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Jamie Dolezal

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Quiet Voices of Dissent: Opposition Culture in Franco's Spain

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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Introduction

On September 15, 1956, the prominent Spanish author Juan Goytisolo sought voluntary exile in Paris to escape the oppression of Francisco Franco's government in Spain. Only five months later, on February 14, 1957, he temporarily returned to Spain and, writing of the trip in his memoirs, he said, "After my happy, stimulating stay on the rue Poissonniere, the return to Pablo Alcover dampened my spirits: decrepit people and things, cold stingy light, my father's anxious questions, Grandfather's silence, Eulalia's pathetic smile, diffuse oppression, painful memories, anguish, anxiety, remorse."¹ Goytisolo would make a series of trips to Spain over the next few years, each time with a sense of foreboding, as his reputation as a dissident – evidenced by his anti-Francoist associations and writings – put him in danger of being imprisoned by the regime. He writes in his memoirs, "While my European colleagues walked the world in a state of innocent tranquility, conscious of exercising an inalienable right, I did so for years in a state of suppressed terror."²

Goytisolo's story is one of many that can be told in the context of Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain, which lasted from 1939 until his death in 1975. On April 1, 1939, a bloody Civil War between Republicans and Nationalists came to an end with the surrender of Republican forces. The commander of Nationalist forces, Francisco Franco, came to power with the promise of reestablishing the monarchy in Spain. However, it became clear early on that this was not Franco's true intention, as he effectively became the dictator of Spain and set about establishing an authoritarian regime.

In order to solidify his control, Franco shut Spain off from the outside world and instituted a campaign of terror and repression to eliminate the remaining opposition within the

¹ Juan Goytisolo, *Realms of Strife: The Memoirs of Juan Goytisolo, 1957-1982* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 13.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

country and to gain control over its culture. During his time in power, he attempted to create a centralized state culture that conformed to the values of his regime while at the same time eliminating opposition culture from within Spain. As a result, many of Spain's most celebrated cultural figures were imprisoned, executed, forced out of the country, or silenced by the censors. According to Richard Herr, "Fear of the forces defeated in the war maintained Spain as a police state, probably the cruelest regime it has ever known, with strict censorship, an enforced ideology, countless thousands in prison, and many of the best minds in disgrace."³

Franco's rise to power brought to an end a period of liberalization in Spain that had begun in the 19th century. At the end of the 19th century, a group known as the "Generation of '98" broke away from traditional Spanish culture and included figures such as the poet Antonio Machado and the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. In the 20th century, the "Generation of '27" continued the efforts of the "Generation of '98" to revolutionize Spanish culture. The poet Federico García Lorca – who was executed in the Civil War – and the poet Rafael Albertí – who fled to Argentina after the war – are among its most important members.

The loss of so many of the intellectuals associated with these movements has led some scholars and critics to conclude that Spain was a "cultural desert" in the Franco period. Robert G. Mead said of the situation, "Those writers who have chosen to stay at home must either make their peace with Franco, like the aged playwright and Nobel Prize winner Jacinto Benavente and the critic Eugenio d'Ors, or like Ortega y Gasset, maintain a studied aloofness from politics and other controversial subjects. Neither attitude is conducive to much original literary production of interest or merit."⁴ Intellectuals who remained in Spain were also criticized by intellectuals in

³ Richard Herr, *An Historical Essay on Modern Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 1971), 236.

⁴ Robert G. Mead, "Dictatorship and Literature in the Spanish World," *Books Abroad* 25, no. 3 (1951):, 224, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40090135> (accessed Jan. 15, 2010).

exile who “saw themselves as the true bearers of Spanish civilization.”⁵ This idea has been supported by the fact that “the great majority of Spanish intellectuals who have won international attention since the Civil war have been among the emigré group.”⁶

However, not all cultural figures within Spain were silenced or conformed to the ideals of a Francoist culture. In many cases, authors, playwrights and filmmakers were able to express their ideals and their dissatisfaction with the regime in their works despite the strict censorship. A “coded language of communication” was developed through which authors, playwrights and film directors were able to criticize the Franco regime in a way that could be understood by their readers or audience, but was subtle enough to pass by the censors.⁷ For example, in speaking of writing his book *Campos de Níjar*, Juan Goytisolo stated, “an experienced student in the art of speaking to the voiceless, I took up the challenge of writing a work full of hidden messages and winks and nudges to the alert reader, without stalwart functionaries of the Information and Tourism Ministry – information for images to please the tourists – being able to latch onto anything in particular to justify cutting even a paragraph.”⁸

The goal of this essay is to prove that Spain was not a “cultural desert” in the Franco period. In order to do this, it will be necessary to discover the extent to which Franco was able to establish a monolithic, traditional state culture in Spain, to consider the effectiveness of the censorship apparatus in silencing subversive voices, and to study specific works produced by anti-Francoist authors, playwrights and film directors who remained in Spain – looking particularly at the techniques they used to keep a spirit of resistance alive in these works.

⁵ Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpurua, *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1979), 105.

⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *Franco's Spain* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), 95.

⁷ Catherine Boyle, “The Politics Music: On the Dynamics of a New Song,” in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction, The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 294.

⁸ Goytisolo, *Realms of Strife*, 20.

Censorship and State Culture

An important element of the centralization of power in Spain was the control and manipulation of Spanish culture. According to Alicia Alted, “The legitimization of culture offered itself as a tool: first, by controlling all cultural activities through censorship and the purging of cultural workers, and second, by creating a cultural model to shape the behavior of Spanish citizens, thus guaranteeing the regime’s stability and permanence”⁹ Thus, cultural control consisted of two elements. First, Franco attempted to mold the Spanish culture to conform to the values and purposes of his regime, and second, he carefully controlled subversive culture from within Spain through censorship.

Throughout his period of rule in Spain, Franco attempted to create a common cultural base that upheld the values of his regime. Franco’s regime was highly nationalist, patriarchal and Catholic, and thus, Francoist culture emphasized these ideals. Furthermore, Franco attempted to unify the country by subordinating regional culture to a greater Spanish culture centered in Castile. One way it did this was through the manipulation of Spanish history. Franco propagated the idea that his regime was the “sole representative of the ‘eternal Spain,’” meaning that it was a complete break from the Republic and was connected to the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella and the Reconquest.¹⁰ In this way, Franco connected 20th century Spain with the Golden Age of Spanish history in order to return it to its imperial, Catholic roots. At the same time, he sought to wipe the 19th century, with all its liberal, Enlightenment ideas, from Spain’s collective memory. Hence, the regime essentially attempted to rewrite Spanish history, erasing the parts of it that contradicted the purposes of the regime, recasting the Civil War as a

⁹ Alicia Alted, “Education and Political Control,” in Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 196.

¹⁰ Carmen Ortiz, “The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 446 (1999): 483, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/541485> (accessed Feb. 13, 2010).

glorious crusade, and mystifying and idealizing the Golden Age of Spain which the regime had supposedly inherited.

