DIVIDE, CONQUER, ENTERTAIN:

FILM MELODRAMA AND AUTHORITARIANISM IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation examines the role played by the popular film melodrama of interiority in

the dissemination and normalization of authoritarian ideology regarding the private and

intimate spheres in France under the German Occupation (1940-1944), Spain under

Francisco Franco in the 1950s (1951-1961), and Romania under Nicolae Ceauşescu in the

late 1960s (1965-1971). Two major theoretical concepts, strongly connected with each

other, structure my analysis: the intimate sphere, which I define as the space of discourse

created among the closest emotional and psychological groupings of family and friends;

and the melodrama of interiority, which I describe as one of the two major tendencies of

the melodramatic mode centering on the conflicts within the intimate sphere. This

theoretical aspect is doubled by a historical grounding of my dissertation in the social,

economic, and political context of each country, with a specific focus on the organization

and transformation of the three chosen cinema industries. Each authoritarian state sought

to eliminate or control private groups and associations, and to reorganize intimate publics

following a conservative, patriarchal model that emulated the relationship between the

state and its citizens. Films were produced, distributed, and exhibited with the full knowledge of authorities. My analysis of the most popular melodramas of interiority in each country—*L'éternel retour* (*The Eternal Return*, 1943) in France, *El último cuplé* (*The Last Torch Song*, 1957) in Spain, and *Dacii* (*The Warriors*, 1967) in Romania— suggests that their commercial success relied on the well-organized system of production and promotion that supported them and on their melodramatic characteristics; these films contributed to the "naturalization" of state ideology regarding the intimate sphere. Through such texts, authoritarian regimes sought to seduce and conquer their publics.

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Introduction

My interest in the popular cinema produced and released during authoritarian regimes arises from the desire to understand the mechanisms through which culture contributes, if at all, to the promotion and longevity of power structures and the social, political, and even economic habits that these create. Films constitute an ongoing archive of trends, expectations, and values through which non-democratic states can gain mass support for their doctrinal missions. The most commercially successful productions in the three cases I have chosen for investigation—France under the German Occupation, Spain in the 1950s, and Romania in the late 1960s—supported, legitimated, and championed the very practices that restricted the ticket-buyers' freedoms and rights. What were the historical conditions that led to such viewing preferences? Could cinema have contributed to the political "achievements" of such regimes?

France under the German Occupation of 1940-1944, Spain under Francisco Franco in the 1950s, and Romania under Nicolae Ceauşescu in the late 1960s suffered comparable political, economic, and social turmoil. All three countries adopted an authoritarian state model whose main purpose was self-perpetuation through force, but also through public approval and support. Of the three, Spain is the classical model of authoritarianism and I have insisted on this case more than on the others. Franco's state relied on limited political pluralism and aimed to neutralize and depoliticize the masses. It directed its repression at clearly defined enemies and gradually developed a public bureaucracy that coordinated its affairs. Unlike Spain, France was an authoritarian regime established under a foreign power, so the social and political tensions that characterized it

often resulted from multiple causes and were difficult to attribute exclusively to French or German authorities. By contrast, Romanian authoritarianism produced a break within the totalitarian regime installed after 1947, when Romania fell under the Soviet influence. In the late 1960s, there was an apparent tendency to democratize the Romanian Communist Party and popular participation in state structures seemed to increase. Fascism and communism, as distinct ideologies, determined different economic models: in France and Spain, private corporations, in partnership with the state and its officials, dominated, while in Romania all private property was nationalized. These three countries are, therefore, distinct cases of authoritarianism, which makes their similarities all the more representative for this type of non-democratic regime.

France, Spain, and Romania did share several characteristics that ensured the domination of one uncontested ideology in the public sphere. The leader was, in all cases, the center of power and promised his nation's regeneration through a return to conservative family values and the individual's self-sacrifice to the community and the country. Parliaments and other democratic institutions—courts of law, the press, etc.— retained merely a symbolic value and could not defend the citizens' right to public representation. In particular, the cinema industry was, in all three cases, completely reorganized and transferred under the full control of state institutions, so that all films produced, imported, and released had the authorities' approval. Economic and social turmoil, migrations, and the constant fight for survival further contributed to the political apathy of the masses, so that, even when oppositional voices did emerge in the public sphere, they were heard and supported by few. The state, therefore, directed and

monitored all institutions, organizations, individuals, and discourses that had access to or organized the public sphere.

These authoritarian regimes also decisively intervened in a similar manner into the dynamics of private life with the aim of producing the "new," unthreatening subject. In order to analyze these transformations, I rely on Jürgen Habermas's study of the bourgeois public and private spheres, but complement it with contributions by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, as well as Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner. I suggest that France, Spain, and Romania attempted to control their citizens by isolating individuals into smaller, increasingly unstable groups, and encouraging them to relate to the state as to a parent who is at once protective and punitive. I consider that the "intimate sphere," which these theorists mention only briefly, is essential to the strategies of social control adopted by non-democratic regimes. I define the intimate sphere as the discursive space of family members and friends and suggest that it was the main interest of popular film melodrama.

Under such circumstances, the three national cinemas displayed several common tendencies that were in dialogue with, and not separated from, the historical periods that preceded and succeeded these authoritarian regimes. In all cases, the rise of a young generation of filmmakers—whether as a result of massive immigration or of newly-established film schools—brought out an increased awareness of style and the impetus toward formal experimentation as a means to deceive censorship. Even when released, such films were seen by few and had little, if any, public impact. The majority of productions, however, posed no aesthetic challenge and belonged to several major thematic cycles, centering on mysteries, historical events, characters, or fantasies,

religious figures, and the contemporary world. In all cases, however, there was a visible, concerted effort to rewrite national history at a grand scale in order to legitimate the new regimes and raise viewers' feelings of national pride and self-esteem as citizens of a new era.

Melodrama was essential to the promotion and validation of such dominant ideology. It was a spectacular form that centered on a morally unambiguous conflict with a predictable resolution, which made it an accessible vehicle for the promotion of official ideas. Melodrama was not intended to challenge, but to entertain and appease. I suggest that one of its two major tendencies, which originated in the late nineteenth-century stage tradition, focused on the crises of the intimate sphere. The melodrama of interiority, as I define it, revolved around internalized conflicts and featured protagonists, both male and female, who strove to understand and adapt to the changing relationships within the intimate publics to which they belonged. Its audiences cut across categories of gender, class, education, or political affiliation. Many of the most popular films in France, Spain, and Romania were melodramas of interiority; I argue that they seduced viewers to accept authoritarian values and practices.

A thorough understanding of the dynamics of the intimate sphere is essential to the definition of the melodrama of interiority and of its relationship with its viewers. My dissertation connects the changes that the authoritarian state intended to perform at the level of closely-knit groups and the type of discourse disseminated through the melodrama of interiority. Thus, melodramas militated for individuals' loyalty to authorities by suggesting that neglect of, or opposition to, the new type of society officially promoted could result in the instability and isolation of one's intimate public

(represented by one's family and friends). The commercial success of these films was due, in part, to the "attractions" delivered by the melodrama itself: spectacular narratives and aesthetics, the use of stars, and the indirect promise that viewers themselves could enjoy the happiness that fictional characters failed to achieve. Most critics tend to focus on dissident texts or on subversive readings of popular texts. My dissertation, however, exclusively examines popular cinema in order to suggest that, even when they may have had ambiguous or oppositional meanings, films sold many tickets because of their spectacular qualities and because of views that ultimately accommodated state ideology.

I have structured my doctoral thesis into five parts that examine the political and social characteristics of the three authoritarian regimes, as well as the situations of the respective industries and their film production. The first chapter diagnoses the power mechanisms and methods of social intervention of the authoritarian state. I argue that Vichy France, 1950s Spain, and late-1960s Romania blocked or coordinated the access of individuals and groups to the public sphere. Furthermore, they either co-opted or eliminated the most dynamic groups of the civil society, thus silencing oppositional voices. Finally, they attempted to isolate individuals from each other by provoking gender, generational, and ethnic tensions within the societies' most intimate social groupings. The intimate sphere fell, therefore, under the constant pressure and scrutiny of the state. The second chapter demonstrates that these regimes created the legal and business framework that would allow them to interfere at all levels of cinema production, distribution, and exhibition. I suggest that carefully coordinated and rigorously imposed censorship ensured that a film would be released or remain in theaters only with the authorities' knowledge. In the third chapter, I explore the role of the melodrama of

interiority in the naturalization and popularization of social expectations in relation to gender roles and the intimate sphere. The fourth chapter is a brief survey of the major aesthetic and thematic preoccupations of popular film, which reveal that, through the manipulation of the plots, characters, and filmic language of the melodrama of interiority, authoritarian regimes were able to attract and entertain viewers. The final chapter includes a detailed textual analysis of the most popular melodramas in each country: Jean Delannoy's *L'éternel retour* (*The Eternal Return*, 1943), Juan de Orduña's *El último cuplé* (*The Last Torch Song*, 1957) and Sergiu Nicolaescu's *Dacii* (*The Warriors*, 1967). In all cases, the idealized reconstruction of the past reinforced the idea that spiritual and emotional harmony was possible only within the space of the patriarchal family and nation. I argue that popular melodrama temporarily fostered the perception that one could be in charge of one's life, but, at the same time, it tried to reinforce fears regarding viewers' real lives beyond the screen. The more one wanted to get away, the more one failed to do so and looked for an escape in the theater seat.

One distinct memory I have of my native Romania during communism is the eagerness with which we waited in line to see the newest cinema productions, especially if they were rumored to be "clean" of propaganda. I have always wondered if the films we watched and the images that flooded the public sphere—sometimes in spite of their overt or covert contestation of the regime—did play a role, however small, in producing the largely quiescent Romanian society I remember. I am under no illusion that popular cinema could, in any way, be the only, or even the major, source of the longevity of any regime, but I believe that films can influence people's relationship to authority and, most importantly, to each other. In authoritarian regimes, the development, unity, and

emotional consistency of the intimate sphere were constantly undermined by a state that sought to control and dominate its citizens. Viewers watched what they were allowed to watch and asked for more of the same.

Chapter I: The Public, Private, and Intimate Spheres in Authoritarian Regimes

Popular cinema is not a form of art. It is a social product. It arises out of a complex, well organized network of desires, expectations, and aspirations, and becomes a diluted *lieu de memoire*, a direct locus of recognition and identification for each generation within each given nation.[1] Each film bears the traces of all material and human factors involved in its creation and promotion, but the means through which it may also intervene in the audiences' larger reality are complicated and often too elusive to define.

Authoritarian regimes, however, offer the necessary frame for the study of popular film because they exercise a higher degree of regulation over cinema than democratic regimes, with the goal of keeping their populations in check. I do not intend to measure the direct impact of state directives or intentions on audiences; it would be an unending and unedifying task. What I propose is a diagnosis of the conditions under which the most popular films were produced in order to suggest that, far from resisting the regime's ideological offensive, most audiences were seduced by, and paid a ticket to, those films that reinforced the state's perspective, but not necessarily because they fully supported it; official cinema functioned mostly as a therapy of escape. Viewers rushed into theaters to laugh, weep, and forget. Relying on such mass reaction, totalitarian and

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[1] Pierre Nora defines *lieux de memoire* as "places, sites, causes" that are "concrete and abstract," are invested with symbolical value, and concentrate memory for a particular group, community, or nation. They are created "by the interaction between memory and history" and exist between "the collective and the individual, the prosaic and the sacred, the immutable and the fleeting." Their purpose is "to stop time, to inhibit forgetting" and "to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections." Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory*, vol. 1, *Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 15-16.

authoritarian regimes attempted to transform the structure of private life by isolating

individuals within smaller and smaller groups and feeding their insecurities and fears.

Popular cinema had, therefore, a paradoxical and addictive effect: it temporarily

produced the impression of a controllable universe only to deepen anxieties regarding the

more real universe beyond the screen. Films promised future individual happiness in

return for support for the official political, social, and moral codes and standards. The

more one wanted to escape, the more one failed to do so.

Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes

One major observation needs to be made from the start: authoritarian regimes are

the milder, but more enduring, version of totalitarian regimes. The history of the term

"totalitarian" goes back to Fascist Italy. Giovanni Amendola, the most important

opposition leader, used the term "totalitaria" in May 1923 to characterize Mussolini's

efforts to take over public office; Mussolini adopted it to refer, with pride, to the type of

government he intended for Italy. The term was soon used by other opponents of Fascism

to define the regime's aspirations to total control.[2] Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K.

Brzezinski define totalitarianism as a combination of "an ideology, a single party

typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons

monopoly, and a centrally directed economy."[3] Philip Morgan explains that the aim of

the regime is to reconstruct the country around an ideal national community and on a

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[2] Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 211.
[3] Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9.

completely new basis[4]; to be fulfilled, it requires the annihilation of previous structures.[5]

Although this model was attacked in the 1960s, when a new generation of theorists

dismissed the lumping together of Nazism and Communism, it was restored after the

demise of the Soviet Union, when the practices employed in the former Soviet bloc were

revealed to have had some similarities with those of the Nazis.[6]

      The paradigm of totalitarianism, however, was soon considered quite limited in its

scope—it included Nazism, Stalinism, and the communist regimes established in Eastern

Europe—and not applicable to other non-democratic regimes. The term

"authoritarianism" gained in importance in the 1960s and 1970s and was used to describe

various regimes, from Vichy France and Franco's Spain, to the different dictatorships in

Latin America, Africa, or the Middle East. Paul Brooker defines authoritarianism as a

regime in which, "(a) freedom is restricted in favor of obedience to authority, and (b) this

authority is itself exercised with few restrictions."[7] The major difference between

totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, therefore, concerns their goals: totalitarian regimes

aim to revolutionize society and replace its political and economic structures, while

authoritarian regimes use their power in a reactionary manner, to preserve traditional

values and structures. Furthermore, as Stephen J. Lee emphasizes, totalitarian regimes

rely on mass mobilization and an almost religious claim to possess the best and only

solution for their nations. Authoritarian regimes resort to popular mobilization in isolated

cases and only in order to gather support for specific policies; in most cases, they aim to

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[4] See Philip Morgan,"The Fascist Regimes in Italy and Germany," in *Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 126-128.
[5] Friedrich and Brzezinski, 88.
[6] Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, 211-212.
[7] Paul Brooker, "Theories of Non-Democratic Government," in *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government, and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 22.

neutralize and depoliticize the masses.[8] Finally, totalitarian regimes can metamorphose into authoritarian regimes, as was the case with Franco's Spain after the 1940s, and authoritarian regimes can revert to totalitarianism, as was the case with Romania in the 1970s and the 1980s; the relative malleability or radicalization of state and party structures served only the purpose of their perpetuation in power.

Totalitarian regimes display several common characteristics. Two essential elements were the efficiency of the single party to grasp power and its leader's ability to take all control. The rise to one-party dictatorship rested not only on the gradual withdrawal and elimination of all coalition partners, but also on the physical elimination of rivals.[9] Party life was carefully orchestrated to appear complex and replace ordinary political life. Referring to Nazi Germany, Hannah Arendt explains that the leader was surrounded by a clique, or a number of faithful officers who served him above all ideology, rules, or laws; in turn, the clique was linked to elite organizations, whose members swore allegiance to the party and the leader for life; the elite organizations, the different militants, and the regular party members were, finally, connected to the masses through front organizations, which spread propaganda in its milder and more convincing forms, and the sympathizers, whose numbers rose constantly.[10] The leader, considered infallible, was the center of the regime and incarnated the historical destiny of his people, as Robert Paxton emphasizes; it was his will and not the power or authority of any

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[8] See Stephen J. Lee, "Dictatorships Compared," in *European Dictatorships, 1918-1945*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 300.
[9] Hitler is famous for the Night of the Long Knives (June 30, 1934) when his clique, on his direct order, eliminated his opposition within the party. Stalin, in his turn, had his rivals murdered shortly after Lenin's death.
[10] See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt, Inc., 1951), 364-386.

hierarchy that organized life in the regime.[11] The symbiotic, yet short-term, union of the leader, the many officials of the regime, and the masses made possible a totalitarian regime.

This is not the case in the lengthier authoritarian regimes. They do not rely on a single party, but enjoy a limited political pluralism, which implies a distribution of power between such groups as the church, the business community, or the army; furthermore, there are predictable and real limits on the power exercised by the leader or the leading group.[12] Finally, the more extended duration of authoritarian regimes inevitably leads to the gradual decline of the leader's charisma, so, in order to maintain supremacy, he often adopts, more visibly, the position of the outside arbiter of the various groups that compete for power.

Terror is a major instrument through which totalitarian regimes control the opposition. Especially in their advanced stages, terror can become radicalized: its objects are no longer the dissidents, but all those who might, even without their knowledge, become superfluous to the nation. Arendt suggests that the purpose of total terror, which becomes the essence of a totalitarian government, is to destroy one's capacity for spontaneity and creativity, and, therefore, to transform human nature itself; such an objective is, however, impossible to achieve for an unlimited period of time because, as

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[11] In reference to Hitler's regime, there were two types of approaches in the 1980s that can be rightfully claimed in reference to communism, as well: the "intentionalists," who emphasized the centrality of the leader's will in the exercise of the regime, and the "structuralists/functionalists," who stressed the multiple connections between the leader, the state, and society as the basis for the regime. In the 1990s, these approaches were overcome by a new model: there was a permanent feedback between the midlevel officials, who competed to anticipate and fulfill the leader's wishes, and the leader, who rewarded them, set different goals, and constantly removed possible limits. Paxton, *Anatomy of Fascism*, 127-128.

[12] See Brooker, "Theories of Non-Democratic Government," 23-24; Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, ed. Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 255-257.

new generations are born, new capacities for moving outside the mental and spiritual

confinements of the regime become impossible to restrain anymore.[13] Authoritarian

regimes have to face such new generations, which constantly leads to a decline in their

power; consequently, they tend to reinvent the means of control, and often vary periods

of relative political opening with firm repression.

The military and the secret police are the two essential institutions through which

repression is put into practice in authoritarian regimes. The military have a privileged

position and often support the leader's arrival in power. The secret police play a decisive

role especially in the initial, totalitarian phase of the authoritarian regime, when purges

and penal camps are frequent. Oppression is clearly targeted at the system's well-

identified enemies, while dissenters within the party are treated with more "care," and

exile or retirement to private life may replace harsh punishment.[14] The degree of terror is,

therefore, gradually reduced in authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, such regimes

eventually encourage the depoliticization of different state structures, the demilitarization

of the state, and, often, the increasing importance of public and private bureaucracies,

from the military and civil service to the business corporations.[15] Such transformations

are not steps toward a more democratic society, but often only obscure the otherwise

steady possession of power by only a few elected groups. Finally, as Juan Linz

underscores, the immediately visible result of authoritarianism is the privatization of the

masses: the population becomes apathetic and drives its attention from public affairs to

private matters. Life becomes a matter of habit and self-preservation, and individuals

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[13] See Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 466, 478-479.
[14] See Lee "Dictatorships Compared," 306; Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," 266-268.
[15] See Brooker, "Theories of Non-Democratic Government," 27-30.

refrain from questioning the regime's legitimacy.[16] I argue that this process of privatization is not a secondary effect of authoritarian regimes, but one they seek to obtain. Such regimes adopt the methods implemented by totalitarian states in order to restructure society in a manner that could reduce its resistance to a minimum. The core of this strategy consists in blocking the interchange between the intimate, the private, and the public spheres. Film, as well as other media, plays a significant role in this project.

