

A HOLLYWOOD HAUTING IN SPAIN: RAZA (1942), REBECCA (1940), AND COMMEMORATION OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

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As Derrida nicely puts it in Specters of Marx, ghosts must be exorcised not in order to chase them away, but in order 'this time to grant them the right [...] to [...] a hospitable memory [...] out of a concern for justice.'

-Jo Labanyi. "History and Hauntology."

The year is 1942. Three years after the Spanish Civil War ended, the country is still divided into two Spains, except the two Spains of the postwar are called the victors and the vanquished, *los vencedores y los vencidos*, the winners and the losers. As the dust clears and Spaniards attempt to find normalcy in their daily lives, Franco's reprisals quickly remind them that the only normalcy in a dictatorship for the losers is one filled with severe hunger and the constant threat of becoming one of the 200,000 men and women murdered after the end of the war (Richards 30). Entrenched in the immediate postwar, the year 1942 is the year in which the names of two films shared the marquee: *Raza* (1942) from director José Luis Sáenz de Heredia and Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (released in 1940 in the U.S., 1942 in Spain).¹

During these times of political and social repression, the cinema was the great respite of postwar Spain for the public at large, offering warmth in the winter and cool in the summer as a widely available escape from the weather as well as the "asphyxiating cultural climate" (Bosch 113).² However,

¹ Although *Rebecca* was censored upon release in Spain, there exists little record of what exactly was cut from the film. After viewing the seven reels of *Rebecca* at the Filmoteca Española, I can say that this version is more or less faithfully dubbed in Spanish and no scenes are cut. However, Spanish film critic J. Cobos wrote in the magazine *Film Ideal* in 1959 of *Rebecca*, "la *Rebecca* que además de dos "c" tiene otras cosas que no vimos aquí" (Cobos 36). This alludes to some censored dialogue and/or scenes that are included in the official version available at the Filmoteca Española.

² Young couples would often use the darkness of a movie theater to hide the affection that they could not show freely on the street. In a 1942 report by "El Bloque contra la inmoralidad pública de Zaragoza", the

with his rise to power, Francisco Franco gained control over this incredible cultural presence as part of his goal to disseminate and ingrain a "tendentious image of Spain's imperial past as a model for its present" (Graham 237).³ Franco established this control through censorship and through an incentivized system for film production. Films, both domestic as well as imports from abroad, were censored by the Junta Superior de Censura (Superior Censorship Committee) and later by another censorship board manned by members of the Catholic Church, a powerful entity in postwar Spain given Franco's drive for *nacionalcatolicismo* (national-Catholicism) (Bosch 121).⁴ For Spanish films, the censorship process began with the script and continued in post-production with the option to cut scenes and control over publicity materials including posters and advertisements in periodicals (Gubern, *La censura* 81). The censors typically cut scenes that included any mention of the vanquished Republicans and their goals, communism, freemasonry, strikes, class struggles, sexual content, and democracy (Bosch). Similar restrictions were placed on imported films, which were required to be redubbed in Spanish (Gubern, *La censura* 81).⁵ Aside from direct censorship, Franco encouraged "patriotic films exalting military values or the glory of Spain's imperial past" and those films that

Zaragoza theaters were described as being filled with "las parejas que con la mayor desvergüenza e impudor daban rienda suelta a sus instintos carnales, favorecidos por la casi completa oscuridad" (Gracia, "Selección" 399).

³ In issue no. 2 of the *Cuadernos de la Academia*, Joan M. Minguet Batllori aptly describes the effect of Franco's fascination with film in the title to his contribution to the publication: "La regeneración del cine como hecho cultural durante el primer franquismo" (Minguet Batllori 187).

⁴ In his 1981 book *La censura: Función política y ordenamiento jurídico bajo el franquismo (1936-1975)*, Spanish film historian Román Gubern comments on the later break between the clerical censorship and the Junta Superior: "El mismo año (1947) ... se produjo también el escándalo del estreno de *Gilda*, de Charles Vidor y con Rita Hayworth, ruidosamente proscrita o desaconsejada desde púlpitos y colegios religiosos, y que confirmó el relativo divorcio entre la Junta Superior de Orientación Cinematográfica y los sectores más integristas del clero" (Gubern, *La censura* 104). In 1950, the Catholic Church created its own censorship board, the Oficina Nacional Clasificadora de Espectáculos, which ranked each film based on its morality. The ranks were 1 (authorized for everyone), 2, 3, 4, and 4R (the most dangerous) (Rodríguez 121).

⁵ For instance, censors redubbed the film *Mogambo* (1953) so that Grace Kelly's relationship with her husband became a brother-sister relationship. Thus, Kelly's escapades with Clark Gable's character were no longer adulterous (Bosch 121).

demonstrated such values were awarded import licenses for American films (Bosch 119). This made it more profitable to rush through the production of a film that satiated Franco's ideological fix in order to gain lucrative import permits for Hollywood films that the public would devour. Although Spanish audiences flocked to the release of Hollywood films, the fascist film reviewers at *Primer Plano*, a Spanish film magazine founded in 1940, "veía en el cine de Hollywood una muestra abyecta de decadentismo liberal" (Gubern, *La censura* 62). *El Generalísimo*, as Franco is also known, exercised great power over the film industry, but, as British hispanist Helen Graham reminds us, "the regime's intent regarding such cultural forms is not ... the same thing as ascertaining their impact on the constituencies of Spaniards consuming them" (Graham 238). Thus, Franco's regime used Hollywood cinema as one of these cultural forms, but the regime's intent of placating the masses with mindless entertainment is not the same as the actual effect these films had on the audience. Franco's goal was autarky, a complete Iberian self-sufficiency, but his drive for cinematographic autarky actually resulted in a kind of dependence on imported Hollywood films.