Myth and folklore were important mediums for projecting the values of the regime. The regime “selected, twisted and made use of elements” of folklore “for such functions as legitimizing the regime and creating aesthetics of its own.”¹¹ For example, the Golden Age of Spanish history, especially the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, was mythologized and associated with Franco’s regime through folklore. Franco set up political institutions to circulate this folklore, which was incorporated into songs, anthems and poetry.¹² One such song says, “For Spain to be One/ she had Isabella and Ferdinand/ to be Great she had Columbus/ and to be Free, Franco.”¹³

Many of the early cultural works of the Franco regime were idealized representations of the Civil War which celebrated wartime heroics and emphasized “fascist myths and aesthetics, extolled patriotism, honor, duty, youth, virility, courage, discipline, force, machismo, violence, and brutality, expressing horror of liberals, homosexuals, Masons, Jews, freedom of the press, and feminist emancipation.”¹⁴ Grouped under the title “Triumfalismo,” these works included Rafael García Serrano’s *La fiel infantería*, which tells the story of a courageous Falangist soldier named Mario and his experience in the Civil War.¹⁵

Film was a particularly important medium through which Franco and his followers propagated Francoist cultural ideology for a mass audience. The official film company of the regime, *Noticieros y Documentales Cinematograficos*, or NO-DO, was the only film company in

¹¹ Ortiz, “The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime,” 482.

¹² *Ibid*, 483.

¹³ *Ibid*, 484.

¹⁴ Janet Perez, “Prose in Franco Spain,” in *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 629.

¹⁵ Tatjana Pavlovic, *Despotic bodies and transgressive bodies: Spanish culture from Francisco Franco to Jesús Franco* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2003), 37, <http://www.netlibrary.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/Details.aspx> (accessed Nov. 9, 2009).

Franco's Spain allowed to produce newsreels and documentaries. In 1959, the company released the first documentary of the Civil War, *El camino de la paz*, which presented the message that "the civil war had been necessary and justified as the only way to restore peace and order, destroyed by the chaos of the Second Republic."¹⁶ The other important film company of the regime was Cifesa, which made films that "projected conformist attitudes towards God, nation, and family."¹⁷ Films like *Augustina de Aragón* promoted traditional, Catholic values and national unity. *Raza*, released in 1942, is based on a book written by Franco himself. The film extols nationalist war heroics in the Civil War and tells the story of three brothers who fight courageously on the Nationalist side during the war and are killed by the Republicans. "The ending emphasizes the Imperial Spanish past and a possible imperial future."¹⁸

Thus, Franco and his supporters tried to create a culture that conformed to the purposes and ideals of the regime. However, while a Francoist culture can be identified, Franco was unable to create a completely unified state culture in Spain that conformed to his model. A principle reason for this failure was that Francoist culture suffered from divisions that existed within the regime itself. The regime consisted of two political factions with very different ideologies: the monarchists, who were Catholic conservative, anti-liberal and anti-individualist and stressed religious values; and the Falangists, who "wanted to create a new nationalist, elitist culture based on modernized Spanish values, harmonizing tradition with the revolutionary demands of the twentieth century."¹⁹ The ideologies of these two factions often came into conflict and hindered the creation of a unified state culture in Spain. The result after the first years of the regime was that, according to Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi, "Francoism

¹⁶Sheelagh Ellwood, "The Moving Image of the Franco Regime: Noticiarios y Documentales 1943-1975," in Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 201.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁸ Pavlovic, *Despotic Bodies and Transgressive Bodies*, 31.

¹⁹ Payne, *Franco's Spain*, 96.

lacked a common cultural ideological base. . . the cultural policy of the regime became more concerned with control by censorship of possible alternative cultures than with the creation of an original culture of its own."²⁰

The creation of a unified, Francoist culture in Spain also required that liberal and subversive culture be eliminated from the country. Therefore, a rigid system of censorship was put in place in order to eliminate opposition culture. According to Benjamin Welles, "No single arm of Franco's dictatorship has done more to blacken Spain's name and to muzzle and hypnotize its people than the censorship"²¹ However, the second major factor that prevented the creation of a unified state culture was the failure of the censorship apparatus to completely eradicate subversive cultural influences.

Although the Nationalists had already begun to censor texts in 1936 with the creation of the Press and Propaganda Office, censorship was officially instituted in Nationalist Spain in 1938, when the Press and Propaganda Delegation came under control of the Minister of the Interior, Serrano Suñer. Suñer drafted the 1938 Ley de Prensa (Press Law), which required that "all printed, visual, or broadcast materials" be submitted to the state for approval before being published. "A censorial triumvirate enforced political, religious, and "moral" orthodoxy, prohibiting criticism of the government, its functionaries, the police, military, or Falangist party," thereby silencing the voice of opposition in the country and allowing Franco to further solidify his control.²² However, although strictly enforced in the years directly following the Civil War, censorship policies were not static throughout the Franco period. Over time, they were adjusted to suit international and domestic conditions. As a result, censorship went through periods of strict enforcement followed by periods of relaxation.

²⁰ Carr and Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy*, 106.

²¹ Benjamin Welles, *Spain: The Gentle Anarchy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), 77.

²² Perez, "Prose in Franco Spain," 628.

The years from 1936 to 1945 were the most repressive years of the regime as Franco worked to stifle opposition to his new authoritarian government. Before he could firmly establish his regime, Franco needed to eliminate the remaining opposition. To do this, a campaign of terror was carried out in Spain, and hundreds of thousands of Spaniards considered dissidents were imprisoned, executed or forced into exile. Perhaps the most celebrated of these figures was Federico García Lorca, one of Spain's most renowned poets and playwrights. He belonged to the "Generation of 1927," and several of his plays, such as *La Casa de Bernarda* and *Yerma*, were critical of social conditions within Spain. Presumably because of his revolutionary ideas, in 1936 the young writer was taken from his home and shot by Nationalist soldiers.

The regime justified such killings and continuing repression after the war under the Ley de Responsabilidades (Law of Responsibilities) passed in 1939, which declared that those who had committed crimes against the regime were to be prosecuted and sentenced to death or imprisonment. Under this law, a number of important cultural figures were arrested, such as the playwright Antonio Buero Vallejo and the poet Miguel Hernandez. Both were imprisoned after the war and sentenced to death for "crimes" they had committed against the regime. Buero's sentence was eventually commuted to six and a half years imprisonment, and he was released in 1945. Miguel Hernandez died in prison in 1942. Many other cultural figures and intellectuals who had supported the republican side in the Civil War fled into exile. Writers such as Juan Ramón Jiménez and artists such as Juan Miró sought refuge in France and the Americas where they could freely write and publish without the constraints of censorship.

But it was not enough that subversive cultural figures be eliminated from the country; their works must also be eliminated. On April 30, 1939 the Sindicato Unificado de Estudiantes (SEU) organized a public burning of books considered dangerous, and "in May 1939 the patio of

the University of Madrid was the scene of a general book burning.”²³ Bookstores and libraries were closed down and their shelves were wiped clear of any books that contained liberal ideas, books written by the authors who had emigrated from the country, books written in languages other than Spanish, and any other books Franco considered to be “dangerous.”

As a result of this period of repression, any kind of cultural dissent was extremely dangerous and the cultural situation in Spain by the 1940s was bleak. Many of Spain’s most celebrated cultural figures and intellectuals had been executed, imprisoned or forced into exile, and those who remained were silenced by the censors. However, this extreme repression did not last through the entire period of Franco’s reign. As it became clear that the Allies were winning the war, Franco, concerned with gaining international acceptance and recognition, began to relax his repressive policies. From 1945 to 1951, control over censorship was shifted to the Ministry of Education to give the appearance that censorship was not an official practice. Although it very much remained a reality in Spain, books like Pedro Laín Entralgo’s *España como problema* (*Spain as a Problem*) were able to slip by the censors.