Publics and counterpublics

The interaction between the many types of publics, as well as the connections established between the intimate, private, and public spheres provide significant clues for the analysis of any political system. I suggest that the major goal of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is the gradual silencing of the private sphere, responsible for all possible dissident discourses. To that effect, such regimes transform the public sphere into a stage for the presentation of official discourses rather than the site of interaction between various discourses, and isolate it from the intimate sphere, which falls under constant pressure and surveillance from the state. One of the means through which such pressure is exerted is popular film, which seduces audiences into possible support for state discourses. In popular cinema, the pretended reflection of "reality" becomes the means through which reality can be manipulated. In this section I will propose a new description—inspired by the dialogue among theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, and Michael Warner, among others—of the dynamics of authoritarian societies as

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[16] Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," 268-269; see also Brooker, "Theories of Non-Democratic Government," 27.

a background to my later analysis of popular films made in such societies. I contend that popular films present the intimate sphere as under constant threat from the many groups that form the private sphere, especially those whose discourses differ from the official one. By means of this strategy, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes encourage individuals to withdraw into smaller and smaller groups, thereby breaking the opposition before it has a chance to form.

I make a clear distinction between the "public sphere" and a "public." The public sphere is constituted by the circulation of a particular discourse among different publics. A public refers to a community of people who may or may not know or meet each other face to face, and who are connected to each other by means of their participation in a discourse. Jürgen Habermas's theory of the transformation of the bourgeois public and private spheres provides efficient instruments for the analysis of the discourses that circulate in a society at particular moments in time, but has often been attacked for its inability to recognize precisely the plurality and diversity of such discourses. I consider that this deficiency can be remedied if one also takes into consideration the many types of publics constituted by each discourse; in this sense, Michael Warner's investigation into the means through which publics and counterpublics are established and evolve becomes crucial because it acknowledges the range and dynamics of various groups. Nancy Fraser's classification of publics adds essential details. In its turn, the theory of publics needs to be supplemented by the depiction of the spheres of interaction across the various groups and discourses, for which Habermas's earlier analysis becomes necessary. I, therefore, consider that the examination of the transformations undergone by totalitarian

and authoritarian societies can be served better by all theories because they complement each other.

A brief description of the major constituents of each social organization is necessary at the beginning, and the definition of a public is an essential tool. Michael Warner suggests that a public exists only as long as it is addressed: "A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, Web sites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced. It exists *by virtue of being addressed*."[17] The emergence and circulation of a discourse is the source of a public. The members of a public may, but do not have to, be contemporary with each other or live within a well-defined territorial unit.

Michael Warner also makes a clear distinction between a public and a "concrete audience,"[18] delimited in time and space. I would like to introduce another distinction between literary and art publics, and political publics. Literary and art publics match Warner's definition; political publics are temporarily and spatially bound to the exact time in which the discourse emerges, flourishes, and fades away, and to the limited space of its circulation. They should not, however, be confused with concrete audiences: the time and space of a discourse are greater than the particular duration and space of a performance; furthermore, while it is arguably possible for the members of an audience to see each other face to face, the members of a political public cannot. In this dissertation, I shall use the noun "public" to refer to political publics. I also insist that, although political publics are organized around a discourse, it is important to emphasize their

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[17] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 67.
[18] Ibid., 68.

materiality: a political public is a *group of individuals* addressed by a discourse rather than the space in which the discourse circulates.[19]

A number of characteristics emphasized by Michael Warner apply to political publics as well. A political public is constituted on the basis of a relation among strangers who participate in the same discourse and, by that fact, are not alien to each other.[20] The style of address is both personal and impersonal[21]; furthermore, style and language isolate particular political publics according to their nationality, class, gender, etc.[22] Finally, a political public acts, rather than meditates or speculates, in relation to the discourse which constitutes it, especially when it is very concrete and addresses a limited, specific number of people.[23] Political publics are, therefore, especially vulnerable to the type and construction of the discourse that forms them and to the forces that contribute to the materialization and circulation of the discourse.

Publics can also be established in opposition to the dominant discourse. Counterpublics bear the same characteristics as the rest, but question the primacy of specific, widely-disseminated thought and opinion.[24] Nancy Fraser, using as an example the feminist counterpublic in the United States, suggests that such groups coalesce when they locate important matters of difference in the public arena.[25] Michael Warner further explains their emergence as the result of an effort made by a subaltern group to form a

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[19] I differ from Michael Warner in this respect, but I shall return to this point in my definition of the public sphere.

[20] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 74-76.

[21] Ibid., 76.

[22] Ibid., 106.

[23] Ibid., 96-97.

[24] See Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 112; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 124.

[25] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 123.

public, which leads it to a conflict with both the dominant group and the norms of the dominant culture.[26] Gender, race, class, religious orientation, ethnicity, etc. are unchallenged bases for divergences in ideological positioning, but I suggest that political affiliation represents such a base as well, especially in undemocratic systems. Gay groups constitute themselves as counterpublics to the same degree to which politically extremist groups do, for example, albeit with very different intentions and means of action.[27] Counterpublics are not always democratic in intention, but they always fight so that their interests might be represented in, and recognized by, larger, dominant publics.

An important, though not emphasized enough, category is that of smaller groups on the margins of the dominant publics, which open the public arena for subaltern discourses. Several straight politicians who defend gay rights are an immediate example. I shall refer to such groups as "mediators." It is necessary to point out that mediators have their own political, economic, moral, etc. reasons for acting as facilitators for counterpublics. The variety, visibility, and vivacity of publics and counterpublics characterize a democratic society; furthermore, the freedom of mediators to open public discourse to counterpublics also indicates democratic vigor. It is the function of a well-consolidated state to defend its citizens against extremist, violent counterpublics, but the identification and restriction of such groups is always a complex and sensitive matter. Democracy rests on the fragile openness to most, if not all, types of publics.

A further essential distinction must be made between "strong" and "weak" publics. Nancy Fraser defines "strong publics" as "publics whose discourse encompasses

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[26] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 112.
[27] I stress the complete difference between these two types of counterpublics; their only similarity is their coagulation around a discourse opposed to the hegemonic one.

both opinion formation and decision making," while "weak publics" are those "whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation."[28] A parliament is an example of a strong public because its debates ultimately confer authority to the state. A non-governmental agency for the protection of gay rights is an example of a weak public because, although it contributes to the configuration of public opinion, it cannot, by itself, effect a change in legislation. Counterpublics are always weak publics, but their members can infiltrate strong publics or can influence "mediators," which can lead to the reform of public policy. Not all weak publics, however, are necessarily counterpublics; for example, a leisure club, while not capable or not intent on influencing the decision-making of the state, is not inherently opposed to the dominant public opinion.

I will also introduce a third category of publics, which refers specifically to totalitarian and authoritarian regimes: "underground counterpublics." These are always weak publics whose activity has been declared illegal by the state and that consolidate in opposition to the dominant discourse and. The relationship between weak and strong publics is essential to a democratic system: the more likely strong publics are to take into consideration the position of weak publics on various matters, the more democratic a society is; furthermore, the more visible weak publics are, the more democratic a state is.

A final important distinction should be drawn between the categories of "public" and "private." The word "public" refers to a number of realities: it is related to the state, the nation, or the whole world, and is of concern to everyone. As Warner emphasizes, the political, official, impersonal, usually outside the home is also public.[29] By contrast, what is "related to the individual, especially to inwardness, subjective experience, and [the]

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[28] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 134.
[29] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 29.

incommunicable" is private; so is the nonpolitical, nonofficial, personal, tacit and implicit.[30] The word "private" also covers private property in a capitalist economy.[31] To summarize, the seen, heard, known, and common to many is public; the unseen, unheard, unknown, and restricted to a few is private. Although the two categories seem distinct from each other, their meanings shift and become more nuanced when applied to the interaction among the various publics and the state. An underground counterpublic in a totalitarian or authoritarian regime, for example, is difficult to classify. It is not recognized in the official public sphere and always tries to conceal its existence, which makes it private. Nevertheless, its actions are visible to, and try to influence, the underground public sphere, especially within a specific area, which makes it public. Furthermore, the moment its members are pursued by the state, this group achieves publicity, albeit negative, in the official public sphere as well, which also makes it public.

All publics and counterpublics are organized into four zones of social interaction: the state authority, the civil society, the world of work, and the domestic realm. State authority is always public and includes all institutions, groups, and individuals who represent the state in its daily interaction with the population. They have the right of decision on all matters and their decisions have the power of law. As Habermas suggests, the state developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, when the budget of the royal house slowly divided between incipient "institutions," such as the army, the administration, and part of the judicial power, and the private spending of the royal

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[30] Ibid., 29-30.
[31] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 128.

family. As lords established their estate budgets in a similar manner, the corresponding part of the judicial system, as well as parliaments, also came into being.[32]

The second zone, the civil society, resulted from the growth of publics and counterpublics starting especially with the seventeenth century. Jürgen Habermas highlights its roots in the trade in commercial news, then in the press, coffee houses, salons, as well as in art, music, and literary criticism, and even in the architectural reconfiguration of domestic space[33]; it is important to notice that these are all means for the circulation of counterpublic discourses. Civil society emerged out of the tensions between merchants, whose economic interests steadily gained importance vis-à-vis the incipient state, and the royal court; it was the "domain of private autonomy" and a counterweight to state authority.[34] It had, therefore, two functions: to represent the interests of the middle classes in their economic interaction with the state and to offer an arena for the cultural, moral, and philosophical debates that validated the middle classes as political forces.[35] Nancy Fraser suggests that the separation of the state and civil society, which first emerged during the transition from a feudal to a modern society, implies a lack of social and economic dialogue between the two, as well as the impossibility of political accountability.[36] I would like to emphasize Fraser's implicit idea that the interaction between the state and civil society is essential to the protection of economic and human rights for all publics and counterpublics.

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[32] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 12.
[33] Ibid.,, 20-24, 31-45.
[34] Ibid.,, 12, 23.
[35] Civil society was the locus of different discourses on matters of private interest, especially related to life-sustaining concerns. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, c. 1958, 1998), 30-33.
[36] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 136.

In the democracies of the later modern period, civil society is the body of nongovernmental institutions, organizations, and associations that aim to bring their members' interests to public attention, but also scrutinize, support, or contest state actions. Ideally, it has two branches: a public one, which includes strong publics that mediate directly between state and society; and a private one, which consists of weak publics, counterpublics, and underground counterpublics, which may influence public opinion, even if not state policies directly. The parliamentary institution is an important case to discuss: initially one of the most important strong publics of civil society, it became part of the state apparatus with the rise of modern democracies. In totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, however, its function is corrupted not only because membership in such a parliament may be the result of fraudulent elections, but also because it is also reduced to a formal gathering that merely approves state-dictated laws. The strong publics that are part of the public civil society can include political parties, publics with good lobbying power, publics that represent hegemonic ethnic, racial, gender, etc. groups, or publics with good media exposure. Film clubs, youth associations, or writers' organizations are only a few examples of weak publics.

An ideal model of society rests on the constant interaction between the private and public parts of the civil society: the discourses produced with freedom of thought and association in the private civil society trickle into the public civil society, where they enter into a dialogue with the state, with more or less impact on state policies. Extremist (counter)publics, for example, are ideally blocked from access to state decision-making either because their discourses do not filter into the public civil society or because they do not pass from strong publics to state authorities. In authoritarian regimes, the state

decides which publics can have access to the public civil society and which cannot. In addition to reducing the number of counterpublics by declaring their activity illegal, thereby forcing them underground or eliminating them, the state also blocks their access to the public civil society and state authorities. In turn, strong publics are either declared illegal and eliminated, or co-opted by the state apparatus. Moreover, it is the state that imposes specific matters for debate by strong and weak publics rather than allowing them to emerge from weak publics and counterpublics, seep into strong publics and, eventually, reach state authorities. The degree of interaction between the private and public civil society, and the state, as well as the direction from which discussion topics circulate make the difference between a democratic and an authoritarian state.

The third zone where publics and counterpublics form and interact is the world of work. Established between the public and private realms when work was separated from life in a household starting especially in the eighteenth century, and accelerating with industrialization and urbanization, the world of work includes the totality of employees' and employers' organizations and associations involved not only in professional life, but also in leisure activities. Like the civil society, the world of work has both public and private components. The strong publics that form the public component include trade unions and syndicates that have the power to negotiate with state authorities or other strong publics in civil society. The private component includes weak publics, such as leisure or health clubs for different professions. In authoritarian regimes, some of the strong publics in the world of work are co-opted into the state apparatus, where they no longer defend their members' interests, but function to impose state surveillance and discipline, as is the case with the centralized, state-supervised employees and employers'

syndicates; the other strong publics are either eliminated or driven into secrecy where, together with some of the former weak publics, they become underground counterpublics. The remaining weak publics, as is the case with the weak publics of civil society, fall under strict state scrutiny and control. Similarly to the blocking of civil society, the energy of the world of work in relation to the state is tamed either by obstructing the interaction between the private and public world of work, or by reversing the direction of policy change, which now becomes the attribute of the state alone. The publics that form the civil society and the world of work are, in authoritarian regimes, merely symbolic audiences before whom state measures are, in most cases, presented and implemented.

The domestic realm is the site of what I shall call "intimate publics." This is the area in which an individual acquires his or her unique, coherent, indivisible identity by interacting with family members and friends. Both Hannah Arendt and Habermas set the origin of intimate publics in the Greek *oikos*, or the household, which was the domain entrusted with keeping one alive.[37] Initially bound by the patriarchal authority of the father, the family was, ideally, the site of love, trust, and communication, as Habermas suggests in relation to the rise of the bourgeoisie:

> … [T]he intimacy of the family relied on its private autonomy; it was private autonomy denying its economic origins that seemed to be established voluntarily and by free individuals and to be maintained without coercion; it seemed to rest on the lasting community of love on the part of the two spouses; it seemed to permit that non-instrumental development of all faculties that marks the cultivated personality. The three elements of voluntariness, community of love, and cultivation were conjoined in a concept of the humanity that was supposed to inhere in humankind as such and truly to constitute its absoluteness: the

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[37] See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12-13, 30-33; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 3.

emancipation (still resonating with talk of the "pure" or "common" humanity) of an inner realm, following its own laws, from extrinsic purposes of any sort.[38] In this utopian model, the family was perceived as protected from the eyes of the many, and, especially, of the state; it brought together individuals who, ideally, chose to live with each other; and it nurtured subjectivity and sheltered it from the outside world.

Families of workers or peasants, however, differed from Habermas's ideal bourgeois model. Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt suggest that, in industrialized societies, a worker experienced time as a succession of units: "[s]ocially necessary time, which the manufacture of a product requires; overtime, which is done within a specific period; [and] leisure time, as the residual part of the day...."[39] The first two dominated over the last time unit. Consequently, workers' daily lives followed a routine that could be valorized by Capital, which oriented the type of relationship established within a couple and with their children toward economic survival rather than the cultivation of one's personality. The proletarian family, therefore, did not always follow the bourgeois model, but may have included single parents who raised their children with the support of relatives, friends, or neighbors. The offspring often started working at an early age, initially within the family, raising younger siblings, then outside the home. Furthermore, as the state developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it took over part of the burden by means of welfare programs and available education. Bonding, especially of young generations, whether belonging to the bourgeois or proletarian classes, took place outside the realm of the family per se. Friends generated the emotional and mental

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[38] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 46-47.

[39] Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis, MN and London, UK: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 19.

closeness necessary when the family failed or when accelerated urbanization and industrialization aggravated the breach between generations.[40] Intimate publics, therefore, can come in various guises, but their "purpose" is to offer a sense of community and security, and fulfill a compensatory function in relation to the labor process.

Intimate publics, whether established within or outside the family, perform two important roles: they provide individuals with the necessary privacy—or freedom from outside interference—to engage with each other emotionally, and they support and guide the individual's inner realm of thought and affect. Ideally, the opinion generated within intimate publics reaches out to the weak and strong publics, and eventually, to the state. European totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in the wake of World War I "attacked" intimate publics on two levels. They inhibited the free circulation of ideas between these and the publics and counterpublics involved in the world of work, civil society, and state authorities. Furthermore, they brought to the general public's attention matters that used to be governed by privacy, such as gender behavior, sexual relations, or decisions regarding child-bearing and rearing. This strategy intimidated the individual, and led to duplicitous, automatized behavior; it also diverted people's attention from politics to survival, thereby allowing the state to exercise more control over its citizens.

The four components of social organization I have discussed so far—state authority, civil society, the world of work, and the domestic realm—interact with each other in the public, private, and intimate spheres. I define the public sphere as the totality of discourses that are made public and circulate among the representatives of state authority, civil society, and the world of work; this sphere relies primarily on strong

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[40] This was especially the case in Spain, where anti-Franco sentiment among the educated young generation brought them together against their families.

publics, which, in an ideal democracy, can balance each other. The public sphere also includes the discourses that circulate among the private components of the civil society or the world of work, among publics and counterpublics, to the degree that these become known beyond their immediate publics.[41] I describe the private sphere as constituted by the totality of discourses that never gain publicity beyond the limits of their own publics and that remain unknown to the state. Finally, I will refer to the intimate sphere as the space of communication established within intimate publics. The discourses generated within the intimate sphere can enter the private sphere, as intimate publics interact with weak publics and counterpublics; they can also seep into the public sphere, either from the private sphere or directly, as intimate publics interact with, or become part of, strong publics. In all spheres, the discourses produced range from contestation, to deliberation, negotiation, and even manipulation and control.

The transformation of the public sphere makes it increasingly vulnerable to manipulation and control by the state, Capital, or both. Habermas initially associates the European public sphere with the private civil society of weak publics, where matters of state trading and exchange gained publicity, that is, were made known to publics outside those who represented the state and the other agents involved in the respective transactions. He explains that this bourgeois public sphere was the natural prolongation of a "public sphere in the world of letters,"[42] which publicized private subjectivity, initially among intimate groups, and then among weak publics and counterpublics of the civil society, I would add. The world of film, for example, could be considered a

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[41] One example is a dispute between two sports clubs that may gain public relevance once it becomes a newspaper headline, and, therefore, known to others who are not members of those clubs.
[42] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 29-30.

modernized version of this public sphere in the "world of letters." If, in present democracies, this can be corrupted by the interests of Capital, in authoritarian regimes it falls under the strict surveillance of the state. By the 1700s, letter- and novel-writing, which had given birth to the literary sphere of critical discussion, had also inspired a political public sphere, where discussion no longer revolved around private, literary, or artistic matters, but developed further around economic issues and the necessary political measures to approach them. Habermas's definition of the bourgeois public sphere refers to an ideal, face-to-face interaction among equals:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason (*öffentliches Räsonnement*).[43]

Habermas describes the transformation of a part of the weak publics of the private civil society into stronger publics, in increasingly direct interaction with the state. Having risen in numbers and economic power, the middle classes, represented by men who owned property, demanded recognition by public authorities. They asked for a set of norms that would regulate economic relations among themselves and with the state. The result of rational discussions with state representatives, such norms threw into question, from the start, the previously unchallenged privileges that had formed the backbone of royal and manorial power in feudalism. It is important to underline an aspect on which critics have not always insisted: Habermas here describes the discrete mechanism which undercut the principle of power delegation in the Middle Ages. No longer distributed from a central

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[43] Ibid., 27.

point—be it the king, queen, or the lord—to those below, power, at least in specific economic and social cases, was to be based on a "contract" drawn *with* some of the formerly weak publics and not merely enacted *before* them. Consequently, these groups gained public status and a political function as a result of the debates and mutual recognition of the involved parties.

