

**Contesting Visions:
Memory and Cultural Trauma
in Early Post-Civil War Spanish Cinema 1939-1950**

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Declaration of Authorship

I Madori Nasu hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: 

Date: 16. October 2013

Abstract

This thesis is a critical study of Spanish cinema of the 1940s and its relation to the memory politics in early post-Civil War Spain. Despite the increasing interest in the scholarship on modern Spanish literature and cinema about the repressed memories of those who suffered during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and under Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), early post-war films have been largely neglected, given the general assumption that they had served essentially as vehicles of Francoist ideology. This thesis, however, complicates this view by concentrating on this less well studied period (1939-1950) of Spanish film history. It provides a close analysis of texts that address questions about memory and trauma that seem symptomatic of early post-war Spain. Among the several films discussed in this thesis, special focus is given to four texts: *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948), *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949), *De mujer a mujer* (Luis Lucia, 1950) and *La vida en un hilo* (Edgar Neville, 1945). The thesis argues that, despite the regime's effort to disseminate a triumphant vision of the war, repress memories inconvenient for the regime, and deny cultural trauma, these filmic texts provide contesting discourses that problematised the dominant politics of memory. Drawing from recent theories of memory and trauma, the thesis demonstrates that even films that might seem unrelated to the Civil War could be read as displacements of cultural trauma. These films tried to work through cultural trauma, yet simultaneously expose the existing rifts in post-war Spanish society. The thesis also discusses the intertextuality of these films, and shows how some of these texts reflexively explored the function of cinema as 'prosthetic memories' that could destabilise or challenge the regime's monolithic vision of the national past and mediate alternative memories.

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Introduction

1. Contesting visions of the past

In a scene from Víctor Erice's internationally acclaimed film *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973), Fernando, played by actor Fernando Fernán Gómez, walks by a village hall improvised as a cinema where his daughters Ana and Isabel are watching James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931). Fernando, without entering the cinema, looks at the film poster of Whale's film hanging outside of the hall and returns to his large and empty house. Sitting in the armchair in his study, Fernando appears to be drawn to a soundtrack of *Frankenstein* floating in from the window. Whether or not it is a real sound coming from the theatre or a dislocated sound, the film shows that the effect of Whale's haunting film extends well beyond the theatre, associating the horror film with Fernando's thoughts as he opens the window and gazes outside. With the soundtrack continuing, the scene then cuts to the interior of the cinema theatre, in which we see his two children absorbed by the images of *Frankenstein*. It is a moment in the film when the window becomes an important metaphor for the cinema and stands in for Fernando's silence.

El espíritu is set in a small Castilian village in 1940 in the immediate aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Scholars have provided different psychological, historical and cinematic readings of *El espíritu*'s rich references and complex visual and aural texture.¹ Most studies have pointed out that the film deals with the taboo subject of the fragmentation of the post-war Spanish nation polarised between the victors and the defeated. As Chris Perriam (2008) suggests, *El espíritu* 'stages a series of possible reactions to and interpretations of the state

¹ The anthology edited by Linda C. Ehrlich (2000), *An Open Window: The Cinema of Víctor Erice*, includes important criticism and studies of *El espíritu de la colmena* written both within and beyond the borders of Spain. For other studies see, for example, Hopewell (1986: 203-09), Higginbotham (1988: 116-20), Kinder (1993: 126-33), Arocena (1996: 77-188), Smith (2000: 23-41), Pena (2004), Stone (2002: 87-94), Labanyi (2000b; 2007b) and Perriam (2008).

of Spain, on the one hand, and a state of mind, on the other hand, connected to horror, nightmare, vicarious remembrance, the loss of innocence' (67). The young girl Ana's fascination with the on-screen monster of *Frankenstein* and the Republican fugitive she befriends in real life has prompted readings that suggest that the film is a profound reflection on the nature of cinema as both fantasy and an alternative reality during the 'time of silence'.²

What has hardly been pointed out, however, is that a very similar scene, played by the same actor, can be found in a film made during the most difficult of the early post-war years. In the 1948 film *Vida en sombras*, directed by Catalan filmmaker Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, we find Fernán Gómez, this time playing Carlos, contemplating film stills from George Cukor's *Romeo and Juliet* (1936) outside his local cinema in Barcelona in the aftermath of the Civil War. The images, and the sounds coming from the theatre, evoke in Carlos the memory of his wife, Ana, who had died in the war. Like *El espíritu*, *Vida en sombras* also portrays Carlos sitting in his study and looking through a window; this time another Hollywood film, *Rebecca*, serves as a displacement for the traumatic memories of the Civil War. Neither Carlos nor Fernando's experiences of the Civil War are clearly articulated in each film. However, both men, who live quietly after the war, are apparently affected by the conflict.³ Fernando retreats into his world of beekeeping, and exists, almost as a shadow, within the dysfunctional family; Carlos also stops making or viewing films, and withdraws from the world. What is surprising is not only that the two films, temporally separated by the long dictatorship period, use the same actor and the same

² While many have focused on Ana's reaction to the on-screen image, Vicente Molina Foix (2000) notes that it is not only to Ana that the world of fiction 'bursts into the compromised reality' (108) but to all the characters, including the adults, who 'live a sort of borrowed or fictitious existence, a reality that is out of sync with the real world, a *second reality*' (emphasis original: 108).

³ Critics have been divided in their opinions about Fernando's political affiliation. While critics such as Molina Foix (2000) clearly state that the film deals with the family of the vanquished Republicans, Hopewell (1986), citing Erice's words, suggests that Fernando embodies "the emptiness of Spaniards who fought in the war ... an absence. They had died, gone abroad, or were left locked up in themselves radically deprived of the least elemental modes of expression ... defeated men who, independently of which side they fought on, lived the war without any clear idea of the reasons for their behaviour, acting simply to survive" (207). Pena (2004) further compares Fernando with Miguel de Unamuno, with whom he appears in a photograph. Although Unamuno initially supported the military rebels, he later opposed their methods, 'refugiándose a continuación en sus investigaciones en el campo, alejado de los centros de estudio, de la ciudad' (62).

character name, Ana, but also that they perform a similar ‘memory work’ of the Civil War, underscoring the intricate relationship between cinema and memory. Both films explore cinema’s relation to the historical trauma of 1940s Spain, and use intertextual references to express alternative memories about the Civil War that were repressed under Francoism.

Over the past two decades, the recuperation of the memories of those who suffered during the Spanish Civil War and under the dictatorship (1939-1975) has become a key political and social issue in Spanish society. The Civil War broke out as a result of the military coup of 17-18 July, 1936 led by Francisco Franco against the Second Republic. The killings in the battlefield and the violent repressions that were performed in both Nationalist and Republican zones took the lives of many citizens.⁴ 350,000 Spaniards died, and approximately half a million more were driven into exile. According to Michael Richards (2013), ‘[a]t least 100,000 “Reds” were executed by the rebel “Nationalists” during the war years’ and ‘between 38,000 and 55,000 “enemies of the Republic” were killed in the government zone during the conflict, most in the first five or so revolutionary months from July to November 1936’ (6-7).⁵

In comparison with other Western European countries that experienced social and political polarisation during the Second World War, the unique case of Spain was that the profound polarisation continued well beyond the period of the Civil War. Whereas in Italy and Germany democracy was installed after the defeat of fascism and Nazism, in Spain, fascism continued as a founding force for the reconstruction of the war-torn nation. Approximately 200,000 people lost their lives in the first years of Franco’s dictatorship through execution, political repression, hunger and disease brought on by the conflict (Richards and Ealham 2005: 2-3). The collective violence and suffering unleashed by perpetrators against undeserving victims both during and after the conflict have urged historians such as Paul Preston (2013) to characterise the war as the ‘Spanish

⁴ As historian Michael Richards (2013) remarks, ‘[t]hroughout Spain, half of the total recorded deaths occurred through politically motivated violence away from the field of battle’ (6).

⁵ These numbers, however, are contentious among historians. For example, Paul Preston (2013) notes that the tentative figure for deaths at the hands of the Nationalists is 130,199, while also suggesting that it is unlikely that the number of such deaths was fewer than 150,000 (xviii).

holocaust'.⁶

The collective memory of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism is highly complex, having been formed and reformed according to the dramatic political changes within contemporary Spanish society. Scholars identify three phases in contemporary Spain that have shaped the construction of memory and collective identity: Franco's dictatorship; the democratic Transition; and the post-transition process marked by European integration and globalisation (Colmeiro 2011: 24). Each phase had significant impact on the way contesting visions of the past were shaped, controlled or forgotten. The first phase, which will be the central concern of this thesis, and will be discussed in detail later, relegated the memory of the Civil War, forcing it to be publicly rewritten and subjugated to the construction of a new post-war order. The regime imposed a unified Spanish national identity by suppressing the memories of the defeated and the languages and practices of different national identities from the periphery (namely Basque, Catalan and Galician).

With Franco's death in 1975, Spain faced another crucial moment where the memories of the Civil War would take centre stage. However, the political transition to democracy during the late-1970s to early 1980s did not lead to an official recognition of the memories of the victims of past repression. The transformation of the political system 'was predicated upon the "social contract" of the burial of the past—no reopening of old wounds and no questions asked' (Colmeiro 2011: 24). As scholars have pointed out, the contract was allegedly called the '*pacto de olvido*' ('Pact of Oblivion'), an unwritten agreement not to prosecute those involved in abuses committed by the Franco regime for fear of jeopardising 'national reconciliation'.⁷ The memories of atrocities and injustices silenced by Francoism were considered taboo, and were replaced with discourses that depicted the war as a tragic past for all Spaniards. Paloma Aguilar-Fernández

⁶ Although Preston (2013) does not intend to equate the experiences in Spain with those of the 'holocaust' of the Nazis against European Jewry, he nevertheless uses this term to describe the massive suffering of the Spanish people during the Civil War, and also to highlight the anti-Semitic rhetoric (the 'Jewish-Bolshevik-Masonic' conspiracy) which was often used by the perpetrators to rationalise the slaughter (xi).

⁷ This notion has been put forward in the important work of Aguilar-Fernández (2002). The idea of the *pacto de olvido*, however, has been contested by scholars such as Santos Juliá (1999) and Labanyi (2007b), who maintain that the pact was 'not a decision to forget the past, but a decision not to let it shape the future' (Labanyi 2007b: 93).

(2002) notes that during the difficult period of the transition, a generalised idea of the war as ‘collective insanity’, along with an understanding ‘that the two sides who had fought against each other in the war had been equally to blame for the barbaric events that ensued’ (268), were used so that society could come to terms with the past and reach a consensus for the construction of a democratic society.⁸ Yet, Aguilar-Fernández notes that the model of democracy to be pursued was not that of the experience of the Second Republic, which had eventually led to civil war; it was ‘the memory of historical misfortune and the fear of the dangers of radicalisation, that contributed most to moderating the demands of all the important political and social groups of the time and to legitimising a different means of bringing about political transformations’ (151).

The peaceful transition was generally looked back on as a success story as the Socialist Party came to power in 1982. The Socialists promoted a ‘modernised’ and ‘European’ Spain while trying to minimise the public assessment of the Civil War. However, in turn, ‘[t]here would be no official unburdening of the past and, of course, no return to a republic’ and ‘the general avoidance of dwelling on the past, were the price paid for modernising’ (Richards 2013: 315). While in the political arena the Socialists moved on to create an image of a youthful, cosmopolitan and postmodern nation, the recognition of the deaths and victims of the defeated had been sidestepped.

As Spain reached the twenty-first century, questions about the ‘recuperation’ of the memory of the victimised Republicans re-surfaced in the political arena.⁹ In 2000, a civil organisation called the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH) was founded by journalists Emilio Silva and Santiago Macías.¹⁰ With the help of volunteers and scientists, the organisation

⁸ The amnesty text of 14 October 1977 is one example of this political gesture. As Preston (2006) explains, ‘[t]he formal renunciation of revenge which was an essential precondition for change was enshrined in a political amnesty not just for those who had opposed the dictatorship but also for those guilty of crimes against humanity committed in the service of the dictatorship’ (11).

⁹ Labanyi (2008a) is careful to specify that the term ‘recuperation’ should be used not to mean the recovery of a time-capsuled, unchanging artifact, but instead be ‘used concretely in relation to those forms of memory work that take place in transitional justice contexts. [...] That is, today’s demands to remember the Francoist repression represent an attempt to “recover” (reactivate) the demands for transitional justice that were sidelined at the time’ (122).

¹⁰ The ARMH was initially created for the exhumation of the Republican victims. However, as the organisation caught the attention of national and international press, the ARMH contacted the UN Task Force for Forced Disappearances to inform it of other cases. With the creation of a website in

conducted the excavation of *fosas* (mass graves) where the unidentified victims of the Franco regime were buried. The creation of the organisation was prompted by Silva's personal experience relating to his Republican grandfather, who had been killed by Franco's forces. Silva had recently located the clandestine mass grave in which his grandfather was buried, and participated in the exhumation of his body.¹¹ He has noted both the sociological and psychological impact of this memory work, which has established a 'conversación entre los muertos y los vivos' (in Labanyi 2008b: 149). But even among the victims, there is the question of whose memory should be recuperated and to what political ends. Whereas ARMH focuses on 'the affective familial bonds between the living and the dead and the necessity of mourning and psychological closure', groups such as *Foros por la Memoria* 'conceive of an ideological bond with the dead and explicitly seek to resurrect Republican ideology' (Renshaw 2011: 52, 53).

Renewed interest in the memory of the Civil War emerged when Spain found itself in a contradictory position: applauding the trials in Argentina and Chile against the crimes committed during the dictatorships in these countries, while remaining quiescent to the crimes committed by the Franco regime.¹² The different ideological positioning of the current political parties, as well as the differing family backgrounds of politicians, have continued to steer the search for how to publicly deal with the memories of the past. For example, the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) government (1996-2004), led by José María Aznar, refused to give state funding to the ARMH, whereas the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2011) passed the 'Ley de Memoria Histórica' in 2007.¹³ This law encouraged the local

2002, it received an overwhelming number of responses from families asking for help to recover the bodies of the victims, and thus expanded its activity throughout Spain. Silva comments that its aim increasingly became the recuperation of the memories of the disappeared, and that 'algún día estuvieran en los libros de texto, que es donde deberían estar' (in Labanyi 2008b: 147). For more information about the ARMH and its creation, see Jo Labanyi's (2008b: 143-155) interview with Emilio Silva.

¹¹ According to Layla Renshaw (2011), there are an estimated 30,000-40,000 bodies located in hidden mass graves throughout Spain (17).

¹² In 1998, Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón ordered the arrest of Chilean ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet during his stay in the UK. This led to the trial of the ex-dictator in Chile, where he was prosecuted for the torture and deaths of those who had opposed his regime (1974-1990).

¹³ Aznar's father and grandfather had been important governmental figures in the Franco regime, whereas Rodríguez Zapatero's paternal grandfather was a Republican captain executed by the Nationalists at the beginning of the Civil War.

authorities to cooperate in the process of exhumations and to remove monuments and street names related to the perpetrators.¹⁴ In 2008, Judge Baltazar Garzón opened an enquiry against crimes committed during the Francoist era, arguing against the Amnesty Law of 1977 that had assured impunity for the perpetrators. However, the following year, right-wing supporters took legal action against Garzón, which subsequently turned into a complex legal turmoil. The Supreme Court of Spain has suspended Garzón's judicial activity since 2010.

The recent memory boom has also generated a right-wing historical revisionism. Temporal distance can be positive, as it allows the younger generations to interrogate what actually happened during the war and under Francoism while liberating them from the ideological opposition of the earlier generations. However, the lack of knowledge about the past also entails the danger of historical revisionism, such as allowing Pío Moa's books to become bestsellers.¹⁵

The struggle for adequate acknowledgement of past sufferings did not emerge for the first time in the past decade. Even during periods of what could be called 'political amnesia', historians were constantly investigating the past from multiple perspectives, while writers and filmmakers were searching for ways to express alternative or counter-memories in literature and cinema. As Colmeiro (2011) asserts, historical memory was 'exiled from institutional political discourse, and displaced to the intellectual and cultural arena, where it found a distinctive space' (26). The cinema of the 1970s saw the emergence of documentary films such as *Canciones para después de una guerra* (Basilio Martín Patino, 1976), *Caudillo* (Basilio Martín Patino, 1977), *El desencanto* (Jaime Chávarri, 1976) and *La vieja memoria* (Jaime Camino, 1979) that dealt with the memories of the Civil War and the dictatorship which differed from official viewpoints. For example, *Canciones* provides alternative memories about the extremely difficult social experiences in

¹⁴ The law is officially called 'Ley por la que se reconocen y amplian derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura'.

¹⁵ Moa argues that the origins of the Civil War should be attributed to a left-wing revolution; an account that only confirms the arguments found in early Francoist historical discourses. Despite the lack of historical rigour, his book *Los mitos de la Guerra Civil* (2003) became a great commercial success. Other historical writers, such as César Vidal, José Javier Esparza, José María Zavala and Ángel David Martín Rubio, as well as periodicals such as *Libertad Digital*, have published attacks against left-wing accounts of the Civil War.

the immediate aftermath of the Civil War; memories that the Franco regime sought to conceal. The film is a montage made by footage from the state-owned NO-DO (*Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos*) newsreels and unreleased images, combined with a musical score that consists of popular hit songs from the period. The allegorical fiction films of the years of late dictatorship and transition to democracy, such as *La caza* (Carlos Saura, 1966), *El espíritu de la colmena* (Víctor Erice, 1973), *Cría cuervos* (Carlos Saura, 1976) and *Furtivos* (José Luis Borau, 1975) evoke memories that challenge the monolithic visions of the past created by Francoism. More recently, within the context of international co-productions and global marketing, alternative memories of the Civil War and Francoism have appeared on screen in various genres: realist drama (*Las bicicletas son para el verano* [Jaime Chávarri, 1984], *Si te dicen que caí* [Vicente Aranda, 1989], *Libertarias* [Vicente Aranda, 1996], *La lengua de la las mariposas* [José Luis Cuerda, 1999], *El viaje de Carol* [Imanol Uribe, 2002], *El lápiz del carpintero* [Antón Reixa, 2003], *Soldados de Salamina* [David Trueba, 2003], *Las trece rosas* [Emilio Martín Lázaro, 2007], *Salvador Puig Antich* [Manuel Hueriga, 2006]); musicals (*¡Ay, Carmela!* [Carlos Saura, 1990], *La niña de tus ojos* [Fernando Trueba, 1998]); comedy (*La vaquilla* [Luis García Berlanga, 1985], *¡Buen viaje, Excelencia!* [Albert Boadilla, 2003]); horror and fantasy (*El espinazo del diablo* [Guillermo del Toro, 2001], *El laberinto del fauno* [Guillermo del Toro, 2006], *No-Do* [Elio Quiroga, 2008], *Pa negre* [Agustí Villaronga, 2010]). The Civil War and Francoism have also become the backdrop of enormously popular television series, such as *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (2001-) and *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (2005-2012).¹⁶

The mediation of memories of the Civil War and Francoism in these various expressions of the past in visual arts has become an important focus for Spanish cinema scholars (Torrell 1999; Losilla 1999; Labanyi 2000b, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Pavlović 2008; Castro de Paz 2002; de Pablo 2004; Perriam 2008;

¹⁶ *Cuéntame cómo pasó* depicts the life of the family Alcántara in the years from late-Francoism to the Transition period. On the other hand, the telenovela *Amar en tiempos revueltos* is a love story set in an unprecedented time for a television serial: the Civil War and its immediate aftermath. For an interesting comparative study of transnational telenovelas and the use of the post-Civil War setting in *Amar en tiempos* in relation to historical memory, melodrama and consumption see Smith (2009: 122-44).

Gutiérrez-Albilla 2011). Jo Labanyi's (2000b) seminal work, included in the important collection of essays *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*, edited by Joan Ramón Resina, discusses how the memories of the Civil War and dictatorship appeared in literature and cinema over the three decades of the transition to democracy. Labanyi takes her cue from Jacques Derrida's philosophical idea of 'hauntology'—a neologism created as an alternative to 'ontology' that he developed in *Spectres of Marx* (2006)—to claim that the repressed memories of Francoism might return in the form of ghosts. She presents Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena* as a film exemplifying the transition period that manifests such hauntings. Both the 'monster' from *Frankenstein* and the Republican fugitive soldier who is killed by the authorities represent the spectre of the 'living dead' who are denied memorialisation (2000b: 72-73). The fugitive's act of jumping off the train symbolically expresses his status as one of the 'refugees from history' (73). Labanyi, through Derrida's idea of the spectral aspect of history, writes that 'ghosts are the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace; that is, the victims of history and in particular subaltern groups, whose stories—those of the losers—are excluded from the dominant narratives of the victors' (2002a: 1-2).

Yet, most present-day discussions of Spanish cinema and memory have focused on texts from the period of late-Francoism to democracy. While the Franco regime's politics of memory may appear more obvious and straightforward compared to the second 'forgetting' of war trauma during the Transition, in this process, early post-war Spanish films have been largely neglected, due to the general assumption that films in the 1940s merely served to disseminate Francoist ideology. As we will see in chapter one, however, a haunting similar to that depicted by Labanyi also occurs in a film from the 1940s.

This thesis concentrates on the less well-studied period from 1939 to 1950 to draw out a more complex picture about how cinema of the immediate aftermath of the Civil War responded to this traumatic historical event. My intention is by no means to downplay the regime's control over the memory of the Civil War and the repressive measures used against those who have opposed to Franco's rebellion. Neither does it try to address how 'accurately' films portrayed the Civil

War. My aim is to reassess the cinema of this period, asking why and how some films show an obsessive concern over questions of remembering, trauma and working through, albeit in oblique forms. The thesis interrogates how Francoist politics of memory might have, not only consciously but unconsciously, intersected with the cinematic texts of the time. But more importantly, it shows that, contrary to the regime's effort to disseminate a particular memory of the past while suppressing other memories, the films selected for this thesis express visions of the past that contest or challenge the official politics of memory.

2. Francoist visions of the past

Before entering into the discussion of 1940s cinema and memory, I will provide an overview of the Franco regime's politics of memory in the construction of the new state. In the immediate aftermath of the war, it was highly important for the regime to circumscribe the ways in which the Civil War should be collectively remembered. The war itself was 'instrumental in establishing a new system of political and ideological domination' (Richards 2013: 15). It would 'represent an unequivocal demarcation between "old" and "new", becoming the founding political myth of the New State' (14). This 'rupture' with the past was nevertheless accompanied by a claim to characterise the war as the victors' 'religious crusade', which became a significant myth allowing it to conceal the illegitimacy of its insurgence against the democratically elected government of the Second Republic.¹⁷

The anticlerical legislation of the Second Republic had resulted in a violent confrontation between committed Catholics and those who supported anticlericalism. While the initial military uprising was targeted at defeating communism and disorder, rather than instilling Catholic fervour, it became increasingly important to mobilise the insurgents' supporters during the war. In the Nationalist zone, acts of reparation, funerals and processions were combined with ceremonies to return crucifixes to schoolrooms, exaltations of the Sacred Heart and movement of Virgins (Cruz 2005: 172). These processes brought

¹⁷ For the study of the role of myths during the Civil War, see Reig Tapia (2006) and Aróstegui and Godicheau (2006).

together the clergy, militia and civilian population to gradually develop a belief in the sacred significance of the war (172).¹⁸ When the war ended, the deaths of those who had supported the Nationalists were remembered as the ‘fallen’, a term exclusively used for the martyrs of Franco’s crusade. On church walls, the names of these martyrs were listed under the sign ‘caídos por Dios y por la patria’.

The regime believed that Spain had to be ‘purified’ from the ‘contamination’ of foreign influences, such as Republicanism and liberalism. It claimed that it had fought a war against the threatening foreign values that had infiltrated Spain during the Enlightenment period. Its mission was to restore Spain’s glorious era of the Catholic monarchs of the fifteenth-century from which Spaniards could trace their ‘eternal values’.¹⁹ As Franco proclaimed in 1938, the Civil War was “‘the coronation of an historic process, the struggle of the Patria against the anti-Patria, of unity against secession, of morality against crime, of spirit against materialism, and there (was) no other solution than the triumph of the pure and eternal over bastard, anti-Spanish principles’” (quoted in Richards 1998: 9).²⁰

Reconciliation was not a political option for the regime, which carried out a violent purge against the vanquished and everything related to the Republic. The severe treatment of the defeated also served to coordinate the diverse factions that supported Franco in the cause.²¹ The fate of the vanquished disseminated a general fear among the population, discouraging them from objecting to the regime’s politics. In 1939, the regime introduced the ‘Law of Political Responsibilities’, which ensured that not only those who actively fought against

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of how Nationalists increasingly developed the idea of the war as religious ‘crusade’ see Cruz (2005).

¹⁹ This idea was drawn from writings by the so-called Generation of 1898, who lamented Spain’s situation in the face of the turn-of-the-century national crisis. Labanyi (1989) shows how ideas such as those presented by Miguel de Unamuno in *En torno al casticismo* (1895), in which he privileges ‘an eternal tradition’ against ‘the changing waves of history’, were echoed and twisted by fascist leaders such as José Antonio Primo de Rivera or Pedro Laín Entralgo. Both claimed that ‘fascism saved man from the inauthenticity of history by restoring him to lost eternal values’ (Labanyi 1989: 36).

²⁰ Discussing this Nationalist cult of the past, Carmen Martín Gaité (1994) also observes: ‘Desde la Reconquista para acá, todo habían sido glorias y triunfos del Imperio español hasta el siglo XVIII, que es cuando habían empezado a entrar en la Península los vientos antiheroicos y burgueses del progreso material, cuya culminación se situaba en el ateísmo de cuño extranjero implantado por la reciente República, de triste memoria. Enterrar el pasado reciente y exaltar el pasado remoto fue una de las más inquebrantables consignas de la España de Franco’ (22-23).

²¹ As Labanyi (2007b) reminds us, ‘the regime emerged out of an uneasy military alliance (which adopted the label “Nationalists”) between traditional landowners, the church, monarchists, big business, and fascism’ (92).

the Nationalists, but also those who supported the Republicans in any way could be punished and ‘legally’ persecuted.²² The defeated had to face the overwhelming consequences of exclusion through execution, violence and punishment, and some 500,000 people were forced into exile by the end of the war.

Anti-liberal perspectives were crucial in the discursive practices of Francoist historians. Conservative writers such as José María Pemán saw the war as ‘a classic tale of good versus evil, or spirit and matter’ (de Meneses 2001: 101). Pemán’s view was turned into official orthodoxy when in 1939 he published a history primer for children which presented the Civil War as the latest event in a long struggle between Spain and “‘anti-Spain’”: the wars of the Reconquista, the fight against the Protestant Reformation and victory over the Turks at Lepanto’ (101). Francoist historians rejected the perception of history that emerged from the liberal thinkers associated with the *krausistas* of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE).²³ Instead, they re-evaluated the reactionary thinking of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912).²⁴ In his study of Francoist narratives of the past, David Herzberger (1995) asserts that Francoist historiography ‘does not aim to dispute the knowledge collectively possessed about the past of Spain (the so-called facts of history), but rather seeks to establish a normative set of strategies that define a particular *concept* of history’ (emphasis original: 16). These were discursive practices ‘that froze the nation in another time’ (Herzberger 2007: 14). As a result, historical discourses were highly prescriptive and

²² Preston (2013) writes: ‘Although the concept had been developed in the rebel zone since the start of the war, the timing left no doubt that a negotiated peace was out of the question. Its first article was as sweeping as it was awkwardly worded: “The political responsibility is declared of all those persons who, after 1 October 1934 and before 18 July 1936, contributed to the creation or aggravation of the subversion of any kind of which Spain was made a victim, and of those others, who from the second of said dates have opposed or might oppose the National Movement with concrete acts or serious passivity”’ (503).

²³ Founded by Francisco Giner de los Ríos in 1876, and influenced by the philosophy of the German Romantic, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), the ILE aimed to provide the rational humanist education a modernizing elite would need to “Europeanize” Spain’ (Vincent 2007: 89).

²⁴ Herzberger (1995) points out that Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo emerged as one of the principal figures in guiding Francoist historiography: ‘For Menéndez y Pelayo the past and future of Spain both begin and end with Catholic religiosity and orthodoxy. He repeatedly challenges the perception of history formulated by the free-thinking Krausists of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (he accuses them of disaffirming the religious essence of the Spanish past), but more importantly, he places at the intellectual center of his work the idea of an authentic and eternal Spain’ (21).

monolithic.²⁵ Francoist historians used abstract notions such as ‘*destino universal*’ (‘universal destiny’), in order to ‘cast historical “realities” into a narrative structure that negates alternative or counter-discourses and therefore to make the past largely immune from other potential representations’ (Herzberger 1995: 17).²⁶

The past was evoked as a source of power to solidify the unity between society and the political system. Therefore, the dialectic of ‘*las dos Españas*’ (‘the two Spains’) was also discarded by Francoist historiographers. The two Spains is a hypothetical concept dividing Spain into two opposing bands, and it emerged from the writings of intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century.²⁷ Nathan Richardson (2012) writes:

In addition to the multiple kingdoms, countries, regions, nations, and ethnicities that comprised a kingdom (or nation, supernational, or state) called Spain from the fifteenth century forward, the coincidence of the failure of the Bourbon monarchy in Charles IV, the Napoleonic invasions, and the rise of the public intellectual, produced two competing discourses regarding the past, present, and future of Spain. Spaniards were compelled to either understand their nation as essentially Catholic, Monarchic, and Centralist or as naturally

²⁵ As Helen Graham (2004) has also noted, ‘Franco legitimised his violent new order by reference to an ultra-conservative reading of Spanish history—one that had, significantly, been challenged under the Republic. He erected a repressive myth of a monolithic Spanish “nation” born in the fifteenth century with the Catholic Kings, where hierarchy and cultural homogeneity, guaranteed by integrist Catholicism, had generated imperial greatness. Although the empire was gone, metropolitan Spain under Franco would be great again as a bulwark against the Republic’s “sins” of modernity: enlightenment freethinking, the acceptance of leveling change and a tolerance of cultural heterogeneity’ (29).

²⁶ Labanyi (1989) writes that the Falange Española founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s ‘meaningless but evocative definition of the nation as an organic “unit of universal destiny” became the chief catchphrase of Nationalist propaganda’. Furthermore, ‘the notion of unity is linked to that of imperialism: the return to “natural”, “organic” values gives the nation universality that legitimizes the imposition of its culture on other nations’ (38).

²⁷ José Luis Abellán (2011) traces the origins of this left-right political division to the Spanish War of Independence (1808-1814): ‘En mitad de la llamada Guerra de Independencia y en lucha contra la invasión napoleónica se produjeron dos expresiones opuestas de la afirmación nacional: por un lado estaban los que luchaban por el regreso de Fernando VII como rey absoluto, y, por otro, los que lo hacían por el mismo rey pero reivindicando su carácter constitucional. El texto de la Constitución gaditana promulgada dicho año [1812] viene a ser el paradigma de ese antagonismo entre “dos Españas” opuestas’ (40). For other discussions about the historical evolution of the idea of *las dos Españas* see Juliá (2004).

democratic and diverse. (6)

The notion of the two Spains only appeared in Francoist discourses when it was ‘viewed as a perversion of true Spanish history’ (Herzberger 1995: 29). Insisting on their victory, the Franco regime affirmed that they had conquered the problem of the two Spains. With the slogan ‘¡Una, Grande y Libre!’, Spain was conceptualised as a unified nation; the division was not to be found *within* Spain, but *between* the ‘true Spain’ and the ‘anti-Spain’.

In sum, the regime’s ‘anti-modern’ perspective, represented by myths and monolithic historical discourses, converged on the idea of a ‘rupture’ from the past and a triumphant beginning of a new Spain led by Franco.²⁸ In reality, these triumphant visions of the war concealed the wounds of a society where the memories of those who experienced it were varied and complex.²⁹ The sufferings experienced by the defeated and those who were reluctant to share the vision of ‘victory’ (even among those who supported the Nationalist cause), were never allowed proper healing, as this went against the logic of the official ‘master narrative’ intended to ‘purify’ Spain. While the Civil War was remembered as a victorious crusade, and kept present through official commemorations and proclamations to legitimise the regime’s origins, alternative memories were excluded from public and political discourses.³⁰

3. Revisiting the cinema of the ‘time of silence’

Spanish cinema of the 1940s emerged from this context of severe political control and repression. But the cinema industry also had to recover an audience that was feeling the devastating effects of death, deprivation, loss and hunger, and the shifting cultural values imposed by the new regime. These post-war conditions,

²⁸ Franco was compared with the image of ‘great warrior heroes and empire-builders of the past, like Philip II and El Cid’, and ‘[t]he ceremonies of triumph repeatedly re-enacted the victory parades of the heroic figures of the Middle Ages’ (Richards 1998: 16).

²⁹ In his recent book *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain since 1936* Michael Richards (2013) reveals these diversities of the experience of violence and terror by presenting a closer examination of the memories of both Nationalists and Republicans. Tracing the memories of violence from the 1930s to 2007, Richards relates the first-person memoirs of the cultural elite as well as the recollections of ‘ordinary’ witnesses to the ideological ‘master narratives’ that supported the processes of social change in Spain.

³⁰ I will further discuss these acts of commemoration in chapter one.

and the exile of artists and intellectuals who had cultivated Republican culture, seemed to have created a cinema culture void of artistic worth. Thus Diego Galán (1997) asserts,

[e]l cine español, casi desde sus orígenes y hasta hace pocos años, ha sido uno de los más atrasados, torpes y faltos de interés del mundo occidental. Y, desde luego, la década de los cuarenta se erige en la más extravagante, enloquecida, curiosa y patética de su propia historia. (113)

The Franco regime's direct intervention in cinema was tangible, applied through censorship, obligatory dubbing and inconsistent subventions, privileging certain themes and genres that complied with its ideology.³¹ The Press and Propaganda Office was created in Nationalist territory during the war, in 1936. Once the war was over, the office took control of the censorship of film productions, demanding that all screenplays be pre-censored before filming.³² Censors made sure that the films showed respect for state institutions and the Catholic Church, her dogmas, morals and cults. Censors were especially strict on sexual matters, direct references to the Civil War, and anything related to the Second Republic. Obligatory dubbing of all foreign films was introduced in 1941 as a means to 'protect' the Castilian language.³³ This ironically increased the number of imported foreign films from which Spanish film companies sought profit.³⁴ It was combined with a protectionist policy that awarded more import licences to those companies that produced films that complied with the classification scheme established by the Franco regime.³⁵ However, the regime's

³¹ For a detailed study on censorship of films under Franco see González Ballesteros (1981), Gubern (1981) and Labanyi (1995).

³² During the war, the 'Comisión de Censura Cinematográfica' and 'Junta Superior de Censura Cinematográfica' were created in November 1938 in Salamanca, the former controlling the production of fiction and the latter documentaries and newsreels. Their objective was the 'fiscalización moral del cine en su aspecto político, religioso, pedagógico y castrense' (Monterde 1995: 189). In 1946, these committees were transformed into 'Junta Superior de Orientación Cinematográfica' (190).

³³ See Ávila (1997: 58-62) for the transcription of this order from 23 April 1941.

³⁴ The dubbing policy made foreign films more accessible to audiences, and increased their popularity.

³⁵ In 1944, the category 'Interés Nacional' was created to reward films that complied with the regime's ideology. As Heredero (1993) notes, the classification of 'Interés Nacional' was given to

control over cinematic production was never complete, and highly arbitrary. One of the major problems with censorship was that there were no written norms established until 1963, resulting in prohibitions of images and plots that were based on extremely erratic and random decision-making processes.

Until recently, most critical studies have associated 1940s Spanish cinema with films that seem to have directly benefited from these policies, either by (1) fully complying with the regime's ideology or (2) simply providing fantasy narratives that could divert the audience from the harsh realities of post-war Spanish society.

I will start by giving an overview of the first group. Scholars have identified two cycles of films relating to the history of the conveying of Francoist propaganda at a time when the new state needed to construct its own national narratives. First came the military films that depicted the victors' version of the Civil War. These films, which appeared during the years immediately after the war, justified Franco's military rebellion and commemorated the victors of the 'crusade'.³⁶ Examples of what is commonly called the '*cine de cruzada*' include *Sin novedad en el Alcázar* [*L'assedio dell'Alcázar*] (Augusto Genina, 1940), *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941), *Escuadrilla* (Antonio Román, 1941), *¡A mí la legión!* (Juan de Orduña, 1942) and *¡Harka!* (Carlos Arévalo, 1942). Official film magazines, such as *Primer Plano*, promoted these films as the national cinema for the post-war period (Triana-Toribio 2003: 46).³⁷ The most direct investment of the Franco regime in cinema for projecting its one-sided vision of the Civil War was *Raza*, a film allegedly based on a story written by Franco himself under the pseudonym Jaime de Andrade. As I will discuss more fully in chapter one, *Raza* chronicles the lives of the fictional and emblematic Churruca family, whose patriarchs have sacrificed their lives for the *patria* over generations, in Trafalgar,

those films that were 'muestras inequívocas de exaltación de valores raciales o de enseñanzas de nuestros principios morales y políticos' (44).

³⁶ Gubern (1981) explains that before the private sectors began to produce these films, the *cruzada* was marked in cinema by a short film titled '*Vía Crucis del Señor por tierras de España*' (1940), written by Manuel Augusto García Viñolas and directed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia. Gubern notes: 'En *Vía Crucis del Señor por tierras de España* se proponía una legitimación religiosa de la Cruzada franquista, a partir de su explícito subtítulo: "Para constancia del dolor que las furias comunistas hicieron al Señor". A partir de ahí se ofrecía un paralelismo metafórico de la Pasión de Cristo y de la España sometida al Frente Popular' (66).

³⁷ However, as Triana-Toribio (2003) specifies, most present-day critics have noted that 'the attention [the film magazines] command belies the number of films made' (46).

Cuba and during the Civil War. The film represents the Civil War as a righteous crusade against atheism, communism and freemasonry, and promotes the Nationalists' idealised values of nation and family.

However, the Spanish production of *cine de cruzada* came to a halt by the end of 1942, coinciding with the changes in the course of World War II, when the victory of Nazi Germany became more unlikely (Mira 2010: xlv). The *cine de cruzada* was replaced by the 'historical epics' produced by CIFESA (Compañía Industrial Film Español), the production company described by Evans (1995) as the 'regime's ideological standard bearer' (215).³⁸ These films were promoted through the funding category of 'Interés nacional', which rewarded films that reflected the regime's views, including its vision of the past. The CIFESA historical epics, such as *La princesa de los Ursinos* (Luis Lucia, 1947), *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948), *Agustina de Aragón* (Juan de Orduña, 1950), *La leona de Castilla* (Juan de Orduña, 1951) and *Lola la piconera* (Luis Lucia, 1951) merged historical narratives with melodramatic plots, displaying spectacular sets and costumes. The ways in which these films featured heroic historical figures apparently concurred with the Franco regime's mythification of the National-Catholic symbols of the past based on a renewed interest in the period of the Catholic Monarchs. Furthermore, they also resonated with the regime's desire to incite nationalism and the people's allegiance to the regime during a time when Spain was isolated from the international community. In February 1946, France closed its borders with Spain, and in December of the same year, the United Nations decided to impose diplomatic sanctions on and withdraw foreign ambassadors from Spain.³⁹

The second group pertains to films that were apparently less political. 1940s cinema has commonly been labelled 'escapist', in reference to the series of

³⁸ CIFESA was created in 1932 by the Casanova family, who were Valencian oil manufacturers. Under the leadership of Vicente Casanova, they were the first Spanish film company to adopt the Hollywood system—including the star system, studios and permanent technical teams. Casanova's good relations with the Franco regime allowed CIFESA to continue its success during the early post-war years (Mira 2005). For a deeper study of the historical evolution of CIFESA and its film production see Fanés (1982).

³⁹ For a study that focuses on the analysis of the rhetoric of Francoist historiography found in these historical films see Mira (2005) and Monterde (2007). Mira argues that, among many other historical films of the period, CIFESA films particularly responded to Francoist versions of Spanish history (2005: 62).

CIFESA romantic comedies (especially during the period 1942-1945) and folkloric musicals of the Republican years that regained their popularity in post-war Spain. The romantic comedies, or ‘society comedies’, were set in an imaginary high society of large palaces and beach resorts, with eccentric characters wearing luxurious costumes engaging in fast and witty dialogue.⁴⁰ These films include *Viaje sin destino* (Rafael Gil, 1942), *Un marido a precio fijo* (Gonzalo Delgrás, 1942), *Deliciosamente tontos* (Juan de Orduña, 1943), *Tuvo la culpa adán* (Juan de Orduña, 1944), *La vida empieza a medianoche* (Juan de Orduña, 1944), *El hombre que las enamora* (José María Castellví, 1944) and *Ella, él y sus millones* (Juan de Orduña, 1944). Critics have tended to denigrate these films for their ‘falsedad no disimulable’ (Monterde 1995: 215), as they are set in a cosmopolitan world, distant from the general populace, and reveal the influence of Hollywood screwball comedies and Italian ‘white telephone’ films.⁴¹ The same happened with folkloric musicals, or *españoladas*, which were based on plays and *zarzuelas*. These musicals were extremely popular during the Second Republic, and made a comeback after the war with titles such as *La Dolores* (Florián Rey, 1940), *Castañuela* (Ramón Torrado, 1945) and *La Lola se va a los puertos* (Juan de Orduña, 1947).⁴² In these musicals, songs (or *coplas*) often convey patriotic sentiments, and the stories of the love between upper-class men and lower-class artists glossed over the real class divisions that prevailed in Spanish society.

In sum, for a long time critics have commonly associated 1940s cinema with either political propaganda or ‘*cine de cartón piedra*’ (‘cardboard cinema’). The latter refers to the large-scale artificial sets, but also to the ‘falseness’ obscuring what was really going on in post-war Spain. As Monterde writes, ‘el cine español aparecía siempre distanciado de una realidad tan pregnante como la de la posguerra’ (1995: 215).⁴³ The tendency to denigrate 1940s films, however, did

⁴⁰ The Spanish definitions vary: they are variously referred to as ‘*alta comedia*’, ‘*comedia sentimental*’, ‘*comedia sofisticada*’, ‘*de enredo*’, ‘*de humor absurdo*’ and ‘*intentos de Screwball*’ (See Ortiz 2001: 115).

⁴¹ Italian high society comedies were called ‘White Telephone’ pictures because of the white telephones in the fancily decorated apartments in the *mise-en-scènes* of these films.

⁴² Caparrós Lera (2007) writes that the folkloric films that already existed during the Republican period, which included a ‘*tono costumbrista o testimonial de una época*’ (75), were reconfigured in the post-war years. He believes that they were exclusively intended to ‘*distraer al público, evadirle de la dura realidad hispana*’ (76).

⁴³ Alcover (1977) similarly writes that ‘[e]l cine de estos años ignora casi por completo los

not begin in the post-Franco years. From the 1950s, Spanish filmmakers had been seeking alternative cinematic discourses that would challenge the dominant popular culture of the previous decade. Filmmakers and critics increasingly found ‘realism’ (in a sense closer to ‘social realism’) as a preferable vehicle to articulate a Spanish ‘national cinema’ (Triana-Toribio 2003: 57-61). Their exposure to Italian neorealism, the influence of the previous development of social realism in the Spanish post-war novel, and the *Primeras Conversaciones Cinematográficas Nacionales* celebrated in Salamanca in 1955, when director Juan Antonio Bardem famously dismissed Spanish cinema of the 1940s as ‘políticamente ineficaz, socialmente falso, intelectualmente ínfimo, estéticamente nulo e industrialmente raquítrico’ (in Nieto Ferrando and Company 2006: 293-295), have cast a shadow over the cinema production of the 1940s.

Working in the field of 1940s Spanish cinema, Jo Labanyi (2002b) has challenged this denigration, arguing for a Gramscian approach to popular culture. She writes:

[o]ne of the unfortunate cultural consequences of Francoism is that it encouraged opposition critics to adopt an orthodox Marxist position which viewed popular culture as little more than ideological manipulation—a view which at the time was excusable given state censorship and control of the media (though one must remember that the film industry remained in private hands). Curiously, the acknowledged debt of the Spanish oppositional cinema that developed in the 1950s to Italian neo-realism, itself based on Gramsci’s theories of the ‘national-popular’, did not lead to the assimilation of Gramsci’s unorthodox Marxist analysis of culture, which to this day remains largely ignored by critics of Spanish culture. (206-207)

Gramsci’s theory of hegemony proposes that dominant power cannot simply impose ideology but must negotiate with the culture of the subalterns. Within the

problemas reales con que se enfrentaba el español y trata de “consolarlo” con glorias pasadas’ (175).

spaces of transaction, the strategies or objectives of the dominant power can be altered.

One of the aims of this thesis, then, is to move beyond the view that 1940s cinema simply manipulated the masses from an ideology imposed from above. It hopes to contribute to the body of works that scholars have provided over the last decade. These new researches have engaged in re-readings of less well-known film texts and analysed alternative theories of consumption in order to reveal the complexities of the cinema of this period. Scholars have provided research in popular genres, such as comedy (Triana-Toribio 2003; Ortiz 2001; Marsh 2006), costume film (Labanyi 2004, 2007a), melodrama (Martin-Márquez 1999; Martín 2005) and folkloric musical (Labanyi 1997, 2002b; Woods 2004; Dapena 2010). Other studies have approached early post-war cinema from the perspective of gender representation (Labanyi 2000a), stars and stardom (Martin-Márquez 1999; Triana-Toribio 2000) and spectatorship (Camporesi 1993; Labanyi 2007c).

This thesis, which focuses on memory and cultural trauma, is especially inspired by the work that has been undertaken by José Luis Castro de Paz (2001, 2002). In his monograph *Un cinema herido: los turbios años cuarenta en el cine español (1939-1950)* (2002), Castro de Paz provides a comprehensive study of 1940s cinema. He was one of the organisers of and leading participants in the Eighth International Conference of the *Asociación Española de Historiadores del Cine* (AEHC), which took place in Galicia in December 1999 under the title *La herida de las sombras: el cine español en el años 40*. He conceptualises the cinema of this period as a ‘wound’ (using the noun ‘*herida*’ or the adjective ‘*herido*’), asserting that the term is applicable beyond a simple metaphor to encapsulate this devastating period:

[U]na y otra vez el trauma de la guerra convertía en malsano el clima que dichos textos respiraban, transformaba películas aparentemente intrascendentes o decididamente volcadas hacia la propaganda de los vencedores en “textos descentrados”, escorados hacia la angustia y la pulsión de muerte. (2001: 45)

Castro de Paz’s important work, which categorises the films from the period

under specific genres and directors, supplies new readings for both dominant and marginalised films, contextualising them within the traumatic post-war years.

Unfortunately, his historical study does not particularly address theoretical debates over memory and trauma that have been taking place in the wider fields of film studies. Castro de Paz's conceptualisation of trauma as wound is more or less a generalised view of the prevailing impact of the Civil War on post-war Spanish society. In other words, his work first takes the existence of historical trauma as its starting point and then characterises all films from the 1940s as 'wounded' in one way or another.

This thesis tries to reverse this process by beginning from those texts that seem to be thematically and visually concerned with the idea of memory and trauma. As I discuss in the next section, this thesis draws from current theoretical discussions about cultural trauma and cinema's relation to memory. It neither intends to provide an exhaustive account of 'trauma cinema', nor argue that all films of the period can be read as 'traumatic'. Rather, through a close analysis of selected films taken as case studies, it explores what these individual texts say about memory or trauma, and how these discourses cross over from or contest early post-war Francoist politics of memory. The thesis aims to demonstrate that, even under the devastating and repressive period of the early dictatorship, films could, however obliquely, have provided contesting visions of Spain's recent historical trauma, which had been repressed by the Franco regime's 'official' memorialisation of the Spanish Civil War.

El espíritu de la colmena, which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, presents two contrasting observations about 1940s cinema's relation to the memories of the Civil War and Francoism. On the one hand, the film emphasises early post-war cinema's refusal to record the memories of the vanquished. This can be found in a symbolic sequence where the dead body of a Republican fugitive is placed in front of the blank screen of the village theatre. We could say that, while Erice's film underscores the impossibility of representing Republican deaths in 1940s cinema, it also performs a memory work for the unacknowledged deaths by framing the body as if it were casting the image back onto the screen. On the other hand, *El espíritu* self-reflexively shows how a popular horror film

might articulate the otherwise inexpressible memories of 1940s Spain. Ana's cinematic fantasy parallels her indirect witnessing of the execution of a Republican fugitive soldier she had befriended, merging her perceptions of reality and fantasy. *El espíritu* thus displaces the taboo of the Republican memory, repressed under Francoism, onto the Hollywood film. It is precisely such displacements that might have occurred in 1940s cinema that this thesis explores.

4. Interpreting 'cultural trauma'

In the anthology *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*, Robben and Suárez-Orozco (2000) have brought together research from different fields to tackle questions regarding collective violence and massive trauma. Citing Kai Erikson (1995), they assert that

the social tissue of a community can be damaged in ways similar to the tissues of the mind and body. Massive trauma ruptures social bonds, undermines communality, destroys previous sources of support and may even traumatize those members of a community, society or social group who were absent when the catastrophe or persecution took place. (24)

However, the concept of 'cultural trauma' should be specified when we apply it to the post-Civil War Spanish context. Not all catastrophic events that affect a society or a nation are inherently traumatic. LaCapra (2001) reminds us that '[h]istorical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it' (78). Horrific historical events do not inherently create collective trauma. Far from forgetting the war, the Franco regime repeatedly commemorated it as the victors' war. However, the regime's monopoly over the collective memory of the war and its immediate aftermath involved violent and repressive measures that would silence other memories that might compromise the reconstruction process of a unified, new state. It is not an easy task to capture the traces of these excluded memories of the Civil War and its aftermath within that climate. As Richards (1998) rightly maintains:

Memories of pain, or of shame were internalised and are not easy to recapture, articulate or interpret. The Spanish Civil War and its devastating aftermath represented an overwhelming sense of loss in many ways. Defeat represented more than military failure: it also meant a loss of the past, of identity and ideals, and of visions of the future. Loss was also highly personal: the loss of family members, not only for those who supported the Republic but also for those who found themselves on the other side, either through conviction or through geographic accident. (28)

One of the important objectives of this thesis, however, is to interrogate whether films might have become symptoms of this cultural trauma.

Personal trauma and cultural trauma may each require different understandings. The concept of trauma originates from nineteenth-century medical and scientific discourses, and its use has been extended to literary and film studies.⁴⁴ Most recent trauma theories refer back to the studies by Freud and his collaborators, who associated the phenomenon of trauma with the effects of modernity. These included industrialisation, the growth of the bourgeois family, and large-scale wars. Freud's writings about trauma first emerge in his accounts of the treatment of female patients suffering from hysteria. In Freud and Breuer's early collaborative work *Studies in Hysteria* (1893), they observe that hysteria is caused by an earlier trauma, but suggest that the symptoms appear belatedly and insistently on the body of the patient: 'we must presume [...] that the psychical trauma—or more precisely the memory of the trauma—acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work' (*SE* II: 6). Unlike normal memories, traumatic memories '*are completely absent from the patients' memory when they are in a normal psychological state, or are only present in a highly summary form*' (original emphasis: 9).

From the 1990s on, an important body of work on trauma emerged from Holocaust studies, which has subsequently influenced research on the concept in the humanities. Cathy Caruth, along with her colleagues Shoshana Felman and

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the development and historical specificities of various theories on trauma that have emerged from Freud onwards see Leys (2000) and Kaplan (2005: 24-41).

Dori Laub, has worked on collecting testimonies of Holocaust victims, and together they have provided sophisticated analyses of the traumatic experience (Caruth 1995, 1996; Felman and Laub 1992). They have looked at the paralysed state of disconnection in trauma victims, whose blockage of language is thought to have been caused by an earlier, overwhelming event. In defining trauma, Caruth based her theory on the Freudian model of dissociation, but also on the studies advanced in the field of neurobiology.⁴⁵ She formulates that trauma is

a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (Caruth 1995: 4)

In other words, for Caruth, trauma is not accessible to cognition or memory.

In *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, Ann Kaplan (2005), whose work I draw on in this thesis, extends the dissociation model found in personal traumas to the theorisation of cultural trauma. Kaplan returns to Freud's discussion of trauma developed in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he compares the latency of the victim of a train crash with the 'forgetting' of monotheism in the Jewish religion. Like the patient who leaves a train collision apparently uninjured, but later develops 'a number of severe psychical and motor symptoms which can only be traced to his shock' (*SE XXIII*: 67), Freud symptomatically reads the Jewish religion as constituted through the 'forgotten' and repressed murder of Moses. According to Kaplan (2005), Freud's view suggests that the impact of the past crimes of a nation may belatedly appear as 'symptoms' similar to those of the traumatised individual (31-32). She adopts

⁴⁵ Research by Bessel A. van der Kolk and his associates has shifted focus from the mind back to the body; they argue 'that traumatic events are encoded in the brain in a different way from ordinary memory' (Leys 2000: 7). Following this idea, Caruth has suggested that trauma is registered in the brain differently from regular memories, which are usually placed in their proper temporal and spatial context. Felman and Laub (1992), for their part, emphasise that trauma 'precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction' (57). For these theorists, trauma lacks meaning, and produces emotions such as terror, fear and shock, as well as disruptions of comfort.

Freud's discussion and states that nations also seem to practice a 'forgetting' or displacement of historical traumas (similar to that of the 'splittings' or displacements found in individual traumas) onto their cultural narratives.

However, in extending the idea of trauma to a culture, Kaplan argues that 'traumatic memory is not "unconscious" in the manner of ordinary neurotic repressed memory' (73) but a memory that has been 'shifted to another part of consciousness mainly accessible in the familiar traumatic phenomena of flashbacks, phobias, and dreams' (73-74). Thus the historical trauma may be repeatedly forgotten through the accessible forms of fiction produced in a culture. Yet, Kaplan also reminds us that, unlike individual trauma, the process of 'forgetting' is not always innocent in cultural trauma, 'since political interests generally enter into processes of national memory or non-memory' (68). As mentioned above, in early post-war Spain the Civil War was not entirely forgotten, but commemorated by the victors in a way that would engineer a 'forgetting' of the inconvenient memories that could endanger the reconstruction of Franco's new state. Nevertheless, films were directed toward audiences from mixed ideological backgrounds, and with mixed memories of the war. The process of 'forgetting', or the erasure of inconvenient memories for the regime, might not have been so straightforward as it first seems.

Making her case through the analysis of post-World War II Hollywood films, Kaplan proposes to look at how cultures may 'translate' the traumatic event into a cultural form and 'manage' trauma by 'unconsciously colluding with dominant political forces' (66). She argues that melodrama can be seen as an example of this form of translation. One of the critics who have contributed to the rehabilitation of melodrama, Peter Brooks (1995), had by then already argued that the melodramatic mode could be seen in terms of 'acting out the recognition of the repressed' (xi). In his ground-breaking *The Melodramatic Imagination* he points out the convergence between psychoanalysis and melodrama: 'If psychoanalysis has become the nearest modern equivalent of religion in that it is a vehicle for the cure of souls, melodrama is a way station toward this status, a first indication of how conflict, enactment, and cure must be conceived in a secularized world' (202). Kaplan, basing her discussion on this and other previous scholarship

about the different historical origins of melodrama (Elsaesser 1987; Nowell-Smith 1987), contends that melodrama arises from the cultural shocks of modernity. She argues that melodrama is an aesthetic form both on the stage and in popular fiction, produced ‘from the traumas of class struggle and in the context of a search for identity, social order, and clear moral rules by which to live in modernity’ (2005: 72). Some melodramas that are apparently unrelated to the overwhelming historical event could still be considered as symptoms of historical trauma in a fictional form that tries to ensure safe closure and cure at the end, so as to cast away the traumatic memory.