In his essay on the power of poetry to reassemble scattered emotions and experiences, critic John Berger says that poetry has the ability to speak to the "immediate wound" of trauma (Berger 450). This study will demonstrate how the Hollywood film *Rebecca* "speaks to the immediate wound" of those Republican losers living in the immediate postwar more so than *Raza*, which more closely portrays the reality of the winners from the war. Specifically, although both films deal with death, remembrance, and commemoration, *Raza* is a propagandistic, state-sponsored spectacle of military triumph of good over evil. I am interested in how a facet of this spectacle of military triumph is the spectacle of death and mourning of Nationalist fallen. *Raza* only commemorates the fallen Nationalists from the war, while *Rebecca* depicts a haunting, something far more familiar to the Republicans and the way in which they must silently coexist with their dead in the postwar. Film critics, including Spaniard Esteve Riambau, are currently attempting to explain the unusual success of *Rebecca*. Riambau names in the magazine *Dirigido por...* several factors in the success of *Rebecca*: "La popularidad de la novela – un best-seller de Daphne du Maurier..., el peso específico de los actores -Laurence Olivier y Joan Fontaine- y el éxito comercial del propio film han sido factores que quizá hayan contribuido a

empañar la importancia de este film" (Riambau 63). I offer in this investigation another explanation for the immense success of this Hollywood film abroad in Spain. I argue that the Republican audience, a public severely traumatized following three years of civil war and the continued reprisals of Francoism, appropriated *Rebecca* as a vehicle of commemoration of their dead, making it such an "éxito extraordinario" in Spain upon its release, according to Fernando González in his reflection on the Falangist film magazine *Primer Plano* (González 113).⁶ My analysis will reveal why this defeated audience would identify more with *Rebecca* and the mysterious death of the title character than with *Raza* and its heroic, martyr-like deaths.

On January 5th, 1942, *Raza* premiered in Spain with its script written by Franco himself, giving historians one of the more obvious examples of a dictator literally rewriting the history of his rise to power (Gubern, *1936-1939* 98). *Raza* serves as part of Franco's effort to smooth out the wrinkles of the war, annihilating certain narratives, demonizing the Republican "rojos," and glorifying the deaths of his fallen troops; in short, *Raza* is Franco's commemoration of the war. In his introduction to the edited volume *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John Gillis states that commemorative activity "involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation" (Gillis 5). Franco utilized the bloody nature of the war as well as this power to rewrite the history of the war in an effort to commemorate the Nationalist war dead through *Raza*. In his 1990 account of the dictatorship, Paul Preston cites several of Franco's commemorations of the war and its dead, including that "the war-ravaged wreckage of the town of Belchite was left standing as a Nationalist monument" (Preston, *The Politics* 44). *Raza* serves a similar purpose in that it too takes the ravages and deaths of the war and memorializes them.

The film also acts as commemoration because the ties that the deaths of Franco's forces have to Christianity presuppose that the souls of these

⁶ González goes on in his article "El discurso sobre la técnica en *Primer Plano*, 1940-1945" to cite reviewer J.L. Gómez Tello in *Primer Plano*, who said that "películas como ... la misma *Rebeca* son ... heréticas, superficiales y materialistas" (González 126). These were typical critiques of both Hollywood film and American society. It is also important to note that González cites *Rebecca* six times in his article, each time noting the film's immense Spanish success.

men will far outlive the material world, even the celluloid on which *Raza* resides. The Nationalists die as martyrs in the film, which alludes to the reverence for martyrdom in Spanish fascism. Spanish fascists would often commemorate the dead by referencing how they lived on, including how when “the names of the fallen, when called in roll, were to be answered by the voices of their comrades shouting, ‘Present!’” (Vincent 76). According to Mary Vincent in her 1999 study on masculinity and martyrdom in the Spanish Civil War, death for Franco was tied irrevocably to “the eternal glory of martyrdom” (Vincent 89).⁷ Therefore, by depicting and making eternal through film the deaths of these martyrs, Franco is commemorating the Nationalist dead. This commemoration is essential for the regime’s goal of justifying the Spanish Civil War as well as the continued detainment and execution after the war of countless Spaniards with political affiliations that Franco found disagreeable. By commemorating the deaths in *Raza* as Christian, martyr-like deaths, Franco is justifying the Spanish Civil War as a Christian war, another Crusade, in which a good Christian would side with the Nationalist victors.⁸

As the opening credits fade in and claim that *Raza* is the “gran superproducción española,” a series of images appears in the background showing battles during the Crusades (Ra1, Ra2), supporting the assertion of Román Gubern that “*Raza* pretendía ser el modelo de ‘cine patriótico’ legitimador de la Cruzada que el régimen necesitaba para su propaganda” (Gubern, 1936-1939 100). These images of battle and death are the first in a multitude of images and themes that solidify a connection between Nationalism and Catholicism. This connection also implies that the death of a Nationalist is a Christian death, the martyr-like death full of sacrifice in the name of defending Catholic Spain in the new Crusade: the Spanish Civil War.

⁷ “Cara al sol”, the official anthem of the Falange, the fascist organization founded by José Primo de Rivera that worked alongside Franco during and after the war, references and glorifies martyrdom.