The middle classes, however, represented only a part of the weak publics of the private civil society. They became "visible" when, having outgrown its financial capacities, the state had no choice but to engage with the community of owners. Women, the landless peasantry and the emerging working class remained outside the bourgeois public sphere, and so did members of minority ethnic groups, all of whom formed weak counterpublics. Habermas suggests that, with the rise of nations and nationalism in the nineteenth century, the state was confronted with a civil society that demanded access to the public sphere based on citizenship rather than property. At this point, the nation state was forced to assume a welfare role, taking upon itself part of the concerns of the publics that had supported its rise. With this welfare role, the state also extended its authority over the private realm, especially over issues essential to the intimate and private spheres and that could no longer be settled by the respective publics alone.[44] I would like to underscore that two important transformations, therefore, happened simultaneously over the course of the nineteenth century: many counterpublics emerged into the public sphere, even if they remained on unequal footing in debates and negotiations with the dominant publics; secondly, the state started to intervene in matters that had once been protected by privacy. If the publicity of counterpublics eventually led to more rights for

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[44] See also Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 142-143.

their members, thereby contributing to the democratization of the state, the long arm of

the state, especially in matters regarding population growth, location, and military

service, would become one of the vulnerabilities of any society, and was to be abused

easily in authoritarian regimes.

The modern public sphere of the 1960s and 1970s, Habermas argues, flooded by

too many interests, was "refeudalized": it was no longer a site of interaction among

different publics, but one that only presented, under the mask of "general interest," the

results of a compromise reached by big business and the state beyond the scrutiny of the

other publics.[45] State and society had become so interlocked that there was no room left

for rational-critical debate:

> … [T]he integration of the public and private realms entailed a corresponding
> disorganization of the public sphere that once was the go-between linking state
> and society. This mediating function passed from the public to such institutions
> that have arisen out of the private sphere (e.g. special-interest associations) or out
> of the public sphere, e.g. parties; these now engage in the exercise and
> equilibration of power in cooperation with the state apparatus, treating it as a
> matter internal to their organizations. At the same time, they endeavor, via mass
> media that themselves have become autonomous, to obtain the agreement or at
> least acquiescence of a mediatized public. Publicity is generated from above, so to
> speak, in order to create an aura of good will for certain positions…. Critical
> publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity.[46]

In Habermas's vision, strong publics, in conspiracy and agreement with the state, had

colonized the public sphere and, with the help of the media, conferred publicity, i.e.

openness to the public, only to those matters they had already decided upon; furthermore,

they presented such matters in a biased, tendentious manner in order to gain approval for

their own position. Weak publics and counterpublics had no voice, and individuals could

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[45] Ibid., 195.
[46] Ibid., 177-178.

no longer intervene to sanction the state; their only role was to vote, and even this process was corrupted via the media.[47]

I believe that Habermas's vision is too pessimistic and obscures at least two realities.[48] The most important is that a variety of media leads to a variety of voices, and, consequently, to a greater empowerment of the individual, who has the opportunity to become more informed than Habermas assumes. In an authoritarian state, however, control over the media drastically reduces all sources of information that may challenge the official standpoint. In fact, most forms of public expression, from the press, to cinema, the arts, and cultural production, become mere loudspeakers for state propaganda, agents of advertising for what the totalitarian state considers appropriate and useful to strengthen and amplify its own power. I, therefore, argue that the "refeudalization" of the public sphere started in the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes established in Europe after World War II, and not merely in the 1960s and 1970s. Even in such extreme cases, however, I suggest caution because, especially in regimes that lasted for a long time, oppositional press, art, and culture often continued to exist, mostly within underground counterpublics and intimate publics. Sometimes, for limited periods, such opposition was allowed to emerge in the open, as a safety valve to release the pressure stored from growing discontent, or as a "proof" of democracy meant to convince foreign states.[49]

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[47] Ibid., 179-180.

[48] One need to take into consideration, however, that Habermas was writing at a time when German television was mostly state-sponsored.

[49] This is the particular case of Spanish cinema, for example; dissident films, although very carefully scrutinized, were subsidized through state institutions and exhibited especially in international film festivals, as "evidence" of the freedom of speech in Franco's authoritarian regime. I shall return to this issue in more detail in a further chapter.

Furthermore, the authoritarian state's control over all types of publics—strong, weak, and counterpublics— that contribute essentially to the construction and propagation of ideology further diminishes all groups' ability to gain publicity for their viewpoint.[50] This control takes many forms, from co-option of strong publics into the state apparatus, to the incorporation of weak publics and counterpublics into state-supervised organizations, and to the direct repression and even physical elimination of formerly strong publics and counterpublics that refuse collaboration. A major target is, therefore, the private sphere, which is subjected to state surveillance, purged, or driven underground. Civil society and the world of work fall, thus, under state siege and lose exactly the roots that offer them consistency and legitimize the power of the state. In authoritarian regimes, as in feudalism, ideological hegemony is imposed from above, by force and manipulation, when the many types of publics are silenced in favor of a few.

The second reality obscured in Habermas's account is individual agency. In an ideal democracy, weak publics and counterpublics provide individual voters with a diverse perspective on political issues, conferring on them the freedom of choice. In authoritarian regimes, the need to control the voting process—through intimidation of voters, as well as direct manufacture of votes—also implicitly indicates the impossibility of complete control by the state. Driven underground, formerly strong or weak publics may continue to exist, even if only in the conscience of their former members or through scattered, often isolated representatives who mostly act within intimate publics. Such

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[50] Louis Althusser names the totality of such publics as "Ideological State Apparatuses"; he includes strong publics belonging to the public civil sphere (such as political parties or publics belonging to the legal sphere) and weak publics of the civil sphere (which can have an educational, religious, or cultural orientation), as well as publics belonging to the world of work (such as trade unions), and, finally, intimate publics constituted around the family. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 17.

regimes, therefore, attempt to eliminate these individuals, and to intimidate and repress, if necessary, the intimate spheres where discontent may grow.

Authoritarian regimes present, therefore, two characteristic types of spheres: the official public sphere, mostly, albeit not completely, similar to Habermas's "refeudalized" public sphere, and a number of unofficial, underground private spheres, which rely especially on intimate publics and very few underground counterpublics. These underground private spheres are indirectly acknowledged by the state, which imposes its surveillance and takes repressive measures against all possible participants in such hidden discourses.

The unhindered, open existence and interaction among all types of publics and counterpublics is, therefore, essential to a democracy. Authoritarian regimes may be not only the result of an unexpected takeover of power, but also the indirect consequence of the diminishing energy of publics. The state and its representatives slowly take hold of the civil society and the world of work, and submit the domestic realm to economic and political pressures that reduce the ordinary individual's capacity for opposition. The public sphere, no longer a site for the interaction of various discourses and interests, becomes only a "stage" for the representation of state authority. Furthermore, matters of public interest do not germinate in the intimate sphere, and then trickle into the private and public spheres, but are rather imposed by the state, from above, onto strong publics and intimate groups. Weak publics, once the source for the validation of state power, are incorporated into state organizations, while counterpublics are eliminated or driven underground. The private sphere is thus reduced to silence. Finally, authoritarian regimes also inhibit the circulation of opinions and ideas within the intimate sphere by submitting

it to increased surveillance and control by means of policies regulating intimate life. In this context, popular film becomes a double-edged, complex, interactive tool, giving voice to both state ideology and, in some cases, to the discourses that contest it. The balance is always in the state's favor, but varies with each regime, with its duration in power and its social policies.

Authoritarianism in France, Spain, and Romania: The public sphere

Motto: A transparent society, a society without secrecy or privacy—that may be one of the best definitions of the totalitarian ideal, whether on the left or the right. Democracy is always nontransparent, opaque.[51]

The authoritarian and totalitarian states differ radically in terms of their political, economic, and social organization; they nevertheless share the structuring of such domains as education, social and cultural life, and the media. To recapitulate, totalitarianism relies on an official ideology, which often includes messianic elements, while authoritarianism relies on mentalities, on the acquired perceptions and expectations related to the regime. In France, Spain, and Romania, nationalism, buttressed by Catholicism in the case of the Western states, and by Marxism in the last case, replaced the initial fascist impetus. Power was divided among several entities of relatively equal importance to the regime. In occupied France, tensions regarding the country's role in the war and in a future Europe arose not only between the French government and the German occupier, but also within these two blocs. In Spain, the Falange, part of the

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[51] Matei Călinescu, "The Intellectual Scar," in *Censorship in Romania*, ed. Lidia Vianu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 65.

National Movement (Movimiento Nacional) since 1937, competed for power with the army and the Church, whose representatives often opposed its initiatives. Finally, in Romania, the old and new guard of communists struggled to maintain or gain control of the party in the late 1960s. Furthermore, both totalitarianism and authoritarianism resort to political repression and fear as essential instruments to discipline the population; while totalitarianism can turn anybody into an enemy authoritarianism targets clearly definable opponents.[52] No regime, however, can remain in power without mass support; in this sense, the major distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism is that the former rests primarily on the seduction of the people and their ensuing apathy, while the latter builds on terror and alienation.

In France, Spain and Romania, similar phenomena facilitated the perpetuation of an authoritarian regime: the strengthening of the leader and of the state apparatus beyond the citizens' capacity to intervene in their own defense; the colonization of the public sphere by one ideological discourse, and the elimination, often through brutal means, of any other contenders; and the use of the economic and social context to enhance the power of state bureaucracy and the few "chosen" power groups.

The figure of the leader is central to the authoritarian state, where it plays a more practical than symbolical role: the leader ensures the cohesion and functioning of the regime. Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain was, at the time of his rise to power in France, an eighty-four year old veteran of World War I and the hero of Verdun. In May 1940, the German army attacked France, by-passing the Maginot line, a series of fortifications built along the border with Germany and Italy. By June 14, the French had surrendered. The

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[52] See Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," 255; Paul Brooker, "Authoritarianism," in *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government, and Politics*, 21-36.

cabinet debated whether to join the Allies and fight against the Axis powers from North Africa or to remain at home and accept defeat. Pétain refused to leave and, on June 22, 1940, France signed the armistice. President Albert Lebrun named him prime-minister and the general perception at the time was that Pétain was the savior of his country.[53] He soon issued acts that undermined the powers of the parliament, but also preserved and legitimated the measures adopted in 1939-1940 by a government under siege and which had already taken an authoritarian direction.[54]

Marshal Pétain had become known for his opposition to direct firearm attacks at and his ability to negotiate and diffuse the soldiers' rebellion in 1917. In the 1930s, he contemplated accepting the post of minister of education, firmly convinced that the liberalization of morals, and the role teachers played in it, had brought little of value to the state. By 1940, he had become a quiet, venerable figure, much less threatening to the Popular Front than the more divisive Ferdinand Foch or Marshal Franchet d'Esperey, the other rivals for power. Commenting on Pétain's qualities as a father figure, Robert Paxton notes, "In the summer of 1940 . . . Pétain fitted the national mood to perfection: internally, a substitute for politics and a barrier to revolution; externally, a victorious general who would make no more war. Honor plus safety."[55] The Marshal's rhetoric of duty and sacrifice, his insistence on the family and its Catholic values as the stable basis for a national regeneration, as well as his conservatism and sternness found many supporters after the unexpectedly rapid defeat of the French troops. "Travail, famille,

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[53] See Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 34-38, 234.

[54] See Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 49; Paxton, *Vichy France*, 221.

[55] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 35.

patrie" ("Work, family, fatherland") replaced "liberté, égalité, fraternité" with the consent of a significant percentage of the people. Pétain's quick ascent to the position of "Head of the State" in July 1940 was followed by declaration of the first three acts of the new constitution, which gave him almost full legislative and executive power without the need for approval from the parliament.[56] There were no vigorous manifestations against this authoritarian gesture, which was perceived as a possible solution to national turmoil and surrender.

Like Pétain, Francisco Franco was a military figure associated with former Spanish glory. He was a very popular, relatively young general of the Spanish Army in Morocco when the growing dissent between the military and the government propelled him, along with three other generals, to initiate a coup against the Republican government. In this group, which included General Emilio Mola, one of the initial organizers of the plot, Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, and Miguel Cabanellas, Franco appeared as the least likely to alienate any of the forces united against the government, a similar situation to Pétain's and, later, to Ceaușescu's. By October 1936, he was proclaimed Chief of State and Head of the Government, and had free rein to decide on both strategic and economic matters; he was declared the leader of the state and government for an indefinite period of time.[57]

Franco was not particularly charismatic, but had great prestige as a general, so the Nationalist press promoted him as the man who would "save" Spain from the threat of

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[56] Pétain still had to consult the Assembly in case of declarations of war. See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 33.
[57] See Gabriele Ranzato, *The Spanish Civil War*, trans. Janet Sethre Paxia (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2005), 67-72; Stanley G. Payne, "The Civil War, 1936-1939," in *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 107-119.

left-wing principles and mores, as would soon be Pétain's case in France.[58] He became a symbol of discipline, order, and hierarchy, rapidly gaining supporters even among those who had initially stayed out of the conflict. The long war added to his luster, especially after Franco decided to stop his advancement toward Madrid in order to liberate the army academy at the Alcázar in Toledo, an event distorted and mythologized in his favor by the media. Like totalitarian leaders, Franco came to power by opposing the official ideology; unlike them, however, he did not support a specific set of ideas, but chose the ones that best fitted his military spirit. His inauguration speech was brief and to the point: Spain was to recover its former unity and glory, and the proposed regime was to be totalitarian in its scope, based on authority and hierarchy, and respectful of the religion of the majority.[59] Spain, God, family, and tradition were the future guiding principles, and Franco remained faithful to them.

The quality that drove him to the leadership of the Nationalist armies during the war was also the one that ensured his grip on power for almost forty years: his ability to function as a mediator between various interest groups. Franco was an army officer, the supporter of the fascist Falange, and a fervent Catholic, downplaying one characteristic in favor of the other, whenever necessity dictated.[60] During WW II, and as long as the Axis remained in control, Franco encouraged the activity of the Falange, and kept close ties with his brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Suñer, the president of the political council of the Falange and the foreign minister in charge of negotiating with the Italians and the Germans. When Hitler and Mussolini appeared to be losing the war and Serrano had

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[58] It is an interesting coincidence that Pétain was France's ambassador to Franco's Spain in 1939.

[59] Payne, "The Civil War, 1936-1939," 117.

[60] See Payne, "The Civil War, 1936-1939," 178; Jean Grugel and Tim Rees, *Franco's Spain* (London and New York: Arnold, 1997), 32.

managed to irritate everybody, el Caudillo (the Leader) removed him from the ministry in 1942, and allied himself even more clearly with the army.[61] As economic matters became more pressing in 1952 and then 1959, Franco incorporated into his government the technocrats of the Opus Dei, a Catholic group whose mission was the "sanctification of the secular world."[62] Although he had the authority to interfere in all ministries, he used it selectively, and, in the 1940s and 1950s, intervened especially in decisions regarding national defense and foreign policy.[63] He tended to wait and observe which group won an advantage over the others, and only then acted in support of that group. Power, therefore, lay in the interplay between different political elites and Franco; the regime did not depend on him for its daily running, but it would have ended—and it did—without him.

If Pétain and Franco were constantly associated with the father figure, Nicolae Ceauşescu's connection to his people was initially different: he was the "beloved son" of the nation rather than its benevolent or orderly instance of authority. Ceauşescu was the child of a peasant and had little formal education; after running away from home at the age of eleven, he found the family he was craving in the Communist Party. Jailed for his convictions in the early 1940s, he met the future, older Communist leaders in detention, which soon garnered him a comfortable position within party structures. By the 1960s, all other political parties had been eliminated, their members incarcerated and murdered, so a favorable situation within the ranks of the sole remaining Party implied access to important state functions as well. In 1965, Ceauşescu was only forty-seven years old and one of the newest arrivals in the highest circles of power. He had, however, been working

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[61] See Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," in *The Franco Regime*, 302-312.
[62] Ibid., 437.
[63] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 32.

for a long time for the Romanian Communist Party as a deputy minister first for the

Ministry of Agriculture (1949), then for the Ministry of the Armed Forces (1950), and

finally as a secretary for the party organization and cadres in the Central Committee

(1952).[64] His ascent to the top position was, in part, the result of particular circumstances,

but was made possible through his own cunning and, as in the French and Spanish cases,

by others' underestimation of his political abilities. Before his death in March 1965,

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the First Party Secretary, had been the partisan of "collective

leadership," a buzz-phrase referring to several people who held power and took turns in

different high office posts, but who never threatened the ultimate authority of the party

leader. Of these, Gheorghiu-Dej chose Gheorghe Apostol, a long-time comrade-in-arms

and one of the prominent members of the Party, to succeed him and continue the

opposition to the Soviet Union and to the Party faction that supported the Soviets. By

March, however, Ion Gheroghe Maurer, then prime-minister and the person entrusted

with the change, had already struck a deal with Ceauşescu, which both of them kept: at

the upcoming party congress, Maurer would nominate Ceauşescu for the position of First

Secretary and Ceauşescu would support Maurer's bid for prime minister.[65] Maurer

perceived the younger Ceauşescu as a less divisive figure and someone who could also

oppose the Russians, but without alienating other party members; he would live to regret

his choice, as he explained in the 1990s.

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[64] See Dennis Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy (1956-1969)," in *Romania under Communist Rule* (Iasi and Oxford: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1999), 104-106.

[65] See Silviu Brucan, *The Wasted Generation: Memories of the Romanian Journey from Capitalism to Socialism and Back* (Boulder, Co and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), 111; Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 106.

Ceauşescu's first measures were to remove all possible adversaries from the state and party apparatus: he sent Apostol as ambassador to Argentina; he named Chivu Stoica, a contender for high office, as President of the Council of State, but only for a few years; and he slowly sidetracked other competitors such as Alexandru Bârlădeanu, and, by the mid-1970s, even Maurer. Alexandru Drăghici, the Minister of the Interior, was Ceauşescu's most dangerous rival because he was the head of the massive repressive apparatus; in 1965, he was accused of the purges and murders committed in the 1950s and eliminated from all party and state positions (but eventually given a cozy management job).[66] The years between 1965 and 1969 were, therefore, essential to the leader's consolidation of power, so Ceauşescu, like Pétain and Franco, resorted to the double game of suppressing his enemies and seducing the masses; his advantage came from the shrewdness with which the repression of political competitors took the nationalist bent that made it so appealing to many people.

