

Teaching Representations of Resistance and Repression in Popular Spanish Film

Nicole Mombell
Marist Catholic High School
nmombell@marisths.org

Abstract

This essay presents a brief analysis of three popular Spanish films released between 2001 and 2012 that are set in the immediate post Civil War period and first decades of the Franco dictatorship. Specifically, it considers three films which aim to reconstruct and represent the experience of the men, women, and children who fought Francoism or who endured repression after the end of the Spanish Civil War: *Silencio roto* (Armendáriz 2001), *El laberinto del fauno* (Del Toro 2004), and *30 años de oscuridad* (Martín 2012). This essay explores the way in which tropes of politics, history, resistance, and repression are represented in each film, and how filmmakers using popular cinematic forms have appropriated the Spanish Civil War and Franco period settings to comment on contemporary political and social issues in Spain.

Most of the recent Spanish cinematic productions (fictional and

documentary) that depict the Spanish Civil War and Franco period have focused on the moral vindication of the vanquished. The three films considered here aim to reconstruct the particular experience or memories of the Spanish maquis and topes, and the civilians who supported them in their struggles. Each of the films discussed has sought to play a role in the recasting of collective identity in Spain, and affords important insights into the social processes and experiences of the time in which they were created. In a world where the visual immediacy of cinematic images increasingly works to displace traditional historiography, these representations have become ever more important and merit discussion. This essay takes into account that these cinematic representations are subjective and mediated depictions of events, participants, and circumstances of the Civil War and Franco period, and suggests pedagogical approaches to discussing each film in order to enable students (and other viewers) to grasp how to distinguish between history and the historicizing effect of its representations.

Keywords: Film; Documentary; Maquis; Spanish Civil War; Francoism; Film Studies; Del Toro; Armendáriz; Pedagogy; Students

Resumen

Este ensayo presenta un breve análisis de tres películas españolas populares estrenadas entre 2001 y 2012 que se desarrollan en el período inmediatamente después de la Guerra Civil española y las primeras décadas de la dictadura franquista. En concreto, considera tres películas que pretenden reconstruir y representar la experiencia de los hombres, mujeres y niños que lucharon contra el franquismo o que sufrieron la represión tras el fin de la Guerra Civil española: *Silencio roto* (Armendáriz 2001), *El laberinto del fauno* (Del Toro 2004) y *30 años de oscuridad* (Martín 2012). El ensayo explora la forma en que los tropos de la política, la historia, la resistencia y la represión están representados en cada película, y cómo los cineastas que utilizan formas cinematográficas populares se han apropiado de los escenarios de la Guerra Civil española y el período de Franco para comentar sobre cuestiones políticas y sociales contemporáneas en España.

La mayoría de las últimas producciones cinematográficas españolas (ficción y documental) que retratan la Guerra Civil española y el período franquista se han centrado en la reivindicación moral de los vencidos. Las tres películas aquí consideradas tienen como objetivo común reconstruir la experiencia o los recuerdos particulares de los maquis y topes españoles, y de los civiles que los apoyaron en sus luchas. Cada una de las películas comentadas ha buscado desempeñar la refundición de la identidad colectiva en España y aporta importantes conocimientos sobre los procesos sociales y las experiencias de la época en que fueron creadas. En un mundo donde la inmediatez visual de las imágenes cinematográficas trabaja cada vez más para desplazar a la historiografía tradicional, estas representaciones se han vuelto cada vez más importantes y merecen discusión. Este ensayo toma en cuenta que estas representaciones cinematográficas son representaciones subjetivas y mediadas de eventos, participantes y circunstancias de la Guerra Civil y el período de Franco, y sugiere enfoques pedagógicos para discutir cada película a fin de que los estudiantes (y otros espectadores) comprendan cómo distinguir entre la historia y el efecto historizante de sus representaciones.