At the same time censorship policies were relaxed, a new opposition was arising within Spain. It consisted partly of a new generation of Spaniards, who had been children during the Civil War and were in many cases the children of Nationalist families, and partly of Falangists who had become disillusioned with Franco’s government.²⁴ By the 1950s, it was clear that Franco favored the more traditional Catholic ideology of the monarchists over their Falangist rivals, and many Falangists began to leave the regime to join the opposition. One such Falangist was Dionoso Ridruejo, who had been a leader in the publication of state propaganda in the

²³ Willis Knap Jones, “Recent Novels of Spain: 1936-56,” *Hispania* 40, no. 3 (1957): 303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/335357> (accessed Feb. 10, 2010), .

²⁴ Harry Jordan, “The Emergence of a Dissident Intelligentsia,” in Graham and Labayani, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 246.

1940s. He and other Falangist intellectuals wanted to keep alive certain aspects of the Generation of 1898, but these efforts were rejected by the regime as it adopted a more traditional ideology. Becoming disillusioned with the regime, Ridruejo deserted it and passed over to the opposition in which he dedicated himself to poetry through the rest of the Franco period.

However, at the end of the 1950s, censorship became stricter again as it came under the jurisdiction of the newly created Ministry of Information and Tourism, with the hardliner Gabriel Arias Salgado at its head. But by this time dissident voices had grown stronger in Spain, and Spaniards were not as willing to stand by and watch as their works were rejected and cut to pieces by the censors. In 1960, 227 Spanish intellectuals signed a petition protesting censorship, which resulted in the imprisonment of many of them, including the playwright Alfonso Sastre.

In 1962, censorship was relaxed once again when Manuel Fraga was appointed as the Minister of Information and Tourism. His passing of the Ley de Prensa y Imprenta (Law of Press and Printed Matter) in 1966 ended the “previa consulta,” which required that materials be submitted to the state for approval prior to publication. Editors and writers were now obligated to self-censor to determine which materials were appropriate to be published. However, far from eliminating cultural constraints, the state continued to censor in the post-publication phase, and the passing of this law actually increased the number of people who were prosecuted for publishing subversive materials. Materials deemed unsuitable by the censors were seized and destroyed after publication, and heavy fines were imposed on writers, publishers and editors.

In 1969, Fraga was removed from office and replaced by a hardliner, and the regime attempted to tighten its control over cultural materials once again. However, by this point, censorship was beginning to disappear “in great part through the determination of writers, editors of journals, film directors and producers, actors, singers, students, of Catalan, Galician, and

Basque nationalists, and of common citizens to express themselves without restrictions and to distribute those expressions regardless of governmental interference”²⁵ In this way, by the end of the regime, literature was published and plays and movies were released that were more overtly critical of the regime.

Thus, Franco’s strict censorship policies failed to completely stifle cultural opposition to his regime, and his attempts to create a unified, traditional culture in Spain were only marginally successful. First, Franco’s censorship policies were not consistently enforced, and in the periods in which they were relaxed, works which openly criticized the regime, such as *España como problema*, slipped by the censors and were published. Second, while writers, playwrights and filmmakers within Spain were, for the most part, unable openly to criticize the regime in their works, neither did they conform to the Francoist cultural model. Many of these cultural figures were able to find subtle means by which to express their opposition to the regime in their works. The remainder of this essay will present specific examples of subversive novels, poems, plays and films that were published and released during the Franco period. Despite strict censorship policies, writers, poets, playwrights and film directors were able to produce many influential works that successfully conveyed their criticisms of the regime.

Narrative and Poetry

The situation of literature in immediate postwar Spain was grim. Many of Spain’s most prominent authors had been imprisoned, executed or exiled, and those who had not were unable to openly express themselves in their works because of the extreme repression of the 1930s and 40s. However, by the 1940s, beginning with Camilo José Cela’s publishing of *La familia de*

²⁵ Michael Ugarte, “The Literature of Franco Spain, 1939-1975” in Gies, *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, 613.

Pascual Duarte (*The Family of Pascual Duarte*, 1942), the Spanish novel was revived, and many authors began to challenge the censors. *La familia de Pascual Duarte* was the first novel of a new literary style known as “Tremendismo.” Tremendist novels are characterized by their realistic portrayals of extreme violence and misery and their emphasis on “the horrific, ‘tremendous’ events of life.”²⁶

By the 1950s, as censorship became less strict, a new literary movement arose in Spain – Social Realism. With Social Realism, Spanish authors revived 19th century Realism in order to “reflect both their personal traumatic experiences of the war and the realities of postwar Spain in their works”²⁷ Through realism and other literary devices, many Spanish authors were able to develop a code by which to criticize the regime in their works. Unable to overtly discuss political or social issues, they wrote in such a way that their messages were open to the interpretation of the reader. Although they were not always successful and were often censored, novelists like Camilo José Cela, Miguel Delibes and Ana María Matute and poets like Dámaso Alonso, Vicente Aleixandre, Blas de Otero and Gabriel Celaya published numerous works that contained messages of resistance beneath the surface.

Camilo José Cela is one of Spain’s most famous and important 20th century novelists. Only twenty years old when the Civil War began, he was drafted to fight on the Nationalist side in 1938. Although he worked as a censor for a short time after the war, he was severely affected by the violence and cruelty of the Civil War and turned to the opposition, where he devoted himself to writing and imbued his works with critiques of socioeconomic conditions in Franco Spain. He wrote the bulk of his more than twenty volumes of novels, plays, essays and short stories, in the years of Franco’s reign. Lucile Charlebois, writing of Cela’s works in her book

²⁶ Ronald Schwartz, *Spain's New Wave Novelists*, (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), 33.

²⁷Ibid, 2.

Understanding Camilo José Cela, stated, “numerous readings are possible, each of which reveals layers of criticism leveled at the injustices and atrocities that grow out of the hypocrisies of twentieth century life and, more specifically, the impoverishment of a Spanish society whose ruling government proclaimed (until Franco’s death) vacuous prosperity for over thirty years.”²⁸ Cela is also known for his founding and editing of the journal *Papeles de Son Armadax* in 1956, which became “one of Spain's most important literary outlets during the years of repression.”²⁹ After Franco’s death, he was such an influential figure that he served as a senator in the Constituent Cortes and helped write the new Spanish Constitution, and in 1989, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

One of his first novels, *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, written in 1942, is said by literary critics to have “brought about the revival of the postwar Spanish novel.”³⁰ The protagonist of the novel is a criminal named Pascual Duarte who has committed such heinous crimes as the murder of his own mother. The book is written in first person from the perspective of Duarte as he awaits his execution, and in the first line he states, “I am not, sir, a bad person, though in all truth I am not lacking in reasons for being one.”³¹ In this line, Cela’s underlying message can be seen: Duarte is a product of the society in which he grew up. According to Margaret Gonzalez, “Cela uses the depraved character of Duarte to demonstrate the effects of a people who acquiesce to the authoritarian control of a political regime, religion, and the class system, failing to exercise free will and power.”³² In the end, despite the numerous crimes he has committed, Duarte is put to death for crimes against society, illustrating that “disruptive force is punished by the regime

²⁸ Lucile C. Charlebois, *Understanding Camilo José Cela* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 6-7.

²⁹ Marie-Lise Gazarian Gautier, *Interviews with Spanish Writers* (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 78.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 78.

³¹ Camilo José Cela, *The Family of Pascual Duarte*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1964), 13.

³² Margaret C. Gonzalez, *Literature of Protest: The Franco Years* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998), 8.

only when it affects the order and stability of society.”³³ Upon its publication in 1942, the response to the book was so great that it was recalled shortly after its second edition was printed and wasn’t released again for another two years. Its influence is further evidenced by the eighty-seven Spanish editions of the book that have been released since 1942.