During his first years in power, Ceauşescu sought to strengthen his authority, so he allowed for a timid liberalization at home and engaged in an apparently bold foreign policy.[67] Most preoccupied with the consolidation of his own control over the party elites, the leader requested the investigation and arrest of those responsible for the mass murders and torture of the 1950s, a measure that made him very popular, but was not intended to establish justice: once Ceauşescu's challengers were dismissed, they were not indicted or sentenced for their crimes. The new leader also adopted Gheorghiu-Dej's anti-Soviet

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[66] See Brucan, *Wasted Generation*, 113; Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 106.

[67] Michael Shafir considers that Ceauşescu's first four years in power—the "authority building" stage—were marked by his attempt to demonstrate his leadership abilities and indispensability to others; they were followed by the "power consolidation" phase, in which he used repression and manipulation to strengthen his position. Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1985), 69-70.

stance, but, like his predecessor, not because he believed in democratization, but because he feared it. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, if applied in Romania, could endanger Ceauşescu's own position as absolute leader, so he tried to avoid it.[68] His opposition to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Prague and his constant emphasis on the country's autonomy and national pride transformed him into a hero for Romanians, who hailed him at a massive rally on August 21, 1968; it also made him a rebel figure for the West, who perceived him as a possible ally against the Soviet Union and as a mediator of talks with the Asian and Middle Eastern worlds.[69] Ceauşescu's first years in power, between 1965 and 1971, were, therefore, the authoritarian preamble to his totalitarian regime; by 1971, however, he had consolidated all possible functions within the state and party machine: he was the General Secretary of the Party (a title he had changed from "First Secretary" and which indicated his thirst for total power), the President of the Council of State, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the President of the Defense Council, and could preside over the Council of Ministers, if necessary; he also appointed the President of the Supreme Court and the General Prosecutor.[70] The cult of personality, connecting him with a long line of Romanian kings and revolutionary figures, was already in progress.

Franco, Pétain, and Ceauşescu gained power in surprisingly similar circumstances and by similar means. Their countries were passing through a difficult historical moment, when the threat of the dissolution of state power was very high: the German Occupation

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[68] See Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Ceauşescu's Dynastic Communism, 1965-1989," in *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2003), 187-188.

[69] See Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceauşescu's Romania* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1998), 21. Tismăneanu, "Ceauşescu's Dynastic Communism ," 188; Brucan, *Wasted Generation*, 84.

[70] See Shafir, *Romania*, 98.

in France, the Civil War in Spain, and a possible Soviet intrusion after Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's death in Romania. The leaders were perceived as less divisive and intimidating than others, so they soon gained the trust of the power elites. Furthermore, many people considered them capable of improving what appeared to be a hopeless situation, so they supported these figures. Pétain, Franco, and Ceauşescu were, therefore, entrusted with absolute authority because they were believed to be the only and best solution for the respective state crises.

No leader is alone in the exercise of power; however, and the institutions that would normally ensure the balance of all social and political forces in a democracy become, under authoritarianism, only the tools for the will of a small elite. Vichy France represented the rule of bureaucracy over all other state factors because the government amassed all power in the hands of its high civil servants, prefects, and experts. Two other forces—the Catholic Church and the several right-wing parties— played an important role in the administration, but they did not have the internal cohesion necessary to seize full authority. Although it was not dissolved, the parliament had an effaced presence in French politics because many of its members were sent to the provinces or jailed, while others joined the different governments of this period. Furthermore, even the advisory and consultative functions of the parliament were usurped in January 1941 by the National Council, a body chosen by the government that included "notable" figures of the regime: veterans, fathers of large families, symbolic patriotic and religious figures, and representatives of different professions or of social groups such as the artists or the peasants.[71]

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[71] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 191-192.

The state was solely authorized to appoint all members of the administration, both at national and regional levels. Pétain's first government included a relatively equal number of deputies and experts, some of whom had served under prime-minister Paul Reynaud in early 1940. Traditionalists, who supported a return to Catholic moral order, hierarchy, and a communal economy, initially dominated the ruling group and they held important positions in the ministries of foreign affairs, education, and defense, in the National Council and the Vichy youth and veterans' movements.[72] Nevertheless, the socially and economically relevant policies were taken by apparently neutral experts in the ministries of industry, labor, and agriculture.[73] Furthermore, in the fourth and fifth governments, under the supervision of François Darlan, these professionals dominated, as would be the case with the late-1950s government in Spain.[74] Finally, the internal fragmentation of the traditionalist forces, which ranged from old veterans to radical Catholics, largely prevented the formation of a strong, right-wing movement.

High civil servants also replaced politicians in public administration and were given more authority over their subordinates. Over three hundred Organization Committees were established to control labor, production, and prices, a similar situation to the reorganization of public and work life in Spain and Romania; their members were delegated rather than elected. Departmental administrative councils and municipal councils, prefects and mayors alike also gained office by nomination and not by vote; furthermore, the twenty provinces delineated by the Vichy regime were each

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[72] Ibid., 270-271.
[73] Ibid., 272.
[74] Ibid., 266.

administered by a governor and a council of notables commissioned from above. [75] The rule by appointees, whose position depended solely on their ingratiatory relationship to their superiors, presented several important advantages: it eliminated political ties to the past and, implicitly, political responsibility; it permitted more flexible shifts in strategies (hence the negative effect of governmental instability);[76] and it ensured the loyalty of the lower tiers to those who could give or take away their jobs. The steep increase in bureaucracy—by 50% between 1936 and 1947[77]—suggests the massive co-option of the middle classes into the administration, but also the higher degree of control exercised over the individual, in spite of the constant volatility of ministers and even prime-ministers.

Spain's authoritarianism also thrived on the manipulation of access to the ministries. Three essential forces, sometimes referred to as "families," were involved in decision-making at all levels: the army, the Catholic Church, and the Falange.[78] Although there were several other institutions—all of democratic origins—such as the Cortes (the former parliament) or the Council of the Realm, these had only a consultative value and their members were directly nominated by the party, army, or church rather than elected by popular vote. Even within the Cabinet, the most important administrative and policy-making unit, decisions were the responsibility of each minister rather than the result of discussion. Military officers were the preferred choice for government ministries throughout the 1950s, given their long history as supporters of the regime. Their

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[75] Ibid., 194-198.
[76] There were nine governmental crises between 1940 and 1943, most often in response to the evolution of the war. See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 200.
[77] Ibid., 193.
[78] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 30.

representatives infiltrated all organizations and the administration, and their main task was to guarantee the execution of policies rather than originate them (although, as ministers, they also contributed to policy-making). During and after the Civil War, the army established its own network of courts, prisons, and camps, and even as late as 1958 it was given jurisdiction over serious political crimes. After World War II, the main concern of the military was no longer the defense of the regime against international enemies, but the repression of domestic insurgency and state subversion. Although apparently essential to the regime, the army was kept in check by a reward-and-punishment system: loyalty to the regime was stimulated with posts in the government and the administration, while dissent was punished with forced retirement and even exile. Officers were constantly moved out of high positions so that they would not be able to accumulate too much power, a strategy also adopted by Ceauşescu; furthermore, they were placed in competition with each other or with civilians, which led to a balance of power among the various "families." Although it started to lose its financial relevance, the army remained an important instrument used by the Caudillo whenever a governmental change became imperative or as a counterbalance to the Church, the monarchist forces, and the Falange

In Romania, Ceauşescu's rise was possible after Gheorgh Gheorghiu-Dej's death as a result of the complex dependence of all state institutions on the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). As was the case of the Vichy regime and its adoption of the legislation passed in the last years of the Third Republic, the new Romanian leader did not reform, but used and improved the structures he had inherited in order to solidify his grip on power. At the RCP's Ninth Congress (1965), Ceauşescu insisted on an ideology

of change, so he took the title of General Secretary, changed the name of the party from the Romanian Workers' Party into RCP, and re-baptized the country from the People's Republic of Romania to the Socialist Republic of Romania. These were apparent signs of a new era, but, as Michael Shafir has underscored, these only accounted for a "simulated change": the party continued to exercise absolute authority, but it became the focus of apparently democratizing transformations.[79] RCP gave everybody the legal right to speak, but only as long as they deferred to the Party. All institutions, therefore, were mere shells, empty of any real meaning or power. The period under discussion, however, differed from those that preceded and followed it because it was one in which these institutions were reconfigured, thus granting more people the illusion of access to the public sphere.

The Grand National Assembly (GNA, Marea Adunare Naţională), the equivalent of the parliament, was defined by the 1965 Constitution as the institution of supreme power, but, in effect, it was under the complete control of the RCP and played merely a symbolical role, as it did in France and Spain.[80] Its members were elected for a term of five years, but participated in only two short sessions a year. Between these two dates, activity was carried out by the Council of State, elected from the members of the GNA, or by different GNA commissions coordinated by a Bureau; most members of these structures were also members of the RCP's Central Committee.[81] In theory, legislation could be initiated by at least thirty-five deputies or by GNA commissions, as well as by the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee; in practice, the party had the last word. Although the Constitution stipulated all the necessary powers for the GNA,

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[79] See Shafir, *Romania*, 55-56.
[80] Ibid., 95.
[81] Ibid., 96.

including that of appointing, checking on, and removing the President or the Council of Ministers, in effect the votes cast by its deputies were merely of approval for everything dictated by the party. The Council of State also had a largely decorative role: it established the dates for local and national elections, nominated and revoked administration officials, except ministers, awarded decorations and honorary titles, ratified treaties, etc.[82] After the removal of Chivu Stoica in 1967, Ceauşescu became the President of the Council, thereby fully submitting the GNA to his own rule. The executive power was represented by the Council of Ministers (i.e., the government), which was equally under party rule and supervision: it was appointed by the GNA at the recommendation of the RCP's Central Committee and of the National Council of the Front of Socialist Unity and Democracy (FSUD), an umbrella organization that included and politicized all types of associations that could have formed the private sphere; furthermore, the General Secretary could also function as its President whenever he chose to do so.[83] The army and the secret police had long been seized by party cadres and they were under the full control of the Minister of the Interior, Cornel Onescu, one of Ceauşescu's protégés. If the French bureaucracy served a state whose symbolical figure was Pétain and the Spanish state drew its authority from the balance of the three "families" for whom Franco served as an arbiter, the Romanian state in the 1960s laid the groundwork for the absolute dictatorship of one person and his "family," a group of preferred "servants" in key posts. As long as Ceauşescu was in the process of assigning these positions, however, the regime did not take its totalitarian turn. The late 1960s were

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[82] Ibid., 97.
[83] Ibid., 98.

a period of apparent popular participation and delineations of institutional functions and expectations.

All three regimes were, therefore, characterized by the thorough colonization of the public sphere by the conservative forces that, paradoxically, took power in the name of change. They achieved this result by undermining and suppressing the real function of the parliament. These governments, and the forces that controlled them at one time or another, ruled by fiat but maintained the pretense of accountability to the shadow legislative assemblies still preserved for their symbolical value. This system encouraged corruption and nepotism, as well as the devotion of appointees to those who empowered them, thus guaranteeing the stability of the whole.

All authoritarian regimes need a "religion," an ideological linchpin to "sell" to the people and maintain an impression of consistency; in all cases, nationalism was the new "religion," but it took different shapes. Catholicism and a return to a more conservative morality dominated the political and social discourse of Vichy France, but the Church did not pose a real threat to the state; increasingly, the prominence of the underground public sphere suggested that opposition to the Germans and national pride were the real factors that crystallized public sentiment and action. The Church expected a more significant role in the life of the state as a result of its ideological primacy. The priestly orders had three goals: a return to Catholic education in schools; the restoration of its property confiscated in 1905; and the abolition of discriminatory laws against religious denominations.[84] In spite of the visibility of Catholic ministers, the Church itself had to be content with only half measures. Religious instruction was reintroduced in schools and priests were

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[84] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 149.

permitted to teach in 1940, but this type of education became voluntary in 1941, with Darlan's more technocratic government. Church property was given back in 1941, but only in those cases in which it had not been (re)appropriated yet. Finally, religious orders gained the right to function under the same conditions as all other associations, but did not achieve a privileged position within power structures.[85] By 1942, the Catholic left had become frustrated with the increasingly authoritarian and corporatist state; furthermore, as deportations of Jewish nationals and refugees began, the opposition of this group produced the first open conflict with the regime.[86] The major domain of Catholic influence remained, therefore, only official public opinion as Vichy co-opted and cultivated the family-centered ethics and virtues of the church in its discourse, but did not empower the institution of the church itself.

In Spain, the Catholic Church gained a more significant role as a result of the changes that the regime was compelled to undertake in response to the outcome of World War II. The Church had supported the Nationalist side in the war, when nuns and priests had become the victims of gruesome assassinations by the Republicans; it turned a blind eye to the repression and executions in its own camp. It had one of the best-organized social and economic networks, built around its parish structures, schools, youth and women's organizations, unions, rural banks and syndicates; many of these were soon incorporated into similar party organizations. Like the military, it infiltrated all institutions, and gained exceptional visibility after 1945, when it was transformed into the new face of the regime. The Acción Católica Nacional de Propagandistas (National Catholic Action for Propaganda), its main organization for social interaction, became a

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[85] Ibid., 151-153.
[86] Ibid., 153.

major recruiting pool for state appointees. Supported by big landowners and industrialists, the Church was also especially important in regions such as Old Castile, Navarre, and the Basque country.[87] In the 1953 Concordat with the Vatican, the Church won important concessions, especially in the fields of education and the press. The Church's major political influence, however, was exerted indirectly, with the rise of the Opus Dei, the lay organization that provided technocrat ministers for the 1950s governments, which modernized the financial and economic direction of the regime. Their opposition to liberalism and the Falange conferred on them an increased authority, but, especially toward the end of the 1950s, clashed with other emerging Catholic groups that supported regional and union rights and often included members of the intelligentsia.[88] The Catholic Church remained an essential partner of the regime, substantially influencing public opinion through its governmental presence, and extended press and educational apparatus.[89]

In Romania, the major "religion" of the late 1960s was nationalism, with its special emphasis on the rejection of the Soviet Union's long-feared shadow and the "re-Romanianization" of the country. Strong anti-Russian feelings were caused not only by the overnight annexation of a large part of Romania—Bessarabia and Bukovina—by the Soviet Union as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939, but also by the stationing of Soviet troops in Romania after World War II and the deep infiltration of all state and party structures by Soviet agents and practices. The cruel torture and murder

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[87] In many cases, the Church had an important role in supporting regional rights.

[88] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 36-65, 53; Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 421-438; Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939-1975* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 28-41.

[89] By 1961, the Catholic Church controlled 49% of all secondary education, thirty-four out of the one hundred and nine newspapers, and owned over eight hundred periodicals. It was also one of the important instruments of censorship. Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 421.

of prominent pre-war Romanian politicians and of ordinary people opposed to the regime were also perceived as engineered in accordance with Stalinist ideology. In 1956, Romanian authorities facilitated the access of Soviet troops to Budapest in order to quell the popular uprising and Romanian facilities were used for the detention and interrogation of top leaders of the Hungarian revolt such as Imre Nagy and Georg Lukács.[90] These gestures of cooperation, as well as the high improbability that Gheorghiu-Dej's communist government could be overthrown by a similar uprising, convinced the Russians to withdraw their troops in 1958.[91] In the 1960s, however, as the Romanian communists feared a decrease in authority as a result of Khrushchev's policies, they started to criticize Soviet politics, which provoked the Soviets to encourage the Hungarian government to attack Romania's policy toward its Hungarian ethnic minority in 1968.[92] The relationship between the Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups had long been tense in Transylvania, a territory important to the histories of both groups.

In this volatile context, the Russian invasion of Prague only added more fuel to the nationalist fire, and the party easily manipulated popular sentiment. The newly-reinforced "religion" exalted national independence, the right of all states to determine their own fates without foreign intervention, and the long-lasting capacity of the Romanian people to resist daunting adversity. This ideology co-opted a large part of the more vocal intelligentsia, divided a possible resistance group along ethnic lines, and

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[90] Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 93-95.
[91] Ibid., 95-97.
[92] Ceauşescu's government promised new rights for minorities and did draft them into law, but, in practice, it consistently denied them any meaningful representation in the power circles. Furthermore, in 1968, the new division of the country into forty instead of sixteen counties led to the grouping of the Hungarian minority into two rather than one county, which prevented any future convincing claim to administrative autonomy by this ethnic group. Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 108.

emotionally energized ordinary citizens into support for the regime.[93] It was, therefore, the seductiveness of a doctrine spurred by specific historical circumstances that acted to split the private sphere and co-opt more voices for the official discourse.

Although differing in their ideological foundations, France, Spain, and Romania all adopted essentially conservative/traditionalist policies with markedly nationalistic accents. The state, the family, and the nation, whether reinforced through Catholic precepts or boosted by a Marxist insistence on self-determination, became the tenets of an official state "religion," which they defined as transformative for their populations. Individuals were valorized with regard to their contribution to the larger, officially defined, community and were labeled as enemies when they deviated from the "norms." Counterpublic discourses found no place in the public sphere.

If totalitarian regimes are often associated with the domination of a single party, authoritarian regimes preserve the preference for one political structure, but do not confer on it complete powers. With the exception of 1960s Romania, which had inherited the totalitarian system established in the late 1940s, these nations avoided the ascription of absolute authority to one political group. In spite of the German Occupation, fascism had a marginal position in the Vichy regime. The largest movement of quasi-fascist tendencies had been Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de Feu, but, by the 1940s, it had become the object of derision by other smaller, but more ideologically radical fascist groups.[94] The most prominent leader of such a group—the Parti Populaire Français—was Jacques Doriot, but in 1941 he co-founded the French unit of the Wehrmacht and went to fight on the Eastern front. Most fascists stayed within or withdrew to the Occupied Zone,

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[93] See also Shafir, *Romania*, 148.
[94] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 231.

where they enjoyed a cozy life of privilege, but no real political power. As Robert Paxton underscores, Vichy was closer to Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal in its fascist orientation than it ever was to Hitler's Germany or Mussolini's Italy.[95]

In the absence of any widespread fascist tradition, conservatives dominated the political stage. Starting with Pétain's rise to power, there was a strong impetus to entrust the veterans' associations with the important public mission of mediating between the population and the state. A well-known anti-Semite, Xavier Vallant attempted to create a national organization that could play such a role; the Veterans' Legion (Légion Française des Combattants) united all similar associations and engaged in acts of vigilantism, especially in the provinces. When its members also tried to assume pseudo-governmental functions, they clashed with the administrative bureaucracy, especially with the prefects, and eventually lost the confrontation.[96] Although it did not gain the political power it sought, the Legion continued to play a significant role as a staunch defender of old-fashioned morality and patriotism. A profoundly bureaucratic state, Vichy France used Catholic doctrine and the veterans' aura of integrity and honor as the grounds for its public discourse, with Pétain, the benevolent father figure, overseeing the national "family."