Palabras clave: Cine; Documental; Maquis; Guerra Civil española; Franquismo; Del Toro; Armendáriz; Pedagogía; Estudiantes

This essay presents an analysis of three popular Spanish films released between 2001 and 2012 that are set in the immediate post-Civil War period or first decades of the Franco dictatorship and aim to reconstruct the particular experience or memories of the Spanish *maquis* (resistance fighters) and *topos* (people who went into hiding) in order to recast collective identity in Spain: *Silencio roto* (Armendáriz 2001), *El laberinto del fauno* (del Toro 2006), and *30 años de oscuridad* (Martín 2012). In a seminar course designed to introduce undergraduate or graduate students to filmic, literary, and cultural analysis about contemporary Spain, a study of these films prompts development of knowledge about the historical periods they represent, and an understanding

of the legacies of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism. An examination of how tropes of politics, history, resistance, and repression are represented in each film affords insights into the social processes of the time in which they were created, and develops students' critical thinking about how filmmakers using popular cinematic forms have appropriated the Spanish Civil War and Franco period settings to comment on contemporary political and social issues in Spain, which students can also connect to themes of authoritarianism, human rights abuses, and anti-fascist/anti-totalitarian resistances in a variety of nations and time periods.

The relation of Francoism and Spain's Francoist legacy to Spanish popular culture is a complex one. Remembering and forgetting war and its aftermath is not an object of disinterested inquiry, but a burning issue at the very core of conflicts over forms of organizing the state, social relations, and subjectivity. For decades, artists, filmmakers, novelists, political parties or movements, and other social agents have been involved in constructing versions of Spain's national past and national identity, selecting from or reworking the repertoire of national stories and symbols to fashion accessible public memories for their particular ends. The immediate post-Franco period evidenced a short-lived rush of publication about the Civil War and the dictatorship. Although historical studies on the Civil War and dictatorship continued to appear throughout the post-dictatorship period, it was not until the 1980s that Spanish feature films and novels about the Civil War reached best-selling status. Though some publications, most notably by Pío Moa, defend the Francoist version of Spain's mid twentieth-century history, most historical studies, novels, documentary and feature films since the late 1990s have focused overwhelmingly on the theme of repression experienced in wartime and the postwar Francoist era, and more recent Spanish cinematic productions (fictional and documentary) focus on the moral vindication of the vanquished (Labanyi, "Politics of Memory" 124).

Films employ narrative strategies that allow audiences to experience

social or political tensions, and are particularly powerful in their function as active transmitters of images and imaginings about the past. Richard Sperber posits the instability of public memory anchored in visual representation and argues for the power of the visual image to “infect and affect” written history. This essay considers that cinematic representations are subjective and mediated depictions of events, participants, and circumstances of the Civil War and Franco period. It builds upon Marianne Hirsch’s thoughtful discussion of the role of images in the generational transfer of memory, examines the role of the cinema as a repository of memory and experience, and suggests pedagogical approaches to each film to enable students (and other viewers) to grasp how to distinguish between history and the historicizing effect of its representations.

Silencio roto

Montxo Armendáriz’s original screenplay *Silencio roto* (2001) draws from the tradition of the Spanish memory novels written immediately after the dictatorship and during the Transition. Released in the spring of 2001, *Silencio roto* is a historical fiction film inspired by Alfons Cervera’s novel *Maquis* (1997) and Fernanda Romeu’s 1987 history of the anti-Franco guerrilla movement in the Levante region. Rather than giving his film the same title as the novel (like Sánchez Valdés did with his cinematic adaptation of Julio Llamazares’s *Luna de lobos*), Armendáriz borrowed his title from Romeu’s second book—a collection of leftist women’s prison testimonies that she published in 1994.

