

KEN LOACH'S *LAND AND and FREEDOM* (1994): CONFLICTS AND QUESTIONS CONCERNING SPANISH CINEMATOGRAPHIC MEMORIES

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The present essay analyses the concept of Spanish national cinematographic memory by examining a transnational film, *Land and Freedom*, by Ken Loach. With this film, the British film director critiqued the influence of Stalin on the Spanish Civil War. As this fictionalised film was located in Spain itself, and referred directly to some historical facts, it was strongly criticised in the country. *El País* published several reactions: for example, from the former leader of the Communist Party, Santiago de Carrillo, and from Wilebaldo Solano, former member of the POUM. This debate demonstrated a need to reconstruct the 'truth' about this period. The highly provocative and direct message of Loach's film on a sensitive point of Spanish history contrasts completely with the general tendency of Spanish film directors in the 1990's, who created discourses of consensus in their images. I will therefore work through the concept of national memory. How do reactions to a transnational film in a national context show us the mechanics of cultural restrictions? Can we define this in relation to the interaction between institutions, politics, and film-making in the 1990's in Spain? And is it possible to speak of a typical national cinematographic memory? I will examine these issues by first situating Loach's film in the context of Spanish cinematographic memory, concentrating on the representation of the International Brigades in fiction films of the 1990's. They are transnational figures in this civil conflict. Also analysed will be some theoretical approaches to national and transnational memory. Finally, in order to give a concrete example, I will conclude by commenting on the debate in *El País* about historical truth and this transnational film.

Land and Freedom shows the members of the POUM at the front, in their desire for a revolution in the 1930's.¹ The main character, David Carr,

¹ Loach's film is inspired by *Homage to Catalonia*, by George Orwell. Michel Cadé in his article "Land and freedom de Ken Loach: la révolution permanente", 47, compares the narration of this publication with Loach's film, underlining the comparison between Orwell's life and that of the main character, Dave Carr.

is from Britain. Filming Dave and the other members of the POUM, Ken Loach denounces the influence of Stalinism on this civil conflict. As the story takes place at the front, the film director represents the International Brigades as the representatives of Stalinism, because they have weapons. Making a film about the desire of the members of the POUM for a revolution, and showing the division among the Republicans is, of course, a sensitive point in Spanish history, as Franco himself claimed to have been a hero in saving his country from a disaster -the 'red' disease or Communism. Loach films in close up the division within the Left -the Republican camp- and their dependency on weapons, which throws them into the arms of Stalin. In analysing this film, I wish to focus on the representation of the International Brigades, as they are transnational actors and their reputation is completely demolished in this story. At the same time, they represent a myth about heroism, having come from abroad to sustain the Spanish Republic. Recently, several exhibitions were organised in Madrid (Círculo de Bellas Artes) and Paris to commemorate their presence in Spain.² To understand their role in the Spanish civil war, we must go back to the 1930's.

The Spanish Civil War was part of an international crisis, following on from the economic crisis of the early 1930's and the emergence of dictatorships in Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. As the Spanish Civil War broke out on the 18th of July 1936, this conflict quickly became an international issue. On the eighth of August, different countries signed a pact of non-intervention in Spain: this was signed by France, the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States. At the same time, Hitler and Mussolini declared that they would sustain the Nationalists, immediately sending weapons and military experts. The Republicans were forced to wait until October 1936 to receive help from the Soviet Union, in the form of weapons and military experts.³ Countless books and articles have been published on this non-intervention pact, which provoked a relationship of dependency

² Several exhibitions were organised: in 2003, in Madrid, Círculo de Bellas Artes, « La Epopeya de las Brigadas Internacionales »; in Paris, from March until June, exhibition No Pasaran, in the Museum Contemporary History-BDIC, Hôtel national des Invalides. From June until September 2003, Exhibition around the book by Remy Skoutelsky and Michael Lefebvre, *Imágenes para recuperar la historia de las Brigadas internacionales*.

³ Michel Cadé, op.cit.

between the Spanish Republicans and the Soviet Union.⁴

The strategic interest of the Soviet Union was to prevent a real revolution.⁵ Loach's fictionalised film *Land and Freedom* considers this possible revolution,⁶ and it provoked a debate in Spain. The film includes several sequences demonstrating that the Republicans needed weapons, and that this dependency on Stalin meant that he could control the country. Another issue is the fact that to sustain the Spanish Republic, volunteers from around the world arrived in 1936. Many of them but, not all of them, joined the International Brigades. Considering their relationship with Stalinism, Loach treats them as being manipulated by the Soviet Union. They are not the main character in the film, but they pop up as soon as the fighters of the POUM need weapons, and one of them decides to join the International Brigades. There are only a few sequences where this matter is worked through. Of course, this film treats many issues that can explain the controversial situation on which this fictionalised story is based. In this essay, however, I wish to focus on the International Brigades and the status of their image in an international context.