In Spain, the Falange did not fare much better: it gradually lost its foothold in the regime, and, after 1956, it was dissolved into the larger National Movement.[97] Before World War II, membership in the Falange could facilitate landing a job in the political

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[95] Ibid., 230.
[96] Ibid., 190-191.
[97] The National Movement appeared as a result of the April 1937 Decree of Unification, which united all right-wing groups under the title of Falange Española Tradicionalista y de la Juntas de la Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista. Shortened to FET, the formation adopted as its uniform the blue shirts of the Falange, the red beret of the Carlists, and the yoke-and-arrows symbol of the monarchy; it was later renamed the National Movement (Movimiento Nacional). Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 13.

and administrative apparatus, an advantage lost in favor of the army after 1945. The Falange was not popular with the army, the monarchists, or the Catholics because it was accused of corruption and arbitrariness. In the 1950s, the Falange, as part of the larger FET, was in charge of the unions and labor relations, youth programs, press and propaganda, and the welfare system.[98] A number of its important figures, including university personalities, manifested their opposition to the regime, but their aim was to transform, not replace it.[99] Even within the Falange, especially after 1955, the radicals and moderates confronted each other, which prevented them from conducting a coherent action in the public sphere. A major attempt to reorganize the National Movement appeared with the 1956 drafting of a new law according to which the party gained control over the Cortes, the presidency became tightly implicated in party structures and vice-versa, and the monarchy remained unmentioned. The Cabinet, dominated by the army, and the Catholic Church opposed the project, so Franco eventually rejected it. With the adoption of the 1958 Principles of the National Movement, the regime was recognized as Catholic, monarchist, and traditional; membership in the Falange dropped dramatically by the 1960s.[100] Neither the Falange nor the FET ever fused with the state, as was the case in the Soviet Union, or created the type of parallel structures that existed in Nazi Germany. Such a doubling of the state authority was essentially impossible, as the three "families"—the army, the Church, and the Falange—had separate areas of influence and never gained the financial, political, or social power to develop such a widespread

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[98] Ibid., 13-17, 39; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 50-51.

[99] Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 55.

[100] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 55-61; Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 447-455; José María García Escudero, "Cerco y triunfo (1945-1962)," in *Historia política de la epoca de Franco (*Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1987), 108-110, 113-114.

network of institutions.[101] Franco represented the state, and he was not ready to relinquish

this power to any of the groups. In France and Spain, therefore, the multiple forces that

shared power thwarted all the attempts made by favored political groups to gain

supremacy; the result of the constant tension among these groups was the gradual

surfacing of counterpublics, even if they did not have the strength to become influential

or resist very long in the public sphere.

The situation of the Romanian Communist Party, the only political formation that

was legal in Ceauşescu's state, was different from that of the French Veterans' Legion or

the Spanish Falange because of domestic and international circumstances rooted in World

War II: initially an ally of Germany, Romania turned against it in 1944 and was invaded

by Soviet troops. The 1945 Yalta Agreement placed it in the Eastern bloc, which soon led

to the uncontested proclamation of the Communist Party as the only political force. In the

late 1960s, however, the party was in the process of readjusting to new world

configurations and also to the ambitions of a new power group, of which Ceauşescu was

the major promoter and chief coordinator. Three factions had been clearly defined within

the Romanian Workers' Party[102] by the early 1950s, according to Dennis Deletant: one

was represented by those who had been jailed during World War II (which included

Ceauşescu and Gheorghiu-Dej); a second included those who had acted clandestinely in

Romania during the same period; and the third was the "Moscow bureau," formed by

those who had spent the war in Moscow and returned to high power positions in Romania

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[101] The monarchists were an important voice in the regime, and, if initially weakened by internal divisions, they gained more relevance in the 1960s, with the designation of Juan Carlos, the son of the never-enthroned don Juan de Borbón, as Franco's successor, after the young prince had sworn allegiance to the Movement. Franco used the monarchists to temper the Falange. Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 42-58.
[102] As I have already noted, the Romanian Workers' Party was the 1940s and 1950s name of the Romanian Communist Party.

afterward.[103] Gheorghiu-Dej slowly eliminated the last two circles through repeated

purges, arrests, and executions. Ceauşescu continued this process, but in an ingenious

manner: he enlarged and restructured the top bodies of the party in order to include his

own protégés and gradually sidetrack his possible opponents or rivals. The 1965 Ninth

Congress passed a new statute forbidding the same party member to hold full-time

positions in both state and party structures, which removed a number of Ceauşescu's

challengers.[104] He also created the Executive Committee (EC) of the RCP's Central

Committee (CC), a smaller body that connected the top party leadership and the CC and

included three newcomers; a pool of candidates for the EC was also established and all of

them were his devotees. Finally, a Standing Presidium replaced the Politbureau of the

CC, the highest party council of decision and control, but included only seven members,

all of whom were gradually removed from power.[105] By the Tenth Congress in 1969, only

five members of the former Dejist leadership still held important party functions; the rest

had all been promoted by Ceauşescu and would serve him faithfully. Another important

step was to ensure the support of the local communist organizations. Ceauşescu had been

nominating first secretaries—the equivalent of prefects— in many counties even before

his arrival in power in 1965; he continued to do so, but also increased their number in

1968, with the new territorial organization. These secretaries, in turn, controlled the

selection of those who would become members in the GNA, the Council of Ministers, or

the CC. This "circular flow of power" permitted no real newcomers into the system and

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[103] Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 83-84.
[104] Ibid., 112.
[105] See Shafir, *Romania*, 71-73.

ensured the party's allegiance to those at the top.[106] By 1971, RCP had all structures in place to become the totalitarian state party. In the late 1960s, however, as these transformations were under way and Ceauşescu sought to preserve and strengthen his authority, the plurality of voices within the same party gave the impression that there were several centers of power coordinated, as was the case in France and Spain, by one leader. As in France and Spain, the few voices that dared to criticize the regime were gradually marginalized and eliminated from the public sphere.

The history of the different contenders for power cannot be divorced from the social and economic upheavals experienced by the populations of France, Spain, and Romania. Events succeeded each other with great celerity for the Vichy regime during World War II. Barely born out of a shameful armistice, Pétain's "state" faced a second blow in July 1940, when its former ally, the U.K., attacked its fleet at Mers-el Kébir, killing over 1300 Frenchmen. Resistance would take more time to coalesce, however, because the first year of the Occupation was one of confusion, as Robert Paxton suggests. Most people were so disillusioned after the defeat that they believed the war was over. Furthermore, many did not know whether they should support or oppose Pétain, which prevented them from joining an active form of opposition. Finally, the French left was in complete disorder, as the forces that once formed the Popular Front now renounced their common program, but did not manage to gather enough supporters for a clear action against the government.[107]

The atmosphere of relative consent changed dramatically in 1941, especially after the launch of the Barbarossa Operation on June 22. The Nazi attack on Russia raised the

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[106] Ibid., 72.
[107] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 38-39.

pressure on France, Germany's supplier of food and fuel, but by this time, the resistance

was no longer passive. A wave of acts of economic sabotage culminated in the murder of

the German cadet Moser in a Parisian subway station on August 21, 1941.[108] Germany

retaliated by shooting common and political prisoners in large numbers, instilling an

atmosphere of panic and fear. Terrorist activities waned somewhat after Pétain offered

himself as a hostage to the Germans, but there was increased demand that Vichy curtail

the activities of the Resistance. Thinking that they could reduce Nazi control over

detainees, the French government started to execute its own prisoners, which only

aggravated the situation and produced more supporters for the Resistance.[109] 1942

brought massive deportations of Jewish refugees, but also a higher number of Maquis

(resistance fighters) and a more organized movement of underground counterpublics. In

the same year, the Nazis were defeated in North Africa for the first time. Following an

Allied attack on Morocco and Algeria, the Germans invaded the formerly Unoccupied

Zone on November 11, 1942 in order to use it as a launching base against their enemies.

After the major battle at Stalingrad in January 1943, Germany entered a period of more

dramatic economic and personnel shortages, which led to increased demands on France

and to the establishment of the much reviled Compulsory Work Service (Service du

Travail Obligatoire, STO). The service forced young men to do two years of mandatory

labor and sent most of them to work in Germany; the result was another boost to the

Resistance lines. Vichy responded to German demands in early 1943 by creating the

Milice française, a governmental paramilitary organization whose purpose was to fight

the opposition. The activities of the Milice, however, enraged the population more than

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[108]Ibid., 223.
[109] Ibid., 227.

those of the SS or the Gestapo. By D-Day, France was very clearly split between collaborators with, and vehement opponents to, the occupier.

Socio-political tension was exacerbated by economic turmoil. The unexpected defeat plunged France into one of its most dire periods, as industries and small businesses closed or were confiscated, ceasing their production, if only temporarily, before they could be re-organized. Shortages of food and shelter followed soon after an important exodus of people toward the Unoccupied Zone in 1940.[110] Two major tendencies dominated the early Vichy economic agenda: the "return to the soil" program of Minister Pierre Caziot and the corporatism sought by major proprietors in order to regulate and control labor, production, and prices.[111] The initial governmental orientation toward the reinvigoration of rural life as a source of moral rejuvenation was supported through legislation that promised subsidies to families who agreed to restore abandoned lands, encouraged tenants to make improvements in farms, and promoted the transfer of all holdings to a single heir.[112] Nevertheless, young people failed to return to rural areas, as would also happen in the case of similar legislation in 1950s Spain. Some agricultural regions yielded bigger crops during this time, but these went to the war effort in Germany. The fascist corporate model gathered all forces in a given industry or industrial section—employers, managers, and employees—into economic groups whose purpose was self-regulation. This model gradually was adopted in both industry and agriculture, which resulted in the production of specific war supplies necessary to Germany and the

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[110] See Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 29-38.
[111] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 205.
[112] Ibid., 207-208.

rationalization of others.[113] After 1942, when food shortages dramatically worsened the situation of millions of people, corporatism facilitated state intervention and administration of the market, as would also be the case in 1950s Spain. Inflation, unemployment, and penury led to bouts of hunger and the rapid expansion of the black market. The Pétainist slogan "Travail, Famille, Patrie" soon gave way to the sardonic popular saying "Tracas, Famine, Patrouille" ("Bother, Hunger, Surveillance").[114] The authoritarian regime of Vichy emerged and died with the German Occupation because it remained a foreign enterprise to its own citizens, in spite of its aspirations and pretense to self-determination. Pressed by daily worries and fears, individual citizens withdrew into smaller and smaller groups, but remained alert to the moves of the occupier. Their reactions had important effects on the transformation of the private and intimate spheres.

World War II was not the only agent of such a transformation. In Spain, the 1950s were tumultuous times, with tensions among the different contenders for power, with social pressures that often broke out into street protests and strikes, and with an economy that still had farther to fall before rising in the 1960s. The regime continued to consolidate its power and sought ways to achieve economic success. At the beginning of the decade, the policy of autarchy persisted, with the peasantry still deemed the basis of the state and the reservoir of morality and traditionally Christian values; nevertheless, it was the big landowners and industrialists who would soon gain prominence in the national economic policy. Rapid inflation, low wages, and the demand for fair representation were the sources of much social unrest throughout the period, and several

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[113] Ibid., 220.
[114] Ibid., 228.

major turbulences led to key political changes in 1951, 1957, and 1959, eventually opening the road for economic reform and liberalization.

The new government of 1951 followed an impromptu massive strike in Barcelona. Enraged by a rise in transport costs, and encouraged by members of the Falange to protest,[115] over 300,000 workers joined the spontaneous movement and paralyzed the city for two days. The government sent in troops and quelled the rebellion, removing both the city governor and the union leaders after the Falange withdrew its support. The Basque country witnessed similar riots in the weeks following the Barcelona strike. The state finally granted a 25% increase in wages, too little to cover the growth in inflation.[116] In July 1951, the new government included hardcore Francoists, most of whom had military and/or Catholic backgrounds, with the Falange and the monarchists pushed to the side, but also featured ministers who favored a slightly liberalizing position. Joaquín Ruiz Giménez, the minister of Education, would prove essential in restructuring the university curriculum and allowing for freer representation on university boards.[117]

1951 also marked a definite change in Spain's position within the international context, as the nation's anticommunism had become an important asset on the world stage. That year, Franco's state was admitted into the World Health Organization; in 1952, Spain joined UNESCO, and in 1953 it was included in the International Labor Organization. In August 1953 a new Concordat was signed with the Vatican; the Spanish

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[115] The Falange was in charge of the unions and had been in a long battle to recover from its political downfall after 1945.

[116] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 62; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 80-81; Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 415-416.

[117] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 59; Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 416-417; García Escudero, "Cerco y triunfo," 101-102.

state officially recognized the legal privileges of the Catholic Church, which included

mandatory canonical marriages for all Catholics, the right to exert censorship on

offensive materials, and the freedom of Catholic groups to decide on the structure and

mission of their congregations. Following Spain's offer of support for the Korean War,

the United States signed a multi-level pact with Franco; it included the acknowledgment

of the regime as legitimate, as well as military and economic provisions. The funds

derived from the construction of several military bases in Spain were doubled through the

credits given to buy American raw materials and food at lower prices. Although not on a

par with the aid distributed through the Marshall Plan, these allowances fortified the

regime internally and externally. In December 1955, Spain was finally accepted as a

member of the United Nations.[118]

This international recognition, together with the limited economic opening,

largely contributed to the rapid growth of the GDP between 1951 and 1958. This rise,

however, had an unstable foundation, as the quality of goods was inconsistent, factories

and machines were old, and consumption remained low because of limited production

and reduced salaries. By 1956, a severe deficit resulting from rising imports and

widespread unemployment further worsened the standard of living.[119] Strikes continued

all through the 1950s, especially in industrialized areas such as the Basque Provinces,

Asturias, Navarre, and Catalonia, and in important urban centers such as Valencia,

Seville, Orense, Barcelona, or Madrid.[120] In 1956, a major students' movement in Madrid

led to a new restructuring of government. Protesters demanded free elections to the SEU

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[118] See Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 417-420; García Escudero, "Cerco y triunfo," 102-103.
[119] Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 465.
[120] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 63; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 81-83.

(Sindicato de Estudiantes Universitarias, the Syndicate of University Students), the national youth organization represented in the Cortes. The clashes between students and the army ended in the suppression of the protest, the dismissal of Ruiz Giménez, accused of attitudes that were too liberal, and the removal of the leader of the Falange, Raimundo Fernández-Cuesta, who was suspected of having instigated the students. Franco, whose habit had been to minimize such protests and prevent them from gathering momentum, did react, albeit with some delay, to the unrest, and temporarily closed the University of Madrid. [121] Although they did not achieve their goals, the students signaled the emergence of a still-timid dissidence that gained more visibility through the various professional journals and magazines published in the 1950s.

More strikes and an already uncontrollable inflation, as well as dissention among the three major political "families," led to the 1957 reshuffle of the government. The Falange, whose ministers had approved wage raises, was further removed from active involvement in economic affairs, although they still maintained four positions in the administration. The majority of ministries—seventeen—was allotted to the army, while the Catholics received the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opus Dei was to change the country's economic direction from its three key posts in the Ministries of Finance and Commerce, and the Secretariat of the Falange. Promoting market-based policies and limited economic state intervention, the conservative Catholic group was not, however, in favor of a radical political change or of a cultural and social liberalization.[122]

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[121] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 63; Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 442-443.
[122] See Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 450-455; Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 64-65; García Escudero, "Cerco y triunfo," 110-112.

The 1959 Stabilization Plan proposed by the Opus Dei was deemed successful, in spite of the temporary set-backs in terms of employment and wages. Preceded by the signing of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, the plan opened Spain to an intensive economic cooperation with Europe and led to the rapid *desarrollo* (development) of the 1960s, largely based on consumerism, industialization, and tourism. [123] The aim of the Plan was to reduce inflation and encourage foreign trade and investment. Public spending was cut by 75%; the price of utilities rose dramatically; and there were new, higher taxes on tobacco and gas as well as higher interest rates for borrowers. Industry became a priority and agriculture producers saw their direct subsidies curtailed.[124] By the 1970s, the number of people employed in agriculture had decreased from 46% (in 1950) to 22.2%, and the number of employees in the secondary sector had increased from 27.4% to 48.4%.[125] Spain had become a modern state, with an urban-based population.

A similarly rapid, yet tormented, growth was registered by Romania in the late 1960s. The theses of the Ninth Congress continued the economic line generated before 1965, but did not veer towards real reforms that could have threatened the solidity of the political regime. The stress continued to be placed on centralized planning, following the Soviet model, on the accelerated development of industry, especially heavy industry, at the expense of consumer goods, on the maximum use of national resources, which amounted to a situation of semi-autarchy, and also on social and ethnic "harmonization,"

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[123] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 65-66; García Escudero, "Cerco y triunfo," 115-116.

[124] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 116.

[125] Most European economies shifted from an agriculture- to an industry-based economy. Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 96.

which implied the cultural assimilation of minorities.[126] In 1967, at the party conference,

reformers at the top proposed a change in economic relationships and the recognition of

market policies, but this suggestion was rejected.[127] By 1968, there were important

modifications in the administrative and education systems, as well as a sense of overall

liberalization of the media and arts. These transformations toward a more open society

were abruptly interrupted in 1971, following Ceauşescu's visits to China and North

Korea; impressed by the demonstrations of absolute adherence and support to the Party,

he returned home with the determination to achieve the same obeisance from his citizens.

The "Seventeen Theses" of July 1971 were the start of a mini "cultural revolution," a

complete reversal of even the timid reforms under way and a return to the hard political

line of the 1950s.[128]

Before World War II, Romania had been a largely agrarian society, with a

reduced middle class and a relatively deep gap between rural and urban life. Between

1950 and 1980, seven million of the nation's twenty-two million people moved to the

cities, a migration similar to that experienced by Spain in the 1950s.[129] In order to cope

with this massive relocation, there were over 640,000 apartments built between 1966 and

1970.[130] In the same period, Romania had one of the highest growth rates in the world,

most of which was concentrated in industry at the expense of agriculture; the result would

soon be economic stagnation. The national income also increased by an average of 9.3%

per year, but only half of it affected real wages.[131] Schooling became compulsory up to

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[126] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 197-198; Shafir, *Romania*, 107.
[127] See Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 198.
[128] See Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 112-119.
[129] See Brucan, *Wasted Generation*, 125.
[130] Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 113-114.
[131] See Shafir, *Romania*, 107-108.

the age of sixteen, which resulted in a higher rate of literacy. Overall, Romania, like many of the countries in the Eastern bloc, passed through its most propitious economic period, when many people's standard of living improved and social mobility increased.[132] This, in part, explains the low levels of discontent and the absence of any serious oppositional movements or strikes before 1972. The other reason for the relative apathy of the time was still to be found in the ubiquitous and mostly unreformed presence of the secret police at all levels of society, which prevented and repressed any possible attempts at revolt. Finally, Ceauşescu's appeal to national sentiment following the 1968 events further contributed to the consolidation of his, and the party's, control over an enthusiastic population.