In order to ‘uncover’ the translated traumatic event, she draws from Thomas Elsaesser’s (2001) reformulation of trauma theory as ‘recovered referentiality’ rather than ‘recovered memory’ (199). ‘Trauma’, writes Elsaesser, ‘is experienced through forgetting, its repeated forgetting, then paradoxically, one of the signs of the presence of trauma is the absence of all signs of it’ (199). His attention to the ‘belatedness’ of trauma is directed toward the rehabilitation of the work of interpretation. Similarly, Kaplan asserts that we should look ‘for what the texts cannot know because that knowledge has been “displaced”’:

This is not because the events are literally unable to be recalled, but because, for political or social reasons (or a mixture of the two, including guilt or criminal activity), it is too dangerous for the culture (or powerful political figures) to acknowledge or recall, just as the “forgotten” contents in individual consciousness are too dangerous to remember. Individuals and cultures, then perform forgetting as a way of protecting themselves from the horrors of what one (or the culture) has done or what has been done to oneself or others in one’s society.
(74)

Kaplan’s theorisation of cultural trauma and melodrama is adopted in this thesis because it is also concerned with how 1940s films that are apparently unrelated to the Civil War and its aftermath might have dealt with a cultural trauma that the nation was not ready to address. This is especially relevant in the analysis of two melodramas, *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949) and *De mujer*

a mujer (Luis Lucia, 1950), discussed in chapters two and three respectively. In these chapters I will explore the extent to which a Francoist ‘politics of forgetting’ intervenes repressively, while also being met with resistance, so that eventually the cultural trauma the regime sets out to bury is revealed.

Kaplan’s approach enables us to discuss cinema and trauma, not merely with a focus on the limited number of ‘high-modernist’ films, but also through an engagement with popular films. Traditional trauma theorists such as Caruth and Felman have searched for ways ‘to understand the nature of the suffering, without eliminating the force and truth of the reality that trauma survivors face and quite often try to transmit to us’ (Caruth 1995: vii). At the heart of the stories of a traumatic experience is ‘an enigmatic testimony not only to the nature of violent events but to what, in trauma, resists simple comprehension’ (Caruth 1996: 6). In their search for writings and representations that can truly speak for the pain and suffering of the victims of trauma, these trauma theorists privilege the gaps or disruptive effects in language as ‘adequate’ forms to express the traumatic event.

However, their theories have also been subjected to criticisms.⁴⁶ For example, Dominick LaCapra (2001: 43-85) warns us of the dangers of becoming too fixated on a melancholic repetition of the symptoms when writing about trauma. He suggests the possibility of a dialectic ‘working-through’, which he differentiates from ‘acting-out’ (in which the victim is unconsciously possessed by the past). For LaCapra, this does not completely free the victim from the trauma, but enables the subject to move on. But, regarding adequate forms of representation, both Caruth and LaCapra are suspicious of realist narratives, mainstream films or ‘happy endings’ that might gloss over and undermine trauma, thereby suppressing the true experience of it.

In their introduction to *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, the editors, Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (2004), contest this view by proposing that we should not easily dismiss mainstream films, but open up our examination to the different types of films that represent trauma. Kaplan and Wang maintain that we should look at *how* these texts introduce trauma to the spectator by way of

⁴⁶ Scholars have criticised trauma theory’s encouragement of ‘victim culture’ (Showalter 1997), its lack of historical perspective (Kaplan and Wang 2004) and its emphasis on the real event, rather than on the fantasies that are involved in the process of memory (Radstone 2000).

form and plot. In other words, they stress the ways in which filmic texts communicate trauma to the spectator. Kaplan and Wang do not try to delimit an idea of what ‘trauma film’ might be, but instead, closely consider the historical and cultural context of trauma *and* its different effects on the spectator (9). What kind of audience is the trauma addressed to? Where, and in which moment of history, is the trauma addressed? I consider these important questions that have not been sufficiently asked in terms of discussing trauma on film. 1940s Spanish films do predominantly belong to the category of ‘mainstream’ films or have narrative closures with ‘happy endings’, but then the audience consisted of people who were living with the after effects of the war to varying degrees. Kaplan (2005) argues that ‘telling stories about trauma, even though the story can never actually repeat or represent what happened, may partly achieve a certain “working through” for the victim’. ‘It may also’, she continues, ‘permit a kind of empathic “sharing” that moves us forward, if only by inches’ (37). All of the films that are discussed in this thesis seem to strongly express these desires for empathic sharing and working through.

5. Cinema, intertextuality and prosthetic memory

This thesis is also concerned with the intertextual references to Hollywood films and how these films may have mediated memories that were not allowed within the ‘official collective memories’ of the Franco regime. The Franco regime’s economic policy during the years of early dictatorship is marked by autarky. Historians have noted that this policy was the regime’s ‘expression of extreme nationalism, a rejection of liberalism, a desire for national industrialization, a sympathy for fascist ideas [...]’. This ‘fitted very well with a broader ideological belief in the need to seal Spain off culturally from the outside world’ (Richards 1999: 37). However, as Triana-Toribio (2003) reminds us,

it is one thing to set out to exclude all external influence, entirely another to achieve it. In theory, autarky could provide an autonomous, self-sufficient Spanish cinema, sealed off from foreign influence and input; in practice this was nearly impossible because much Spanish

cinema production had taken place elsewhere, because internal production inevitably drew on imported genres, and because the funding of Spanish-made films was directly tied to the lucrative business in import licences for foreign films. (52)

From 1942 onwards, Spain experienced a sudden influx of American films which replaced their German and Italian counterparts.⁴⁷ In her seminal study *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, Marsha Kinder (1993) discusses the influence of Hollywood melodramas and Italian neo-realist films in Spanish cinema, calling them ‘transcultural reinscriptions’ (11). Kinder examines ‘the ideological reinscription of conventions that are borrowed from other cultures and set in conflict with each other’ (11). By doing so, she problematises the concept of ‘national cinema’, arguing that ‘it must be read against the local/global interface’ (7). However, Kinder’s study has its weaknesses, as the selected films are mainly internationally acclaimed texts. Her view should be further explored with reference to other, less well-known texts from the 1940s in order to complicate the ways in which we might understand these inscriptions within early post-war cinema.

Hollywood reinscriptions were in constant practice during the 1940s, both in popular and art films. Focusing on memory adds another dimension to the interpretation of the ways in which Hollywood films might have helped challenge how collective memories were formed by dominant practices. To this end, this thesis draws from the idea of cinema as ‘prosthetic memory’. In her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Alison Landsberg (2004) defines ‘prosthetic memory’ as a distinctively twentieth-century type of memory, one that has emerged from modern technology and a capitalist economic system of commodification. Prosthetic memories are memories that may have no direct connection to a person’s lived past, yet can be acquired through experiences such as watching films. Landsberg looks at the ways in which these technologies ‘transport individuals through time and space’, and how such experiences may ‘function as

⁴⁷ While in 1940 American films represented only 8.3% of the total share of imported films, by 1945 this figure had reached 66.4%. See Diez-Puertas (2003: 141).

technologies of memory' (1). There are four reasons why Landsberg uses the term prosthetic memory: firstly, such memories are 'not a natural, not the product of lived experience [...] but are derived from engagement with a mediated experiences'; secondly, like an artificial limb they are 'worn on the body' and 'often mark a trauma'; thirdly, the term prosthetic memory speaks to their 'interchangeability and exchangeability and underscores their commodified form'; and fourthly, the term emphasises its usefulness, as they may help condition how a person thinks about the world and become instrumental in articulating an ethical relationship with the other (20-21).

Some scholars have pointed out their apprehensiveness about the kind of spectatorship that prosthetic memory might imply. For example, Radstone (2010) argues that '[p]rosthetic memory models the cinema-memory relation as one in which cinema implants memories into passive spectators, but this takes no account of the spectator's negotiation of images' (335). Her criticism suggests that prosthetic memories will return us to the ways in which traditional apparatus theory once formulated cinema spectatorship, thereby undermining the different challenges to apparatus theory.⁴⁸ However, disputing Radstone's view, I would argue that Landsberg *does* acknowledge the complex process of film viewing and meaning-making. She maintains that the on-screen images 'are not capsules of meaning that spectators swallow wholesale but are the grounds on which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed' (Landsberg 2004: 21). Neither do *all* film experiences create prosthetic memories in her belief. Each prosthetic memory is 'inflected by the specificities of his or her other experiences and place in the world' (21).

Landsberg maintains that prosthetic memories can transcend the traditional frameworks through which collective memories have been transmitted. In the early twentieth century, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) importantly argued in *On Collective Memory* that even individual memories, which feel private, are actually constructed within social frameworks such as family, religion

⁴⁸ Christian Metz (1982) associated the cinematic apparatus with the 'Imaginary', drawing from Lacan's theory of the three psychic developmental stages. In Metz's formulation, the cinema spectator is aligned with the 'mirror phase' (in Lacan's theory), passively identifying (through misrecognition) with the screen image.

and social class. Landsberg contests Halbwachs' notion of collective memory, arguing that 'cinema and other mass cultural technologies have the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs' (Landsberg 2004: 8). She argues that films can be a medium experienced through affect, and so become part of a 'real' experience.

The idea of prosthetic memory is taken up in my discussion of 1940s cinema, particularly when discussing films that show an awareness of cinema's potential to transcend traditional social frameworks in the construction of memory. The Franco regime mainly mobilised traditional social institutions such as the Church, schools and families to transmit its version of a collective memory of Spain's past, but this is not to say that it was unaware of cinema's power to produce collective memories. The *cine de cruzada* and NO-DO films that commemorated the victors' war on screen attest to this. However—as I analyse in the following chapters—cinema seems to appear as a particular space where tensions between the regime's memory politics and the culture's desire to accommodate other excluded memories may become visible, albeit through oblique forms.⁴⁹

By referring to prosthetic memory, I am not arguing that Hollywood provided other, optional 'historical representations' of the Spanish Civil War.⁵⁰ Rather, I focus on the experiential memories that films as prosthetic memories may provide for the audiences, helping them to mediate personal memories that were inexpressible in other public spaces in early post-war Spain. Prosthetic memories, according to Landsberg, are 'neither purely individual nor entirely collective but emerge at the interface of individual and collective experience' (2004: 19). They are 'sensuous memories produced by an *experience* of mass-mediated representations' (20). Cinema audiences may be emotionally 'possessed' by a character, a scene or a story long after they leave the cinema. Cinema's experience might thus be 'as formative and powerful as other life experiences'

⁴⁹ Memories transmitted or inherited through families can also be very different from public commemorations, and more truthful to the past than the fictional accounts in film. However, Aguilar-Fernández (2002) notes that the memories of the Civil War and the post-war period 'of divided families, of a country of ruins' were also 'fused with those of repression, silence, distorted historical facts and fears perceived within a family setting' (5).

⁵⁰ Indeed, the screen adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1943), for example, was banned from Spanish screens until 1978.

(30).

In this sense, two of the films discussed in this thesis, *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948) and *La vida en un hilo* (Edgar Neville, 1945), can be read as reflexive texts that explore these kind of possible mediations between cinema and memory. Both texts are remarkable reflections on how film spectatorship in the early post-war years was both diverse and complex in relation to the official views of the past.

Jo Labanyi has been one of the leading scholars to examine early post-war Spanish cinema and the different readings that these films might have offered to the audience. Her most recent project, however, is more empirical, following the ethno-historical investigation of cinema culture conducted by researchers such as Jackie Stacey (1994) and Annette Kuhn (2002) in Britain. Labanyi (2005) has gathered a team of researchers to undertake an ‘oral history of cinema-going in 1940s and 1950s Spain’, interviewing people around Spain to narrate their film-going experiences and then analyse the filmic cultures of the period. The results of this fascinating study have only partially been revealed, in a dossier of the journal *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* published in 2005. Their research will undoubtedly become an invaluable addition to studies of spectatorship in Spanish cinema, initiated by Valeria Camporesi (1993) and, moreover, to studies of memory and cinema, since their interviews will hopefully reveal how people remember actual films and their film-going experiences, while enmeshing these experiences with other memories of their everyday life in the post-war period.

The discussion of spectatorship is not the central focus of this study, but I will address this issue in various parts of this thesis by highlighting that the relationship between spectator and the screen image can be complex in terms of trauma, memory and fantasy. As mentioned earlier, 1940s Spanish audiences consisted of people whose memories of the war and its aftermath were extremely diverse. Audiences might have engaged with acquired memories in ways that did not necessarily comply with the ‘official memories’ provided by dominant Francoist culture. As mentioned earlier, Landsberg compares prosthetic memory to replacing a missing part of the body, a loss which often marks a trauma. In the case of post-war Spain, these prosthetic memories might not necessarily entail an

objective knowledge of the historical event of the Civil War. However, they may well be memories of loss, deprivation or guilt that could be attached to the experiences of the Civil War and its aftermath. I suggest that these alternative memories, which could be missing from the official memory culture during the early dictatorship—such as in public ceremonies, churches, education and state-controlled documentary films (NO-DO)—could be found, constructed or worked through via the fictional on-screen images that might apparently be unrelated to the ‘real’ experiences of the time.

6. Methodology and chapter summary

The four films that form the core of this thesis are *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948), *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949), *De mujer a mujer* (Luis Lucia, 1950) and *La vida en un hilo* (Edgar Neville, 1945). However, each chapter includes a discussion of various other films from the 1940s, depending on its thematic concerns. All of the core films deal with characters that face a certain memory crisis. Although these crises (with the exception of *Vida en sombras*) are apparently unrelated to the war, I attempt to interpret them in relation to a wider national memory crisis in post-war Spain.

The selection of these core films not only crosses over different genres and directors, but also transcends the divisions that separate the ‘popular’ from the ‘artistic’. Certainly, reading a film like *Vida en sombras*—which was only seen by a limited Spanish audience due to the difficulties it had with censorship and distribution—along with a popular CIFESA production such as *De mujer a mujer*, is not as incongruous as it may seem at first. It is a deliberate choice to emphasise and pay attention to the hybridity of 1940s films, suggesting that we should avoid the common perception that films that pertain to certain genres or directors must immediately reflect Francoist ideology. Monterde (1995) maintains that one of the difficulties in discussing 1940s cinema through a focus on directors is that there are very few directorial ‘stylistic signatures’, since practically all of the filmmakers varied their thematic and generic registers within their body of work (226). Moreover, it should be stressed that directors and technical professionals working in 1940s Spain came from different political backgrounds (both

Nationalist and Republican supporters).⁵¹ Among those who supported the Republican government were some directors who were able to continue or return to filmmaking after experiencing a period of internal exile (Gubern 1981: 59). Many important technical professionals also worked as art-directors and cameramen outside of Spain, including those who fled from Nazi Germany and imported different ‘styles’ and ‘looks’ for Spanish films of this period. To note one example, Manuel Berenguer, the cinematographer of *Un hombre va por el camino*, a film which Mariano González (2012) has connected with the ultra-conservative ideology of the regime in terms of its use of the rural landscape, began as the work of an amateur filmmaker in Catalan circles and later worked in Germany as a cameraman for UFA during the 1930s. However, when the Civil War broke out, he became one of the most important cinematographers for Laya Films, a film company which supplied war documentaries to support the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Republican government, and also worked as a second cameraman for André Malraux in his antifascist film *Sierra de Teruel/L'espoir* (1939).⁵² Spanish filmmakers were also strongly influenced by foreign productions, and adapted their techniques, styles and looks. National films were also in constant negotiation with the preferences of audiences, which were exposed to a large number of films coming from Germany, Italy and, most significantly, Hollywood. Rather than focusing on a particular filmmaker, the inclusion of films made by directors of different political backgrounds and affinities to the regime might show more clearly the social and cultural concerns of the period that appeared in the texts.

Chapter one begins with a discussion of two films that actually deal with the historical memory of the Civil War. I start with an analysis of the Francoist epic *Raza* (1941), underscoring how the film reflects the Franco regime’s memory politics and ‘monumentalises’ the war in a way that represses the memories of the vanquished. The main focus of this chapter, however, is to reveal how *Vida en sombras* can be read as a film that deconstructs *Raza*’s commemoration of the war.

⁵¹ This is not to deny that many were also persecuted and suffered exile. Gubern (1981) affirms that Francoist control ‘afectó, naturalmente, a la calidad de la producción del cine español, que acababa de sufrir la hemorragia del exilio de sus más cualificados profesionales, en número superior a un centenar’ (59).

⁵² See Llinás (1998:133-134).

The film destabilises the foundational narrative of the Francoist nation with a self-reflexive use of film texts. The visualisation of war as trauma is discussed, as well as the ways in which the film uses the Hollywood film *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) to underscore the haunting effect of the Civil War in post-war Spain. The film suggests the necessary working-through of silenced trauma, and proposes that cinema can be a space for alternative memories to be inhabited.

Chapter two moves on to a discussion of cultural trauma and how it might appear in films that are apparently unrelated to the war. In this chapter, the rural landscape is explored in relation to Francoist's visions of the past and the construction of national identity based on patriarchal ideals. I first introduce *La aldea maldita* (Florián Rey, 1942) in order to compare it with Manuel Mur Oti's *Un hombre va por el camino*, the main focus of this chapter. In comparison to how *La aldea maldita* idealises the link between the rural and the patriarchal family as a basis for Francoist Spain, I argue that *Un hombre* configures the landscape as melancholic, invoking inexpressible losses of post-war Spain. I also explore how the melodramatic mode of *Un hombre* displaces war trauma onto a film about male trauma.

Chapter three also examines trauma, but in a film that seemingly has no connection with the war. This chapter, however, explores the female body as a metaphor of the nation, and madness as a condition associated with the Civil War and its aftermath. As a comparative reference for understanding to what extent Francoist politics of memory and forgetting are projected onto the bodies of women, I first consider the popular historical melodrama *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948) before going on to discuss the costume melodrama directed by Luis Lucia, *De mujer a mujer*. The chapter argues that the post-war struggle in managing the traumas of the war and its aftermath appears in a more conflicted way in Lucia's film, where the film's interest in the treatment of female hysteria, psychoanalysis and melodrama is at odds with the highly conservative, masculine and religious discourses.

The last chapter turns to a film which, at first sight, seems insignificant to the discussion of cultural trauma and memory in post-war Spain. However, my discussion of Edgar Neville's *La vida en un hilo* will demonstrate that, despite its

apparent lightness, it could also be read as symptomatic of a wider ‘memory crisis’ in post-war Spain. The chapter examines how *La vida* challenges Franco’s attempt to impose a monolithic vision of the past, which served as a basis for the regime’s construction of post-war national identity. Contextualising the film within the self-reflexive films of the period, the journey of the female character into her own past (memory) and her virtual past (prosthetic memory) is read as a reflexive vision on the interaction between experience of film spectatorship and memory. I explore the ways in which *La vida* suggests that cinema as prosthetic memory may be a progressive tool to destabilise one’s apparent identity in the present.

Chapter One

Cinema, memory and the trauma of the Spanish Civil War in *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948)

1. Introduction

In May 1973, film historian Ferrán Alberich attended a screening of *Vida en sombras* (1948) in his local *cine club* in Sabadell. Long buried in the dustbin of Spanish film history, this 1948 film was shown in an incomplete 16mm format and was presented by its director, Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia (1911-1976). The film made such a deep impression on Alberich that he decided to take on the project of the film's restoration, in collaboration with the Filmoteca Española.¹ A decade later, the completed film, now in 35mm, was screened at the 1983 Barcelona International Film Festival, and at the Valladolid Film Festival the following year. Writing about the film, Alberich (1983) maintains that '[l]a audacia de su planteamiento llama la atención todavía hoy y permanece una experiencia sin precedentes con cuanto se hacía entonces ni ha tenido continuidad en lo que se ha hecho después una pieza rara, única, irrepetible' (37). Since the recuperation of the film into Spanish film history, scholars have been keen to point out its exceptionality, which seems to have made it completely distinct from the predominant productions of the early dictatorship years.² However, perhaps too

¹ Sánchez Salas (1994) cites a comment by Alberich which appeared in an article in *Diario de Sabadell* (6 February 1985): 'Vaig veure la pel·lícula fa dotze o tretze anys al Cine-Club Sabadell, en una sessió que va presentar el propi Llobet-Gràcia [...] Com a tots els que hi erem, *Vida en Sombras* ens va impressionar' (10n).

² The reflexivity of *Vida en sombras* has prompted critics to focus on the film's aesthetic achievements. For Sánchez Salas (1994), 'la auténtica capacidad que posee [*Vida en sombras*] para sorprender [...] hay que buscarla en su configuración estética' (10), while for Casanova (2003) the narrative structure can be characterised as 'post-classical cinema'. María de Ros (1994) associates *Vida en sombras* with the Spanish reflexive literary tradition, as well as the avant-garde experimental films of the 1920s and 1930s, notably the French Impressionist cinema, which influenced the tradition of Catalan cinema. She argues that 'Carlos's story is also the history of a suppressed manifold tradition of avant-garde film which has been conjured back to life in *Vida en sombras*' (175). Marsha Kinder (1993), on the other hand, places the film within the context of regional politics, arguing that *Vida en sombras* 'presents Barcelona as an international center in

much emphasis has been put on the film's uniqueness, diverting critics' attention from looking at the text as a powerful testimony to the experience of visual culture and memory in early post-war Spain.

Vida en sombras was Llobet-Gràcia's first venture into professional filmmaking after he had gained a reputation as an amateur filmmaker within the Catalan *cine amateur* circles.³ The film narrates the story of a filmmaker, Carlos Durán (Fernando Fernán Gómez), whose life intertwines with the history of the development of filmmaking and film reception in Spain. Carlos is born in a fairground tent while his parents watch screenings of the Lumière brothers' cinematograph films. His passion for cinema is marked from the early days of his childhood, watching Hollywood films in the local cinema and filming his friend Luis with his *pathé baby* camera. Later in life he becomes a documentary filmmaker and marries his childhood friend, Ana (María Dolores Pradera). Just as he learns that they are expecting their first child, the Spanish Civil War breaks out, prompting Carlos to leave his pregnant wife at home to film the street fighting of Barcelona. During his absence, a stray bullet kills Ana in her home. Once the war is over, Carlos is unable to overcome the loss and withdraws from the world. It is only after viewing Hitchcock's *Rebecca* that he gradually finds his way back to filmmaking.

It can be argued that the 'recovery' of *Vida en sombras*, which took place during the crucial years of the Spanish transition to democracy, was part of a 'memory work' under Spain's democratisation. The film seems to share a similar fate with those individuals who were politically persecuted under the Franco regime. The production of *Vida en sombras* was no easy process. It suffered from financial problems, script censorship and weak publicity. Of the forty-nine films produced in Spain in 1947, *Vida en sombras* was one of six that did not receive

touch with Paris and Hollywood, despite its subordinate position within a xenophobic Spanish nation' (401).

³ The *cine amateur* flourished in Cataluña during the early 1930s. According to Soler (2011), 'El cine amateur nace oficialmente en Catalunya, dentro de la Sección de Cine del Centro Excursionista. El año 1931 se creó la Sub-sección de Cine Amateur de la Sección de Fotografía, llamándose primero "cine de aficionado" antes que "cine amateur". El 22 de abril de 1932 se convocó el Primer Concurso Catalán, año en el cual se creó la "Sección de Cinema" del CEC. Este hecho resulta de gran importancia, pues fue el primer precedente del nacimiento de un movimiento social y cultural en Catalunya que forjó, a través de las imágenes, un medio de expresión tanto personal como de colectivos alternativo al cine oficial, y que ejercería con frecuencia de medio de expresión de resistencia social y cultural' (119).

financial assistance from the Crédito Cinematográfico Sindical.⁴ Although I have mentioned in the introduction of this thesis that censorship was often arbitrary, the Civil War was indeed a theme that censors were sensitive to and eager to control. It is notable that during the 1940s, apart from the early *cine de cruzada*, not many fictional films actually represented the theme of the Civil War.⁵ Images of commemorative acts and victory parades were mainly transmitted through the state-owned NO-DO film reels, whose projection was obligatory in commercial film theatres. Furthermore, the regime's harsh repression of political opposition did create a climate for self-censorship among filmmakers, who would either have to adapt their forms of expression in accordance with the dominant discourses of the Civil War, or simply avoid making films about it altogether. In the late 1940s, some films began to portray war experiences on screen, either about the Civil War, or without specifying which war they depicted.⁶ The temporal distance perhaps allowed these films to treat the war in a less triumphant manner. *Vida en sombras* is a film that emerged in this context.

Nevertheless, the board of censors evaluated *Vida en sombras* as '...sin interés en ningún aspecto [...] inconcebible, inaceptable, inadmisible, impresentable'.⁷ The completed film was classified as '*tercera categoría*', which practically blocked its initial commercial release.⁸ The film was only shown in a private screening for critics in 1948. After another director, Antonio del Amo, re-edited some parts of the film for Llobet-Gràcia (who was suffering from a mental breakdown after his son's death in 1948), the censors finally allowed the film's commercial release in 1953. We can deduce from at least one censor's comment requesting a clarification of Carlos's position in the war, that the

⁴ According to Aranzubia Cob (2007), this was revealed to the producers when the filming was at an advanced stage.

⁵ Crusells (2003) notes that '[e]ntre 1943 y 1945, coincidiendo con el declive de las potencias nazi-fascistas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, no se produjo en España ninguna película en la que apareciera el tema de la guerra' (187).

⁶ These films include *Cuando llegue la noche* (Jerónimo Mihura, 1946), *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948), *Paz* (José Díaz Morales, 1949), *El santuario no se rinde* (Arturo Ruiz Castillo, 1949), *Noventa minutos* (Antonio del Amo, 1949) and *El sótano* (Jaime de Mayora, 1949).

⁷ Censors generally denigrate the film as '*absurdo*' without providing a specific rationale behind it (Archivo General de la Administración, Expediente no. 8.424, c/34.336).

⁸ This meant that the film could not be exhibited in first- or second-class theatres. The exporting of the film was also prohibited.

political ambivalence of the film was one of the major concerns of the censors.⁹

When *Vida en sombras* was released, critical reception varied. Some criticised the film for being overly ambitious in its artistic expression, or for being technically unsuccessful (anon. 1953: [n.p.]), while others noted Llobet-Gràcia's 'verdadero afán de apartarse de los caminos trillados' (Méndez Leite 1965: 125). Either way, they avoided mentioning the film's treatment of the war. But in 1972, pro-Franco film historian Carlos Fernández Cuenca (1972) wrote in *La guerra de España y el cine* that Llobet-Gràcia was able to capture 'un certero y mesurado testimonio del clima barcelonés recién fracasada la sublevación' (36). For him, the film appeared to be a realistic portrayal of the tragic consequences provoked by the Republican militias (35). This view, however, was challenged by the pioneering work of Jesús González Requena (1998), who applied a complex semiotic and psychoanalytical analysis to argue that *Vida en sombras* implicitly tells 'the story from the side of the defeated' (93).

We can perhaps say that Llobet-Gràcia's film does not allow for easy ideological categorisation of the 'collective memories' of those (the 'vanquished' or the 'victors') whom the film seems to be representing. Yet, in the particularly difficult period of the early post-war years, under the regime's control over the memory of the Civil War, *Vida en sombras* provides a subversive exploration of the alternative memories that the regime sought to repress. The film destabilises meaning and order by acknowledging cinema's potential to stir up 'prosthetic memories' that can disrupt the dominant national historical narrative. Furthermore, *Vida en sombras* seeks to express the trauma of the Civil War by suggesting that cultural trauma, or things that the culture cannot symbolically represent, may be displaced onto different forms of narrative constructions and consumptions.

I will begin my discussion by outlining how the Franco regime used cinema for the official commemorations of the Civil War, focusing on the historical epic *Raza* (Sáenz de Heredia, 1941), based on the novel allegedly written by Franco under the pseudonym Jaime de Andrade. What has not been pointed out is that both *Vida en sombras* and *Raza* are, uncannily, the only two fiction films in the

⁹ Censorship documents relating to the film (with the provisional title *Hechizo*) include one commentary by the censors that doubted the main character's place during the war. Exp.269-47, c/7.644.

1940s to have been inspired by the author's autobiography, and to parallel the life story of the protagonist with the historical events that led up to the Civil War.

Firstly, I will discuss *Raza*'s function as a 'cinematic monument'—a term that I will expand upon shortly—that glorified the heroic sacrifices of the Nationalists and concealed other sufferings from both sides. Secondly, moving on to the study of *Vida en sombras*, I will examine the ways in which 'history' is narrated through fragmented cinematic images, thus destabilising the coherent historical narrative of the past that *Raza* tries to create. While *Raza* uses the family as an allegory of the Spanish nation, and makes it the site for the transmission of collective memory, Llobet-Gràcia's film replaces the family with the prosthetic memories of cinema, challenging the idea of a unified collective memory. I will then discuss how the film reflects upon the act of filming the war and filming death, and further subverts the idealised and heroic deaths constructed by official discourses. I will argue that *Vida en sombras* reflexively expresses the war as trauma, converting the camera into 'weapon'. The film's use of the haunting image of Hitchcock's *Rebecca* will then be discussed. After providing an overview of the social impact of the film, I will describe the ways in which *Vida en sombras* uses *Rebecca* for the expression of the cultural trauma of post-war Spain. This will be followed by the final section, where I will look at the film's function as both testimony of the traumas of the Civil War and an attempt to work through them.

2. The 'official' commemoration of the Civil War—*Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941) as 'cinematic monument'

Memorial practices are intimately connected with nation-building processes and the construction of national identity (Anderson 1991). Pierre Nora (1996), in his discussion of monuments, archives and celebrations as 'realms of memory', states that 'these bastions buttress our identities, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need for them' (7). For the Franco regime, memorial practices of the Civil War were politically necessary for stabilising the regime's power in the post-war years—power that was still under threat from the opposition. As Aguilar-Fernández (2002) notes, while the end of hostilities and

the establishment of ‘peace’ were commemorated, ‘for Franco, it never stopped being an “armed” and “vigilant” peace”, and ‘it was an almost aggressive peace, incapable of producing either social integration or creating a valid collective identity for all’ (72). Whereas the personal experiences of the Civil War generated different memories, the ‘official memory’ was to be marked by commemorative acts that celebrated the triumphant ‘victory’ of the forces that supported the ‘crusade’, and the exclusive honouring of those who died for the *patria* as ‘martyrs’. The *Desfiles de la Victoria* (‘Victory Parades’), which displayed signs of victory combined with the exhibition of arms, were repeated yearly on 1 April, a date which marked the end of the Civil War. Throughout the post-war years, these celebrations were also propagated in NO-DO newsreels that were shown from January 1943 on Spanish cinema screens across the nation. As Araceli Rodríguez Mateos (2008) notes:

la revisión de la contienda en clave revanchista se trasladó a las pantallas a través de ceremonias de conmemoración y el premio a los excombatientes. [...] La tipología era variada, desde homenajes a los *caídos* hasta los fastos en el aniversario de la *liberación* de algunas capitales por las tropas franquistas, más las inauguraciones de lugares reconstruidos, etc. (186).

In addition to these Victory Parades, the regime took on the project of constructing massive monuments to commemorate their victory.

From the nineteenth century, monuments were instrumentalised by nation states to serve as guarantors of national memory: ‘[T]hey both created the illusion of a stable, recognizable past and promised to serve as a bulwark against further social upheaval’ (Landsberg 2004: 6). Such monuments could become, as Robert Musil has formulated, ‘invisible’, effaced by their own static nature, particularly in democratic societies where different political claims compete for public visibility (cited in Huyssen 1996: 181). However, in authoritarian regimes, they become important elements to demonstrate the regimes’ ‘hegemony of representation’. Rather than producing a memorialising effect for those who are honoured under these signs, the ubiquity or largeness of the monuments tend to

signify the stability and immutability of the system which constructs them. One of these examples in post-war Spain is the grandiose mausoleum *Valle de los Caídos* ('The Valley of the Fallen') built in the outskirts of Madrid.¹⁰ It is a monumental complex designed to incorporate the bodies of the Francoist war dead that were exhumed and transported across Spain, as well as a place to ultimately house Caudillo's own bodily remains (Renshaw 2011: 81). That the monument was principally built by the forced labour of Republican prisoners over a period of nearly two decades demonstrates well the 'imposed' nature of the memorial.¹¹ The monument includes a huge crucifix that is visible for miles in all directions, underlining the idea that the war was a religious crusade. The great size of the monument reflects the regime's control over the official memory of the war, as well as its conspicuous desire to maintain the dominant memory over time. As the 1940 decree that ordered the building of this monument states: 'an anniversary as glorious and significant as that of the war could not be evoked by small and simple monuments, but only by grandiose sites that "challenge the passing of time and fading memory" in homage to "our dead [...] the heroes and martyrs of the Crusade"' (Aguilar-Fernández 2002: 75).

We can further say that the Franco regime also tried to construct a 'cinematic monument' with the production of *Raza* (1941). As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the immediate post-war years saw the emergence of the *cine de cruzada*, which included films that demonstrated the heroic acts and values of the military. Films such as *¡A mí la legión!!* (Juan de Orduña, 1942) extol the camaraderie between the soldiers of the African foreign legion (which played a significant role in the Francoist uprising), while *Escuadrilla* (Antonio Román, 1941) depicts the heroism of the national air force. However, the business of representing the Civil War or dealing with its memories in cinema was not a

¹⁰ Another example was the *Arco de la Victoria* ('The Arch of Victory'), which was built in the Ciudad Universitaria, one of the famous battlefields of the Civil War. According to Aguilar-Fernández (2002) '[t]he site that formed the Ciudad Universitaria [University City] front was almost entirely destroyed by the end of the war; even the current Air Ministry building was built over the ruins of the Model Prison of Madrid, which was used during the war to imprison and, on occasions, execute the supporters of the Uprising and constituted one of the most widely vilified places under Francoism' (85).

¹¹ As Richards (2013) points out, after its completion in 1959 'the monument would be used largely for minor state occasions and was never viewed popularly as a national monument' (144).

simple matter, even in the production of Francoist films.¹² *Raza* is a film that distinguishes itself from all other *cine de cruzada* films because of its ‘monumentality’. By this I mean that *Raza* was instrumentalised as the official commemoration of the Civil War and the founding narrative of the Francoist State.

No other Spanish commercial war film is comparable to *Raza* in terms of its propagandistic nature, level of investment received from the regime, production scale and distribution throughout Spain (and overseas). *Raza* was produced with the support of the *Consejo de la Hispanidad*, an institution created in 1940 to foment Spain’s ties with Latin America and propagate Spanish culture abroad. Not only did Franco write the story of the film, he also personally appointed José Luis Sáenz de Heredia—a cousin of the Civil War martyr and founder of Falange José Antonio Primo de Rivera—to direct it.¹³ *Raza* was commercially released on 5 January 1942 in the Palacio de la Música in Madrid, and within five months, the film had been shown in all Spanish provinces (and up to 551 cities). The release of *Raza* itself was a historic event, given the fact that forty copies were distributed around Spain to be simultaneously shown in various cities, unusual for 1940s cinema when the number of copies was normally limited. Furthermore, in some cases, local authorities made the viewing of the film compulsory for young students, attesting to the regime’s willingness to use *Raza* to educate the masses with the official version of the Civil War as part of Spanish history (Crusells 2011: [n.p.]).¹⁴ As if to resist the passing of time, *Raza* was re-released in 1950 as

¹² For example, *Frente de Madrid* (1939), a film that Edgar Neville made in the Italian studios, had many issues with the censors. They required him to change the ending, which appeared to them as a reconciliation between two the enemies. On the other hand, *El crucero Baleares* (1940), a film made with the support of the Ministry of the Navy, and which portrayed the last attack of the Republicans on the Spanish cruiser Baleares and the heroic deaths of the Nationalist naval officers, was banned after its completion. Apparently, the authorities considered that the film did not achieve the sufficient level of quality to represent such an important theme for the Nationalists (Castro de Paz 2002: 33).

¹³ The novel was published as *Raza: anecdotario para el guión de una película* (1942) after the film’s release.

¹⁴ Pavlović (2003) has also found in the memoirs of Pilar Primo de Rivera her account of the day that *Raza* was shown to an all-female audience, which highlights the number of times the film was replayed in institutions: ‘Un día en que se proyectaba la película *Raza* se estropeó el sonido y hubo que suplirlo con la participación vocal de las profesoras, que, como la habían proyectado cientos de veces, se la sabían de memoria’ (*Recuerdos de una vida*, cited in Pavlović 2003: 34).

Espíritu de una raza.¹⁵ Although the second version was slightly re-fashioned to stress the ‘anti-communist’ stance of the film, through cuts and added voice-overs, as a response to the hardening of attitudes during the Cold War, the film’s release expressed the regime’s constant will during the 1940s to preserve the ‘official’ version of the Civil War on film.¹⁶ Given these factors, we could say that *Raza*, like the physical monuments, was made with the intention that it should endure the passing of time—in contradiction of the ephemeral nature of film—to demonstrate the immutability of the regime.

Raza is, then, a cinematic monument that pays tribute to Franco’s war effort and legitimises him as the *Caudillo* of Spain.¹⁷ The film displaces Franco’s semi-autobiographical accounts onto the story of the fictional Churruca family (Gubern 1977; Preston 1993, 1994; Sebastián 1995; Crusells 2003; Pavlović 2003). Franco’s pseudonym, ‘Jaime de Andrade’, can be linked to the maternal lineage of his mother, Pilar Bahamonde y Pardo de Andrade. Like *Raza*’s main character, José, Franco came from a Galician coastal town, and chose the army despite the family’s naval tradition. And, like José, Franco was also once presumed dead in a battle; in his case, in Morocco in 1916. But, as scholars have pointed out, the inconvenient aspects of Franco’s family history—such as his having a leftist Republican brother and a libertine father—were either altered to fit the narrative or his family members changed to idealised fictional figures (Gubern 1977; Reig Tapia 2002; Pavlović 2003). Gubern (1977) maintains that ‘*Raza*, como producto de la imaginación, representó para su autor la superación y sublimación, en el plano de la fantasía y de la voluntad, de una frustración histórica y personal’ (14). We could say that the film expresses Franco’s desire to sanitise his own personal memory as well as the collective memory of the nation.

Raza is about the claim for origins. The first half of the film establishes both the figure of José Churruca as the ‘chosen war hero’, and the ‘past’ in which

¹⁵ This version was the only one known until 1993, when a damaged copy of the original was discovered in Germany. In 1995, the complete version was discovered in the Berlin UFA archive (Bentley 2008: 91).

¹⁶ In the second version, the opening credits are followed by the following commentary: ‘La historia que vais a presenciar no es un producto de la imaginación. Es historia pura, veraz y casi universal, que puede vivir cualquier pueblo que se resigne o perecer en las catástrofes que el comunismo provoca’.

¹⁷ As Richards (2013) writes, Franco ‘became a reincarnation of heroic warriors, mystics, ascetics and monarchs of the past, condensing centuries of Spanish glory’ (74).

post-war Spain should nostalgically find its ‘racial’ roots. The film begins with the serene, bucolic landscape of a coastal town, protected, as the film seems to say, by the efforts of the navy abroad (figure 1.1). The idyllic Catholic family—Isabel, the mother, and her children José, Pedro, Isabel and baby Jaime—wait for the patriarch, naval commander don Pedro Churruca, to return from his duties abroad. Within these early scenes we see small rifts emerging between the obedient son José, who is eager to learn about the military, and his materialistic brother Pedro. In response, their father sets out to teach his children the importance of the values of self-sacrifice for the *patria*: ‘Cuando le corresponde a uno a morir, se muere con toda arrogancia, con toda la despreocupación y con toda la grandeza’. Just as the Franco regime considered the Catholic family to be the ‘sacred repository of traditions’ (Richards 1998: 64), don Pedro shows his children that these values should be passed down from father to son (figures 1.2-1.4).¹⁸ With the aid of family photographs, and affirmed for the audience in a flashback sequence, don Pedro narrates the bravery and sacrifice of their great ancestor don Cosme Damián Churruca in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. In the next sequence, don Pedro follows this tradition and heroically dies in combat in Cuba during the Spanish-American War of 1898 (figures 1.5, 1.6).¹⁹



Figure 1.1



Figure 1.2

¹⁸ As Richards (1998) affirms, under Francoism ‘the “traditional Spanish family” was seen as an agent of quarantine facilitating the healthy growth of a “patriotic morality” and acted “as a type of cell in the social body which forms the race”’(64).

¹⁹ In one scene, don Pedro refers to the figure of ‘Almogávares’, who, he claims, were the ‘chosen soldiers’, and ‘[l]os más representativos de la raza española’.



Figure 1.3



Figure 1.4



Figure 1.5



Figure 1.6

The crisis of Spain leading up to the Civil War is allegorically inscribed in the later conflict between the Nationalist military officer José and his older brother Pedro, a Republican politician. On the one hand, *Raza* represents José as embodying the ‘passionate patriotism’ of the Nationalists, who will eventually become the legitimate victors. On the other hand, *Raza* associates Pedro’s egoistic materialism with the mentality of the Republicans that will jeopardise the nation. Yet, the fantasy scenario of *Raza* enables Pedro’s politico-religious conversion after the Republican forces brutally murder their other brother, Jaime, who has become a priest. Pedro acknowledges his mistake and decides to sacrifice his life for the Nationalist cause. The film ends with José marching on his horse, leading the Nationalist troops in a victory parade, while his girlfriend Marisol, his sister, his nephew and the crowd watch him with admiration.

Raza, as ‘cinematic monument’, aspires to honour the sacrifices made by the victors of the Civil War and attribute meaning to their deaths, as necessary for the construction of the new Spanish Catholic nation led by Franco.²⁰ Thus, the deaths

²⁰ As Aguilar-Fernández (2002) notes, ‘[a]lthough victory and peace constituted a source of

of the Nationalists are carefully staged and choreographed in the film. However, while the Nationalist supporters verbally articulate the importance of self-sacrifice and their willingness to die for the *patria* in the film, the visual representations of their deaths are condensed into only two sequences in the film. The first is the execution of José at the hands of the Republicans. Here, his fearlessness before the Republican firing squad, as shown in his declining to be blindfolded, and his puffing his chest out, is rewarded when Marisol later finds him alive (figure 1.7). We could say that José's survival and happy reunion with Marisol at the end of the film serve as a symbolic resurrection of the fallen Nationalists.

The second visual representation is the scene where the Republican soldiers gun down a group of monks, including Jaime, near the seashore. The scene is enhanced and 'beautified' by a carefully combined use of camera angles, lighting, sacred music and shots of natural scenery, such as a line of trees, a beach and the sea. This could in fact be noted as one of the most 'artistic' moments of the film.²¹ Furthermore, the scene not only sacralises death, but also evokes a necessary 'forgetting' of and 'closure' for these deaths. While Jaime's body lies dead on the seashore, a close-up image of his peaceful face is shown as the water softly laps against his body. This shot is inserted between two beautiful shots of the waves that come and go on the edge of the water. Resonating with an earlier shot of the monks' footsteps, which mark the sand and then disappear, the movement of the waves seems to emulate the acts not only of remembrance, but also forgetting (figures 1.8-1.10). In other words, on the one hand *Raza* beautifies and commemorates the heroic deaths of the Nationalists, while on the other hand it prompts a forgetting of the barbaric acts of killing that meaninglessly took the lives of many Spaniards.

legitimation for the supporters of the régime, it was necessary to somehow calm the passions of the relatives of victims of the winning side, to somehow silence the voices of so many deaths which, after the clamour of battle, might have seemed unnecessary' (73).

²¹ Alejandro Yarza (2004) has also noted how this scene fetishises death in a highly aestheticised manner (61).



Figure 1.7



Figure 1.8



Figure 1.9



Figure 1.10

The acts of commemoration in *Raza* also exclude remembrance of the Republicans, whose deaths are completely omitted from the film. It should be noted that, while we can find scenes of attacks by the Republican militias, the depiction of any direct confrontation between the Nationalists and Republicans and scenes of Nationalist killings are eschewed. These manipulations and absences reflect the regime's denial of war responsibilities, and conceal an important part of the trauma of the Civil War. By giving meaning to the victors' deaths, and repressing acknowledgement of Republican deaths, the film tries to achieve a closure and forgetting of war trauma.²²

²² According to Marita Sturken (1997): 'Traditional war memorials achieve its status by enacting closure on a specific conflict. This closure contains the war within particular master narratives either of victory or the bitter price of victory, a theme dominant in the "never again" texts of First World War memorials. In declaring the end of a conflict, this closure can by its very nature serve to sanctify future wars by offering a complete narrative with cause and effect intact' (51).

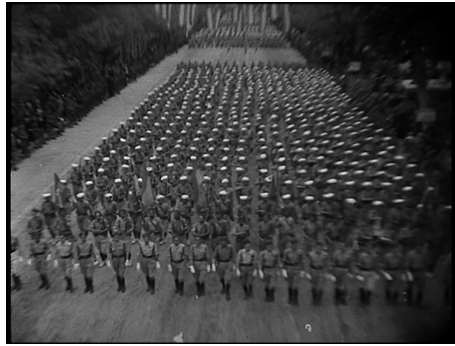


Figure 1.11



Figure 1.12

Writing on ritual and memory, anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang (2010) states that ‘war memorials convert historical events, on one hand, and families’ individual mourning for their dead, on the other, into a grander vision, of a national or human destiny’ (288). Similarly, Jaime’s death and Pedro’s political conversion are later put together with images of other sacrificial acts by the Nationalists in a final montage sequence that appears in a flashback. *Raza* further juxtaposes the fictional flashback sequences with documentary footage of the victory parade of 19 May 1939, in which we see the Nationalist army, the Foreign Legion and the Requeté columns saluting General Franco (figures 1.11, 1.12). Here, Franco’s image is only shown from behind, allowing the fictional character José’s image to double with that of Franco. In this final montage sequence, the Churruca family’s patriotic sacrifice is given greater acknowledgement in the ritual of this ‘real’ victory parade as the film itself is transformed into a historical monument for the victors, bringing a forced closure to the conflict (figures 1.13-1.16).



Figure 1.13



Figure 1.14



Figure 1.15



Figure 1.16

However, the memorial effect of *Raza* for the spectator may be problematic. Writing about the defects of monuments, Landsberg (2004) notes that ‘the very monumentality of monuments might have undercut the monument’s memorial effect, standing in for memory rather than provoking it’ (6). In a similar way, *Raza*, as a cinematic monument, only ‘stands in’ for the Franco regime’s triumphant version of national memory by transmitting the ‘always ready’ quality of the new state. Rather than provoking different memories, the monolithic historical discourse employed in *Raza* and its monumentality presuppose a ‘passive’ spectator who will submissively identify with the regime’s memorialisation of the Civil War.²³ In the following sections, I will discuss how *Vida en sombras* destabilises this kind of ‘official’ commemoration.

3. *Vida en sombras* and the memory in shadows

3.1 Traumatic origins

Both *Raza* and *Vida en sombras* amalgamate real-life memories of the authors with fiction. Like the protagonist, Carlos, of *Vida en sombras*, Llobet-Gràcia started filming his sisters with a *Pathé* camera given to him by his father, making his first short film at the age of seventeen. His father worked as a shipping agent in Sabadell, but was also a keen amateur photographer. Although very little is known about Llobet-Gràcia’s life during the war, his experience was marked by

²³ This point is also noted by Alejandro Yarza (2004): ‘Francoism understood, to its advantage, the fetishistic nature of the cinematic apparatus, whose ultimate goal was to produce a submissive and unified cinematic subject who, by identifying with the camera’s point of view, would identify with the state’s ideology’ (51).

the loss of his father, who was captured by the Nationalists and disappeared during the conflict. It was only after the war that they found out about his death, but his body was never recovered.²⁴ Also like Carlos, Llobet-Gràcia established himself as an important film critic and filmmaker in the Catalan amateur film circle. His short films were prize-winners in national and international competitions.²⁵ It was his friend Carlos Serrano de Osma, film director and leader of the '*cine telúrico*' group, who talked him into professional filmmaking and offered him supervision during the initial stages of the filming of *Vida en sombras*.²⁶ This allowed Llobet-Gràcia to draw upon the collaboration of significant professionals whose names are familiar in mainstream cinema, including Pedro Lazaga (assistant-director), Salvador Torres Garriga (cinematographer) and Jesús García Leoz (music), and his casting of two popular actors of the period, Fernando Fernán Gómez and his wife, María Dolores Pradera, for his first feature film.

The 'origins' of both of the protagonists of *Raza* and *Vida en sombras* can be traced back to turn-of-the-century Spain, a critical moment in the nation's history associated with the 'disastrous' loss of its colonies and the crisis of modernity. However, the ways in which the two films construct the narrative that leads up to the Civil War are radically different. *Raza* reworks the 1898 crisis through José's father's heroic death in the naval battle. By glorifying this past, it implicitly criticises the attitudes that emerged from the urban Spanish middle classes (characterised by their '*antimilitarismo*') against the Spanish navy. This crisis, and the reconstruction of national identity, should, according to *Raza*, be resolved through the restoration of the traditional 'family'. In contrast, by linking 'origins' with the 'origins of cinema', *Vida en sombras* associates the same period with the shocks of modernity, during which traditional values of family, religion and society were challenged.

²⁴ This is according to a comment made by Llobet-Gràcia's wife, Beatriz Sanz, in the documentary film *Bajo el signo de las sombras* (Ferrán Alberich 1984).

²⁵ In 1919, Llobet-Gràcia and Josep Torrella established the 'selección de *cine amateur* del centro Excursionista del Vallés'. In 1935, they created together the 'asociación Amics del Cinema de Sabadell'.

²⁶ The *cine telúrico* was an informal group of film critics, creators and intellectuals who were located in Barcelona. Many of them wrote for the short-lived film journal *Cine Experimental* (1944-1946). The three central figures were Serrano de Osma, Pedro Lazaga and José G. Ubieta.

Scholars have singled out cinema as ‘involving a special relationship to trauma in the “shock” experience of modernity, especially as cinema disoriented traditional, primarily literary cultures’ (Kaplan 2005: 24). *Vida en sombras* places the ‘origins’ of Carlos and his life story in a fairground, a space that expresses what Bakhtin (1984) called the ‘carnavalesque’. As Simon Dentith (1995) explains, Bakhtin’s idea of the carnivalesque ‘articulates an aesthetic which celebrates the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture, and seeks to mobilise them against the humourless seriousness of official cultures’ (66). The carnivalesque ‘brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid’ (Bakhtin 1984: 123). Likewise, the scenes in the fairground offer images of reversals, disruptions and diversity, where spectators from different classes come together in the exhibition tent to witness the earlier forms of cinema. Fragments of short reels are projected on the screen, including scenes of performing magicians, trains running toward the screen, exotic dancers of the Moulin Rouge, and a woman cutting up and dressing the bodies of male mannequins that come to life.²⁷ The projection of these films is juxtaposed with the diverse reactions from the different types of spectators in the tent.²⁸ Images of well-dressed, ‘respectable’ gentlemen enjoying the spectacle are combined with somewhat grotesque close-ups of those of the lower classes, who bite into their food while watching the screen (figures 1.17-1.19). From the very beginning, the film meta-cinematically alludes to cinema’s subversiveness and capacity to destabilise order and authority, while also suggests the origins of *Vida en sombras* as illusory.

²⁷ Among these films, Llobet-Gràcia includes a fragment of *Les Vêtements cascadeurs* (1908), directed by Jean Durand for *Pathé Frères* in Paris, with the trick camera work and cinematography by Spanish filmmaker Segundo de Chomón. Kinder (1993) reads this ‘castrating image’ as ‘emblematic of the regional filmmaker’s plight; for both Chomón at the beginning of the century and Llobet-Gràcia in the Francoist period were cut off from a receptive home audience and prevented by the xenophobic provincialism of the dominant Castilian culture from expressing their sophisticated modernist views (which *Vida en sombras* quite pointedly associates with France)’ (407). However, one Catalan filmmaker and critic, Joan Francesc de Lasa, who was also a close friend to Llobet-Gràcia, confessed that even in Barcelona the film suffered poor reception.

²⁸ These films are also what Gunning (1990) calls the ‘cinema of attractions’, as they lack narratives but ‘present a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power’ (57).



Figure 1.17

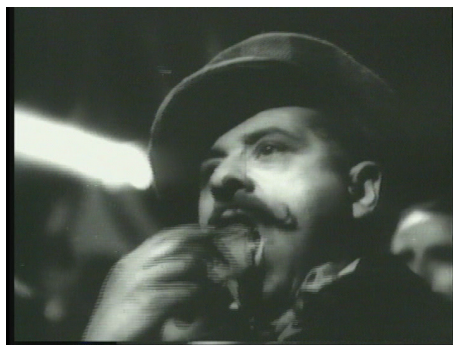


Figure 1.18



Figure 1.19



Figure 1.20

In sharp contrast to the family album that assured the historical origins of the Churruca family in *Raza*, *Vida en sombras* begins with a scene that reveals the constructedness of the family portrait, and undermines the authority of the father. In the opening scene, we see Carlos's parents posing in front of a camera in a fairground tent. However, their image is turned upside down through the viewfinder of the camera (figure 1.20). The photographer tries to ease the father's serious facial expression with the help of a gramophone. Unlike the heroic navy officer don Pedro in *Raza*, Carlos's father is undermined by a comment his wife makes at the shooting gallery in the fairground—'mi marido nunca da en el blanco'. When he does hit the bull's eye, his prize is a 'zoetrope', a device that produces only the 'illusion' of movement, but which also means the 'wheel of life'.²⁹ If *Raza* emphasises the transmission of military values, or, in Lacan's three registers of human reality, the 'Symbolic Law' from father to son, *Vida en sombras* deconstructs these traditional paternal/filial relations by emphasising the

²⁹ According to the *OED*, zoetrope is a word consisting of the Greek word ζωή, meaning 'life', and τροπος, which means 'turning'.

‘Imaginary’ relation that link them together.



Figure 1.21



Figure 1.22



Figure 1.23



Figure 1.24

Vida en sombras further equates natal origins with trauma in Carlos’s birth scene, which takes place in the fairground. The sequence constructs his birth as a ‘magical spectacle’ in a montage consisting of shots cutting between the image of a magician (introduced by the fairground crier as ‘a Spanish disciple of Georges Méliès’) and a close-up of Carlos’s mother watching this image. The inter-cutting is heightened by a dramatic music score connoting suspense, ending with the mother falling out of the frame, followed by a shot of the magician conjuring a naked baby upside-down from his hat (figures 1.21-1.24). While in the censorship documents of *Vida en sombras* there are not many detailed descriptions about what should be suppressed, it is notable that Carlos’s birth scene seems to have been particularly disturbing for the censors, who tagged it as ‘de mal gusto’.³⁰ Their evaluation seems to highlight the fact that the birth scene entails a ‘grotesque realism’, a notion related to the material and the bodily, which Bakhtin

³⁰ Archivo General de la Administración, Expediente no. 8.424, c/34.336, c/36/4697.

emphasised as elements of the carnivalesque (Dentith 1995: 67). The ‘shock’ effect of this birth scene is further emphasised by the succeeding violent newsreel images of the bombardments of World War I that are abruptly inserted as transitional scenes. Carlos’s birth, therefore, paralleled with the birth of cinema, underscores the trauma of modernity. But this connection also evokes what Otto Rank has called the ‘birth trauma’ as the primary cause of all anxiety in humans. With birth, ‘the individual is thrown into a new type of existence as an isolated individual, an entity separated from the whole’ (Reevy, Ozer and Ito 2010: 136). In the way that Rank argues that art, myth, religion, philosophy and therapy are illuminated by this separation anxiety, *Vida en sombras* also highlights Carlos’s birth as traumatic, which will subsequently feed his passion for cinema.