This introduction to the history of their arrival in Spain brings us to a second point: the theoretical approaches to national and transnational memory. In national cinema of the Franco era, the International Brigades are portrayed as having fallen victim to the 'red disease': influenced by Communism, they are pushing Spain further into trouble. During this period, two tendencies dominated their representation. Francoism imposed a myth referring to 'España eterna', the so-called: 'Eternal Spain', representing the country as a huge Catholic Empire. The dictator attempted to justify his military intervention as a Crusade defending the interests of the Spanish race. In relation to this image, Communism became the 'red disease', a red shadow, like a virus that should be treated or eliminated. The Republicans

⁴ Hugh Thomas, *La Guerre d'Espagne*, Paris, Ed. Laffont, 1961. Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth. An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, 1943. Enrique Moradiellos, 'The Allies and the Spanish Civil War', 96-126, in *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, sous la direction de Sebastian Balfour et Paul Preston, London/New York: Routledge, 1999.

⁵ Emile Témime, *La Guerre d'Espagne. Un événement traumatisme*, Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1996.

⁶ Michel Cadé, op.cit.

had provoked disorder and influenced the Spanish with their revolutionary ideas.

To monitor cinema, Francoism imposed censorship dominated by two approaches. These were, first, the suppression of this 'red shadow', by justifying the military intervention as having protected Spain. A second option was to oblige film directors to cut some sequences or images that referred in a positive way to Communism or Stalin. The film *Raza* by José Luis Saenz de Heredia is one of the best examples to illustrate the Francoist myth of the Catholic Crusade. *Raza* justifies the military victory in 1939 as having protected the interests of the Spanish race.⁷ Franco himself wrote the script, presenting it under a pseudonym 'Jaime de Andrade.' The story portrays a traditional Catholic family in which the father dies defending Cuba, while the mother educates her children with the traditional ideas of 'The Eternal Spain.' The *coup d'état* and Civil War had defended Spain against the destructive influence of communism, which would have destroyed the country. The International Brigades are referred to with disdain in *Raza*, being considered the representatives of this red disease. Another documentary by José Luis Saenz de Heredia, *Franco ese hombre* (1964), continues to justify the military intervention.⁸

Even during Francoism, the transnational French film by Frédéric Rossif, *Mourir à Madrid*, released in 1962, had provoked a 'cinematographic debate.' This documentary shows the interests of the Republic, also including images of the International Brigades. Only two years later, the Spanish documentary, *Franco ese hombre* by Saenz de Heredia, gives a direct reaction towards this French vision, underlining the delicate situation of the Civil War and the fundamental importance of Franco's intervention in offering peace to the Spanish people since that date.⁹ Censorship could only control images of the International Brigades, Stalinism, or Communism inside

⁷ For a complete study on this film director, see different books published by Nancy Berthier, *Le franquisme et son image*, Toulouse: Press Universitaires de Mirail, 1998. Román Gubern in *La Guerra civil en la pantalla, 1936-1986*. Madrid, 1986 analyses as well this film.

⁸ Berthier op.cit., studies the propagandistic aspects of the films by Heredia, concentrating on different political periods during dictatorship.

⁹ *Idem*, 94.

Spain.¹⁰ The publications of Carlos Heredero, *La pesadilla roja del general Franco. El discurso anticomunista en el cine español de la dictadura*, and Román Gubern's book *La censura. Función política y ordenamiento jurídica bajo el franquismo (1936-1975)*, give numerous examples of this kind. For example, in *Ciudad universitaria* (1938) by Rafael Gil, the expression "the invasion of foreigners from a red government" refers in a negative manner to their presence. In *Prisioneros de Guerra* (1938), García Viñolas refers to foreigners imprisoned because they had been betrayed by the Soviet Union. Much later, in *El camino de la paz* (1959), the International Brigades were described as pure idealists and compared with criminals who had escaped justice in their country, but are opportunist or 'bon vivants'.¹¹ In *Posición avanzada* (1965), the International Brigades were shown as interacting easily with the Francoist soldiers and Republicans, fishing with each other without any problems. Or, in 1966, *Los ojos perdidos* shows the main character in a church, praying to God: "for my dead friends, from both sides of the war, and for all the dead people in war under whichever flag they fight, except for those who represent the International Brigades."¹² Another example of censorship is the rejection of *Cenizas y diamantes* (1956), due to a sequence that showed the International Brigades discussing the Civil War.¹³ A final example is that of *España otra vez* (1968), by Jaime Camino. In this melodrama, censorship required the name 'International Brigades' to be replaced by the term 'force'.¹⁴

Since 1975, Spanish cinema has paid little attention to the International Brigades in fiction films, as Maggel Crussels' recent study, *Las*

¹⁰ Carlos Heredero, *La pesadilla roja del general Franco. El discurso anticomunista en el cine español de la dictadura*, Festival Internacional de Cine de Donostia San Sebastian, S.A., Filmoteca Española, 1996, 129-131.

¹¹ Ibid. Encuadraron desde idealistas puros a criminales escapados de la injusticia y logreros y vividores.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Román Gubern, *La censura. Función política y ordenamiento jurídica bajo el franquismo (1936-1975)*, Barcelona, 1981, 204-205.