Armendáriz’s personal interest in the figure of the maquis resistance deepened after he met many maquis and their *enlaces* (liaison agents) at a town festival honoring them in Santa Cruz de Moya, Cuenca in the late 1990s. After this meeting and conversations with surviving maquis, he decided to write and direct a movie based on the resistance. The action and characters of *Silencio roto* are born of the knowledge that Armendáriz acquired from

investigating the maquis in history as well as from insights and anecdotes taken from hours of interviews with still living guerrilla fighters and the people who had supported them.¹

Silencio roto is set in the year 1944 and it depicts the postwar conditions of a rural village in Northern Spain. The film tells a love story between Manuel, a young blacksmith who flees into the mountains to join his father in the guerrilla resistance, and Lucía, a young woman who arrives from the city to live with her Aunt Teresa in order to alleviate the domestic burden from her Republican war-widowed mother. Though the menacing presence of the Guardia Civil is evident from the moment of Lucía's arrival in the town, there is still a strong sense of hope and conviction of cause among the maquis and their supporters.

The Franco regime was highly invested in separating the maquis from the political nature of their resistance in order to discredit and vilify them as domestic terrorists. In its representation of the maquis, *Silencio roto* also distances them from a fervent political militancy, but to a different end in order to turn the historical Francoist narrative about the maquis on its head and change public perceptions about this group. For example, in the film it is the Guardia Civil who wantonly menace and terrorize the townspeople, not the maquis. In an undergraduate seminar course, classroom discussion of the film might consider how the guerrilla's composition of a diverse group of men functions to underscore their shared interests and shared need against common Francoist threat: some, like Manuel's father, Matías, were Republican soldiers motivated by a militant communist political agenda who stayed in Spain to resist the dictatorship and await aid from the western Allies; others, like Manuel, were not soldiers during the Spanish Civil War, but come from highly political families and flee to the mountains; all arm themselves defensively in fear for their lives.

Lucía becomes involved in the clandestine resistance as a civilian *enlace*, delivering food and news to the men hiding in the mountains, not because of

any ideological conviction (in fact, she is quite ignorant of the entire resistance movement or any political motivation when she first arrives), but rather because she has fallen in love with Manuel. While the love story and the political story within *Silencio roto* are not by necessity mutually exclusive, the film does go from emotional to political in ways that intertwine and conflate politics with emotions. Students can be guided to think about how framing the story of the guerrilla resistance within a love story between two very good-looking young people may arouse spectator identification at the same time that it disrupts an explicitly political message. Class discussion might focus on how the film flattens the complexities of the political history behind the resistance movement, highlighting the creation of sympathies through the humanity and romantic appeal of the characters, thus inviting the spectator to root for the underdogs, and, by proxy, with their general antifascist political cause.

One possible approach to *Silencio roto* is to focus on how various cinematic techniques communicate the psychological terror of the regime's repression. For starters, Armendáriz's visual technique makes the Civil Guard's costuming—full military dress, long black capes, handguns, and the *tricornio* hat—ominous and threatening. Perhaps most striking is Armendáriz's recourse to audio cues to reinforce the presence of the Civil Guard: either suspenseful music (original score by Pascal Gaigne) or a fearful silence accompanies their presence throughout the film. These audio-visual cues reinforce the dynamic of fear and intentionally exacerbate the sensation of stress or uncertainty experienced by the maquis and their supporters.

Silencio roto abstains from elaborating an explicitly political anti-Francoist discourse. Students may consider how opposition to the dictator is not presented within a categorical political argument, but rather as a human reaction against the abuses perpetrated by supporters of the regime. In the film, the Caudillo is an abstract figure. The immediate enemy of the maquis and their sympathizers is the Guardia Civil, who use fear and a masculine fascist

performativity as a psychological weapon to terrorize and control the public.

Another topic to explore is how this film focuses on the complex social relationships in the small rural community during the immediate postwar period, particularly on the plight and condition of women. As the film narrative progresses, almost all men with Republican sympathies flee to the mountains to join the maquis. Women are left to suffer and endure interrogational torture, public humiliations, and the general threat of the Guardia Civil who try to extract from them information about their husbands and sons hiding in the mountains. As the episodes of brutality and repression increase, these women become the ultimate victims of the men's war, and as the years pass, few are able to preserve their hope in the cause.