3.2 Cinema as prosthetic memory

In *Vida en sombras*, Llobet-Gràcia uses fragments of documentaries, European films and Hollywood films to create an alternative form to narrate the history of Spain leading up to the post-Civil War period. In *Raza*, as we have seen, the Churruca family not only becomes the allegory of the Spanish nation in crisis, but also a site where collective memories are transmitted and the tradition of the ‘race’ is maintained. On the other hand, *Vida en sombras* presents the cinema as an alternative site to the family. The film explores the potential of cinema as a site to contest the ‘imposed’ collective memory of a nation. This form of understanding cinema can be linked to Landsberg’s (2004) concept of prosthetic memory, which she defines as ‘commodified memories’. Landsberg states that prosthetic memories are memories ‘that have no direct connection to a person’s lived past and yet are essential to the production and articulation of subjectivity’ (20). In comparison with earlier forms of remembrance, such as religious rituals and paintings, in which ‘people are invited to take on memories of past through which they did not live’ (8), prosthetic memories acquired through films can allow us to ‘challenge the essentialist logic of many group identities’ (9). Moreover, ‘[o]ne’s engagement with them begins from a position of difference, with the recognition that these images and narratives concerning the past are not one’s “heritage” in any simple sense’ (9). Likewise, *Vida en sombras* recognises

that films are able to align the spectators with images of the past which they did not actually live through, but which nevertheless form a significant part in constructing their subjectivities.

Vida en sombras uses various filmic texts to destabilise teleological historical narratives found in films such as *Raza*. While maintaining the portrayal of ‘historical events’ at the level of allusion, it reflexively allows these ‘prosthetic memories’ to speak about the memories of contesting experiences that have been marginalised from the ‘grand narrative’ of national history. Furthermore, the film shows that Carlos’s identity is constructed by these acquired commodified images of cinema, and by the way he makes these images ‘his own’. Landsberg notes that ‘commodities and commodified images are not capsules of meaning that spectators swallow wholesale but are the grounds on which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed’ (21). *Vida en sombras* also presents cinema as a space where these images become part of one’s memory through their negotiation with the everyday lives of the spectator.

As mentioned earlier, Carlos’s birth scene in the fairground is followed by a few shots that show the outbreak of the First World War. The exploding buildings and battlefield bombardments as abrupt and ‘extraordinary’ events of history appear in sharp contrast with the subsequent ‘normal’, everyday scenes of Carlos’s childhood in the local cinema, resisting the totalisation of history. Whereas in *Raza*, José learns about national history and the patriotic acts of his ancestors from his father, Carlos is educated by the prosthetic memories in the cinema that mix with his everyday experiences. For example, in the cinema, Carlos and his friend Luis argue over their favourite actors in two films: the adventure-mystery serial *The Broken Coin* (Francis Ford, 1915), starring Eddie Polo, and Charlie Chaplin’s *Easy Street* (1917). Carlos passionately defends Chaplin against Luis’s favourite action hero, Eddie Polo, calling Polo ‘bruto’ and ‘farsante’.³¹ When Luis mimics Polo’s on-screen action scenes and strikes Carlos in the face, their fight sets off a commotion in the cinema involving the rest of the audience, until the police are called. Their confrontation is resolved when the

³¹ Eddie Polo was a legendary hero of silent serials and action pictures. ‘A former circus acrobat, he entered films in 1913 as a stuntman but quickly became a popular Universal star billed as the “Hercules of the Screen”’ (Katz, Klein and Nolen 2005: [n.p.]).

screening of Chaplin's *Easy Street* (1917) begins, generating laughter and restoring peace to the theatre, as well as friendship between the two children. The sequences emphasise that on-screen memories can become part of the audience's psychological and bodily experiences.

But Carlos's preference for Chaplin over the heroic action hero Polo is worth examining in detail if we consider the social context of 1940s Spain. Chaplin was known as a supporter of the Republic, and Spanish censors had only recently prohibited the screening of his film *The Great Dictator* (1940), which powerfully mocked the figure of a dictator.³² Although *Easy Street* is quite a different film, it can also be read as a film that condemns the institutionalised violence of modern society. In the film, Chaplin plays a tramp and a reformed police officer whose excessive bodily movements enable him to undermine the social divisions between the good and the bad, privileged and underprivileged, bully and victim.³³ He embodies the powerless subject, a product of the violent society; but he takes his bodily movements to the extreme to reveal a body that resists conforming to the laws that govern that society. While Polo's masculine figure displays violence and action in a more obvious manner, Chaplin proposes an opposite type of violence and action which also undermines the hierarchical military values propagated in *Raza*. Todd McGowan (2007) argues that Chaplin's films usually have an 'overtly political dimension of a cinema devoted to fantasy' (39). While fantasy usually 'provides private support for public ideology, covering the ground the ideology cannot', cinema can sometimes become a space where the 'invisible fantasmatic dimension of our social reality becomes visible' (19). In Chaplin's fantasies, his body provides visual excess that sticks out of the *mise-en-scène*, revealing what ideology cannot contain or acknowledge. In *Raza*, social violence is repressed through the fantasy of heroism and self-sacrifice. Contrarily, as will later become clearer in examining the film's reference to *Rebecca*, *Vida en sombras* underlines the potential of cinematic fantasy to disclose what dominant

³² According to Álvarez Lobato and Álvarez San Miguel (2010: 78) it was only until after censorship was abolished that Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) was screened in Spain.

³³ In *Easy Street*, Chaplin is a 'reformed' tramp who is hired as a policeman to clean up the neighbourhood of Easy Street, dominated by violence and poverty. As he faces the most dreaded neighbourhood bully, Chaplin's squeamish body nevertheless fights back with resourceful pinpricks, which sticks out in the film as excess.

ideology tries to occlude.

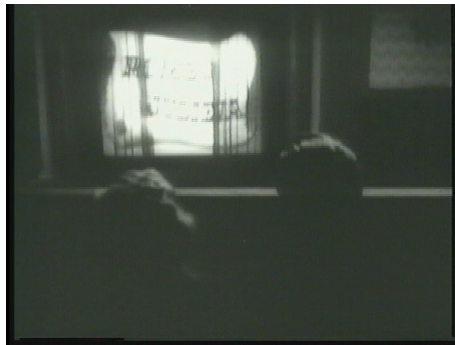


Figure 1.25



Figure 1.26

Another sequence in which prosthetic memories replace Spain's historical narrative is where Carlos and Ana go to the cinema during their courtship to see George Cukor's screen adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1936). The sequence is apparently a love scene, where Carlos and Ana are increasingly drawn toward each other as they become more and more absorbed in the images of Cukor's film. When they finally kiss, their shadows are projected onto the blank cinema screen, blurring the boundaries between on-screen and off-screen events (figure 1.25). However, the two films—a short documentary film and Cukor's feature film—that are referred to in this sequence, also allude to the growing social anxieties that are taking place off-screen. Firstly, the documentary footage projected before *Romeo and Juliet* shows images of high-speed racing cars, followed by their violent crashes (figure 1.26). Not only do they provide shocking images for the spectators, they also evoke the shocks of modernity, including the emergence of fascism, with the scenes' allusions to futurism.³⁴ Secondly, *Romeo and Juliet*, which was produced in 1936 and released in August of that year, provides an analogy to the Civil War and foreshadows the tragic fate of Carlos and Ana, who become victims of the conflict. The Civil War can be compared to the story of the two young lovers in Shakespeare's play, who fall victim to a violent family feud between the

³⁴ In *The Futurist Manifesto* (1909), Italian fascist poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1973) had praised the beauty of the roaring motorcar as one of the symbolic images supporting their ideology.

Montagues and the Capulets, which we can associate with the victims of the war between Republicans and Nationalists. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the love and secret marriage between the children of the two families, which also represent the future of their own familial growth, are hindered by their families' past, based on a historically rooted hatred. Unlike *Raza*, which symbolises the Civil War as a crisis within a family, *Vida en sombras* clearly states neither the political affiliation of Carlos or Ana, nor their family backgrounds.³⁵ However, the allusions and references to *Romeo and Juliet* indirectly point to the innocent victims of a historically rooted confrontation between the two political factions of Spain that ultimately led to the Civil War—a past which Francoist historiography would later work hard to suppress.

4. The Spanish Civil War: representing death and trauma

4.1. War and documentary

With the portrayal of Carlos as a documentary filmmaker, *Vida en sombras* remembers the Civil War as a moment when war documentaries played an important role in the conflict. The immediacy of the images from the front lines served political propaganda purposes and mobilised the masses. As Talens (1998) reminds us, while the First World War had already attracted filmmakers to use film as a medium to report from the front, 'it is with the Spanish Civil War, after the invention of sound film, that these possibilities could best be exploited' (58). Documentary films of the Spanish Civil War had the potential to provide prosthetic memories for people beyond national borders. Both Nationalists and Republicans produced films to convey their political messages abroad, reach an international audience and win their hearts.

Vida en sombras, however, offers a self-reflexive view on the 'constructedness' of war documentaries, as it shows how Carlos tries to 'poetise' the killings between the soldiers on film.³⁶ This portrayal of Carlos becomes a

³⁵ It is only implied that Ana's father might have been a military officer, given Carlos's comment to Luis that her father was posted to Melilla and died there.

³⁶ de Ros (1994) has also noted that Llobet-Gràcia's reflexive depiction of Carlos's effort to capture the deaths of the soldiers on film can be read as 'a reminder of the "fabrication" element in

complex and critical self-reflection of Llobet-Gràcia's own involvement in filming documentaries during the war.³⁷ Patricia Zimmermann (1995) describes how the conventional amateur documentary film styles of the 1930s, which 'elaborated social commitment with a highly stylized and personalized approach' (92-93), were usefully employed for the war effort. Documentary films were mixed with narrative techniques, mobilising 'public opinion through dramatization of fact' (93). Zimmermann refers to a comment by Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, whose documentary film *The Spanish Earth* (1937) is still seen as one of the pioneering war documentaries from the Spanish Civil War. She notes that, while Ivens 'embraced the visual power of on-the-spot filming', he 'had no reservations when it came to reenactments to deliver "an emotional presentation of fact" in documentary' (93-94). Similarly, *Vida en sombras* shows Carlos to be an enthusiastic documentary filmmaker whose desire to capture the events that unfold in front of his camera drives him to exploit certain film techniques to add symbolic shots for the sake of delivering emotional impact. During the filming of the shootings, Carlos turns to the surrounding objects, such as a wine barrel with wine leaking through bullet holes.³⁸ At the end of the scene he finds a large reel of white paper, which he kicks down the slope between the bodies of dead soldiers lying on the street (figures 1.27-1.30).

documentaries' (9).

³⁷ According to de Ros (1994), '[a]s a reporter, among his [Llobet-Gràcia's] productions in 9.5mm there is a collection of documentaries entitled *El año 1932 en la pantalla* (1933) which combine artistic merit with historical interest (showing, for instance, images of Azaña's arrival in Barcelona for the *Estatut* agreement). During the Civil War, he made a number of documentaries, of which some excerpts are included in *Vida en sombras*' (153).

³⁸ In the unpublished original screenplay, written by Llobet-Gràcia and Victorio Aguado (1948), a voice-over by Carlos was added, but was later excluded from the film: '¡Si pudiera dirigir escenas de este tipo!... escenas de la vida... porque la vida es cine... ¡Caramba! buen título para un artículo. [...]Yo no pierdo este encuadre... aunque me maten...' (46-7).

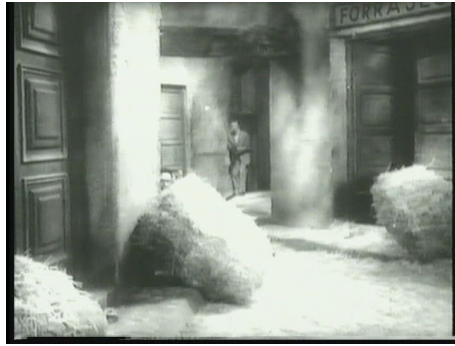


Figure 1.27



Figure 1.28



Figure 1.29



Figure 1.30

The overall effect of this reflexive portrayal of the battle scene sharply contrasts with the war scenes depicted in *Raza*. In *Raza*, scenes that illustrated the direct confrontation between the two sides were suppressed and replaced with emotional sacrificial scenes of the Nationalists, nostalgic depictions of camaraderie between the Nationalist soldiers in the trenches and one-sided depictions of the attacks by the Republicans. In *Vida en sombras*, Carlos's camera's neutrality is underscored by Llobet-Gràcia's camera capturing the soldiers in long shots, avoiding any close-ups that might emphasise the heroism of either side.³⁹ Llobet-Gràcia's camera stays by Carlos and focuses on his absorption in the scenes of confrontation. As the nameless soldiers fall dead, one by one, to the ground, Llobet-Gràcia refrains from using dramatic music, and relies mainly on the sounds of gunshots in the background.

The reflexive portrayal of documentary filmmaking ironically presents the

³⁹ In fact, Llobet-Gràcia does not clarify in the screenplay whether these soldiers are Republican militias, anarchists or rebels. While the costumes do give us some idea of the ideological affiliations of these soldiers, Llobet-Gràcia does not emphasise this scene as a political battle.

deaths of the soldiers as ‘banal’.⁴⁰ These deaths are marked by a complete flatness, and lack any heroic gestures. As Casanova (2003) also states:

nada habrá de heroico en esa muerte de la que puede decirse que carece de sentido. Así, lo único que veremos serán los cuerpos sin vida que yacen en la calle tras ser abatidos por las balas, y que nada nos dicen sino que sólo nos impresiona su presencia ahí en tanto que cuerpos anónimos a la vez que muertos. (86)

The image of these deaths is perhaps similar to what Brad Epps (2005) points out as present in Agustí Centelles’s photograph *Morts a la plaça [de] Catalunya*, a photograph taken on 19 July 1936, the day the street fights in Barcelona began. Like Llobet Gràcia’s soldiers, Centelles’s photograph ‘refrain[s] from providing captions that name their subjects’ (113). Drawing on Barthes’s theorisation of the photograph in *Camera Lucida* (2000), Epps (2005) explains that Centelles’s photograph “‘freezes” or “arrests” death as it is happening’, but also states that ‘the “horror of Death” is “precisely its platitude”’ (135). In Centelles’s photograph ‘[n]o emotion is visible on the invisible faces, no compassionate or challenging exchange of looks is possible: the death of war has taken place in the great square of Catalonia—and life goes on’ (135). Similarly, the soldiers who fall in combat in *Vida en sombras* are shown empty of visible emotion in their faces. These deaths are ‘unidentifiable’, and cannot be explained by the narrative of ‘sacrifice’ or ‘victory’ provided by Francoist commemorations of the war.

Furthermore, Llobet-Gràcia’s perceptive use of documentary footage throughout *Vida en sombras* challenges the ways in which *Raza* takes advantage of these images. *Raza* shows the advance of Nationalist troops and images of victory parades to add dramatic effect to the heroic and triumphant narrative of the Nationalists. By contrast, *Vida en sombras* uses documentary footage to evoke disruption and trauma, making a very different commentary on the war. Carlos’s involvement in the war is treated obliquely in *Vida en sombras*. We only know from a conversation with a colonel in a military camp that Carlos offers his

⁴⁰ Gubern (1986) has noted that in *Vida en sombras* the narrative of the Civil War is ‘un mero contexto episódico despojado de significación política’ (108).

resignation from the post of war cinematographer for the Nationalists and expresses his wish to be transferred to the infantry. At first glance, this request, which would further endanger his life, may seem like a self-sacrificing act for the Nationalist cause. Yet, instead of showing Carlos's participation in real battle, the film superimposes documentary images of combat and bombardment onto a close-up of Carlos's melancholy face, suggesting that these deadly flashback images are visual symptoms of war trauma (figures 1.31, 1.32).



Figure 1.31

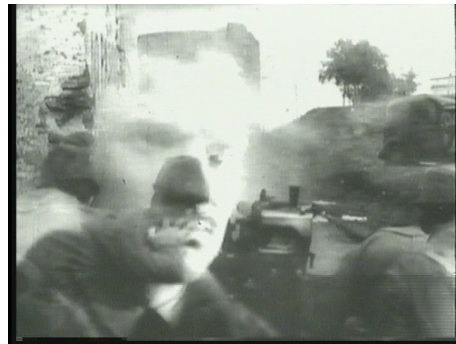


Figure 1.32

4.2 Camera as weapon

Vida en sombras stresses the traumatic shocks of the Civil War in a profoundly reflexive manner. The emotional 'shock' both for Carlos and the audience of *Vida en sombras* arrives only belatedly, after the battle scenes, where we witness the soldiers' deaths. As we have seen, during the street fighting Carlos's feelings are blocked when facing the deaths that occur in front of him. His distance can be read as the numbness of the trauma survivor, as described in Freud's account of the man who comes out of a train accident apparently unharmed, but who later develops symptoms of 'traumatic neurosis' (*SE XXIII*: 67).⁴¹ Carlos also survives the scene, seemingly unharmed. Llobet-Gràcia's final crane shot of this sequence, a bird's eye view of Carlos standing among the dead bodies, underscores his condition as the only survivor of the deadly combat.

⁴¹ In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud (1939) likens the historical trauma of the Jews to the 'traumatic neurosis' of the survivor of a train accident: 'It may happen that a man who has experienced frightful accident—a railway collision, for instance—leaves the scene of the event apparently uninjured. In the course of the next few weeks, however, he develops a number of severe psychological and motor symptoms which can only be traced to his shock, the concussion or whatever else it was' (*SE XXIII*: 67).

Carlos's apparent 'success' in capturing the realities of the war on film, however, collapses when his wife's death occurs during the very act of his filming. The real shocks of death are delayed both for Carlos and for the spectators until the discovery of Ana's dead body.

Vida en sombras displaces war trauma onto Carlos's melancholic self-recrimination. Carlos is convinced that his passion for cinema has caused Ana's death. The traumatic experience triggers in Carlos what Freud (1917) has described as distinguishing mental features of melancholia:

a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and the lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminate in a delusional expectation of punishment. (*SE XIV*: 244)

Freud further suggests the self-accusations made by the melancholic might not correspond to the image that other people have of the patient. However, interestingly—for our purposes—he points out that the melancholic 'has a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic' (*SE XIV*: 246).⁴² Carlos's self-criticism appears perplexing to the other characters of the film, who try to convince him that Ana was 'una de las tantas víctimas de la guerra'. Intriguingly, censorship records suggest that Carlos's self-accusation was even more baffling to the Spanish authorities. 'Resulta falsa la reacción del protagonista cuando se considera culpable de la muerte de su mujer. ¿Qué culpa tiene él de lo que ha pasado?' asked one censor.⁴³ The censors criticised the plot as 'una idea confusa' and 'inconcebible'. Carlos's melancholia may be read in different ways. However, it is not far-fetched to relate the gap between the view of others and Carlos's own vision to the Franco regime's disavowal of any responsibility for the deaths in the war, and its elimination of the possibilities of mourning the deaths, particularly those of the vanquished. As Félix Fanés (1982)

⁴² Freud explains that 'the essential thing [...] is not whether the melancholic's distressing self-denigration is correct, in the sense that his self-criticism agrees with the opinion of other people', but rather that 'he is giving a correct description of his psychological situation' (*SE XIV*: 247).

⁴³ Archivo General de la Administración, Expediente no. 269-47.

writes, there was a collective negation of trauma and ‘un no-reconocimiento social de la propia culpa’ (129). These deaths, including that of Llobet-Gràcia’s father, were unrecognised under Francoism, and repressed in official history.

Vida en sombras not only represents the war as traumatic for Carlos, but also reflexively implicates the camera in Ana’s death in order to reinforce the connection between the camera and her death for the spectator. While the film already alludes to the connection between the camera and the gun in the opening fairground scene, where Carlos’s father obtains a zoetrope as a prize from a shooting game, Llobet-Gràcia metonymically associates the camera with Ana’s death on two occasions: firstly in the scene where Ana sees Carlos off before he goes to film the fighting, and secondly when Carlos finds Ana’s dead body. The first scene is well described in a sequence summary provided by Sánchez Salas (1994):

La esposa enciende velas a la Virgen porque finalmente va a necesitar su protección; su marido tiene que abandonarla. Ella ha ido acercándose poco a poco al balcón precipitada por la cámara, en un travelling frontal que va alcanzando poco a poco mayor intensidad ayudado por la música, que se introduce en una variante dramática del tema de amor sólo utilizada en esta secuencia. Los disparos en la calle siguen sonando, pero Ana continúa ignorando lo que son. Por eso puede sonreír cuando finalmente alcanza el balcón y despide saludando con la mano a Carlos. (27)

As we can see from the above description, Ana’s movement is captured in a frontal dolly shot, emphasising the camera’s force that draws her toward the open window. While she looks down onto the streets, waving to the off-screen Carlos, half of her body is visible through the large, open windows.

The second instance that implicates the camera in Ana’s death is the scene where Carlos finds her dead body upon returning home. When he opens the door and sees her lying dead on the floor, the camera does not immediately capture the image of her body, for first we see Carlos rush to Ana, located off screen, and then hear him call her name, while the camera slowly pans from right to left,

showing the empty bedroom and tracing the bullet holes on the wall. The camera then stops at the image of the black virgin statuette of Montserrat placed on a cabinet, whose body is suddenly decapitated in our sight. The movement of the panning camera itself seems to ‘perform’ the firing of the gun and the splitting of the Virgin (figures 1.33-1.36). The sudden destruction of the statuette invokes not only a delayed repetition of how Ana’s death might have occurred, but also of the trauma of the deaths of the earlier battle scenes. It symbolises the traumatic moment when Carlos loses control over his active gaze, while the visual shock and horror allow spectators to bear witness to his trauma.



Figure 1.33

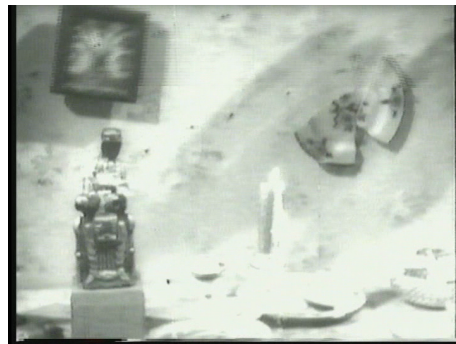


Figure 1.34

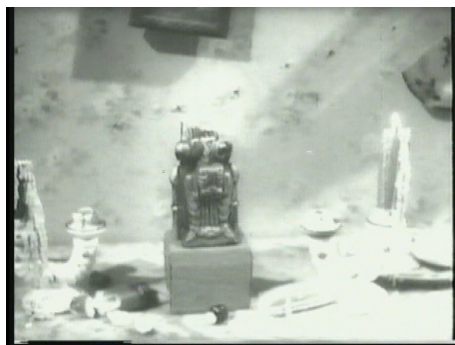


Figure 1.35



Figure 1.36

The way in which *Vida en sombras* juxtaposes Carlos’s filming of the war and Ana’s death epitomises the film’s attention to the ‘historical gaps’ created by the Civil War, an attention that deconstructs the dominant Francoist perceptions of the war that conceal such gaps. It is significant that Ana’s death occurs during an ellipsis, eluding the visualisation of the killer and leaving her death as historically unrepresentable. Furthermore, *Vida en sombras* describes the traumatic losses and

pain of the Civil War as intimate and personal, not only challenging the ‘triumphant’ vision, but resisting the convergence of these memories within the wider collective memory of the war as a ‘national suffering’. As Richards (2013) has noted,

[t]he intimacy of civil war violence, both that in the name of the rebels’ ‘crusade’ against ‘Godless’ democracy and that which emerged as part of the inchoate social revolution in areas defended by Republicans, forms the basis of the post-war memories. (36)

Significantly, the end of the war is announced in a quiet and mournful transitional montage sequence. It begins with a shot that I referred to earlier where documentary footage of the war is superimposed onto Carlos’s face. This sequence transitions into the image of Ana’s tomb, over which a shadow of a cross slowly moves while quiet music suggests the end of the war. Here, we see a comparison between death and cinema as the tomb metonymically becomes a kind of cinema screen for the projected shadow (figures 1.37, 1.38). The camera gradually pulls back to a long shot as Carlos enters the frame, placing flowers on Ana’s grave and silently gazing at the tomb in the empty graveyard. In this scene, *Vida en sombras* seems to suggest that the war experience should be characterised through these highly personal and intimate sufferings that were sealed off from the dominant political discourses.⁴⁴



Figure 1.37



Figure 1.38

⁴⁴ Writing about this scene, Castro de Paz (2002) suggests that ‘[l]a paz franquista—música dramática entremezclada con el surgir inequívoco del himno nacional—, [es] la paz de cementerios, fundada sobre la muerte inocente’ (212).

5. Watching *Rebecca*

While *Raza* ends with the triumphant victory parade that tries to achieve closure for the national suffering and engineer a forgetting of the traumas of the conflict, *Vida en sombras* suggests that the post-war years were still afflicted by cultural trauma. After the war, Carlos gives up filmmaking and withdraws from society. His detachment from the new Francoist society is glimpsed when we see him looking away from the advertisement of the Spanish CIFESA melodrama *El escándalo* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1943) announcing its gala premiere.⁴⁵ By contrast, Carlos is drawn to a poster that shows the rerun of *Romeo and Juliet* in his local cinema. Staring at the film stills that are displayed in the entrance, the sound coming from the cinema reanimates his pre-war memories of he and Ana kissing in the cinema. However, here, Carlos cannot enter the cinema to face his past. He can only stand on the threshold between the past and the present.

As well as *Easy Street* and *Romeo and Juliet*, *Vida en sombras* employs another Hollywood film, Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). *Vida en sombras* uses *Rebecca* to express Carlos's trauma, and also the cultural trauma of post-war Spain, where some memories were repressed and impossible to articulate. Persuaded by his friend Luis, who has become an actor, Carlos decides to join him and Clara, his landlady's daughter, to watch *Rebecca* in a theatre in front of his *pensión*. *Rebecca* tells the story of a young heroine (the second Mrs. de Winter, played by Joan Fontaine) who marries a wealthy Englishman, Maxim de Winter (Lawrence Olivier), and gradually discovers the circumstances surrounding the death of her husband's first wife, Rebecca, by whom she feels haunted. Half way through the film, however, Carlos is disturbed by the scenes in *Rebecca* and walks out of the theatre.

The impact of *Rebecca*'s ghost exceeds the diegetic space of *Vida en sombras* and Llobet-Gràcia's personal cinephilia, intersecting with the then-recent collective memory of the post-war Spanish audience. Hitchcock's *Rebecca* was released in Spain on 10 December 1942, immediately becoming one of the most

⁴⁵ Although *El escándalo* is not a historical film, the reference can also be read as Llobet-Gràcia's gesture showing his disregard for what can be considered mainstream Francoist cinema, since both *Raza* and *El escándalo* were directed by the same director.

successful Hollywood films of the period.⁴⁶ The film was adapted into popular fiction, short stories and plays.⁴⁷ There may be many reasons for *Rebecca*'s enormous popularity. For audiences, the star personae of Lawrence Olivier and Joan Fontaine were great attractions. Many women imitated the fashion of Fontaine's character, which resulted in the word '*rebeca*' being added to the Spanish language to mean 'cardigan'.⁴⁸

For filmmakers, Hitchcock's rich innovative techniques of editing, the use of voice-over, and the subjective camera became sources of inspiration.⁴⁹ In 1943, director and writer Claudio de la Torre commented: '[e]stas películas, que, como *Rebeca*, hacen hablar del cine a todo el mundo'. 'Y es que el cine', he continued, 'ha logrado la máxima progresión en la educación del gusto del público, creándoles una cultura y una sensibilidad cinematográficas, metiéndolos en problemas cuya densidad rechazaría ese mismo público, por ejemplo, en el teatro' (in Fernández Barreira 1943b: [n.p.]). But some critics saw these cinematic techniques, which would align the spectator with the psychological problem of the character, as examples that should not be followed by Spanish filmmakers. For writers such as Giménez Caballero, Hitchcock's film had provided an 'expresión de un nebuloso conflicto individual', which, 'llega a hacer perder al espectador los límites entre lo que el personaje nos hace pensar y sentir, y lo que "ocurre en realidad"' (in González García 2004: 104). Spanish filmmakers should, instead, apply the '*técnica de confesión*' that constructs a distance between the perspective of the audience and that of the conflicted individuals (104).

Giménez Caballero's remarks, however, do suggest that Hitchcock's film techniques might have allowed the spectators of *Rebecca* to experience the same

⁴⁶ In his 'Resumen crítico del cine en Madrid en 1942', contemporary critic Luis Gómez Mesa (1942) chose *Rebecca* as the best North American film of the year. He noted that *Rebecca* 'demuestra que el cine es un arte de conjunto armonioso, en el que su definidor medio de expresión—la visualidad—exige una trama intensamente humana, unos diálogos de calidad, un acompañamiento musical elevado y una excepcional sensibilidad artística en sus intérpretes...' ([n.p.]).

⁴⁷ One example would be the theatrical adaptation *Rebeca* by Enrique Rambal premiered in June 1944 at Madrid's Teatro Calderón.

⁴⁸ The *RAE* (2001) defines *rebeca* as deriving from the film title *Rebeca*, 'cuya actriz principal usaba prendas de este tipo'. It is described as '[c]haqueta femenina de punto, sin cuello, abrochada por delante, y cuyo primer botón está, por lo general, a la altura de la garganta' ([n.p.]).

⁴⁹ In 1943, director José López Rubio described the popularity of the film, noting that 'nos pasamos la vida hablando de *Rebeca*' (in Fernández Berreira 1943a: [n.p.]). I shall also refer to this point in my analysis of other films discussed in this thesis.

‘haunting’ felt by the characters. The impact of the ghost of Rebecca on the spectators can be glimpsed in one short story published by writer Leonor Noriega (1943) in the film magazine *Primer Plano*, which includes the following description:

Todos los espectadores notaban en la frente el roce de unos dedos húmedos y viscosos y en todas dejaba *Rebeca* su huella. [...] El castellano de Menderley [*sic*] y su desvaída jovencita *Rebeca*, pero no serían nunca Hamlet ni Ofelia en el recuerdo del espectador y a la hora de cenar nadie recordaría ya sus nombres, mientras que ella era siempre *Rebeca*, el fantasma triunfador de los vivos, la inolvidable mujer que nadie había conocido. ([n.p.]

The passage suggests that the haunting evoked in *Rebecca* is also a bodily experience which the audience will take with them outside the film theatre.

In a series of articles, Jo Labanyi (2000b, 2002a, 2007b) has identified literary and film texts from Spain’s transition to democracy that contain the motif of ‘haunting’, ‘which operates through suggestion rather than statement’ as more effective in their treatment of the war.⁵⁰ Interested in how the texts position the spectators or readers against the past, she favours the strand of works that adopt haunting tropes such as ghosts and spectres over works that ‘attempt to recount the “facts” with maximum verisimilitude’, as the latter reinforce a certain distance from the past (Labanyi 2007b: 97). We could also say that within the oppressive memory politics of early Francoism, in which other ‘realistic’ forms of historical descriptions of the past were repressed, *Vida en sombras* uses this ‘haunting trope’ from *Rebecca* to describe the Civil War as an ‘unresolved’ memory.⁵¹ According

⁵⁰ An equally exciting work on haunting in cinema has been provided by Tatjana Pavlović (2008) about another remarkable *auteur*, Basilio Martín Patino, who emerged alongside Erice from the experience of the New Spanish Cinema of the 1960s. She discusses how his film ‘calls for a revision of the Spanish Transition, insisting on a settling of its ghostly accounts’ (120).

⁵¹ Without making any reference to *Vida en sombras*, Nathan Hoback (2010) has also picked up on *Rebecca*’s popularity and the film’s ‘haunting’ in the post-war years. Drawing from theorists of hauntology such as Avery Gordon (1997), who have argued that haunting is ‘an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known’ (xvi), Hoback asserts that the Republican audience ‘used *Rebecca* as a vehicle of commemoration of their dead’ (44). Although I make a similar point here, I suggest that his rather bold statement that *Rebecca* is a commemoration of Republican deaths should be more nuanced through analysis of *Vida en*

to Derrida (2006), ghosts need bodies to inhabit: ‘there is no ghost, there is never any becoming-specter of the spirit without at least an appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility, like the dis-appearing of an apparition’ (157). But ghosts do not reappear in the same body from which they were parted; they must, Derrida says, be incarnated ‘in *another artifactual body, a prosthetic body*’ (original emphasis: 158). We could say that *Vida en sombras* shows *this* process of spectres inhabiting the prosthetic body of cinema. The film suggests that the memories left out of official history inhabit the film. Furthermore, *Rebecca*’s narrative and images mediate Carlos’s emotional knot, which he had been unable to disentangle after the war.

In *Vida en sombras* several fragments from *Rebecca* are highlighted to show what Carlos might have found in Hitchcock’s film that he would not be able to find outside the film theatre. Firstly, the opening scene of *Rebecca*, which begins with the famous voice-over of Joan Fontaine (dubbed in Spanish by Mercedes Mireya), ‘Anoche soñé que volvía a Manderley...’ becomes an important metaphor to describe Carlos’s return to a past (both to the cinema and to the past of the Civil War) which he had hitherto avoided. The symbolic scene takes the camera through the iron gate and into the ruins of Manderley in a dream-like travelling shot (figure 1.39). This return to the ‘ruins’ or debris of the past can also be associated with a trespassing into a particular memory of the Civil War, precisely forbidden in post-war Francoist society.



Figure 1.39



Figure 1.40



Figure 1.41



Figure 1.42

Secondly, and more importantly, the boathouse scene from *Rebecca* is described as a traumatic moment for Carlos. In Hitchcock's film, the recovery of Rebecca's body from the sea pressures Maxim de Winter to confront the death of his previous wife. Maxim begins to share with his second wife what happened that night in the boathouse. A slow camera movement that suggests Rebecca's invisible body moving around the room accompanies his narration:

De repente se levantó, y avanzó hacia mí. Empezó diciéndome... Cuando yo tenga un hijo, nadie dudará que su padre eres tú. Seré una madre perfecta lo mismo que he sido una esposa modelo. Nadie sabrá nunca nada. Será muy emocionante para ti Maxim, ver crecer a mi hijo día por día, y saber que cuando mueras, Manderley será suyo. Estaba de frente. Recuerdo que en la mano tenía un cigarrillo. Me sonreía. Di, Maxim, ¿qué vas a hacer ahora conmigo? ¿No piensas matarme? Me volví loco por un momento, debí golpearla, de pronto tropezó y cayó.

In a similar gesture to that of his mother, who had covered her eyes facing the screen at the moment of giving birth in the fairground tent, Carlos puts his hands over his face to avoid the traumatic encounter with what could be called, in Lacan's words, the Real (figures 1.40-1.42). Of the three orders of psychological development formulated by Lacan, the Real is 'the essential object which isn't an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety *par excellence*' (Lacan 1988: 164). As McGowan (2007) asserts, '[i]deology constantly works to obscure the traumatic

real of the gaze because this real threatens the stability of social order that ideology protects' (16).⁵² If ideology is based on its own fantasy, which conceals the gaze, or conceals the excessive piece of reality that we cannot find anywhere within the reality, cinema has the potential to break the coherent image of the given world around us. Like dreams, film images are not approached by us, but they show themselves to us (15). McGowan identifies that this characteristic may allow these traumatic encounters with the Real.⁵³ By depicting the boathouse scene as Carlos's unbearable encounter with the Real, I argue that *Vida en sombras* also invokes the failures within Francoist fantasies to conceal the real deaths of the war.

In *Rebecca*, Maxim's confession in the boathouse brings to light the horrible truth, which destroys the second Mrs. de Winter's fantasies about Maxim's past. Earlier in the film, through the traces of Rebecca's remaining objects and the manipulative comments of Mrs. Danvers, the second wife imagines that Maxim was deeply in love with Rebecca, and that they had a beautiful past in Manderley. The boathouse scene marks the moment of disillusionment and the revelation of a past tainted by hidden secrets, betrayals and murder. The scene symbolically suggests the disenchantment experienced in post-war Spain in which a fantasy past ('of a glorious Spain') had been manipulatively constructed by Franco, yet which turned out for many to be a past that contained these horrific truths.

Maxim's monologue reveals that he had accidentally killed Rebecca after being taunted by her. It should be noted that when *Rebecca* was adapted for the screen, the Motion Picture Production Code suppressed the overt conjugal murder depicted in Daphne Du Maurier's (2003) novel of the same title.⁵⁴ Whereas in the

⁵² The 'gaze', in Lacan's terms, is not to be confused with the act of looking. As Evans (1996) explains, 'the eye which looks is that of the subject, while the gaze is on the side of the object' (72).

⁵³ McGowan (2007), drawing from Lacan, writes: 'In dreams, we do not approach things, but things show themselves to us. This showing is what allows us to experience the gaze in the dream: when we encounter the gaze, we encounter the object that shows itself to us but which does not within our visual field. The form of the dream, like the form of the cinematic experience, makes this encounter possible' (15-16).

⁵⁴ Despite the changes made to the story in the film adaptation of *Rebecca*, some contemporary Spanish critics complained about the moral content of the film. Miguel Rodenas (1944) wrote in *ABC* that 'Es preciso reconocer, pese al galardón que obtuvo este "film" a cuenta de la Academia de Ciencias y Artes Cinematográficas de Norteamérica, que el asunto no es simpático, porque el acuerdo tácito entre el marido y la mujer, para realizar el suicidio de la última, va contra nuestra sensibilidad, contra nuestro criterio de cristianos, y nos parece inconcebible y monstruoso' (25).

novel Maxim shoots Rebecca, Hitchcock's film makes her death more ambiguous, somewhere between accident and murder, leaving the audience wondering whether Maxim is guilty or not ('I went mad for a moment', he says). Maxim's 'moment of madness' captures Carlos's 'moment of madness' when he goes out to film the street fights, and later finds his pregnant wife killed in his home. In this scene Carlos encounters the unbearable voice of the dead, which returns to accuse him of being responsible for his wife's death.

The 'moment of madness', however, further invokes the madness of the Civil War, where numerous acts of crime and repression took place. In a similar way to that in which Maxim had manipulated Rebecca's death to seem like 'suicide' in Hitchcock's film, many deaths during the Civil War and its aftermath were manipulated and unacknowledged by the regime. Spanish society also continued to keep silent about these deaths during the post-war years. The accidental recovery of Rebecca's 'missing body' from a sunken boat, reopens the trauma of the 'missing bodies', including that of Llobet-Gràcia's own father, who were never registered or identified. It is suggestive that the second Mrs. de Winter tries to persuade her husband not to reveal to the authorities what actually happened in the boathouse. This cover-up of Rebecca's murder becomes necessary for the new couple's survival. In a similar way, we could say that the Franco regime considered that the concealment of the deaths and crimes committed by the victors was a necessary measure for the construction of the new state.

Furthermore, the boathouse scene highlights a certain failure in the symbolic order to describe the cause of Rebecca's death as murder, accident, suicide or illness. All these possibilities are entertained within the twisted plot of Hitchcock's film, even as the film finally settles on a judgement of suicide, asserting Maxim's innocence in the matter before the court.⁵⁵ Yet, what really happened between them in the boathouse will remain a secret shared only with his wife and his close friend, Frank. Thus, the ways in which *Vida en sombras* brings forward Maxim's confession scene in relation to Carlos's own guilt, doubts and

⁵⁵ By the end, Hitchcock's film reaches a melodramatic resolution, which involves the revelation by Rebecca's doctor that she was not expecting a child from her affair with her cousin Jack Favell, but instead had been diagnosed with late-stage cancer. The film explains that her suicidal desire had triggered her provocative acts against Maxim.

anxieties about the war shows a remarkable reflexivity about the ways in which some deaths would only be kept as family secrets, and impossible to account for in post-war Spanish society.

6. Cinema and working through trauma

The experience of watching *Rebecca* offers Carlos a traumatic encounter with the Real. Yet, as this section will argue, *Vida en sombras* also illuminates cinema's possibility to work through and bear witness to the traumatic experiences of others. Like the Spanish spectators in real life, who carried their imaginings about Rebecca outside the film theatre, Carlos continues to be affected by the prosthetic memory enmeshed with his own memories of his past. Sitting in his dark room, facing the window, the shimmering light from the neon sign of the cinema is reflected onto his face. Then the light becomes still and his face begins to glow, as if he were sitting in front of a cinema screen. Cutting to his point of view, the camera pans left from a shot of Ana's photograph placed on the cabinet toward the open balcony. The railing of the balcony through which we see the neon sign 'Rebeca' recalls the opening sequence of Hitchcock's film, where the 'iron gate' connotes a return to the past (figures 1.43, 1.44). Suddenly, another fragment from *Rebecca*, which briefly shows Maxim and his second wife watching a home movie of their honeymoon trip, is superimposed on the image of the theatre wall Carlos sees from the window (figure 1.45). When the sequence ends, we see Carlos standing beside a film projector ready to screen his own home movie that he shot with Ana (figure 1.46).



Figure 1.43



Figure 1.44

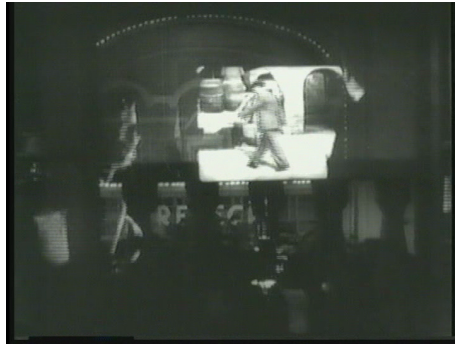


Figure 1.45



Figure 1.46

Beyond simple mimicry, the home movie sequence blurs the boundaries between cinema and memory. The involuntary recollection of the happy moments between Maxim and his second wife in the sequence from *Rebecca*, triggers Carlos's own wish to project his happy memories with Ana recorded in his private film. It shows Carlos clumsily directing Ana and himself in a romantic scene, which seems to re-enact a segment from *Romeo and Juliet*. If we consider that, at the time, as in *Rebecca*, home movies were usually silent films, we could say that the voices emanating from Carlos's projection suggest that the scenes we are witnessing are located somewhere between Carlos's movie and his memory.⁵⁶

Vida en sombras ends with Carlos directing his friend Luis in his first professional feature film. The last scene returns to an image of the fairground, where his parents stand in front of a camera, and closes the circle with which the film began. Previous scholars have read Carlos's viewing of *Rebecca* and the circular ending of the film as expressing Carlos's 'entrapment' within the imaginary, unable to escape identification with the specular image (González Requena 1998; Casanova 2003). Discussing the circular structure, González Requena writes of 'an essential deficit of symbolization that will make it impossible for the protagonist to escape the net of the imaginary' and 'the impotence [...] of acceding completely to the symbolic order' (100). This view resonates with Freud's (1914) concept of the compulsion towards repeating, or 'acting-out', described in 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through' (*SE*

⁵⁶ All of Llobet-Gràcia's short films available in the Filmoteca Española (including the 'home movies') are silent films. They include *Suicida* (1934), *Enterrament de Macià* (1936), *Olimpiada Popular* (1936), *Tin l'intrepit* (1936), *El valle encantado* (1946), *Sucedió una noche* (1947) and *Pregària a la Verge del Colls* (1947).

XII). In this essay, Freud distinguishes between ‘acting-out’ and ‘working through’. ‘Acting-out’ occurs when ‘the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed’ and ‘reproduces it not as a memory but as an action’ (original emphasis: 150). The psychoanalyst’s task is to bring into consciousness the repressed memories so that the patient can ‘work through’ them.

Instead of reading the repetition in *Vida en sombras* as an ‘entrapment’ or a melancholic ‘acting-out’, I argue that Llobet-Gràcia’s film proposes that cinema can provide a more transformative relation between the text and the spectator. The ‘working-through’ achieved in *Vida en sombras* is not an imposition of closure or a simple replacement of trauma with a ‘happy ending’, as seen in *Raza*. Neither does it offer a forced melodramatic resolution like *Rebecca*, where Maxim’s innocence is proved, with the love of his new wife, by the revelation of Rebecca’s secret illness and the dramatic burning down of Manderley by Mrs. Danvers.

It is notable that *Vida en sombras* does not resolve Carlos’s war trauma by simply replacing Ana with his new love interest, Clara. Despite Clara’s timid advances toward him, the film does not put forward her presence in order to explain his recovery and return to filmmaking. Even Clara herself is conscious of her marginal role, when she asks Carlos and Luis, in a surprisingly ironic way, ‘¿Qué pinto yo aquí?’ as they discuss their plans for Carlos’s new film project. Rather, *Vida en sombras* reflexively uses the camera/cinema itself to work through trauma and give the unacknowledged deaths a proper remembrance and recognition within history.

The home movie scene that follows Carlos’s viewing of *Rebecca*—which is arguably one of the most memorable scenes of the film—is significant in this sense. Zimmermann (2008) notes, in her introduction to the anthology *Mining the Home Movie*, that while home movies are often considered to represent ‘an irrelevant pastime or nostalgic mementos of the past’, they can also be ‘first-person documentation of history and culture’ that ‘provoke reexamination of issues of identity, culture, history, politics, and memory from the point of view of images made outside the dominant channels of representation’ (20). Llobet-Gràcia, who had himself been a devoted maker of home movies since childhood, cleverly

recuperates this medium in *Vida en sombras* by making Ana's gaze and voice directly address the spectators of *Vida en sombras*, for the first time (figures 1.47, 1.48). The home movie includes images of her looking toward the camera and speaking to Carlos, who is behind the lens. Asking her to speak to the camera, Ana responds, 'No sé qué decir hombre, ¿qué quieres que te diga? ¡Tonto!' Various shots of Ana appear, beautifully framed and smiling toward the camera. Carlos, who now stands close to the screen in his room, looks into her face projected in front of him. He occasionally covers his eyes to avoid her gaze. The reel ends with her picking flower petals, asking him directly into the camera whether he loves her or not, to which she herself repeats the affirmative words, 'Sí, sí, sí'. The screen turns blank, and Carlos's face is illuminated by the light coming from the projector.

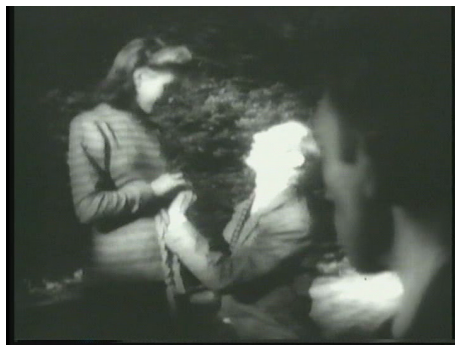


Figure 1.47



Figure 1.48

Writing about the power of the direct address in cinema, Casetti (1998) maintains that

in revealing a presupposition which has been and must remain silent, illegitimately attempting to invade a different space, and tearing apart a web that ought to stay intact, the look and voice addressed to the camera constitute an infraction of canonical proportions, an affront to the 'proper' functioning of representation and filmic narrative. (17)⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Casetti (1998) specifies that home movies are film discourses which usually allow this transgression. 'The prohibition differs [...] according to the kind of discourse in the film: while prohibited in the fiction film, the look into the camera is allowed in the pedagogical film or in the

Even though *Vida en sombras* begins from the self-reflexive history of cinema, the moment of Ana's direct gaze depicted in the home movie might well be the most transgressive moment, as it breaks the illusion of the hidden camera, abruptly closing the gap between the victim of the war and the spectators of *Vida en sombras*. It creates a moment of dialogue between the dead and the living. If, as Zimmermann (2008) states, home movies as symptoms of historical trauma rely on testimony to move beyond the symptom into history because '[p]ublic memory is that ephemeral, constantly shifting, and imagined construct that moves from the private, silenced, and repressed trauma to the public, performative, and activated mode of historical agency' (223), the home movie in *Vida en sombras* also lends an effect to a private memory that demands to be listened to and remembered by others.

Furthermore, *Vida en sombras* emphasises the process of Carlos working through his trauma through cinema. If the 'camera' was converted into a 'weapon' during the war, the film works through this process by transforming the 'camera' into a medium for 'memory work'. The panning camera movement, which first appeared in the traumatic scene of the Virgin's decapitation, and then in *Rebecca's* boathouse scene, is used again in Carlos's room when he decides to pick up his camera for the first time after the war. Through the frame of the viewfinder, which resembles a view through a gun sight, we see his camera slowly pan from the right to the left until it arrives at Ana's photograph placed on a cabinet. Llobet-Gràcia's camera cuts back to Carlos, showing his reluctance. Then, like the early 'cinema of attractions' that animated the photographs into movement, Ana, in the photograph seen through the finder, is given life, as her slightly sad look transforms into a smile (figures 1.49-1.51). Carlos is now able to move on to create a short poetic documentary, titled *Sombras*. After this success, Carlos accepts an offer from a producer to make his first feature film, which will be about his life story.

home movie' (17).



Figure 1.49

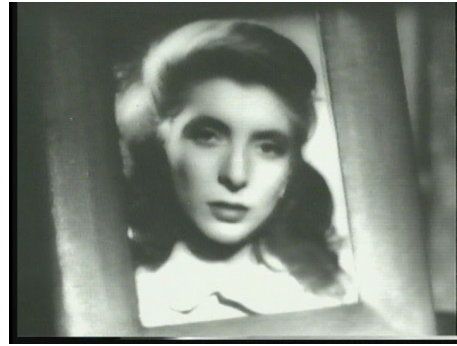


Figure 1.50



Figure 1.51

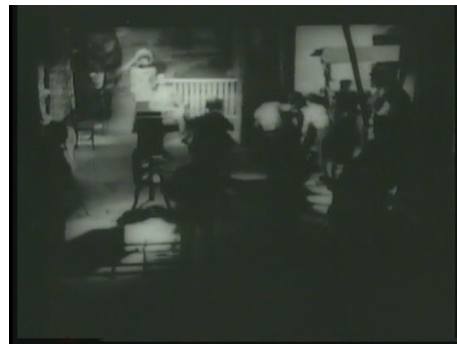


Figure 1.52

As I have mentioned above, critics have read the circular structure of the film as an ‘entrapment’. However, from the perspective of memory work, we should stress that the ending is also a repetition with a difference. While the last scene returns to the opening shot of *Vida en sombras*, this time Llobet-Gràcia’s camera pulls back to reveal the film set in the studio, exposing the camera and the constructed sets in a reflexive way (figure 1.52). For the viewers of *Vida en sombras*, this distance allows the spectators to be in the position of witnesses of trauma. Kaplan and Wang (2004) note that this position as witness invites the ‘viewer to at once *be there emotionally* (and often powerfully moved), but also to keep a cognitive distance and awareness denied to the victim by the traumatic process’ (original emphasis: 10). The ‘circular structure with a difference’ in *Vida en sombras* allows the spectator to be placed in this triangular structure.

Furthermore, for Carlos, this ending expresses his drive to tell his story and, implicitly, the story of the dead. That is why Carlos visits Ana’s grave on the first day of shooting. Helped by Clara, Carlos slowly walks away from the tomb toward the camera, and the lights of the graveyard are turned off. The scene cuts

to Carlos calling ‘action’. As Kaplan (2005) argues, ‘telling stories about trauma, even though the story can never actually repeat or represent what happened, may partly achieve a certain “working through” for the victim’ (37). *Vida en sombras* seems to suggest this strong desire to narrate trauma and silenced memories, but also to do so with an awareness that ‘accuracy’ or ‘representation’ can only be partially achieved, as we have seen in the way that Ana’s death was written out from the screen. It is also suggestive that in Carlos’s home movie, he almost fails to ‘manage’ the image of Ana. His movie shows Ana constantly slipping out of the camera frame, underlining his unsuccessful mastery over her image.⁵⁸ Kneeling in front of Ana, he takes her hand and pleads with her not to leave him: ‘Amor mío: no me abandones’. Ana resists and leaves the frame. Carlos runs after her and pulls her back into the frame: ‘Oye, oye, abandóname pero no te salgas del cuadro’. From this allusion, and given what I have argued throughout this chapter, we could say that Carlos’s attempt to retell his own story as an alternative memory to that of the ‘official story’ is a process that *Vida en sombras* is conscious of failing to do, but nevertheless is willing to carry out.

7. Conclusion

It seems more than a coincidence that both *Raza* and *Rebecca* were screened in the same year in Spain, creating different social impacts.⁵⁹ *Raza* could be called a ‘cinematic monument’ for the victors, one which glorified their sacrificial deaths and manipulated the past for the stabilisation of a post-war identity. Llobet-Gràcia, however, chose Hitchcock’s film as a reference to articulate the collective memory of the early post-war years. The comparison between *Raza* and *Vida en sombras* reveals how the latter, intentionally or not, deconstructs the ways in which the former commemorates the Civil War and conceals the traumas of it. Llobet-Gràcia achieves this by replacing the monumentalising historical narrative of *Raza* with fragments of popular and documentary films from beyond Spanish borders as ‘prosthetic memories’, and destabilising the totalising historical

⁵⁸ Casanova (2003) notices Carlos’s failure of managing ‘la presencia y la ausencia (el *fort-da*) que está en la base de todo orden de representación’ in this scene (121).

⁵⁹ *Raza* was produced in 1941, but released on 5 January 1942.

narrative of the Civil War constructed by the Franco regime. *Vida en sombras* brings forward, obliquely but daringly, the regime's failure to explain and acknowledge the true horrors of the war in post-war Francoist society. Furthermore, this chapter has argued that, while *Vida en sombras* acknowledges the impossibility of 'accurately' narrating the war or depicting trauma, it believes in cinema's fantasmatic dimension that might destabilise the other fantasy created by dominant ideology. What *Vida en sombras* proposes as cinema's potential can perhaps be applied and expanded to the understanding of other popular films of the post-war period, some of which will be the subject of the following chapters.

Chapter Two

Male Trauma and Rural Landscapes in *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949)

1. Introduction

The previous chapter examined how *Vida en sombras* depicted the Civil War as traumatic, and in so doing contested the official Francoist cinematic commemorations of the war. As a result, the film suffered censorship and poor reception among contemporary critics. Films that dealt directly with the traumatic memories of the Civil War and provided alternative assessments of the war were rare. But as discussed earlier, *Vida en sombras* also illustrates that cinematic fantasy, even if apparently unrelated to the war, may have provided the spectators with means of expression of, or with ways to negotiate and work through, memories that were repressed by official discourses. This chapter will move on to discuss *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949), a film whose overt narrative does not explicitly deal with the Civil War, nor its consequences. However, by closely reading the film's employment of the rural landscape—traditionally co-opted to articulate the national—the depiction of 'damaged masculinities', and melodramatic textual operations, the chapter will argue that the film exposes and 'manages' the repressed cultural trauma of post-war Spain.

Un hombre was writer and director Manuel Mur Oti's (1909-2003) first feature film after he established his career as a writer and screenwriter in Cuba and Spain.¹ Set in the fictional rural space of Monte Oscuro, *Un hombre* was filmed in the mountains located in the northern regions of Spain.² The film

¹ Born in Vigo, Galicia, Mur Oti received most of his cultural and intellectual training in Cuba, where he lived for ten years. After publishing poetry in the Cuban press, he made a successful debut with his play *La alegría del sitio* (1929), performed in La Habana. After returning to Spain in 1933, his first novel, *Destino negro* (1949), was positively received by critics.