¹⁴ Román Gubern, 162-164.

brigadas internacionales en la pantalla (2001), confirms.¹⁵ Crussels analyses, over different periods, the way in which the Brigades were filmed. Even if they appear infrequently in fiction films and far more in documentaries, it is interesting to analyse how the image of their transnational identity is constructed. In contrast with some documentary productions, such as *La vieja memoria* (1976) by Jaime Camino, many fiction films about the Civil War are dominated by a tendency to take families as the main characters, with suffering and violence often staying off screen. (*Las largas vacaciones de 1936* (1976) by Jaime Camino, *La guerra de papá* (1977) by Antonio Mercero, *Las bicicletas son para el verano* (1983), by Jaime Chávarri). In the 1980's, the comedy *La vaquilla* (1985), by Berlanga, transformed the Civil War into a comic and light-hearted adventure for the first time, without the International Brigades. But we had to wait until the 1990's for four fiction films that pay more attention to them. These were *¡Ay Carmela!*, by Carlos Saura in 1990, *El largo invierno* by Jaime Camino in 1991, *Land and freedom* by Ken Loach in 1994 and, in 1995, *Two much* by Fernando Trueba.¹⁶ Camino's film takes place during the period of the Civil War, in Barcelona. Trueba directs a light-hearted comedy, with, as protagonists, Antonio Banderas and Melanie Griffith in a hilarious love story. When Banderas, as Art, is in a complicated situation, his father helps him out, accompanied by several of his friends who took part in the Spanish Civil war with the International Brigades. The references are highly comical; at one point they even liken the battle against Franco to their own situation as they drive an old car through deserted city streets. In the other three films, the representation was completely different.

How can we define the image of their bodies, as transnational actors? As the International Brigades came from outside Spain, it is interesting to analyse the way in which they are visualised, because their images change in different historical periods. As the scholar Christa Blümlinger explains, re-using images as archives reveals our relationship with history. Blümlinger has suggested that images function as monuments, witnessing by their very presence a particular period: "The objective is not to recollect official images

¹⁵ Magí Crussels, *Las brigadas internacionales en la pantalla*, Ed. Ciudad Real: Gabinete del Rector de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2003.

¹⁶ *Idem*

from historical events, but to actualise a monument, in a way that originally they were not meant to speak or testify directly to."¹⁷ Blümlinger's vision is inspired by Foucault's conception of archives. It can be applied to the human bodies of the International Brigades in Spanish Cinema, who testify merely by being there. And, as they often do not speak Spanish, they are physical witnesses, through the image of their human bodies, as critical observers. This linguistic mutism converts them into monuments, witnesses, and testifiers. Moreover, they testified to historical events, as the French historian Marcel Oms demonstrated that the International Brigades were often filmed at decisive moments of the civil conflict, stimulating the creation of this myth.¹⁸

A second aspect is the transnational vision of Loach. In Spanish cinema of the 1980's and 1990's, we observe a tendency to reconcile with the past. In 1995, the British director Ken Loach showed a close-up of an anti-Stalinist vision, provoking violent reactions. We therefore need to think about the status of *Land and freedom*. As a typical transnational product, it can illustrate the complexity of cinematographic memory by showing a vision from abroad that provokes strong reactions inside a country. Outside the Spanish context, other fiction films have marked history, such as *Schindler's List* (1994), by Steven Spielberg, and *La vita è bella* (1998) by Roberto Benigni. This last film was very badly received in the Netherlands, for example, as it was considered to represent such a disastrous period in too superficial a manner. Commemoration by fiction films is a very difficult issue. But displacing the vision from one country to another in order to create a transnational vision also makes us aware of the norms and values in Spain itself.

Another example of a difficult memory of German society has been analysed by Régine Robin, who studied conflicting memories ('mémoires affrontées').¹⁹ She compared the 1997 German film, *Hitler, ein film aus Deutschland* (*Hitler, a film from Germany*) by Jürgen Syberberg, with an American series from 1979: *Holocaust* by Gerald Green. Robin observes that

¹⁷ Christa Blümlinger, 'Cinéastes en archives', 68-78, in: Trafic N° 38, *Revue de Cinéma*, été 2001.

¹⁸ Marcel Oms, *La guerre d'Espagne au cinéma, mythes et réalités*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1986, 77-78.

¹⁹ Régine Robin, *Berlin chantiers. Essai sur les passés fragiles*. Paris: Editions Stock, 2001, 66-78.

Syberberg's film inscribes itself in German history without ignoring the Hitler period, but with a nostalgic tonality towards an earlier period, constructing myths about a former period that allows the film to avoid referring to this painful past.²⁰ This contrasts completely with the American series, which directly portrays families killed and images of concentration camps. This series provoked a cultural shock in Germany in the 1970's. As a result, still following Regine Robin's interpretations, different series were produced, a very famous one being *Heimat (Home, 1984)*, by Edgar Reiz.²¹ The violent reactions of German society to this American production and the tendency to create other visual discourses about this painful past testify once more to the fact that remembering is a ritual determined by codes related to both the culture itself and the historical period when they are transmitted.