Instructors who choose *Silencio roto* might draw students' attention to the final scene of the film. In this sequence, Armendáriz signals that, in spite of women's victimization, women are the ones who keep alive the positive memory and the legacy of the Republican resistance. Lucía is on a bus leaving the village to return to the city. As she looks out the window of the bus and out onto the mountain-scape, the clouds in the sky open to let through a ray of sunlight and a rainbow. A quotation by German poet, playwright, and life-long committed Marxist, Bertolt Brecht appears on the screen: "En los tiempos sombríos ¿se cantará también? También se cantará sobre los tiempos sombríos" (1:44:10). With this, Armendáriz implies that Lucía will one day tell her daughter about her father, Manuel, and grandfather, Matías, who fought to defend Spain and their Republican ideals. In current discussions and politics of memory in Spain, Lucía represents ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances who survived the Spanish Civil War and Franco regime and who will give testimony to their experience after the death of Franco. Like the stories about life, death, struggle, and intractable hope that Lucía will tell her daughter, Armendáriz imagines oral testimonies as the primary voice that will shape cultural memory about the Spanish Civil War and the aftermath of

that struggle. In spite of the maquis' failure to restore Republican Spain, the film ends with an allusion to their heroism and works to commemorate their antifascist legacy.

El laberinto del fauno

Part of the cultural project undertaken by *Silencio roto* is to contest the previous Francoist criminalization of the maquis by depicting them as victims. *Silencio roto*, like other films that depict the maquis in this way (consider Sánchez Valdés's *Luna de lobos*), has worked to contribute to the creation of a sympathetic public space for the cultural memory of the maquis. Likewise, Guillermo del Toro's celebrated *El laberinto del fauno*, works to rehabilitate the historical depiction of the maquis. Del Toro's film, which tells the story of a young girl named Ofelia, is set in 1944 when Francoist repression is at its height and the maquis are actively engaged in armed resistance against Falangist troops. *El laberinto* depicts a version of the historical world that is dominated by an allegorical political narrative with fantastic elements that looks back to an age of Republican virtue and ascribes the sins and crimes of the world to the Francoist establishment in Spain. The film inserts itself into the cultural and memory wars in contemporary Spain by inventing a new myth of the maquis that undermines the heroic ordering of history offered by the regime. Its treatment of the postwar period invites viewers to ruminate on notions of what Spain might have become without Franco's victory over Spain.

Since its release in 2006, *El laberinto* has received much attention in critical and scholarly commentary. Jane Hanley and Victoria Martínez have discussed tropes of fantasy, escapism, and power in the film, Timothy Reed has analyzed the rhetorical presence of monsters and hauntology, and Beverly Cook has commented on del Toro's use of a child's perspective in his cinematic depictions of the Civil War and post-war periods. None, however, has examined del Toro's representation of the maquis nor discussed the historical revisionism

inscribed within the film. One possible approach to studying the new myth of the maquis set up in *El laberinto* is to ask students to explore dichotomies they perceive in the narrative and visual sequences (interior and exterior spaces, law and lawlessness, male and female, good and evil, etc.) and to discuss their effects (Hanley). Examining these dichotomies underscores the explicit and unequivocal division between good and evil in the film. Here, for example, the maquis are active agents of good. They are vital, active, and strong in numbers, a benevolent force in the forest (“hombres mágicos en el bosque”), who fight for freedom and justice in repeated attacks against the despotic, violent, and volatile Captain Vidal. Even the colors in which these characters and scenes are cast are juxtaposed in stark relief: the maquis are always cast in the morning light, in the outdoors, where shades of orange, brown, and green are predominant. In contrast, Captain Vidal is almost always in dark rooms, or, if outside, in stormy weather; his scenes are dominated by dark blue, gray, and black.