Romanians were not the only ones to feel enthusiasm for the new leader; the West was equally impressed by Ceauşescu's apparent revolt against the Soviet Union. In 1967, he was the first one to establish a relationship with West Germany and to preserve political ties with Israel after the Six-Day War.[133] He opposed the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968, not because he was looking forward to the type of reforms promoted by Alexander Dubček, but because he feared that Leonid Brezhnev's measures would apply in Romania and he would lose some of the power he was seeking, as Silviu Brucan suggests.[134] After 1968, important leaders, such as Charles de Gaulle, Richard Nixon, and Harold Wilson, the British prime-minister, attempted to create ties with a man they perceived as the face of change. In 1971, Romania was admitted to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and in 1972, to the International Monetary Fund and the

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[132] Ibid., 139-144.
[133] Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 106.
[134] Brucan, *Wasted Generation*, 115.

World Bank.[135] Like Spain, Romania gained international approval in spite of the backstage consolidation of the authoritarian regime; to a great degree, this endorsement further seduced many of its citizens into an optimistic perception of the "new" state and party.

Vichy France, 1950s Spain, and 1960s Romania shared several essential characteristics that allowed one political orientation and one uncontested ideology to dominate the public sphere and closed the door on counterpublic discourses. They all entrusted their leaders with absolute powers, even if this was "justified" by reference to the necessity of a coherent command during wartime in France, the indispensability of a "mediator" among different groups in Spain, or the search for a "new" type of political administration in Romania. In all cases, the presidents promised the regeneration of their nations by emphasizing conservative family values and calling upon citizens to devote themselves fully to the community and the country. In order to achieve undisputable domination, these regimes transformed parliaments into symbolic assemblies and conferred on their own governments, and the people who ruled them, the power to legislate, enforce laws, and impart justice. Economic reorganization or turmoil, massive migration, and the constant preoccupation with survival and adaptation contributed to the apathy of the majority as long as precipitating historical changes did not push them into action, as was the case in France. Out of the competition for political power among the different factions at the top came the opportunity for the rise of counterpublics into the public sphere; their presence there, however, was fragile, temporary, and served to improve the state's domestic and international image rather than foster any real change.

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[135] Deletant, "Moves towards Autonomy," 118.

The private and intimate spheres faithfully recorded and reacted to all these transformations.

Authoritarianism in France, Spain, and Romania: The private sphere

The private and intimate spheres constitute the foundation of all individual action, so authoritarian regimes found it imperative to modify their dynamic and composition in order to attain and preserve the support of the majority. The private sphere refers to the space of discourse created by one or more groups around a common topic, a discourse that is supposed to remain unknown to outsider groups or the state; freedom of thought and expression usually characterize this discursive space. The private sphere is intricately connected to the intimate sphere, which is the primary site for the formation of individual consciousness in relation to the values shared by the close group of communication. The principles originating in the intimate sphere represent the basis for the debates in the private sphere and, eventually, for those that emerge within the public sphere. It is not surprising, therefore, that the non-democratic regimes of Vichy France, Franco's Spain, and Ceauşescu's Romania acted in a similar manner in order to impose a uniform mode of thinking among their citizens. Much like totalitarian regimes, they co-opted or eliminated private publics, isolated the intimate and private spheres from each other, and sought to determine the substance and orientation of private and intimate discourses. All three states promised security, order, and morality to populations who had suffered through long periods of economic and political confusion.

World War II provoked seismic shifts in the social realm and, consequently, important changes at the level of the private and intimate spheres in France. The drafting of thousands of men paralyzed the economy and agitated the lives of small communities. The unexpected defeat followed by the exodus toward the south plunged the country into a period of uncertainty, confusion, and expectation. As political and economic conditions worsened, individuals were forced to resort to all types of bargaining for food and shelter, and often had to depend on friends, families, and even strangers for a hiding place. Although apparently protected from the pressures of politics, life in the countryside was not spared its share of danger and frustrations with the newly empowered authorities. In the crowded cities, scouring for any meager sources of food and trying to avoid both domestic and foreign surveillance became a national pastime. Suspicion, exhaustion, and fear were not the best supporters of peaceful interaction between publics and counterpublics.

The French and the "un-French" were the two "nations" that seemed to materialize out of long-standing enmities and xenophobia. The regime tried to attract the population to its project of a National Revolution that would ensure social harmony and stability through the revitalization of morality, better education, and a technocratic vision of a well-organized industrial France.[136] In 1940, mass disillusionment was also the product of the 1930s parliamentary crises that prevented the timely approval and enforcement of legislation, and of the laissez-faire economic policies that only deepened economic depression. Vichy promised a return to Enlightenment values, coherent reforms, honesty, and safety, so, in its initial stages, it attracted many of those who had

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[136] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 232-233.

grown tired of uncertainty and disorder. Parades, marches, and other ceremonies organized by the traditionalists appealed to religious, patriotic, and rural symbols intended to exalt national roots and raise participants' self-esteem. This air of "la Vieille France," as Paxton describes it,[137] mobilized the conservative and even pacifist strata of society, but it was soon rendered powerless by the increased friction between the German and Vichy authorities.

The "un-French French" represented the agents of corruption against whom the regime launched campaigns of "purification," set up its own system of concentration camps, and retroactively denied naturalization.[138] Jews, Freemasons, foreign laborers (from Spain, Italy, or Poland), and refugees drew the attention of the repressive authorities. There was an indigenous, mostly cultural and national anti-Semitism that incited the French to exclude Jews from public and work life, intern them in camps, deny their rights as citizens, and impose no penalties on the extreme-right press.[139] If in the Occupied Zone, Jewish businesses were immediately confiscated and distributed between the German and French authorities, in the Unoccupied Zone there was a well-orchestrated effort to force the Jewish population to emigrate: jobs were gradually entirely forbidden to Jews, including those in the entertainment industry after June 6, 1942, their properties were sold to French profiteers, and they were eventually rounded up and deported starting in 1941.[140] The Vichy government set up the Union Générale des Israélites Français,[141] an organization it controlled and which became mandatory for all Jewish nationals. This

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[137] Ibid., 222.
[138] Ibid., 170-171.
[139] Ibid., 173-176; Vinen, *The Unfree French*, 136.
[140] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 178-181.
[141] Ibid., 184.

measure brought into forced public visibility this large ethnic and religious counterpublic, and made it vulnerable to the state's whims. As Paxton rightfully emphasizes, the system of repression set up by the French, most often unprompted by the Germans, became the perfect Nazi instrument for the imprisonment and execution of Jews after 1942.

Another important counterpublic was constituted by the Freemasons. The Masonic Lodges, which included village teachers, doctors, and shopkeepers, represented important oppositional voices against officials such as priests, landowners, or monarchists.[142] They were republican and anti-clerical, and could have represented important centers for the crystallization of discontent. On August 13, 1940, the regime ordered that all secret societies be abolished; furthermore, civil servants and public officials had to take an oath that they were not members of such societies. This law completely banned the access to the public sphere of those counterpublics that threatened the establishment, forcing them underground; the constant repression that followed was intended to silence them and dismantle their unity. Their energy, however, was often transferred to the forces of the Resistance and their discourse gained constant supporters so that, at the time of the liberation, the rapport between the two "nations" of France—those who were for and against Vichy—had been fully turned around in favor of the "official" counterpublics. This transformation is the major difference between France and the other two states, Spain and Romania, and it derives from the perception of the Vichy regime as conspiring with a foreign occupier against its own people. It was the dependence of Pétain's rule on German victories that led to the ultimate reversal in fortune of the underground and official public spheres at the end of the war.

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[142] Ibid., 172.

In the 1950s, Spain was trying to recover from the deep rifts created by its own Civil War, but did not manage to engender the national harmony that, like France and Romania, it sought. The individual's private and intimate spheres suffered profound transformations, camouflaged by the more pressing fight for economic progress and the general climate of political apathy. Social restlessness was fostered by the massive migration to the cities, which implied a change in profession as well as mentality. Some urban centers grew between 84% and 500% between 1951 and 1959, which only tightened the competition for housing, schools, and welfare.[143] Work and living conditions remained precarious.[144] In agriculture, at the beginning of the decade, there was an excess of workers, most of whom toiled the day and lived in shacks and on low wages. In the cities, industries expanded at a rapid pace, but their antiquated machinery demanded the equally rapid expansion of the workforce, achieved at minimum costs. Tensions derived from the crowded living conditions in tenements could be further inflamed by hostilities between practicing Catholics and non-religious individuals, between groups coming from different regions, or between younger and older generations. Such a precarious economic environment generated enmity among the various publics and counterpublics.

Two Spains emerged in the process: the "true," Catholic, Nationalist, traditional, and property-based and the "anti-Spain," secular, formerly Republican, modern and, in some cases, Falangist. One was to profit, the other, to pay. "Every Spaniard follows the

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[143] Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 105-106.

[144] The same situation could be found in France, as a consequence of war, and even in Romania, as a result of uncontrolled industrialization and in spite of incremental improvements in urban living standards.

church, with either a candle or a club," [145] ran the saying, and, indeed, the split was two-fold: city versus village, and the upper and middle classes versus the working class and the dissident intellectuals. The religious processions on important saint days reflected social hierarchy: the bishops and priests were followed by the military, mayors and civil governors, the representatives of the Falange, and other local personalities; the poor and the ragged came at the end. The Church, whose approach permeated the media and was adopted by official culture, opposed the middle classes, defined as reasonable, hardworking, and spiritual, to the working and lower classes, described as culturally limited, weak, and pleasure-oriented. [146] Certain categories of people were especially targeted and submitted to a harsher discipline because of their leftist background, as was the case with railway workers or miners. Low salaries, chronic illnesses, mistreatment, and hazardous, disease-ridden housing transformed their lives into a constant battle for survival.[147] Protestants also saw their rights severely curtailed, in spite of the 1945 Fuero de los Españoles, the bill of rights that guaranteed freedom of worship; their public activity was prohibited and they fell victims to intimidation tactics and direct attacks.[148] Although the supporters and the opponents of the regime seem to have been divided into more or less homogenous groups, one should be wary of making a priori judgments based on categories such as class, religious, political, or intellectual background. There were Catholic organizations that became very vocal against the dangerous working and living conditions of the lower classes just as there were groups within the Falange that spied on and denounced union representatives who encouraged workers or students to protest. The

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[145] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 129.
[146] Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 135-136
[147] Ibid., 75.
[148] Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 421.

rapport between publics and counterpublics varied according to the economic and international agenda of the state, which did make individuals wary of the groups to which they could belong and, therefore, lowered possible opposition to the state.

The same situation existed in Romania in the late 1960s, when the communist regime was passing through a period of redefinition. The major economic event was the transformation of a mostly agrarian society into an industrialized one, soon to be plagued by shortages and poverty. In 1950, 75% of the population was employed in agriculture; by 1981, less than 30% still worked the land.[149] The "systematization" of villages started immediately after the full installation of the communist authorities in the late 1940s and it implied the expropriation of all private farms, the forced relocation of the more prosperous class, and often the imprisonment of priests and teachers, the intellectual strata. By the 1960s, many of the former peasants had been employed as workers in the new factories, but they continued to depend on goods and food produced through an agriculture of subsistence in the countryside, where many of their older relatives continued to live. These young people brought with them the mentality of a peasant society, characterized by a collectivist rather than individualist attitude, mysticism, and fatalism.[150] As many scholars have emphasized, the paradox of Romanian communism was that it defended workers' rights in a country where the working class was poorly represented, if at all. Improvements in living standards—too few by comparison to similar cases in Western Europe, but important if related to life in the Romanian countryside—and the struggle to succeed preoccupied most of the new urban dwellers. These economic realities, combined with the lack of class consciousness and the

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[149] Shafir, *Romania*, 139.
[150] Ibid., 132.

continuous pressure of the secret police, may account for the relative calm of the late 1960s, when there was no visible opposition to the regime.

The absence of direct conflict with the state in the late 1960s was also the result of the recruitment of the small community of intellectuals in the service of the state. In the late 1940s, the Soviet authorities conducted a well-orchestrated campaign against the major figures of the Romanian intelligentsia that had not yet emigrated; the result was almost always their imprisonment, torture, and death. By 1965, very few of those incarcerated were still alive or had recovered their posts in universities and other cultural organizations, in spite of a 1964 amnesty granted by Gheorghiu-Dej to all political prisoners. The new intellectuals, some of them quite vocal against the Stalinist excesses in the 1950s, found in the Writer's Union a space that was conducive to their debates. Ceauşescu's first two years in power brought a relaxation of censorship and political repression; furthermore, his position in the 1968 events attracted even former dissidents and prisoners, such as Paul Goma, to the RCP. Finally, there never was a very close connection between the Romanian intelligentsia and the new working class, which did not foster a common stance against the regime.[151]

The Romanian dissidence included isolated counterpublics with distinct preoccupations and few opportunities for interaction. One group that was unintentionally pushed into political opposition was that of the "oneirist" writers, who, early in the 1960s, insisted on the absolute autonomy of art against all political or even pseudo-scientific intrusion.[152] This small private sphere was gradually eliminated by the forced emigration of its participants. Much of the opposition to the state came from religious and

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[151] Ibid., 144-149.
[152] Ibid., 168-169.

ethnic groups. The Uniate Church, practically outlawed in the late 1940s, continued to

function as an underground order, with bishops secretly ordained by the Vatican, but with

ever fewer parishioners.[153] Members of the Roman Catholic Church, mostly of Hungarian

and German ethnicity, also faced continuous repression and conducted their gatherings

with the utmost care, often in the presence of more or less secret representatives of the

authorities.[154] Finally, many dissidents found it impossible to gather supporters and their

acts remained solitary moments of defiance, almost always punished by detention and

even execution. In Romania, therefore, "conscription" into support for the official

discourse was almost complete by the late 1960s, while the existence of underground

counterpublics, severely imperiled long before 1965, did not pick up pace in the first

years of Ceauşescu's "mandate."

In France, Spain, and Romania, the proportionate importance of publics and

counterpublics varied as a result of specific historical circumstances. In France,

underground counterpublics grew in number as a direct consequence of foreign

occupation. In Spain, they had an oscillating, unclear relationship with the state, while in

Romania, they had been radically diminished and relentlessly pursued. In all cases,

however, they were the main targets of the authoritarian regimes that sought to reduce,

control, and eliminate them. Consequently, ordinary individuals were reluctant to enter

into associations, especially with those ethnic, religious, and economic groups repudiated

by the state, an attitude that led to the substantial impoverishment of the private sphere

and the longevity of the authoritarian regimes.

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[153] Ibid., 154.
[154] Ibid., 154-155.

The world of work is one of the most important suppliers of publics and counterpublics for any regime. In the case of the three authoritarian states under discussion, workers' unions, employers' associations, and other professional organizations gradually fell under the jurisdiction of the state, which sent its representatives to watch and control the activity of all types of groups. Furthermore, in spite of their different ideologies, all three countries adopted the same strategy of consolidating these different organizations into one mammoth union, which was centralized and submitted to official regulation. Vichy France, like Spain and Romania, promoted the idea that class struggle could be eliminated if employers and employees joined together and had common goals. Among the first measures taken, therefore, was the dissolution of all existing economic interest groups, including the powerful Confédération Générale du Travail (The National Confederation of Labor, CGT), whose history was over fifty years long, the Christian unions, and the Confédération Générale du Patronat Français (The General Confederation of French Employers, CGPF) on November 9, 1940. Earlier, in August 1940, the regime had passed a law authorizing each industry to set up an Organization Committee (Comité d'Organisation) financed by a fee levied on all companies involved and whose members were appointed by the Ministry of Industrial Production. Although these committees were supposed to regulate the activity of each industry, it was the government that had the last word on the allocation of raw materials, so that production was ultimately directed towards those areas most needed by the Germans and the war effort.[155]

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[155] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 216-217; 220.

If the employers' and managers' influence was reduced to a minimum, workers had even less, if any, leverage in the system. Although local unions had initially survived the 1940 law, the Labor Charter that followed on October 4, 1941 withdrew their right to strike and only allowed them to participate in local social committees (comités sociaux) that represented them in matters such as pension funds and recreation.[156] From a strong public, with an important position in the public sphere and in relation to the state, workers were reduced to a weak public under the control of the authorities. Even in the local mixed committees, workers represented only a third of the assembly (the other two thirds were the delegates for the employers and the technical personnel, such as engineers and accountants). If the employers had been, at least in part, co-opted by the system, many workers eventually joined the Resistance, forming underground counterpublics that fought for the termination of the regime.

In a very similar way to the transformations in France, in Spain, workers' organizations and unions fell under full state jurisdiction as a consequence of their massive support for the Republican side; the regime cannibalized this private sphere by exposing union debates to the public eye of state representatives and employers. By the end of the 1950s, the private and public spheres in the world of work did diversify, but did not gain enough official recognition to be considered partners by the state. The 1938 Labor Charter created a network of official "vertical" unions (the OSE, or Organización Sindical Española) which brought employers and employees together under state direction; by 1940, membership in the OSE had become mandatory. The main functions of the OSE were to discipline the workers and defend the employers' economic interests.

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[156] Ibid., 217-219. Unions had similar "rights" in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, 1950s Spain, and late-1960s Romania.

Understaffed and underfunded, the OSE network was completed in the urban areas only in the 1950s and in the rural areas in the 1960s.[157] Under the control of the Falange, unions were represented in the Cortes, but only by supporters of the regime who were invested by the National Voting Committee (Junta Nacional de Elecciones); even so, their numbers were reduced and workers' real interests were not well represented.[158]

Workers' initial reticence towards the unions was overcome in the 1950s, when they recognized the necessity for representation, but also when the election process was slowly improved. Various political and social forces attempted to gain control of the national syndicate movement, especially after 1956. José Solís Ruiz, the secretary general of the National Movement, realized that the unpopularity of the party made it difficult to defend its power among the Francoist "families," so he attempted to build a stronger syndicate in order to use it as leverage.[159] His action did not have the intended effect. With freer union elections, the PCE (The Spanish Communist Party), the socialists, and the former militants infiltrated the unions and interacted with younger workers, raising the group's prominence as counterpublic.[160] The ensuing strikes often ended in layoffs, arrests, and severe sentences especially for those with a politically "tainted" past. Nevertheless, they also resulted in higher wages and the granting of a number of rights. In 1959, the Law for Collective bargaining replaced the industry-wide agreements made with the state with individualized contracts made directly with the Ministry of Labor.[161] This allowed for better representation of workers' interests and, consequently, better

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[157] Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 43; Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 19, 34.
[158] Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 47-48.
[159] Payne, "The Dictatura, 1939-1959," 454.
[160] Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 47, 87.
[161] Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 66.

wages and working conditions, although the effects would only be seen in the 1960s,

after the short period of recession between 1959 and 1962. A related development was

the emergence of Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras), which were unions

independent of state intervention, but largely supported by the PCE, with a free system of

elections and whose representatives had, therefore, the full support of their voters.[162]

Although initially not recognized by state representatives and the OSE, these

Commissions gained importance after the widespread 1962 strikes, when they were

acknowledged as representing the workforce. The communists and socialists were not the

only supporters of the workers' movement. By the end of the 1950s, significant Catholic

associations such as HOAC (Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica), a group

belonging to the powerful Catholic Action organization and established in 1945, and JOC

(Juventudes Obreras Católicas), their youth counterpart established in 1947, supported

the leftist criticism voiced by the independent unions, which allowed them to gain more

rights in the 1960s, when there was also a labor shortage in the public sector.[163] In Spain,

then, the counterpublic sphere in the world of work diversified in the 1950s, but it only

gained real leverage in relation to the state after 1959.