How can we define cinematographic memory? Individual films function as rituals of commemoration. A transnational vision can provoke a shock, and thereby make clear that the audience is not used to or willing to see these images. What can be shown at a certain moment illustrates the norms and values of that culture.²² As I will comment on the debate in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, people wish to find history as they imagined it, or had known it. But for film historians, fictionalised images represent other values: the camera does not witness an event, but rather reconstructs it, by imagining what happened in the 1930's. The process of imagining history is also described in George Didi Huberman's book, *Images malgré tout* (2003), where he analyses the function of four photographs of concentration camps. Analysing the status of images reveals our relationship with the past. Reconstructing and fictionalising this period is a way of asking questions about it. In the case of Loach's film, the critique of Stalin's influence completely destroys the heroic image of the International Brigades. This was in a context in which the Brigades were receiving a new wave of attention, even being offered Spanish nationality in 1996.²³ Thinking about history

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 69.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 72-76.

²² Marc Ferro, *Cinéma et Histoire*, Editions Denoël/Gonthier, Paris: Editons Gallimard, 1977, 41.

²³ Real decreto 39/1996, the 19th of January. The International Brigades who fought in the Civil War could obtain Spanish nationality. In France, in the same year, Chirac declared that the survivors of the

becomes an interrogation of the past that creates new mythological visions in the current period. To take a concrete example, I wish to compare how the International Brigades are presented in *¡Ay Carmela!* and *Land and Freedom*, two films dominated by stereotypes about the Civil War. The interaction between the two films of the 1990's, and their reception in Spanish society reveals the function of cinematographic memory. What reading can one make of this schema through the cultural function of the filmic memory? And how can we read the stereotypes of the past, creating some new mythological figures of history in the contemporary period?

The Civil War is obviously the 'Other' in Spanish history: an internal conflict that must be addressed due to the need to install democracy from 1975 on. The stereotyped representation unifies the contradictions about the past: this stereotype is a negotiator. The term 'negotiator' was introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who uses it in his mythological theories to describe the person who negotiates between a binary opposition:²⁴ a conflict that cannot be resolved, for example the opposition between life and death, or unity or dispersion. In the Spanish cultural context, the stereotype can be read in different ways. This figure should always be interpreted in its cultural and historical context. In the two fiction films of the 1990's mentioned above, the image of the human body negotiates between different historical visions related to the contemporary period. For example, the prefixed schema allows us to immediately recognise the period of the 1930's. A certain distance is then introduced in our perception of the event, due to the exaggeration and by transgressing different aspects of it. The process of reinforcing typical behavioural characteristics can stimulate laughter, which is the case of fiction films like Berlanga's *La vaquilla* (1984) and Saura's *¡Ay Carmela!* (1990) by Saura. The characters, by the images of their human bodies, express ridiculous ideas compared to the seriousness of a war. They transgress the ideological reasons that this war represented by comparing it to chasing a cow (*La vaquilla*), or by representing fascist attitudes in an ironic manner, putting people on stage and making them dance in a rigid way. They dance like robots, as if the way they move shows how their brain

International Brigades were officially considered as being 'ancient combatants' (the first initiative for this recognition was taken by Louis Mexandeau, proposing a law the 4th of January 1993).

²⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1956, *L'Anthropologie structurale*, Paris: Editions Plon, 1956, 260.

functions: like machines without a proper personal identity, forming part of a totalitarian system (*iAy Carmela!*).

The stereotype negotiates between how to remember the past, because we immediately recognise the period of the Spanish Civil War, and reading it with a certain distance of the real historical event. This process permits the creation of a new mythological vision about the past. Ruth Amossy describes this crucial importance of the stereotype in the construction of a myth: she explains how this figure gives the first coded reference allowing the story to be transformed into an 'idealised model'.²⁵ Following Amossy, I suggest that the stereotype can be read in this case as an idealised model, because it concerns a delicate period: the degrading vision is transformed into a humorist vision, substituting the historical version into a myth. The myth is thereby 'historicised' in the present period, due to stereotyped human bodies that allow us to return to the past. Analysing both films on this process, a distinction should be made between the stereotype introduced in Saura's film, which distances itself from reality, favouring the creation of a myth about the International Brigades, and Loach's vision, which is closer to a historical reality destroying certain myths of heroism.

The fiction *iAy Carmela!* is dominated by comical discourse and the violence is often off screen. There is one execution, but that sequence is shown by aesthetic references that transform it into a pictorial past, distancing it from a direct reality:²⁶ it becomes an image. Similarly, Saura does not show the division on the Left. The film opens with a panoramic shot of the ruins of a city. The camera films the debris, accentuating the destruction of buildings by the piles of stones. These images refer timidly to a diversity on the Left when the camera focuses on a wall with torn political posters bearing names such as that of the CNT. But the shot is not fixed in order to denounce something. In the meantime, we hear the song of the war -"Ay Carmela"- that accompanies the ruins and becomes the main storyline. This sonnet speaks about those who fight for the Republic,

²⁵ Ruth Amossy *Les Idées reçues. Sémiologie du stéréotype*, Paris: Editions Nathan, 1991, 103.