⁸ A key aspect of Nationalist civil war ideology is that the Spanish Civil War was a crusade. In fact, after the war, the Catholic Church gave Franco “su cobertura moral, como vencedor en una *guerra santa*, en una cruzada contra el comunismo” (Monlau 42-43). According to Stanley Payne in his detailed 1999 chronicle *Fascism in Spain*, during the dictatorship, the connection between the Catholic Church and the regime remained strong (Payne 401).



Ra1



Ra2

The film tells the story of the Churruca family, a traditional Catholic family, through fifty years of Spanish history, ending with the family's participation in the Spanish Civil War: José as the Nationalist hero, Pedro, the brother who betrays his family to fight as a Republican, and Jaime the monk murdered by the Republicans. The roles of these three brothers establish their ties to Christianity and, more specifically, the betrayal of Pedro establishes the inability of Republicans to recognize the beauty of martyrdom; thus, they are undeserving of such commemoration. After the opening credits, the story begins in 1898 as the father, Don Pedro Churruca, a naval officer, returns from the Spanish-American War to his family, who stop first at the church to thank God for Don Pedro's safe return (Ra3). The following scene finds Churruca regaling his children with tales of ancestors and their sacrifice throughout the family's naval tradition (Ra4). He tells of his own grandfather and how "fue de hermosa la muerte" of this ancestor who died in the name of something larger than himself: his country.



Ra3



Ra4

It is important to my argument to recognize that all four males in this scene, Don Pedro Churruca, son José, and son Pedro as well as newborn son Jaime will all die by the film's end. Since these protagonists represent the various Nationalist and Republican (in the case of Pedro) archetypes that Franco's ideology propagated, my focus on *Raza* is on the various death scenes of these family members and how the deaths are portrayed. What does Franco as scriptwriter want the death of each family member to mean? I will also focus on the over-the-top connections drawn to Christianity, calling upon the themes of salvation, resurrection, and redemption that are apparent in the death scenes. By connecting each family member's death to Christianity, the film commemorates them as martyrs. This cinematographic commemoration equates to a proper burial in which the Nationalist dead are recognized for their sacrifices and are given a final resting place in the nation's memory as well as its cemeteries.

Even before the chronology of the film reaches the Spanish Civil War, we find our first depiction of death as martyrdom in the death of the father Don Pedro. The scene is the chaotic naval battle of Cuba, during which the

captain of the ship assures Pedro, "Del nuestro [sacrificio] de hoy, saldrán las glorias de mañana," implying that the death awaiting Pedro in the next scene will be a death of sacrifice for the glory of Spain. At the exact moment of Pedro's death, the dissonant, chaotic music accompanying the battle stops, replaced by a quieter, more humble music. Pedro receives a fatal wound and, in his final moments, takes the crucifix hanging from his neck, kisses it, and gazes into the heavens as his eyes close and the screen fades to black (Ra5). The next image that fades in is the mourning wife, wearing a cross that acts as a graphic match to Pedro's crucifix from the scene before (Ra6). Based on the quotation from the ship's captain, Pedro's death is in the name of Spain and since Pedro solemnly clutches the cross and the next scene shows his family's Christian mourning practices, the audience understands that this man is commemorated as a martyr. Just as he showed his children a scrapbook of his ancestors and told their tales of heroism, he too will find his rightful place in the annals of history.



Ra5



Ra6

As the Churruca family confronts the Spanish Civil War, the son José shares his father's fate, except the death of the son is depicted in the fashion of the greatest example of martyrdom in the Christian faith: the death of

Jesus Christ. Despite José's heroism and prowess, Republican forces capture him and schedule his execution. Before his execution, he receives his last rites and, when called to face the firing squad, he rises as if triumphant, as proud as his father was before his death. When he is placed against the wall, José is offered a blindfold to shield him from what awaits, but he rejects it and even reveals his medals before screaming "¡Arriba, España!" (Ra7). When his partner, Marisol, receives his body, she is astounded to feel heat emanating from José's skin (Ra8) and, after several weeks of recuperation, José miraculously survives his execution. This resurrection from the dead is blatantly Christ-like, something that Marisol acknowledges when she describes it as impossible "sin la intervención de Dios." This plot point is the most unconcealed example of scriptwriter Franco tying the Church to Nationalism and tying Nationalist deaths to martyrdom. This connection that Franco establishes is particularly significant, because he is also establishing the intervention of God in his actions as leader of Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War and as *Caudillo* of Spain in the postwar.



Ra7



Ra8

With the exception of the brother Pedro, the only exposure that the

audience receives to Republicans is during one scene in which a ruthless band of anarchist militiamen storms a monastery and leads the monks to a beach and to their executions. The acts committed by the soldiers in the scene reflect Franco's demonization of Republicans who fought in the war. As the band of combatants bursts through the front doors of the monastery, the editing changes to a series of quick cuts that add frenzy to the already chaotic scene.⁹ Republican soldiers break religious figurines (Ra9), drink communion wine, and eat communion wafers (Ra10), all the while sinisterly laughing at their exploits. In such stark contrast, the friar Jaime Churruca calmly shields a wide-eyed young boy, the poster-child for innocence, from the onslaught. His efforts are in vain as the monks are captured and led to a beach. The only sound as they journey to the beach is the diegetic chanting of the monks. They form a line along the shore and calmly share a final prayer before a Republican flagrantly says, "Sal cuando quieras" and the monks fall dead to the sand (Ra11). The chanting of the monks from before the execution is then replaced with non-diegetic choral singing of young children performing something typical of a Catholic funeral. Thus, this scene not only portrays the Republican soldiers as vile, Godless beings, but it also gives these monks proper burial; although this is not a literal burial, the camera and the score are paying respect to the dead. This is significant because the film makes a point to properly bury and commemorate those sympathetic to Franco, which included the Catholic Church.