Instructors may ask students to examine the function of metaphor throughout del Toro’s film and its role in a narrative strategy that suggests a (re)mythologized version of Spain’s historical past. A particular example is how del Toro effectively constructs a fantasy world set in a historical moment in order to portray the struggle to return to idyllic origins—a promised future in which the princess will be reunited with her father and the world will be restored to its true and perfect balance. The initial sequence of the film uses a mythical-narrative structure to inscribe the story within a cyclical time sequence concerned with the return to origins, and the film juxtaposes the “real” world with the fantastical world of the Faun. Audiences should examine and discuss the princess described in the opening sequence as a metaphor for the Second Spanish Republic. This metaphor implies that the world from which the princess escapes represents the utopian ideal that the Republican democratic government was founded upon. The princess’s suffering, blindness, and death

represent the pain of Republican defeat and the subsequent Francoist erasure of the Republican past.² Furthermore, that the princess would emerge from a secret underground paradise is an overt allusion to the clandestine guerrilla resistance as well as to the dormant (but enduring) Republican hopes that, one day, the Spain that was lost will once again be restored.

The protagonist of *El laberinto* is Ofelia, a young girl who is already orphaned at the beginning of the film—her Republican father was killed in the Civil War. She goes to live with her mother and new stepfather, Captain Vidal, at the military outpost where the Captain is the leader of Nationalist efforts to defeat the guerrilla resistance active in the surrounding mountains. Like Lewis Carroll's Alice, who escapes reality in a "wonderland" at the bottom of a rabbit hole, del Toro's Ofelia enters the labyrinth and engages in a fantasy world to escape the harsh realities she encounters (del Toro, *Guión* 255, 266, 269-70). There, she meets a faun who sets her on a journey to complete three tasks so that she can reclaim her true identity as the Princess Moana. While not so innocent as a child's fantasy, national myth seeks harmony beyond a culture at war with itself. Ofelia's struggle to protect her baby brother and quest to recover her true identity as the Princess Moana to restore peace and order to her reality represent Spain's ongoing battle over cultural reconciliation and search for a new collective identity in order to ensure a more stable future.

Ofelia's first task is to remove a key from the belly of a giant toad that lives under a fig tree in the forest. The toad has destroyed the tree, sucking all life from its roots, but according to the instructions that Ofelia receives, once the toad is removed the tree will begin to bloom again ("volverá a florecer"). Ofelia climbs down deep into the root system under the tree to confront the toad. In this sequence, invite students to observe and comment how the tree may be understood as a metaphor for Spain and the toad a metaphor for Franco. In order for the tree to regain its health and flower once again, the toad must be removed from underneath its roots. Likewise, the first step in

redeeming Spain's true, democratic form is the removal of the dictator, and, by extension, the Francoist legacy, from Spanish politics and society.

Other allusions are made in the film to the illegitimacy of Franco's claim to Spanish government and history in order to construct an alternate to the Francoist historical narrative. For example, Ofelia repeatedly denies the Captain's claim to paternity. When the Captain and her mother insist that she call him "father," Ofelia vehemently refuses and reminds them that her real father died in the war. As in *Silencio roto*, a character acting as Francisco Franco himself never appears in *El laberinto*. Franco's authority and purpose are conferred upon and embodied in the menacing military fascistic performance of Captain Vidal. Ofelia's refusal to validate the Captain's claims of paternity (even as he is the supreme authoritarian figure who controls the circumstances of her life) represents the Republican resistance's refusal to accept Franco's paternalistic claim to authority in Spain after the war.

Students should observe that Captain Vidal, who spends a great deal of time repairing, cleaning or looking at his pocket watch, is a man obsessed with forward motion. He refuses to acknowledge the past—silencing his wife, Carmen, at dinner as she tells how she and the Captain met, and refusing to acknowledge another guest who shares a war story about the Captain's father in Morocco. He fixates on the impending birth of his infant son and on the legacy of "una España nueva y limpia" that he will procure. The Captain's urgent obsession with forward motion points to the regime's imperative of controlling and preserving the particular historical narrative of the war and its future legacy.