² Although in Asturias there exists an area called the 'Sierra de Monte Oscuro', Monte Oscuro is

narrates the story of Luis (Fernando Noguerras), a *vagabundo* who strays into a lonely ranch in Monte Oscuro where a widow, Julia (Ana Mariscal), and her eight-year-old daughter Blanca struggle to maintain their lives on the land acquired by her deceased husband, Enrique. Though at first Luis reluctantly agrees to help Julia's work in the fields, he eventually escapes and returns to his life as a tramp. As time passes, the views of the autumn harvest in the countryside remind Luis of Monte Oscuro and prompt his return. However, the inhabitants of the nearest village, Tierra Vieja, begin to suspect Luis and Julia's relationship, provoking Luis to leave once again. On the eve of his departure, Blanca falls ill, and Luis goes to the village to call for a doctor. After a confrontation with the villagers, Luis escapes and returns to Monte Oscuro to operate on Blanca himself. Following a successful operation, Luis confesses that he is a doctor, and discloses his dark past marked by his wife's adultery and his daughter's death. The film ends in a hopeful tone with the prospect of the three happily forming a new family in Monte Oscuro.

Unlike *Vida en sombras*, the film had a generally good reception, and contemporary critics hailed the director's innovative use of natural landscapes, dubbing Mur Oti a '*genio*'.³ Given that during the early post-war years feature films were predominantly made in studio sets, relying on extravagant decor and costumes, some critics associated Mur Oti's approach in *Un hombre* with Italian neorealism because he took the camera out of the studios and focused on the simple everyday life of a peasant family.⁴ Even today, some scholars continue to state that *Un hombre* is 'una de las primeras manifestaciones del neorrealismo español' (Seguin 1999: 39).⁵ Italian neorealist films arrived in Spain in the late

given fictional treatment in the film. See Mur Oti's interview with Castro (1996: 57).

³ For example, Jesús Bendaña (1950) wrote in the film magazine *Radiocinema*, 'Desde el tema, limitado a unos cuantos personajes que miran la ancha panorámica de los paisajes infinitos, hasta esos encuadres maravillosos que ha sabido captar la cámara mágica de Manuel Berenguer, todo es bello en este film' ([n.p.]).

⁴ Gómez Tello (1950) locates the film's realism in its portrayal of landscape, 'rodado sobre los mismos escenarios naturales y con un espléndido aprovechamiento de la niebla, el horizonte, la montaña, los campos y el sentido dramático de las cosas' ([n.p.]). In Gregori (2009), Mur Oti himself is said to have remarked on the '*corte neorrealista*' of *Un hombre va por el camino*, stating that the film broke with 'el excesivo uso de decorados, pelucas, maquillaje, con historia, y con grandilocuencia' (25).

⁵ On the other hand, Emilio Sanz de Soto (1984) contends that the film has been overrated as 'neorealist', since '[l]a película, de argumento convencional, engañaba por estar rodada en gran parte al aire libre y beneficiarse de la fotografía' (134).

1940s, and strongly influenced the filmmakers of the next generation.⁶ However, while Italian neorealism emerged from the context of anti-fascism and the post-war quest for justice, the Spanish critics' associations of *Un hombre* with neorealism did not subsume any political or critical examination of *Un hombre*'s depiction of the rural world.⁷ As Miguel Marías (1992) writes, '[c]asi todos se maravillan –como si fuese algo realmente insólito y nuevo –la fuerte presencia de la naturaleza y el rodaje casi íntegro en escenarios naturales, y elogian el tema “humano” de la película, sin contarle ni explicarlo' (92). While the title and the plot are often mentioned in historical overviews of 1940s Spanish cinema, *Un hombre* has been largely ignored by scholars, both Spanish and foreign.⁸

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in investigating how space is configured in Spanish cinema.⁹ Regarding the representation of the rural landscape, we can find pioneering works by Katherine Kóvacs (1991) on the Spanish *meseta* in cinema; Sally Faulkner (2004, 2006) on the country/city division in literary adaptations; Tom Whittaker (2011) on the landscape of the dissident films produced by Elías Querejeta; and Ann Davies (2012), whose book includes studies of the complex negotiations between the rural, urban and coastal landscapes, and the ways in which 'Spain' is imagined within the context of these various terrains. It is generally agreed that throughout Spanish film history, the rural genre has offered images for the construction of Spanish national identity, and that such images were transmitted for both internal and external consumption (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 1998: 46). Such schemes are thought to have been exploited by the Franco regime. Francoism, as historian Michael Richards

⁶ There was a considerable delay in the arrival of Italian neorealist films in Spain. Both *Cuatro pasos por las nubes* ([Quattro passi fra le nuvole], A. Blasetti, 1942) and *Vivir en paz* ([Vivere in pace], L. Zampa, 1946) were screened in Spain in 1948, and the iconic *Ladrón de bicicletas* ([Ladri di biciclette], Vittorio de Sica, 1948) was not released until 1950. See Monterde (2006: 53). The debate on whether neorealism should be an aesthetic and/or movement to be followed in Spain intensified during the 1950s, triggering the celebration of the *Conversaciones de Salamanca*, in which 'realism' was proposed as the new direction for Spanish cinema.

⁷ Camporesi (1993) explains that one of the adjustments made to make the emergent realist discourse compatible with the state's National-Catholic and anti-Communist ideology was to 'atenuar o eliminar del todo sus rasgos más explícitamente políticos o excesivamente crudos' (51).

⁸ Exceptions are Castro de Paz (1999, 2002), Marías (1992) and the recent study by González (2012).

⁹ Marvin D'Lugo (2010) has provided an overview which examines the varying cultural meanings inscribed in the landscape in relation to contemporary Spanish history; and Paul Julian Smith (2000) has discussed the spaces of Basque Country and the cities through Lefebvre's spatial theories.

(1998) has noted, ‘eulogised the Spanish peasantry as the embodiment of national virtues’ since the peasantry served as an ‘important ingredient in the Francoist project of national unification’ (151). As I will discuss in the following section, this is reflected in rural melodramas such as *La aldea maldita* (Florián Rey, 1942) that faithfully convey the ideology of the regime. When the rural becomes a setting to provide a critical discourse, however, critics seem to mainly focus on either late Francoist or post-Franco cinema.¹⁰ My analysis of *Un hombre* aims to complicate the generalised perception that the rural in 1940s Spanish cinema transparently reflects the regime’s idealised views of the countryside.

Un hombre concludes with Luis settling into the rural world and announcing his marriage to Julia. This ‘happy ending’ might only seem to confirm the Franco regime’s fantasies of the idealised rural world as a reflection of the harmonious post-war Spanish nation. Thus Mariano González (2012) has argued that the rural space of *Un hombre* ‘both expresses and consolidates the ultra-conservative ideology of the hegemonic block of post-war Spain’ (216). González maintains that the film provides a fascist narrative that eulogises the rural world, and applies its linear narrative in order to ‘normalise’ the correct gender roles ruled by National-Catholic ideology (218). Indeed, on one level *Un hombre* is about a man recovering the place of the Father with the help of a woman, a theme reiterated in many conservative Francoist films. The late 1940s saw an array of films in which strong women dominated the screen and provided both female and male spectators with role models (Labanyi 2000a: 163). During this period, ‘Spanish cinema concentrated on the world of romance, home and family, in a depoliticizing strategy that encouraged men as well as women to identify with the private sphere’ (164). Julia’s strong presence in the film and her ability to guide Luis into the world of home and family seem to fit the paradigm suggested by Labanyi. The film also appears to underline the two poles of female archetypes within patriarchy: the pure, virginal mother (Julia) and the *femme fatale* (Luis’s wife).

However, this chapter will contend that *Un hombre*’s relation to Francoist

¹⁰ As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (1998) note, ‘oppositional writing, and later film appropriated the rural context for the elaboration of a critical discourse which established rural Spain as the spatial representation of stasis and repression’ (46).

dominant ideology is more complex than it might first appear. If, as Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas (1998) suggest, the ‘air both of pastness and atemporality’ found in the rural ‘have made [the rural film] a suitable location for various articulations of the ambiguous relationship between reality and fantasy and between linear time and atemporality’ (46), I would argue that *Un hombre*, through its association of the ‘male trauma’ with a ‘melancholic rural landscape’, also uses the rural space to enunciate these ambivalent desires and anxieties related to post-war cultural trauma.¹¹

I will begin by briefly outlining the Franco regime’s conception of hegemonic masculinity in post-war Spain and discussing one rural film that is strongly aligned with the regime’s ideology. *La aldea maldita* (1942) is a film that typically transmits the Francoist rural world as a space to project nationalist fantasies of a patriarchal fatherland. However, I also suggest that representations of masculinity in the 1940s were not as straightforward as one might expect. This chapter argues that *Un hombre va por el camino* (1949) can be read as one such film. Firstly, I will explore the ways in which *Un hombre* configures landscape, and examine what kind of imaginaries it might evoke in relation to national identity. Contrary to the bucolic images of the *meseta*, *Un hombre* configures the rural space of Monte Oscuro as a melancholy space of loss and ‘inner exile’. The landscape’s relation to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ as an expression of alienation and fragmentation of post-war Spain will also be discussed. Secondly, I will discuss the ambivalent attraction which Monte Oscuro evokes in the male character Luis. As a land closely associated with the feminine, Monte Oscuro will be interpreted as a maternal ‘fantasy space’ on to which Luis can project a lost home. The complexity of the female character Julia as both maternal and sexual will be explored, as well as her relation to the land. In the final section, I will discuss melodrama, and how the considerable shift in the latter part of the film can be seen as melodramatic excess. I will examine *Un hombre* as a melodrama

¹¹ Castro de Paz’s (1999, 2002) brief study also offers a different perspective that focuses on the way the film marries different stylistic sources (from neorealism, Spanish rural drama, and mythical drama to Hollywood melodrama) and articulates ‘la fractura bélica’, conveyed through ‘los personajes, abocándolos a la soledad, a la mentira, a la locura, a la pulsión de muerte’ (191). While his analysis does not provide specific theoretical frameworks, I concur with his view that the film indeed deals with the traumas of the Civil War.

which tries to ‘manage’ the cultural trauma of the Civil War while also revealing an awareness to the ways in which the ‘forgetting’ of trauma is achieved.

2. Masculinity and the rural in 1940s Spanish cinema

2.1 Hegemonic masculinity and the Francoist rural ‘fatherland’—The case of *La aldea maldita* (Florián Rey, 1942)

In an attempt to ‘correct’ the liberal views on gender roles implemented during the Republican years, Francoism applied fascist understandings of gender and sexuality in which the oppositions male/female and heterosexual/homosexual needed to be clearly defined.¹² It was seeking to rehabilitate the ‘family’ as the source of social stability, and to re-establish male authority. The regime overturned the Republic’s legislation by re-enacting the 1889 Civil Code and introducing the *Fuero de los españoles* in 1945. This gave legal status to the male ‘*cabeza de la familia*’, ‘making him officially in charge of all other family members and the representative of the family in the public sphere’, while ‘[w]omen and children, including minority males, were firmly confined to the private sphere of family life’ (Grugel and Rees 1998: 134). Of course, Franco himself served as the ‘model’ father figure for the nation. As Rafael Abella (1996) writes, ‘El respeto a la autoridad paterna era dogma que se sostenía desde la misma estructura del Estado’. ‘La propia figura de Franco,’ he continues, ‘en su pedestal de Caudillo, se llenaba de resonancias paternas’ (213). Through organisations such as *Frente de Juventudes*, intended to incorporate young middle class and working class Falangist men, the regime sought to train ‘hombres disciplinados, viriles, fieles a las consignas del mando y aptos para todo servicio, de modo que acuñaran en sus años de formación un espíritu de amor a la patria pertrechado de virtudes militares’ (217).¹³

¹² As Spain’s fascist ideologue José Antonio Primo de Rivera stated: ‘We do not understand why respect for woman should consist of removing her from her magnificent destiny and of delivering her to masculine functions [...]. True feminism should not consist of wanting for women those functions that are nowadays considered superior, but of increasingly surrounding feminine functions with more human and social dignity’ (cited in Pérez-Sánchez 2007: 12).

¹³ According to Abella (1996), ‘[d]e este modo los españoles, desde la infancia a la edad militar, respirarían un ambiente que, dándoles unas características campamentales y casi castrenses de respeto a la jerarquía y de obediencia al mando, les impartiría una ideología henchida de virtudes

In cinema, this hegemonic masculinity was most conspicuously represented in the *cine de cruzada* of the early 1940s, which reproduced images of the strong masculinist values of war. These films offered ‘narratives about male bonding and identity, rites of passage, and physical or mental endurance’ (Evans 1995: 218). *Raza*, as we saw in the previous chapter, also promoted the ethos of self-sacrifice and virility through the heroism of the main character, José. It can also be read as a film in which José recuperates the patriarchal authority that had been endangered by Spain’s historical crisis of 1898 and the subsequent Civil War.

One representative rural melodrama that also advocates the importance of establishing hegemonic masculinity for the construction of post-war national identity is Florián Rey’s *La aldea maldita* (1942), a remake of his own 1930 silent film. The film narrates the travails of a successful farmer, Juan de Castile, and his family, whose crops are hit by drought and a hailstorm. The film is set in the Castilian *meseta*, a landscape which has been a symbolic space for Spain as a nation and has ‘recur[red] with insistence’ in Spanish fiction (Kóvacs 1991: 17). Tom Whittaker (2011) explains how the vast Castilian *meseta* was central to Francoist ideology and hegemonic control. It appropriated the earlier pastoral writings of the *Generación de 98*, namely Miguel de Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Azorín and Antonio Machado, who bore witness to the turn-of-the-century crisis and decline of Spain triggered by the Spanish-American war and the loss of Spain’s colonies. These writers considered that ‘[i]n order to “regenerate” Spain and rebuild a national identity that was solid and cohesive [...] the true essence of the nation should be rediscovered in the plains of the region [of Castile]’ (47). Similarly, for Franco, the *meseta* ‘served as the ideal *tabula rasa* on which to reconstruct a unified Spain: a nation scrubbed clean of all political and regional differences and rewritten anew’ (47).

Francoist imaginaries imbued the countryside with the values of ‘eternal Spain’, emphasising its timelessness and countering the modernising forces of cosmopolitan city life, which was linked to Republican Spain. These imaginaries,

patrióticas y esenciales de nacional-revolucionarias e inconformistas’ (217). It was particularly important for middle class and working class families to make their sons join the *Frente de Juventudes* during the difficult post-war years—parents who saw ‘la necesidad de aire libre y vida sana que precisaba la adolescencia’ (220).

however, were far from the harsh realities that the Spanish peasantry faced after the war.¹⁴ In 1939, the Franco regime overturned the agrarian reforms carried out by the Republic, forcing many smallholders and tenant farmers to migrate to the city or maintain dependence on large landowners. Despite the regime's violent policies against the peasants, as Cazorla Sánchez (2010) writes, 'Francoism maintained that the regime had restored harmony to society by being fair, and by convincing former enemies, particularly landless peasants and the working class, to embrace the cause'. 'The strategy', he continues, 'was based on distinguishing between two kinds of enemies: the perverse, defeated republican leaders, and the good, ordinary Spaniards who had been led astray by foreign ideologies and perverse politicians' (43).

In both versions of *La aldea maldita*, produced before and after the Civil War respectively, the crisis of the *meseta* (as Spain) is marked by natural disaster and the migration of peasants to the city. This results in the downfall of Juan's wife Acacia, who becomes a prostitute. However, there are significant differences between the two versions of *La aldea maldita*, which indicates how representations of the rural world had to be carefully adjusted to the post-war context of Francoist Spain.¹⁵ Firstly, compared to the original 1930s version, the 1942 version carries many more powerful Catholic overtones, reflecting Francoist ideology, which 'restored adherence to Catholic orthodoxy as the political and economic law of the land' (Morcillo 2010: 95). In the first version, Juan appears as a poor peasant whose general state of misery triggers his assault on the village's usurer, Uncle Lucas. As a result, Juan is thrown into jail, while Acacia, persuaded by her friend Magdalena, accompanies Magdalena to the city, where the two end up working in brothels. In the second version, however, the image of the strong and respectable patriarch is reinforced, as Juan is transformed into an affluent and trusted landowner. Here, not only does Juan not *attack* Uncle Lucas, he actually welcomes him with a glass of wine. Furthermore, in this version, it is Juan who decides to join the mass exodus to the city, whereas Acacia secretly

¹⁴ According to Richards (1998) roughly four-fifths of the 'National Army' during the war were peasants (128). Exceptions were workers in *latifundio* areas, who were committed to left-wing trade unions and supported the Republicans.

¹⁵ For comparative analyses of two films, see González Requena (1990), Sánchez Vidal (2005) and Bentley (2008: 38-40).

follows him with her friend Luisa. That Juan's character is changed from poor peasant to landowner parallels the suppressed contradiction within Franco's pronouncements. As Richards (1998) notes, 'Spain would be referred to with evident pride as being "eminently rural" (*campesino*), while the system of *latifundismo* was staunchly defended' (129). The reality of the 'rural' in Francoist terms was the 'rural' of the large landholders.

In the second film, Acacia's figure is made less problematic so as to make her final religious redemption possible. The earlier film clearly illustrates that she is working in a brothel, rather than appearing in the 'tavern' in the later film. In both films, José discovers Acacia, and brings her back home so as to maintain the social esteem of the family in front of Juan's blind father, Martín, on condition that she does not look at her child. The clearest difference between the two films, however, appears in Acacia's state when she is expelled from Juan's household after the death of Martín. The first version highlights that the separation from her child triggers her madness; a scene which finally evokes the sympathy and forgiveness of her husband. The second version omits these scenes of madness, while concentrating on the staging of Acacia's Calvary.

The 1942 film emphasises the authority of Juan as the honourable Catholic patriarch, and that the reliable relationships between sons, fathers and brothers are key to the restoration of the 'eternal values' of Spain. Here, the crisis of the nation is associated with Acacia's succumbing to the temptations of city life, linked to the memory of leftist Republican Spain. Falangist writer and critic Giménez Caballero (1943) confirms this view in his allegorical reading of the figure of Acacia in relation to the nation:

abandonando la tradición de su hogar, las canas de sus ancianos, el respeto de sus muertos, la rectitud de una moral sagrada, se marcha un día con los más encarnizados enemigos de ese hogar, de esa "patria" o tierra de los padres. ([n.p.]

Acacia, an embodiment of Spain influenced by the '*rojos*', must be 'purified' in order to be 'cured' from the 'infection', just as the nation must rid itself of internal divisions. Franco declared in his speech of 31 December 1939 that the

relinquishing of hatred left by the war must ‘not be accomplished in the liberal manner, with enormous and disastrous amnesties, which are a deception rather than a gesture of forgiveness’. But at the same time, the solution had to be ‘Christian, achieved by means of redemption through work accompanied by repentance and penitence’ (Payne 2011: 224). This vision is reflected in the latter scenes of *La aldea maldita*, where we witness the long and painful punishment of Acacia and her wandering around the rural lands as a demonstration of her repentance and penitence (figures 2.1, 2.2). The film ends with Acacia returning to the house after suffering penance and the heroic patriarch Juan ordering his servants to prepare for a feast to receive his redemptive wife, evoking the biblical scene of the return of the prodigal son (figures 2.3, 2.4).



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



Figure 2.3



Figure 2.4

Secondly, there are aesthetic differences between the two versions, which convey distinct political messages. The 1930s version inclines toward social realism, and acknowledges the existence of social schisms in Spain by way of representing the ‘raw’ images of rural poverty. Writing about this earlier version,

Kovács (1991) notes that '[e]ven though the city is a corrupting influence, there is no longer any real alternative—the village way of life has been destroyed by drought, poverty, and neglect' (20). The film opens with the intertitle '1930 Sobre las ruinas de Castilla' and ends with the village completely deserted, thereby addressing rural poverty as a contemporary issue. On the other hand, in the 1942 version, the realistic images of poverty and desertion in the earlier version are replaced with glossy folkloric sets and chiaroscuro close-ups of the characters. In Sánchez Vidal's (2005) words, '[a] folkloric patina gleams on the surface' of this second version (18).¹⁶ The film begins with 'Castilla 1900', distantiating the filmic events away from the present post-war Spain, and portrays the rural world as 'an unearthed artefact from an older time' (15).¹⁷ The opening scene is a village celebration accompanied by a cheerful musical score (figures 2.5, 2.6). When the countryside once again 'receives God's blessing' and the land becomes fertile, the film employs shots that underscore the beauty of farmers working in great unity, the joys of harvest and the abundant crops, all of which create a sense of the harmonious community of the countryside (figures 2.7, 2.8). However, the rural world is overall visualised through a static set design, masking the materiality of the real land and perpetuating 'the fantasy of folkloric cinema' (D'Lugo 2010: 121).



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6

¹⁶ Thus, Sánchez Vidal (2005) maintains that the film does not 'face up with sufficient frankness to the two faces of the rural drama: the hunger *in situ* and the prostitution in the city' (19).

¹⁷ Rey modifies the opening intertitle to 'Castilla 1900. Cuando la ciudad divorciada del campo que la alimenta, dejaba al campesino desamparado en su lucha contra la inclemencia de los elementos. En su consecuencia, pueblos arruinados, emigraciones y éxodos iban desangrando la vida de la nación'.



Figure 2.7



Figure 2.8

Thus, the rural world of *La aldea maldita* could be characterised by what Svetlana Boym (2001) calls a ‘restorative nostalgia’, a type of longing which ‘puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps’ (41). This type of nostalgia, as opposed to a ‘reflexive nostalgia’ that dwells on ‘longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance’, engages ‘in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths’ (41). Indeed, the ‘innocent view’ of the rural, and the emphasis on the binary between the ‘good’ rural and the ‘evil’ city, emphasises this ‘restorative nostalgia’. *La aldea maldita* configures the rural space as a mythical site where national crisis can be overcome by the determination of the patriarch to return to the traditional values of Catholicism, to maintain his loyalty to the land (and nation), to reaffirm the relation between father and son, and to ‘purify’ the woman’s body so that the land can be fertile and the post-war nation can once more become productive.

2.2. ‘Defeated’ masculinities in 1940s cinema

The cinema of the 1940s, however, does not unanimously reflect the dominant fiction of the ‘strong patriarch’ which the regime had sought to propagate. As Evans (1995: 218-19) argues, even in CIFESA war epics such as *¡Harka!* (Carlos Arévalo, 1941), which celebrates male bonding and shows ‘authoritarian attitudes toward women’, one can detect a homosexual subtext between the soldiers through the use of melodramatic lighting and camera work and suggestive dialogue. The idea of masculinity seems to be more unstable and ambiguous in 1940s cinema than generally expected by modern critics. A closer look at Spanish

films from the 1940s will prove that many cinematic representations of male characters do not necessarily coincide with the ‘masculine’ values sustained by the ‘dominant fiction’ of the Franco regime.

In her seminal study *Male Subjectivities in the Margin*, Kaja Silverman (1992) discusses how the ‘historical trauma’ of World War II may have affected what she calls the ‘dominant fiction’ of American society, and undermined the ‘male subject’s aspirations to mastery and sufficiency’ (52). She argues that in Hollywood films produced during the post-World War II years, there are a number that ‘attest with unusual candor to the castrations through which the male subject is constituted’ (52).¹⁸ Drawing on Ernesto Laclau, Silverman’s conceptualisation of the ‘dominant fiction’ is ‘the mechanism by which a society “tries to institute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning, of the non-recognition of the infinite play of differences”’ (54). Dominant fictions neutralise ‘the contradictions which organise the social formation by fostering collective identifications and desires’ (54). Kaplan (2005) maintains that Silverman’s concept is significant in relation to the question of memory, since it acknowledges a cultural unconscious and like Freud, she introduces the idea that trauma is not only concerned with individual crises but also with cultural crises.¹⁹

In applying the concept to post-war Spain, we should take into account the more overt political violence involved in the construction of the dominant fiction of male identity compared to the situation of post-World War II United States. Nevertheless, what remains in the ‘unconscious’ of a culture affected by historical trauma might well have appeared in the fictional narratives of the 1940s that seem to obsessively engage with the powerlessness of the male characters and a crisis of male identity. Popular comedies of the 1940s, such as *El hombre que se quiso matar* (Rafael Gil, 1941), *Huella de luz* (Rafael Gil, 1942), *El fantasma y doña Juanita* (Rafael Gil, 1944), *Pepe Conde* (José López Rubio, 1941), *El crimen de*

¹⁸ Although her discussion focuses on *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *The Guilt of Janet Ames* (1947), she also lists *Pride of the Marines* (1945), *Hail the Conquering Hero* (1944), *State Fair* (1945), *Those Enduring Young Charms* (1945), *Lost Weekend* (1945), *Spellbound* (1945) and *Gilda* (1946).

¹⁹ Silverman (1992) draws her idea of ‘historical trauma’ from Fredric Jameson’s theory that history is ‘a force capable of inflicting injury’ (55). According to Silverman, Jameson argues that ‘history is what hurts’, and ‘attributes the painful or constraining qualities of history primarily to what he calls the “Necessity” of the political unconscious—to the great master narrative which moves us inexorably toward its predestined conclusion, whether we want to go there or not’ (55).

Pepe Conde (José López Rubio, 1946) and *Aventura* (Jerónimo Mihura, 1942) deal with inept male characters struggling in their given economic conditions, aspiring to a better place in society and suffering sexual frustrations. Other films focus on marginalised, passive and paranoiac men haunted by hidden pasts and recurrent anxieties.

Furthermore, the male characters' inability to have control over their pasts becomes one of the characteristic features of films that express the crisis of masculinity. In addition to *Vida en sombras* (1948), discussed in the previous chapter, films such as *Obsesión* (Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, 1947) and *Confidencia* (Jerónimo Mihura, 1947) deal with apparently 'respectable' men who are haunted by a crime they committed in the past. On the other hand, *Angustia* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1947) and *La calle sin sol* (Rafael Gil, 1948) both feature male protagonists frustrated professionally (a scientist and an artist) who are psychologically persecuted by crimes they did not commit. Moreover, in a particularly interesting case, *Misterio en la marisma* (Claudio de la Torre, 1943) explores the theme of transgenerational trauma. The main character is haunted by a mysterious female ghost that ultimately reveals a past crime in which his ancestor was murdered. Although these films all pursue different solutions and remedies, some contributing more to the dominant fiction than others, they express anxieties of castration and the fragile foundations on which patriarchy is constructed. These narratives, which reveal the crisis of masculinity, and which have an obsession with the past, seem to resonate with the issues that will be discussed in the study of *Un hombre*.

At first glance, the apparently restorative narrative and celebration of the rural in the 1949 film *Un hombre* also seem to comply with the Franco regime's agenda that appears in films such as *La aldea maldita*. However, this is not the case. As I go on to discuss in the next section, *Un hombre* situates the rural world in a different landscape that entails it serving a more complex function in relation to gender, history and nation.

3. The rural landscape of *Un hombre va por el camino*

3.1. From the *meseta* to the mountains

If *La aldea maldita* (1942) configures the imaginary *meseta* as the eternal ‘hearth’ of a Spain that was saved from crisis and unified under a patriarchal figure—in this case Juan—the rural landscape of *Un hombre* is attached to different historical, social and cultural imaginaries. Let us turn to the director Mur Oti’s use of landscape. Natural landscapes are frequently featured in Mur Oti’s films.²⁰ Whereas *Condenados* (1953) depicts the arid lands of the vast *meseta*, *Fedra* (1956) foregrounds the sea and a coastal fishing village. In *Orgullo* (1955), Mur Oti revisits the mountains, this time featuring a forest, river and valley. In these films Mur Oti utilises natural landscapes not to promote pastoral images of the rural world, but to stage tensions and anxieties that articulate what cannot be enunciated otherwise. Pérez Perucha (1999) states that ‘land’ becomes one of the central themes in Mur Oti’s films:

Ella no es sólo la base del sustento material de esos personajes, sino concreción cuasi mítica de su mentalidad y aspiraciones, firme anclaje de sus construcciones imaginarias y elemento desencadenador de las pulsiones que los constituyen, parcialmente, como sujeto. (15)

Santos Zunzunegui (2002) draws our attention to the *estilización* (or schematisation) of Mur Oti’s films, which underscores the ‘mythological’ aspect of the landscapes, characters and narratives. He writes that Mur Oti

no recurrirá a la ubicación de sus historias sobre el fondo que ofrecen las referencias a toda una serie de elementos de corte simbólico susceptibles de desviar el relato de cualquier realismo a ras de suelo. De esta manera el cine de Mur Oti, abrirá sus ficciones (hará un huevo en su interior) para la receptividad de toda clase de voces inmemoriales, relatos primigenios que la separarán de la

²⁰ González Requena (1988) maintains that Mur Oti’s films should be located within the tradition of Spanish rural dramas. However, this chapter highlights Mur Oti’s specific uses of landscape, and takes into account the film’s intertextual reference to Hollywood films and genres.

contaminación de cualquier color local para hacerla abreviar en fuentes más esenciales que actuarán de matriz básica para la inscripción del relato. (50)

I concur with Zunzunegui that Mur Oti's films generally lack the iconography that would identify their geographic location or historical period. Yet, I would also stress that these landscapes cannot be *completely* detached from historical references or national imaginaries. Zunzunegui's view can be further refined, as I would argue that Mur Oti's abstract *estilización* allows the text to open itself up to a more complex seeing or reading of the landscape. As Fowler and Helfield (2006), quoting Paul Willemen, write in their introduction to *Representing the Rural*, 'land or landscape' becomes

itself a layered set of discourses [...] a text in its own right [...] not subordinated to character and plot development but a discursive terrain with the same weight and requiring the same attention as the other discourses that structure and move the text [as it becomes] a site where the dynamic of history can be read (7).

We could say that Mur Oti's landscapes also invoke (albeit obliquely) the existence of layered historical discourses.

Monte Oscuro was filmed in *Picos de Europa*, located among the regions of Asturias, Cantabria and Castilla y León. For cinematographer Manuel Berenguer, it was a 'maravilloso lugar que Mur Oti descubrió para el cine español' (Llinás 1989: 189). Although *Un hombre* never fixes the space onto a specific town or region on the map, the images of small valleys surrounded by mountains strongly evoke the Asturian landscape. One might read into the landscape the political connotations of Asturias, known for the miners' strike of October 1934, which developed into an armed insurrection against the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (CEDA)'s entry into the Republican government. The uprising was suppressed by troops led by General Franco himself, but the region remained loyal to the Republican government during the Civil War.

Writers and intellectuals have also engaged with the landscape of Asturias to discuss the nation. In the post-war years, Falangist writers such as Ernesto

Giménez Caballero tried to rhetorically recuperate the Asturian landscape for the nationalist cause. In *Afirmaciones sobre Asturias* (1945), he criticised Ortega y Gasset's earlier view of Asturias as a '*valle diferencial*', a view which stressed the plurality of the small villages with which the region was constructed.²¹ Ortega y Gasset's vision of Asturias appears in his landscape essay of 1916 titled 'De Madrid a Asturias o los dos paisajes', in which he describes the journey from Castile to Asturias, comparing the two regions and their distinct world views. When Ortega says that 'Lo primero que mirando hacia Asturias vemos los castellanos es que no vemos' (2004: 383), Ortega is cunningly presenting both his visual observation of the multiple small, foggy valleys surrounded by mountains along with his metaphysical observations on the act of viewing different cultures.²² The Castilian traveller who finds it difficult to adjust to the topography of Asturias eventually surrenders his Castilian perspective to the transformative influence of the Asturian landscape. Lane Kauffmann (1987) explains that here 'Ortega calls the capacity to transcend one's narrow perspective "the most delicate human faculty"', and exhorts Castilians to respect the other regions and viewpoints of Spain' (116). Ortega y Gasset's 'liberal' projections on Asturias were subsequently revoked by Giménez Caballero (1945): 'Tras esta hipótesis "liberal" y "fraccionadora" del paisaje en Asturias tenía que asomar a los pocos años lo que asomó: el Estatuto catalán, el separatismo vasco y la revolución minera de estos propios valles asturianos' (10). Instead of looking at these scattered and isolated valleys, Giménez Caballero turns his attention to the sublime mountains, which he calls 'la cabeza hispánica'. These mountains, in his mind, symbolise the primitive origins of Spain and the greatness of the Hispanic race. He even reworks Ortega y Gasset's description of the 'fog' as '*el aliento de la valle*', which originally alluded to the lives of the peoples of each individual valley, to make it a magical veil that anoints the entire region in totality ('mágico

²¹ See 'De Madrid a Asturias o los dos paisajes' in Ortega y Gasset (2004: 377-392).

²² Ortega y Gasset describes the Asturian landscape as follows: 'Apenas abandona la córnea se encuentra enredada en una sustancia algodonosa donde pierde su ruta cien veces: es la niebla, la niebla perdurable que sube a bocanadas, como un aliento hondo del valle. Al través de ella, cayendo y levantando, azorada y temblorosa, logra la mirada castellana rehacerse, y sola, en medio de la niebla, recoge sus bríos y da una postrera arrancada rectilínea. ¡Paf! A la mitad de su carrera choca definitivamente con algo imperforable: es la vertiente frontera del valle, la loma de la collada vecina, la frente del cerro que corona el ámbito' (384).

velo que desde arriba tiende alguna deidad majestuosa, ungiendo de *unidad* todo un ámbito inmenso') (10). In reference to the 1934 uprising and regional separatism, Giménez Caballero's reworking of the Asturian landscape was clearly in accord with the Falangist purposes and its own political desires. Such meanings that might underlie the rural landscapes of *Un hombre* also evoke traces of historical trauma.

Whether Mur Oti had political intentions in choosing this landscape is not clear. Nevertheless, the following comment, made by the director about the earlier version of the screenplay, includes some references to the Civil War. This shows that his views were quite distant from the dominant perceptions represented by figures like Giménez Caballero, who continued to negate 'the others within' post-war Spanish society. In a 1979 interview with Antonio Gregori (2009), Mur Oti affirmed that he had to change the script due to pressure from the censors. The first version, according to Mur Oti, was based on a 'true' story about a Spanish doctor who served in the International Brigades:

al ser condenado y puesto después en libertad, se apartó de la vida, de su profesión de cirujano en Madrid, y recorrió los pueblos vestido de vagabundo. En esta etapa de su vida salvó la de un muchacho que había caído bajo un tractor en la provincia de Córdoba y le salvó transformándose de vagabundo en cirujano ante el asombro de aquella pequeña comunidad. Después, la familia del niño premió la labor silenciosa y abnegada del hombre devolviéndole a su vida activa, logrando el perdón de sus aparentes culpas y reintegrándole a su profesión de verdad con todos los honores. (25)

This story suggests that not only had Mur Oti intended to make a film about an ex-doctor who is redeemed from his 'sins' as a Republican supporter by rescuing a child's life, but also a film about reconciliation and the acceptance of the 'other'. Interestingly, the final production preserves the revelation of the 'secret identity' of the *vagabundo*.

Here we might recall the fate of the many Republican supporters who had to manipulate or suppress their identity during the difficult early post-war period. As

Julián Casanova (2013) describes it: '[m]any lost their jobs; others, particularly in rural areas, were forced to move to new cities or villages. [...] For those who were not so firmly committed [...] Francoism imposed silence in order for them to survive, forcing them to erase their own identity' (188). Furthermore, during the 1940s there were also those who continued in their resistance to the dictatorship—the so-called *maquis*—who initially escaped into the mountains of Andalucía, Asturias, León and Galicia and remained there in order to hide from persecution (188).²³ As I will go on to argue in the following section, the rural space of *Un hombre* is configured so as to bring out these questions concerning hidden and secret identities.²⁴ I will suggest that *Un hombre* breaks away from the sorts of idealisations of the nation expressed in Giménez Caballero's writings; instead, it depicts the rural space as a melancholic and wounded world with its internal conflicts.

3.2. The melancholy of the rural world

Rather than stressing the country/city divide and opposing the bucolic rural to the corrupted city, *Un hombre* presents the rural world itself as inherently divided, locating Monte Oscuro *tres leguas*, about 12 km away from the nearest village of Tierra Vieja. Tierra Vieja is imagined as a conservative, intolerant and stuffy rural settlement. In the opening scene, the mayor of Tierra Vieja finds Luis walking down the road toward the village. Although at first he sympathetically offers Luis a local job, once Luis rejects his offer, the mayor forbids him from entering the village, remarking 'No queremos vagabundos'. Throughout the film, the villagers are shown either gossiping about others in the village shop or attending church mass. From the conversations between Julia and the villagers which take place when she occasionally visits Tierra Vieja, we see that, despite how far away she

²³ Cazorla Sánchez (2010) also narrates such resistances: 'Many republicans, refusing to accept defeat, headed for the mountains. The price for those who tried to wage a guerrilla war (very active between 1944 and 1949) was high, and weighed heavily on their relatives. In their fight against the communist-dominated guerrillas, the Francoist forces habitually used family members as hostages, knowing that fugitives would feel responsible for the fate of their loved ones. Mothers, wives, sisters, and even children –anybody could be forced to betray or used to convince the guerrillas to surrender'. Cazorla provides an account of a man from Asturias who had witnessed these events that took place in his family (29).

²⁴ The displacement of issues of political power onto the melodramatic realm of the family is a formula which has frequently been used in both Nationalist and dissident Spanish cinema (Kinder 1993: 59).

lives, the villagers are carefully monitoring Julia's life. No one, however, offers to go to Monte Oscuro and help her out in the fields.

'Monte Oscuro' ('Dark Mountain'), as suggested by its name, is a space cast out from this local community. It is an abandoned place, and undesirable for the rest of the world ('A Monte Oscuro nadie viene por gusto', 'Por esta finca no hay quien de céntimo a mí. Está demasiado lejos para que nadie quiera comprar'). It is also imagined as an uncanny space, and at one point in the film, Julia pleads Luis not to go, disclosing her anxiety of living in Monte Oscuro alone with her daughter:

He esperado tres años a que subiera alguien a la cumbre, y ahora cuando llega usted... Anoche no quise decírselo pero ahora no me importa. Tengo miedo ahí arriba. Los inviernos son horribles en Monte Oscuro. Dígame que no se irá.

Luis's initial encounter with Monte Oscuro, too, is visually expressed as intimidating. Julia's grim stone house overlooking the valleys below is captured in an extreme low-angle shot against the surrounding towering mountains. The shot is accentuated with a musical score which produces a sense of dread rather than homely attraction. '¡Qué barbaridad! ¿Quién diablo sería capaz de vivir aquí? Hace falta tener valor...', Luis gasps upon his arrival (figures 2.9, 2.10). These location shots not only provide a sense of the 'authentic' outdoors, but, as cinematographer Manuel Berenguer testified in an interview, also create an 'ambiente irreal' (Llinás 1989: 193). 'Natural effects' such as fog, dark clouds and rain are used to enhance the atmosphere, which can easily change the sublime images of beautiful valleys and mountains into complete darkness. Whereas the 'rural world' of *La aldea maldita* (1942) relies heavily on studio set designs to 'naturalise' Francoist notions of the rural world, *Un hombre* foregrounds real landscapes to 'defamiliarise' the 'tamed' versions of the rural in folkloric films.



Figure 2.9



Figure 2.10

The rural world of *Un hombre* is characterised by a pervading sense of melancholy. It is a space that foregrounds loss and longing. But the origins of such loss are made extremely difficult to pin down. This is reminiscent of what Freud tried to describe as the characteristic of melancholia. Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917) forms part of a series of essays in which he addressed the trauma of war.²⁵ He sought to differentiate melancholia from mourning as two distinct but related forms of loss. The object of their loss may be similar (people, places, ideals, potential), and they may display similar traits of pain and suffering, but what separates them is the manner in which that loss is dealt with, and the obscurity that is associated with the lost object. In mourning, Freud claims, there is 'nothing about the loss that is unconscious' (*SE XIV*: 245). Since the loss is consciously perceived as detached from the ego, the mourner's identity remains intact. While the ego laments the departure of the lost object, the passing of time will eventually allow the ego to free its libido from the lost object. However, in melancholia, the patient him/herself cannot consciously perceive what he/she has lost (245). This, Freud maintains, derives from a certain ambivalence in the relation with the lost object: 'In melancholia [...] countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault' (256). These struggles in melancholia may only be found in the unconscious, or in 'the region of the memory-traces of *things*' (original emphasis: 256).

²⁵ Other essays include 'The Uncanny' (1919), 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' (1915), 'On Transience' (1916) and 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920).

Both the landscape and the characters of *Un hombre* evoke this sense of melancholy. Although Julia suggests that her husband Enrique's death was caused by an illness, the film seems to be expressing more loss. Julia and her deceased husband's pasts are revealed only disjunctively, through the 'memory traces' of the film, such as Julia's brief mention of their past and the objects that remain in the house. These traces raise more questions, rather than provide secure information about the identity of the characters. If *La aldea maldita* (1942) presents Juan's family as inherently belonging to the rural world and as the 'legitimate' heirs of their land, *Un hombre* suggests that neither Julia nor Enrique are 'natural' inhabitants of this rural world. For example, Julia's more glamorous past is hinted at in a shot of a photograph placed on her dresser, alluding to a past that might be associated with the city. Julia tells Luis that Enrique was a writer, and that she also contributed to his last book, *Critica de la relación humana*. Enrique's bookshelf in the house is full of books by Darwin, Bergson and Nietzsche, revealing an alternative identity to that of a simple farmer. Luis's response to these books also indicates that he too is not the simple *vagabundo* that he appears. Apart from both Julia's and Luis's critical comments on Darwin's concept of human evolution, criticism which may have resonated with the conservative Catholicism of the Francoist regime, the film does not make any particular judgements about the authors, such as Bergson or Nietzsche, whom some might relate to the origins of fascism. Instead, Julia laments Enrique's unfulfilled dream of constructing a utopia in Monte Oscuro—a fantasy world of "perfect humanity"—'sólo podía existir en su libro'. But Julia, as a struggling single mother, also recalls the status of many Spanish women in the aftermath of the war. Morcillo (2010) notes that, 'according to police reports, single mothers were to be found mostly in the rural areas and among the urban lower classes' (103). These elements evoke an inherent loss and 'ideological defeat' whose cause cannot be adequately traced back, but can only become uncannily recognisable through images and words.

The sense of loss and alienation that prevails in Monte Oscuro through the 'memory traces' of Enrique and Julia might further be compared to the sentiments of many Spanish intellectuals in the margins (either Republicans or disillusioned

Nationalists), disenchanted by the consequences of the Civil War and locked in a state of what Paul Ilie (1980) calls ‘inner exile’. Ilie has argued that the Spanish exile of the post-war years encompassed not only those who were physically forced to leave the country for fear of persecution, but also those who remained or migrated within Spain as economic refugees, or who experienced ‘the subtler forms of internal uprooting: imprisonment, political clandestinity, economic ostracism, moral excision by a triumphant society, disillusioned repatriation, and still other marginal modes known to “outsiders” unhappy with authoritarianism’ (3).²⁶

One of the significant points that Ilie makes is that if ‘exile’ includes both physical and mental separation that ‘removes people from other people and their way of life’, it involves a process of excision that is reciprocal (2). These mutual wounds are in fact suggested in *Un hombre*. Monte Oscuro is portrayed as the space of the alienated, and Tierra Vieja also reveals itself as a community which suffers its losses: widows mourn their dead husbands, the village church lacks an organist to play tunes for the mass, and the doctor is unable to find his successor. Thus, *Un hombre* does not place the two spaces in complete opposition to each other (like the dichotomous construction of the rural and the city in *La aldea maldita*). Instead, the film stresses the ‘division within’ the rural world in its entirety. This spatial configuration of the rural landscape alludes to the condition of post-war society where schisms and losses are repressed—the condition that the melancholic nation is unable to articulate.

3.3. Crisis of masculinity

From the beginning, *Un hombre* leaves traces that allude to the question of masculinity and trauma. The images of ‘castration’ are emphasised through the opening shots of the film that reveal Luis’s bare toe sticking out of his broken shoe as he recites a verse from Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (2010). Besides the apparent humour of a tramp reading Shakespeare, the reference to this particular play implies that *Un hombre* is also about disguised identities and both

²⁶ These are the excluded lives that Victor Erice so delicately portrays in *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973).

resistance and conformity to ‘normative’ gender roles.²⁷ Beneath the story of a man disguised as a carefree *vagabundo* lies a story about a man’s inability to ‘tame’ his wife. This also translates into his failure to ‘tame’ or ‘overcome’ his past.

Luis’s ambivalent relationship with Monte Oscuro expresses his resistance to comply with the ‘normative’ male identities constructed by the Francoist dominant fiction. Silverman (1990) has noted that the films about male trauma in post- Second World War Hollywood films deal with a ‘loss of faith in the familiar and self-evident’ (114). Men who had experienced the traumas of war lost their sense of familiarity in the places they used to occupy:

The hero no longer feels ‘at home’ in the house or town where he grew up, and resists cultural (re)assimilation; he has been dislodged from the narratives and subject-positions which make up the dominant fiction, and he returns to those narratives and subject-positions only under duress. (1990: 114)

We could say that *Un hombre* demonstrates a similarly dislodged ‘unhomeliness’ experienced by the traumatised male of post-war Spain.²⁸ We are not aware of the true reason for Luis’s resistance to the idea of ‘home’ until the end of the film. However, at one point, his trauma as the ‘defeated male’ in relation to the war is suggested when he expresses that he had given up fighting for what he believed in. Luis tells Julia that ‘Cuando no se puede luchar, es preferible hacer lo que yo, andar por ahí’.

Through Luis, we find a resistant voice to the ‘normative ideas’ that the dominant fiction of Francoist society expects of men. Luis’s reluctance is first represented by his unwillingness to work. Obviously, this clashes with the regime’s intention to promote the image of Spanish peasants and their work ethic. As Richards (1996) notes, ‘[t]he essence of the Spanish character was usually

²⁷ The verse Luis recites is taken from a scene where one of Bianca’s suitors, Gremio, boasts about the various ‘riches’ he possesses in order to marry Bianca. ‘First, as you know, my house within the city, is richly furnished with plate and gold [...]’ (*The Taming of the Shrew* II.1.214-5). Sneering at this line, Luis complains that what he really needs is a pair of new boots, and leaves the book on the ground to continue his journey.

²⁸ Homi Bhabha (1994) has also argued that ‘the unhomely moment relates traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence’ (11).

seen as being embodied in the virtues of the Spanish small-holding peasantry of Castile: hard-working, thrifty, selfless, stoical and with an allegiance to the spiritual concept of Spain' (154). More importantly, Luis's attitude defies 'the regimentation of labour' with which the Francoist State of autarky tried to cement its own authority. For Francoism,

work constituted 'one of the most noble attributes of hierarchy and honour' and the right to work was 'a consequence of the duty imposed on man by God, for the compliance of his individual objectives and the prosperity and grandeur of the *Patria*. [...] Work, as a social duty, will be required of all Spaniards without excuse [...] because it is esteemed as an obligatory tribute to the national patrimony'. (Richards 1998: 84)

Furthermore, Luis repeatedly shows his discomfort with Enrique's portraits, which associate the patriarch with Francoist ethics of work and 'idealised masculinity'. His portraits are all magnified with phallic symbols—a spade, a rifle or a pen—underscoring Enrique's virility and authority (figure 2.11). Nevertheless, Luis repeatedly mocks these images and refuses to become like Enrique: 'Hombre, éste debe ser el difunto. Pobrecillo. Retratado en el lugar de su martirio. Ahora comprendo tu muerte. ¡Hiciste bien, chico!'



Figure 2.11



Figure 2.12

In a different scene, Luis subverts the idealised image of Enrique as a strong patriarch. When Luis gets wet in the rain after a day's work in the field, Julia prepares her husband's clothes for him. Her daughter, Blanca, asks whether Luis

will fit into them. Julia's confident reply to her daughter is soon undermined when Luis appears at the top of the staircase in completely undersized clothes (figure 2.12). While Blanca climbs up the stairs, laughing at this 'spectacle', Julia sinks into a chair, shocked by the sight (figure 2.13). A strong sense of loss permeates this scene, coming both from the recognition of Enrique's physical death and also from the misrecognition of what she believed Enrique to be. The melodramatic score accompanies the image of Julia sitting by the table, disheartened. This shot carefully frames Julia with objects that connote Enrique's absence in order to express her emotional state. In this highly melodramatic scene, the sharply contrasting of lighting, which duplicates the multiple objects in the frame with shadows, dramatizes the elusiveness of identity and memory, just as Julia herself comments later in a close-up: 'Es raro lo que nos pasa con las personas a las que hemos querido. Cuando se van para no volver. Al recordarla las vemos siempre mejor. Más buenos, más hermosos... más fuertes'.



Figure 2.13



Figure 2.14

The scene implies a kind of double castration; both Enrique's image as the patriarch and Luis's inadequacy are underscored. The traditional 'economy of the gaze' in classical cinema, theorised by Laura Mulvey (1986), is subverted. In Mulvey's theory, the audience is aligned with the male gaze and the heroine is made a passive object of erotic spectacle. But *Un hombre* insists on showing Luis's bodily lack as object of the spectator's gaze. The film frequently makes his castrated image the object of spectacle, especially through a close-up display of his ragged clothes, and his toe peeping out of his broken shoe (figure 2.15). Furthermore, as the effeminate man—and in a reversal of the Cinderella fairy

tale—Luis finds that Enrique’s shoes fit him perfectly. Luis’s transient figure as the *vagabundo* in Monte Oscuro introduces to the film an alternative perspective that potentially inverts or inflects established social values.²⁹

4. Fantasising the motherland utopia

If *La aldea maldita* projects Francoist fantasies of a paternal fatherland, *Un hombre* constructs its rural fantasies in a more complex way, by linking the land to the feminine. In this sense, the name ‘Monte Oscuro’ can be associated with Freud’s use of the term ‘dark continent’, describing the mother’s womb and the enigma of female sexuality.³⁰ Freud’s characterisation may well have reflected his own trouble with theorising ‘female sexuality’; *Un hombre* also displays the unsettling feelings of the male character in his relationship to Monte Oscuro, which parallels Luis’s own anxieties concerning masculinity and his unstable place in the world. On one hand, Monte Oscuro is constructed as a ‘fantasy space’ that offers Luis a safe and maternal place where he can seek his recovery of a lost ‘homeliness’. On the other hand, that Julia is portrayed as both ‘maternal’ and ‘sexual’ evokes in Luis an ‘unhomeliness’ that triggers the return of his repressed trauma. This section will focus on the former: the ways in which the film presents the (impossible) utopic fantasies of a recovery of the mother in the figure of Julia.

Regardless of her disheartened remark that her husband’s utopia ‘sólo podía existir en su libro’, the film’s most attractive and powerful scenes focus on the utopic reconstruction of a ‘homely’ space in Monte Oscuro driven by the maternal figure, Julia. For Luis, the return to Monte Oscuro evokes the dream of an imaginary union with the motherland. Explaining the psychoanalytical account of fantasy, Cowie (1997) asserts that ‘[f]antasy is an imagined scene in which the subject is a protagonist, and which always represents the fulfilment of a wish

²⁹ Fowler and Helfield (2006) write that not only is ‘the rural’ represented from an urban perspective, but that ‘there are other subjectivities that fall between or outside these polarized realms that also require examination: these are the tourists, visiting friends and family, or members of a diasporic culture who feel both connected to and alienated from the rural milieu and its people and who, by virtue of their interstitial position, bring critical attention not only to the boundaries demarcating between urban and rural and between inside and outside but also to the sliding scale of values assigned to them’ (2).

³⁰ In ‘The Question of Lay Analysis’, Freud (1926) addresses female sexuality as the ‘dark continent’. Freud writes: ‘We know less about the sexual life of little girls than of boys. But we need not feel ashamed of this distinction; after all, the sexual life of adult women is a ‘dark continent’ for psychology’ (*SE XX* : 212).

albeit that its representation is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes' (127). Similarly, the scenes that focus on the relationship between Luis, Julia, Blanca and the land of Monte Oscuro can be read as just such an enactment of Luis's defensive process, where he can fantasise a 'homely' space which he had lost in the past. Without facing his repressed past, where he was traumatised by his wife's adultery and by his daughter's death, Luis is able to play the role of the temporary 'father/husband' for Blanca and Julia.

Julia's figure as mother and her attachment to the land are crucial in this fantasy. In Mur Oti's films, the female characters are intimately connected with nature, often becoming their embodiment. Castro de Paz (2002) also finds in *Un hombre* the merging of land and woman as 'un *par* indisociable y casi cósmico' (188). Quoting Pérez Perucha, he notes that in Mur Oti's films, the points of comparison between the woman and land range from 'su fecundidad hasta su indomeñabilidad, desde su potencia a su periódica hosquedad' (in Castro de Paz 2002: 186). Indeed, woman embodies landscape in Mur Oti's films, but landscape also becomes her accomplice to convey her inexpressible desires and emotions.³¹ Under early Francoism, when the depiction of sexual matters was severely restricted by censorship, Mur Oti's films often used landscapes as means to express 'untameable desire', not only of the male characters, but also of the female protagonists. One significant example is *Fedra* (1956), which identifies the sea with the female character Estrella, and stages her desire for her husband's beautiful son and her consequent tragic death. This is not to say that these women were depicted as progressive female figures, and I agree with Arocena (1999) that the women in Mur Oti's films cannot constitute themselves as 'agentes libres' (112). Nonetheless, Julia's identification with land deserves a closer examination to understand her as both desiring and desired woman.

If *La aldea maldita* strictly confines the wife's space to the domestic realm (Juan impedes Acacia from going out into the fields: 'Tú lugar es la casa'), *Un hombre* depicts Julia's direct involvement with land as positive and even erotic.

³¹ This could be compared with what Martin Lefebvre (2006), drawing on Eisenstein's theories of film music, refers to the 'musicality' of landscape. As Lefebvre states, 'landscape was to silent film what music is to sound film: "landscape is a complex bearer of the possibilities of a plastic interpretation of emotions"' (xii).

Thus, I disagree with González (2012) when he says that in ‘[t]he beginning of the film [*Un hombre*] shows a dysfunctional organism because it is the woman who is working the land’. ‘According to the National-Catholic ideology’, he continues, ‘women are not prepared to fulfil this task and, therefore, this “anomaly” needs to be fixed’ (218). Rather, I would argue that it is the scenes of Julia and the land that are privileged in the film. Julia becomes the embodiment of land through her own proximity to and identification with it. In one scene, Julia tells Luis that Blanca was born on the day she and her husband collected their first harvest. Julia and the land of Monte Oscuro are presented as nurturing and protective. For Julia, the act of cultivating the land in Monte Oscuro is not only a means of survival for her and her daughter, but also signifies her desire to carve out a space independent from Tierra Vieja, where stricter moral codes control the lives of women. The contradictory attitudes shown by the village women—who call her a ‘Santa’, yet are scandalised by the fact that she has a man in her house to help her—only highlights Julia’s relative freedom and happiness that she is able to maintain when she is working the land. As if to dismiss Luis’s comment on her ‘weakness’ as woman (‘Es usted demasiado débil para un oficio tan duro, señora’), the film *shows* Julia’s relationship with land as empowering. Her body is projected against the breath-taking open-air scenes, setting her in tune with the natural environment as she tends the fields. When she is out in the fields with Luis she is portrayed as a more lively person than when she is in the domestic realm of the house; her bodily movements are more dynamic and her physical strength is emphasised. In the land, she appears to be more in control than Luis; whereas Julia walks firmly down the slopes of her field, Luis stumbles and requires her helping hand.