Because of its more blatant criticism of the regime, *La colmena* (*The Hive*), written in 1951, was rejected by the censors and had to be published in Argentina. Cela once said in an interview, "Each time I lost a fight with a censor, I considered it a personal failure. When words and sentences were crossed out from my manuscripts, I felt I was being persecuted."³⁴ Despite this, *La colmena* is one of Cela’s most celebrated works and is an excellent example of a Social Realist novel. The book consists of snapshots from the lives of more than three hundred characters that reflect the everyday lives of ordinary Spaniards in postwar Madrid. Through, for example, the stories of Elvira, who lives miserably in a one room apartment, and the poet Martín, who survives off the charity of his sister, Cela illustrates the poor socioeconomic conditions that existed in Franco’s Spain.³⁵

Miguel Delibes Setién, like Camilo José Cela, fought on the Nationalist side in the Civil War, serving in the navy on the cruiser *Canarias*. However, like Cela, his experiences in the war caused him to alienate himself from the regime, becoming a “determined nonpartisan, often opposing the government he had originally helped to bring to power, and doing everything within his means to assist former opponents, the Republican political prisoners.”³⁶ Shortly after the war, he studied journalism and began to write award-winning books, such as *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* (*Long is the Cypress’s Shadow*; 1948) – for which he won the Nadal Prize,

³³ Ibid, 59.

³⁴ Guatier, *Interviews with Spanish Writers*, 86.

³⁵ Charlebois, *Understanding Camilo José Cela*, 32.

³⁶ Janet Diaz, *Miguel Delibes* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc, 1971), 22.

and *Diario de un cazador* (*Diary of a Hunter*; 1955) – for which he won the Miguel de Cervantes National Prize. He also worked for the newspaper *El Norte de Castilla* and was appointed director in 1959. By the 1950s, Delibes was taking an active interest in political matters. He was forced to leave the paper in 1963 because under his direction, it “published the most daring articles to appear in the Spanish press since the Civil War.”³⁷

Delibes’s early novels were realistic in nature and thus were characteristic of the Social Realist movement. One of his first novels, *Aún es de día* (*Still it is Day*; 1949) is similar to Cela’s novel, *La colmena*, in that it presents a realistic and objective portrayal of Spanish society under Franco. The protagonist of the story, Sebastián, is a deformed young man who lives with his cruel, alcoholic mother and half-sister in a rundown tenement building. He is “the incarnation of almost incurable optimism” and works hard to achieve a better job and a better position in life.³⁸ Eventually, he is elated when he is able to procure a job in a textile store, but the enthusiasm he displays over such a small improvement in his condition represents how difficult it was for Spaniards to improve their social and economic conditions in the 1940s.

Another of Delibes novels, *Cinco horas con Mario* (*Five Hours with Mario*; 1966), is distinctly different from *Aún es de día* and represents a break from the Social Realist movement because it is “devoted entirely to psychological probing.”³⁹ The book is about a widow named Carmen who converses with the dead corpse of her husband, Mario, the night before his burial and consists almost entirely of Carmen’s silent conversation with her husband. Carmen is a Franco supporter and devoted Catholic, while her husband was “a dissident, isolated and alienated from his marriage and society.”⁴⁰ Through the portrayal of Carmen’s Francoist views

³⁷ Ibid, 30.

³⁸ Ibid, 47.

³⁹ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁰ Gonzalez, *Literature of protest*, 9.

and Mario's Republican views, Delibes represents the two political ideologies that existed in Spain during and after the Civil War. Each chapter begins with a passage from the Bible. Carmen gives her often skewed interpretations of the passage and then reveals what would have been Mario's very different interpretation through stories she relates from his life. By portraying Carmen in a negative light, Delibes criticizes the values and ideals of the bourgeois class in Franco Spain; however, he masks his criticisms by using a woman to represent the ideals of the regime.

Another important novelist of the Franco period was Ana María Matute, who continues to be regarded as "the most prominent woman writer in present-day Spain and the best known female Spanish novelist in the United States and abroad."⁴¹ She spent the duration of the Civil War isolated in her home and began writing in the early 1940s. Her works, like Cela's and Delibes, are imbued with subtle criticisms of the regime, and she was often censored. For example, she was forced to rewrite several of her books including *Las luciernagas* (*The Fireflies*), which she rewrote as *En esta tierra* (*In This Land*; 1955). As the Franco period progressed and became more open, Matute became a more outspoken critic of the regime. In 1971, she was fined 50,000 pesetas for protesting the repression of the regime. The majority of her books and short stories are from the point of view of children. Matute was not alone in this technique – other cultural figures of the Franco period employed children as the protagonists in their works because, like Matute, they had experienced the Civil War as children.

After the censors prevented her from publishing her novel *Las luciérnagas*, Matute decided to rewrite it, changing the ending and making drastic revisions. In 1955, the second version of the book, which she renamed *En esta tierra*, was published. While it is true that she was forced to compromise with the censors in her second draft of the book, it is still "among the

⁴¹ Schwartz, *New Wave Novelists*, 113.

most political of her writings, and definitely the most audacious up until the time of its publication.”⁴² The protagonist of the story is a young girl named Soledad who grows up in a bourgeois family during the time of the Civil War. When her father was executed, Soledad’s family became poor and was forced to survive on little food. During the war, her brother, Eduardo, joins a gang led by a boy named Daniel Barral. Soledad falls in love with Daniel’s older brother, Cristián, and becomes pregnant with his child, but when Franco’s army marches into Barcelona, Cristián is shot by one of the soldiers as he runs towards them, shouting.

It is unclear whether or not Cristián’s shout as he runs toward the soldiers is one of despair, but this is a result of the censorship. In her original story, Cristián and Soledad married and lived together with their baby, struggling to survive under the “hopeless postwar economic and political situation.”⁴³ At the end of the book, Cristián ran shouting towards the soldiers as a result of the desperation he felt after being sent to a work camp for committing robbery to obtain medicine for his sick baby. The message in the original version of the book may have been more obvious, but *En esta tierra* was nevertheless “a cry for understanding the causes underlying the revolt of the lower classes, the implicit but fervent sympathy with the losers in the Civil War.”⁴⁴

Primera memoria (First Memory), published in 1960, is one of Matute’s most well-known novels and is the first volume of a trilogy entitled *Los Mercadores (The Merchants)*. The story is written in the first person from the perspective of a fourteen-year-old girl named Matía who goes to live on an island with her grandmother after her mother dies and her father enlists on the Republican side in the Civil War. One day, as Matía and her cousin Borja are playing on the beach, they find a body of a man named José Taronji. Matía befriends the son of the dead man,

⁴²Janet Díaz, *Ana María Matute* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971), 63.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 135.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 64.

Manuel, but Borja becomes jealous of their relationship. At the end of the book, he steals a large sum of money and frames Manuel for the theft, so that Manuel is forced to go to a reformatory.