Indeed, throughout the 1950s, strikes and labor movements had little chance to

succeed. The Falange collaborated with the police in repressing them and arresting their

leaders. Furthermore, they warned workers about their behavior in relation to the regime:

insistence on unearthing sensitive issues such as state violence, militarization of the

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[162] Ibid., 70.
[163] Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 87; Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 115.

workplace, or deportations only led to further punitive actions against union members.[164] In an unstable economy, plagued by hunger and poverty, workers went on strike in regions with a high class consciousness, while in others they tended to take a less confrontational stance: they refused to enter the factory or slowed down their work pace.[165] Whether intended or imposed by economic conditions, the behavior of the authoritarian state oscillated between reward and punishment, opening and repression, dialogue and command. The result was the tentativeness of many of the workers' actions, and a competition between different workers' publics. In the 1950s, workers' private public sphere of debate was, therefore, largely engulfed by the re-feudalized public sphere of the state, which, even when it allowed their voices to be heard, did not listen to what they had to say or soon repressed them. Counterpublics were allowed to rise only to be suppressed when they became a real threat to the regime.

In Romania, workers were equally powerless, in spite of the official propaganda that promoted their rights and boasted of their prosperity. One important difference existed between Romania, on one side, and France and Spain, on the other: in the communist country, all the organizations that could have formed the private sphere were gathered into the Front of Socialist Unity and Democracy (Frontal Democraţiei şi Unităţii Socialiste, FDUS), under the direct management of the RCP. FDUS was presided over by Ceauşescu or by the party secretary at the local level. It included the RCP, the General Trade Union Confederation (Confederaţia Generală a Sindicatelor, CGS), the Councils of Working People of the Co-Inhabiting Nationalities, the Union of the Communist Youth

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[164] One example is the 1957-1958 strikes in Asturias, where workers confronted state representatives about their violent attitude toward the labor movement only to find themselves victims of that very same behavior. Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain,* 86.

[165] Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 85.

(Uniunea Tineretului Comunist, UTC), the National Council of Women, and the National Union of Agricultural Production Co-operatives.[166] The suppression of the private sphere in the world of work was coordinated through the CGS, the only officially accepted professional organization of all trade unions; its goal was to mobilize workers and control their disciplined implementation of the RCP economic program. The constitution of the CGS did not mention the right to strike, but only the attachment of the organization to the ideals of the Party.[167] Furthermore, trade unions were organized according to place of work rather than profession, and they consisted of a general assembly, which met twice a year, and a working people's council, which included the collective management of each institution and was led by the party secretary, and an executive bureau of the council, which was entrusted with daily decisions and was led by the managerial staff.[168] This multi-layered structure functioned mostly as an instrument of control over the working class, whose voice was closely monitored and censored at all levels. Several other related organizations gave the appearance of plurality and, therefore, of an official sphere that represented all types of publics, but, in effect, these were centrally coordinated and their purpose was to command all possible discourses of the labor force. The Party's Central Council of Workers' Control of Economic and Social Activity was one of the organizations that supervised daily activity in factories and other institutions.[169] The Councils of Workers of Hungarian, German, Serbian, and Ukrainian Nationality, which represented only a few of the almost twenty ethnic groups in the country, were directly managed by the Secretariat of the RCP's Central Committee and financed from its

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[166] Shafir, *Romania*, 100.
[167] Ibid., 101-103.
[168] Ibid., 102.
[169] Ibid., 98.

budget; consequently, all discussions conducted under its patronage celebrated the Party's policies toward minorities and represented merely a multiplication, rather than a diversification, of the official discourse. Ethnic minorities had no autonomy and no influence in any state organism, in spite of the ample provisions made by the Constitution.[170] Instead of representing various publics and counterpublics within the public sphere, all these organizations were, in fact, state institutions whose role was to impose a single discourse, oversee its implementation, and control all its possible recipients.

In France, Spain, and Romania, the authoritarian regimes took similar measures regarding the world of work: they eliminated the trade unions they could not control, centralized all others into a state-coordinated association that included both workers and managers, and submitted its debates to the constant surveillance and direction of officials. Even when oppositional discourses did arise, as happened in Spain, these never surprised the state; in fact, they were even encouraged as a means of venting social frustration, but they never went beyond the regime's capacity to muffle or shut them down. The activity of the counterpublics in the world of work was carefully monitored, which deprived the private sphere of its function as a realm of debate.

Another group whose different venues of expression were curtailed and fell under official surveillance was the young generation. As in the case of the world of work, there was a double attempt to co-opt or eliminate those counterpublics that could pose a threat to the system. In 1930s France, as in other European countries, youth culture was spreading as organizations emerged in response to the general expectation that young

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[170] Ibid., 158-160.

people engage in positive experiences with their own peers. Political parties had their own youth associations (the Red Falcons for the Socialists, or the Young Communists, for example) and so did religious orders (the most notable was the Young Christian Workers [Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne, JOC]). The Scouts continued their activity in the Unoccupied Zone, but they were banned in the Occupied Zone, as were all other youth groups perceived as too chauvinistic by the Germans.[171] Although Vichy attempted to set up a single national youth organization, opposition from the Church, protective of its many associations, prevented the forced unification of the different groups.[172] Two important movements emerged during the Occupation: Les Compagnons de France and Les Chantiers de la Jeunesse. Both were primarily targeted at young men and claimed to promote moral and patriotic education. Les Compagnons was founded by a civil servant, was addressed to boys between fifteen and twenty years old, and focused on physical education, outdoor activities, sport, and communal living. Les Chantiers eventually drafted all men of twenty-one years old for eight months of service and was the closest to a national organization; it functioned as a school for ideological and military training, as well as hard work, but, in spite of its efforts, it did not seem to have the desired effect on its members, especially because, after 1943, it was used as a pool to draw men into the STO.[173] Many of the young Chantiers joined the Allied forces and were anti-Nazi, which made the Germans very suspicious of them, as they were of the Compagnons, whose activity they banned after 1942.

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[171] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 161.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., 162-164.

The Vichy regime also sought to promote its conservative views through a reformed system of education that would return to elitism and classicism in its curriculum. The primary school was free for all and trained students to become "instituteurs," i.e. teachers in the same system; considering its activity too rationalist, positivist, and anti-clerical, the different ministers of education reintroduced high costs for the secondary education system, merged it with the primary system so that poor students would no longer have access to a higher education in a lycée, and introduced different curricula for the cities and the countryside, as well as for boys and girls.[174] Many of the teachers known for their liberal views were purged from the system and the rest had to take an oath of loyalty to Vichy. The regime, thus, attempted to prevent the access of the poorest classes to the public sphere and control their youth through organizations that exploited physical energy; it advanced a traditionalist, paternalist ideology and sought to direct young people's labor in its favor. Although there were a number of fifteen-twenty youth associations, they functioned as weak publics and were under the control of the authorities in one form or another. The organizations that could have posed a problem to the regime were immediately banned, together with the political parties that sponsored them. In spite of all its efforts, the Vichy regime was too brief and was eventually too closely associated with the foreign power it served to produce any lasting effects on students; its only "achievement" was to raise the numbers of its disgruntled adversaries.

Franco's rule, however, had the advantage of time and adopted a different tactic. As was the case with the working force, an oscillating situation was also experienced by

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[174] Ibid., 159-160.

the young generation, who, by the mid-1950s, had managed to enter the public sphere only to be silenced again toward the end of the decade. The indoctrination of the new generations started early in school when the Catholic and Nationalist version of history was *the* history to study. Curricular content followed anti-rationalist criteria, and rested heavily on religious dogma. Franco was anointed as a providential man who had saved the endangered nation from the assault of foreign ideas and decadent practices. Social inequality was also indirectly built into the system as a result of the uneven coordination of education. In rural areas, children attended school erratically, often only for a few years and then became part of the workforce. Furthermore, Catholic schools, better endowed and attended by the middle and upper classes, multiplied and, by 1957, they were graduating four times more students than public schools.[175] The final result was that a large part of the population had little or no access to public life, and, therefore, did not pose a challenge to the regime.

An important change occurred after the appointment of Ruiz Giménez as Minister of Education. Appreciative of dissident intellectuals such as Pedro Laín Entralgo and Antonio Tovar, he appointed them as rectors of the important universities in Madrid and Salamanca, where they fostered an atmosphere of openness and dialogue. Consequently, the Syndicate of University Students (Sindicato de Estudiantes Universitarios, SEU), the overarching union that had incorporated all students' organizations existing in the civil society before the Civil War, became, indirectly and against its state-intended purposes, a forum for the expression of discontent as well. Membership in the SEU had been compulsory since the early 1950s because, as was the case with the OSE, the state

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[175] Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 91.

attempted to reduce the plurality of publics and the private spheres they generated by incorporating them into its apparatus.[176] The small pockets of contention, visible in the students' debates and publications of different topics, made various counterpublics visible, but they were tolerated as long as they remained "weak publics"; these had a very limited impact, often involved young people whose parents belonged to the upper classes favored by the regime, and represented merely a safety valve for discontent. Following the protests and riots of 1956, the rectors and minister were removed, the universities closed temporarily, and the SEU was brought under stricter state control. The young "generación del medio siglo" ("mid-century generation") was forced to become silent in the public sphere; it did, nevertheless, continue its activities as part of different underground counterpublics, in writers' groups, filmmakers' circles, or artists' houses.

In Romania, the youth movement was hijacked by the state as well. The Union of Communist Youth (UTC) was an organ of the Party, but it soon became a mass organization when membership became mandatory for young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six. It had a similar structure to the RCP, with a congress convened every five years, a Central Committee, a Bureau, and a Secretariat. The president of the UTC was also the Minister of Youth in the government.[177] The mission of the organization was the mobilization of young people in service of the party, which was to be realized by means of thorough ideological indoctrination, which was mandatory in schools and universities. The UTC also included the Union of Communist Students' Associations, whose representatives were members of the university senates and

[176] Ibid., 133-138; Barry Jordan, "The Emergence of a Dissident Intelligentsia," in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 245-249.
[177] See Shafir, *Romania*, 103.

professional boards and whose purpose was identical to that of the UTC. Finally, starting in 1966, this type of mass enrollment was extended to even younger students, who, at the age of nine, joined the Pioneers' Organization. There were no youth associations outside the surveillance of the RCP because, immediately after 1945, all religious, political, and even leisure associations had been outlawed, their members arrested and even exterminated. UTC was not a platform for an independent discourse of different young publics and counterpublics, but a tool for state control and manipulation, a public sphere emptied of any free content.

In France, Spain, and Romania, then, youth organizations could not constitute independent, vibrant counterpublic spheres of interaction because they fell under the full jurisdiction of the state. As in the case of workers' unions, students' associations were carefully monitored in order to force them to serve the regime; if and when they gained freedom of expression, it was momentary and never threatening to the establishment.

The institution of the Church and its secondary organizations were also enrolled in support of the regime in all three countries, regardless of the official ideology. One of the initial pillars of the French state, the Catholic Church never achieved the politically prominent role it expected, although its precepts on private and public life were fully adopted as the moral foundation of the Vichy regime. In the 1930s, the militant secularism of the republic had clashed not only with the conservative, but also with the leftist wing of the Church; consequently, both groups supported Marshal Pétain and sought to obtain a new covenant that would favorably reassess the relationship between the clerics and the state. In spite of the several concessions they obtained—most of them regarding the education system, as I have already emphasized—the covenant never

materialized and, in time, the position of the Catholic Church in the regime weakened.[178]
If other denominations—such as the Protestants or the Jesuits—reacted negatively to the
persecution of the Jews, the Catholic Church kept silent until the beginning of the mass
deportations in 1942, when public opinion opposed the measures taken by the French and
German authorities. There were isolated cases of priests and bishops who protected
members of their parishes and dioceses against the control of the anti-Semitic French
police, but they could not exercise enough influence to reverse the measures taken by
Vichy. Disenchanted with the direction of the regime, dismayed with the deportations of
the Jewish community, and in complete disagreement with the corporatist economic
model, the Catholic left eventually joined the Resistance. In France, the Church, whose
discourse dominated the public sphere, started as a strong public whose political
influence was exercised on social matters regarding education, public health, and the
family. In time, however, it was gradually transformed into a weak public, with little
power in the government; as the war advanced, some of its members adhered to and
supported the discourse of the underground counterpublics, thus contributing to the
increasingly adverse public opinion that would eventually crucify the regime.

In 1950s Spain, the Church had a more direct involvement in the regime, but
eventually it played a double and, at times, confusing role. Incorporated into the state
apparatus, it enjoyed its privileges and became part of the system of repression. As was
the case with the Falange, the Catholic Church had a strong grip on private life, and
clerics had the power to help or doom individuals. Education, the entertainment industry,
justice, and the press fell under the Church's tutelage, which allowed it to impose its

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[178] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 152-153.

discourse onto the official public sphere. The missionaries sent into the remote corners of

the country, especially in regions with low church-attendance, carried their messages into

the heart of communities that were still publically invisible, and, through them, the state

took hold of private life in the countryside.[179] Church approval was needed for trivial

matters, from job applications to access to charity—the only form of help in a state with

no welfare system—or to defend oneself against all types of accusations, from neighbors'

complaints to state allegations.[180]

The surveillance and propaganda functions of the Church, however, were

undermined when a new generation of priests became increasingly uncomfortable with

the misery and hunger of their parishioners. HOAC (Hermandades Obreras de Acción

Católica) and JOC (Juventudes Obreras Católicas), both small groups within the larger

Acción Católica of the Church, sided with workers and leftist critics of the regime,

creating one of the few breaches in the official public sphere. Acción Católica was a

massive organization that coordinated the activities of the Church, but that was not part

of the state apparatus. As the Catholic Church enjoyed freedom of the press, its young

priests had access to the public arena, where they tried to raise a new topic of debate: the

fate of remote communities of miners or peasants whom the state had abandoned. Like

the initial student activity in the SEU and the workers' activity in the OSE, this small

group's activity was tolerated because it never posed a real threat to the regime, could

function as a safety valve for social discontent, and could easily be brought under control

through Church hierarchy. The temporary surfacing of such counterpublics, however,

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[179] Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 48-49; Ranzato, *Spanish Civil War*, 76.
[180] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain*, 131, 136.

does not make the Spanish regime democratic, but it does bear proof of the fertile underground animation of different counterpublics, however small they may have been.

In Romania, there was a clear demarcation between the dominant Romanian Orthodox Church and minority religions such as the Uniates, Roman Catholicism, Judaism and Islam. Although the Party attacked religion and condemned its influence on people's mentality, it is important to emphasize that the authorities could not completely dismiss this aspect of social life, given the large number of believers and church-goers. Official policies differed according to the denomination. The 1948 Law of Cults submitted all churches and faiths to strict state control, recognized only fourteen out of the sixty religious communities of the time, abolished all religious forms of education, and confiscated church property.[181] The Romanian Orthodox Church, which covered 70% of the population and was autocephalous, had a long history of subservience to the state. RCP's attitude toward it was ambivalent: it demolished its churches, silenced its priests, and took its possessions, but it also used it as a tool to raise popular approval. Ceauşescu's secret police agents and informers infiltrated the priestly order, with the double mission of propagating party directives and denouncing possible opponents. Furthermore, the participation of Romanian Orthodox Church representatives in international ecumenical conferences built a favorable image of the regime abroad.[182] The church of the majority was, thus, co-opted into the state apparatus, albeit in a discreet manner, and transformed into an instrument of manipulation and control.

The religious denominations of the ethnic minorities had a different fate. Probably the most dramatic case was that of the Uniates, the Greek Catholic Church that had split

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[181] Shafir, *Romania*, 135; 150-151.
[182] Ibid., 151-152.

from the Romanian Orthodox Church in the early eighteenth century and fought for the

rights of Transylvanian Romanians under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1948, there

were 1,700,000 members of the Uniate Church, but, by 1965, they had completely

vanished in official statistics.[183] Forced to reunite with the Romanian Orthodox Church,

the Uniates saw their property stolen and their clergy and parishioners arrested and

assassinated. However, they continued an insecure, underground existence, with masses

held in private houses among a handful of faithful followers.[184] The Roman Catholic

Church suffered a similar fate, although it could not be officially forbidden. Its clerics

were persecuted, imprisoned, executed; three of its five bishoprics were abolished in

1949; and all its bishops had to be approved by the government before they could take

office.[185] The Jewish community continued to suffer as well. Dramatically reduced after

the Holocaust, Jews emigrated in large numbers to the future state of Israel, so that only a

very small percentage continued to live in Romania in the 1960s. Their remaining

synagogues suffered from the continuing exodus of their members, but also from the anti-

Semitic measures of the communist regime that sought to eliminate all traces of the

"Zionist threat." Religious private spheres were, therefore, either brought under the direct

supervision of the state and the party, or gradually eliminated from public life.

     In France, Spain, and Romania, the church was, therefore, split in two: the

majority of its institutions and clerics were co-opted, in various ways, by the regime and

served it, while the minority, often determined on political or ethnic grounds, attempted

to defend its oppositional private sphere, but to little or no avail. The members of these

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[183] Ibid., 152-154.
[184] Ibid., 154.
[185] Ibid., 154-155.

counterpublics were consistently pursued and punished, which prevented any consistent dissidence from crystallizing and threatening the state.

Private and intimate life also fell under the full attention of the authorities, who brought quotidian issues, such as economic status, sexuality and other aspects of couples' interaction, under the public lens in order to promote a homogeneous and easily manageable behavior. In 1940, the defeat was interpreted as a sign that France had been emasculated, so women became most important to the regime because their duty was to rebuild the family and restore national honor. The concern with changing gender roles dated back to the 1930s, when the imminence of another world war and the anxiety it caused prompted debates about birthrates, women's employment, and home responsibilities. In 1940, two antithetical models had already been outlined: the 1930s New Woman, dark, sexually predatory, and independent, and the Vichy mother, whose purity, wholesomeness, and virtue could re-establish the order and harmony lost with the invasion of the occupier.[186] If the images of the revolutionary Marianne, the symbol of the Republic, were replaced by photos of Pétain as the father of the "new" nation, the new feminine icon was Joan of Arc, whose faith and self-sacrifice were the essential qualities required in times of need.[187] Like the fifteenth-century saint, women were now called to become combatants in the New France and pay their "blood tax" to the nation by becoming the mothers of future soldiers.[188] Their position as guarantors of social cohesion and home sanctity was intensely politicized, so the intimate sphere was brought under close public scrutiny. Motherhood was praised as women's essential contribution

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[186] See Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 49-50.
[187] Ibid., 48.
[188] Ibid., 51-52.

to the nation; furthermore, Catholic figures and doctors argued that bearing children beautified, "cured," and balanced women.[189] At the same time, however, prostitution was tolerated, but only under the strict supervision of the police and the health authorities; its "purpose" was to reinforce men's virility and self-esteem, so, indirectly, it was still deemed a service to the nation.