One of the most climatic moments of the film is a seductive scene between Luis and Julia, mediated by land. Julia teaches him the beauty of, and entices him to work in, the virgin land. The ceremonial and melodramatic sequence is much assisted by music and the *mise-en-scène*, set up as if the breaking of soil were a religious act. But paradoxically it is charged with sexual connotations that problematically imply sexual consummation between Luis and Julia (as mother):

Julia: Hínque la cuchilla en la tierra, apriete luego para que cale hondo y al guiar procure que el surco salga derecho. ¿Quiere creer

que me emociona este momento?

Luis: ¿Por qué?

Julia: Porque es tierra virgen. Nadie sembró en ella jamás.

Although Luis is at first reluctant to work, he picks up some soil in his hands and repeats her words. He takes off his hat as a gesture of respect to the land and the virgin. The montage sequence begins with Julia whipping the cattle and encouraging him to move the plough. The camera switches to a close-up tracking shot of a plough digging the soil, then cuts to another tracking shot of the lower half of Julia's body. The folds of her skirt act as a graphic match to the furrows in the field created by Luis. The camera stops and tilts up to show Julia's whole body. She stands firmly with her hand on her waist and her face lit up, looking happy and satisfied. The orchestral music reaches a climax while the camera cuts between Luis ploughing and Julia pulling the yoke (figures 2.15-2.18).



Figure 2.15

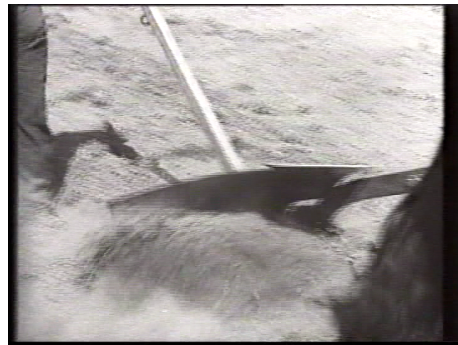


Figure 2.16



Figure 2.17



Figure 2.18

This sequence ends with the two sowing the fields as Julia sings a Castilian folk song:

Allá arriba, en aquella montaña,
Yo planté una caña
Yo planté una flor
Para labrador, labrador ha de ser
Que coja las mulas y se vaya a arar
Y a medianoche me venga a buscar.

The lyrics above contain a sexual innuendo linking her desire for the ‘ploughing’ man and her wish for his courtship (‘a medianoche me venga a buscar’). The previous visual images and the song allegorically represent the penetrated and inseminated virgin land.

Un hombre treats Julia’s figure in a truly complex way, which both complies with but sometimes transgresses Francoist notions of motherhood. At first, she appears as a model of the strong and even threatening ‘phallic’ mother who replaces the absent patriarch, when she orders Luis to work the land. Marsha Kinder (1993) argues that in what she calls the ‘Spanish Oedipal Narrative’, ‘mothers frequently stand in for the missing father as the embodiment of patriarchal law and thereby become an obstacle both to the erotic desire of the daughter and to the mimetic desire of the son’ (198). However, instead of becoming an ‘obstacle’, Julia turns into the pre-Oedipal, seductive mother who invites the son to identify her with and express his nostalgic yearning for the lost mother.

During the first half of the film, which focuses on Julia’s relation to land and Luis’s involvement in Monte Oscuro, she is depicted as a mother figure to Luis, rather than as a woman. She is the provider to satisfy Luis’s basic needs: shelter, food and clothing. Her appearance as the idealised rural mother, in her traditional peasant clothes and headscarf, recalls the image of the imaginary mother fantasised by Marcelino the orphan child in *Marcelino pan y vino* (Ladislao Vajda, 1955). Reworking Freudian theories about the identity formation of the child, Jacques Lacan shifts Freud’s biological discussions to a concern with language, paying more attention to the pre-Oedipal stage and its pleasures. As Kaplan (1992) explains, ‘Lacan stresses how we come to be *sexed* subjects, how sexual difference operates on the unconscious level, namely that of the “Imaginary,” set

in opposition to the level of culture, the Law, and language that he calls the “Symbolic” (30). Even after the child’s entry into the Symbolic, in the Lacanian system ‘the child/adult [...] never forgets the world of the Imaginary, and he/she continues to desire, unconsciously, the illusory oneness with the mother he/she experienced’ (30).³² Luis’s imaginary and illusory oneness with the mother is most notably enhanced in *Un hombre* through the use of Julia’s voice-over. In the early moments of the film, the voice-over is used in Luis’s interior monologues, in which he articulates his cynical comments, connoting both his distance from the world and the fact that his ego is in full control. The change begins when Julia’s voice echoes in his mind when he starts working in the fields. Her voice-over returns when Luis travels away from Monte Oscuro and witnesses farmers harvesting in the golden fields (figures 2.19, 2.20). Emanating from the landscape, Julia’s voice is accompanied by an extra-diegetic music of a hymn-like tune:

¿Usted no ha visto un campo de trigo en verano? Es algo muy hermoso. Este pedazo de tierra parecerá un mar de oro cuando llegue el junio. En verano gozaremos viendo las espigas. Nosotros haremos todas las faenas. Y si usted quiere, levantaremos un pequeño molino para hacer también la harina, y que sea nuestro, por entero, el pan de cada día.

These words, which were articulated by Julia in an earlier scene, return to Luis in a softer voice through the voice-over. The pre-Oedipal child, in the Lacanian formula, ‘seeks to become the object of her [i.e. the mother’s] desire’ (Evans 1996: 128). Mediated by her disembodied voice, Julia’s desire becomes Luis’s desire. In *Un hombre*, Julia’s gentle and seductive, but disembodied voice-over evokes a pleasurable and attractive space for the male subject.³³

Although it is rare for early post-war Spanish cinema to use a woman’s voice-over for such purposes, Mur Oti had already directed his attention to

³² Madelon Sprengnether (1990) argues that Freud was unable to integrate the regressive urges focused on the desire to return to the mother into his progressive model of human civilisation and Oedipal masculinity.

³³ In his study of the voice-over, Chion (1999) uses the image of the ‘umbilical cord’: ‘In the beginning, in the uterine darkness, was the voice, the Mother’s voice. For the child once born, the mother is more an olfactory and vocal continuum than an image. Her voice originates in all points of space, while her form enters and leaves the visual field’ (61).

regressive male desire and the maternal voice in another film, called *Cuatro mujeres* (Antonio del Amo, 1947). Written by Mut Oti, the film depicts four men who discuss their memories of an old love affair, but eventually discover that she is the same woman. The film traces their inability to capture the ‘true’ identity of the woman, as each of the men are obsessed with the woman’s different bodily parts (her eyes, her hands, her voice and her ‘image’). For one of the men, who was once a young sailor fleeing from a gang, it was her soft voice, which reminded him of his mother. In one sequence, the sailor tells the woman that he recognises her from her voice, which had already appeared in his dream prior to their encounter.



Figure 2.19



Figure 2.20

The mother’s voice, which provokes the regressive desire of a utopic union with the lost mother, is thus repeated in *Un hombre*. For Luis, the return to Monte Oscuro is not caused by a desire to marry Julia and resume his place as the patriarch. Up to this point in the film, their mutual connection has been communicated only through the land, and never in words. In this safe haven of Monte Oscuro, where the Father is absent, Luis can imagine the fantasy of a return to a Utopian union with the motherland. *Un hombre* privileges these scenes of maternal unity and harmony against the more traumatic sequences of the film that unfold toward the end. Because of this contrast, we feel that this utopic fantasy is framed precisely as ‘fantasy’, or a veil which conceals the repressed anxieties of both Luis and the film.

5. Melodrama and the return of the repressed

This last section attempts to read several scenes that unveil Luis's anxieties concerning his past and consider how they might be related to *Un hombre's* melodramatic shift. Despite the positive reception of the film upon release, many contemporary critics expressed their disappointment with the later sequences of the film, which seemed to dislocate its texture. Marías (1992) notes that, despite Mur Oti's relatively successful directorial debut, critics generally dismissed his body of work because of the film's melodramatic tone and the extreme situations in which the characters are placed.³⁴ Thus, one critic wrote that Mur Oti's second film, *Cielo negro* (1951), a melodrama about the tragic story of a young woman who gradually goes blind, 'reflejaba ya esa violencia barroca que iría, poco a poco, amañerando toda la obra de Mur Oti' (cited in Marías 1992: 25). Elsewhere, another critic argued that the director's 'gran defecto' was 'su tendencia al barroquismo y a explotar con toda clase de excesos formales las situaciones límites' (cited in Marías 1992: 31). Mur Oti's inclination toward melodrama and certain 'excesses' are manifest in *Un hombre*. These elements annoyed one critic, who wrote in the periodical *ABC* that '[l]os tópicos del peor de los folletones se han acumulado para engendrar esta producción deforme' (anon. 1949: 29). Dissatisfaction with the 'deformity' or 'imbalance' of the film are also echoed in another contemporary critic's comment, who asserted that

hubiera sido excepcional [...] si hubiera mantenido el ritmo y el interés del relato, que ahora se quiebra y se hace artificioso en su segunda mitad, concretamente, cuando el vagabundo se afeita para descubrirnos al hombre culto y sensible que creía haber renunciado al amor para siempre. (Barbero 1950: 6)

The critics' use of words such as '*folletón*' or '*artificioso*' connote their distrust of melodrama, in contrast with their high praise for the realist aesthetic (as discussed at the beginning of this chapter).

³⁴ Marías (1992) affirms that critics have gradually relegated the director from Spanish film history without providing in-depth studies of his films. Thus, as early as 1958 Hernández Marcos wrote in the magazine *Film Ideal* that Mur Oti 'entró con buen pie en el cine' but his subsequent films 'no lo fueron tanto y sobre Mur Oti cayeron las críticas más duras' (11).

Although in Spain critics have long been reluctant to take film melodramas seriously, Anglo-American film theories from the 1970s onward have engaged positively with melodrama and reevaluated its significance as genre, mode and sensibility (Gledhill 1987; Elsaesser 1987; Nowell-Smith 1987; Williams 1998; Mercer and Shingler 2004; Kaplan 2005).³⁵ Most studies have been influenced by Peter Brooks's (1995) pioneering study of theatrical melodrama, in which he describes melodrama as a 'text of muteness'. According to Brooks, melodrama is a mode which 'seeks total articulation of the moral problems with which it is dealing'. But it often employs 'non-verbal means of expressing its meaning' when the characters or the text are faced with what cannot be articulated via the available codes of social discourse (56). Inherent in melodramas are certain excesses (that the aesthetic of realism cannot contain) communicated through the *mise-en-scène*, and through gestures and repetitions (Elsaesser 1987; Brooks 1995; Nowell-Smith 1987; Gledhill 1987). From this point of view, the landscape of the earlier scenes of *Un hombre* that I have analysed so far can be perceived as *mise-en-scènes* of melodrama in which the inexpressible desires of the characters are communicated.³⁶ And, as I will discuss shortly, the film's melodramatic denouement is also marked by Luis's unconscious re-enactment of the past; or a form of recurrence that Freud (1914) has described as an 'acting-out' (*SE XII*).

I have explained in the introduction of this thesis that Kaplan's (2005) approach to melodrama from the perspective of trauma theory traces the origins of melodrama to the traumatic shocks of modernity, which destabilised traditional forms of identities (73). Kaplan argues that melodramas repeat 'in fictional form a suppressed cultural trauma' (73), and can represent 'memory shifted to another part of consciousness' (73-74). These 'split off' texts may try to 'manage' trauma by translating trauma to text in order to perform a 'forgetting' of what is considered to be too dangerous within the culture (66-67).

I would argue that *Un hombre* could be read, not only as melodrama, but as a

³⁵ Although more recently the works of Pedro Almodóvar have triggered a reevaluation of the genre, very few studies on film melodrama exist within Spanish scholarship. Exceptions have been Marías (1997) and Pérez Rubio (2004).

³⁶ In her discussion of post-war melodramas, Jennifer Peterson (2010) argues that 'landscape can add emotional tone to film, wordlessly signifying a host of other meanings not voiced in dialogue' (136).

‘translation’ and ‘symptom’ of the cultural trauma of post-war Spain. Earlier, I mentioned that Mur Oti suggested that the pre-censored original script included references to the Civil War, and that he modelled Luis on a figure associated with the ‘defeated’. Yet, the redemption through a heroic act of an ex-Republican, and reconciliation between the victors and the defeated, are factors that were considered to be too dangerous within post-war Spain. And so, Luis’s inability to reconcile with his past also points to the film’s own inability to acknowledge the traumas of the Civil War. We could say that these repressions, however, return in the melodramatic text through the dramatisation of Luis overcoming his crisis of masculinity and reconciling with the villagers.

Melodramatic excess can first be located in the *mise-en-scène*. Following Luis’s return to Monte Oscuro, the film’s texture changes from the fantastic to the traumatic, and the narrative markedly shifts to the domestic realm. The long shots of the beautiful external landscapes of the motherland of Monte Oscuro gradually disappear, to be replaced by a fast-cutting of fragmented nocturnal shots. We also see Julia’s magnetic figure lose agency in the film, giving way to the story of Luis’s struggle with his past. His repressed ‘male trauma’ resurfaces when he returns to Monte Oscuro and transforms his appearance. Urged on by Julia, Luis shaves his face and changes into the new clothes she has prepared for him so they can go to a celebration in Tierra Vieja. Luis’s new ‘manly’ look surprises Julia, and prompts her to run into her own room to contemplate her image in the mirror. She removes her headscarf and compares her reflection with a movie-star-like photograph of herself placed on her drawer. Mirrors are often important tropes in melodramas, most notably in Douglas Sirk’s subversive Hollywood melodramas. In his films, mirrors offer dramatic effects that ‘produce an image that seems to represent the person looking into the mirror when in fact what they see is their exact opposite’ (Mercer and Shingler 2004: 54).³⁷ In this scene from *Un hombre*, Julia, who has been depicted as the virtuous widow of Enrique and mother of Blanca (and symbolically, of Luis), expresses her strong desire for self-transformation and sexual expression. In a similar ritual to Luis’s shaving, but in a far more dramatic way, Julia lets down her long hair and cuts it in front of the

³⁷ Sirk’s characters look into mirrors ‘when they are acting, deluding themselves, or conforming to society’s rules’ (Mercer and Shingler 2004: 54).

mirror (figure 2.21). In *Un hombre*, the two acts of ‘cutting’ bring to the foreground Oedipal tensions. Kinder (1993) has remarked that in ‘Spanish Oedipal narratives, the primary act of symbolic castration associated with the woman is not blinding but the cutting of hair’ (221). Scenes of shaving and cutting become the ‘quintessential denouement’ in many Spanish films (221). Indeed, this can also be applied to *Un hombre* where the acts of shaving and the cutting of hair signal the moments of Luis’s and Julia’s sexual awareness and the intervention of paternal law.



Figure 2.21



Figure 2.22



Figure 2.23

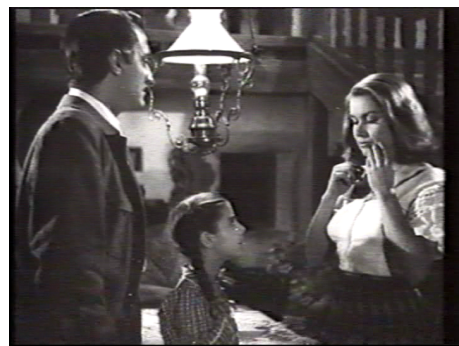


Figure 2.24

For Luis, Julia’s transformation from ‘mother’ to ‘woman’ brings back the ghost of his wife. When Julia appears, beautifully transformed, at the top of the staircase, the camera cuts to Julia’s point of view, showing both Luis’s and Blanca’s astonished faces. Instead of romanticising the scene, however, Mur Oti creates an uncanny moment invoking anxiety with the use of a high angle shot and chiaroscuro lighting (figures 2.22-2.24).³⁸ Luis’s shocked and speechless face

³⁸ Here, as well as in the scene in which Luis appears in Enrique’s undersized clothes,

is highlighted in the dark room as if he were seeing a ghost from the past. The scene evokes a sequence from *Rebecca* where Maxim de Winter is shocked and troubled by the image of the second Mrs de Winter, who descends the staircase wearing his ex-wife Rebecca's dress.³⁹ This scene highlights the gap between Maxim's true past and the fantasy which the second Mrs de Winter has developed about it as a result of her complex about Rebecca. The staircase scene from *Un hombre* closely parallels *Rebecca* in that it also stresses Julia's misconception. When Julia's attempt to seduce Luis is frustrated, she also imagines the weight of Luis's lost love, whereas in fact his inability to respond to her feelings is caused by a more sinister past that continues to haunt him.

Luis and Julia's transformation of appearances further changes the fantasy space of the idyllic Monte Oscuro. Žižek (1991), writing about the motif of the 'transference of guilt' in Hitchcock's *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (1941), maintains that

[a]t any moment, the idyllic texture of the everyday course of events can disintegrate, not because some iniquitous violence erupts from under the surface of social rules [...] but because all of the sudden—as a result of unexpected changes in the symbolic texture of intersubjective relations—what was a moment ago permitted by the rules becomes an abhorrent vice, although the act in its immediate, physical reality remains the same. (75)⁴⁰

Likewise, when Julia, Luis and Blanca arrive at the village church for the celebrations, they are immediately subjected to the gaze of the villagers, and the 'idyllic texture' of the friendly relationship between the three in Monte Oscuro is suddenly disrupted with the intervention of paternal law. Here, we find not only the villagers' gaze but also, implicitly, the Spanish censors' gaze, both of which

cinematographer Manuel Berenguer's contribution to the lighting should be noted. According to Francisco Llinás (in Borau 1998: 133-134), Berenguer was influenced by Gregg Toland, the cinematographer of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), known for his use of deep focus and strong shadows.

³⁹ We could say that the influence of *Rebecca*, discussed in the previous chapter, can be found in many of the Spanish films of this period that deal with scenes that evoke a haunting past.

⁴⁰ Here, Žižek (1991) talks about the 'transference of guilt' as the motif of Hitchcock's *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (1941), a story about a husband and wife whose relationship is altered when one day they discover that they were never legally married.

prohibited the depiction of extramarital affairs. Their ‘fantasy family’ is transformed into a shameful and illegitimate relationship by the shift in the symbolic texture of intersubjective relations. In this sense, the film not only critiques the intolerance of the people of Tierra Vieja, but also reminds us of the existence of social identities that were impossible to inscribe within the Symbolic structures of post-war Spain.

Another characteristic of melodrama in *Un hombre* is the regarding of Luis’s ‘muteness’ in relation to his past, which gradually translates into his violent actions and ‘acting-out’. Brooks (1995) asserts that ‘[m]utes correspond first of all to a repeated use of extreme physical conditions to represent extreme moral and emotional conditions’ and their ‘very physical presence evokes the extremism and hyperbole of ethical conflict and manichaeistic struggle’ (56). Likewise, Luis’s silence and inability to articulate his secrets underscore his moral conflict and extreme emotional state. Neither the film nor Luis explain the reasons for his struggle until his confession at the end of the film. Instead, in a highly melodramatic form, the film translates his silence into a violent struggle with the chance events that occur as repetitions from his past.⁴¹ In other words, his traumatic past takes possession of the present, forcing Luis to act-out the past.

For example, the sequence that leads to Blanca’s operation unfolds in an accumulation of chance happenings.⁴² The recurring events from the past force Luis to come face to face with his own repressed past in which he had failed to save his own daughter. During the night, Luis is awoken by Julia’s footsteps and is informed by Julia that Blanca is feeling ill. Although Julia cannot determine the seriousness of her daughter’s condition, Luis examines Blanca and tells her that they will need a doctor. Thus, Luis must inevitably go to Tierra Vieja and call for the doctor, who also turns out to be the mayor, whom he had encountered on the road at the beginning of the film. Despite Luis’s now transformed ‘respectable’ appearance, the old doctor recognises his voice as the *vagabundo* from an earlier

⁴¹ In his essay ‘The Uncanny’, Freud writes that if ‘every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*’ (SE XVII: 241).

⁴² As Steve Neale (1986) describes in his essay about melodrama and narrative, ‘melodramas are marked by chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions, last-minute rescues and revelations, *deus ex machina* endings’ (6).

encounter. Luis's own words, 'Yo no voy a ninguna parte' (I'm not going anywhere), which he used to reject the mayor's invitation to work in the village at the beginning of the film, now return to jeopardise his situation in the village. Identifying him as the *vagabundo*, the doctor refuses to give him anything. Now Luis must seize by force the medical equipment he needs to operate on Blanca. As he rushes back to Monte Oscuro, the village men go after him to seek revenge. When he reaches home, he commands the terrified Julia to assist him in the operation. Luis goes through the operation with his own agonizing voice-over in crescendo repeating the words '¿Qué vas a hacer, qué vas a hacer, qué vas a hacer...?' in his mind. The fast cross-cutting between the operation scene and the persecution of the armed village men also underscores the scene as traumatic.



Figure 2.25



Figure 2.26



Figure 2.27



Figure 2.28

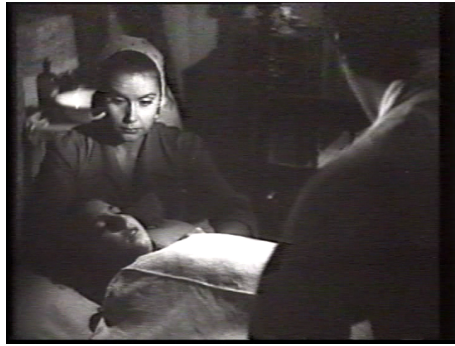


Figure 2.29



Figure 2.30

These scenes not only express Luis's personal trauma, but can also be read as textual excesses and as symptoms of the cultural trauma of post-war Spain. The drama of 'mistaken identities' that triggers the violent confrontation with the villagers suggest the repression of the defeated Republicans (as noted in Mur Oti's initial script), or those of 'inner exile' who live under silence, and whose identities are erased from both the film and Francoist social discourses. Luis's violent assault on the doctor and the fierce hand-to-hand fight between him and the doctor's son stick out of the film as almost unnecessary plot twists. They can be read as a return of the repressed image of the 'war between brothers', a confrontation between the sons of the symbolic father in the form of the doctor/mayor (figures 2.25-2.30).

Kaplan (2005) states that melodramas are 'impelled to repeat the rent in the dominant fiction occasioned by historical trauma while at the same time seeking unconsciously to repair and reveal that rent' (74). The melodramatic denouement in which Luis succeeds in saving Blanca's life, eventually allows the troubled past to be settled. When the village men break into Julia's house, Luis's 'true' identity as a doctor is revealed, and he finally confesses to the mayor/doctor of Tierra Vieja about his wife's elopement with his best friend, their fatal accident and his failure to save his own daughter's life as a doctor. Again, this revelation of Luis's secret past recalls *Rebecca's* boathouse scene where Maxim confesses his hate for his wife, Rebecca's adultery and his accidental killing of her. Luis, however, does not demonise his wife; he tells the doctor that she could not cope with his busy life because 'no era tan fuerte como Julia'. As melodrama, the film allows Luis to clear his identity and recover his home and profession. He resumes his place as

husband and father, and even agrees to succeed the old village doctor. Yet, on another level, the textual operations of *Un hombre* also aim to achieve a ‘forgetting’ of the ‘war between brothers’, ‘the need for reconciliation’, and the cultural traumas of loss, alienation and inner exile.

However, as I have tried to show, the film interestingly portrays the overcoming of Luis’s trauma not as the result of an active desire to recuperate the father’s place, but through a passive surrendering to the mechanical repetition of events returning from the past. As I have suggested, in contemporary critics’ reactions this melodramatic shift does leave the spectator with an uneasy feeling about the film’s closure. While the rural world in the film seems to have patched up the inherent gaps between Tierra Vieja and Monte Oscuro, and shown the melancholic losses of the rural world, we are reminded of the violent and sudden turn of events that take place in the latter part of the film, and spectators are left with a desire to recall the powerful landscape scenes featured earlier in the film, in which a regressive yearning for motherland, free from paternal laws, can be imagined.

6. Conclusion

The ending of *Un hombre* strikes a cynical note, with its incongruity between narrative closure and the final visual image. Acknowledged by the villagers, Luis, Julia and Blanca can ‘legitimately’ live in peace, not as part of the community of Tierra Vieja, but in their remote, secluded space of Monte Oscuro. The gossiping villagers who once reproached the family now wave back to them with smiles as they disappear into the landscape and head back to the mountains. As we have seen, Rey’s *La aldea maldita* (1942) also casts away the ‘Republican ghost’ (represented by the corrupting forces of the city that erode the body of the wife) through religious repentance and the restoration of the strong patriarchal figure that unifies the rural world. It seems that the manifest narrative of *Un hombre* exorcises past ghosts, and achieves reconciliation between Luis and the villagers so as to ‘forget’ the male/cultural trauma caused by the Civil War. Yet, a close examination of the ways in which the film portrays the rural space makes us reconsider such simplistic conclusions. Firstly, *Un hombre* configures the rural

world as a melancholic space, with its repressed objects of loss. Secondly, the film privileges the images of Monte Oscuro as a motherland, which is later violently taken over by the paternal Law. And finally, the melodramatic excesses of the film bring to light what the film insists on forgetting.

These factors suggest the film's awareness of the illusive function of the rural world in the construction of a 'unified' national imaginary. Thus, through melodrama, the film simultaneously provides a forgetting, and yet almost self-reflexively suggests the impossibility of such reconciliation in the real world. In an early part of the film, Blanca repeatedly asks Luis to tell her fairy tales because her mother is too busy working in the fields. Luis promises her that he will, calling her a '*princesa*'. Likewise, the film's dream-like ending suggests that the 'curing' of cultural trauma can be imagined in so far as it is in this fantasy space of Monte Oscuro—a distant place from the constraints of everyday life in post-war Spain. The film seems to indicate that reconciliation with Spain's traumatic war and its consequences can only be achieved within this confined and remote utopic, cinematic fantasy.

Chapter Three

Female Madness, Melodrama and Memory in *De mujer a mujer* (Luis Lucia, 1950)

1. Introduction

The two films discussed in the previous chapters—*Vida en sombras* (1948) and *Un hombre va por el camino* (1949)—deal with a man’s struggle to overcome a traumatic past. To differing degrees, the two male protagonists are haunted or possessed by past traumas that hinder them from resuming their ‘proper’ places in post-war Spain. This chapter now turns to the costume drama *De mujer a mujer* (1950), directed by Luis Lucia (1914-1984), a film about female madness in relation to memory. Loosely adapted from Jacinto Benavente’s 1902 play *Alma triunfante*, *De mujer* was one of the many historical melodramas and period films based on literary adaptations that were produced by CIFESA during the early post-war years. CIFESA has been considered as one of the film production companies that most faithfully reflected the ultra-conservative values of the Franco regime.¹ The Valencian director Luis Lucia was a son of an important politician of the Catholic conservative party of the Second Republic, the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right-wing Groups (CEDA). After studying Law, the close ties between Lucia’s family and the Casanova family—who were the owners of CIFESA and supporters of CEDA—allowed him to work for their company, first as a manager and later as a director. At first glance, these conditions may seem sufficient to underscore the conservative nature of *De mujer* in relation to Francoist dominant ideology. This chapter, however, will complicate this view by studying the contesting discourses within the film. While in *Un hombre* the rural landscape revealed cultural trauma, I will argue that in *De mujer*, it is the women’s bodies that become the site for the articulation of trauma.

¹ During the Civil War, CIFESA collaborated with the Nationalists in the production of propaganda films. See Crusells (2003: 77-80).

Set in Spain at the turn of the twentieth century, *De mujer* portrays a happily married bourgeois couple, Isabel (Amparo Rivelles) and Luis (Eduardo Fajardo), whose lives are afflicted by the death of their only child, Maribel. On the couple's wedding anniversary and the daughter's Saint's day, Maribel accidentally falls off a swing while being pushed by her father, and dies. The incident drives Isabel insane; she continues to believe that her daughter is alive in the form of a doll. When Isabel's aggression towards her husband begins, she is confined in a psychiatric institution. Meanwhile, Luis starts to see Isabel's devoted nurse, Emilia (Ana Mariscal), in hope of hearing about his wife's condition. Eventually, Luis falls in love with Emilia, who gives birth to a girl. At the same time, Isabel is miraculously cured and sent home after various 'innovative' treatments by a young doctor, Javier. When Luis returns to Isabel, he confesses to his relationship with Emilia and the birth of their child. While Isabel schemes to return to the asylum, the guilt-ridden Emilia attempts suicide. With her last remaining breath, Emilia entrusts her baby daughter to Isabel.

De mujer has received very little critical attention from Spanish critics, who have generally dismissed the film with contempt, along with other CIFESA period films that were considered to be overblown melodramas with pompous costumes and set decorations.² For example, film scholar Carlos Heredero (1993) writes that *De mujer* is 'un título que se desvela, todavía, anclado en el acartonamiento y la falsedad del cine más académico de la década anterior' (259). Only recently has the film raised interest among film scholars, working outside of Spain, who have approached the film from different angles. Susan Martin-Márquez (1999) and Núria Triana-Toribio (2000) have examined the film through a re-reading of Ana Mariscal's image (as Emilia in *De mujer*), which had long been associated with her character as José's girlfriend in *Raza* (1941). Annabel Martín (2005) has identified the National Catholic discourse that glorifies motherhood and self-sacrifice, while also discussing how the film reworks the formula of maternal

² Critics have focused more on the cycle of 'historical melodramas' promoted by CIFESA during this period. As Bentley (2008) notes, '[m]ost of these films are melodramas set in a historical context, and those best remembered turn a historical moment into a melodrama dependent on its stars, with costumes, action and romance' (100). Examples of CIFESA historical melodramas are *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948), which I will discuss later in this chapter, *La princesa de los Ursinos* (Luis Lucia, 1947), *Agustina de Aragón* (Juan de Orduña, 1950), *La leona de Castilla* (Juan de Orduña, 1951) and *Alba de América* (Juan de Orduña, 1951).

melodramas for the post-war Francoist social context. Jo Labanyi (2007a) reads the film as a costume drama that allows spectators to rework gender relations through past settings.

This study extends the works of these scholars as it traces the various contradictory messages of the film and takes gender representations as one of its target concerns. The objective of this chapter, however, is to explore the ways in which *De mujer*, as melodrama, can be read as a displacement of the cultural trauma of the Civil War. Once again I take my cue from Kaplan's (2001, 2005) notion of melodrama as a displacement of historical trauma.³ Kaplan suggests that '[a]s a genre occupying the space between history and the unconscious, melodrama offers an imaginary focused on the private sphere of the family—where traumas are secret, hidden—yet an arena structured by male power in the public sphere' (2001: 202).

While *De mujer* is apparently a domestic melodrama that does not foreground history, the film can nevertheless be read as alluding to national politics. Benavente's play was written in the context of Spain's turn of the century national crisis, and *De mujer* also links the death of the child with the crucial year of 1898.⁴ This is implied in a scene where Luis looks at the last photograph of his daughter taken on Christmas day, 1897, revealing that she died the following year. The 1898 military defeat in the Spanish American War and the loss of Spain's last colonies, events that later became known as the '*Desastre de 98*', generated a deep national identity crisis. The crisis sparked a heated debate among politicians and intellectuals, and 'all sorts of schemes and proposals to "regenerate" Spain were put forward by a disparate assortment of would-be reformers' (Harrison 2000: 5). In these assessments, the body became an important metaphor to express the pathological state of the nation, as seen from future Conservative leader Francisco Silvera's diagnosis of Spain as being 'without a pulse' ('*sin pulso*') (5). The metaphor of the 'iron surgeon' (a term coined by Joaquín Costa) was used to allude to the necessary intervention to save the sick national body.

Within the post-war context, we can further say that *De mujer*'s reference to

³ In the previous chapter, I discussed the shift of a film's mode to melodrama in *Un hombre va por el camino* through Kaplan's (2005) theory of melodrama as displacement of cultural trauma.

⁴ Martín-Márquez (1999: 105) has also noted this point in her study of the film.

this turn of the century crisis is also an allusion to the crisis of the Civil War. The Franco regime selectively appropriated the discourses of ‘regeneration’ articulated by traditionalists for its renewed political agenda. In the official propaganda, ‘Franco became the iron surgeon in charge to restore health to the agonizing body politic’ (Morcillo 2010: 44). During the Spanish Civil War, Nationalists carried out psychological investigations ‘to find “the bio-psychological roots of Marxism”’.⁵ Military psychiatrists and race hygienist Antonio Vallejo-Nágera, who later became one of the most important psychiatrists of the Franco regime, considered the research into the connection between heredity and criminality useful for politics and the social sciences (Richards 2001: 398). Vallejo Nágera took on the subject of racial regeneration, and claimed that Spain’s political tribulations were the result of the degenerative decline of the once ‘virile Hispanic race’ (cited in Morcillo 2010: 46).⁶

Associating ‘madness’ with the Civil War, Martin-Márquez (1999) argues that Isabel’s madness can be interpreted as a ‘leftist contamination of the (feminized) national body’ (105). She goes on to suggest that Luis’s union with Emilia and the birth of a new daughter symbolises the ‘reconstruction of the lost empire, albeit through illegitimate means’, which she links to the post-war ‘National uprising against the Republican government and the ensuing Civil War’. The schism in the family is thus restored, and ‘Emilia’s sacrifice of herself and her daughter legitimizes the new national family, now completely purged of Communist insanity’ (105).

I will, however, propose a different reading of *De mujer* in its expression of national crisis by focusing on the fact that Isabel’s madness is related to ‘memory’. I suggest that in *De mujer*, the woman’s body afflicted by madness can be compared to the traumatised post-war national body. I disagree with Martin-Márquez’s claim that it is Emilia who embodies the Fascist uprising as restorer of Spain. Instead, I contend that in *De mujer* Emilia embodies the

⁵ Richards (2001) notes that Nationalists used the term ‘Marxism’ broadly to describe Republicans.

⁶ Vallejo-Nágera (1889-1960) was a military psychiatrist for the Nationalists during the Civil War, and was appointed the first chair of the Psychiatry Department of the Central University of Madrid. He published numerous works during the Civil War, and subsequently about the ‘eugenics of Spanishness’, the ‘regeneration of the race’ and ‘madness and war’ (Richards 1998: 57).

memory of the silenced ‘other’ of post-war Spanish society. On one hand, *De mujer* tries to manage the traumatic losses of the Civil War and the shocks brought by the regime’s implementation of strict gender roles in order to cut off the liberal gender politics introduced by the Republic. Yet, in this very attempt, the film exposes the violence that is involved in the coercive attempts to ensure such forgetting. *De mujer* seems to be an exemplary text that reveals the connections between cultural trauma and fiction.

To begin with, this chapter will outline the importance of women’s bodies for the articulation of the ‘nation’, and how female madness was represented in the films of the period. Female madness was often framed within a patriarchal discourse that would safely control its ‘otherness’ to fit with the regime’s political ends. I suggest that such a case can be found in the historical melodrama *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948), which also deals with madness and the crisis of national identity, only to ultimately reaffirm the ideology of the Franco regime. In comparison with *Locura de amor*, I argue that *De mujer* is multi-layered and contains many competing discourses. The discussion of *De mujer* first acknowledges the patriarchal discourses of the film that try to contain female madness, encouraging the forgetting and curing of the repressed cultural trauma. However, when we examine the film’s reference to Hollywood psychiatric films, and its exploration of Isabel as a hysteric, the film’s relation to dominant ideology becomes more complex. I will address how *De mujer* tries to ‘manage’ the discourse of psychoanalysis that was repressed under Francoism, and examine to what extent it fails to do so. This is further explored in the following section, where I will examine *De mujer*’s focus on Isabel’s hysteric symptoms. *De mujer* overtly associates Isabel’s madness with hysteria, an illness that has been problematically tied to the female body throughout its medical history, as seen in its etymological origin *hysteros* (the Greek word for the uterus).⁷ One of the concerns of this thesis involves the particular meaning that the depiction of hysteria might have evoked in the post-war Spanish context. *De mujer* illustrates

⁷ Extensive research has been carried out on hysteria as a culturally constructed malady. On the history of cultural interpretations of hysteria, see Micale (1995) and Showalter (1997). There has also been a renewed critical and cultural interest in the concept of hysteria (Bollas 2000; Mitchell 2000; Verhaeghe 1999; Bronfen 1998).

how Isabel's vision, her hysterical mimesis and performance, challenge the patriarchal discourses of the filmic text. I will stress the importance of Emilia's character in this resistance, both as the memory of the 'other' and through her role in the film's articulation of the victims of Francoism. Finally, I will argue that the film's melodramatic excess and *pathos* provide contesting messages to the dominant patriarchal discourses that try to achieve closure on personal/national trauma.

2. The female body and madness in 1940s Spanish cinema—The case of *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948)

During the process of constructing the new post-war state, women's bodies were of particular political interest for the Franco regime. In *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*, Aurora G. Morcillo (2010) gives us an insightful study of the symbolic relationship between the Spanish body politic during Franco's dictatorship and the allegorical female body of the nation (13). Morcillo traces how the regime participated in the construction of what she calls 'True Catholic Womanhood', based on culturally constructed Castilian Catholic identity in the 1490s and 1500s (15).⁸ Sexism was not invented by the Franco regime; women's bodies had been used as national iconography throughout Spanish history. Sexism was, however, 'perfected', Morcillo explains, 'to legitimize authoritarian rule in the midst of turmoil after the Spanish civil war, first, and later during the Cold War' (68).

Women's bodies became important somatic metaphors to support the three fundamental pillars of Francoism: the state, the Church and the patriarchal family.⁹ This was a specific reaction to the progressive democratic politics which the Second Republic had brought to the unevenly developed and still highly rural Spanish nation at the beginning of the 1930s. As Graham (1995a) summarises:

Women's changing identity and roles [...] were perceived by those

⁸ Morcillo (2010) draws from writings such as *The Instruction of the Christian Woman* (1523) by Juan Luis Vives and *La perfecta casada* (1583) by Fray Luis de León, which underscore the idea that women's 'virtue was rooted in their ability to preserve their modesty' (15).

⁹ For more historical studies on women under Francoism, see, for example, Morcillo (2000), Graham (1995a), Nash (1991) and Gallego (1983).

sectors of society adversely affected as the *cause* of their personal problems and of ‘falling standards/degenerating values’. Thus reimposing traditional gender roles on women became at once a substitute for this lack of control in other areas and an (ultimately unsuccessful) bid to ‘turn the clock back’. As a result, a whole pathology of modernity was written on women’s bodies via repressive state legislation—in particular with regard to pronatalism. (184)

The Franco regime annulled the Constitution of 1931 which authorised women’s emancipation.¹⁰ The Republican reforms were considered by the Franco regime as ‘inorganic democracy’ (Morcillo 2010: 18). The *Sección Femenina de Falange* (Women’s Section of the Falange), founded in 1934, indoctrinated women with National Catholic ideology. When the war was over, the *Sección Femenina* directed the state *auxilio social* (Social Services). In order to qualify for public jobs, women had to perform social service as a proof of their sacrifice for the *patria*. In addition to these impositions, the new state created laws that prohibited women from working at night. They also severely penalised sexually related crimes such as abortion, contraceptive propaganda, cohabitation outside of marriage and women’s adultery (Morcillo 2000: 33). Ironically, the ‘home’, where women were now restricted to, became a ‘private sphere’ in which the state increasingly intervened. The regeneration of the nation planned by the new regime required that women’s bodies be turned into vessels for national reconstruction; they now had to ‘devote themselves to their natural task, procreate for the patria, in body and soul’, because ‘domesticity would be the most precious virtue of the new woman under Francoism’ (69).

The image of the ‘liberated woman’ of the Republic was thus recast into the pious, motherly and devoted woman. Women were now inherently passive creatures, born to suffer and sacrifice, and to be activists only as guardians of the moral order. They were weak, and characterised by their purity as well as potential impurity (Richards 1998: 52). But it was precisely because of their

¹⁰ The Civil Code of 1889, re-enacted by the regime, made married women minors before the law.

propensity for weakness and impurity that the ‘moral re-education’ and purification of a war-torn nation should be achieved through the body and behaviour of women. Early post-war Francoist discourses, such as one cited by Pastor i Homs (1984), express women’s obligation to be moral educators:

La mujer tiene un alma delicada; en ella deja huella todo cuanto la toca; por eso le conviene vivir a cierta distancia de las personas y de las cosas [...] La mayor independencia a la que debe aspirar es a la independencia de la mujer ‘fuerte’ ante el cumplimiento de su deber, que sacrifica su capricho a la voluntad de aquel que ella llama, como Sara en el Antiguo Testamento y como la castellana de la caballería medieval, ‘mi señor’. (Cited in Gámez Fuentes 2004: 42)

These images of women also appear in the cinema of the 1940s, especially in the female heroines who appeared in the historical melodramas of the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹¹ These include heroines such as Agustina de Aragón and María Pacheco, who transmitted the image of dutiful and pious women.¹²

One of the findings made during the course of my research project on 1940s Spanish cinema was that, while many films from the period deal with male paranoia and obsession, very few films feature female madness as their central concern.¹³ This may well be related to the regime’s interest in women’s roles as important conveyors of Francoist dominant ideology. When madness does appear in female characters, it is often displayed through their ‘hysterical’ performances. The female heroines of historical melodramas are at once strong in their commitment to their patriotic duties, while also suggesting a certain instability

¹¹ See above at n.2 on CIFESA’s historical melodramas in this category. Other historical melodramas include *El tambor de Bruch* (Ignacio Iquino, 1948), *Eugenia de Montijo* (José Luis López Rubio, 1944), *Reina Santa* (Rafael Gil, 1947), *Doña María la brava* (Luis Marquina, 1948), *Catalina de Inglaterra* (Arturo Ruiz Castillo, 1951) and *Lola la piconera* (Luis Lucia, 1952).

¹² Agustina de Aragón (1786-1857) was considered to have been a leader of the resistance in the Spanish War of Independence (1807-1814), while María Pacheco (1496-1531) was the wife of Juan López de Padilla, who took over her husband’s role to defend the city of Toledo after his death in the Battle of Villalar.

¹³ Examples of films about male paranoia and obsession are *La casa de la lluvia* (Antonio Román, 1943), *Angustia* (José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1947), *Abel Sánchez* (Carlos Serrano de Osma, 1946), *La sirena negra* (Carlos Serrano de Osma, 1947), *Embrujo* (Carlos Serrano de Osma, 1947), *Obsesión* (Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, 1947), *Confidencia* (Jerónimo Mihura, 1947) and *Cuatro mujeres* (Antonio del Amo, 1947). See also chapter two section 2.2.

and fragility in the face of ‘reason’ (thus rendering them inapt for politics). In these films, women’s susceptibility to shock and their strong emotional responses are tied up with their determination to perform their duties to the nation, making them the ‘inciters’ of history.

The idea of women as inciters, as opposed to makers, of history, resonates with the medical and scientific discourses of influential scientists and thinkers of the early twentieth century such as José Ortega y Gasset. In *Estudios sobre el amor* (1966), Ortega y Gasset explains the biological mission of women in history.¹⁴ According to him, the achievement of equality for social rights was not a *natural* way to make women participate in the creation of history. The woman’s historical role was first to excite men, who are the forces of history, ‘while men’s worth is the product of their actions, women’s worth is based in their inner essence, their “being”’ (cited in Morcillo 2010: 76).¹⁵ Ortega y Gasset’s dictum about women’s historical purpose is further appropriated by the Franco regime to serve its gender politics and also seems to manifest in CIFESA historical melodramas.

One example is the CIFESA biopic *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948), which tells the tragic story of Queen Juana I of Castile (1479-1555).¹⁶ In the film, Juana’s unrequited love for her husband, Philip the Fair, the Duke of Burgundy, and her jealousy over his infidelities drive her to madness. As she becomes increasingly suspicious of Philip’s secret affair with a Moorish woman, Aldara, Juana’s private concerns begin to affect her public duties as the Queen of Castile. In the meantime, the ill-intentioned Don Filiberto de Were conspires with Aldara against the queen. The two work together to provoke and then demonstrate the queen’s madness in front of her courtiers. When Philip dies of illness, Juana’s loss of sanity becomes apparent and she is confined to the Castle of Tordesillas.

Locura de amor was one of the most successful films of the 1940s, running for as long as 136 weeks in Madrid theatres (Camporesi 1993: 127). Part of its

¹⁴ *El libro de amor* was first written in German, and translated into Spanish in 1940.

¹⁵ Morcillo (2010) writes that for Ortega, ‘[i]t was precisely their female essence not their actions that attracted men. Hence females’ role in history resides, according to Ortega, in their passive existence’ (76).

¹⁶ The film is an adaptation of a play with the same title by Manuel Tamayo y Baus (1855). In Spain, it was adapted first by Ricard de Baños and Albert Marro in 1909 and then by Vicente Aranda in 2001.

appeal can be attributed to Aurora Bautista's strong and 'hysterical' performance as Juana.¹⁷ She is well known for her dramatic facial/bodily expressions and exaggerated style of speech. Later, in an interview, Bautista recalled that it was the scenes of madness she performed for Orduña in an audition that got her the part (Castillejo 1998: 14). Despite being her film debut, *Locura de amor* propelled Bautista into fame and allowed her to secure the leading roles in other melodramas, such as *Pequeñeces* (Juan de Orduña, 1950), *Agustina de Aragón* (Juan de Orduña, 1950) and *Condenados* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1953).

Although *Locura de amor* apparently deals with the melodramatic themes of conjugal love and betrayal, it can be read as a film that uses the *mise-en-scène* of the past to associate Juana's madness with the crisis of the Republican-Civil War period. Francoism associated the Republic with 'foreign' contamination of the national body. In Spanish psychiatrist González Duro's (2008) words, '[t]odos los republicanos fueron calificados indiscriminadamente de comunistas, de rojos: además de ser contrarios a los valores españoles, aparecían como "agentes del extranjero" e intoxicadores de las masas incultas' (92). Likewise, in *Locura de amor*, Juana's madness appears as a response to the 'contamination' of the national body from foreign influences, represented by the figures of Philip, Aldara and Filiberto. Juana's madness is not defined as *against* Catholic morality, but rather as a defence against the foreign values that offended the proper Catholic virtues of post-war Spain. In *Locura de amor*, foreign influences signify philandering, deception and conspiracy, while Spain represents the realm of the truth (Evans 1995: 217). In other words, instead of alluding to an internal split within the nation, *Locura de amor* carefully justifies Juana's madness by constructing an external enemy who 'contaminates' the woman.

One of the iconic moments of the film appears toward the end, where Juana exhibits her most extreme symptom of madness at the deathbed of Philip. Unable to accept her husband's death, Juana explodes into a hysterical outburst,

¹⁷ The enormous success of *Locura* has led some scholars to suggest the possible subversiveness of the film: its aesthetic references to nineteenth-century art (Seguin 1997), the depiction of Juana's political role in the film (Martin Pérez 2004) and the pleasures of spectatorship (Labanyi 2000a). The audience's reaction to Aurora Bautista's hysterical performance could be another interesting subject to study. However, for the purposes of this chapter I will stress how *Locura* downplays the more subversive aspects of female madness and melodrama in comparison to *De mujer*.

commanding silence from the courtiers in the chamber: ‘No le despertéis. ¡Silencio! El Rey se ha dormido’ (figures 3.1, 3.2). In her mad state, Juana represses the memory of Philip’s death and continues to act as if he were in his sleep. Ironically, this death scene is where Juana finally seems to be rewarded with Philip’s love. In other words, it is with his death that she can finally erase the earlier traumatic events of her husband’s infidelity and live within her fantasy of their mutual love. In a similar manner, the film seems to suggest that Spain’s flirtation with foreign ideas can be finally put to rest with the death of liberal Spain, and post-war Spain can now live within the fantasy of a unified nation.



Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2

It is also significant that *Locura de amor* uses melodrama to safely achieve closure for the ill body of the nation. The narrative of *Locura de amor* is structured in such a way as to temper Juana’s subjective fantasy and memory by framing her account within a patriarchal, historical discourse. Juana’s life story is placed within an entire flashback explained by her loyal supporter, Captain Alvar. *Locura de amor* opens with Juana’s son Carlos I visiting his mother in the secluded Castle of Tordesillas. Witnessing his mother’s insanity, Captain Alvar begins to tell her story. The film closes with Alvar’s voice again, stating that her madness ‘no tiene remedio, pero es la locura más hermosa del mundo... Locura de amor...’. Here, Juana’s madness is absorbed by the masculine historical narrative that reflects the desire of Alvar, and of Carlos too.

Locura de amor demonstrates that women’s susceptibility to madness would inevitably disqualify them from participating in the public sphere. On the other hand, it celebrates Juana as an ideal Catholic woman whose faith, even in

madness, has defended the Spanish nation, a virtue which her son should learn from. Thus Juana's figure is fetishised and turned into an inciter of history. Juana's act of carrying her deceased husband's body throughout Castile so that people can mourn his death and loss is accompanied by a musical sound resembling a Christian chant (figure 3.3). Similar to the ending of Florián Rey's *La aldea maldita* (1942), discussed in chapter two, her figure is finally framed and eternalised in the famous painting of *Doña Juana la Loca con el Féretro de Felipe el Hermoso* (1877) by Francisco Pradilla Ortiz (1848-1921) (figure 3.4). The picture appears in the opening credits, and then reappears in the last scene when a *tableau vivant* freezes into a composite of the painting. Juana's melancholic attachment to the past is ultimately objectified through the masculine historical gaze.



Figure 3.3



Figure 3.4

If *Locura de amor* portrays a woman whose madness affects her performance in the public sphere, the problem in *De mujer a mujer* is that of a woman's madness affecting her socially assigned space, the private 'home'. It is about a direct crisis in the traditional Spanish family as an allegory of the nation.¹⁸ Furthermore, compared to *Locura de amor*, the madness of *De mujer a mujer* is cinematically presented as a more destabilising force set against the established social order. I shall now turn to a discussion of *De mujer a mujer*.

¹⁸ Under Francoism, the 'traditional' Spanish family was seen as an agent of quarantine facilitating the healthy growth of a "patriotic morality" and acted "as a type of cell in the social body which forms the race" (Richards 1998: 64).

3. Containing madness: patriarchal discourses of *De mujer a mujer*

3.1. Neo-Catholic discourse

Like the conservative narrative of *Locura de amor*, at first glance *De mujer a mujer* also seems to faithfully represent the Franco regime's National Catholic agenda. One of the patriarchal discourses of *De mujer a mujer* is constituted by the figure of the family priest, Padre Víctor. Despite his 'sympathetic' portrayal, Padre Víctor is characterised by his dogmatic and inflexible judgements, which he makes whenever Luis, Isabel and Emilia are faced with dilemmas that might compromise the traditional Catholic family. His comments mirror the neo-Catholic vision of the Franco regime that allowed the Church to have moral and spiritual authority in all aspects of life. Padre Víctor's discourse falls into line with what Marsha Kinder (1993) has called the 'Catholic sadomasochistic discourse' she observes in Francoist melodramas which 'merged with Fascist rhetoric in fetishizing suffering and death' (73). Padre Víctor insists on the importance of self-sacrifice, commenting that 'donde está el mayor sacrificio, la mayor renuncia de nuestra voluntad, ahí está la virtud, ahí está el deber'.

Padre Víctor divides the women of the film—Isabel and Emilia—into two categories reinforced within Francoist society: the pure and chaste Catholic woman, and the 'fallen woman'. The moral double standard of Franco society was to consider these fallen women as a 'necessary evil' for supporting the 'sexually potent man fit with the regime's promotion of itself as virile and masculine' (Morcillo 2010: 92), while protecting the 'true Catholic women', who are to become wives and mothers. Similar to the case of Juana in *Locura de amor*, Padre Víctor never doubts Isabel's nature as the 'good Catholic wife', despite her madness. When Isabel breaks down in the hospital after her daughter's accident, Padre Víctor reminds her about the correct role of a virtuous Catholic woman: 'los buenos cristianos no se desesperan jamás. Y tú eres una mujer cristiana Isabel'. When she is cured and returns home from the asylum, Padre Víctor persuades Luis to leave Emilia and return to his wife, reassuring him that Isabel is a good Christian and will understand. In addition, he reveals to us his participation in Isabel's spiritual regeneration by encouraging her to pray for her own recovery.

In contrast, Padre Víctor condemns Emilia as a ‘fallen woman’. Toward the end of the film, he goes as far as to reprimand Isabel for sympathising with Emilia, and for her desire to return to the asylum after learning about Emilia’s relationship with Luis:

¿Pero qué te propones? No ser un estorbo para la unión de tu marido con esa mujer? ¿Una unión que nada legítima? ¿Ni siquiera el amor a su hija? No Isabel. Tú deber está aquí. Tú no puedes destruir un sacramento. Antes te prefiero ofendida, celosa. Defendiendo como mujer el corazón del hombre que ofendió a Dios al ofenderte.

Padre Víctor’s comment ‘Antes, te prefiero ofendida, celosa’ also resonates with the model of the good Catholic woman Juana in *Locura de amor*, whose madness is driven by jealousy and religious faith.

In Benavente’s play, which is set during the Restoration period (1874-1931), the family priest and the doctor are in direct confrontation over how the mad woman should be treated. This corresponds with the social context of nineteenth-century Spain, in which ‘[p]olitical polarization was a structural component of scientific activity’, with ‘scientists (particularly medical scientists and natural historians) typically in opposition to traditional conservative governments and, as a group, conspicuously active in republican politics’ (Glick 1982: 534). In the play, the doctor believes that her madness is hereditary and incurable, and therefore proposes that Andrés (Luis, in the film) might consider divorcing his wife. To the contrary, as the title *Alma triunfante* (‘Triumphant Soul’) suggests, the priest stresses that it is only divine power that can cure her. He also believes that Isabel’s faith will eventually allow her to accept the other woman’s baby and forgive Andrés.

In *De mujer*, however, it is not only religion that plays an important part in Isabel’s cure. There is a conscious attempt to merge the religious and medical discourses. This reflects the post-war climate of Francoism, under which ‘Catholicism and pathology provide[d] parallel repressive linguistic and ethical frameworks, the one consisting of sin, punishment and redemption, and the other of infection, disease and cure’ (Richards 2001: 420). Thus, the film shows that

Padre Víctor acknowledges the young doctor Javier's psychiatric experiments, while also remaining closely vigilant over his methods. In fact, it is Padre Víctor's voice-over that introduces us to a flashback sequence of Javier's experiments on Isabel. During the final stages of these experiments, the senior doctor, Doctor Hernández, reminds Javier that it is God who performs miracles. Javier's own willingness to reconcile his science with religion manifests itself throughout the film. When his treatment finally succeeds, he accompanies Isabel to the chapel and gives thanks to God: 'Gracias, mi ciencia nada hubiera podido sin tu mediación'. Javier also asks Padre Víctor to accompany him when he hears about Emilia's suicide attempt, telling him that 'las enfermedades del alma necesitan médicos del alma'.

3.2. 'Managing psychoanalysis': Hollywood psychiatric films

In addition to the strong neo-Catholic discourse of *De mujer*, which reflects the Franco regime's ideology of the early post-war period, another aspect which can be linked to the social context of the 1940s concerns the ways in which *De mujer* appropriates and 'manages' the style of the Hollywood psychiatric films that were enormously popular among the Spanish audiences of the time. Scholars who have compared the similarity between *De mujer*'s plot elements with those of the Hollywood 'woman's films' suggest that, whereas the doctor is the ultimate authority figure in American films, *De mujer* completely replaces the medical authority with the Church (Martín Marquez 1999; Bentley 2008: 113). This is, however, an oversimplification. Given the apprehensiveness Spanish psychiatric authorities showed over the popular consumption of American pseudo-psychoanalytic films, a further contextualisation of the medical discourse might prove fruitful.