Ra9

⁹ For another use of quick cuts in editing to create a feeling of chaos and instability, see the famous "shower scene" in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).



Ra10



Ra11

The final son of the Churruca family who has yet to encounter death is the traitor Pedro and his death only comes after he has repudiated his Republican involvement. The seeds of Pedro's betrayal had been planted early on in the film during his childhood. During his father's expositions on the beauty and glory of death in battle, Pedro responds, "No comprendo que el morir pueda ser hermoso." This scene, according to Gubern, serves "no sólo para exaltar las virtudes de la 'raza' ... , sino también para reiterar el carácter odioso del pequeño Pedro, que ni comprende la belleza de la muerte heroica" (Gubern, *Raza* 24). Also in this scene, the script correlates Pedro's character and greed, for he asks not of his ancestor's bravery in battle, but asks, "¿Fue rico?" In this short exchange, the script establishes that the son Pedro, the future Republican during the civil war, is the "other" of the family, just as all Republicans were the "other" of the Franco regime. However, in Pedro's final scene, he is confronted at the end of the war by his Republican comrades and accused of betraying them. He admits his guilt and the camera passes by the shoulders of his accusers, including an overweight sweaty man who is exemplary of the archetypal Republican in Nationalist ideology. As the

camera reaches Pedro, it films him from below (Ra12), placing him in a position of power, since he is now a reformed man. As his eyes grow larger with excitement, coinciding with his narration of how the Nationalist forces will prevail, a patch of lighting highlights his eyes and images of flags are overlain on top of this scene. Two quick cuts follow, revealing Pedro's fate: first, a cut to the barrels of several guns and then a cut to Pedro's shadow as he is executed and killed. The character of Pedro can now die and be commemorated because he is no longer Republican; he has been saved as if through a spiritual awakening and religious conversion.



Ra12

April 1st, 1939, the Día de la Victoria, marks the end of the Spanish Civil War and the celebratory military parade through the streets of Madrid on May 19th, 1939 gave director José Luis Sáenz de Heredia the unique opportunity to combine actual footage from the event with the footage filmed for *Raza*. As the Churruca family celebrates the Nationalist victory parade, the film overlays images of the procession of soldiers with images of the various deaths seen throughout the film, including those of the father Pedro Churruca and the monks murdered by Republican soldiers. By placing these overlaid images during the Día de la Victoria commemorative act, Sáenz de Heredia creates a remembrance of the film's fallen on the same grand scale as the parade. In a way, the fallen members of the Churruca family are being commemorated just as deceased fascists were often memorialized during roll calls; by overlaying images of the dead with their fellow Nationalist soldiers marching now in formation past Franco, the film is calling, "*iPresentes!*" for them. It is essential, however, to note that every death shown on screen is that of a Nationalist. There are no depictions of Republicans dying because

Raza is a tribute only to the Nationalist fallen. The message that Franco propagates both as dictator and scriptwriter is that only the victors, those that died as martyrs for the Catholic nation that Franco defended, deserved to be etched forever into the annals of history and memory.¹⁰

The film *Raza* is a "commemorative activity" (Gillis 5) that Franco created after the Spanish Civil War, but while writing the script, Franco was concocting another commemoration for the Nationalist dead: the Valley of the Fallen (*el Valle de los Caídos*). Although the Spanish government did not inaugurate this monument until 1959, Franco formulated the ideas and designs while writing *Raza* and the shared intentions of the two larger-than-life, state-sponsored commemorations are readily apparent (Gubern, *Raza* 8). The striking hilltop presence of the Valley of the Fallen is marked by a giant cross resting atop a cavernous mausoleum (Va1) inside of which would eventually lay the remains of Franco himself and José Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange, the fascist organization that collaborated with Franco during and after the war. The monument claims to honor all the dead of the Spanish Civil War, but its strict ties to Catholicism and the reverence given to Franco and Primo de Rivera show that this monument is an example of a commemorative activity that distorts history. Like *Raza*, the Valley of the Fallen may be aptly described in the terms expressed by John Gillis – "[it] appear[s] consensual when [it is] in fact the product of processes of intense contest [and] struggle" – because the monument was built with the coerced labor of Republican prisoners of war. Also, the Valley of the Fallen commemorates the Nationalist deaths "en la mitología del nacional-catolicismo y en el imaginario colectivo de quienes se consideran justos vencedores de la contienda," according to Fernando Olmeda in his recently published book *El Valle de los Caídos: Una memoria de España* (Olmeda 20-21). During the dictatorship, the Valley of the Fallen acted as a commemoration reserved strictly for the victors; the losers of the war had

¹⁰ In 1994, the Filmoteca Española and Ferrán Alberich released a documentary entitled *Corten veintidós metros de chinos*, which was a compilation of scenes cut as a part of Francoist censorship. One such cut was part of the famous speech in *Patton* (1970) delivered by the title character in front of an enormous U.S. flag. Based on my study of Francoist censorship, I suggest that perhaps parts of the scene were cut due to Patton's grotesque depictions of the gore of war, his references to defeating the Nazis, who were allied with Franco during World War II, or due to his opening statement, "Now, I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country." This statement is completely contrary to the idea of the "muerte gloriosa" and full of sacrifice that Franco and *Raza* propagate.

little freedom to speak of their dead loved ones, much less commemorate them in a similarly grandiose, public fashion.