The Captain does not succeed, however, in securing his legacy. At the end of the film he follows Ofelia, who has fled with her baby brother, into the labyrinth, murders her, and takes back his infant son. He emerges from the labyrinth and is surrounded by maquis soldiers who have defeated the Guardia Civil and burned the fascist military outpost to the ground. Captain Vidal is

forced to hand over the child to Mercedes, his housekeeper whose brother, Pedro, is the leader of the maquis. In the final exchange before they kill him, Captain Vidal begins to instruct Mercedes and the maquis to “Dile a mi hijo... dile a qué hora murió su padre. Dile que yo...” and is abruptly interrupted by Mercedes who tells him “No. Ni siquiera sabrá su nombre.”

The end of *El laberinto* makes us ask “What if?” What if the guerrilla resistance had triumphed in their efforts to restore the Republic? What *would* be the legacy of Spain if Franco had not won the war? It was the intention of the regime to extinguish the resistance in Spain—both physically and in Spanish historical memory. By declaring that the Captain’s infant son will never know his father’s identity, *El laberinto* effectively declares its intention to snuff out any memory of the Francoist legacy in Spain. The denial of Captain Vidal’s last request and the handing over of the child to the maquis suggest a re-writing of history, that the new generation will learn an alternate telling of the past—one which would relegate to the realm of *silencio* and *olvido* the Francoist legacy and redeem that of the Republicans. Thus, by representing the maquis as virtuous and triumphant in their resistance, *El laberinto* subverts the mythic and heroic ordering of Spain’s history offered by the regime, and indulges the temptation to tell history as a viewer sympathetic to the Republican cause might wish it to have been.

30 años de oscuridad

When the Spanish Civil War ended and the borders were closed, some Spaniards were forced to go into hiding to escape repression. These so-called *topos* (moles) lived for decades, hidden in their homes, afraid of being discovered at any moment. Manuel Martín’s *30 años de oscuridad* is a documentary film that combines interviews, archival images, analysis, and animation to recuperate and tell the stranger-than-fiction true story of the Spanish *topos*. The film was nominated for Best Documentary at the 2012 Goyas. Like *Silencio roto* and *El*

laberinto, *30 años* tells a story about the desire for freedom and the struggle for survival. Most notably, it depicts how the harm and fear felt by the victims of Francoism endured the term of the dictatorship and beyond. Jo Labanyi argues that once the experience and suffering of victims becomes public knowledge, they can be depicted as the historical agents they were before they were made into victims against their will (“Politics of Memory” 121). This film seeks to restore the moral, political, and legal personhood of Franco’s victims. Including *30 años* alongside *Silencio roto* and *El laberinto* for critical analysis serves to inform students’ understanding of the consequences of war and dictatorship in a way that fleshes out the real, lasting effects of fear on the minds and hearts of people.³

The main character of this story is Manuel Cortés, “el topo de Mijas.” Cortés was the socialist mayor of Mijas (Málaga) elected during the Second Republic. When Franco’s troops invaded the region, Cortés fled to fight for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. After the war, he returned to Mijas to surrender himself to the Francoist authorities and serve a prison sentence. Upon his return, however, he learned that other Republican mayors from the region had been executed by the regime, so, to escape repression and in fear of his life, Cortés decided to hide in his home. He remained hidden for thirty years, living like a ghost behind a small hole in the wall of his house.⁴

Through storytelling, suspenseful soundtrack, and graphic illustrations and animations, *30 años* successfully evokes the perpetual fear that the topos and their families experienced during the dictatorship. Jonathan Holland notes that the film is “especially good in detailing the paranoid, morally blurred day-to-day existence of the post war years in Spain, when neighbors would inform on neighbors to establish their pro-Franco credentials and so ensure survival.” Students may observe and analyze this dynamic and the cinematic strategies that create tension-filled scenes that depict the remarkable, often tragic, events in Cortés’s life: failed escape attempts to France, illness, a clandestine

move into a new house, being unable to attend his daughter's wedding or his granddaughter's funeral.