As a result of these events and other circumstances in the book, Matía begins to lose her innocence and is introduced to the adult world. This loss of innocence is an important theme in many of Matute's works and probably symbolizes the innocence she lost as a child in the Civil War. The book ends as "the obviously symbolic cock of Son Major cries out for 'some mysterious lost cause,' – lost innocence, lost idealism, lost hope, lost Republic."⁴⁵ Although the book does not directly deal with the Civil War, war is a symbolic theme in the book, which can be seen in the family feuds and conflicts between juvenile gangs that exist in the story. Matute was able to bypass the censors because of her translation of the setting of the novel to an island. Janet Diaz says that "the use of an island, removed from the main conflict, and of child or adolescent protagonists, may be seen either as a device to circumvent censorship, or as a microcosmic, symbolic representation of the national situation."⁴⁶

Camilo José Cela, Miguel Delibes and Ana María Matute are three of the most celebrated authors of the Franco period, but many other novelists also braved the censors with their works. Luis Martín-Santos died prematurely in a tragic automobile accident in 1964, but his only published novel, *Tiempo de Silencio* (*Time of Silence*; 1962), is one of the most influential books of the Franco period. The novel is notable because of its portrayal of the slums that existed on the outskirts of Madrid throughout the Franco period. This was a dangerous subject for Martín-Santos to address because Franco did his best to keep outsiders ignorant of the poverty and squalor that existed in the slums. In the novel, Pedro, a student working at a research institute, searches for rats to use in a study he is performing on the growth of cancer. Pedro learns of a

⁴⁵ Schwartz, *New Wave Novelists*, 119

⁴⁶ Díaz, *Ana María Matute*, 133.

man named Muecas who breeds rats in the slums on the outskirts of Madrid. As Pedro travels to Muecas's home to purchase the rats, Martín-Santos paints a bleak picture of life in the slums.⁴⁷ Pedro himself works hard at the research institute to avoid living a life of poverty and squalor, but by the end of the novel, he is fired by his boss at the research institute, and his fiancé, Dorita, is murdered. Pedro gives up his dreams and moves from Madrid to work for a medical practice in Castille. In this way, Martín-Santos illustrates that Pedro is "condemned to silence by a society that deprived him of all he wanted."⁴⁸

Other important novels include Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (*Nothing*; 1945), which tells the story of a young woman named Andrea who moves to Barcelona from the Canary Islands and is "shocked by harsh, postwar realities."⁴⁹ José María Gironella took advantage of the relaxed period of the 1950s to publish his novel *Los cyprés creen en Dios* (*The Cypresses Believe in God*; 1953), with which he "indirectly led the battle against government censorship, inspiring other novelists to take up the theme of the Spanish Civil War."⁵⁰ The novel describes the experiences of the Alvear family in the Civil War and addresses some of the social and political problems that existed for the Civil War generation. The protagonist of Daniel Sueiro's novel, *La criba* (*The Sieve*; 1958), remains unnamed throughout the book, suggesting that he represents the Spanish people as a whole. The book describes the protagonist's miserable, monotonous life and ends after the death of his newborn son. At the end of the book, as he walks along the street, the protagonist notes, "All the faces that he encountered along the way. All the people, all the things were condemned like him."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Schwartz, *Spain's New Wave Novelists*, 154.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 156.

⁴⁹ Perez, "Prose in Franco Spain," 631.

⁵⁰ Schwartz, *Spain's New Wave Novelists*, 51.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 133-135.

Poetry was another literary medium of protest in Franco Spain – even more so than the novel because of its more indirect and coded language and because “dissidence could be tolerated in a minority genre”⁵² In the postwar years, a new generation of Spanish poets who have become known as the Social Poets, emerged in Spain. As do the Social Realist novels, Social Poetry “represents a view politically and aesthetically opposed to that of the writers who supported Franco’s autocratic rule, a form of protest within the bounds which censorship imposed.”⁵³ The first of these poems were published in 1944 and were concerned with portraying the devastating effects of the Civil War. As the Franco period progressed, Social Poetry matured and became more concerned with social and political issues. The most important of these Social Poets includes Vicente Aleixandre, Dámaso Alonso and Blas de Otero.

A member of the Generation of 1927 who chose to remain in Spain after the war, Vicente Aleixandre wrote award-winning poetry throughout the Franco period and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1977. He immediately began work on his book of poetry, *Sombra del paraíso* (*The Shadow of Paradise*; 1944), after the war and had it published in 1944. Although far from overtly critical of the regime, the poetry in this volume does express a sense of loss and a longing for a happier past that has disappeared. This sense of loss can be seen at the end of “Spirits of a higher heaven” when the poet writes, “And I look at the imprecise fabrics offered by men, masks that do not cry over the tired towns while I feel far away the music of my dreams in which the flutes of Spring run away as if they were flickering out.”⁵⁴ Although he does not refer specifically to historical conditions within Spain in these poems, the sense of loss present in them would have resonated with many Spaniards struggling with the loss of freedom and the declining living conditions that had come with Franco’s rise to power.

⁵² Jo Labanyi, “Censorship or the Fear of Mass Culture,” in Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 211.

⁵³ Santiago Daydí-Tolson, *The Post-Civil War Spanish Social Poets* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), ix.

⁵⁴ Daydí Tolson, *Post-Civil War Spanish Social Poets*, 3.

Dámaso Alonso was a close friend of Vicente Aleixandre and published his volume of poetry, *Hijos de la ira* (*Children of Wrath*; 1944), in the same year Aleixandre published *Sombra del paraíso*. Like *Sombra del paraíso*, Alonso's book expresses the author's sense of loss and personal anguish. "His tormented voice was that of each reader, the voice of hundreds of individuals faced with a world of despair, pain, and anguish."⁵⁵ Although, as in Aleixandre's volume, the poems in Alonso's book do not refer to historical conditions in Spain, the poet has said that "*Hijos de la ira* is a book of protest written in Spain at a time when nobody protested."⁵⁶ Thus, it is probable that the anguish Alonso portrays in these poems – as he writes that "a million corpses are rotting in the city of Madrid" – is meant to portray the anguish he experiences in the wake of the Civil War. The poetry in *Hijos de la ira* also greatly influenced many of the future social poets.

Blas de Otero was one such Social Poet that was influenced by Dámaso Alonso. His books *Angel fieramente humano* (*Fiercely Human Angel*; 1950) and *Redoble de conciencia* (*Drumroll of Conscience*; 1951) are similar to Alonso's *Hijos de la ira* in that they portray the torment and despair of the author.⁵⁷ However, unlike Aleixandre and Alonso, as Otero became progressively more opposed to Franco's government, he began to write poetry that was devoted to social and political issues. As a result, he often struggled with the censors, but he was able to create "a language that can be clear and easily understood by everyone, but that is also elusive and open to varying interpretations" by combining "original images with straightforward language, literary allusions, and set symbols."⁵⁸ He used this language in his most famous work *Pido la paz y la palabra* (*I Ask for Peace and the Right to Speak*; 1955), which includes poems

⁵⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁷ Daydí-Tolson, *Post-Civil War Spanish Social Poets*, 50.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 55.

that are concerned with political and social conditions. For example, he alludes to censorship and refers to the obligation of the poet to defend justice in an untitled poem from the volume which states, "I ask for peace and the right to speak. I write in defense of the kingdom of man and its justice."⁵⁹ In his poem "Sobre esta piedra edificaré" (On this rock I will build) his preoccupation with conditions in Spain can be seen in the verses: "Backward Spain, water without a glass, when there is water; glass without water, when there is thirst."⁶⁰

In sum, Spanish authors and poets were not completely silenced by the Franco regime. Although they were limited in what they could say in their works, award-winning writers like Camilo José Cela and Vicente Aleixandre found ways around the censorship. Instead of overtly criticizing the politics of the regime, they resurrected the Realism of the 19th century to illustrate the devastating socioeconomic conditions that existed in Franco Spain. Furthermore, they often translated the settings of their works to other locations, wrote their stories from the perspective of women or children, or used symbolic language and metaphors to hide their messages of protest.