Va1

This begs the question: What film was there for the defeated to treat the “immediate wound” of the postwar of the 1940s? To answer this question, I rely on several theories of audience reception. In his 2003 contribution to *The Audience Studies Reader*, “Understanding Popular Culture,” media scholar John Fiske describes an audience as “a user not simply consuming a commodity but reworking it, treating it not as a completed object to be accepted passively, but as a cultural resource to be used” (Fiske 112). I find this particularly useful, because it allows me to establish that a film audience viewing a film, consuming that commodity, will do more than simply watch, but will rework it and use it in a subjective manner. In an earlier study *Cinema and Sentiment*, cinema and culture critic Charles Affron presented the idea of audience consumption in terms of films, describing them as a “meaning-generating body of art” (Affron 1). What, then, determines the meaning that movies generate? According to Affron, viewers will recognize and “respond to the medium when its conditions echo something of their feelings and their experience” (Affron 2). Simply put, says Affron, audiences identify with films, their images, characters, themes, etc., and generate some personal meaning based on their identification. Affron goes on to say that film “elicit[s], in many viewers, passionate reading activity” (Affron 3). Ben Highmore reiterates this idea in his study of Michel de Certeau’s theories of the everyday, saying that consumers of culture not only make do with everyday culture, they “[make] with this culture (through

acts of appropriation and re-employment)" (Highmore 13). Therefore, the audience identification with the motion pictures shown in Spain during the dictatorship, their "passionate reading activity," would be based on "their feelings and their experiences" of the Spanish postwar and Franco's repression with all its hunger, fear, and loss. The 2004 collection of essays *Hollywood Abroad* also informs my theoretical framework, because author Richard Maltby states that Hollywood movies in different cultures take a complex new form that "renders [the films] open to reinterpretation within the cultural matrix of the host culture" (Maltby 2). I plan to look specifically at this "passionate reading activity" in terms of the "cultural matrix of the host culture" of postwar Spain.

Following the theory of Charles Affron, a film that the *vencidos* identified with would be one that "echo[es] something of their feelings and experiences," their harsh reality (Affron 2). Due in part to the watchful eye of government censors, the Spanish movie-going public did not find this film in a Spanish production, but rather a Hollywood production: *Rebecca*. This film, the first American production of director Alfred Hitchcock, premiered in the United States in 1940 and Spain in 1942 and is based on the 1938 novel of the same name by British author Daphne du Maurier. It is important to note that the film's plot has nothing to do with the Spanish Civil War; it tells the story of a shy young woman played by Joan Fontaine working as the paid companion to a headstrong older American woman. On their trip to Monte Carlo, our female protagonist meets and falls in love with Max DeWinter, the millionaire who whisks her away from her humble, seemingly miserable life to his estate Manderley. Despite the fairytale circumstances for this young woman, now known only as "the second Mrs. DeWinter," the first Mrs. DeWinter, Rebecca, who died under mysterious circumstances before the audience's point of entry into the plot, exists in Manderley as a ghost "whose Gothic presence haunts this film with a supernatural power," according to Brigitte Peucker in her contribution to *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays* (Peucker 149).¹¹ How could this film possibly reflect the reality of the

¹¹ The character of the second Mrs. DeWinter, portrayed by Joan Fontaine, is never given a first name throughout the entire 131 minute runtime of the film. This calls into question what (if any) identity this woman has. She has no name, we know little of her background, and her time in Manderley is spent living up to Rebecca's precedent. As a result, some film critics believe that the 2nd Mrs. De Winter becomes a surrogate for Rebecca.

defeated Republicans of the Spanish Civil War and the manner in which they remember and mourn their dead? *Rebecca* depicts a haunting akin to the kind that existed in Spain, a country haunted by the ghosts of the Republican dead.

It is important to fully define "haunting" in this context. The critic Avery Gordon defines a haunting in her book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* as "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (Gordon xvi). This social violence makes itself known in the form of a ghost, a memory or a reminder of that social injustice that survives repression and bubbles back to the surface. One of *Rebecca's* protagonists, Max, reiterates this conception of ghosts when he says that they have a way of "popping out at you just as you're trying most desperately to forget." These are not ghosts of the paranormal kind, but metaphorical ghosts in a society that result from "improperly buried bodies" and oftentimes the indiscretions of war and dictatorship (Gordon 16). These ghosts create a space with a "merging of ... the dead and the living, the past and the present" in which they demand justice (Gordon 24). In the case of postwar Spain, the social injustices are clear: the regime's continued killing based on suspicion and loose political allegiances, the dumping of countless bodies into unmarked graves, and the complete denial of public and cultural expression for the losers of the war to share their motivations in the war and to share the fates of their fallen or "disappeared" family members.