²⁶ Nancy Berthier, *De la guerre à l'écran, iAy Carmela!*, Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1999, 67-70, analyses the references to the painting of Goya, *Tres de mayo*, symbolising the suffering of human beings in war.

including the International Brigades: "Ay Carmela, viva la quinta brigada, Rumba la rumba la rumba la, Viva la quinta brigada, rumba la rumba la rumba la, quien está cubierta de gloria [etc.], Ay Carmela."²⁷

The identities of the protagonists are caricatured. Carmela and Paulino, a couple who entertain in shows for the Republicans during the war, are accompanied by Gustavete, who is mute due to a traumatism acquired during a bombing that took away his ability to speak. Trying to return to Valence, Gustavete makes a mistake and drives them all straight away into the area where the enemy is located, leading to their incarceration. In an old building (that was a former school, and is now a prison), they meet the members of the International Brigades, who are also incarcerated. It is here that Carmela speaks to a Polish International Brigade soldier, who does not speak Spanish. In front of a map of Europe, stuck on the wall, Carmela explains to him where her country is situated. He reacts by pointing with his finger to the place where he comes from, Poland. Sustaining the Spanish Republic, they are all locked up in the same prison. Carmela tries to teach him her language, demonstrating how he should pronounce her name. As a real pupil, he repeats it, then he turns towards his comrades when he starts to sing "Ay Carmela," and they sing it with him. This conversation between Carmela and the Polish International Brigade soldier is their only dialogue.

The three artists, Carmelo, Paulino and Gustavete, are supposed to put on a show for the Nationalists. Given the circumstances, they try to be 'politically correct,' adapting their jokes to a fascist interpretation. Carmela remains very nervous, as she fears the arrival of the International Brigades as part of the audience. Through a small hole in the wall, she observes the Polish man arriving with the other International Brigades. From the other side, she sees that Franco himself will attend their show at the theatre. She's terrified. Their first performances honor the greatness of Spain with the dancing of some *pasodobles* and the recital of poems adapted to fascist ideology. Everything is headed as intended, but the last skit must still be done, and Carmela continues to suffer seriously. As the International

²⁷ Pilar Martínez-Vasseur, 'Les chants de la Guerre d'Espagne: entre oubli et mémoire', 99-101 in: L'Avant-Scene Cinéma Novembre 1999, N°486: *¡Ay Carmela! Un film de Carlos Saura. Dialogues français et espagnols*. Originally "Ay Carmela," was an anarchist song, born in 1808, during the guerilla against the invasion of Napoleon, and used against during the Civil War. The original title was: *El Ejército del Ebro* or: *¡Ay Carmela!*

Brigades do not understand the Spanish language, there has been no problem so far, but when the last skit is announced, the situation becomes extremely complicated. This skit is entitled: "The Spanish Republic goes to see a doctor."

The 'mise-en-scène' of their characters illustrates a transgression of morality through the images of their human bodies. Paulino comes on stage dressed up as a doctor, with a white shirt and a white cap on his head. His gestures are characterised by stereotypically female movements of his hand, to indicate that he is homosexual. Without hesitation he shows his interest for men, complaining that his patients are often women. Even his name carries physical connotations: 'touchmeeverywhere' (tocametodo). After introducing himself, Carmela comes on stage and introduces herself as the "Spanish Republic." Grimacing, she complains about her health. Gustavete is standing next to her, dressed up as a Bolshevik, wearing a red jumper with a half moon on it. Carmela continues to speak about her health, because apparently the political influences have contaminated her physically, as she demonstrates with some red marks on her skin, and she does not feel well at all.

The images of their human bodies parody the political situation: the 'red disease' of communism has contaminated the Republic. They are all stereotyped and exaggerating a pathological aspect of the situation. For example, the doctor is homosexual, which was considered a disease at that time. He receives a sick Republican and a mute Bolshevik. The three bodies are mutilated. The doctor has problems concentrating because he is more interested in Gustavete, but he asks the Spanish Republican to undress herself. The catastrophic end approaches: Carmela is wearing the Republican flag around her naked body, and the International Brigades start to react on the balcony, understanding the meaning of their sketch. On the podium, a chaotic situation ensues. Paulino tries to save them, proposing to fart, but nobody pays attention to him, with all eyes being fixed on Carmela. The Nationalists give the fascist greeting in a compulsive manner, trying to control the situation. But Carmela fixes her eyes on the International Brigades, who refuse to accept this humiliating image of the Spanish Republic. Carmela loses control over herself and starts to sing "Ay Carmela" with the International Brigades, to defend her cause, her convictions, her innocence. But her dangerous attitude provokes a violent reaction from the Nationalists, who kill her by firing a bullet through her head, her front, her

mind. Representing the Spanish Republic, Carmela will be killed on stage, a place where everybody sees her falling down, murdered, forcing her to stop singing this song, penetrating her mind by the bullet.

The dramatic end makes us almost forget the comical discourse of the film. The stereotype of the three main characters referred to a conflict that is still delicate in Spanish society. In this burlesque social painting by mutilated human bodies, and ridiculed fascists dancing rigid choreographs, the International Brigades are introduced as natural, honest and authentic people assuming their belief in their conviction until the end, even if they risk being killed. Their mutism in the Spanish language stimulates our reading of them as representing a monument: being there, witnessing by the image of their human body. The success of this film accentuates this: indeed, it received thirteen Goyas in Spain and drew at least a million spectators the year it was released.²⁸ The Spanish press also reacted in a positive way.²⁹ "Theatricalising" memory through different skits, with characters parodying themselves, is together with the International Brigades, who emerge in this context as heroes. They confirm their myth -an example of courage- even if their reaction provoked the death of the protagonist, Carmela.