Theatre

According to John Hooper, "Under Franco, drama was widely employed for political ends."⁶¹ The early theatrical works produced in the post-Civil War era largely reflected the ideology of the regime, but beginning in the late 1940s, a number of Spanish playwrights, using similar methods to those of the authors discussed in the previous section, revealed dissident views in their plays and "brought to the stage the harsh reality of the early postwar period."⁶²

Antonio Buero Vallejo is arguably the most important of these playwrights because he was able

⁵⁹ Ibid, 64.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 59.

⁶¹ John Hooper. *The New Spaniards* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 388.

⁶² Martha Halsey, "Theatre in Franco Spain" in Gies, *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, 659.

not only to produce excellent theatrical productions that gained international acclaim, but also to disguise subversive messages in his plays by using a variety of techniques that allowed them to slip by the censors while at the same time remaining obvious to their audiences. Because of his influence and the variety of techniques he used, a large part of this section will be devoted to his works.

Originally interested in painting, Buero studied art in Madrid from 1934 to 1936. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted on the side of the Republicans, and was arrested and condemned to death in 1939. After his sentence was commuted and he was released in 1946, he turned from painting to the theatre. His experience in prison had an enormous influence on the plays he produced, evident in the symbolic prisons that exist in many of them. In the years after his release, he established himself as one of Spain's most successful playwrights, for the most part because he "largely accepted the constraints of the regime, preferring to achieve what was possible within the limitations it [imposed]."⁶³

One of his most famous plays, *Historia de una escalera* (*Story of a Staircase*), premiered in 1949 and was one of the first attempts by a playwright to move beyond the limitations of Francoist culture. It takes place in a tenement building in Madrid, and the focal point of the story is the staircase in the building which "remains virtually unchanged as three generations trudge up and down it without getting anywhere."⁶⁴ Fernando and Urbano, two of the inhabitants of the building, are members of the working class who long to improve their social standing but are unable to. Three generations succeed one another as the play progresses, and each generation finds itself in the same position as its parents, unable to improve its condition. Thus, the unchanging staircase serves as a metaphor for the "social and economic immobility of the early

⁶³ Gwynne Edwards, *Burning the Curtain: Four Revolutionary Spanish Plays* (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1995), 118.

⁶⁴ Halsey, "Theatre in Franco Spain," 661.

postwar years.”⁶⁵ Although its critique of Franco Spain was fairly obvious to its audience, the play was able to get past the censors because it never mentioned the Civil War and, like the Social Realist novels, it portrayed the socioeconomic conditions of the average Spaniard rather than directly criticizing the politics of the regime.

Another of Buero’s plays, *En la ardiente oscuridad* (*In the Burning Darkness*; 1950) was written shortly after his release from prison. The play is an allegory in which a school for the blind represents Franco’s Spain. The majority of the students in the school are content to live in an illusion, refusing to believe they are different. However, the protagonist of the story is Ignacio, who is a dreamer and wants to break through the illusion and open the students’ eyes to the world that exists outside the school. He believes that “their life is only a parody of what it could be if they could see, and to pretend otherwise is insincerity.”⁶⁶ At the end of the story, Carlos, a student leader who supports the rules of the institution, kills Ignacio because he has begun to influence many of the other students. The students in the school for the blind, living in isolation and denial, can be compared to Spaniards living isolated from the rest of the world in Franco Spain. Ignacio, then, represents the opponents of Franco who dream of breaking through the illusions of the regime, and Carlos represents Franco’s followers who work to repress the opposition.

In *Las Meninas* (1960), Buero uses still another method to disguise his criticisms of the Franco Regime – he translates the setting to another time period. The play takes place in the era of Felipe IV, “another disastrous period in Spain’s history.”⁶⁷ Velázquez is the leading character, a rebel who attempts to convey the realities of Spain in his paintings, including his famous painting *Las Meninas*. He is put on trial for his unconventional paintings and for

⁶⁵ Ibid, 661.

⁶⁶ Martha T. Halsey, *Antonio Buero Vallejo* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc, 1973), 139.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 113.

sheltering a beggar named Pedro, who actively rebels against the injustices in the country. It is easy to see that Felipe IV's period of rule in Spain parallels that of Franco's rule because the play "deals with the struggle of the intellectual who lives in a time of crisis" and reflects the struggles Buero and other intellectuals were dealing with in Franco Spain.⁶⁸

Alfonso Sastre is another important Spanish playwright who began producing plays in the early postwar period. In 1950, he joined the theatre group Teatro de Agitación Social (Theater of Social Agitation), but the plays the group presented were regularly banned by the censors. Sastre's own plays were also heavily censored. He believed that dramatists should refuse to compromise with the censors and should write what they wanted to in their plays, regardless of the consequences. This was in contrast to Buero's idea that playwrights should write within the realm of the "possible," and "Sastre initiated an often bitter polemic with Buero on the correct stance of the committed writer in times of censorship, proclaiming that silence was preferable to the literary conventions and masks often used by Buero."⁶⁹ The playwright wrote several books expressing his views on theatre. In *Drama and Society*, "he proposed that the true purpose of theatre should be to agitate and disturb."⁷⁰ In 1966, he was imprisoned after refusing to pay a 50,000 peseta fine for participating in the "National Day Against Repression."

Escuarda hacia la muerte (Condemned Squad), premiered in 1953, is the most famous of Sastre's plays. Set in the future in an imagined World War III, this revolutionary play tells the story of a squadron of soldiers under the command of a tyrannical corporal who abuses the soldiers until they are driven to murder him. Each of the soldiers deals with the death of the corporal in a different way, and each represents a different class and segment of society in Spain under the influence of an authoritarian power. According to Martha Halsey, the play

⁶⁸ Ibid, 117.

⁶⁹ Halsey, "Theatre in Franco Spain," 666.

⁷⁰ Edwards, *Burning the Curtain*, 81.

“represented a protest against the nationalist ideals of militarism and the mysticism of death promoted by the Franco regime.”⁷¹ However, because of the obvious message in the play, the regime banned it after three performances.

Antonio Buero Vallejo and Alfonso Sastre are two of the most important Spanish playwrights of the Franco period and released the first protest plays of the post-Civil War period, but by the 1960s, other Spanish playwrights joined the ranks of Buero and Sastre and began to produce revolutionary plays. With the appointment of Fraga as Minister of Information and Tourism in 1962, a new Realist generation of Spanish playwrights emerged “whose vision of Spain was decidedly critical.”⁷² Like the Social Realist authors, the Realist playwrights sought to represent an objective view of the social and economic conditions in Franco Spain.

An example of a realist play is Lauro Olmo’s *La camisa* (*The Shirt*; 1962). Set in a shantytown on the outskirts of Madrid, the play deals with the problem of unemployment in Franco’s Spain. The characters in the play struggle with the decision of whether or not to immigrate to Northern Europe in search of greater opportunity. Juan, the main character, opposed to the idea of emigrating, articulates the view of Olmo and other Spanish intellectuals who chose to remain in Spain after the Civil War.⁷³ Another example of a realist play is Martín Recuerda’s *Las salvajes de Puente San Gil* (*The Savages in Puente San Gil*), which was released in 1963. The play is based on a true story in which a group of chorus girls travel to a small town to put on a show. When they arrive, they are rejected by the Church and violently attacked by the town citizens. “However, as the actresses are led off by the police, they refuse to be silenced, raising their voices defiantly in a protest song.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ Halsey, “Theatre in Franco Spain,” 666.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 668.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 668.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 669.