Gordon cites specific characteristics of a haunting that I find particularly useful for my reading of *Rebecca*. The first, that "the ghost imports a charged strangeness into the place or sphere it is haunting," refers to the effect that this ghost has on the world of the living (Gordon 63). Much of Gordon's book concerns how the living and the dead co-mingle within the same space. Postwar Spain came to be such a space, because the *vencidos* were forced to physically co-mingle with the dead in the form of unmarked mass graves that peppered the Spanish landscape. The surviving *vencidos* also emotionally and mentally co-mingled with the dead, because the regime's seizure of interpretive power forced the losers to mourn their dead silently. The second characteristic that I cite alludes to the reason for the ghost's presence, since the ghost is "primarily a symptom of what is missing," which she says usually represents a loss (Gordon 63). In Spain, the

ghosts represent the missing history of the Republicans in Franco's grand narrative of the war.¹² Gordon informs my understanding of postwar Spain, because during the postwar, the *vencidos* had to silently grapple with the recent trauma of the war and mourn their dead; this silence demonstrated that something was missing: their voice and agency in the public sphere. Gordon's theory similarly functions at the level of plot in *Rebecca* with the film's two protagonists, Max and the 2nd Mrs. De Winter. In a 1960 interview with Spanish film magazine *Film Ideal*, Alfred Hitchcock, speaking generally about his films, said that he wanted his typical audience to have "la impresión de que esta misma historia puede ocurrirle mañana" (Hitchcock 6). He went on, saying, "Si se quiere que el lector o el espectador sustituyan inconscientemente al héroe, porque la verdad es que la gente sólo se interesa por sí misma o por las historias que pueden afectarles" (Hitchcock 6). If we follow Hitchcock's theory that audiences are only interested in a film if the stories affect them, then, looking at the immense Spanish success of *Rebecca*, we can say that Spanish audiences were deeply affected by the film. I propose that the Spanish filmgoer was deeply affected by *Rebecca* because it depicts a haunting according to Gordon's theory. To reveal the aforementioned characteristics of a haunting as seen in *Rebecca*, I trace the two protagonists of the film, the two foci of audience identification: Max and the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter.

The audience immediately identifies with the film's protagonist, the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter, and she leads us into the "place or sphere" of the haunting: Manderley. As she and Max approach Manderley for her first visit, a subjective shot through the car's windshield reveals this larger-than-life mansion, accompanied by a larger-than-life explosion of grandiose music in Franz Waxman's score. The cut back to her wide eyes and fearful expression reveal that she already senses there is something to dread. As the doors open, the whole staff of the house awaits in the cavernous great hall, which is built by combining the actual set and matte paintings. The head of the staff and former mistress of Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers, floats into the frame just

¹² The final qualification that Gordon outlines, that "the ghost is alive, so to speak," refers to how we cope with the ghosts and the lasting effects that these ghosts have on the people who coexist with them (Gordon 63). I chose to exclude this third characteristic in my analysis of *Rebecca*, because I found it more illuminative to trace the film's two protagonists, which naturally led to discussion of the first two characteristics.

as the music turns dark and ominous.¹³ This introduction to the mansion immediately establishes that the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter will not face an easy transition into this sphere in which the haunting will take place.

As she explores the labyrinth that is Manderley, the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter first encounters the ghost of Rebecca through whispers of the past from the staff, especially Mrs. Danvers. The 2nd Mrs. DeWinter stumbles throughout the house, portrayed as a child-like figure due to the high placement of doorknobs in the set design (Re1) and through forced perspective in a shot with butler Frith (Re2). She often stumbles into reminders of Rebecca, either in the stationary in the morning room which still carries "R deW" or in conversations with members of the staff, who reveal little of Rebecca. When Max's sister visits, she explains to the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter that the staff, especially Mrs. Danvers, "simply adored Rebecca." At this moment, Fontaine turns her head sharply to the left, creating a profile in the frame. Her face remains lit as the light in the background dims, showing her isolation (Re3). How exactly is she isolated? She is isolated because she is the only person in the house who is haunted. This profile comes precisely as the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter is reminded once again of Rebecca and how Rebecca fulfilled so well the role of lady of Manderley. Like Max's sister, each new acquaintance is a function of Rebecca, someone whose connection to the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter is only through Rebecca. In one especially eerie scene, she ventures into Rebecca's old room in the west wing and the audience hears the non-diegetic sound of a wheezing organ.¹⁴ The housekeeper Mrs. Danvers, who had the most intimate relationship with Rebecca and whose presence in itself is as eerie as any ghost, enters the bedroom and says, "Sometimes I think she comes back here" and that Rebecca is present in "not

¹³ In describing three of Hitchcock's female characters, author Boris Izaguirre reiterates this description of Mrs. Danvers' manner of walking: "Como la señora Danvers en *Rebeca* o *Marnie* después de un robo, Madeleine no anda: se desliza, flota. Toda ella es una aparición" (Izaguirre 79). It is interesting to compare Mrs. Danvers to a ghost, since Rebecca is so obviously a ghostly presence and since Mrs. Danvers was Rebecca's closest confidante.

¹⁴ This wheezing organ calls to mind the wheezing organ in the Hollywood film *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) from director Billy Wilder. Its sound is used to exemplify the age and out-datedness of Norma Desmond's mansion. A future analysis of this film would prove interesting; its main character, former silent film star Norma Desmond, is obsessed with the past and her parasitic relationship with young screenwriter Joe Gillis is an eerie "merging...of the past and the present" to use Avery Gordon's terms when she discusses ghosts.

just this room, all the rooms." Mrs. Danvers presents pieces of clothing and a negligee that Rebecca wore, caressing the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter's cheek with one of them and later imitating how she would comb Rebecca's hair by miming the activity with the helpless new wife. Mrs. Danvers is forcing the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter into Rebecca's identity, just as she later will manipulate her into wearing a dress that Rebecca once wore. The ghost of Rebecca is so powerful that it not only is present in Manderley, but it begins to consume the identity of the woman who survives her. Just like the film audience in postwar Spain, the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter is haunted by this ghost from the past that has returned to share some untold truth.