The International Brigades also pop up in *Land and Freedom*. The entire film provoked a controversy in Spain by demolishing different codes in the representation of the Spanish Civil War in the 1990's. First, declaring himself Trotskyist, he presents a completely negative image of Stalin. Filming the lack of weapons, he critiques severely the influence of Stalin on this conflict. Second, he underlines in close-up the complete dispersion on the Left camp of the Republic. By showing violence, he fails to respect a third unwritten code of commemoration that dominated the 1990's. Loach films the trenches, people fighting and killing each other for several minutes, and the victims who suffer. In his schematic vision against Stalinism, the International Brigades are shown as being manipulated by Stalin.

²⁸ *Boletín Informativo. Películas Recaudaciones Espectadores*, Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales: Edition de 1990-1991. *Ay Carmela* sort le 15-03-1990. *Nombre de spectateurs*: 1990: 717.703, 1991 : 96.177, 1992: 17.758.

²⁹ Rosana Torres, 'Aplausos en el estreno en Madrid de ¡Ay, Carmela!' in *El País*, 16-03-1990. Andrés F. Rubio, 'La Academia del Cine de España elige ¡Ay, Carmela! para los Oscars de Hollywood' in *El País*, 05-11-1990.

If we focus on the filmic narration, the story is a discourse of remembrance. The Englishman Dave Carr has been found by his granddaughter, when he is about to die. She takes him to the hospital, but he dies in the ambulance. When she returns to his apartment, she finds an old suitcase and discovers the real life story of her grandfather, almost forgotten, trying to reconstruct it with the help of letters, articles from Spanish newspapers and pictures. The camera focuses on her hands when she opens a package of envelopes, wrapped up into a red tissue, and containing some remains of soil, which is of course Spanish soil. There is then a medium close-up on the expression of her face, indicated by the movement of her hand that approaches her nose. By the frowning of her eyebrows, we observe that she is wondering where the material comes from. These are obviously remnants of the Spanish soil that had been carried by Dave Carr to Britain: the material traces his past, when he was fighting for the Republic. The spectator discovers the Spanish War of her grandfather through his granddaughter, who finds pictures, press articles and letters written to his fiancée. Dave's voice-over takes part in the remembrance: he recounts his vision of history, reading the letters, which becomes a discourse of remembrance transmitted to different generations, to reconstruct the past in the present.

Dave, a young man, is member of the Communist Party in England. Unemployed, he feels completely useless doing nothing and decides to leave his country to help the Spanish to defend the Republic. On the train in Spain, he meets other fighters and joins the militias of the POUM, composed of Spanish, Italian, Irish, French, German, and British people. All come from far away with the intention to sustain the country against fascism. United in this cause, they are filmed in the trenches or in protracted debates about the cause for which they are fighting. The first attack of a village takes almost ten minutes and shows a significant amount of violence, with many people killed and others losing people they love. The lack of weapons becomes an important issue. When Dave is wounded by a bullet because of their bad material, he decides to join the International Brigades. After being treated in the hospital, he encounters Blanca in his hotel room. A romantic love affair begins. But after having spent the night together, she discovers his International Brigades uniform. They argue violently because of his decision. Shouting at him, she explains that the International Brigades are manipulated by Stalin: that he uses them for his own sake, to slow down a

real revolution. Dave refuses to listen, convinced that there is a good explanation for this situation. So, after one romantic night, the couple separates, and Dave finds himself in the middle of a fight, where Republican fighters are opposed against themselves. Completely disappointed, he abandons the International Brigades and once again joins his friends of the POUM.

The film shows the internal struggles within the Left and a negative vision of the International Brigades. They are presented as manipulated by Stalin, as though they were poorly-armed robots without a brain, with Stalin making the decisions. Stereotyping their image transforms them into marionettes, also making them victims of an international conflict. The people of the POUM are shown as idealistic but with having weapons. Every positive image of the International Brigades is destroyed, as if they were opportunists accepting Stalin's power games, even killing the fighters of their own camp. With this schematic vision, Loach destroys the myth created about the heroism of the International Brigades. But controversy reared its head in Spain about the influence of the Communists on the Civil War, and about historical truth.

In the debate on historical truth, Santiago Carrillo, ex-leader of the Communist Party, spoke up loudly in the Spanish newspaper *El País*. Wilebaldo Solano from the POUM then denounced Santiago Carrillo's attitude. Reactions were numerous and Loach expressed himself in the same newspaper, saying that it is necessary to reconstruct the truth, to write history for the present.³⁰ Analysing articles published in one newspaper, *El País*, two tendencies dominate: on the one hand, the passionate will to reconstruct historical truth, by authors who claim to be specialists in these questions because they were physically present; and on the other hand, different articles criticising the responsibility of the Soviet Communist Party in the victory of fascism. Several authors underlined the influence, noting that it was the first time that it was able to be discussed, and moreover, that this was thanks to a film director without direct ties to Spain.