Whereas Benavente's play focuses more on the moral struggle of the husband than on the descriptions of symptoms and treatments of the female patient, Lucia's adaptation makes alterations to the text by foregrounding these clinical aspects, applying the aesthetics of the Hollywood psychiatric films that were in vogue.¹⁹ Lucia, famous for his musical films of the 1960s that starred child

¹⁹ For example, one critic summarises Benavente's play as the drama of the male character,

prodigies such as Marisol and Rocío Dúrcal, began his career as filmmaker in the 1940s, adopting and experimenting with a wide range of generic films—from historical epic (*La princesa de los Ursinos*, 1947), spy thriller (*El trece trece*, 1943), comedy (*Dos cuentos para dos*, 1947) and folkloric/historical adventure (*La Duquesa de Benamejí*, 1949). Lucia was able to create popular films that would connect with the Spanish audience by adapting Hollywood generic styles and plots to the Spanish context (Pérez Perucha 1989-90: 101). For example, *El trece trece* adopts the Hollywood spy film genre to narrate a love story between two young secret agents who reunite after six years, unaware of their true identities. While Lucia is cautious to add a commentary ‘el lugar y los personajes son imaginarios’, dissociating the film from specific references to Spain, he does open the film with an unmistakable shot of Madrid and use the backdrop of a tragic war, inevitably making reference to the Civil War.

De mujer can be seen as CIFESA’s response to Spanish audiences’ demand for Hollywood films that dealt with psychologically troubled characters and pseudo-psychoanalytic treatments. Yet the Hollywood films that explicitly dealt with psychoanalysis or psychotherapy were themselves products that were intimately connected with cultural trauma and gender issues in post-World War II American society.²⁰ Spanish audiences were fascinated with Hollywood films such as *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), *Lady in a Jam* (Gregory La Cava, 1942), *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945), *The Locket* (John Brahm, 1946), *Sleep, My Love* (Douglas Sirk, 1948) and *The Snake Pit* (Anatole Litvak, 1948), which presented morbid imaginations and unrestrained fantasies. Contemporary critics such as de la Iglesia (1948) have noted the seductive power that these films had over audiences. In an article for the film magazine *Radiocinema* he wrote:

Su influencia en las masas de aficionados, y muy particularmente en el elemento joven, ha sido tan grande que el solo anuncio de un título, seguido de ligeros comentarios ‘psicológicos’, ha sido suficiente para que las salas de su proyección se viesan repletas de espectadores

Andrés (changed to Luis in the film): ‘[P]or efecto de la fatalidad que priva temporalmente de razón a su mujer legítima, ve su vida afectiva fraccionada’ (anon. 1902: 3).

²⁰ See Walker (1993), Doane (1987) and Polan (1986).

ávidos de presenciar un nuevo caso ‘psicológico’. ([n.p.]

Spanish psychiatrist Albert Solà (2006) recalls viewing these American films, which he says influenced his development as a psychiatrist. In his book *Hollywood: cine y psiquiatría*, he writes that

[a] partir de los años cuarenta y hasta finales de los años sesenta, el cine americano empieza a interesarse de una manera aparentemente seria por los problemas psiquiátricos: si no por su resolución, al menos por el planteamiento de los casos. Este período de tiempo coincide con el de mi evolución hacia la psiquiatría. (29)²¹

De mujer uses the mise-en-scène and thematic concerns of these popular Hollywood films. Unlike in Benavente’s play, there are two psychiatrists in Lucia’s film: the senior physician, Doctor Hernández; and the younger doctor, Javier. Doctor Hernández assumes that Isabel’s madness is hereditary, biological and therefore incurable, while young doctor Javier is interested in her unusual symptoms and attempts to cure her. Javier experiments with different techniques that he learns from books. The film shows him studying books with titles such as ‘Teorías sobre los casos de Neurosis Traumáticas’ (a reference to Freud and Breuer’s work on hysteria), ‘Neurosis’ (published by Pierre Janet in 1909) and ‘Los Experimentos del Dr. Charcot en La Salpêtière’ (a clear reference to Jean-Martin Charcot’s works on hysteric patients). These references tell us that in Javier’s mind Isabel’s illness is associated with hysteria and trauma. Adapting the mise-en-scène of Hollywood films, scenes of Isabel’s treatment include a session of hypnosis controlled by ‘scientific’ tools such as spinning, mirrored wheels with flashlights.

Critics were generally not happy with *De mujer*’s allusion to Hollywood psychiatric films. For one critic, *De mujer* showed too much of ‘la influencia del cine psicológico que Hollywood nos ha estado enviando durante tantos años’ (Baron 1950: [n.p.]), while another found ‘ciertos pequeños anacronismos que

²¹ Solà (2006) further specifies that ‘[d]e estos años recuerdo con especial cariño los siguientes títulos: *La extraña pasajera* [*Now Voyager*] (cómo curar la timidez con una sola frase), *Recuerda* [*Spellbound*] (la amnesia como consecuencia del sentimiento de culpa), *Nido de víboras* [*Snake Pit*] (la curación a través del electroshock) [...]’ (29).

afectan especialmente al campo de la psiquiatría' (anon. 1950: 8). Another critic commented that, whereas the film 'posee indudable fuerza dramática y una considerable dosis de interés [...] no posee nada de español, defecto que para nosotros será siempre de capital importancia en todo film que salga de nuestros Estudios' (Gallardo 1950: [n.p.]).

The direct or indirect references to Freudian psychoanalysis made in Hollywood psychiatric films might have been one reason for their criticisms. In 1948, one critic, suspicious of the American psychiatric films, claimed the need to 'olvidar el decadente problema freudiano' (Mantua 1948: [n.p.]). In many cases, critics praised the cinematic techniques and aesthetics used in these films, but condemned the depiction of psychoanalysis and their clinical experiments.²² The leading Francoist psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nágera also voiced his concerns over the depiction of psychiatry in cinema. In 1951, in an interview for the film magazine *Espectáculo* he asserted:

[I]a Real Academia Nacional de Medicina ha calificado a las películas psicológicas y psiquiátricas 'como pertenecientes al más ínfimo de los géneros teatrales, reproduciendo, exagerados, los aspectos más terroríficos y espeluznantes de lo mental, por lo que inducen en el público una serie de prejuicios acerca de las enfermedades psíquicas'. (In Cuevas 1951: [n.p.]

Furthermore, he warned people of the danger 'para la salud mental del pueblo en el contenido inmoral de esta clase de cintas' (in Cuevas 1951: [n.p.]). Vallejo-Nágera's comments allude to those Hollywood films, listed above, which not only explored madness through visual representations, but also drew out themes such as childhood trauma (*The Locket*), sexual repression (*Now, Voyager*), traumatic amnesia (*Spellbound*; *The Snake Pit*) or deviant femininity (*Lady in a Jam*; *Sleep, My Love*). He underscored the perversity of these films when set

²² In 1950 the film magazine *Imágenes* also included an article written by a doctor, Isidro Guitart Suriol (1950): 'Es interesante y la vez digno de notar el estado de ánimo con que se sale de un cine después de asistir a la proyección de una de estas películas, ahora tan en boga, denominadas de "complejos" o "psicológicas". La realidad no nos puede ser indiferente y la verdad es que muchas de ellas nos angustian más que nos distraen. El cine es, o debería ser, lugar concurrido para solaz distracción del espíritu y descanso del cuerpo' (1950: [n.p.]).

against Catholic values of post-war Spain.

Imported, and widely debated, in the pre-Civil War years in Spain, Freud's works were condemned by the leaders of post-war Spanish psychiatry.²³ By the 1920s, the discussion of Freud extended from the medical and psychiatric to the wider Spanish intellectual elite, thanks to the efforts of Ortega y Gasset, who, in spite of his own philosophical opposition to Freudian views, suggested that the publishing company Biblioteca Nueva print Freud's complete works in Spanish. Freud's studies on dream-work, the unconscious and the Oedipus complex inspired the Spanish avant-garde art and literature of the pre-war years; particularly the works by artists of the so-called '*Generación de 27*'. Surrealism was explored in the paintings of Salvador Dalí and the cinema of Luis Buñuel, but also in the poetry of Vicente Aleixandre, Rafael Alberti and Federico García Lorca.²⁴ Furthermore, psychoanalysis became an important discourse for intellectuals who participated in the sexual reform movement during the Second Republic.²⁵

In Franco's Spain, the construction of medical culture and biology was based on essentialist, totalising ideas, rather than on the individual and the individual's way of being. Science could not be ignored, but it also could not be permitted to relativise the absolute gendered values of post-war Spain (Richards 2001: 420). Freud's theories, which explored unconscious desire, clearly went against Francoist psychiatrists' views that mental disorders should be cured through religious purification. For example, in his psychiatric studies of female Republican prisoners during the Civil War, Vallejo-Nágera asserted in 1945 that

²³ According to Glick (1982), Freud's concept of hysteria was introduced to Spain in 1914 by Enrique Fernández Sanz with his book on hysteria. Although Fernández Sanz praised Freud's studies of 'the basic processes of psychic life and stressed the importance of the unconscious', he also condemned Freudianism as dangerous, particularly remarking on the moral consequences of the Freudian approach to sexuality. However, illustrating the strong impact of Fernández Sanz's work on some Spanish psychiatrists of the subsequent generation, who supported Freud's thesis, Glick remarks that both 'anti- or non-Freudian expositions of Freud's works were powerful force for the promotion of the ideas they attacked' (537).

²⁴ Stone (2007) writes that for these Spanish artists, 'Surrealism was an attempt to express the workings of the subconscious mind as a corrective to propriety and censure' (24). See also Morris (1972).

²⁵ As Glick (1982) notes, '[t]he sexual reform movement was a coalition of interest groups—those favoring feminism, prostitution reform, sex education, mental health, and eugenics—which had an interlocking leadership of doctors and lawyers whose attitudes towards sexual relations were highly colored by Freudian arguments' (555).

psychological disorders operated when women lost their religious sentiments, and were ‘exclusively stimulated by her natural tendencies’ (cited in Richards 2001: 411). Under Francoism, Freudian psychoanalysis was inconvenient because, as Spanish psychiatrist González Duro (2008) suggests, ‘se generalizaba [...] la creencia en la casi inocuidad de los factores sociales, familiares y biográficos en la determinación de toda enfermedad psíquica’ (314). While Freud traced the origin of neurosis to ‘the action of the superego, as a consequence of the internalization of social values’, this would be highly problematic to Francoist society because it would appear to be an implicit criticism of its conservative values (Glick 1982: 571).²⁶

Although scholars have suggested that psychoanalysis was not completely banned under Francoism,

whenever [it] was addressed in a context not strictly limited to the medical or psychological field, that is, in a context that involved the general public and was likely to give psychoanalysis social visibility, religious objections were always mentioned and they framed all possible debate. (Druet 2012: 71)²⁷

De mujer is a clear example that reveals these tensions. The intervention of neo-Catholic discourse in the form of Padre Víctor is merely one of the many attempts to manage this struggle. Firstly, the *fin de siècle* setting helps to add a safe, ‘historical’ look at the medical treatment, corresponding with the view of many Francoist psychiatrists who tried to downplay psychoanalysis as an ‘outmoded’ science, inapplicable in post-war Spain.²⁸ Secondly, the often negative depictions of psychiatric hospitals in Hollywood films (e.g. *Spellbound*, *Snake Pit*) are transformed into a convent-like haven of ‘serenidad y reposo’: the

²⁶ Juan Barcia, one of the anti-Freudian psychiatrists of the 1940s, saw that ‘to discover the cause of a conflict was not in all cases sufficient to effect a cure; rather it was necessary to elucidate the finality or function of the illness’ (Glick 1982: 568).

²⁷ Freud’s works were republished as *Obras Completas* in 1948 by Biblioteca Nueva. However, in order to avoid wide dissemination among the public, they were published with an expensive binding (González Duro 1978: 71).

²⁸ In 1951, Spanish psychiatrist López Ibor (1973) wrote about the ‘end of psychoanalysis’: ‘Cierto es que, a mi modo de ver, el ciclo psicoanalítico está terminado. La muerte de Freud no ha sido su causa esencial, sino que el desenvolvimiento interno de su pensamiento ha llegado ya a sus límites posibles’ (17).

look of the nurses is similar to novitiates in habits, and we notice a large crucifix hanging over Isabel's bed.²⁹ Doctors are sympathetic to their patients; Javier rejects the idea of the straitjacket (often a feature in the film's Hollywood counterpart) during Isabel's hysterical attacks. Thirdly, if Hollywood psychiatric films are often framed by a love story between the male doctor and the female patient, relating the pathological symptoms of the female patient with sexual repression, *De mujer* displaces this sexual relation onto the close relationship between the female patient and the nurse, Emilia.

Finally, the common cause-effect device found in Hollywood films that looks into symptoms in order to trace the pathological origins of the psychiatric disorder is reversed in *De mujer*. Both the doctors and the priest try to guide the audience through the process of *how* Isabel recovers faith and overcomes her mental crisis by hypnotic treatment. However, they are not able to provide an explanation of her symptoms of insanity. This, as I will argue later, is precisely where we might locate the film's unconscious, or what 'the text cannot know because that knowledge has been "displaced"' (Kaplan 2005: 74).

3.3. Repressed memories

In her discussion of cultural trauma and melodrama, Ann Kaplan (2005) takes Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) as an example of a filmic text that participates in the cultural 'forgetting' of war trauma: 'the knowledge of United States culture's choosing to "forget" war suffering is so close to the surface that a whole series of displacements have to be instituted in order to keep that split-off part in its place' (74). It could be argued that, in a similar way, *De mujer* plays out post-war Spanish society's desire to forget the pain and losses of the Civil War. Just as the Franco regime devised a sealing off of the traumatic memories related to the war, the patriarchal discourses of *De mujer* also demand that Isabel forget and overcome the loss of her child. Following Maribel's death, Luis urges his wife to collect all the objects that remind them of their daughter and lock them up in Maribel's old room. Isabel's father and Padre Víctor also show similar attitudes toward Luis after Isabel is confined in the mental institution. At the dinner table,

²⁹ Martin-Márquez (1999: 103) also indicates these changes in the mise-en-scène.

they advise him to forget about his wife's condition, leave the past behind and find 'distractions' so that he can return to his normal life and resume his responsibilities as a successful factory owner. Shortly afterwards, the film presents the viewer with images of Luis enjoying life again, but now in Emilia's company.

In order to cure Isabel, Javier attempts to replace her hysterical memory (distorted by the shock of her daughter's death) with a 'correct' one. His first experiment is to invoke the memory of her happy marriage, inviting Luis to the asylum and making him present her with the same white flowers he had given her as a token of their love on their anniversary day. When Isabel rejects him, Javier considers that Isabel's mind is weakened from the loss of her 'true femininity', and that she might recuperate her memory by recovering her 'feminine qualities'. In a flashback sequence, introduced by Padre Víctor's voice-over, we learn that Javier attempted to strengthen Isabel's mind by reawakening in her one of the significant feminine traits—'la coquetería'. The sequence shows images of Isabel picking flowers, entertaining other patients by playing the piano, and enjoying a game of chess with Javier, who 'lets her win the game'. Javier's persistence finally enables him to make Isabel interested in 'todas las pequeñas cosas que hacen bella la vida'. Once she recovers her 'beautified' look, which coincides with the socially constructed ideas of 'correct femininity', Javier is also able to implant the 'correct memory'.

Rather than allowing Javier to 'read' Isabel's dreams and images (flashbacks) and analyse her symptoms, Isabel is ultimately cured through hypnosis based on a one-sided evaluation by the doctor. The scene of the hypnosis session shows Isabel in close-up, lit by flashing lights and faced with a spinning wheel, while an eerie extra-diegetic sound expresses her altered state (figures 3.5, 3.6). As we witness her agonised face, covered with tears, Javier starts to override her memory:

Escuche bien Isabel. Usted no tiene enemigos. Nadie la odia. Nadie la persigue. Todos la quiere. Usted fue feliz, muy feliz en su casa, junto a su marido. Y amaba a los niños. A todos. Pero muy especialmente a una niña, su hija. Recuerda Isabel, su marido la quería mucho. Tanto

como a usted. Grabe esto bien en su memoria. Recuerda que fue de su hija. Murió, una tarde en el jardín, en el columpio, usted lloró mucho, sufrió mucho. Pero ahora ya es tiempo de serenar los recuerdos porque todo está en calma.

When Isabel is woken, the nurse brings her Maribel's doll. Both Javier and Doctor Hernández are delighted when they find out that they have succeeded in their treatment, as Isabel finally recalls her daughter's death and recognises the doll as an object. The doctors conclude that Isabel's false memory has been successfully expelled and supplanted with the correct one.



Figure 3.5



Figure 3.6

To a certain extent, Javier's attempt to replace Isabel's traumatic memory with narrative memory can be read along with what Freud's contemporary, Pierre Janet (1919-1925), observed to be the difference between the two.³⁰ Janet's case-study was his patient Irène, who could not mourn her mother because she failed to remember that her mother was dead. This is similar to the case of Isabel. According to Janet, narrative memory is a memory that can be integrated with other experiences in life, an event that can be placed within the chapters of personal history. In contrast, traumatic memory is not adaptable to present circumstances. It 'is evoked under particular conditions', occurring automatically in situations which are 'reminiscent of the original traumatic situation' (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 163). Janet believed that a cure could be achieved by

³⁰ See Herman (1992) and van der Kolk and van der Hart (1995) for their reevaluation of Pierre Janet's work and his meditations on the nature of trauma, memory and narration.

converting the traumatic memory into narrative memory. But, according to Ruth Leys (2000), Janet's own understanding of the ways in which the conversion was possible was self-contradictory and conflicted. Janet used hypnosis to bring back the apparently forgotten memories of his patients, and 'criticized Breuer and Freud's account of the cathartic cure on the grounds that what mattered in the treatment of the neuroses was not the "confession" of the traumatic memory but its elimination' (Leys 2000: 107). But Leys also comments that 'at almost the same moment Janet discovered the therapeutic value of erasing memory, he began to suggest that, in order to be cured, patients must be helped to dissolve their amnesia by telling the story of the traumatic event' (111).

The doctors in *De mujer* focus on the former position. They consider important the excision of Isabel's traumatic memory, and implant a narrative memory that could place the traumatic event within a historical order that would fit with the present. The ways in which the patriarchal discourses of *De mujer* treat Isabel's traumatic memory come close to the Franco regime's coercive ways of dealing with the cultural trauma of the Civil War. The contesting ideas of femininity introduced by the Republic, as well as the memory of the defeated, were significant cultural traumas that were repressed under the deterministic historical visions of Francoism. Neither the doctor nor the priest take into account Isabel's traumatic memory, or the way she herself 'translates' the experience of the overwhelming event of her daughter's death. Instead, they set out to indoctrinate her with their version of the historical truth where, they believe, Isabel's memory of the event should also be located.

4. Hysteria, memory and resistance

4.1 The hysteric's vision

As I have pointed out earlier, Isabel's madness is diagnosed as hysteria, an illness that has been problematically linked to the female through the womb. Indeed, the film could be read as a drama of the uterus since Isabel's madness triggered by her daughter's death is further enhanced by her inability to have more children. Thus, in keeping with Francoist ideology, on one level *De mujer*

proposes that Isabel's desire to have children is inherent to women, and that the cause of her 'madness' is precisely that of the 'wandering womb', a crisis of 'proper' femininity; on another level, the link between Isabel's infertility as madness also matches the discourse of another well-known Francoist psychiatrist, López Ibor, who insisted that in the Republican zone during the Civil War, 'all had been a "sterile womb" containing "everything which was inauthentic"' (cited by Richards 1998: 61).

Despite the patriarchal discourses that try to eradicate the 'trauma', I argue that the film privileges the vision of the hysteric as a site to contest these discourses. Earlier, I mentioned the impact of Hollywood psychiatric films in Spain during the 1940s. Janet Walker (1993) notes that Hollywood films on psychiatry have generally received a poor press in terms of their inaccuracy and often simplistic resolutions. Yet, she maintains that 'they may be taken as texts that bear [...] an interesting and rich ideological relation to nonfilm discursive practices and formations' (xx). Furthermore, '[t]hrough processes of spectator identification with the subjectivity of the heroine, they make "what the culture defines as "natural" and "normal" appear eerie, bizarre, and strange"' (xxii). These films may contain significant moments and passages that may disrupt the functioning of the phallogentric representational system (xxii). We could say that *De mujer* also encourages spectator identification with Isabel's hysteric vision and her resistance against patriarchal discourses. The contesting ideas of femininity introduced by the Republic, as well as the memory of the defeated, return as symptoms on the body of the hysteric and the melodramatic text in *De mujer*.

De mujer includes shots of Javier studying the works of Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet. For Charcot and Janet, hysteria was an illness related to disrupted memories triggered by horrific events.³¹ Before going on to develop his theories on sexuality, Freud, with Breuer, was in agreement with Charcot and Janet on the traumatic origins of hysteria. They all considered that the affect of the original trauma is translated onto parts of the hysteric's body. Their early attempts

³¹ Janet believed that under extreme conditions, 'existing meaning schemes may be entirely unable to accommodate horrific experiences, which causes the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control' (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 160).

to treat hysteria brought forth their famous formation, ‘Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences’, expressed in *Studies on Hysteria* (1893) (*SE II*: 7). Post-World War II Hollywood cinematic narratives often use these bodily/visual hysterical symptoms as clues for the location of the ‘original trauma’ and its curing processes. They involve male psychiatrists and female patients (or vice versa, in the case of Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*), and frequently maintain the original ‘trauma’ as a mystery, making the spectators identify with the ‘medical gaze’ (Doane 1987: 47). Doane writes that these films usually conform to the structure of classical narrative that provides

an enigma (What is wrong with the character? What event caused him or her to be like this?), a justification for the classical device of repetition (the compulsion to reenact the trauma, the recurrence of symptoms), and a final solution (the cure, the recovery through memory of the early scene). (47)

With this narrative device ‘the trauma in the film is explained, cured and “framed”’ (Kaplan 2005: 85). However, as *De mujer* narrates the events chronologically, spectators have already been informed of the ‘traumatic event’ that triggers Isabel’s hysterical attacks. Paradoxically, the ways in which the film visually explains Isabel’s ‘symptoms’ stick out of the narrative as excess, creating a tension between her hysterical symptoms, the referent of trauma and what the doctors explain as the solution.

Similar to Freud’s (1893) description of hysterics as the ‘visual type’, whose repressed elements return in the form of lively images (*SE II*: 280), the film privileges Isabel’s hysterical visions, aligning them closely with the spectator.³² This begins when the doctors operate on Maribel while Isabel waits outside the operating room with her family and Padre Víctor. Although Padre Víctor urges Isabel to ‘have faith as a good Christian’ and pray for her cure, an extra-diegetic sound signals that Isabel already senses Maribel’s death, and a shot cuts to the operating room giving credit to her vision (figure 3.7). In a different scene,

³² Comparing hysteria with obsessional neurosis, Freud (1893) writes that ‘Hysterical patients, who are as a rule of a “visual” type, do not make such difficulties for the analyst as those with obsessions’, whose memories return in thoughts (*SE II*: 280).

following Maribel's death, Isabel tells her husband that she saw her daughter alive, walking around their house, and that she felt her touching her face. Rather than distancing the spectator by using distorted images of her hallucinations (a more conventional association with madness in film), Lucia opts for a subjective horizontal shot accompanied by Isabel's voice-off description that traces her child's presence in the room:

Y veo a Maribel corriendo por la casa. Hace un momento a mirar esa puerta juraría que la vi entrar alegre y risueña como siempre. Se detuvo junto a la butaca y me preguntó, ¿me dejas jugar con la muñeca? Y se acercó a ella y la miró un momento y empezó a acariciarla. Yo le dije, ¿y a mí no me besas? Y vino corriendo hacia mí a echarse en mis brazos para besarme... Y hasta he sentido su carita junto a la mía.

The camera allows the spectator to imagine the presence of Maribel (figures 3.8-3.10). This subjective horizontal shot recalls the famous camera work in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* that evokes the presence of Rebecca's ghost, a sequence which fascinated many 1940s Spanish spectators and filmmakers. I discussed in chapter one that in Llobet-Gràcia's *Vida en sombras*, the fragment of the subjective shot in *Rebecca* is used to express the main character's repressed traumatic memories of the Civil War. The cinematic device is also used in *De mujer* to suggest Maribel's haunting image.



Figure 3.7

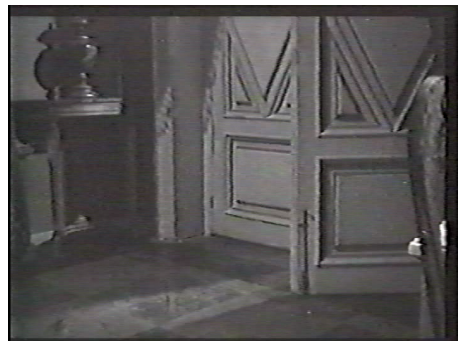


Figure 3.8



Figure 3.9



Figure 3.10

One of the most troubling and ‘perverse’ visions expressed by the hysteric Isabel is how she translates the traumatic event of her daughter’s death into a fantasy of filicide. In *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896), Freud discusses the ‘belatedness’ of symptoms, writing that ‘[...] *no hysterical symptom can arise from a real experience alone, but that in every case the memory of earlier experiences awakened in association to it plays a part in causing the symptom*’ (original emphasis: *SE III*: 197).³³ Recent trauma theorists have also highlighted the temporal belatedness of trauma and the importance of the ‘latency period’, in which symptoms become signs that entail a displacement of the original event (Kaplan 2005: 68). In a similar way, Isabel displaces the death of her daughter onto the scene of Luis’s aggression toward Maribel’s doll. This scene takes place after Luis suggests that Isabel put away her daughter’s toys in her room. When Isabel places Maribel’s doll in the bed, however, she begins to hallucinate that she is putting her daughter to sleep. Seeing this, Luis snatches the doll away from Isabel and violently throws it onto the floor (figures 3.11, 3.12). From this point on, we see that it is this memory that replaces the original event in Isabel’s mind. In other words, Isabel represses Maribel’s death through the construction of a fantasy of an attempted filicide.

³³ Freud refers to the experience of the child as rape victim whose symptoms of the first trauma only comes through the second experience, after puberty, which brings to the memory the affect of disgust.



Figure 3.11



Figure 3.12

On the surface, the film explains Maribel's death as an 'accident', especially through the patriarchal discourses that claim that Isabel's memory is erroneous. However, the film also provides traces that imply Luis's responsibility in the cause of Maribel's death, allowing the spectator to identify with Isabel's hysterical fantasy. The swing was his gift to Maribel on her Saint's day, and it is he who was pushing her when she fell off the swing. Luis, ignoring Isabel's appeal to be cautious, and not heeding her claim that he was being childish ('peor que la niña'), listened to his daughter's request to push harder. The father and daughter are shown through Isabel's point of view, expressing her growing anxiety. The low angle shot of Maribel's body being pushed higher and higher into the air, and the music in crescendo, not only create suspense for the spectator, but also render the outcome inevitable (figures 3.13-3.15). And, more importantly, Luis's treatment of the doll is marked by violence, leaving an emotional shock not only on Isabel, but also on the spectator. Because of the doll's resemblance to the figure of Maribel, the image of the doll thrown onto the floor entails a visual shock that evokes aggression against women.



Figure 3.13



Figure 3.14



Figure 3.15



Figure 3.16

4.2. Dolls, mimicry and performance

The doll in Maribel's likeness is an object that further invites the spectators to identify with Isabel's vision. At the beginning, *De mujer* shows that the doll is a 'familiar' and 'domesticated' object, associated with the transmission of Francoist 'feminine' values of motherhood. The talking doll with a 'mama' cry is in the exact likeness of Maribel, wearing an identical outfit and hairstyle (figure 3.16). That the doll resembles the look of the child is not unique to the film. It also reflects the advertising slogan of Mariquita Pérez—'la muñeca que se viste como una niña'—, a popular doll that circulated in early 1940s Spain. According to Carmen Martín Gaité (1994), '[t]he interest in dolls was truly obsessive' in the early post-war period, and 'it reached its climax when the famous Mariquita Pérez doll was launched on the market' (110). Dolls were considered to have an educational function in the construction of domestic femininity for girls under Francoism (Harvey 2002; García-Hoz Rosales 2006). Along with the text and images that circulated in post-war Spain that represented the 'domestic girl',

cultural artefacts such as dolls were designed to instil in the girl ‘her future role as housewife and mother, whilst also instructing her on how to behave like a “correctly” gendered being’ (Harvey 2002: 25).³⁴ *De mujer* also projects this social function of the doll, as it is presented as a gift from Isabel to Maribel. It sharply contrasts with Maribel’s grandfather’s gifts—a toy horse, a sword, a gun and a bugle—expressing the Francoist social expectations of gender roles.

However, after Maribel’s death, the doll represents the memory of her child that the patriarchal discourses seek to cast away. By making it an object of the hysteric’s obsession and linking it to fantasies of filicide, *De mujer* turns the doll into an untameable and uncanny object for the male characters. In his reference to E.T.A. Hoffman’s short fiction ‘The Sand-man’ (1816-17), Freud’s etymological exploration of the word ‘uncanny’ leads him to theorise that it is the double, death and the intrusion of the unfamiliar (what Freud terms the *unheimlich*) into the field of the familiar (the *heimlich*).³⁵ The doll marks the intrusion of death into the normative domestic world, and provokes the return of repressed cultural anxieties of post-war Spain.

To follow this logic, firstly the doll expresses Isabel’s desire to mimic her role as a mother in order to survive in a world where motherhood is the only option for the construction of female identity. It highlights the violent impact of the changes in gender roles brought by post-war Francoist society. Feminists such as Luce Irigaray (1985a, 1985b) have developed a concept of ‘hysterical mimicry’ to explore the potential of hysteria as a challenge to patriarchy. For Irigaray, woman’s adoption and adaption of ‘femininity’ is ‘a mimetic process in which women masquerade that which they are required to be’ (Robinson 2006: 36). Hysterical mimicry is an extreme form of mimicry of imposed femininity, and a ‘redoubling of that mime’ to ‘wrest back some control over destiny, identity and sexuality’ (36). Elizabeth Grosz (1989) also argues that hysteria can be

³⁴ Harvey (2002) delineates three different meanings that the dolls may have generated in early 1940s Spain: ‘firstly, as signifier of motherhood, secondly as alter ego, and thirdly as valuable object’ (22). Particularly interesting for the study of *De mujer* is her focus on the doll as ‘alter ego’, which she draws from Simone de Beauvoir’s interpretation of the doll in *The Second Sex* (1949). Harvey explains that, for Beauvoir, the doll had a negative effect on girls, because she saw that whereas for boys the alter ego is his penis, as an extension of his body, for the girls it is the doll that becomes her alter ego; an alter ego which is moulded by the repressive patriarchal environment (23).

³⁵ Freud (1919) engaged with the subject in his essay ‘The “Uncanny”’ (*SE XVII*: 217-256).

understood as ‘a mode of defiance of patriarchy, not the site of its frustration’. ‘In this sense’, she continues, ‘the hysteric is a proto-feminist, or at least an isolated individual who, if she had access to the experiences of other women, may locate the problem in cultural expectations of femininity rather than in femininity itself. The hysteric’s defiance through excess, through *overcompliance*, is a parody of the expected’ (original emphasis: 135).³⁶ I would argue that Isabel’s holding on to the doll is a form of this overcompliance with her ‘expected role’ as a mother in society. Isabel reaches an impasse when she loses Maribel, knowing that she cannot have any more children. Since the loss of Maribel leads to her own alienation and loss of identity, she uses the doll as her only means of survival.

Isabel’s mimicry is enhanced by her ‘performances’, which express her resistance to the explanations provided by the priest and the doctors. Isabel seems to be conscious of ‘performing’ her expected role even in her hysterical state. This first appears during Javier’s first experiment, mentioned earlier. When Luis visits her in the asylum, she challenges her husband’s recollection through a hysterical performance:

Luis: Nuestras flores [...] ¿Las recuerdas?

Isabel: Todo. En este encierro se acuerdan las cosas claramente. Recuerdo todo el daño que me has hecho. Y ahora, ¿qué quieres? ¿Indagar en mis pensamientos?

Luis: No, sólo quiero verte cuando en cuando y cada vez que venga te traeré flores, las más bonitas, blancas como éstas...

Isabel: Si son rojas... Así era la sangre de mi hija aquella mañana. ¿Tú crees que lo he olvidado? Entraste en la alcoba, me arrancaste la niña de los brazos, la tiraste en el suelo, y empezó a brotar sangre... ¡Roja, como estas flores!

After Luis leaves, Isabel tells Emilia that she has succeeded in protecting her

³⁶ While these feminists do not ultimately valorise hysteria, they do accuse ‘the phallogocentric response of attempting to “cure” the hysteric by training her in a more appropriate adaptation to “femininity”’ ignoring her resistance’ (Robinson 2006: 38).

daughter by making Luis believe that Maribel is dead (figures 3.17, 3.18). What is striking is that, while at first Isabel's 'performance' seems simply to pathologise her figure, conforming to the traditional devalued image of the feminine, the film moves on to show the spectator that her 'performance' continues even after she recovers from her illness. This time, in a heroic scheme to rescue Emilia and save her daughter's life, she decides to 'perform' hysteria, complicating further our interpretation of her first performance.³⁷ Contrary to Juana's madness in *Locura de amor* (which was used to express both her 'Spanishness' as a guardian of traditional Catholic virtue and her 'weakness' as a woman), Isabel's 'performance' embodies a resistance to the demands of patriarchy.



Figure 3.17



Figure 3.18

Secondly, the doll represents a temporality that interrupts linear, patriarchal and progressive time. In her study of the narrative of miniature, Susan Stewart (1993) has observed that 'the miniature, does not attach itself to lived historical time' (65) but opens up different temporalities and a device for fantasy. 'That the world of things' writes Stewart, 'can open itself to reveal a secret life—indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence a narrativity and history outside the given field of perception—is a constant daydream that the miniature presents' (54). In the asylum, Isabel imagines that her daughter is in school, and wishes that she might someday become her most intimate confidante: 'Será mi amiga más querida, como mi hermana pequeña. Me contará sus secretos'. The exclusivity of the mother-daughter relationship is also emphasised in the traumatic scene in

³⁷ It is only through her confession to the priest and the spectator that she reveals this secret performance: 'Es tan fácil hacer creer que uno está loca, también usted me mira con desconfianza'.

Maribel's bedroom where she puts the doll in her daughter's bed. Isabel recalls how Maribel would always want her mother to tell her stories. Resisting Luis's attempt to take away her doll, she cries out '¡No quiere oírte a ti! ¡Sólo quiere escuchar mi cuento!' We could say that in *De mujer*, the doll is an object that symbolises a different temporal space shared between mother and daughter. Luis's destruction of the doll, therefore, symbolically represents the deprivation of this feminine space.

In contrast to the male characters' reactions to Isabel's hysteric symptoms, Emilia is capable of sharing Isabel's fantasy, inviting the spectators to identify and empathise with Isabel. Indeed, the change of title from the original play *Alma triunfante* to Lucia's *De mujer a mujer* gives a much stronger presence to Emilia. This change might even suggest that the 'miracle' of Isabel's cure and the film's resolution rely not so much on Isabel's faith as on Emilia's presence and self-sacrifice. From their first encounter at the asylum, Emilia immediately addresses Isabel as 'la madre de Maribel', reassuring her that the patient's daughter is safe and is playing on the patio. Isabel confides to Emilia that they must protect the doll (as Maribel) from others so that she can have a good future. Emilia becomes an accomplice with whom Isabel can share her imaginary world.

Emilia : Debe ser muy hermoso tener una hija.

Isabel: Es la mayor felicidad.

Emilia: Alguna noche me duermo pensando en esas cosas y sueño con una niña mía muy rubia y muy bonita, como Maribel.

Isabel: ¿Dónde está Maribel?

Emilia: Allí, jugando bajo los árboles. El sol y el aire son muy conveniente para los niños.

Emilia herself, through her slips of the tongue, sometimes confuses the doll with Maribel.

The intimate relationship between the two women and their empathetic sharing of fantasies are, however, revealed in the most extreme form in a

sequence where (wife) Isabel and (lover) Emilia mirror themselves in the image of each other. We see again a ‘hysterical mimicry’ between the two women when the memories of these two begin to overlap. This scene exposes not just the repressive contradictory values of femininity imposed by Francoism, but also the problem of forgetting induced by the patriarchal discourse. After her recovery, Isabel finds out about Luis’s secret life with Emilia and their new child. Luis’s attempt to remain silent to Isabel fails, as Emilia calls him when their child falls seriously ill. His confession drives Isabel to secretly visit Emilia in order to confront her with the truth. Climbing up the staircase of Emilia’s apartment we hear Isabel’s voice-over, which imagines Luis walking up the same stairs during her absence. As Emilia lets her in, Isabel looks around the room and finds familiar objects that belong to Luis. A horizontal camera movement similar to the earlier scene of Isabel’s hallucinations of Maribel, captures the objects in Emilia’s apartment as traces of Luis’s existence: his favourite chair, his books and his pipe. Initially, the emotional distance and confrontation between the two women are stressed by an editing of shots that cut between the two women. However, when Emilia begins to tell her side of the story to Isabel, the camera gradually frames the two closer underscoring their physical and emotional proximity (figures 3.19, 3.20). Finally, realising that the way Emilia has kept the room intact after Luis’s return to Isabel—just as Isabel wanted to keep Maribel’s room intact after her death—Isabel notices that Emilia is unable to let go of the happy memory of a life she could have had with Luis. Isabel remarks:

Isabel: Veo que habíais formado un hogar. Que habíais dado un cauce normal a vuestra vida, que transcurría como la de un matrimonio cualquiera. El despertador que suena a las ocho, prepararle las cosas de afeitarse, un beso a la niña que todavía duerme...

Emilia: El desayuno... y al trabajo. Junto a Luis he pasado las horas más felices de mi vida. En esa tranquila monotonía que no aburre, porque es la dicha misma del hogar.

In sharp contrast to the overlaying dialogue that suggests the ‘dicha misma del hogar’, the heightened music score adds a tragic note to the scene. Whereas social

norms determine Isabel as the ‘legitimate wife’ and Emilia as the ‘illegitimate lover’, the scene presents them as bodies mirroring each other and reveals the schisms created by the imposed values that align women with domesticity and motherhood. But what is more, this sequence visually underscores that the weight of the other’s memory will never allow either of them to repair their ‘ideal’, lost home.



Figure 3.19



Figure 3.20

5. Melodrama and memory

5.1. Melodrama, excess and *pathos*

This last section will now pay attention to the melodramatic mode of the film, and how it foregrounds the repression of the memory of the silenced ‘other’. The male characters of *De mujer* operate within a realist discourse that depreciates the ‘melodramatic’ relationship between Luis, Isabel and Emilia. At one point, Isabel’s father regrets that Luis has made himself a protagonist of a *folletín*. The patriarchal discourses generally present a distant view of the circumstances in which the three are placed. For example, we see the priest and Isabel’s father bring out the theme of Emilia’s illegitimate child during a game of billiards where they try to trick each other, thereby undermining the seriousness of the case. With a slip of the tongue, the priest even confuses the child with the word ‘*carambola*’, which in Spanish signifies the name of the game, but also means ‘accidental’ or ‘by chance’. Furthermore, the medical and religious discourses explain that Isabel’s malady is triggered by her daughter’s death, while also considering Isabel’s disorder to be an innate weakness of women which should be

strengthened by Catholic faith.

However, as discussed in chapter two, melodrama converts the contradictions that realist discourse cannot contain, or that cannot be translated by the existing social codes into symptoms of melodramatic excess. Writing about the convergence between psychoanalysis and melodrama in theatre, Peter Brooks (1995) asserts that ‘the hysterized body offers a key emblem’ of the concerns shared by psychoanalysis and melodrama because ‘it is a body preeminently invested with meaning—a body that has become the place for the inscription of highly emotional messages that cannot be written elsewhere, and cannot be articulated verbally’ (xi). Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1987) has noted that in film, these elements, which cannot be articulated, are replaced by excesses: ‘music and *mise-en-scène* do not heighten the emotionality of an element of the action: to some extent they substitute for it’ (73).

As I have argued above, the excess which the patriarchal discourses fail to contain manifests in the body/vision of the hysteric and in the hysterical mimicry of the female characters. Given the repressive social codes, these characters resort to performance as their only way to make their voices heard. Excess also appears in the *mise-en-scène*, borrowed from the Hollywood psychiatric films, where ‘female madness’ is scrutinised. One representative sequence in the asylum visually equates ‘female madness’ with the ‘return of the repressed’. When Doctor Hernández and Emilia visit the patients’ ward during the night, Emilia acknowledges the peaceful sight of sleeping female patients and jokes to the doctor, ‘Cualquiera, al ver ésto, podría creer que sus pacientes no son enfermos, sino secuestrados por familiares en complicidad con usted’. However, the doctor then orders Emilia to take Isabel’s doll away while she is asleep. When Isabel awakes, she finds that her doll is missing and enters into a hysterical attack. Her hysteria provokes all the other women in the room into a chaotic outburst of insanity. The horrific representation of dangerously ‘contagious’ female madness unfolds in a fast cutting of successive close-ups shot in canted angles of women bursting into hysterical laughter, including some of them expressing their fears of persecution. While the rest of the film emphasises the mental institution as a space of comfort, this sequence of collective madness appears as a traumatic image

(figures 3.21-3.24). The sudden transition from the scene of tranquillity into one of female madness underscores the return of the repressed or the ‘uncanny’ that Freud connected with ‘everything [...] that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’ (*SE XVII*: 225). The illustration of collective hysteria invokes the ways in which the ‘defeated’ were explained by the Nationalists after the war. Citing the writings of war psychiatrist Vallejo-Nágera, Richards (2001) notes:

the Republic’s defeat was explained by the ‘hystericisation’ of its people. Meanwhile the victors were *positively* stimulated by a ‘paranoia of persecution’ which was successfully converted (or projected) by ‘patriotic sentiments’ and a ‘sense of community’ into a ‘delirium of imperial grandeur’. (396)

These gendered categories, which pathologically identified the ‘defeated’ as feminised hysterics, substantially contributed to the Francoist repression of post-war Spain. Returning to the film, therefore, it is suggestive that collective female madness resurfaces when Isabel is deprived of her doll (as a symbol of the memory of her child), reopening the unresolved memories that had been hidden within the apparently quiet and confined space of the asylum.



Figure 3.21



Figure 3.22



Figure 3.23



Figure 3.24

Melodrama is also able to evoke tears in the spectator by offering pathos. Writer Terenci Moix (1990) fondly remembers *De mujer* as a film which starred two of his favourite actresses of the time, because ‘por una razón u otra, siempre me hacían llorar’ (81-82). *De mujer* is heavy in dialogue, and can often become dogmatic in voicing neo-Catholic discourse. However, we could say that the moments of strong pathos are created by melodrama’s characteristic temporal structure, and the film’s treatment of Emilia’s figure and her close relationship with Isabel. Linda Williams (1991) considers melodrama (particularly ‘woman’s weepies’), horror films and pornography as three ‘body genres’ that are marked by ‘the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion’ (4). Each genre is characterised by its distinct temporal structure: for melodrama this is its temporal delay, which provides a sense that everything arrives ‘too late’. Drawing on Freud’s ‘original fantasies’—developed later by Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis (1986) in their classic essay ‘Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality’—Williams maintains that melodrama is operated by the fantasy of the ‘family romance’, or the return to origins as the predominant myth to ‘solve’ (albeit unsuccessfully) the enigma of the origin of self (10).³⁸ Melodrama ‘seems to endlessly repeat our melancholic sense of the loss of origin, the impossible hope of returning to an earlier state that is perhaps most fundamentally represented by the body of the mother’ (10-11).

³⁸ Williams (1991) explains: ‘[i]n their classic essay “Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality”, Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis (1968) argue that fantasy is not so much a narrative that enacts the quest for an object of desire as it is a setting for desire, a place where conscious and unconscious, self and other, part and whole meet. Fantasy is the place where “desubjectified” subjectivities oscillate between self and other occupying no fixed place in the scenario’ (10).

The irreversibility of time and the quest for an already lost origin or a lost 'home' also seem to inform the structure of *De mujer*. From the beginning, the film sets out the desire for the acquisition of an impossible ideal 'home'. The seemingly happy marriage between Luis and Isabel is, from the beginning, tainted by her father's expressed desire for a son and a grandson (an impossibility due to Isabel's infertility).³⁹ When Isabel returns home from the asylum, she is anxious that she might become a 'forastera en mi [su] propia casa', given that her 'memories' are different from others'. Her return is 'too late', as Luis has secretly formed an illicit family with Emilia. The ideal 'home' also arrives too late for Emilia. Emilia had told Isabel in the asylum that she would one day hope to create a family. This dream is shattered when Isabel is cured and Luis leaves her. This repeated quest for a 'unified family' can be read in association with the sexual repression of women, but also as a quest for the reparation of a war-torn nation. If the 'mad woman', as the body of Spain suffering from the Civil War, is cured, what remains is the repressed memory of the 'other' that needs to be somehow cast away in order to 'restore' the healthy national family.

5.2 Remembering the victims: Emilia's voice

In *De mujer*, the problem of the 'memory' becomes almost an obsessional demand in need of resolution and closure. I would argue that the fact that *De mujer* can only achieve a forced, narrative closure through Emilia's self-sacrifice reveals the cultural trauma of post-war Spain, in which the process of forgetting the victims of war and repression was indeed a painful and difficult matter. Emilia can be seen as a character who embodies the memory of the silenced 'other'. In the 1940s, the threat of political purge against the vanquished was combined with the extreme post-war poverty and deprivation that especially affected the lives of women. As Mary Vincent (2007) notes, '[t]he experience of daily life in the post-war period differed markedly according to political history and social class' (173). However, this particularly affected women because 'the family home was

³⁹ Commenting on this point, Martín-Márquez (1999) maintains that what is presented and then repressed in this film is a 'patriarchal devaluation of women which in its most extreme guise promotes female infanticide' (110).

their “natural” sphere’, ‘[y]et, the economic realities of the 1940s and 1950s meant that, for many, the idea of home as an inviolate private space existed only as an aspiration’ (174). The same can be said for Emilia. Throughout the film she is a woman deprived of any historical or familiar background. In contrast to Luis and Isabel, whose social status in forming a respectable Catholic bourgeois family is confirmed at the beginning of the film, Emilia, it is suggested, comes from a humble working-class background. She supports herself by working at the asylum, although she dreams of having a family one day. Emilia refuses to speak about her past. At one point, when Luis asks her about her life, she replies: ‘No merece la pena. Yo no soy más que... enfermera’.

But, just as Emilia understands that Isabel cannot let go of her daughter’s memory, Isabel is aware that neither Luis nor Isabel can erase the memory of Emilia from their restored ‘home’. The melancholia of the two women leads each of them to take on their last transgressive act to save the other woman. Isabel locks herself up in Maribel’s room, giving her ‘hysterical performance’ so that she might be sent back to the asylum. Meanwhile, Emilia also decides to lock herself up in her room, intent on taking her own life so that Isabel might recuperate the family she had lost. Padre Víctor will eventually censure these actions, in accordance with the neo-Catholic discourse of the film that carries on to achieve closure by determining the actions of both women as an ‘escape from reality’. Isabel must confess to the priest the true intentions of her performance, and Emilia must repent her attempted suicide on her deathbed, admitting that: ‘Huir es cobardía. Hay que hacer frente a la vida, ¿verdad Padre?’ As many melodramas do, *De mujer* seems to bring closure to all of the film’s contradictions through a character’s (in this case, Emilia’s) last words; she suggests the importance of forgetting and breaking with the past: ‘No quiero que mi recuerdo pese sobre vuestro cariño. Y si Dios dispone de mi vida, desapareceré con la alegría de saber que mi sacrificio hace posible vuestra felicidad. Tenéis derecho a ella’. Emilia’s sacrificial death brings the forced, but necessary closure to the film.

However, the film’s treatment of Emilia in the very last scenes destabilises a simplistic closure of the text and its relation to the spectator. Placing Isabel close by her bedside as a witness and listener to her testament, Emilia tells her that she

can imagine the daily routines of Isabel and Luis with her baby: ‘Y os veo quereros mucho, con tanto cariño como yo soñé para mí’. While she speaks, Emilia’s face is super-imposed onto images from the early moments of the film. These images show Isabel seeing Luis off and happily waving her hand from the porch of the house. Whereas the scene apparently casts away Emilia from the newly recovered family, the spectator is uncertain whether these scenes are from Isabel’s past or her future, or are Emilia’s fantasy. Unlike *Locura de amor*, which frames the story within a patriarchal historical discourse in order to tame the problematic memory of women, the complete collapse of the divide between memory and fantasy in *De mujer* at the end challenges the idea of clear ideological closure.⁴⁰ The merging of fantasy with memory complicates the achievement of a neat temporal closure, and provides the spectator with a more flexible position in relation to the film’s memory of Emilia (figures 3.25, 3.26).



Figure 3.25



Figure 3.26

The climactic last scene, which strongly evokes pathos, might be read as a passive or powerless submission to dominant ideology. Yet, as Italian critic Franco Moretti has argued, pathos can also contain a ‘subversive’ and ‘utopian’ component. Citing Moretti, Williams (1991) asserts that pathos is ‘a surrender to reality but it is a surrender that pays homage to the ideal that tried to wage war on it’ (11). ‘The fantasy of meeting with the other that is always too late’, writes Williams, ‘can thus be seen as based upon the utopian desire that it not be too late

⁴⁰ Martín (2005) also interprets the ambivalence of the restorative message of the film, but from the point of view of the spectator’s empathetic identification with Emilia: ‘Despierta en los espectadores una sensación de injusticia y estafa emocional que anula y ridiculiza el mensaje de restauración y paz doméstica de la obra’ (128).

to remerge with the other who was once part of the self' (11-12). Although Emilia's last words appear to conform to the film's manifest message about overcoming the past, her vocal presence, which continues up to the last image of the film through her voice-over, counteracts her visual and narrative erasure. Emilia's desire to be forgotten contradicts the material presence of her voice, which demands that the spectator listen and remember. The spectator is placed within a hysterical positioning: between the desire to forget (and hope for Isabel's happiness) and the desire to remember (Emilia).

While trying to safely negotiate the cultural trauma of the Civil War within the realm of the domestic melodrama, *De mujer* cannot help but suggest the social violence involved in the process of forgetting the experiences of loss. The film begins as the story of Isabel, whose traumatic experience of her daughter's death, which can be allegorically linked to the Civil War, takes over her present being. The doctors have supposedly implanted her with a 'correct' memory, and so 'cured' her. However, the film goes on to articulate that Isabel can only truly overcome the past at the cost of manipulating the memory of Emilia, or of those who sacrificed their lives in the period of conflict. Therefore, we could say that on the one hand the ending of *De mujer* presents the visual images of a 'unified family' (as an allegory of a nation restored) free from haunting memories, but on the other hand that Emilia's presence, which she herself calls 'un poco de sombra', suggests an underlying desire to remember those who once waged war against an ideal, but who have been cast out of Spanish history.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a close textual reading of *De mujer a mujer*, analysing the contradictory messages that the film presents in terms of remembering and forgetting, and shown how this might be related to the cultural trauma of post-war Spain. I have argued that both these cultural traumas (allegorically represented through Maribel's death) and the sexual repression under Francoism are displaced onto the body of women in *De mujer*. On the one hand, *De mujer* plays along with the patriarchal discourses that pathologise women as having 'too much memory', similar to those found in patriotic films

such as *Locura de amor*. Moreover, the patriarchal discourses of the film attempt to 'cure' the mad woman by exorcising the ghost of the dead. However, the ways in which the film cinematically mediates 'hysteria', makes references to Hollywood psychiatric cinema and insists on female madness as crisis of memory, bring to the surface the anxieties related to the recognition of the sufferings of the victims of war and repression. By featuring women's struggles, along with their memories and their forced mimicry of socially constructed roles for survival, the melodramatic text gives testimony to feminine voices, which advocate a remembering of what has been marginalised or lost. The melodramatic text unconsciously deals with the cultural trauma of post-war Spain through its repetitive desire to return to an original fantasy of a lost 'unified nation'. Like the hysteric, the textual body is split: asserting the patriarchal desire to manage memory whilst closely aligning the spectator with female discourse, which demands remembrance. Melodrama thus pays homage to the existence of lost memories of the other, which had been silenced under Francoism.

Chapter Four

Reflexivity, Virtual Pasts and Memory in *La vida en un hilo* (Edgar Neville, 1945)

1. Introduction

The memories of the central characters of the films I have discussed so far are linked to past traumatic experiences that resurface in the present. To different degrees, all three films reveal the rifts within a supposedly unified post-war national identity that Francoist fantasies sought to construct. These films predominantly imagine memory as something negative, and which needs to be worked through or overcome so that the characters may continue with their lives. However, this is not the only way that 1940s cinema provided a critique of Francoist politics of memory. This last chapter will turn to a film that experiments with cinema as a medium to enable a positive and creative engagement with memory.

Written and directed by Edgar Neville (1899-1967), *La vida en un hilo* (1945) premiered in Madrid on 26 April 1945. It was during a critical period for Spain, as the allied victory brought the defeat of Nazism.¹ Although during the Second World War Spain had assumed neutrality, it supported a pro-Axis policy that later put fascist Spain in an awkward position. The Franco regime sought to deal with the pressures coming from democratic nations by gradually distancing itself from fascism while heightening its anti-communist stance.² Franco made use of these external pressures to create ‘una mentalidad de asedio’ in Spain and rally support for his regime (Preston 1994: 681). During this period, however, Hollywood regained its predominance on the Spanish screens. Despite the censorship and

¹ Stanley Payne (2011) writes that at this point, ‘Franco realized that he faced the most fundamental turning point in the life of the regime, which had to be altered in some ways to survive in the postwar world of social democratic western Europe’ (249).

² The regime gradually disempowered Falange in national politics and projected the image of a conservative Catholic regime. However, Franco always referred to the international pressures to democratise the country as ‘la ofensiva masónica’ (Preston 1994: 676).

some restrictions put on the importing of Hollywood films, American culture increasingly filtered into the imaginary of the Spaniards. The number of imported German and Italian films decreased, while from 1943, ‘Hollywood recupera su hegemonía en el mercado español’ (Diez-Puertas 2003: 137). It seems quite fitting that Neville created a film such as *La vida*, which explores alternative pasts, at this historical crossroads, when a revision of the construction of national identity was on the regime’s agenda and Franco struggled to manage Spain’s self-contradictory and divisive national past.

La vida opens with a scene on a train station platform in a town in the northern province of Spain. Although vaguely set in contemporary Spain, it has no specific social references. A beautiful young widow, Mercedes (Conchita Montes), is about to embark on a journey back to Madrid where she lived before her marriage. During the train ride she shares her compartment with Madame Du Pont (Julia Lajos), a fortune-teller who claims to ‘see’ an alternative past that Mercedes could have lived. Du Pont recalls a rainy day at a florist where two men offered Mercedes a ride home. According to Du Pont, Mercedes turned down the first offer, from Miguel Ángel (Rafael Durán), but accepted the second, from Ramón (Guillermo Marín), whom she eventually married. The train ride occupies the whole film. Mercedes alternately revisits images and scenes of her actual and hypothetical past. The film initially presents two different worlds, represented by Ramón and Miguel respectively. Her deceased husband, Ramón, is shown to be an honest, hard-working man who gave her material comfort and social stability, but made her life dull and stifling. On the other hand, the imaginary husband, Miguel, is depicted as a quirky and ingenious bohemian artist, with whom she could have lived a less luxurious but more exciting and happier life. Upon arriving at Madrid, a man offers to share his taxi with Mercedes. By the time she gets to the doorstep of her house, she realises that he is Miguel. Mercedes runs after the taxi and tells him about their future together.