Re1



Re2



Re3

Our second protagonist, Max DeWinter, knows the truth of Rebecca's mysterious death, which tortures him throughout the film. His torture is evident in the first images of Laurence Olivier as Max standing atop a cliff in the south of France. Cinematographer George Barnes provides us with a beautiful shot from behind Max as he stares down into the water below, the waves crashing like the tortured thoughts crashing in his head (Re4). Luckily, our female lead enters just in time to save him from whatever fate he considered and, the next time we see Max, he is the jovial bachelor and smooth millionaire who frequents Monte Carlo. This juxtaposition of Max's two drastically different moods creates two Maxes: the Max tortured by the truth that only he knows, but can't reveal, and the Max who is suave enough to woo Joan Fontaine's character within the first twenty minutes of the film. At Manderley, it is forbidden for anyone to say anything about Rebecca, because it will cause the emergence of the tortured Max. For example, at a dinner with the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter, Max's sister, and Max's brother-in-law, the latter asks of the new wife's hobbies. When she says she doesn't sail, he replies, "Thank goodness for that." Because the official (but not the true) cause of Rebecca's death was drowning while she was out sailing, the whole table pauses in silence and looks to Max, who stares off in reflection. Everyone present at the table thinks he's tortured simply by the fact that Rebecca died, but his torture goes further; he is tortured because he alone knows the truth, but he cannot tell it without threatening his own freedom.



Re4

Everything changes in one pivotal scene in which divers off the shores near Manderley discover a boat containing Rebecca's body. This cathartic exhumation scene ends the haunting of the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter and the torture of Max. The 2nd Mrs. DeWinter runs down to the shore (Re5), appearing as a kind of ghostly doubling of the first wife as she searches for Max and discovers that Rebecca's body has been exhumed from the ship. She finds Max in the boathouse, stoic with the realization that the long-silenced truth of Rebecca's death is being exhumed with her body. After prodding from his wife, Max shares the story of a death that has haunted him throughout the film so far: Rebecca did not drown, but was accidentally killed by Max. She confronted him in the boathouse, alluding to her possible pregnancy by another man, goading Max into unleashing his temper. When he did, he pushed her back and she fell onto a piece of ship's tackle, dying instantly.¹⁵ During Max's description of the night's events, Hitchcock's camera gives Rebecca's ghost physical embodiment. Max narrates the final moments of Rebecca's life and the camera imitates the movements that Rebecca made. For example, Max tells of her sitting on the sofa and we see the empty sofa; Max says that she got up and the camera immediately rises while the frame still remains empty (Re6). Nevertheless, the camera is giving the ghost of Rebecca physical embodiment in this scene. Tania Modleski remarks in her examination of femininity in Hitchcock films that "not only is Rebecca's absence stressed [in this scene], but we are made to experience it as an

15 The plot as it exists in the book has Max shooting Rebecca. Since the Hollywood Production Code required that anyone who murders their spouse be punished legally, this murder was censored and replaced with Max and Rebecca arguing, followed by her accidental fall on a nearby piece of ship equipment (Spoto 213).

active force" (Modleski 53). This "active force" is the "charged strangeness" that Avery Gordon described in her definition of haunting. Franz Waxman's score takes part in the exhumation of Rebecca, because the theme associated with Rebecca, which the composer calls "highly emotional and haunting," is played throughout the scene and in a "ghostly pianissimo" when the camera follows Rebecca's movements from that fateful night (qtd. in Sullivan 67).



Re5



Re6

How can we tell that the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter is no longer haunted after the exhumation scene? Previously, the presence of Rebecca in the physical realm persisted in the physical relationship between Max and the second Mrs. DeWinter. Max says that their romance suffered because "[Rebecca's] shadow has been between us," demonstrated in the lack of a kiss and any noticeable physical contact between the newlyweds. Only after the

exhumation scene do Max and his new wife have their first onscreen kiss, coming approximately an hour and forty minutes into the film and lasting for a full twelve seconds as the camera pans back. This implies that the truth of Rebecca's death lifts the weight of mystery and trauma from their marriage. During their kiss, Max tells the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter, "It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look I loved. Won't ever come back. I killed that when I told you about Rebecca. It's gone." This is another sign that she is no longer haunted; the helpless, child-like woman we saw earlier struggling through Manderley, is gone. Although the film's opening line from the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter ("Last night, I dreamt I went to Manderley again.") seems to suggest a continued haunting, I believe that this is a mere remembrance of the past and that Rebecca's haunting is indeed over. How do we know that the truth in the missing story no longer tortures our other protagonist, Max? Although he continues to exhibit frustration, Max's frustration is now derived from the fact that he may go to jail. Previously in the film, Max would seize with terror and thought whenever someone made a passing reference to Rebecca or the way she died. After the exhumation scene, the entire town is talking about the controversial discovery of Rebecca's body, but Max does not become catatonic with despair as he had before at mentions of Rebecca.