The first tendency is based primarily on personal testimonies to reconstruct the past: "the role of the militias of the POUM at the front in Aragon made me speechless. As a militant of this party and fighter of these

³⁰ This sentence is a direct reference to Orwell, expressed this time by Ken Loach.

militias, it appears necessary to give some data.”³¹ Not everybody agrees with Loach’s vision of the influence of the communists. For example, in his work entitled *Forgotten, Fascism?*, Santiago Carrillo, leader of the PCE during the Civil War, comments that the engagement of the Spanish people was not really being represented: the whole film gives neither a positive nor a negative image of this period. “It is extremely interesting, the discussion of the collectivisation of land among a group of neighbors from a recently liberated village and the militias, a discussion that reflects the contradiction between farmers without land and the small landowners, also antifascists. From my point of view, this is the first error of the film, because it starts to create the split between revolutionary people and non-revolutionaries, in an anti-fascist war, where everyone’s agreement was necessary.”³² Then, indicating where the errors can be flagrantly detected, Santiago Carrillo aims to reconstruct several historical facts of this period.

Ken Loach reacted on 7 April 1995 in the same newspaper, suggesting that 60 years on, the Communists had still not learned anything from History: “I am glad that Carrillo wrote an article against my film, because it demonstrates that the communists (through the PCE), have not learned anything in 60 years”, says Loach, referring to the text that the Ex-Secretary from the Spanish Communist Party had published the day before in *El País*. Loach defends his right to write History: “It is important that history be written by us, because the person who writes history controls the present”, comments the director.³³ The reactions continued. For example, in

³¹ Alberto Masó March, ‘Hugh Thomas y las milicias del POUM’, in: *El País*, 07-11-1995. “El papel de las milicias del POUM en el frente de Aragón me ha dejado estupefacto. Militante de este partido y combatiente de estas milicias, me parece necesario aportar algunos datos.”

³² Santiago Carrillo, ‘El fascismo, olvidado’, in: *El País*, Cultura, 06-04-1995. ‘Resulta sumamente interesante la discusión sobre la colectivización de la tierra entre un grupo de vecinos de un pueblo recién liberado y los milicianos, discusión que refleja la contradicción entre los campesinos sin tierra y los pequeños propietarios, también antifascistas. Desde mi punto de vista, éste es el primer error del filme, pues comienza a situar aquí la ruptura entre revolucionarios y no revolucionarios, en una guerra antifascista, en la que era necesario el concurso de todos.’

³³ L.M./A.F.R., ‘Ken Loach recuerda que Carrillo llamó fascistas a sus compañeros trotskistas’, in : *El País*, Cultura, 07-04-1995. “Estoy contento de que Carrillo haya escrito un artículo en contra de mi película, porque eso demuestra que los comunistas (por el PCE) no han aprendido nada en 60 años-”, dice Loach refiriéndose al texto que el ex-secretario general del Partido Comunista Español publicó ayer en *El País*. Ken loach defiende su derecho a escribir la historia. “Es importante que la historia sea escrita por nosotros, porque quien escribe la historia controla el presente”, comenta el cineasta.

an article published on 14 April 1995, Wilebaldo Solano, ex-militant of the POUM, explained in *Forgotten Stalinism?* that he was pleased with *Land and Freedom* because it justifies the situation of the POUM by showing that the Stalinists had tried to eliminate them under the internationalist flag they pretended to defend.³⁴ He suggested that Santiago Carrillo could no longer insult or critique a film that reconstructed the events: "Before, Santiago Carrillo would have reacted to a film such as this one by Ken Loach by insulting it in a vulgar way. Now he can only react in a moderated way, with some falseness. Times have changed a lot since the sinking of the USSR and the dilapidation of Stalinism. It is logical that *Land and Freedom* has derailed Carrillo."³⁵ Wilebaldo Solano then underlines the truth of certain points of view in the film, sustained by real testimonies that inspired the story in Loach's version.

One month later, at the Cannes festival, the reactions were still cutting: "Most parts of the film by Ken Loach are convincing, but somewhat irritating and, sitting in the rows of film critics, we detect some old Stalinists that have obviously left this behind them, but their means to defend themselves explode with the terrible moral test that Loach's film made them undergo: the complete acceptance of which is certainly difficult to accept, the reality of the extermination of almost all the revolutionary Bolsheviks, that is to say, the extermination of October."³⁶ And in the same period: "Why did it have to be a Briton who demonstrated for the first time one of the most

³⁴ Wilebaldo Solano, '¿El estalinismo olvidado?' in: *El País*, 14-04-1995.

³⁵ *Ibidem*. "En otra época, Santiago Carrillo hubiera reaccionado ante un filme como el de Ken Loach con insultos vulgares. Ahora no ha tenido más remedio que combinar una moderación estudiada y relativa con algunas perfidias. Los tiempos han cambiado mucho desde el naufragio de la URSS y el desmoronamiento del estalinismo. Es evidente que Tierra y Libertad ha desarbolado a Carrillo."