At the same time Lauro Olmo and the other Realist playwrights began producing plays the Symbolist generation also emerged in Spain. Symbolist playwrights used symbols, allegories and metaphors to disguise their critiques of the regime. José Ruibal's *Los mendigos* (*The Beggars*; 1957) is a highly symbolic play set in an imaginary country. The leaders of this imaginary country are portrayed as animals: the general is a dog, the Chief of Police is an ass, the priest is a crow, and the Minister of Propaganda is a parrot. The country is full of beggars that live in devastating conditions, but tourists – portrayed as giraffes in the play – flock to the country, photographing the poverty around them. For Ruibal's audience, this satire would have been a fairly obvious reflection of Spanish political and social conditions, but according to George Wellwarth, "Some of these devices – for example, the universal habit of setting the plays in an imaginary country and frequently giving the characters non-Hispanic names – are clearly designed to lessen the chances of censorship."⁷⁵

Thus, Spanish playwrights in Franco Spain used various methods to keep a spirit of protest alive in their plays, despite the censorship. Antonio Buero Vallejo, one of the most important of these playwrights, was particularly careful not to come into conflict with the censors, as he believed in expressing his ideals within the realms of "the possible." He hid his subversive messages beneath allegories and metaphors, translated his settings to different time periods, and used Realism to illustrate social conditions in Spain. Alfonso Sastre, on the other hand, was unwilling to compromise with the censors and was openly critical of the regime, leading many of his works to be banned in Spain. Later in the period, other Spanish playwrights used realism or symbolism to disguise their messages.

⁷⁵ George E. Wellwarth, *Spanish Underground Drama* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 27.

Cinema

Film was the most difficult medium by which to criticize the Franco regime, as it was seen by the widest audience and was the most heavily censored. Filmmakers in Spain who wanted to include criticisms of the regime in their movies had to be especially innovative in the methods they used to conceal their messages. In the most repressive years of the regime, in the 1940s, the film industry in Spain was dominated by the themes of Francoist culture, but by the 1950s, film directors like Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis Garía Berlanga began to use neorealist techniques to disguise critiques of Francoism in their films. However, because the cinema was so closely monitored, realist films were often censored. In response, beginning in the 1960s, directors such as Luis Buñuel and Carlos Saura began to use surrealist techniques in their films, which made dissident messages more difficult for the censors to decipher.

Bardem and Berlanga were two of the first film directors in the 1950s to produce films that did not conform to the model laid out by the Franco regime. Bardem openly criticized the film industry in Spain in 1955 at the Conversaciones Cinematográficas Nacionales (National Film Talks) in Salamanca. According to his “Five Points” statement, “Spanish film is: politically, useless; socially, false; intellectually, inferior; esthetically, nonexistent, and industrially, sick.”⁷⁶ Breaking from the Francoist films being produced in the country, Bardem and Berlanga began producing works that were characteristic of Neorealism to represent the poor conditions within Spain at the time.

At the outset of their careers, Bardem and Berlanga often collaborated together on their films. *Esa pareja feliz* (*That Happy Couple*; 1951) is an example of one of their early films, which utilizes neorealist techniques by portraying an ordinary couple living an average Spanish existence in 1951. The couple wins the opportunity to live a dream life for a day. However, at

⁷⁶Virginia Higgenbotham, *Spanish Film Under Franco* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 28.

the end of the day, they are forced to return to their miserable existences with little hope of improving their living conditions.⁷⁷ In this way, Bardem and Berlanga illustrated the poor socioeconomic conditions that existed for the average Spanish family under Franco's regime.

Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall (*Welcome, Mr. Marshall*), released a year after *Esa pareja feliz* in 1952, is another example of the use of Neorealism to criticize socioeconomic conditions in Franco's Spain. The film is a comedy which deals with the exclusion of Spain from the Marshall Plan. Through its portrayal of a Spanish town that puts on a fake façade to impress American officials, the movie mocks the idealized, exotic image of Spain that the Franco regime attempted to convey to the world. It was released in the period when Franco was attempting to gain international recognition, and it "attacked not only the imperialist goals of America's Marshall Plan but also Francoist policy with its denial of Spanish socioeconomic realities and its ineptness in negotiating with the United States."⁷⁸ Although it deals with political issues, a dangerous subject to broach in Franco's Spain, the film disguises the "frustrations and illusions of the Spanish people" under the veil of comedy.⁷⁹ According to Virginia Higginbotham, *Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall* is "as close as Spanish film comes to rendering the national reality of the 1950s."⁸⁰

After these initial films, Bardem went on to direct his own movies, which were of a more serious nature. *Muerte de un ciclista* (*Death of a Cyclist*; 1955) is a melodrama in which a woman named María José runs into and kills a bicyclist as she is driving with her lover, Juan. Juan is horrified and wants to notify the authorities, but María insists that they ignore the incident. Overcome by his guilt, Juan becomes obsessed with the accident and pores over newspapers in search of articles reporting it. While at a horse race, he overhears a crowd of fans

⁷⁷ Higginbotham, *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 30-31.

⁷⁸ Marsha Kinder, *Blood Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 25.

⁷⁹ Higginbotham, *Spanish film under Franco*, 46.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 46.

laughing over a notice announcing the death of the cyclist. This scene illustrates the underlying purpose of the film, which is to illustrate the “the social indifference of a complacent bourgeoisie.”⁸¹ While the film won awards abroad, it caused uproar in Spain. Bardem was arrested during the filming of his next movie, but was released soon after to avoid international criticism. From this point on, however, Bardem was closely monitored by the censors, and in his subsequent films, he failed to find a film language with which to voice his protest that would cater to both a Spanish and international audience.⁸²

Bardem’s career may have been damaged by the censors, but Berlanga became one of Spain’s greatest movie directors. His films, unlike Bardem’s, were more accepted in the Spanish community and attracted a larger audience. One of his best films, *El verdugo* (*The Executioner*; 1963), is a black comedy about a man named José Luis who accepts a job as an executioner. Amadeo – associated with Franco throughout the film – is the old executioner whose job José Luis will take. José Luis accepts the position reluctantly only after he is told that he will probably never have to carry out an execution. However, when a day comes that he is required to do so, the duty is forced upon him despite his protests. The film is meant to criticize the practice of execution and undermine “the franquista myths of duty, honor, and patriotism” by illustrating the ways in which cruel practices like execution become socially acceptable over time.

Luis Buñuel was in exile in Mexico until 1962 and filmed only two movies in post-war Spain, but he had an enormous influence on other Spanish filmmakers of the time. In 1935, he began directing for a film company, Filmófono, which was “identified with democratic and liberal tendencies.”⁸³ He directed four films with the company until he left Spain in 1936 with the outbreak of the Civil War. Remaining in exile until 1960, he immediately began filming

⁸¹ Higginbotham, *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 34.

⁸² *Ibid*, 42.

⁸³ Evans, “Cifesa: Cinema and Authoritarian Aesthetics,” 215.

Viridiana upon his return to Spain. He went on to film an adaptation of Benito Perez Galdós's 19th century novel, *Tristana*, beginning in 1969.

Viridiana (1961) is an original script written by Buñuel and Julio Alejandro. The protagonist of the film is Viridiana, an innocent young girl who lives in a convent. At the beginning of the film she temporarily leaves the convent to visit her uncle Jaime, whose wife recently died. Viridiana closely resembles her aunt, and Jaime imagines that she is his wife, reincarnated. He desires to marry her so he can hold on to the memory of his dead wife and attempts to rape her, but restrains himself at the last minute and hangs himself the next day. Buñuel used Jaime's character to represent Spain's decay as the Franco regime clings to tradition and the past.⁸⁴ According to Robin Fiddian and Peter Evans, "Jaime's memories are the weight of cultural tradition...still oppressing Spanish society, with even greater authority under Francoism."⁸⁵

The film is also overtly anti-Catholic. After the death of her uncle, Viridiana opens her home as a haven for beggars. In the most controversial scene of the movie, as the beggars engage in acts of debauchery in Viridiana's home; they recreate the image of the Last Supper. The movie won the Golden Palm award at the Cannes Film Festival, but it became a huge embarrassment for Franco. Although approved by the censors, it was criticized by the Vatican for its anti-Catholic message and its recreation of the Last Supper. The film was therefore banned from Spain shortly after its release.