30 años represents the personal, lived experience, and consequences of Francoist repression from the perspective of those who endured it. To tell Cortés's story, the film mixes still graphics and moving-camera animation with interviews by impassioned historians and family members. Celebrated actors Juan Diego and Ana Fernández voice Cortés and his wife, Juliana. Archival visual images like black and white photographs and period footage function as physical visual evidence that frames the narrative about the personal experience of the post-war years.

Documentary calls public attention to its subjects and concerns by bringing them to light, yet its representation is allied with rhetoric and persuasion rather than merely likeness or reproduction. In Spain, documentary films that represent the traumatic national history purport to bring their subject matter new visibility. Jo Labanyi, Gina Herrmann, and Joan Ramon Resina have observed that since 2003, a very small number of print testimonies have been published contrasting with the production of a large body of documentary film, mostly made for television, based on interviews with eyewitnesses or surviving relatives of the wartime or postwar repression. Anne Hardcastle posits that, in the debate on what and how the Spanish past should be remembered, documentary film has become a "flashpoint in the memory war" for the ways it instructs viewers to think about the past (149). Students and other viewers must learn to be aware of the constructive, material practices that are inherent to documentary film.

In so far as documentary acts as a didactic visual artifact, it is useful to contemplate what kind of education the viewing public receives from *30 años* about the topos and this part of Spain's national past. Teachers may begin a discussion of *30 años* by asking students to consider two interrelated themes. First, to what degree the documentary works to recover and preserve the

history of a repressed population that has been generally overlooked by other cultural and historical projects in Spain? Second, how does the film cast a previously marginalized group (the *topos* and their families) as transmitters of the history of the dictatorship? And how, in turn, is the spectator interpolated into the dynamic of historical reception?

To understand the argument *30 años* makes about the historical world, classroom discussion can begin with an examination of how the opening scene of the film establishes the narrative frame. *30 años* is based on Jesús Torbado's book *Los topes* (1978). Martín's film opens with an interview of Torbado who compares the reality endured by the Spanish *topos* to that of Anne Frank and her family. In this way, Martín immediately situates the story of Spanish *topos* into a similar historical context of other known confinements caused by repression.⁵ Students may consider how part of the narrative project of *30 años* is to place a local issue of survival into a wider context. To what extent does this validate or evoke empathy for the subject of the film?

Students should examine how the tropes of fear and darkness are developed in the film in order to foster empathy for the *topos* and their suffering. Over the course of three decades, Cortés's fear turns into deep anguish. With no way to come out of hiding, he feels that he is serving a life sentence with madness, blindness, or death (suicide) as his only options. The experience of living in hiding for so long has a dehumanizing effect on Cortés and others like him—in the film the *topos* describe themselves as zombies, physically alive but morally dead. Fear (“miedo enredado”) becomes inseparable from the identity of the *topos* and of their families who suffered to protect their secret. Students may analyze how the questions the film raises about the psychological toll that fear has on a person after so many years relate to the lasting impacts of fear and repression on Spanish society during and after the Franco regime.

In *30 años*, the treatment of the repressed should be seen as part of a recent trend in Spanish cinematic productions to focus on the moral vindication

of the vanquished. In this regard, ask students to consider how the trope of fear circumscribes the historical representation of the topos? We have seen how *Silencio roto* and *El laberinto* purport to contest Francoist historiography by tending toward a positive or heroic depiction of Republican resistance. In contrast, *30 años*, though it does stand to criticize the injustice of Spain's past and highlights the suffering endured by a part of the Spanish population, does not regard the topos as heroes of Spanish history in any way. In fact, Martín argues that the topos cannot be called heroes because their lives were dominated by fear. Their victimhood is absolute. For Martín and the historians he interviewed, the topos are the greatest victims of the whole national tragedy. However, by shedding light on this obscure and little-known phenomenon that spanned the dictatorship and the transition, *30 años* offers a redress to this victimization. The documentary recovers the previously excluded history of the topos and inserts it into the cultural discourse on human suffering and consequences of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship. Thus, by working to restore moral, political, and legal personhood to the topos, the film offers catharsis to those who lived this experience or who aided them. It also stands as a reminder of what or whom else we may be excluding from Spanish historical memory and politics, and pushes the viewer to interrogate the historical record for other erasures in order to consider a new collective identity in Spain.