At first glance, *La vida* can be categorised among the Spanish romantic comedies which proliferated especially during the early 1940s. In fact, according to Monterde (1995: 230), of the 443 Spanish films produced between 1939 and 1950, 223 broadly belong to the category of comedy. These comedies have

generally been considered to provide no more than escapism for audiences. However, as many scholars have begun to prove, this is only a partial view (Fanés 1982; Ortiz 2001; Castro de Paz 2002; Triana-Toribio 2003; Marsh 2006). The attitudes toward sex, gender and identity that these films reflect often undermined the dominant values fostered by the regime. Yet even among these films, *La vida* can be read as a particularly subversive film that acutely criticises Francoist ideology.

Although less known outside of Spain than those of other comedy directors such as Luis García Berlanga and Pedro Almodóvar, Edgar Neville's films from the 1940s contain surprises for the present-day viewer given the social context in which his films were produced. Neville was one of the respected writers and 'humoristas' of the pre-war and post-war period. *La vida* is one of his most popular films from the 1940s, a body of work that includes *La torre de los siete jorobados* (1944), *Domingo de carnaval* (1945) and *El crimen de la calle de Bordadores* (1946), films which still call for critical assessment.³ Neville is better known for his contribution to humorous magazines such as *La Codorniz* (1941-1978), and the theatrical works of the post-war period.⁴ *La vida* also carries a similarly critical sense of humour to Neville's other works.

The film garnered positive reviews from contemporary critics for the plot's originality and intelligent humour, but most 1940s critics avoided identifying the film as a social critique.⁵ Post-Franco critics, however, have embraced *La vida* as a subversive film that criticises the stifling life under the conservative dictatorship (Sala Noguer 1997; Ponce 1998). For Vicente Ponce (1998), the film is 'una magistral comedia que esconde, en su aparente levedad, un elegante y sobrio ajuste de cuentas cargado de humor con aquella España del momento' (905). Ramón and Miguel represent two opposing mentalities. Ponce, for example,

³ In Anglo-American scholarship, Steven Marsh (2006) has been one of the pioneers in reassessing Neville's comedies, providing an in-depth Gramscian study of *La vida* and the other three films noted above, which he calls the 'Madrid trilogy'.

⁴ *La Codorniz* (1941-1978) originated from the successful Civil War comic magazine *La ametralladora* (1937), edited in the Nationalist side and founded by Miguel Mihura. González-Grano de Oro (2004) notes that the magazine provided an important source of humour for the people, devastated by the consequences of the Civil War: 'la posguerra estaba necesitada de una buena inyección no sólo de alimentos y comodidades, sino de grandes dosis de alegría, optimismo y humor para hacer frente a todas aquellas y otras carencias' (398).

⁵ See Gómez Tello (1945); anon. (1945) and García Viñolas (1945).

explains that the opposition is between ‘una burguesía provinciana [...] sometida a la tradición, decoro, el chisme y la maledicencia ruin’ and ‘una burguesía urbana culta, liberal y desprejuiciada’ (905).

The two different male characters might well evoke the idea of the ‘two Spains’.⁶ As an abstract form of imagining the Spanish nation, the notion of the two Spains permeated the writings and historiography of public intellectuals from the nineteenth century. Spaniards were driven to understand their nation as either ‘essentially Catholic, Monarchic, and Centralist’ or ‘naturally democratic and diverse’ (Richardson 2012: 6). In Franco’s understanding, however, the Civil War brought to a close this divisiveness. Francoist historiographers overtly discarded such distinctions and emphasised the unity of the post-war nation. They considered that ‘the history of Spain is universal history’ and that it was ‘unthinkable to have more than one Spain’ (Herzberger 1995: 29). Whenever the two Spains idea was addressed, it was in order to justify the Nationalist victory as a religious crusade and to demonise the defeated liberal democratic Republicans as ‘anti-Spain’ (Graham 1995b: 237).

It is therefore not surprising that post-Franco critics generally ascribe *La vida*’s subversiveness to the film’s favourable treatment of Miguel, whose liberal, bohemian world of leftist Spain seems to be set against Ramón’s world, linked with provincial and Catholic backwardness. However, this chapter will question this binary view through a more detailed examination of the female protagonist, who moves between the two worlds. From a Gramscian perspective, Steven Marsh (2006) has already focused on Mercedes as a fluctuating character, associating her with ‘*undecidability*’ (original emphasis: 47). Mapping the division between the two Spains on to the two geographical divisions between the peripheral (provincial) and centre (Madrid), Marsh sees Mercedes as an ‘in-between’ character who is able to cross over the two delineated worlds. He writes that ‘the mobile space in which Madam Du Pont and Mercedes operate tactically enables them [...] to articulate on the edge of discourse’ (60).

In this chapter, I will take a different approach to Mercedes’s character.

⁶ Some scholars have also written about the film as an allegory of the two Spains (Torres-Dulce 1999; Burguera Nadal 1999; Marsh 2006).

Mercedes's train ride through Spain will be compared to the experience of the cinema spectator. I will propose that *La vida* can be read as a reflexive exploration of the relationship between cinema, spectatorship and memory; I will also argue that the film destabilises Francoist visions of the past that were used in an attempt to construct a unified post-war national identity. This reading derives from the discovery of many reflexive films that appeared in 1940s Spain. In chapter one, I already discussed the metacinematic explorations of Llobet-Gràcia's *Vida en sombras* (1948). Whereas the references to films that can be found in *Vida en sombras* have often been considered to be an artistic endeavour exclusive to filmmakers such as Llobet Gràcia, further research on individual texts from the 1940s reveals that a number of popular comedies that appealed to a wider audience are highly self-reflexive about the processes of filmmaking or spectatorship.⁷ This chapter will begin by contextualising *La vida* within this trend, and examine some of the reflexive films from the period that foreground cinema's relation with memory. In the analysis of *La vida*, I will first highlight its reflexivity and use of the 'romantic comedy' genre to set out Mercedes's association with film spectatorship. Secondly, I will explore the ways in which *La vida* criticises Francoist politics of memory by mocking Franco society's *cursilería* and the regime's intent to monumentalise history. Finally, I will examine the film's reflexive exploration of cinema via what Alison Landsberg (2004) calls 'prosthetic memories'. These are memories that 'are adopted as the result of a person's experience with a mass cultural technology of memory that dramatises or recreates a history he or she did not live' (28). I will also examine the film's reflexive manipulation of time, which allows virtual pasts to destabilise the Francoist, monolithic view of history and claims of truth.

2. Reflexivity and memory in 1940s Spanish cinema

In the preface to his study *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*, Robert Stam (1992) defines reflexivity 'as a process by which texts, both literary and filmic, foreground their own production, their

⁷ For example, de Ros (1994) finds the reflexivity of *Vida en sombras* to be an exceptional case in early post-war cinema.

authorship, their intertextual influences, their reception, and their enunciation' (xiii). It is a term used both in artistic modernism and postmodernism. Modernist artists who use reflexivity 'draw attention to the materials with which they work or to the creative processes which engender their texts' in order to 'challenge the taken-for-granted solidity of the world' (xv).

Reflexivity in Spanish cinema has been predominantly discussed either within the context of the social realism that emerged from the 1950s onwards—as represented in the works of Luis García Berlanga—or restricted to the discussion of the postmodernist aesthetics of Pedro Almodóvar (Allinson 2001). *Esa pareja feliz* (1951), a film that marked the directorial debut of García Berlanga who co-directed the film with Juan Antonio Bardem, traces the daily lives of a married couple, Juan (Fernando Fernán Gómez) and Carmen (Elvira Quintillá), who try to escape from their drab reality by 'immersing themselves in the world of cinema, radio, and pulp literature' (Besas 1985: 34). Parodying the CIFESA epic films which were so popular at the time, the film includes a back-stage scene of the production of a historical film. It comically portrays how the queen (of the film-in-film), in the midst of her 'hysterical' performance, falls off the papier mâché set. García Berlanga also used reflexivity in his celebrated *Bienvenido, Mister Marshall* (1953), a film which shows a small village in a Madrid province which fashions itself as an 'Andalusian' village to attract the Americans. During this transformation, a famous actress from the typical *españoladas* of the 1940s, along with her manager, visits the village and helps the villagers to construct the desirable appearance expected of Spaniards. With this film, Berlanga reflexively appropriated the *españolada* genre that he was initially commissioned to work in to provide a satire of the political and economic situation of Spain. What is rarely mentioned, however, is that among the collaborators in the writing of the dialogues in *Bienvenido* was Miguel Mihura, a playwright and *humorista* of the pre-war Madrid *vanguardia*—often termed 'la otra generación de 27'—who worked his way through the critical period of the immediate post-Civil war years as an artist.⁸

⁸ These *humoristas* are generally referred to as 'la otra generación de 27', a term coined by José López Rubio in 1983 during his inaugural lecture to the Real Academia. I concur with Green's (2011) preference for calling these artists the 'humorists of the Madrid *vanguardia*', rather than

Spain's artistic modernism is known to have flourished during the early twentieth century, and often materialised in the artistic experiments of surrealism or cubism. As Graham and Labanyi (1995) note, '[t]hese experimental cultural forms—whatever the specific medium—signified a rupture with representationalism (realism/naturalism)' (12). 'They were abstract', they continue, 'substituting a multidimensional spatial sense for unilinearity, and with an ironic self-awareness of the process of creation (as in the use of collage)' (12-13). Its uneven development of Spain, 'which exacerbated the experience of modernity as contradiction and crisis', could be one reason for the explosion of avant-garde art during the pre-war years. The Civil War and the establishment of the Franco regime had seemed to mark a complete rupture from modernist art, as many of the liberal artists fled the country. Post-war artists and art critics who upheld the regime's ideals called for a different art form, one that would recover 'Spanishness' in national art. They rejected the 'pérdida de la españolidad' bred by the avant-garde artistic movement that reached its height under the Republic (Llorente 1995: 36). However, these claims were abstract and, as Llorente affirms, 'lo más frecuente fue limitarse a señalar el realismo y la religiosidad como sus dos componentes' (36).

The break from modernist art and certain liberal views, however, was not definite, as we can see from the writings of the *humoristas*, including Neville, who continued working after the war because of their support for the Nationalists. In his book *From Silver Screen to Spanish Stage: The Humorists of the Madrid Vanguardia and Hollywood Film*, Stuart Green (2011) provides rich accounts of these humourists, and tells how their pre-war experiences in Hollywood and the 1930s domestic film industry were manifested in their theatrical works. These humourists, including Neville, Tono, Mihura, Enrique Jardiel Poncela and José López Rubio, shared a strong interest in cinema as a medium of modernity, and

the 'otra generación de 27'. Among other reasons, Green points out the following: "[T]he other" implies an opposition between the two groups [in reference to the poets known as the Generation of 1927], often traced along political lines on account of the humorists' support of General Franco's Nationalist rebels during the Civil War (1938-9) and the death or exile suffered by many of the poets of the *vanguardia* on the outbreak of the conflict. The label thus reinforces the bias in many academic approaches to post-war culture, which overlook the marginal position to which many artists of interest who remained in Spain were relegated in the 1940s and how this shaped their subsequent output' (2).

approached their writings through the prism of cinema.⁹ During the 1920s and 1930s, some of them had travelled to Hollywood, where they had worked as screenwriters and dialogue consultants and established friendships with figures such as Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.¹⁰ They had experienced both enchantment and disenchantment within both Hollywood and the domestic film industry, experiences which eventually came through in their writings and provided reflexive views of cinema and spectatorship.

Critics have generally overlooked the ways in which these reflexive visions penetrated Spanish cinema production in the early post-war years.¹¹ For example, Green's study of *La vida* compares the film with the theatrical adaptation, written by Neville himself in 1959. Green's structural analysis on the remediation of cinema in the theatre carefully outlines the different meanings produced between the film version and the play. However, what he does not explore is how the film version may be read as a reflexive commentary on the cinematic experience itself.

During the course of my research, I have found that a variety of 1940s films do attempt to foreground film texts, genres, filmmaking and spectatorship.¹² Each text reveals a different concern over why and how the cinematic medium should be foregrounded. These attempts undoubtedly problematise the common notion that the cinema of the 1940s was simply a transparent medium to either 'project' or 'falsify' reality. However, unlike the 'realist' films of the 1950s, which use reflexivity to generate a break in the fantasy in order to provide social critique, the reflexive films of the 1940s are more ambivalent in their revelation of 'reality' in

⁹ See Green (2011) for a more detailed examination of the intertextuality of cinema in their theatrical works.

¹⁰ In 1928, Neville was sent to the Spanish embassy in Washington as Third Secretary. During their first vacation, he and his family visit Hollywood, where he immediately became acquainted with stars of the silver screen. According to Green (2011), Metro Goldwyn Mayer hired Neville to supervise dialogue and write screenplays for the Spanish versions of American films. He 'worked on a handful of such films, most notably *El presidio* (1930), a remake of *The Big House* (George W. Hill, 1930)' (9). Neville later obtained contracts for other members of the humourists to work in the American film business.

¹¹ Exceptions are Castro de Paz (2002: 113), who notices the '*visibilidad del mundo de la representación*' and the '*antitransparente voluntad de no creerse sus propias ficciones*' that characterises some of the productions of this period (117). Dapena's (2010) analysis of the musical film *Goyescas* (Benito Perojo, 1942) points to the film's reflexive use of the musical tradition, which displays a deep understanding of Spain's high and low culture (110).

¹² We could argue that there were many reasons why this trend of reflexive films emerged. The influence of artists who experienced the pre-war avant-garde, as I have explained above, may have been one reason. It may also be related to these artists' concerns over the audiences from the uneven society of the post-war years.

relation to cinematic fantasy. They seem to strongly rely on the fantastic aspects of cinema, while also reflecting on the medium. In other words, these reflexive films are set in obviously fantasy worlds, rather than the ‘real’ 1940s Spain. Furthermore, many films seem to focus on cinema’s mechanical, temporal and memorial aspects.

For instance, *Los ladrones somos gente honrada* (Ignacio Iquino, 1942), adapted from Enrique Jardiel Poncela’s 1941 play of the same title, is a comedy of intrigue which both conceives and questions the role of cinema as a ‘memory machine’. Iquino gives the cinematic camera the same status as the detective. The film narrates the story of a group of thieves whose plan to break into the house of an aristocrat is aborted when the leader, Daniel, falls in love with the aristocrat’s daughter, Herminia. After Daniel marries her, the other thieves return to the house to seek revenge on Daniel, but instead end up witnessing certain mysterious events that take place among the family members and servants. In the climactic scene, the disguised ‘detective’ discloses his own identity in order to reveal the secrets and entangled pasts of the family. However, unlike in classic detective films, it is not the detective who exposes the crime and secrets but the hidden microphones and cameras placed around the house. Finally, with the use of a film projector the detective shows us the recorded events and dialogue that have been hidden from the spectator. On the one hand, the film highlights the role of cinema as an omnipresent ‘memory machine’ that has a privileged access to knowledge and truth. On the other hand, the film foregrounds the deceptiveness of cinema, as it diverts the spectator from the truth.

Another example can be found in the CIFESA comedy *Viaje sin destino* (Rafael Gil, 1942). The film is about a ‘mystery tour’ organised by a travel agency on the verge of bankruptcy. In order to entertain the tourists, a tour group is ‘accidentally’ taken to a haunted hotel owned by an eccentric old man (Alberto Romea). The guests’ experience in the hotel is dramatised by the mixture of ‘special effects’—similar to those used in cinema—such as thunder, rain and sound effects, controlled by the tour guide, Fernando, and his staff. These ‘productions’ are mixed with ‘real’ contingent factors that end up in a ‘real’ murder, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. In one scene, the

hotel owner reveals his dark family past, including his son's suicide. His 'memory' unfolds in a flashback sequence where characters move in accelerated motion. These images are commonly associated with the effects of silent films. *Viaje sin destino* thus denaturalises the normal 'flashback memory' image by using a cinematic language of the past, and foregrounds the role of cinema as memory.

Eloísa está debajo de un almendro (Rafael Gil, 1943), another film adaptation of Jardiel Poncela's play, could be read as a parody of the gothic melodrama genre. Steve Neale (2000) has suggested that genres are contextual, and that they consist not only of films, but also 'systems of expectation and hypothesis that audiences bring with them to the cinema and that interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process' (158). From this point of view, genres can also be conceived as repositories of cultural memory. *Eloísa* relies on the audience's memory of their previous experiences of watching Hollywood 'gothic melodramas' such as *Rebecca* and *Gaslight* (George Cukor, 1944). Like *Rebecca*, *Eloísa* takes place in a haunted mansion, and the story revolves around the mysterious death of a woman. When the young Fernando Ojeda returns to Spain after spending years abroad, he is faced by a secret concerning the death of his father. Little by little, a past love and a murder that had eventually separated the two eccentric families—the Ojedas and the Briones—are revealed as Fernando falls in love with Mariana Briones. While the film relies on the gothic *mise-en-scène*, *Eloísa* partially pokes fun at the audiences that are obsessed with the genre. For example, the female heroine, Mariana, only finds Fernando attractive when he is tormented by something inexplicable. Martín Gaité (1994) explains that early post-war female viewers were infatuated with the male figures of what they called '*cine de complejos*'.¹³ The male protagonists 'se comportaban de un modo raro, sufrían oscuros e inconfesados tormentos y, de rechazo, hacían sufrir a los demás mediante sutiles coacciones psicológicas' (39).¹⁴ The film

¹³ The term '*cine de complejos*' was used in reference to the Freudian 'complex': 'Por los años cuarenta, cuando nadie entre las personas que yo conocía había leído a Freud ni se había banalizado el psicoanálisis, empezó sin embargo a circular como moneda corriente una expresión que aludía globalmente a todas las torturas incomprensibles del alma: "tener complejos"' (Martín Gaité 1994: 39).

¹⁴ According to Martín Gaité, early post-war female spectators idealised these characters because '[e]namorarse era, en cierto modo, tener acceso a la naturaleza de esos presuntos tormentos varoniles, rodeados siempre de cierto misterio' (1994: 143).

includes another self-reflexive moment when the characters watch a fragment of Gil's earlier film *Viaje sin destino*, which creates a comical doubling of the 'mad scientist' Ezequial (Alberto Romea) watching himself as the 'mad owner' of the haunted hotel. Not only does this scene position the characters as 'spectators' of their onscreen personae, but also underscores the director's self-referential gesture.

Finally, *Si te hubieses casado conmigo* (V́ctor Tourjansky, 1948) foregrounds the director's and spectator's desire to control film narratives by offering the possibilities of multiple outcomes. *Si te hubieses* begins with a portrayal of the unhappy marriage between wife Isabel and flirtatious husband Alfonso. Soon, we find out that these opening sequences are 'fictional', coming from the novel 'Si te hubieras casado conmigo' written by a novelist, Enrique, and narrated by its author. Enrique reads the novel in order to divert Victoria's (Isabel) attention from his rival, Carlos (Alfonso), and win her heart. However, he is challenged by his rivals, Carlos and Gabriel, who read the novel in advance and try to change the course of events. Here, we could say that a temporal splitting is created between the fictional scenes from the novel and those which happen in real time. This splitting destabilises the progressive narrative time via an oscillation between memory (the novel shared by its readers and the audiences of *Si te hubieras*) and the events that occur in the present. In the last sequences of the film, the female heroine suddenly looks into the camera lens and urges the audience to tell her which man she should marry. The writer ultimately has control over the film, in complicity with the audience's desires. The possibility of Victoria choosing Carlos is 'corrected' according to the choice of the hypothetical viewers, whose voices we hear within the film. The film 'rewinds' the images back to a point where it can safely have a 'happy ending', a trademark of the romantic comedy.

These reflexive films foreground representation as 'artifice', raise questions about the status of fantasy, and highlight the close relation between cinema and memory. These explorations may have undermined the Franco regime's exercise of control over mass media and cultural representations, and Neville's *La vida en un hilo* can be read as participating in such subversions. However, I would contend that *La vida*'s reflexivity is not directed toward the deconstruction of the

illusionistic aspects of cinema as much as it is in highlighting cinematic fantasy's subversive potential to denaturalise the ideological fantasies that constructed real life under Francoism.

As I go on to argue in the following sections, *La vida* offers, on the one hand, a reflexive and subversive account of Francoist perceptions of the past, while on the other provides a particularly interesting reflection on these interactive negotiations that take place between the film and the spectator, exploring the potential of cinema as prosthetic memory.

3. Reflexivity in *La vida en un hilo*

3.1. Trains, journeys and heterotopia

This chapter has so far proposed that Mercedes's train journey and her viewing of the images of her 'alternative past' can be read as an allegory of film spectatorship. One short and four long flashbacks present Mercedes's memory of her actual past and the alternative past suggested by the clairvoyant, Madame Du Pont. The conversations between Mercedes and Madame Du Pont that take place during the night in the train compartment allow Mercedes and the spectator to move between her memory, her virtual past and the present. A few elliptical shots that show the train moving through the country are inserted between these conversations.

One of the significant differences between the film and the 1959 play is that the former almost entirely takes place on the train, while the train sequences are completely removed from the theatrical adaptation. This elimination underscores the train's affinity with cinema.¹⁵ From the early days of cinema, the train has been regarded as cinema's double. In her study of the relationship between the two, Lynne Kirby (1997) claims that '[a]s a machine of vision and an instrument for conquering space and time, the train is a mechanical double for the cinema and

¹⁵ Writing about the elimination of the train in the play, Green (2011) notes that '[t]he principal reason for the reduced pace at which the plot develops in the play is a combination of the relative spatio-temporal inelasticity of theatre at this time in comparison with cinema, and the quasi-naturalistic approach to *mise en scène* still operative in Spanish theatre at the time when Neville adapted his film' (72). My reading suggests that the train holds a particularly important meaning for the film because of its affinity with cinema.

for the transport of the spectator into fiction, fantasy, and dream' (2). These overlaps are 'embedded in a myriad of cultural, social, and historical relations linking these two modern institutions' (2). One common characteristic between the train and cinema is their ambivalent spatial configuration as an 'in-between' space which destabilises the dominant social/cultural order that is fixed to an established geographical location.¹⁶ This in-between space can be explored through Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia'. Foucault (1986) discusses sites 'that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect' (24). One of these spaces is Utopia, an unreal space that presents society itself either 'in a perfected form' or 'upside down'. Through this idea, Foucault arrives at the idea of heterotopias as spaces that do exist within a culture, but which are kinds of 'counter-sites' (24). Heterotopias are spaces in which 'all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (24). These are places 'outside of all places', from which they can reflect and speak about other sites. Foucault also says that both trains and cinemas are heterotopias, spaces outside of places, and difficult to pin down with geographical markers.

In the historical, social and cultural context of post-war Spain, trains as heterotopias could potentially have special meanings regarding gender and sexual relations. The cautionary commentaries from the defenders of Catholic morality in the 1940s suggested that train journeys implied a certain amount of freedom for women. In *El libro de la mujer* (1946), writer and film critic Cecilia Mantua had expressed her advice for women who travel alone on public transportation:

Parece ser cuando una joven –y mucho más si es bonita – sale sola de viaje ha de abrir la puerta a lo imprevisto, al azar y a la aventura. Salir de viaje con este espíritu, es salir con una desagradable predisposición de ánimo, que ha de poner a una mujer en ridículo. Creo haber dicho en otros párrafos de este libro, que el amor sale al paso como un puro avatar de la existencia, pero predisponerse

¹⁶ Marsh (2006) focuses on 'travel' as 'a conjunction of unstable time and place' (47).

demasiado a que aparezca el amor, porque un compañero de departamento, sea en el tren, barco o avión, nos haya dirigido dos frases galantes, es cimentar desbaratadas ilusiones que han de redundar en perjuicio de una mujer. (70)

This passage summarises well how these journeys could often become spaces for women to fantasise about chance encounters with men. These fantasies were morally condemned for being ‘superficial’, and for having negative effects on women.

Trains as heterotopias also appear in a number of other 1940s Spanish films. These films often depict trains as places where accidental encounters can destabilise gender relations or invert the moral order.¹⁷ In the controversial religious melodrama *La fe* (Rafael Gil, 1947), the young heroine attempts to seduce a handsome priest on the train. Such a transgressive act against Catholic morality, however, is duly punished with the heroine’s death in a derailment. Similarly, in comedies and melodramas such as *Un marido a precio fijo* (Gonzalo Delgrás, 1942) and *Cristina Guzmán* (Gonzalo Delgrás, 1943), trains serve as spaces where characters are in disguise, and true identities become unstable. The affinity between the train and cinema is also reflexively captured in Rafael Gil’s *Eloísa está debajo de un almendro*, discussed above. Edgardo Briones, the eccentric father of Mariana, is a man who has not left his bed for years, after his deranged sister murdered his wife. However, with the assistance of his servants Edgardo occasionally travels, albeit in his bed, which has been converted into a train compartment, using a cinematic screen to project the images of his travel locations and playing the sound effects on records.

The train in *La vida* is such a heterotopic space that provides inversions and allows Mercedes to transgress social norms. Not only is she able to physically escape from the stuffy provincial town fettered by tradition, but also to resist the progress of time and explore the ‘virtual past’. Here, the alternative past emerges *visually* in front of her, with the aid of Madame Du Pont, and transforms the train

¹⁷ Kirby (1997) notes that the ‘railroad adopted an ambiguous status in relation to gender’, stating that ‘[w]hether in the station or on the train, class and sex mixed and converged in a space that could not always be socially defined or controlled’ (82).

compartment into a kind of cinema. As Kirby (1997) notes, in the case of silent and sound train films ‘[i]t is the spectator/passenger that the train and the cinema converge most closely, as each creates its tourist, its visual consumer, its panoramic perceiver, its subject out of a fundamental instability: discontinuity, shock, and, ultimately suggestibility’ (250). Furthermore, ‘[t]he visually based, fantasy-oriented subjects of the railroad and the cinema are also those of the city and its *raison d’être*, consumerism’ (250-51). However, the spectator/passengers are not simply passive consumers. ‘These are subjects whose ability to make judgments is influenced by images’, Kirby notes, ‘whose psyche is based on the destabilization of traditional modes of perception, consumption, sexuality, social interaction, and the framing of vision by a window/screen’ (251). This is particularly conspicuous in *La vida*, as we are invited to see Mercedes’s active participation in looking at the images of both worlds, and make judgements in the present drawn from what she experiences through these images.

3.2. Romantic comedies and female spectatorship

The link between the female traveller and the female spectator is also enhanced by the film’s reflexive references to Hollywood romantic comedies. Miguel, Mercedes’s husband in her alternative past, is portrayed as a ‘cinematic’ romantic hero, an inversion of her ‘real’-life husband, Ramón. Miguel is played by Rafael Durán, who had risen to fame in the post-war years as a *galán*, starring in numerous CIFESA romantic comedies during the early 1940s. According to Comas (2004), Durán formed the so called *parejas ideales*, ‘ampliamente aireadas por las *fan magazines*’ (97).¹⁸ These films were ‘enormously successful, distracting the population from the hardships of the immediate post-war years’ with ‘a sometimes screwball-oriented, high-society world of fast dialogue, zany socialites, and expensive gowns and haircuts’ (Evans 1995: 222). These films, usually set in a fantastical bourgeois/aristocratic world, were stylistically similar to Hollywood romantic comedies and Italian ‘White Telephone’ films.

In *La vida*, the stylistic references to these romantic comedies are reflexively

¹⁸ Prior to becoming a successful *galán* in many of the CIFESA ‘society’ comedies, Durán even worked as a voice-over artist for many leading Hollywood actors, such as Cary Grant and Gene Raymond.

applied, and breaks with the naturalism of many CIFESA films through a juxtaposition of the two worlds represented by Miguel and Ramón, respectively. Unlike *Vida en sombras*, where specific Hollywood film texts are referenced in the form of film fragments (or ‘direct quotations’), *La vida* makes indirect references to the circulating images, figures, language and relationships that pertain to the romantic comedy genre. Neville applies some of the characteristics of 1930s Hollywood romantic comedies, described by Neale (2000) as ‘an energetic mix of slapstick, wisecracks, intricately plotted farce and the comedy of manners combined with vividly eccentric characterization and a disavowable undercurrent of sexual innuendo’ (70). Neville’s adaptation of the language of Hollywood romantic comedies can be compared to what Maureen Turim (1985) calls a ‘semiotic layering’, which she identifies in her study of adaptation in Hollywood films.¹⁹ Turim focuses on the shift of meanings during the process of adaptation depending on the socio-cultural context in which the films were produced. She defines semiotic layering as ‘the accrual and transformations of meanings associated with an artifact as it passes through history, or as it is presented in different versions’ (377).

Neville’s adaptation of the aesthetic of Hollywood romantic comedies is specifically associated with the cultural context of post-war Spain, but particularly with the perspective of the Madrid humourists of *La Codorniz*. Writing on the humour of *La Codorniz*, the editor of the magazine, Miguel Mihura, notes that

[l]o único que pretende el humor es que, por un instante, nos salgamos de nosotros mismos, nos alejemos de puntillas a unos veinte metros y demos una vuelta a nuestro alrededor, contemplándonos por un lado y por otro, por detrás y por delante, como ante los tres espejos de una sastería y descubramos en nosotros, nuevos ángulos y perfiles que no nos conocíamos’. (Quoted in Aguilar 2002: 21)

What Mihura refers to as the ‘mirrors’ that provide different angles to our subjectivity are also important in *La vida*. The aesthetic of Hollywood romantic

¹⁹ I borrow this insight from Kathleen Vernon’s (1998) study of the intertextual presence of Hollywood cinema in the form of ‘direct quotations’ or film clips (319).

comedies provides an angle that could humorously distort both worlds.

Mercedes's and Miguel's relationship develops through successive fast-paced, comical and absurd situations similar to those of Hollywood romantic comedies. After the taxi ride from the flower shop where they meet, Miguel spontaneously invites Mercedes to his studio to show her his sculptures. During the visit, the Sánchez family, an influential family from a southern town, Burguillos, arrive to commission him to create a monument for their late patron. Mercedes is dragged into a situation where she must play his wife in order to save Miguel's reputation in front of the conservative family, and she subsequently accompanies him to the village for the inauguration of the monument. The two spend the night in the same room, each sleeping in an armchair, but the scene swiftly shifts to a brief shot of their wedding. The speedy shifts between scenes that are intimately tied into a cause-effect relation take on a similar process of suturing found in classical Hollywood cinema.²⁰ The linear narrative in Miguel's world aligns the spectator closely with the action of the protagonist suturing the spectator into the narrative.



Figure 4.1.



Figure 4.2.

The witty and fast-paced conversation between Mercedes and Miguel also conjures up 'their enjoyment of each other's company, their shared sense of fun and companionship and the complementary nature of their partnership', a general characteristic of romantic comedies observed by Olsin Lent (1995: 314). For instance, their first conversation in the taxi expresses a pleasurable, creative and

²⁰ As Hayward (2006) notes, 'seamlessness' or suture is one of the key effects of continuity and chronological editing used to refer to the classical Hollywood film style in which 'the spectator is presented with a narrative that is edited in such a way that it appears to have no breaks no disconcerting unexplained transitions in time and space' (110).

egalitarian relationship between the two sexes:

- Mercedes: Ah, ¡es usted músico!
- Miguel: Sí, se lo voy a confesar, sinceramente, soy un concertista famoso.
- Mercedes: ¿Violín?
- Miguel: No, flauta. Tenga usted la pecera. Verá usted, le gusta usted la música romántica o de la otra.
- Mercedes: La que le salga a usted mejor.
- Miguel: [Playing a strange melody]
- Mercedes: Oiga, ¿eso es música romántica o de la otra?
- Miguel: No, ésta es la otra. Pero fíjense cómo les gusta a los peces. Ahora están bailando.
- Mercedes: ¿No será que se quieren escapar?
- Miguel: Oh, veo que usted no entiende ni una palabra de música.
- Mercedes: ¿Y hace mucho que usted toca la flauta?
- Miguel: No, acabo de comprar el instrumento.
Es la primera vez. Pero ¿verdad que prometo?
- Mercedes: Sí, se ve que usted tiene un porvenir seguro...

Typical of the *galán* of romantic comedies, Miguel is characterised as versatile and eccentric. He is a source of fun company for both Mercedes and the spectator (figures 4.1, 4.2). He teaches his goldfish how to dance, and pretends that he is a musician. Armed with playfulness and fantasy, he cleverly subverts the norms of post-war Spanish society. For example, on the night of the village monument inauguration Señora Sánchez offers Miguel and Mercedes a room with a double bed, remarking, ‘Ya suponemos que no sean ustedes esos matrimonios modernos que tienen las habitaciones separadas’. Agreeing with Señora Sánchez, Miguel tells her that he respects his own family tradition, which had taught him that husbands and wives must always share the same room. When Señora Sánchez leaves the room, Mercedes wittily rejects Miguel’s idea by telling him that she would rather follow *her* family tradition when faced with similar circumstances: to each sleep in a separate armchair. Neville’s treatment of this slightly risqué

bedroom scene further evokes the ways in which Frank Capra undermined the Hays Code restrictions in the Hollywood romantic comedy *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934) with the famous use of bed linen between the unmarried couple that they call the ‘Wall of Jericho’.

In sharp contrast, Ramón is in dialogical opposition to Miguel. The character actor Guillermo Marín, a regular in Neville’s films, plays Ramón. Compared to the ‘cosmopolitan’ image of Durán, Marín encapsulates the ‘Spanishness’ drawn from his dramatic roles in such films as *El escándalo* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1943), *Los últimos de Filipinas* (1945) and *Lola Montes* (Antonio Román, 1944). Ramón’s obsession with punctuality, his preference for practicality over improvisation and his sole interest in building bridges, leave little space for imagination. Where Miguel’s language is characterised by fantasy and creativity, Ramón’s language is marked by banality and repetition. A distinctive trait that is repeated in the film is his failure to deliver jokes. Ramón stumbles with language and is unable to deliver the punchline of the joke correctly, underscoring his inability to give pleasure and satisfaction to Mercedes. Ramón’s methodical and orderly behaviour also invokes his military background. *La vida* even mocks the military ideals that were upheld in early post-war Spain. Ramón’s insistence on wearing his military boots on his wedding day ends in embarrassment when he is unable to remove them during his wedding night and so consummate his marriage.

The differences between Miguel’s and Ramón’s worlds are also presented stylistically. When the film illustrates Mercedes’s recollections of her life with Ramón, it stylistically disrupts the suturing techniques of romantic comedies. One example is a scene where Mercedes tries to enjoy a temporary escape from provincial life by going to a Madrid nightclub. Her expectations for a romantic night out with her husband Ramón are completely ruined by his silly conversations with the waiters and old friends he runs into in the club. We could say that the scene is a parody of one of the most sexually charged moments in Ernst Lubitsch’s film *Angel* (1937), in which a violinist serenades Marlène Dietrich while she dines with her lover.²¹ *Angel* is a society comedy about a

²¹ As both critics and Neville himself have noted, Neville was strongly influenced by the German

marriage in crisis. British wife María (Marlène Dietrich) is neglected by her work-oriented diplomat husband, Frederick, and falls in love with an American aristocrat, Tony, during a brief trip to Paris. When Tony asks María (known to him as ‘Angel’) to reveal her true identity in this nightclub scene, she tells her inquisitive lover, ‘Why shall we spoil such a perfect evening with names?’ The scene is caricatured in *La vida*, when the upper body of the waiter with whom Ramón endlessly chats annoyingly obstructs the shot-reverse-shot exchange of gazes between Mercedes and a serenading violinist. The romantic music of the violin is drowned by Ramón’s voice, which constantly articulates the names of old friends who are all unknown to Mercedes (figures 4.3-4.5).



Figure 4.3.



Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.5.

Interestingly, while *La vida* could be seen as a parody of Lubitsch’s romantic

director Ernst Lubitsch and his Hollywood films (Aguilar 2002; Green 2011). Green (2011) writes, ‘[t]he humorists’ most overt borrowing from Lubitsch is, in fact, found in the cinema of Neville. Rare is the film in which he does not employ cinematography and editing to mischievous ends in a way similar to Lubitsch. [...] Such devices are used most extensively in *La vida en un hilo*, which Neville himself described as “Comedia al estilo de Lubitsch” (159-160). The reference to *Angel*, however, is my own interpretation.

film, Neville's film presents a more progressive and liberal view of women. In *Angel*, Tony turns out only to be a dream-like/virtual lover for María as she eventually restores her marriage with Frederick, consolidating bourgeois morality. However, in *La vida*, the 'preterite' and 'subjunctive' temporalities allow Mercedes to freely move between the two men and attain, by the end of the film, her object of desire, Miguel.

Neville's reflexive use of the romantic comedy genre foregrounds the expected 'female spectators' of these films and the manner in which they closely identify with the filmic images. The comedic film works *because* Mercedes is a woman, because female spectators have often been aligned with 'over identification'. In her essay 'Film and the masquerade: theorizing the female spectator' Mary Ann Doane (1991) argues that the problem of the female spectator is her proximity to the image:

Both the theory of the image and its apparatus, the cinema, produce a position for the female spectator—a position which is ultimately untenable because it lacks the attribute of distance so necessary for an adequate reading of the image. (31)

Doane links closeness to femininity not as its essence; she does so in order to delineate the place culturally assigned to woman. Women's proximity to the screen was indeed a concern for Spanish film critics of the period, who criticised the propensity of women to identify too much with the screen image. Articles in the 1940s Spanish film magazines highlighted this problem. In *Radiocinema*, Marina Rey Vázquez (1941) lamented that women who are too influenced by films and film actresses '[q]uieren imitar su vida, sin pensar que lo de la pantalla es siempre una cosa ficticia, y que estas mujeres que os presentan rodeadas de todas esas locuras, solamente las realizan para *ganarse la vida* [...]' ([n.p.]).²² For José Juanes (1942), it had to do with women's nature: 'La mujer es muy dada al ensueño; su pensamiento en esa dulce edad en que sólo las cosas se ven de los

²² Esperanza Ruiz-Crespo (1944) also observes how female spectators identified with and imitated screen images: 'Se empezó a hablar de la gracia de los ojos oblicuos, del encanto de las bocas cuadradas, de la seducción de tantas y tantas facetas femeninas como nunca habían conseguido parecer seductoras [...] Y se imitaron ya sin reservas, las actitudes, los trajes, incluso los conflictos de orden íntimo, de complejo misterioso por los caminos del corazón' (n.p.).

rosales, pudiera condensarse en una sola palabra: ilusión' ([n.p.]).

La vida, however, examines the role of the female spectator not so much to stress the idealistic screen romance as to question her position in Spanish society through reflection. In one scene, Mercedes recalls that she married Ramón passively, following the advice of the people around her and so conforming to her environment: 'me dejé convencer por las personas que me contaban día y noche las excelencias de Ramón. [...] Según toda esa gente, me casaría y sería feliz'. Mercedes's attitude reflects the attitude of many Spanish women of the post-war years who were disconcertingly and blindly induced to accept the institution of marriage, as described by Carmen Martín Gaité (1994):

Del hombre, aquel complemento indispensable al que más o menos estaba referido todo y que se daba por supuesto que un día la llevaría vestida de blanco ante el altar, ¿qué sabía la jovencita soltera? Muy poco. Ni de lo que pensaba, ni de lo que hablaba con sus amigos, ni de lo que 'le hacía ilusión'. Pero siempre abrigaba la esperanza de que aquellas incógnitas quedasen despejadas mediante un trato más estrecho. (162)

Martín Gaité maintains that the engagement period was a time of abstinence, rather than a pleasurable learning period for the couple. One article Martín Gaité cites, from a Falangist women's magazine, recommended that women should have 'la ceguera, la sordera y la tontería' in order to be accepting of her fiancé's flaws. The article warns women not to fantasise about the sort of relationship that films propagate: '[s]er novia no consiste en la alegría de tener asegurada la butaca del cine, el aperitivo y un galán con bigote a lo Clark Gable' (cited in Martín Gaité 1994: 163). In contrast, Neville's film reflexively uses the female spectator's fantasy to reinvestigate her own choices and desires, which society forbids her to look into.

4. Challenging Francoist perceptions of the past

4.1. Edgar Neville and Francoist historiography

I have mentioned in the introduction of this chapter that some post-Franco critics have re-evaluated Neville's film to see it as a critique of the post-war situation, a critique based on an idea of the two Spains. However, this is certainly not according to the director's intention. Neville himself has stated that his plan was not to put in a confrontation between the two Spains (Neville 1969: 291). Neville's ambivalent political positioning both during and after the Civil War does complicate the ideological implications of *La vida*. Sanz de Soto (1999) has characterised him as 'ni comunista, ni fascista, sino todo lo contrario' (56). Neville was a liberal aristocrat and supporter of the Republic who later switched sides at the outbreak of the war. During the war, he participated in the production of propaganda films for the Nationalist cause.²³ Although he was on the victorious side, Neville was among those intellectuals who were later disenchanted by the Franco regime (if not in complete opposition to it) when the war was over.

As early as 1939, Neville experienced problems with Francoist censors regarding the film *Frente de Madrid* ([*Carmen fra i rossì*], 1939), which he directed in the Cinecittà studios of Rome. The film, of which there are no remaining copies in Spain, focuses on a young Falangist soldier on a mission to communicate with the members of the 'fifth column' in Republican Madrid. Although the film was a box office success, its allegedly reconciliatory ending, which showed a Falangist protagonist dying alongside a Communist militia soldier, infuriated the Spanish critics upon its release.²⁴

Turning to the script, written by Neville, Ríos Carratalá (2007) disagrees with critics such as Sanz de Soto who have argued that the film attempts to reconcile the two sides. According to Ríos Carratalá, the script indicates that the film ends

²³ These documentary films include *Ciudad Universitaria* (1938), *Juventudes de España* (1938) and *¡Vivan los hombres libres!* (1939).

²⁴ Sanz de Soto (1999) writes, 'aquel estreno motivó un sonoro escándalo, silenciado naturalmente por la prensa. La película hubo de ser montada de nuevo y a contra-reloj por Sara Ontañón, al tiempo que algunos diálogos desaparecieron [...] el final fue cortado para siempre, ordenándose incluso, quemar el negativo' (58).

with a ‘conversion’ of the Republican militia soldier to the Nationalist cause, which redeems him from his previous sin. He argues that Neville’s ending was not so much based on a desire to reconcile two opposing ideologies as much as to bridge the divide between the two soldiers, who had come from the same neighbourhood: ‘los dos sujetos que agonizan en una tierra de nadie son de Madrid, han deambulado por las mismas calles, tienen una edad similar’ (266). Neville, who has repeatedly showed his preference for *costumbrismo*, which depicts everyday manners, customs, local languages and anecdotes, was perhaps more interested in what united the two soldiers through their personal histories, rather than their ideological and political separation by national history (Ríos Carratalá 2007: 267). Ríos Carratalá, however, notes that during the difficult times of repression, Neville was one of the few writers who dared to suggest what to do with the vanquished who were not even considered Spanish by the regime (267). At one point, Neville himself made explicit his discontent with the regime’s silencing in cinema of any references to the pain and loss of the Civil War. In 1964, Neville recalled that when he had made his medium-length film *Verbena* in 1941, ‘no trataba, como era costumbre allá en el año cuarenta y uno, de un tema épico o altamente educativo o histórico-victorioso’. He affirmed that, at the time, he had not seen a film that described ‘la afrentosa derrota del país que la produce’ (cited in Ríos Carratalá 2007: 279).

As Francoism called for a unified national identity for the post-war years that would exclude all factors referring to the Republic as ‘anti-Spain’, the regime’s vision of the past was accordingly established. ‘Francoist historiography’, writes Herzberger (1995), ‘does not aim to dispute the knowledge collectively possessed about the past of Spain (the so-called facts of history), but rather seeks to establish a normative set of strategies that define a particular *concept* of history’ (original emphasis: 16). The conceptual premise of Francoist historiography is ‘highly prescriptive’, and ‘[h]istorians of the Regime generally set out to cast historical “realities” into a narrative structure that negates alternative or counterdiscourses and therefore to make the past largely immune from other potential representations’ (17). Furthermore,

the imposition of a historical destiny is critical to the functioning of

Francoist historiography, and it stems from the pseudodeterministic principle that the essential Spain of the past (the truth of what has been) gives birth to the essential Spain of the future (the truth of what will be). (Herzberger 1995: 32)

These visions are condensed into cultural and mythic symbols, or ‘kitsch scenarios’, as Alejandra Yarza (2004) puts it, which can ‘replace more complex accounts of Spain’s political past’ (49). ‘Francoism and kitsch aesthetics’, he continues, ‘came together to constitute and project a false and picturesque image of Spain’ (49). As I have argued in chapter one, the commemoration of the Civil War was subject to these precepts. The regime monumentalised the conflict as a victorious historical event for the Nationalists. I shall now discuss how *La vida* ridicules these Francoist perceptions of the past.

4.2. *Cursilería* and cultural inadequacy

One of the ways in which *La vida* attacks how the regime envisioned the national past is by suggesting the cultural inadequacy of the ruling class of Francoist society, by associating Ramón’s world with the notion of *cursilería*.²⁵ Tracing its origins to the aspirations and frustrations of the rising middle class in nineteenth-century Spain, Noël Valis (2002) argues that *cursilería* persisted as a ‘historical sign of the uneven process of modernity’ (19), an expression of cultural inadequacy or ‘insufficient means (economic, cultural social) to achieve desired ends’ (11). *Cursilería* is thus about the anxious desire to maintain appearances in the process of constructing identity. While Valis notes that *cursilería* is a concept which has historically evolved and been used in different ways during different periods, it also takes central stage under Francoism

in part because post-civil war economic hardships and material shortages brought out more sharply the gap between appearances and

²⁵ Although kitsch and *cursilería* are sometimes used synonymously, Valis (2002) asserts that ‘economically, Spain had not undergone sufficient industrialization or evolved into a consumerist mass society in the earlier part of the twentieth century enough to produce kitsch—a product of advanced industrialization and mass consumerism—in any significant way’ (16). While postmodern observers might retrospectively view aspects of the Franco era as kitsch, it is an awareness that came to notice ‘first to the vanguard of the Barcelona intelligentsia in the late 1960s’ (16).

reality, in part because the ideology of Francoism demanded it, in the sense that the regime's values were self-consciously modelled on an obsolescent code of behavior and beliefs. Behind the shield of 'National Catholicism,' a facade of national, political, and religious unity, Francoism defensively drew up barriers against both the outside world and internal dissent, stressing Spain's exceptionalism and uniqueness. Ironically, the result was often far less grandiose and much more banal, indeed *cursi*, than intended, as a warped and retrograde, Victorian-style mentality suffocatingly took over. While Franco himself was depicted as the noble warrior triumphant in historical paintings and speeches, the vision that Francoism projected in reality was pompously and unremittingly middle-class. (5)

The Franco regime significantly underscored the historical 'distinctiveness' of Spain and its 'historical destiny'—which was also manifest in the official slogan 'Spain is different', employed to encourage tourism—proclaiming its imperial grandeur and Catholic tradition. What 'Franco and his supporters most desired was to obliterate history, at least modern history, and return to an earlier myth of Spain [...] the Spain of Isabel and Ferdinand, Saint Theresa of Avila, and Saint Ignatius of Loyola' (Valis 2002: 7). Yet, the 'exceptionality' of Spain that the regime sought to promote only enhanced the contradictions between official ideology and everyday life in a fragmented post-war nation. One of these contradictions would appear in the regime's upholding of the values of marriage and family. The regime invested heavily in traditional family values precisely because of the reality of the war and its aftermath, which had torn up and displaced many homes. Furthermore, while family and marriage were the highest ideals to which women could aspire, in reality there was a 'surplus of unmarried women to work out of economic necessity' (278). The *cursilería* that persisted under Francoism 'signified inner contradictions, social and material disparities, between economic shortages and the need to keep up appearances, or between the ideal image of family life and the harsh reality of unrewarding labor' (278).

La vida also explores this idea that *cursilería* highlights the gaps between

appearances and inner contradictions. Mercedes married Ramón because she was told that he came from a traditional, ‘good family’. Yet, the reality of this family was, according to her words, ‘una mezcla de ordinareiz y cursilería verdaderamente enternecedor’. The recollection scene of Mercedes’s married life begins with a panoramic shot of the exterior of Ramón’s immense neo-Baroque family house. The camera cuts to the dark interior and slowly pans from the left to right, showing the drawing room decorated with outmoded mundane objects, oversized vases, plants, lamps and family portraits (figures 4.6, 4.7).²⁶ These images are accompanied by Mercedes’s voice-over, which explains the unbearable monotony of her daily life: ‘Cada día era tan semejante a los que habían transcurrido anteriormente, que se perdía la noción del tiempo. Y lo peor es que de antemano se podía prever de lo que iba a ocurrir después. Siempre los mismos gestos, las mismas conversaciones, las mismas frases’.



Figure 4.6



Figure 4.7

²⁶ These outmoded objects are similar to what Ramón Gómez de la Serna shows to be a form of domestic adornment in his 1934 essay ‘Lo cursi’. Gómez de la Serna gives examples of ‘lo *cursi* malo’: objects such as ‘centros de mesa que son un cisne paseando flores como un borrico de jardinero esos barómetros inmensos que abruma de miedo al mal tiempo toda la casa’ (Gómez de la Serna 1988: 29). Neville was a great admirer of Ramón Gómez de la Serna, and strongly influenced by his work. See Torrijos (1999: 12-13).

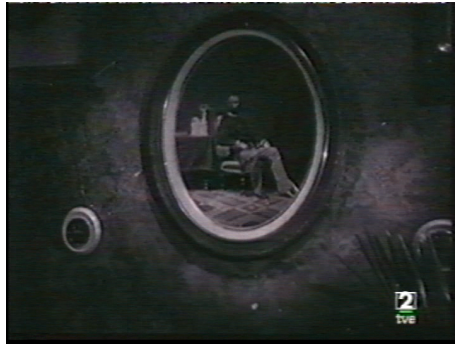


Figure 4.8



Figure 4.9

La vida further pokes fun at the regime's aesthetics of memory by showing that repetition and extreme redundancy exhaust meaning both from the objects and language that represent tradition in Ramón's world. When Ramón's aunt discovers that Mercedes has secretly removed a portrait of a brigadier from the wall, the aunt cries out, '¡Pero ese retrato llevaba colgado allí años y años!', emphasising the importance of tradition for tradition's sake (figure 4.8). The conversations of the guests who come to Ramón's house also expose their superficiality and obsession with social appearances. Neville introduces two female figures in the film, Doña Encarnación and Doña Purificación, whom he had created in articles previously published in the humorous magazine *La Codorniz* (figure 4.9). Aguilar (2002) describes these women as 'dos orondas burguesas con sus intereses chatos, sus conversaciones tópicas y sus preocupaciones mezquinas' (140). Although the women try to appear to be respectable upper-class women by wearing fur coats and extravagant hats for tea, by travelling to Madrid and inviting each other to dinner parties, their repetitive conversations reveal their provincial backwardness. Menial conversations about their gastronomic experiences in Madrid and their kitsch appreciation of a film titled 'Las nueve huerfanitas' reveal their *cursilería* and cultural inadequacies.²⁷

Ramón's desire for social ascendancy and progress counters the ways in which the house is decorated with outmoded objects. One of the significant objects that represents this contradiction is the large metal clock, a wedding gift from his old friends. The clock is revered in Ramón's family, and considered an

²⁷ This latter reference could be another reflexive instance that indicates Neville's frustration with some post-war Spanish audiences who could only appreciate cheap sentimentalism.

important family treasure that should be placed as the centrepiece of Ramón's household. It symbolises his social status as part of the respectable bourgeois circle, as well as functioning as an object that will form a tradition and ground for his 'new' family with Mercedes. However, the deformed shape of the clock, adorned with light bulbs, gives the impression that it hovers between the 'classical' and the desire to be 'modern' while failing to become either, underscoring the 'lack of taste' of the Spanish bourgeoisie. But we could also say that as an object that marks time, the *cursi* clock symbolises a sort of 'distorted history' and the strains that emerge from the Francoist culture of *cursilería* noted above. From this perspective, Mercedes's attempt to remove the clock from her house can be read as a subversive attack on the manipulative Francoist visions of the past. After her plan to remove the clock from her living room is impeded by Ramón's aunts, Mercedes finally succeeds in disposing of it by throwing it from the train after Ramón's death (figures 4.10-4.12).

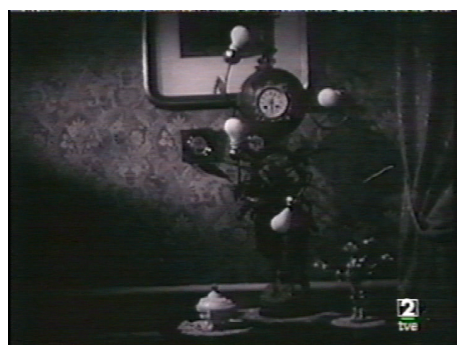


Figure 4.10



Figure 4.11



Figure 4.12



Figure 4.13

However, we see that *cursilería* is not only exclusive to Ramón's world; it

also permeates Miguel's world. When an art dealer visits Miguel's studio, he tells Miguel that modern sculptures have lost their place in contemporary society: 'Se debe usted acomodar a lo que piden hoy en día. ¿Por qué no hacen alguna venus de esas que parecen antiguas?' But unlike Ramón, who takes social appearances seriously, Miguel is able to fire back with his wit and play with appearances so as to subvert their meanings and challenge the *cursilería* around him.²⁸ He shows Mercedes a sculpture titled 'Una mujer desnuda bajo la manta', a piece he has created for the conservative curators in provincial museums (figure 4.13). According to Miguel, these people believe that it is both indispensable for the prestige of the museum, but also morally undesirable because it is a sculpture of a naked woman.

In Miguel we can find an example of the situation that post-war filmmakers such as Neville found themselves in, who had experienced the flourishing of pre-war Spanish *vanguardia* yet remained in Francoist Spain, and struggled to realise their creative desires under censorship, shortage of materials and lack of appreciative audiences.²⁹ Like Miguel, who appropriates his limited means and uses imagination and fantasy to make his place as an artist in the world, Neville subversively uses the fantasy scenario to offer a critique of Francoist perceptions of the past.

4.3. Deconstructing Francoist monuments

Interestingly, both Ramón's and Miguel's professions can be associated with the configuration of landscape. While Ramón is a rich and successful owner of a cement factory in provincial Spain that constructs bridges all over Spain, Miguel is a struggling artist who designs monuments and statues for local authorities. In the post-war years, the construction of monuments, bridges and dams had an important symbolic meaning for the regime for displaying its power throughout the nation. Richardson (2012) notes that in 'churches and plazas—perhaps the

²⁸ In this sense, Marsh (2006) describes Miguel as a '*bricoleur* who "makes use" of officialdom for his own non-official purposes. His sculpture, like the nation itself, is an apparently immobile space that can be altered and transformed with a scarcely perceptible touch or movement' (59).

