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Dr. Sosa-Ramirez

Croft/Honors Thesis

Senior Thesis Prospectus

Overview

Under Francisco Franco's regime, the Spanish film industry was low-quality and heavily suppressed by state censorship. After the death of the dictator in 1975, the newly reformed government began modernizing the film industry and state censorship was lifted in 1977.ⁱ However, it was not until the 1980s that there was a significant growth in the number of Spanish films.ⁱⁱ It was during the 1980s that an important trend developed. At this time there was a proliferation in making screen adaptations of anti-francoist literary works and to make historical films which centered on topics that had been suppressed under the dictatorship.ⁱⁱⁱ Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) [The Spanish Socialist Worker's Party] which came to power in 1982 saw such films as part of the cultural good, and it referred to them as essential in the formation of 'el patrimonio del pueblo', the people's cultural heritage.^{iv}

It is interesting that this initial surge in historical film making coincides with a time in which the transitional government emphasized an unofficial 'pacto del olvido', pact of forgetting or silence. Unlike countries in South America, such as Chile and Argentina, which actively sought justice and prosecuted those who had taken part in the dictatorships and state sponsored terror, the official Spanish discourse was that of a 'willful amnesia' in regards to the Franco era.^v Spanish cinema thus becomes a sort of unofficial discourse on historical memory for society. My interest here is in the discrepancy between the official and unofficial discourse.

Why was there such a fetish for historical memory within the film industry when the government was so focused on forgetting? In addition, why has this proliferation of films pertaining to the Civil War or the period under the dictatorship persisted in contemporary Spain?

Research Question and Hypothesis

The primary guiding question for my thesis is this: What caused this fetishization of historical memory found in Spanish films? I believe that there are two primary causes. My initial hypothesis based upon personal experience abroad and preliminary research is that this fetishization of historical memory was caused by a desire to re-write history so that the losers of the Civil War shaped the historical memory and by a need to deal with trauma of state violence which plays its part in shaping contemporary Spanish identity.

Structure

This thesis will be constructed with an emphasis on culture. The definition of culture which I will be using is that of David T. Gies: “the general body of the arts” and “the intellectual side of civilization”.^{vi} From this restricted definition I have chosen to focus on cinema as a representative of ‘the general body of the arts’. I then further narrow the scope of my thesis by analyzing films that were produced from the 1980s onward. With this initial framework, I will then look to test my hypothesis through the analysis of four films and by examining research

from related bodies of work. Ultimately, I will attempt to prove (or disprove) that the fetishization of historical memory in Spanish films after the fall of the dictatorship was caused by the desire to re-write history from the perspective of the losers and to address the trauma of the Civil War and the violence under the Franco regime.

Methodology

For my primary research I will be analyzing four films: “Pan’s Labyrinth” (2006) by Guillermo del Toro¹, “The Holy Innocents”² (1984) by Mario Camus, “Ay! Carmela” (1990) by Carlos Saura, and “Butterfly” (1999) by Jose Luis Cuerda³. This analysis will be conducted bearing in mind not only the films’ representation of the Civil War or the Franco regime, but the political stance of the director and the significance of the years in which they were produced. My research will also include critiques and reviews of the films written at the time of their releases.

My secondary research will consist primarily of books, scholarly papers, and newspaper articles. The majority of these will pertain to either the topic of cinematography, historical memory or trauma/violence.

Additionally, there will be an element in my thesis related to the intelligence community. I will be examining how, through the use of film, the intelligence community can avoid mirror imaging and how it can gain a better understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of country’s identity.

¹ <<El laberinto del fauno>>

² <<Los santos inocentes>>

³ <<Lengua de las mariposas>>

ⁱ Pavlovic, Tatjana. "The Spanish Film Industry in the 1980s." *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2009. 156-75. Print.

ⁱⁱ Jordan, Barry, and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas. *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies*. London: Arnold, 2000. Print.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pavlovic, Tatjana. "The Spanish Film Industry in the 1980s." *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 156-181. Print.

^{iv} Pavlovic, Tatjana. "The Spanish Film Industry in the 1980s." *100 Years of Spanish Cinema*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 181. Print.

^v Stofleth, Daniel E. *Memory Politics in Spain: "The Law of Historical Memory and the Politics of the Dead"*. *Genocide Scholars*. Genocidescholars.org, n.d. Web.

^{vi} Gies, David Thatcher. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*. Cambridge: University, 2004. Print. p.4

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