Conclusion

Given the power of the medium, students must learn to analyze the relation between film and society. Film influences the ways we imagine the past and project to the future. By representing the past through narrative strategies that allow audiences to experience and reimagine social and political tensions, *Silencio roto*, *El laberinto*, and *30 años* each play a role in the recasting of collective identity in Spain. In del Toro's *El laberinto*, fantasy and historical

contexts, which should be oppositional, instead become labyrinthine as the lines between history and fiction are blurred. During the dictatorship and Transition, Spanish citizens had to negotiate a labyrinth of silence. Today, Spaniards are negotiating a labyrinth of memory. As they confront their country's fratricidal past, they must decide where to enter, which path to choose in the narration of the past and creation of history, and who will emerge (and how) from the labyrinth.

It is impossible to know fully how the three films considered in this essay might seep into the consciousness of the nation or into the attitudes and knowledge of future audiences. However, when considering Spain's evolving relationship with the historical memory of the Civil War and its Francoist past, these films that portray resistance and repression can teach us about how contemporary filmmakers have reacted to the historical period and recreated it. While it is true that these films share some techniques and interests in their portrayal of resistance and repression, connecting those artistic and rhetorical choices to the considerations and politics of memory at their moment of creation would be most informative and pedagogical. It helps us to see how artistic works, even those attending to historical matters, are nonetheless subject to the circumstantial exigencies of their present. Students, and other viewers, should analyze what these films tell us about how filmmakers select or rework national symbols and stories to construct aesthetic versions of the national past, and provide motive for future political action and a renewed cultural identity.

Notes

- 1 An important documentary treatment of this guerrilla group, Agrupación Guerrillera de Levante y Aragón (AGLA), is Javier Corcuera's 2001 film *La guerrilla de la memoria*. Armendáriz's film works well in class alongside the Corcuera documentary and Gina Herrmann's 2013 article on the testimonies of the women guerrillas of AGLA.
- 2 Jo Labanyi remarks the trope of the Republic as "paradise lost" in Spanish novels of the 1950s which identify "the Fall" with Nationalist victory (*Myth and History* 44).
- 3 Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar's acclaimed documentary *The Silence of Others* (2019) also reveals the lasting effects of fear on the minds and hearts of Francoist victims. This documentary, produced by Pedro Amodóvar, tells the story of victims and survivors who continue to this day to seek state recognition for the crimes they suffered under the regime by bringing legal action against Spain's "pact of forgetting". Shown together, *30 años de oscuridad* and *The Silence of Others* would work well for a lesson plan or discussion unit that prompts students to explore Spain's particular reckoning with state-mandated amnesia and the human need for truth and closure.
- 4 The recent acclaimed film *La trinchera infinita* (The Endless Trench 2019) also deals with the story of a topo. Here too the original score was composed by Pascal Gaigne. A lesson plan or discussion unit could be developed to help students attend to how soundtrack creates meaning in cinema by comparing Gaigne's soundtrack for *Silencio roto* with his score for *La trinchera infinita*.
- 5 This conceptualization is elaborated further in the film's press packet. In addition to Anne Frank, the press packet cites Soichi Yokoi (who spent 28 years in a cave after the end of World War II), Nelson Mandela (who was imprisoned for 27 years as a victim of apartheid), and Aung San Suu Kwei (who was released in 2010 after spending 15 years under house arrest) (n.p.).

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