³⁶ Ángel Fernández Santos, 48° Festival de Cannes. 'Tierra y libertad' acaba con la apatía', in *El País*, 23-05-95. "El filme de Ken Loach convence a los más, pero sordamente irrita- y entre las filas de los críticos de cine son detectables- a algunos antiguos estalinistas que, obviamente ya han dejado de serlo, pero que en algún rincón de su memoria conservan vivo un resorte, más instintivo que ideológico, que hace saltar sus mecanismos autodefensivos ante la terrible prueba moral a que el filme de Loach les somete : la plena aceptación de la, ciertamente, difícil de aceptar, realidad del exterminio de la práctica totalidad de los revolucionarios bolcheviques, es decir : el exterminio de Octubre."

painful aspects of the conflict?"³⁷ Three aspects dominate: the will to testify to the past, the need to know the truth of the fights, and the embarrassment felt about the historical distortions made by the filmmaker. This is a short synthesis of the articles published in *El País*. It creates a dialogue about cinematographic memory that functions through images created of the past, the need to know the truth, a cry for justice, and the tendency to maintain a silence about certain issues. It is intriguing that this filmmaker continues to question complicated issues, as he recently demonstrated again with his film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. Obviously, he knows how to hit on sensitive points of the past, again provoking strong reactions in newspapers all over the world, by underlining the historical truth.³⁸ Even if the international audience knows him as an *auteur*, his films are easily recognisable. However, this does not lead them to ignore him, or to categorise his *œuvre* at first sight: Ken Loach still knows how to open up debates about history.

Many things remain to be analysed in this film, but in this article I wanted to point out my method of analysing cinematographic memories over a longer period, by focusing on the image of the human body in fiction films. The debate on historical truth again shows the division in the Republican camp, which could not be debated during Francoism. The schematic approach from Franco has created a taboo on this division, a silence, like Pandora's box, that Loach wanted to open. This transnational film underlines the norms and values of Spanish cinema. It opened up an interesting debate in the 1990s about the role of Stalinism. Loach's direct language was difficult to accept in a country in which national cinematographic memory was building a consensus about the past, by showing more comical discourses, with the violence off-screen. In film scholarship, images not only help us to show the truth, but to think back to a period when we were not present and to redefine debates about issues that could not be worked out in former periods.

³⁷ Rocío García, 'Ken Loach describe en 'Tierra y libertad' la división del bando republicano en la guerra civil', in *El País*, 06-04-1995. "¿Por qué ha tenido que ser un británico el que muestre por primera vez uno de los aspectos más dolorosos de la contienda?"

³⁸ An article of Stephen Howe, translated in a Dutch journal, *NRC*, the 11th of August 2006. Stephen Howe analyses the story in the film, tracing the historical truth.

To return to the issue of the International Brigades, their stereotype functions on different levels: the stereotyped human body in *¡Ay Carmela!* allows the spectator to recognise a historical period and creates a distance towards the seriousness of the civil conflict by human bodies transgressing moral values. The International Brigades pop up in this burlesque painting like pure, authentic heroes, who believe in their cause even if this meant risking their lives. The stereotype in *Land and Freedom* also allows the audience to recognise a period. The schematic anti-Stalinist vision by Loach destroys their myth, turning them into manipulated robots because they were dependent on weapons.

Schematising historical views allows us to contrast them, because the cinematographic memory functions in interaction with society, determined by active norms and values. Constructing their myth nowadays functions by oppositions: in time (period of the 1990's/period of the 1930's), through different views of history and their value as witnesses. Negotiator of a painful past, the Brigades became present once again by expressing their feelings about their past in the Dutch, French, or Spanish press, explaining the personal convictions that motivated them to go to Spain to fight against the Nationalists.³⁹ Their loyalty contrasts with the lack of international help accorded to the Spanish Republic, while Hitler and Mussolini supported Franco immediately. This contrast pushes their myth even further. Their presence in Spain is commemorated by rituals, by images perceived on a screen: their human bodies again become visible on the Spanish soil, or, in the words of the song "Ay Carmela," or even when it concerns the violence in *Land and Freedom*. They are the heroes who came from far away, their efforts to fight for the Republic marking the collective memory in Spain. The International Brigades are located in a cinematographic memory, and they become statues or monuments, witnessing by their physical presence in the Spanish Civil War until 1938. Showing the rituals now used in Spanish

³⁹ The article of Odette Martínez-Maler entitled «L'Album de Juliette », entre traces de mémoire et témoignages' about Juliette and her sincere engagement with the Brigades in Spain published in 2005 in *Tigre 13*, Numéro sur la Trace. To cite just one testimony from the Netherlands in the article: 'The last idealist. Former Brigadist Herman Scheerboom (91) returns once more to Spain to commemorate the Civil war (De laatste idealist. Voormalig Brigadist Herman Scheerboom (91) keert nog eenmaal terug in Spanje voor herdenking burgeroorlog)', in: *Elsevier*, 12 juillet 2003, 38-41. Lots of articles testify of their engagement, their loyalty. I refer as well to several websites with testimonies, for example one of the University of Castilla La Mancha: <http://www.brigadasinternacionales.uclm.es/>. Or <http://www.fut.es/~aabi/aab-naci.htm>, from the Association of friends of the International Brigades.

society, the film by Ken Loach offers an important example of the complexity of cinematographic memory. The reactions provoked by this vision from abroad, this transnational vision, reveals certain norms in force. In so doing, fiction films become historical documents. By showing cinematographic memory of visions of the past, they illustrate the confusion and disagreement about this aspect of history.

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