As Spaniards sat traumatized in theaters after the civil war viewing *Rebecca*, Hitchcock's intent, following his aforementioned interview in *Film Ideal*, was that any audience would identify with his film. Because of Hitchcock's goal of audience identification with the protagonists of the film and because the film's "conditions echo something of their feelings and experience," as Charles Affron said, the Spanish audience comprised of the losers of the Spanish Civil War identifies with Max and the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter. The 2nd Mrs. DeWinter is initially haunted by the ghost of the dead, but she gets relief; her mystery is solved when the silence is broken. The body of Rebecca is exhumed and the power she holds over Manderley is destroyed with her exhumation as well as with Mrs. Danvers's impromptu exorcism of the mansion.¹⁶ Max at first is tortured and cannot share the truth

¹⁶ Rebecca in fact had cancer and had manipulated Max into thinking she was pregnant, angering him and causing him to push her. However, authorities conducting the coroner's inquest take this as evidence that Rebecca's death was a suicide. Upon hearing this revelation, Mrs. Danvers realizes that Max will not be punished and burns Manderley to the ground. The last image we see is the "R" in Rebecca's

of Rebecca's death, but the exhumation requires he share the story and his torture ends. This kind of relief could never have happened for the losers of the war who sat in the audience. The exhumation scene marks the point at which the film no longer mirrors the "feelings and...experience" of the losers, but goes a step further into the realm of what is desired. The end of the film thus provides a catharsis for this audience. The Franco dictatorship would not even let them publicly grieve their war dead or those killed in reprisals of the postwar. These *vencidos* also lived with the mystery surrounding the final resting place of their loved ones, those war dead and disappeared who were executed and carelessly tossed into mass graves. This film struck a nerve, because it gave the audience the catharsis that they could never have under Franco.

This begs the question as to what is necessary to provide the kind of catharsis afforded to Max and the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter. If, as in *Rebecca*, it involves exhumation, then it must involve the unmarked mass graves, the place where ghosts have physical presence in postwar Spain. While the Nationalist dead were ceremoniously laid to rest in cemeteries and later in the prestigious Valley of the Fallen, many of the Republican postwar dead and disappeared were tossed in mass graves. Journalist Giles Tremlett said of the mass graves in his chronicle *Ghosts of Spain: Travels Through Spain and its Silent Past* that "there were graves all over the place" and that "Spain was sitting on ... tens of thousands of such corpses" (Tremlett 6-7). Similarly, in her article "Is Spain Recovering its Memory? Breaking the *Pacto del Olvido*," scholar Madeleine Davis quotes the number of dead Republicans relegated to mass graves at roughly 30,000 (Davis 872). These graves were one facet of the cruel reality of the postwar for the defeated Republicans, who often knew the location of a loved one's body, but had no freedom to obtain it and bury it properly. As a contrast, the Valley of the Fallen is a place of commemoration for the victors and the mass graves are a representation of the lack of commemoration for the Republicans, who were ignored in commemorative acts (Olmeda 171). Only in the 21st century due to the efforts of the Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica) and the Law of

embroidered pillow going up in flames in an interesting parallel to the final image of Rosebud at the close of *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Historical Memory (2007) can “la exhumación de fosas y la localización e identificación de restos humanos” occur (Olmeda 389). These long-awaited exhumations, similar to the eventual exhumation of Rebecca’s body from the sunken ship, are the first step in providing the Republican dead the commemoration and the honorable final resting place that the Nationalist dead received decades before.

When we establish that the Hollywood film *Rebecca* depicts a haunting similar to that which occurred after the Spanish Civil War, the movie becomes a focus of audience catharsis. The defeated Spaniards in the audience responded to the movie *Rebecca*, following the theory of Charles Affron, because of the lack of a representation of their experiences and lives in the dominant rhetoric and ideology oozing from films like the Francoist *Raza* that premiered the same year in Spain. *Rebecca* was an extraordinarily popular film, well-received by Spanish audiences, as seen in its frequent reference in mainstream postwar texts, including Carmen Martín Gaité’s generational history *Usos amorosos de la posguerra española* (1987) and her award-winning novel *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) and Lorenzo Llobet Gracia’s film *Vida en sombras* (1948). The inclusion of a scene from *Rebecca* at the end of one of these texts, the film *Vida en sombras*, reflects how one Spaniard in the postwar (Fernando Fernán Gómez) views this Hollywood film and how it informs his life and his decisions.¹⁷ I argue that *Rebecca* had such a profound impact on Spanish moviegoers, comprised in part by the war’s defeated, because the 2nd Mrs. DeWinter’s interactions with the ghostly presence of Rebecca and Max’s knowledge of a hidden truth mirrored perfectly how *los vencidos* related to their war dead. In Spain, what was missing in the cultural production of the time was the outpouring of stories from the losers of the war “whose stories...are excluded from the dominant narratives of the victors” (Labanyi, Introduction 1-2). Labanyi also says that “ghosts are the return of the repressed of history – that is, the mark of an all-too-real historical trauma which has been erased from conscious memory but which makes its presence felt through ghostly traces” (Labanyi, Introduction 6). *Raza* commemorates the Nationalist dead and lays them to rest with the power of the State, because Franco exercised the same power

¹⁷ For an in-depth discussion of *Vida en sombras* and the quotation of this scene from *Rebecca*, see Sánchez Salas in his contribution to the compilation of essays *El espíritu del caos* (2009).

over the script as he did over Spain: the power to write the official narrative of the Spanish Civil War. The Nationalist dead are not the "repressed of history," as Labanyi says, so they have no incarnation as ghosts. Critic Charles Affron reminds us that movies are a "meaning-generating body of art" (Affron 1) and the defeated movie-going public generated this new meaning for *Rebecca* based on its themes of haunting, which acutely defined their postwar reality.

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