²⁹ 'En España solamente una minoría de público capta el humor. Esa clase de película exige un núcleo espectador especial, público muy refinado, muy ágil para recoger matices' (Neville, in Castán Palomar 1940: 16).

most significant sites for the daily construction of subjectivity in Spanish society—monuments were erected honoring the victors alone’ (33). ‘Franco-era architecture’, he continues, ‘exemplified in the buildings at Madrid’s Nuevos Ministerios, the Ciudad Universitaria, and the Moncloa Arch, was as heavy-handed as the accompanying rhetoric, culminating in the pharaonic Valley of the Fallen’ (33).³⁰ As discussed in chapter one, the dark side of these acts of commemoration and landscape (re)construction in the 1940s was that they involved the labour of captured Republicans, who were ‘redeemed’ by the work.³¹ The most symbolic monument of all was the *Valle de los Caídos*, ‘Franco’s unfortunate recreation of an ancient pharaoh’s tomb, the grandiose temple and crypt principally by the forced labour of thousands of Republican prisoners, to house the bodies of the Nationalist dead in the Civil War and, ultimately, the Caudillo’s own remains’ (Richards 1998: 73).

Despite the fact that *La vida* represses such realities in the narrative, it cunningly attacks the partialities and artificialities of the official reconstruction of the post-war landscape. For example, Ramón’s unattractiveness as a man is especially marked by his obsession with constructing bridges and attending their inauguration ceremonies. His conversation consists of enumerating the number of bridges he has constructed and their length. This image mocks the early post-war NO-DO reels that incessantly depicted Franco’s tours to the provinces, where he opened bridges and dams.³² As Rodríguez (1999) notes,

inauguración de obras, despliegue del aparato del Régimen y manifestaciones de adhesión del pueblo se unen en muchas ocasiones como único argumento, convirtiendo No-Do en un reportaje casi monográfico, un festival de imágenes y comentarios laudatorios.

³⁰ Mainer (1971) also observes that the Franco regime’s vision of history exhibited an ‘obsesión por los rituales fastuosos y una irreprimible inclinación a los símbolos’ (23).

³¹ The captive Republicans were ‘formed into “penal detachments” and “labour battalions” to be used as forced labour in the construction of dams, bridges, and irrigation canals’ (Preston 1990: 41).

³² For instance, in 1943, a NO-DO newsreel (3 May, no.18) shows images of Franco’s visit to Galicia: ‘S.E. el Jefe del Estado [...] durante su reciente viaje a Galicia, donde, como en todos los lugares de la Patria, se ha puesto de manifiesto una vez más la adhesión inquebrantable de la nación a su salvador y Caudillo, inaugura una gran mejora regional: el Puente del Pedrido’ (quoted in Rodríguez 1999: 223-24).

(225)

La vida also subverts the regime's commemorative acts by mocking their superficiality. Miguel's workshop is full of prefabricated sculptures and models waiting to be commissioned by the authorities (figures 4.14, 4.16). While explaining the allegorical meaning of the figures that constitute one of his monuments, Miguel forgets what he had intended to represent with one female figure. Mercedes fuels the comic scene by suggesting that she could simply be 'una señora que pasaba por allí'. The monument becomes even more subversive when we see that the central statue is lacking a head (figure 4.15). Miguel explains to Mercedes that the statue is headless because any person's head could replace it. Within the context of early post-war Spain, this headless statue could be read as a subversive critique of the *Caudillo* himself. We should remember that, during the post-war period, statues of Franco were erected throughout Spain. In his study of Franco's equestrian statues, Leenknecht (2002-3) observes that these sculptures

pueden considerarse como ejemplos por excelencia de "arte político", no solo por razones estilísticas e iconográficas, sino también por el proceso de su realización, su eventual desaparición o supervivencia, hechos que se sitúan integralmente en un ambiente de toma de decisiones políticas'. (13)

Furthermore, the meaning of these sculptures in the public spaces 'surge de su carácter abiertamente conmemorativo, indicado primeramente por las dimensiones monumentales de dichas esculturas y por los sitios de accesibilidad pública que ocupaban o siguen ocupando' (13).



Figure 4.14

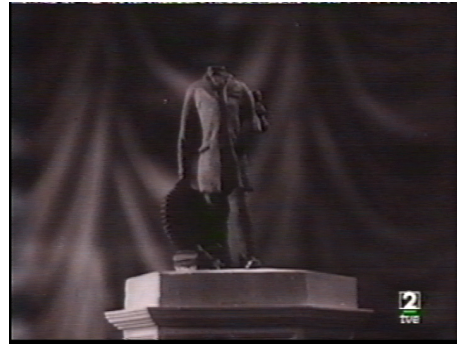


Figure 4.15



Figure 4.16

As with the portrait of the brigadier, *La vida* expresses the imposing yet meaningless nature of the ‘official’ commemorative acts and monuments, and further highlights the partiality and egoism of those who commission them. The Sánchez family, who want to honour their ‘illustrious’ grandfather and mayor of Burguillos, explain that their patriarch had never left the village, and had exclusively worked to increase the wealth and prestige of his own family. When Miguel asks ‘qué hizo su abuelo por el pueblo que justifiquen el monumento?’ the daughter of the patriarch, Señora Sánchez, replies,

puso las aceras de la calle cuando fue alcalde [...] en las dos calles, donde daba a su tienda. [...] Y también construyó una fuente, todo ello, delante de su casa. Y antes de dejar de ser alcalde, también instaló la luz eléctrica en las calles principales del pueblo, que era donde vivíamos nosotros.

The illustration of self-centred local politics alludes to the political authoritarianism of Franco which ‘was paralleled by extreme favouritism,

monopolies and often a high degree of corruption, geared to the peculiar mechanisms of the regime' (Payne 2011: 635). Furthermore, it can also be read as an oblique criticism of the historical commemorative acts that were exclusively reserved for the victors.

5. Memory and virtual pasts

5.1. Manipulating narrative time

In this final section, I will turn to how Francoist visions of the past are further contested by the temporal manipulations of *La vida*, and how Mercedes's memory increasingly becomes inseparable from the prosthetic memory she acquires from the viewing of her alternative past.

In order to stabilise the fluctuating image of the nation, Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that nations establish origins in an almost timeless past in order to teach a sense of identification to the people. However, Bhabha further claims that nations are narrated in a 'double time':

the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity. (145)

Thus, nations, in their nationalist pedagogy, insist on origins to establish continuity; yet they are always interrupted by what he calls the 'performative' act that takes place in the present, and that might shift and erase these origins (145). Francoist official historiography worked hard to exclude the Republican, liberal past that people might potentially identify with. The regime also needed to justify the contingent and accidental occurrences of history, such as Franco's rise to power. The regime built narratives of the past that fixed the present as something inevitable, and stressed the 'historical destiny' of Spain, which was an 'overextension of the past into the future' (Herzberger 1995: 32). It was

resolutely shaped by a conception of truth and temporality in which history is viewed less as a complex web of diachronic and synchronic relationships, both formed and revealed through narration, than as an unfolding of time that is repetitive, deterministic, and radically unchangeable. (33)

Therefore, Herzberger continues, '[p]olyphony [...] becomes the fatal casualty of Francoist historiography' (23). Fictions that narrate the past may contribute to the repetitive conformation of origins and 'truth' to ensure the continuity of national identity, as we have seen in films such as *Raza* (1941), *La aldea maldita* (1942) or *Locura de amor* (1948), discussed in this thesis.

David Martin-Jones (2006) has argued that '[d]uring times of historical transformation, films often appear that experiment formally with narrative time' (1). Drawing from Gilles Deleuze's (2005a, 2005b) philosophical work on cinema, Martin-Jones analyses modern films which manipulate narrative time, such as *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998), *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004). He argues that '[a] jumbled, fragmented, multiplied or reversed film narrative [...] can be interpreted as an expression of the difficulty of narrating national identity at a time of historical crisis or transformation' (1).

It is possible to say that *La vida* is a text symptomatic of a repressed crisis in the attempt to create a unifying historical narrative of Spain. The parallel universes presented in *La vida* can be read alongside Deleuze's labyrinthine model of time presented in *Cinema 2* (2005b). Deleuze distinguishes two different images that emerge from cinema, the 'movement-image' and the 'time-image', and identifies two corresponding models of time, the straight line and the labyrinth. These are two distinct manifestations of the same time. Simply put, the 'movement-image' is an edited version of time where there is a linear progression in the narrative, while the 'time-image' provides a direct image of time without the mediating influence of the protagonist and his/her actions and movement through space (Martin-Jones 2007: 22).³³

³³ Deleuze considers the 'time-image' in relation to a shift in the image of thought emerging from the aftermath of the Second World War: 'Beyond the individualist ethos exemplified by the

At first glance, the two parallel universes of *La vida* might seem to only replace the ‘wrong’ path with the ‘correct’ path. Accordingly, Marsh (2006) suggests that the ‘happy ending’ that unites Mercedes with her ‘alternative’ husband, Miguel, follows the conventional qualities of Hollywood romantic comedies, depicted as a learning process between the male and female characters: ‘there is often pattern of choosing the wrong partner before rectifying, overturning all that had gone before and bringing about a more appropriate ending’ (61). Many post-Franco critics who view the film as portraying the two Spains also often find that *La vida* writes one past over the other. From this perspective, it would seem that the film is anchored by the ‘movement-image’ and the straight line of time that shows one “‘true” time, and marginalizes, expels or eradicates all others from the frame’ (Martin-Jones 2006: 24).

However, I would contend that *La vida* could perhaps be considered a hybrid of the two temporal images. The film centres around Mercedes’s active look and movement into her different spaces of the past, yet the particular use of flashbacks, and their relation to the present, destabilise the causal, linear narrative that is more conspicuous in films subjected to the ‘movement-image’. Mercedes cannot alter her past, which she has already experienced. Nevertheless, she leaps into the past to observe the different outcomes of time, allowing that experience to influence her present and her perceptions of the past. As we will see from the ways in which *La vida* uses flashbacks, the film stresses what Deleuze perceives to be labyrinthine time by providing a more nuanced vision of the either/or perceptions of the national past. In his labyrinthine model of time, Deleuze (2005b), through Bergson’s conceptualisation of time and memory, illustrates his idea of multiple parallel universes that exist in a virtual state, citing Jorge Luis Borges’s famous short story *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941), stating:

nothing prevents us from affirming that impossibles belong to the same world, that impossible worlds belong to the same universe: ‘Fang, for example, has a secret; a stranger calls at his door [...] Fang

action-image (in which the individual’s ability to alter his or her situation was beyond doubt), in the time-image the individual no longer has the power to influence his or her situation’ (Martin-Jones 2006: 22).

can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they can both escape, they can both die, and so forth... you arrive at this house, but in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend...’ This is Borges’s reply to Leibniz: the straight line as force of time, as labyrinth of time, is also the line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through *impossible presents*, returning to *not-necessarily true pasts*. (Original emphasis: 127)

Each forking moment has two ‘impossible presents’ (two possible, and possibly contradictory, outcomes). In the labyrinth, these outcomes can exist in the virtual state. ‘Looking back across the labyrinth of time’, Martin-Jones observes, ‘the present no longer appears in a causal relationship with the past. [...] History now has the potential for different routes of return, as the past may or may not be the direct cause of the present’ (2006: 29). *La vida* also acknowledges this disjuncture between the past and the present, and explores the ways in which narratives may ‘falsify’ the past.

5.2. Flashbacks

Flashbacks have notably been used in the ‘official’ cinema of post-war Spain, frequently presenting the past as ‘historical knowledge’ through the eyes of the heroic character.³⁴ As Maureen Turim (1989) notes, one of the functions of flashbacks is to link the public or shared experience (history) with the personal and subjective (memory) (103). The Spanish historical genre films of the 1940s confirm the progression of linear narration and project the past as a way to establish the character’s identity in the present, thus constructing the illusion of a singular truth and coherent subject. For example, in *Raza* (1941) the flashback sequence is used twice. Firstly, it is used to narrate the heroic death of the protagonist’s ancestor at the Battle of Trafalgar. Secondly, it is used in the last sequences of the film as part of a montage. Comprising the important moments

³⁴ Citing Francesc Llinàs’s study of CIFESA films, Hopewell (1986) shows why these flashbacks, along with the frequent use of high angle camera shots, provide the spectator with the ‘best view of events’ (42). According to Hopewell, the audience is often encouraged to view the protagonist from a higher level, from the point of view of God, suggesting an appeal to complicity with authority. ‘The lesson, and attraction, is clear: acceptance of ideological ‘goodness’ is the pathway to Godness’ (43).

from the entire film, this last flashback sequence is superimposed onto the images of real documentary footage of the Nationalist victory parade, merging fiction, documentary and history. Other ‘historical melodramas’, such as *Locura de amor* (1948), *Agustina de Aragón* (1950) and *La leona de Castilla* (1951), all directed by Juan de Orduña, use flashbacks to frame history as something ‘inevitable’, since the spectator knows the destiny of the protagonist from the beginning.

In contrast, flashbacks in *La vida* create a more complex view in framing the relation between the past, present and future. The flashbacks in *La vida* juxtapose the ‘real’ past as memory and the ‘virtual’ past as fantasy on the same ontological horizon. Yet both pasts are ‘virtual’ because they are constantly recalled in the present, destabilising the locus of ‘truth’ and ‘historical knowledge’. The film suggests a historical unconscious (as virtual past) which can be brought to life in the present (becoming-actual). Instead of using a crystal ball, Madame Du Pont tells Mercedes that she can see her alternative past in the depth of Mercedes’s pupils, for the alternative past ‘ha quedado impresionada como una placa fotográfica’ (figures 4.17, 4.18). In other words, both pasts co-exist in the present, although Mercedes has hitherto only been able to see one of these paths. At the beginning of the film, when Madame Du Pont tells Mercedes that she is able to read her ‘past’, Mercedes answers, ‘Es que el pasado también lo conozco yo’. Mercedes is unable to recall any junctures or alternative paths when Madame Du Pont suggests the bifurcating moment in her past. Then, the fortune-teller introduces a brief flashback scene in the flower shop, where we see Mercedes and the image of two men in the background. Mercedes recalls the moment upon viewing this scene, and another flashback takes us to the florist, where she begins to narrate her memory of meeting her husband, Ramón (figures 4.19, 4.20).



Figure 4.17



Figure 4.18

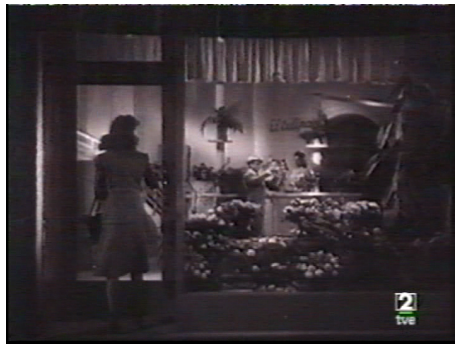


Figure 4.19



Figure 4.20

Mercedes's moment of recollection, appearing in a flashback, also converges with her position as spectator of cinema. Here we might recall Walter Benjamin's conception of memory in relation to the new technologies of vision.³⁵ Esther Leslie (2010) explains that Benjamin reflects on the 'peculiar moments when something akin to a magnesium flare indelibly sears onto memory an image or circumstances [...] as if memory were a photographic plate' (127). Furthermore, '[s]ome time later that same image flashes once again into consciousness's view in order to be decoded' (128). For Benjamin, memory is 'not just a recall of events that are buried in the past', but 'involves a quest for knowledge or truth about a situation' (Leslie 2010: 128). Cameras are able to record with an indiscriminating eye, capturing more than an individual can consciously perceive. The process of the delayed discovery of images is similar to how memory belatedly develops into understanding. Mercedes's exploration of her pasts is also

³⁵ Memory and new technologies are explored in Benjamin's memoirs, which appear under two titles, *A Berlin Chronicle* (1932) and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (1938).

driven by her curiosity for self-knowledge (asking Madame Du Pont more about her alternative past) and the scopical desire produced from her position as spectator.

The existence of virtual pasts ‘falsify’ the single ‘truth’ which Mercedes believes that she possessed, further reconstructing her identity in the present. Her explorations of her pasts are guided by key incidents, objects, places and people that cross over to the other world, allowing her and the audience to reevaluate the meanings that these signifiers have in each world. Although fur coats, hats, *cursi* people, taxis, nightclubs, flower shops, the city and the provinces are common elements that appear in both worlds, the film stresses that labyrinthine time allows Mercedes to see things differently from the present. For instance, in a flashback scene of her alternative past, we see Miguel trying to cheer her up after an unfortunate incident. He surprises her with an expensive mink coat that she had been unable to purchase earlier. Miguel explains to her that he has been offered the job of constructing a mausoleum. But, even as we see Mercedes ecstatic about her new coat and embracing Miguel in the scene, the camera pans away from the happy couple to reveal an empty easel placed in the room. From the present, we learn that Miguel has generously sold his El Greco painting, which he had treasured and insisted on never selling. Viewing this scene from the present, Mercedes’s voice-over questions why she wasn’t able to find out about the missing painting in her alternative past. Her remark implies a transformation of her present identity, and of her way of viewing the past. Martin-Jones (2006) notes that Deleuze’s labyrinthine time underpins Judith Butler’s theory of performative identity:

It is the individual’s power to falsify their previous identity and to break out of the various constraints on identity imposed by normative repetition. Should an individual attempt to change their identity in the present a different path through the labyrinth of time will open up before them. Simultaneously, their past will become not necessarily true. (89)

In a similar way, the flashbacks in *La vida* express Mercedes’s exploration of the labyrinth of time, allowing her to break from her previous identity and from

normative repetition. This eventually opens up different paths into her past. This way of perceiving the past challenges the dominant teleological narratives that are based on a 'cause-effect' inevitability in order to establish post-war Spanish national identity. We could say that *La vida* does not so much suggest a replacing of the false with the true, as much as a transforming of the historical perception of the spectator.

5.3. Cinema, prosthetic memory and identity

In *La vida*, we gradually find the alternative past contesting with her memory for the position of truth. Earlier, I suggested that Mercedes can allegorically be read as a cinema spectator. She is presented with an alternative version of a life 'that could have been', and reflects upon the memory of her own past. Mercedes's visual experience of her 'potential life' can be conceived as a form of prosthetic memory which increasingly blurs the boundaries between 'authentic experience' and 'inauthentic experience' as the story progresses. Landsberg (2004) argues that prosthetic memories have a transformational property in progressive politics, potentially enabling 'counterhegemonic public spheres' (34).

As mentioned earlier, *La vida* emerged during a moment of political uncertainty as Spain became the only fascist country to survive the Second World War. Reacting to the isolation policy of the international community, the Franco regime seized the opportunity to fuel nationalist sentiment and garner support for the regime. On various occasions the regime organised massive demonstrations in front of the Plaza de Oriente in support of Franco. People who were mobilised held up signs such as 'Franco, con pan o sin pan, a tus órdenes', 'España no quiere ser gobernada desde fuera', 'España no admite la intromisión extranjera' and 'Si ellos tienen UNO, nosotros tenemos DOS' (Montoliú Camps 2005: 418).³⁶ In the midst of the regime's propagation of the '*mentalidad de asedio*' ('siege mentality'), it is striking that in 1946 Neville wrote in *La Codorniz* the following:

Hay dos maneras de ser buen patriota; mejor dicho, dos conceptos;
uno es encerrarse en las fronteras físicas y morales de su propio país,

³⁶ Referring to the 1946 UN agreement on diplomatic boycott of Spain. UNO is an abbreviation of United Nations Organisation.

vivir exclusivamente de su producto material o espiritual, rechazando de neto todo lo que se cría fuera. El otro es el de aceptar todo lo que nos parezca bueno del resto del mundo, y tratar de incorporarlo a nuestra vida nacional y de aclimatarlo a nuestro suelo. (Quoted in Aguilar 2002: 21)

I would argue that Neville's critique of the Francoist mentality that rejected alternative cultures and life styles also appears in the positive ways in which *La vida* invests in prosthetic memories. If, as Landsberg maintains, prosthetic memories can transcend essentialism because they 'have the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs' (2004: 8), this is exactly what *La vida* seeks to demonstrate.

La vida illustrates how Mercedes takes on a prosthetic memory (invoking the world view of democratic Hollywood romantic comedies) that will enable her to reconsider her present state. Landsberg notes that people use the past as part of the complex process of identity-formation. When prosthetic memories 'have an affective, individual component, they are more likely to motivate action' (2004: 34). This affective moment is particularly highlighted in *La vida* when Mercedes discovers that she is herself an object whose meaning shifts according to the different discursive practices that support each world. Mercedes and her childhood friend Isabel exchange places in the two worlds. In her memory, Mercedes's people regard Isabel's family background with contempt. They cannot forgive Isabel for marrying their socialite friend. They gossip that Isabel had worked in the circus and exposed herself naked on a horse. Mercedes immediately comes to her defence, commenting that it was the horse that was naked, not Isabel, who had to work in the circus because of her humble origin. Nevertheless, in Mercedes's memory, we see her rather passively reacting to the malicious attitudes of the surrounding people. She recalls that she had to get through an awkward situation when she received a letter from Isabel communicating her desire to visit Mercedes. Instead of inviting her to the house, Mercedes followed Ramón's advice to meet her in Madrid.

However, in the fantasy past, the roles of the two women are reversed, and

Mercedes is profoundly shocked by the way she is treated by Isabel's people (figure 4.21). While in Mercedes's memory Isabel only appears in the conversations of Mercedes's people, in the alternative past she is visualised and played by Alicia Romay (figure 4.22). There is an ironic twist here, since Romay was an actress frequently associated with the figure of the *femme fatale* in 1940s Spanish detective films. In this past, Isabel lives in the province, married to an influential man from a conservative family who looks down on Mercedes. Isabel's people suspect that Mercedes, married to a bohemian artist, regularly poses naked for her husband's allegorical sculptures. Now it is Isabel who is reluctant to see Mercedes and her friends: 'Vosotros sois para ellos mi vida anterior, el circo'.

This moment of reversal is the film's important turning point. It enables Mercedes and the spectator to emotionally invest in viewing the world from the other side. The safe distance maintained between the 'hypothetical past' and Mercedes/spectator is threatened when the gaze is returned and Mercedes's place, even in this hypothetical past, is jeopardised. In this way, *La vida* constructs an empathic relationship with the other, inviting the spectator and Mercedes (watching from the present) to identify with her experience. Isabel confesses that she can only comply with her social environment because of her past: 'Ya me he atragado duras penas, teniendo siempre en cuenta del que me había exhibido en el circo al caballo. No sabes las cosas que me han inventado de la ropa que llevaba. En fin, no me lo había perdonado.' Isabel's comment about the intolerance of the people around her concerning her past is suggestive in a post-war society where the past acts of the vanquished were never forgiven, and true reconciliation was rejected.



Figure 4.21



Figure 4.22

When rejected by Isabel, Mercedes asks, ‘¿Pero por qué nos atacan? To this, her friend Mariana responds, ‘Porque creen que somos más felices que ellos. Porque creen que llevamos una vida que ellos quisieran vivir’. Mercedes’s comment blurs the distinction between memory as truth and prosthetic memory as false, and provides a new perspective for Mercedes and for the spectator. This does not mean that Mercedes forgets who she is in the present, but rather, in Landsberg’s (2003) formulation, she is ‘enabled, for a period of time, to see through different eyes, and think beyond [her] own social position’ (155).

We further witness Mercedes’s prosthetic memory becoming her own toward the end of the film where, in her alternative past, Miguel and Mercedes decide to go out with their friends to a nightclub. Into this scene, Madame Du Pont’s voice-over intervenes from the present and tells us that she now sees Ramón entering the scene. The sequence reunites Mercedes and Ramón in a friendly way, and shows that Ramón has found a different and more suitable partner, Teresa. Although Ramón’s personality has not changed much, the virtual past depicts him as a more pleasant man as he dances with Mercedes. Watching this scene from the present, Mercedes’s voice-over affirms this alternative past as already part of her ‘true’ memory: ‘La vida que llevaba era muy parecida de la que tuve con Ramón, solamente pequeños detalles, atenciones y simpatías eran lo que daban otro tono y otra felicidad’.



Figure 4.23

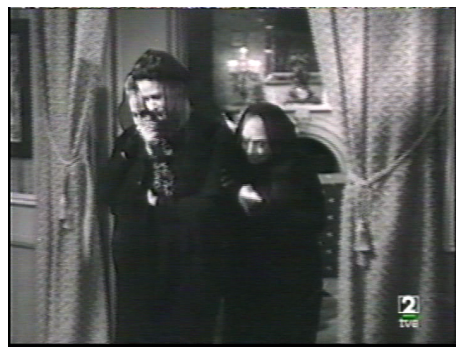


Figure 4.24

By the end of the sequence, all of the characters dance in circles and celebrate a kind of togetherness (figure 4.23). The scene gives the alternative past a utopian

dimension. It constructs an imaginary fantasy of the reconciliation between two pasts and their coexistence. In Deleuze's (2005b) words, it may be called the acknowledgement of 'impossibles belong[ing] to the same world' (127). However, this does not mean that the film tries to erase the differences between these pasts, or overwrite Mercedes's memory with the alternative past. In fact, the last flashback sequence returns to Mercedes's recollection of Ramón's death. It explains that Ramón died from pneumonia after leaving his bedroom window open. He had done so following the advice of his friends, who suggested that it would improve his health. His death is visually expressed in two elliptic shots: firstly, a shot of Mercedes and Ramón leaving the dining room together; and secondly, a shot of Mercedes and Ramón's aunts entering the dining room in black (figure 4.24). The theme of virtual pasts and multiple choices that marked the flower shop scene is repeated here again. One would wonder, 'What if Ramón hadn't left the window open?' In a subversive strategy to counter the 'heroic' deaths so common in Francoist 'crusade' and historical melodramas, Ramón's death is trivialised in the extreme, ironically evoking even more tragic connotations. Furthermore, *La vida* stresses that Ramón's death was triggered by his mindless and automatic adherence to the customs, moral attitudes and discourses of his closed social world.

The ending once again allows Mercedes to cross paths with Miguel, upon arriving at Madrid. After sharing a taxi ride and getting off at her doorstep, she suddenly recalls that it is Miguel. The two finally unite. Mercedes is able to escape Ramón's world, with her prosthetic memory that has now become part of her archive of memory. Alongside this 'happy ending', however, we could say that Neville provides a masterful criticism of the Franco regime's memory politics. *La vida* suggests that monolithic visions of the past, the intolerant exclusion of 'others' and the mindless exaltation of Francoist values could eventually result in death.

6. Conclusion

While *cine de cruzada* or historical melodramas have been considered as representative texts of 1940s Spanish cinema, little has been said about the

number of popular self-reflexive films of the period. To different degrees, these self-reflexive films seem to offer an objective commentary on the cinematic apparatus, film texts, genres and cinema spectatorship. While many of these works simply try to demystify the manipulative aspects of cinema, *La vida* reflects on the possibility of a more complex and positive role that cinema can provide: as prosthetic memories. This chapter has argued that *La vida* denounces the deterministic conceptions of the past that underlie Francoist historiography by reflexively exploring the relation between memory and identity. Through Mercedes's subjective examination of parallel universes, the film highlights the contingencies between the present and the past, destabilising the Franco regime's teleological conception of time, which supported the structure of the 'official' post-war national identity. As a reflexive depiction of cinema spectatorship, *La vida* examines an idealistic, yet nevertheless important, possibility that cinema could perhaps participate in providing prosthetic memories that would allow a more ethical and compassionate relation with the other.

Conclusion

The Spanish Civil War has been perceived as ‘one of the most vivid examples of the conflict of modernities’ (Delanty 2013: 235). Scholars have pointed out that the persistence in Spain of strong rural cultural tradition and the inability of the Spanish bourgeoisie to build a coherent class project for national economic development led to an ‘unequal’ modernity (Graham and Labanyi 1995: 8). This, of course, culminated in a devastating Civil War in which the Nationalist alternative resulted in victory. The Franco regime’s agenda was to jettison ‘the “dangerous” ambivalences and potentials of cultural modernity’ represented by the Second Republic (16). It ‘set itself the (ultimately unachievable) goal of securing the permanent separation of cultural and political modernity from the modernization process’ (10). The regime built a rigid social hierarchy ‘grounded in an anti-modern, anti-rationalist official culture’ (17), and introduced a teleological vision of the past underpinned by a demonisation of Republican Spain in order to establish a new post-war national identity. By conceptualising the Civil War as a ‘religious crusade’, and an answer to the supposedly longstanding division between the two Spains, the regime projected a triumphalist vision of the war; yet all the while, repressive measures were taken against those who fought for the other side, and silence was imposed over the traumatic memories of the defeated.

Although over the last decade Spanish film scholars have begun to argue against the stereotypical view that films of the 1940s served as a transparent vehicle for the propagation of Francoist ideology, there is still a strong tendency in Hispanic studies to treat the cinema of this period within a rigid schematic framework, and to link it with the ‘anti-modern’ Francoist project. The primary objective of this thesis has been to complicate this view by examining how various films from the 1940s challenged or problematised the ways in which the Franco regime constructed the past and tried to memorialise the Civil War.

The Franco regime was well aware that cinema could play an important part in the dissemination of its authorised version of the collective memory of the Civil War, which would then become a foundation for a new post-war Spanish identity. The regime's control measures over cinema production, including censorship and state grants, ensured that certain films would comply with the values propagated by the state. The Civil War was also allegorically treated in different genres and historical settings. For example, the CIFESA historical melodramas of the late 1940s, which glorified Spain's imperial grandeur and Catholic tradition, reflected the regime's monolithic historical view and provided narratives that would justify the outcome of the war. These melodramas, which centred on female heroines who fight to defend the traditional values of the *patria*, resonated with the regime's insistence on the inevitability of the war that stressed Spain's 'unique' historical destiny within Western civilisation, which was under attack and threatened by foreign influences.

This thesis has argued, however, that in some films that were produced during the period of 1939-1950, the allegorical displacements of the memories of the Civil War did not comply easily with the regime's visions of the past. As pointed out in this thesis, the number of films that actually depicted the Civil War was rather limited compared to the number of those that pertained to the genre of *cine de cruzada*, which appeared only during the first few years of the 1940s. I have focused particularly on four films that highlight the question of memory and national identity in ways that seem to contest, either consciously or unconsciously, the Franco regime's politics of memory. And so this thesis has not solely concentrated on how the cinematic production of the period invoked the cultural trauma of the Civil War, but has also examined the ways in which some films from the period self-reflexively explored the relationship between memory and cinema. This two-pronged approach, I believe, has been important for understanding how cultural trauma might appear symptomatically in the production of films set in the specific social and historical context of early post-war Spain, and how films might have mediated memories that were difficult or even impossible to articulate in other public discourses.

In chapter one, I examined two films that engage with the memory of the Civil

War through direct references to the conflict. I began by discussing *Raza* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1941), a film based on a novel allegedly written by Franco himself. With *Raza*, the regime sought to set a benchmark for how the Civil War should be remembered on film. I proposed that *Raza* expressed the regime's triumphalist vision of the Civil War exclusively, and so can be interpreted as an imposing 'cinematic monument' to the victors. This 'monument' reflected the regime's will to bind together the different factions of the victors by establishing a narrative of the war as a 'religious crusade' that would legitimise the new post-war order. The film underscores an essentialist nationalist discourse, and shows that patriotic sacrifice, militarism and the centrality of the traditional Catholic family were values that had been restored to the Spanish nation, now unified as 'one race' by Nationalist victory. Furthermore, while on one hand *Raza* memorialises those who sacrificed their lives for the Nationalist cause as martyrs and gives meaning to Nationalist deaths, on the other hand it represses the important traumas of the war by concealing the memories, not only of those who fought for the other side, but also of those who could not agree with the regime's hard-line approach against the vanquished, and its resistance to national reconciliation. I argued that *Raza* is a quintessential film that embodies the coercive memory politics of the regime.

The central discussion in this chapter, however, focused on Lorenc Llobet-Gràcia's *Vida en sombras* (1948). I took this film as a starting point for a discussion of the relation between repressed memories of the Civil War and cinema, since the film self-reflexively explores the possibilities of cinema to represent memories that might contest the official history the regime sought to propagate. I argued that *Vida en sombras* deconstructs *Raza*'s teleological view of history and its assessment of the Civil War by presenting history as accidental and disjunctive. While both *Raza* and *Vida en sombras* intertwine national history with the biographical accounts of the main characters, José and Carlos, the latter utilises fragments of Hollywood films that offer an alternative understanding about the historical experiences of early twentieth-century Spain excluded from official discourses. What *Vida en sombras* shows is that popular films not only cross national borders and are consumed as entertainment in different cultural

contexts, but also become prosthetic memories, allowing people who live within a fragmented culture, and who are unable to share the imposed collective memory, to seek attachments to memories provided by films. In this way, *Vida en sombras* overthrows the construction of post-war national identity based on the restoration of the Catholic family and mythic origins, as found in *Raza*.

In contrast with *Raza*'s representations of heroic Nationalist self-sacrifice and denial of historical trauma, I argued that *Vida en sombras* offers a completely different perception of how the deaths of the Civil War should be represented on film. Through the experiences of the documentary filmmaker Carlos, Llobet-Gràcia's film reflexively suggests the difficulties in and limits of depicting the truth about the deaths of the catastrophic war. By stripping the soldiers' deaths of meaning and political significance, the film foregrounds the horrors and shock of the war. The film symbolically implicates the camera in the act of killing, alluding to a crisis of representation. Carlos's wife Ana's death occurs off-screen, within the gaps of representation. In this way, the film acknowledges the deaths and the experiences of loss that were excluded from the triumphalist memorialising discourses of the Franco regime.

Vida en sombras further suggests that the end of the war did not bring closure to the pain and suffering of the war, and points to the holes in the memories that official commemorations did not fill. It illustrates Carlos's belated responses to the shocks and losses of the war, and to his melancholia, which prevents him from returning to the cinema and drives him into silence and self-reproach. Just as the Franco regime refused to accept responsibility for the war, or guilt over the deaths that it entailed, censors found Carlos's self-inculpation perplexing. Yet, the film suggests that these sentiments, which were not available in dominant discourses, could have possibly found ways to be channelled or expressed in cinematic fantasies. Through its intertextual references to Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940), *Vida en sombras* attempts to show that films can be appropriated by the spectator, for whom certain images, words, sounds and narratives might create profound impressions and bodily affect intimately connected with personal memory. Moreover, I addressed, in various parts of this thesis, the idea that Hitchcock's film had repercussions that went beyond Llobet-Gràcia's personal cinephilia; it

had a strong social impact and influence over other Spanish films of the 1940s. Linking the memories of the Civil War with the Hollywood narrative of haunting pasts, guilt, secret deaths and discovered bodies, I argued that *Vida en sombras* daringly brings to the surface memories that were suppressed by the regime. The film suggests how fictive narratives that are apparently unrelated to the ‘historical’ representations of the Civil War can yet be associated with them, brought together and ‘experienced’ in relation to the specific experiences and memories of the war of diverse audiences. This idea opens up the opportunity to explore not only how Hollywood films may have provided alternative discourses that do not conform to Francoist ideology, but also how other popular Spanish films that are seemingly unrelated to the Civil War might mediate alternative memories of the traumatic conflict.

The case of *Vida en sombras* also attests to the importance of telling the story of trauma, ‘even though the story can never actually repeat or represent what happened’ (Kaplan 2005: 37). Unlike previous studies of *Vida en sombras*, which have associated Carlos’s immersion into fantasy and the film’s repetitive structure with an imaginary entrapment, I argued, through a focus on memory, that the repetition found in *Vida en sombras* does not simply ‘act out’ the traumatic past, but emphasises a ‘working-through’ by ultimately positioning Carlos as the ‘director/narrator’ of his past. The film further invites the spectator to become a witness of the trauma of the Civil War.

Such attempts to actually speak about war trauma, however, were extremely rare in 1940s cinema. This thesis has argued that the cultural trauma might have been displaced onto melodramas that deal with characters traumatised by past events apparently unrelated to the Civil War. These narratives try to relocate repressed war memories into the safer realm of allegorical melodrama, while simultaneously revealing the memories that have been silenced in dominant discourses.

Chapters two and three discussed two films, *Un hombre va por el camino* (Manuel Mur Oti, 1949) and *De mujer a mujer* (Luis Lucia, 1950), as such melodramas. Drawing from Kaplan’s (2005) theory of cultural trauma, I explored how these texts might translate cultural traumas which could not otherwise be

expressed in the available social discourses in the early post-war period. In these films, the rural landscape and gender representations take on significant meanings.

Before entering into the discussion of the main films in these chapters, I first provided brief analyses of two films, which seem to reflect more faithfully what the Franco regime sought to propagate in terms of gender roles, rural imaginary and mythic historical visions. These films brought to the public imagination problems of modernity, such as liberal attitudes towards gender roles or city/rural divisions, and associated these problems with the memory of Republican Spain. The two melodramas that form the core discussion of these chapters, however, are more ideologically ambivalent in their depiction of rural and gender representations, as they seem to foreground the very theme of ‘memory crisis’ that points to the cultural trauma of post-war Spain.

Chapter two focused on the rural landscape and issues surrounding masculinity. Under Franco’s dictatorship, the rural became a source for the regime’s expression of a putatively ‘authentic’ Spanish national identity. Francoist ideology constructed the fantasy of a rural world associated with an abstract pastness that came to represent the social, cultural and political cradle of family, religion and nation, set against the city, which evoked the ‘morally corrupt’ left-wing Republican past. In *La aldea maldita* (Florián Rey, 1942), an innocent view of the rural is maintained, and a model of post-war masculinity is provided. It imagines that the crisis of Spain involved the rural being seduced by the evil temptations of liberal Republicans (i.e. the city), which should be overcome by the woman’s religious penitence and the guidance of the idealised Catholic patriarch; a very similar construct to how national fragmentation should be conquered through the religious repentance of the vanquished and the strong guiding figure of the *caudillo*.

At first glance, Manuel Mur Oti’s *Un hombre va por el camino* (1949) may seem to fully comply with the nationalist agenda by foregrounding the rural world and constituting a narrative that enables the main character, Luis, to re-establish his role as the patriarch. However, I suggested that, by reading *Un hombre* as a melodrama onto which cultural trauma is displaced, the film brings to the surface the hidden issues concerning past traumas, falsified identities, violence and lost

ideals that are closely related to the traumas of the Civil War.

I focused particularly on two points: firstly, the film's treatment of the crisis of masculinity; and secondly, the treatment of the rural landscape, which transcends the binary perception of city versus countryside that was commonplace in Francoist films. Because the regime placed importance on the traditional Catholic family as the microcosm of a stable post-war Spanish society, both legal and substantial authority were exclusively given to the patriarch. Masculinity was to be tied with military values—strong, controlling and virile—and cinema contributed to the reproduction of these cultural signifiers. However, I argued that the cinema of the 1940s also contains a series of films that attest to the crisis of masculinity. I proposed that *Un hombre* can be read as a film that closely deals with the failure of the paternal function, a failure that was one of the symptoms of the historical traumas of the war.

The rural world of *Un hombre* is different from that of *La aldea maldita*, as it is first and foremost melancholic. It suggests unidentifiable losses, isolation and fragmentation. The rural as national imaginary invokes a painful and traumatic loss of past ideals. *Un hombre* further illustrates the ambivalent love-hate relationship between the rural space of Monte Oscuro and the male protagonist, Luis. Land is linked to the woman, and takes on an ambivalent meaning as both sexual and maternal. This ambivalence reminds Luis of his traumatic past; but the secluded maternal space of Monte Oscuro also accepts Luis in his current identity as a *vagabundo*, allowing him to avoid facing his past.

However, *Un hombre* seems to be fully aware that this space is inherently fantastical, and an impossible space of return for the male subject. Therefore, the melodramatic narrative shift forcefully seeks to reveal and clarify Luis's past and identity so as to establish his 'proper' place as the patriarch of the Catholic family and reconcile him with the members of the rural community. The chapter argued that these melodramatic excesses also point to the cultural trauma of post-war Spain. Despite the film's restorative ending, the film's excesses reveal, more than hide, the violent splitting-off process of the memories of the Civil War onto the melodrama of male trauma.

In chapter three, I examined how women's bodies became sites for the

symptomatic articulation of cultural trauma in 1940s cinema. In the aftermath of the war, women's bodies were politicised and strictly controlled under the vigilant eye of the gender politics of the Franco regime. It was not only the reproductive function of the female body that was needed for national reconstruction. As the metaphor of 'sickness' (evoking an 'internal fight' within oneself) was used to describe the Civil War, women's bodies were converted into important signifiers for Spain's 'purification': that is, the eradication of Republican 'illness'. The legislative and cultural erasure of liberal gender politics that had been introduced by the Second Republic was crucial for the Franco regime's restorative project of the patriarchal Catholic family. In 1940s historical melodramas, madness often appeared in the form of women's hysteric performances. These depictions did not usually destabilise the dominant values of Francoist society, but normally worked to tame and frame their otherness within a safe masculine discourse. One example can be found in the popular historical melodrama *Locura de amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948), in which the madness of Queen Juana is triggered by a struggle between her righteousness and the 'degenerate' foreign influences, a struggle that jeopardises the Catholic nation. This resonates with how the Franco regime conceived the vanquished as having been exposed to the foreign influences of Republicanism, liberalism and freemasonry. The film contains Juana's madness within a masculine historical discourse that safely elides her otherness.

As a comparison, I argued that the depiction of female madness in *De mujer a mujer* (1950) could be seen as more problematic. At first glance, the madness of Isabel in *De mujer*, triggered by the accidental death of her child Maribel, might seem to conform solely to the Franco regime's gender politics, which considered motherhood as woman's sole destiny, and glorified her maternal sacrifice. However, this view is complicated when we read the death of Isabel's child as an allegory of the Civil War, and Isabel's subsequent madness in relation to the traumatised post-war nation. Different discourses compete in *De mujer* in relation to how Isabel's madness should be perceived. The religious and medical patriarchal discourses try to contain the woman's/nation's crisis, and invest in the forgetting of trauma through the 'purification' of the woman/nation. However, these discourses are in conflict with the two female characters' bodies, which are

incapable of such forgetting. The thesis has argued that female madness in *De mujer* destabilises, if only temporarily, the idealised patriarchal order. The hysteric (Isabel) rebels against the order that tries to exorcise the memory of the lost child (equating to memory of the Civil War). Likewise, the film foregrounds the memory of the second female character (Emilia), who provides a child for the lost family and erases herself from history (as memory of the defeated).

The chapter also considered the intertextual references to Hollywood films set in psychiatric institutions. Hollywood psychiatric melodramas were themselves symptomatic of the cultural trauma of post-World War II United States. As Kaplan (2005) suggests, post-war American society was still reluctant to remember the psychic effects of the war on returning war veterans (75). Furthermore, there were radical shifts in gender roles after the war, as women had to relinquish their places in the work force and resume their positions as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere. Hollywood tapped into these social and cultural anxieties by popularising Freudian psychoanalysis in its cinema. Although Spanish audiences were fascinated with these films, which proliferated during the late 1940s, there has been little discussion of their cross-cultural repercussions. This thesis has highlighted the tension between the popular reception of Hollywood films that featured psychiatric institutions and attitudes to the Spanish authorities. In the post-war Spanish context, these films were problematic because they were thought to accentuate and visualise ‘perverse’ fantasies and psychic struggles.

Freudian psychoanalysis, which attempts to bring to light unconscious materials repressed by the constraints of traditional social life, was undermined, if not totally banned, by the Franco regime, which promoted the traditional moral values of family and religion. *De mujer* was thus an attempt to rework Hollywood pseudo-Freudian films, which explore the patient’s unconscious in search of the very ‘cause’ of the symptoms of madness. Ironically, however, cultural trauma can be uncovered precisely where *De mujer* cannot provide an adequate explanation why the hysteric Isabel displaces the traumatic loss of her daughter onto her symptoms, which suggest a fantasy of filicide. It is intriguing that the father never admits to any guilt, despite being indirectly involved in the accident.

Instead, the patriarchal discourses of the film demand a forgetting of the tragic event, and the film eventually makes the other woman, Emilia, serve as the scapegoat for the recuperation of a unified Catholic family.

As in *Un hombre, De mujer* exploits the melodramatic mode in order to deal with the issue of forgetting in the period after the Civil War. Melodrama's temporal structure is marked by belatedness, and is underscored by a desire to seek lost origins. The quest for a lost family, which *De mujer* obsessively seems to pursue, is finally accomplished when female madness is cured and the broken family is repaired. However, *De mujer* also suggests that this is only achieved through another violent process: of repressing the memory of the other. I argued that, while *De mujer* apparently seems to serve as a melodrama that should ensure closure and the cure of the traumatic division of the nation, the film unconsciously brings to the surface another desire, to remember those who had been cast out from the Franco regime's politics of memory.

Finally, chapter four examined the romantic comedy *La vida en un hilo* (Edgar Neville, 1945), a film which may at first appear unrelated to the other films analysed in this thesis. I proposed that *La vida* was, in fact, a memory-reflexive film that subverted the Franco regime's agenda to construct a unified national identity based on a monolithic vision of the national past. I argued that Neville's film undermined Francoist aesthetics of memory by ridiculing its forms of commemoration and the cultural inadequacies experienced in post-war Spain. Furthermore, I suggested that the film's temporal manipulation, which allows the female character to explore the past through the memory of her lived past and an alternative past that 'could have been', destabilised the idea of the past as a stable and retrievable truth.

One of the significant points that I emphasised in the study of *La vida* is that, contrary to the general assumption that 1940s Spanish cinema was simply used for ideological manipulation, a number of films expressed a remarkable self-reflexivity about the cinematic medium. Thus, any academic approaches that mark 1940s culture as a complete rupture from the previous period blind us to the continuities that can be found in post-war cinema culture. In fact, the existence of self-reflexive films expresses the continued interest by writers and directors from

the pre-war period to engage critically with the cinematic medium as a quintessential apparatus of modernity. Contextualising *La vida* within this current, and going further to relate the cinema experience with a train ride, I proposed that *La vida* converged the two pasts of Mercedes's journey with that of the film spectator's experience, and depicted the process of he/she negotiating his/her memory with the cinematic image.

Unlike many other reflexive films that demystify the cinematic apparatus, *La vida* proposes a more positive reflection on the medium's relation to the spectator. I argued that *La vida* explored the ways in which cinema might 'enable individuals to have a personal connection to an event they did not live through' (Landsberg 2003: 156) and encourage the spectator to see through another's eyes, making bridges across the social chasms of difference. This is not to argue that *La vida* suggests that cinema simply 'implants' memories into the passive spectator. Instead, *La vida* highlights the complex ways in which memories acquired through films can manipulate, challenge or substitute for the spectator's real memories. Prosthetic memories resist essentialist claims over memory by individuals or groups in the process of self-identification. These claims over memory were precisely what cinema productions such as *Raza* and historical melodramas sought to promote. *La vida*, however, suggests that cinema as prosthetic memory may allow the spectator to interrogate a constructed identity; in this case, one that had been established within the stifling post-war Spanish society. In this sense, prosthetic memory closely ties in with what Llobet-Gràcia has explored in *Vida en sombras*. We can say that both films reflexively suggest that cinema produces alternative sites of memory.

Some present-day critics have depicted *La vida* as a film that represents the confrontation between the two Spains. Mercedes's husband, Ramón, is associated with the conservative traditionalists, and the fantasy husband, Miguel, with the progressive liberals. Thus the 'happy ending' that unites Mercedes with Miguel has typically been seen as a subversive replacement of the conservative Francoist Spain with an alternative, liberal, Republican Spain. However, this thesis has argued that *La vida* questions such mutually exclusive binaries that have fed the common image of the two Spains. What the film stresses is how the subject's

movement between multiple temporalities allows the past to interrupt and affect the protagonist's present identity, ultimately fostering empathy for the other. *La vida* acknowledges the coexistence of past and present, virtual and actual, disrupting the common sense notion of time as linear. Rather than inscribing one 'true' narrative over the other 'false' historical narrative, the film suggests that Mercedes's time travel falsifies the perception of the past as one form of truth. In this way, *La vida* proposes a more flexible relationship with the past: one that questions the spectator's place in the present.

The reading of *La vida* I proposed in this last chapter, therefore, takes a completely different view from the director Geraldo Vera's interpretation, which can be found in his 1992 remake *Una mujer bajo la lluvia*. Transferring the action to Democratic Spain, *Una mujer* is an update of *La vida*. Like *La vida*, the film juxtaposes Mercedes's (Ángela Molina) marriage with Ramón (Imanol Arias) with a life that she could have had with Miguel (Antonio Banderas). Mercedes's husband, Ramón, is a rich and successful Basque entrepreneur who is characterised as an infantile, unromantic and work-obsessed man. Miguel, on the other hand, is a creative, humorous and sexually active artist who fulfils Mercedes's desires. Reading Neville's film as a criticism of the Spanish elite of the 1940s, Vera also attempts to parody the world of the 'jet-set'—or the so called *los beautiful*—that consisted of bankers and financiers who rapidly made a fortune from the neo-liberal policy measures of the Socialist government.

Although Vera has mentioned that he respects Neville's spirit, important changes can be found in who narrates these two pasts, and how the two lives of Mercedes visually unfold on screen.¹ In *La vida* it is from Mercedes's perspective, with the help of the fortune-teller, that the spectator experiences her two pasts. As argued in this thesis, her journey to view the world from the other side ultimately destabilises her own perception of self. In contrast, Vera's version opens with an on-stage narrator (Javier Gurruchaga) introducing the premise of the story to the audience: 'Cada día nos presentan destinos y elegimos un camino'. While this comment may suggest that the film is about the chance factors in life, the narrative structure that frames the two worlds is far more rigid than in Neville's

¹ See Muñoz (1991).

version. Eliminating the ‘flashback’ sequences employed in *La vida, Una mujer* stages everything *outside* of the protagonist’s consciousness, all directed by the omnipresent narrator. The narrator reappears at the end of the film, further framing the film as a moral tale about ‘seizing chances’. This, indeed, corresponds with Spain’s social climate of the early 1990s, marked by Spain’s integration within the global economy and by the celebration of a fashionable, cosmopolitan contemporary culture.² Thus, the temporal manipulations of parallel universes provided in *Una mujer* merely confirm Miguel’s position as the more attractive option that represents contemporary Spain, while discarding Ramón’s figure as representing an undesirable past.

By contrast, *La vida*’s parallel worlds foreground the question of memory and identity in post-war Spain. The film also reflexively suggests that cinema’s prosthetic memories might grant an empathetic understanding of others within a post-war society where polarisation between the victors and the vanquished were tangible, and where true political reconciliation was denied and replaced by an imposed discourse of national unification. These prosthetic memories, however, are not necessarily ‘accurate’ visual representations of the Civil War as historical event, but rather, memories that are ‘staged’ in a particular way in the present to recall past experiences. Memory is not a simple recollection of facts, but involves fantasy in the reconstruction of the past within the present. It is precisely this staging of the past that attests to the close relationship that the films discussed in this thesis have with the traumatic experiences of the war and its aftermath.

This thesis has not been able to fully address the question of to what extent the films under discussion played an actual mediating role for ‘real’ audiences. ‘Cultural trauma’ might be too broad a term to account for the individual memories about the experiences during and after the Spanish Civil War—on both sides. Nevertheless, what I hope to have demonstrated through the discussion of the four films is that, even within the repressive political climate of the early post-war years, cinema was a site that showed how individual and collective

² Vera’s film was released in 1992, a year that celebrated major international events that would become platforms for Spain to exhibit its global presence: the ‘Expo 92’ in Seville; the naming of Madrid as ‘European capital of culture’; the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Barcelona; and the ‘Quinto Centenario del Descubrimiento de América’ [Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of America].

memories intersected in complex ways, and where multiple layers of memory, acquired through real and fictional experience, could be appropriated by or invoked in the spectator in ways that might not have corresponded to the regime's politics of memory. The four central films engage with the past in ways that challenge, in various degrees, the regime's historical vision and its intent to memorialise the Civil War and encourage a forgetting of past traumas in very specific ways. Despite the Franco regime's quest for a break from the ambivalences of Republican cultural modernity, these films emphasise that cultural trauma appeared precisely where the regime intervened in an attempt to take control over subjects such as history, gender, landscape and memory in order to construct a new post-war identity. By exploring how cultural trauma might have been translated into the fictional texts of the time, this thesis has aimed to open up readings of other films of the 1940s.

Finally, all four films discussed in this thesis seem to articulate a certain desire (or fantasy) for a recognition of the other, for an empathetic sharing of positions, or even for reconciliation. The horrific memories of the repression experienced on both sides during the war triggered the difficulties of such post-war reconciliation, further intensified by the regime's brutal rejection of such processes through the denial of its own violence and the alienation of the other. Yet the four films show, albeit implicitly, a particular concern with this problem. They explore in their narratives and images ways to foster an acknowledgment of the other, and propose that cinema might offer a space that could enable the spectator to come to terms with a traumatic past, and not through simplistic or repressive means of 'forgetting'. We could perhaps say that it is these visions that were most challenging and subversive within the difficult early post-war years.

Filmography

Spanish Films

Agustina de Aragón. Dir. Juan de Orduña, CIFESA, 1950.

¡¡A mí la legión!!. Dir. Juan de Orduña, CIFESA, 1942.

Angustia. Dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde, Cooperativa Cinematográfica Constelación, 1947.

Aventura. Dir. Jerónimo Mihura, Cepicsa, 1942.

¡Ay, Carmela! Dir. Carlos Saura, XYZ Desarrollos, 1990.

Bajo el signo de las sombras. Dir. Ferrán Alberich, Filmoteca Española, 1984.

¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall! Dir. Luis García Berlanga, UNINCI, 1953.

¡Buen viaje, Excelencia! Dir. Albert Boadella, Lola Films, 2003.

Canciones para después de una guerra. Dir. Basilio Martín Patino, Julio Antonio López Pérez Taberero, 1976.

Castañuela. Dir. Ramón Torrado, Cesáreo González, 1945.

Caudillo. Dir. Basilio Martín Patino, RETA, 1977.

Cielo negro. Dir. Manuel Mur Oti, Intercontinental Films, 1951.

Condenados. Dir. Manuel Mur Oti. Cervantes Films, 1953.

Confidencia. Dir. Jerónimo Mihura, Peña Films, 1947.

Cría cuervos. Dir. Carlos Saura, Elías Querejeta, 1976.

Cristina Guzmán. Dir. Gonzalo Delgrás, Juca Films, 1943.

Cuatro mujeres. Dir. Antonio del Amo, Sagitario Films, 1947.

***De mujer a mujer*. Dir. Luis Lucia, CIFESA, 1950.**

Deliciosamente tontos. Dir. Juan de Orduña, CIFESA, 1943.

Domingo de carnaval. Dir. Edgar Neville, Cinematográfica española americana, 1945.

Dos cuentos para dos. Dir. Luis Lucia, CIFESA, 1947.

El crimen de la calle de Bordadores. Dir. Edgar Neville, Manuel de Castillo, 1946.

El crimen de Pepe Conde. Dir. José López Rubio, Suevia Films, 1946.

El desencanto. Dir. Jaime Chávarri, Elías Querejeta, 1976.

El escándalo. Dir. José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, CIFESA, 1943.

El espinazo del diablo. Dir. Guillermo del Toro, El Deseo and Tequila Gang, 2001.

El espíritu de la colmena. Dir. Víctor Erice, Elías Querejeta, 1973.

El fantasma y doña Juanita. Dir. Rafael Gil, CIFESA, 1944.

El hombre que las enamora. Dir. José María Castellví, CIFESA, 1944.

El hombre que se quiso matar. Dir. Rafael Gil, CIFESA, 1942.

El laberinto del fauno. Dir. Guillermo del Toro, Estudios Picasso, Tequila Gang and Esperanto Filmoj, 2006.

El lápiz del carpintero. Dir. Antón Reixa, Sogecine, Morena Films, Filmanova, Telemadrid, TVG, D&D Audiovisuais and Fish People Limited, 2003.

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