Because of the embarrassment caused by *Viridiana*, Buñuel was unable to film another movie in Spain until 1969, when he began work on *Tristana* (1970). In this film, Buñuel used

⁸⁴ David Stuart Hull, "Review of *Viridiana*," *Film Quarterly* 15, no. 2, (1961-1962): 55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1210287> (accessed March 5).

⁸⁵ Robin W. Fiddian and Peter William Evan, *Challenges to Authority: fiction and film in contemporary Spain* (London: Tamesis books, 1988), 68.

subtle methods to voice his protests against the Franco regime. Galdos's novel tells the story of an independent-minded young woman living under the oppressive rule of her guardian, Don Lope. Don Lope steals Tristana's virginity and jealously controls her, discouraging her from leaving the house. A painter named Horacio falls in love with Tristana and asks her to run away to the country with him, but she refuses to leave Don Lope. She further loses her independence when she contracts a tumor on her leg and is forced to have it amputated. The novel ends with the marriage of Don Lope and Tristana, which permanently condemns Tristana to a traditional female role.

Buñuel markedly changed Galdós's original story in his film. In Buñuel's version, Tristana experiences a brief period of liberation when she runs away with Horacio, but she returns to Don Lope's home shortly before her leg is amputated. At the end of the movie, Don Lope has a heart attack and Tristana essentially murders him by pretending to phone for a doctor. For Buñuel, Don Lope – like Jaime's character in *Viridiana* – represents Spain's decay and its attachment to the past, while Tristana, with her amputated leg, represents “the generation to be maimed by the Civil War.”⁸⁶ *Tristana*, like *Viridiana*, was banned in Spain, as were the films Buñuel made in Mexico, but he nevertheless had an enormous influence on Spanish filmmaking because he “was able to lead Spanish directors past neorealism.”⁸⁷

Influenced by Buñuel, the director Carlos Saura adopted his surrealistic techniques. He also became known as the best director in postwar Spain. Unlike Buñuel, Saura did not go into exile at the outbreak of the war; he lived out the entire Franco period in Spain. He was only four years old at the outbreak of the Civil War and began work as a film director in the 1950s. His first films, *Los golfos* (*The Drifters*; 1959) and *La caza* (*The Hunt*; 1965), were heavily censored.

⁸⁶ Joan Mellen, Review of *Tristana*, *Film Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1970-1971): 54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1211221> (accessed March 5, 2010).

⁸⁷ Higgenbotham, *Spanish Film Under Franco*, 74.

After these films, Saura began to adopt Buñuel's techniques of the "surreal documentary," which used highly metaphorical language and images to confuse the censors.⁸⁸

One of Saura's early works, *La caza (The Hunt)* (1965). It is an allegory in which a rabbit hunt symbolizes the Civil War. The three middle-class hunters in the movie represent Nationalists, while the extreme violence of the hunt symbolizes the cruelty of the Civil War.⁸⁹ Sally Faulkner offers an alternative interpretation of the film. She believes the film exposes "the decline of a dictator and a dictatorship which had outlived its time."⁹⁰ The movie was filmed in the period when Franco had developed Parkinson's disease and was nearing his death. The regime, which had failed to garner support from a new generation, was preoccupied with aging. Thus, the hunters in the film are old men who frequently voice their concerns over aging. The hunters' age contrasts with the youth of Enrique, the brother-in-law of one of the hunters. At the end of the movie, Enrique watches in horror as the three hunters kill one another, symbolizing the death of the Franco regime.

Another of Saura's films, *Ana y los lobos (Ana and the Wolves)*, was released in 1972. It tells the story of María, a foreigner who works as a tutor in the home of a Spanish family. The family lives isolated in a mansion, and their situation serves as an allegory for the Spanish situation. The isolation of the mansion parallels the isolation of Spain and the three brothers living in the house represent the "obsessions in which Spanish culture is rooted."⁹¹ At the end of the movie, the three brothers rape Ana, cut off her hair, and murder her, suggesting that, "like Spain, this devouring family destroys foreign elements which do not fit into its culture."⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid, 77.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 79.

⁹⁰ Sally Faulkner, "Ageing and coming of age in Carlos Saura's *La Caza (The Hunt, 1965)*," *MLN* 120, no. 2 (2005): 467, <http://muse.jhu.edu.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/journals/mln/v120/120.2faulkner.html> (accessed Dec. 7, 2009).

⁹¹ Higgenbotham, *Spanish Film under Franco*, 86.

⁹² Ibid, 87.

So, filmmakers in Spain during the Franco period who wished to step outside the bounds of Francoist culture walked a thin line. They struggled to find a balance between portraying their ideals and criticisms of the regime in their films while at the same time making them acceptable to the censors. This was not an easy task – the failure of many of the early Realist films forced filmmakers to adopt Surrealist techniques. In the end, some excellent films were produced from 1950 to 1975 which successfully kept alive a spirit of resistance in Spain.

Conclusion

Spain, then, was not a “cultural desert” during the Franco period. Franco was unable to create a unified state culture that conformed to the purposes of his regime, and censorship was inconsistent and only partially successful in silencing the opposition. Writers, playwrights and filmmakers in Spain found ways around the censorship and used culture as an outlet to express their dissatisfaction with the Franco regime. They did this by working within the realms of “the possible” – they made their works acceptable for the censors but developed methods to hide subversive messages within them.

One of the major ways they did this – in literature, theater, and film – was through the use of realism. Instead of criticizing the politics of the regime, they presented an objective and realistic image of what Spanish life was like during the Franco period. They also used metaphors, allegories and symbolism, translated their works to different time periods or settings, and presented their stories from the perspective of women and children. Thus, these cultural figures were able to keep a voice of protest alive in Spain by communicating dissident messages to their audiences and readers that censors were unable to detect.

Not only did they keep alive a spirit of protest, but they also produced award-winning works. For example, Camilo José Cela won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his “rich and intensive prose,” Antonio Buero Vallejo was a recipient of the Miguel de Cervantes Prize for his lifetime achievements in literature, and Luis Buñuel won the highest prize at the Cannes Film Festival for *Viridiana*. Antonio Buero Vallejo once said, “It was very difficult to write under Franco, but the results were often outstanding in all fields, not just the theater. When democracy came, there were authors who said that they would now write what they couldn't before. But this was an illusion. Those who were genuine writers made their mark felt under Franco despite the obstacles.”⁹³

Spanish literature and cinema during the Franco period gives compelling insight into the ways in which people survive under the severe repression of an authoritarian regime. At a time when opposition to the state could result in severe consequences, these dissident works provide proof that resistance to the Franco regime continued to exist in Spain. Individuals pushed the limits to express their ideals and principles in their works in spite of dangerous and repressive conditions. Far from the idea that Spain was a “cultural desert,” the innovative techniques these writers and filmmakers developed to overcome the censorship and the excellent works they produced in the midst of a repressive environment prove that culture flourished in Spain during the Franco period.

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⁹³ Antonio Buero Vallejo, interview by Marie-Lise Gazarian Gautier, in *Interviews with Spanish Writers* (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 55.

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