In spite of the lofty discourse, Vichy politics were, therefore, profoundly antifeminist; as Miranda Pollard underscores, the strategy for national revival relied exclusively on the politics of gender and sexual difference. [190] Women were to be engaged in the effort of reconstruction, but they were excluded from direct participation in political affairs. They did not have the right to vote, which was gained only in 1946.[191] On October 11, 1940, the state passed a law that aimed to reduce the number of employed women, who were indirectly accused of neglecting their homes and of having contributed to the defeat of the nation. On August 15, 1941, a new law was passed in order to ensure the separation and differentiation of elementary education for the two sexes.[192] Girls took lessons in housekeeping and were taught to become loyal wives, mothers, and guardians of the family, while boys were enrolled in physical education classes and outdoor activities that could prepare them to defend their country. The regime, therefore, supported a clear division between men and women and, implicitly, between the public and the personal.

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[189] Miranda Pollard, "Women and the National Revolution," in *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology*, ed. Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 43.
[190] See Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 2-6.
[191] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 168.
[192] Ibid.; Pollard, "Women and the National Revolution," 41.

The intimate sphere was the focus of probably the most important document that endorsed pronatalist and pro-family policies. Issued by the dying republic on July 29, 1939, Édouard Dalidier's Family Code had the intention of creating a more moral society. Among other measures, the Code encouraged a difference in salaries between men and women, offered an allowance for stay-at-home mothers, and condemned abortion[193]; Pétain's regime was only happy to reinforce it. In February 1942, abortion was deemed a capital offense and was punished by guillotine. Women had no right to self-determination. Furthermore, although they were allowed to sit on local councils, they had no political rights and had to "speak" to the state through the men who represented them, a situation repeated in 1950s Spain. Unlike women in Nazi Germany or Franco's Spain, French women were not mobilized into a national organization that could have ensured them more visibility in the political arena. In spite of public endorsement of their roles, women remained a weak public, mobilized for a national cause, but reduced to silence in the public sphere.

In 1950s Spain, the situation was similar. Women were subjected to the controlling eye of the regime, but the contradictory forces that characterized the rest of the society also applied to their situation. Two relatively conflicting models dominated the public sphere: the Virgin Mary, on one side, and Saint Teresa of Ávila and Isabel la Católica, on the other. The former was a model of submissiveness, piety, and motherhood; the latter two were independent, devout women who were also powerful public personalities. These figures of purity, national devotion, and self-sacrifice were opposed to the dangerous single woman, always predisposed to fall into vice. Sexual

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[193] Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 13-15; Paxton, *Vichy France*, 165.

restraint and purity, supplemented by dedication to the Church and the nation, represented the hegemonic norm; the smallest deviation made one an undesirable partner and a social liability. The model was enforced in schools and churches, where girls learned, from an early age, that their duty was to become good wives and mothers. The small measure of equality gained before the Civil War melted away as society became more *machista*, reducing feminine venues of debate and contestation.

Women were increasingly banished into the intimate sphere in various ways. The 1938 Labor Charter, supplemented by new labor laws in 1942, dismissed them from employment at the moment of their marriage, and added a family subsidy to the husband's salary, a measure similar to laws taken in Nazi Germany. In both cases, the intention was to ensure an increase in population, but, more importantly, to place wives under their husbands' tutelage. In Spain, women's status reverted to the 1889 Civil Code, which transformed them into minors before the law: they could own property, but the men in their lives administered it; limitations were placed on their employment outside the home, and when they did hold jobs, they were paid less than men; and they bore the responsibility for the family's well-being and virtuous life.[194] Single women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five also represented a cheap source of labor, as they did in totalitarian regimes: before they got married or found a job, they had to perform six months' social service for the state. They worked in hospitals, schools, orphanages, and kitchens, doing the welfare work which the state avoided subsidizing. The majority of women constituted weak counterpublics in relation to the state: their interactions with the

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[194] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain*, 135; Helen Graham, "Gender and State: Women in the 1940s," in Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 184-186. These measures are very similar to those taken against women in Vichy France and communist Romania.

public authorities were mediated by men, who had their own interests to defend before they could promote women's.

Economic and marital status represented a further burden for working-class women, which divided them from their middle- and upper-class counterparts. Poor, single women were often the victims of state repression and negligence, especially if they were Republican widows, wives of POWs, or unwed mothers abandoned by their partners. Often unemployable, they survived by buying and selling on the black market or by populating the *casas de tolerancia*, brothels whose activity was tolerated until 1956, when prostitution was declared illegal.[195] Excluded from all dominant publics, and even from the weak counterpublics of married women, single, destitute women attempted to break out of their economic constraints, but were socially marginalized; they had little force as a counterpublic.

Women did have one organization whose affiliation with the Falange could confer upon them the status of a strong public: the *Sección Femenina* (Women's Section of the party), which functioned similarly to its Nazi and Soviet counterparts. Founded in 1934 by Pilar Primo de Rivera, it included only single women, who were recruited to provide support, but also to exercise control, surveillance, and discipline over impoverished sectors of society. Most of the members were middle- and upper-class women, who, like their German or Soviet counterparts, engaged in welfare activities: they opened a network of communal kitchens, ran classes for girls in home economics and motherhood, and sponsored various cultural projects. The Sección Femenina also provided rural "divulgadoras," or women who traveled through the countryside and, in collaboration

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[195] See Helen Graham, "Gender and State," 187-189; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 64-65.

with the Church, policed the poor. Their mission was to combat abortion, contraception, high infant mortality, and illiteracy. The certificates of good moral standing provided by these visitors were necessary for those who depended upon church charity to survive.[196] The Sección Femenina was, therefore, a state instrument rather than an organization that might function as part of the civil society. It provided political representation for women, but it also worked against securing rights for women, especially in the first half of the 1950s. It was a strong public because it was part of the official party and participated in opinion-formation and decision-making. Having access to the official public sphere, Sección Femenina introduced debates about marital violence and poverty, but attracted the opposition of important voices within the establishment.[197] Nevertheless, this group of women managed to initiate public discussions that, in turn, led to a modernization of the Civil Code in 1958. The dual legacy of the organization—it implemented state policies against women, but also gained more rights for them—demonstrates the deep implication of the state in its citizens' intimate life, which it brought under public scrutiny and regulation.

In Romania, women did manage to occupy important positions in the political apparatus, but these were mostly symbolic and were often awarded in order to fulfill a quota system[198]; they did not contribute to a radical improvement in their social status. As in the case of France and Spain, Romanian women remained a weak public for whom the state created the false appearance of a strong public. The roles women were primarily

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[196] See Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 66-67; Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain*, 136-137; Helen Graham, "Gender and State," 186-188.

[197] An important case was the publication, in 1953, of a letter of condemnation of battery by an important woman lawyer backed by the Sección Femenina. Thousands of letters from battered wives followed, but so did an important accusatory reaction against the writer by the lawyer community, mostly men. Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 148.

[198] The state had established a certain percentage of representation for women at all political levels.

called to perform remained those of wives and mothers. Significantly, the feminine models circulating in the epoch emphasized the sacrifice women were expected to make for the motherland. Thus, one model was Ecaterina Teodoroiu, a nurse who also fought as a soldier in World War I, and the other was that of "heroine mothers," who were women rewarded for bearing more than ten children. Before 1965, the continuous fall in birth rates was the result of massive dislocations, hasty urbanization and housing shortages, but also of raised expectations about living standards and of the accessibility of abortion, legalized in 1957. Between 1955 and 1966, the birthrate decreased from 25.6 live births per one thousand inhabitants to 14.3.[199] In a state economy growing at an unprecedented pace and highly dependent on the quantity and inexpensiveness of the labor force, the mobilization of women to become mothers became imperative. Decree #770, passed on October 8, 1966, was the state's direct intervention into the life of the couple and, especially, into women's rights over their bodies and choices. The new law prohibited the use of contraceptives and forbade abortions in almost all cases, with a few very limited exceptions: when the pregnancy imperiled the mother's life, could lead to the spread of hereditary illness, was the result of rape or incest, or was requested by a woman over forty-five years old or who had at least four children in her care.[200] Illegal abortions were punished by the Penal Code with imprisonment for a period varying between one and three years and by the cancellation of specific civil rights, often including the right to paid work, for the women involved, but also for the possible instigators, mediators, or those who effectively performed the operation.[201] By 1968, the

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[199] Gail Kligman, *Politics of Duplicity,* 22-24.
[200] Ibid., 54.
[201] Ibid., 56-58.

birth rate almost doubled, but once the population managed to create a parallel system of evading the law, it began to decrease consistently, while the number of women who were severely injured or died as a result of unsafe illegal abortions increased.[202] Detailed health check-ups were conducted at regular intervals in every workplace and paid special attention to the surveillance of young women's sexual life and fertility. The state's intrusion into the intimate sphere elevated one of the most personal aspects of an individual's life to the visibility of the public sphere with the purpose of solidifying citizens' position as subalterns rather than as partners. The flow of power was reversed: the state did not work with the consent of and for the people, but forced the people to work for it.

As in the French and Spanish cases, the state also became women's close "associate" in matters regarding the intimate sphere because it provided mothers the apparent support they needed: paid maternity leaves, job security, and child-care facilities.[203] Furthermore, it assisted them in achieving a better education and promoted them to important non-managerial positions in different institutions. Between 1938 and 1971, the percentage of women attending high-school rose from 41.2 to 51.5 and that of women obtaining a university degree increased from 25.9 to 43.3.[204] However, they were typically hired for jobs that did not suit their educational levels, often in economic sectors such as agriculture, light industry, education, health care, and culture.[205] To the state, women continued to be secondary citizens in spite of the official masquerade of equal rights and opportunities.

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[202] Ibid., 58.
[203] Ibid., 26.
[204] Ibid., 25.
[205] Ibid., 26.

The National Council of Women and other women's committees and organizations were directly subordinated to the RCP and structured in a similar pattern; they usually had modest funding and reinforced women's roles as caretakers in charge of the household. The mission of the National Council could be compared to that of the wives' movement in Stalinist Soviet Union: they were to participate in the beautification and improvement of working conditions, to fulfill the demographic expectations of the regime, to be devoted wives and mothers, but also to fight illiteracy and contribute to women's education.[206] As was the case with other institutions that replaced the organizations of a democratic public sphere, women's councils merely functioned to legalize and mask the authoritarian interference of the state into intimate matters in order to preserve and reinforce a paternalist, discriminatory social model that traditionally had been the bulwark of the predominantly rural culture. In effect, such measures tripled women's burden: they had to work for the state in factories and on farmlands; they had to fulfill all household duties, with little help from the men who continued to refuse any significant participation in domestic chores; and they had to produce the "future socialist citizens."

In all three countries under investigation, women were, therefore, weak counterpublics for whom authorities manufactured the appearance of strong, influential publics. The necessity of a rise in population made them essential to the state's economic policies, but also prevented them from achieving any real gender emancipation. Their visibility in the public sphere was the result of official publicity surrounding personal

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[206] Ibid., 110-112. The mission of the National Council of Women had many common points with that of the Spanish Sección Femenina.

matters and, paradoxically, the means through which the regime sought to control their private and intimate lives.

The family, as the space of intimate discourse, could not escape state surveillance. Private concerns entered the official public sphere, where they were standardized and imposed as the norm in all three regimes. In France, the family fell under intense pressures in the days that preceded and followed the defeat. Men were mobilized to the front, and over one million of them were interned in POW camps. Families were further divided by the Demarcation Line and, soon enough, young sons and husbands were rounded up for labor service in Germany. The Resistance effort also separated husbands and wives, parents and children, placing a heavy burden on both sides. Increasingly, the occupier and its French acolytes were perceived as the enemy that had to be removed so that a more balanced society could emerge.

The family was the most important social cell for the Vichy regime, which sought a return to a mythologized past of hierarchy, order, and harmony, with precisely differentiated roles for men and women. Its major discourse reinforced the strengthening of the family as a precondition to national reconstruction. In a famous speech, Pétain asserted the supremacy of the family over the individual, but also over the state itself.[207] The Third Republic was blamed because it had encouraged divorce, alcoholism, and prostitution, but especially because it had promoted an urban culture of decadence and corruption. Paradoxically, the 1939 Family Code set the basis for the social policies of the new regime because it stimulated young couples to marry and have children. The Code offered them loans and, in case the couple settled in the countryside, lowered the

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[207] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 166.

interest rates and payments with each newly-born child.[208] In addition to the drastic anti-abortion laws, in April 1941 Vichy passed a law forbidding divorce in the first three years of marriage and allowing it afterward only in cases of mistreatment and serious injury; the law also applied retroactively to cases that had already been filed.[209] Campaigns against socially transmitted diseases often had an anti-Semitic nature and included "sanitary and racial control" of the "un-French" population, whom the authorities harassed and threatened.[210] The regime endorsed a discourse of national necessity and patriotic duty in order to ensure social stability and control fertility; it therefore interfered in the discourses that structured the intimate sphere by bringing into public judgment the most personal decisions a couple could take.

Family hierarchy was another important aspect of Vichy politics and it was perceived as the remedy for the dissolution of city life. The wife and children were unambiguously subordinated to the father, who was revered as the head of the household. In official propaganda, the couple, always heterosexual, was expected to be virtuous and procreative.[211] Fathers of large families, usually veterans, peasants, officers, etc., were included in all local or even national councils[212]; this direct dependence of public office upon one's dominance over the intimate sphere was intended to ensure the subservience of intimate publics to the authority of the state. The strictly gendered demarcation of spheres of influence silenced women and mothers within the public sphere, a situation that marked a return to the social stratification of the nineteenth century. Closely

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[208] Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 13; Paxton, *Vichy France*, 165.
[209] Paxton, *Vichy France*, 167.
[210] Ibid., 166.
[211] Pollard, *Reign of Virtue,* 56-58.
[212] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 167.

following a period of liberalization and imposed under the double pressure of a foreign enemy and unprecedented economic difficulties, these expectations regarding the life of the couple eventually motivated opposition to, rather than support for, the regime.

If in France intimate publics could always draw on an anti-German and anti-Vichy discourse to maintain their unity, in Spain economic and political adversities, as well as the lack of a common foreign enemy, resulted in distress and frustration within intimate publics. Following the Civil War and the years of severe hunger, the family had become the major source of support for a long-afflicted population. It provided shelter for the elderly and newlyweds, food in times of shortages, credit to those who wanted to buy a house, and assistance to those who had gone to the cities to try their luck. A sense of duty and self-sacrifice connected its members, and ensured their progress, as young generations moved to the growing urban centers, worked several jobs, and lived on one meal a day in order to lift their families out of misery and poverty.[213] Economic and political necessity brought them together, but the upcoming transformations would undermine the intimate sphere.

In the 1950s, the family continued to be the center of the unofficial survival system, but economic, social, and political tensions placed its inner cohesion under threat. The domestic model replicated state hierarchical order, with the father as an authoritarian figure, in charge of finances and of representing the family's interests in the public sphere. Inequality between the sexes permeated all social classes, and was guaranteed by the re-adoption of parts of the 1889 Civil Code in the 1945 Fuero de los Españoles (the recognized, yet not implemented bill of rights). Men retained authority over sexual

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[213] See Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 70-71.

relations, and double standards allowed them to have several partners, while women could be punished for adultery.[214] Fathers were distant figures, often feared; they expected compliance with their ideas and could resort to physical punishments, when necessary.[215] When migration to the cities began to undermine these traditional values rooted in the countryside, deep rifts opened between the old generation, raised in the spirit of unchallenged inequalities, and the new generation, with a modern, more practical outlook on daily matters.

The antiquated Catholic morality, which the state imposed as the only guarantee of virtue, led to unstable, problem-ridden marriages. Immediately after the War, civil marriages and divorces were banned and even nullified. Furthermore, social pressures led to a generalized tendency to marry, as the Church and other organizations provided the state with lists of those who failed to behave properly and who could expect to be punished or economically or socially disadvantaged in daily life. Finally, pronatalist policies added increased family allowances and bonuses to the interdiction of abortion and contraception, making procreation a priority for young couples.[216] Although these measures did not lead to an increase in birth rates, the number of formal marriages did rise; many were entered into to obtain practical advantages, such as state subsidies or better housing, or to dodge penalties. Marriages often had a long life, but they represented constant challenges for men and women who were also trying to adapt to the shifting gender norms and roles that came with more modern, urban settings.

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[214] Men could have two fiancées, for example: one whom they would marry and the other with whom they could engage in sexual relations outside marital vows. See Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 146.
[215] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain*, 133-134; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 142.
[216] See Grugel and Rees, *Franco's Spain*, 135; Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 143-144.

By 1959, changes became unavoidable in the public sphere. The national conference on "Family and Public Morality" signaled the need to return to a more religious education that would protect citizens from the dangerous influences of liberal thinking (the by-product of tourism), of atheism, excessive spending, or the favorable attitude towards abortion and contraception.[217] Such categorical accusations in the public sphere were mere helpless reactions to the modernization of Spanish society. The increasing numbers of working and studying women, the greater equality between spouses, and the decreasing role of the family in children's education indicated that a new, improved family balance had been achieved, paradoxically, against the state's express attempts to preserve the conservative family model. Urban life, the economic opening towards Europe and the United States, work migration across the borders, as well as the liberalizing, albeit stunted, measures in education, entertainment, or the press trumped the state's influence over the private sphere and eventually forced it to adopt new civil and penal codes that recognized the changes in social mores. Nevertheless, economic pressures and the rapid changes in mentality from one generation to another inserted deep tensions into intimate publics, making them easy to manipulate.

In Romania, there were similar pressures originating, in this case, from the discrepancy between the modernizing claims of official discourse and the reinforcement of a traditionally patriarchal social structure. Although the 1954 Family Code stipulated that the state's role was to protect, support, and strengthen the family, in effect it pursued a policy of intimidation and usurped the authority of the intimate sphere over decisions regarding the cohesion of the couple, the number of children and their education, and the

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[217] See Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress,* 141-142.

expected roles of the two sexes. The same Decree #770 increased taxes on childless couples and made divorce possible only in extreme cases, leveling very high financial and social costs. Battery, infidelity, incurable diseases, or degrading behavior did not constitute tenable arguments for a divorce and the state insisted on the reconciliation of the parties; more shockingly, even in the case of attempted murder of one spouse by the other or of serious physical injury, the couple still had to consider reconciliation first.[218] The immediate effect was an unprecedented fall in the number of divorces, from 25,804 in 1966 to only 48 in 1967, which was followed, as in the case of abortions, by a gradual rise as people used various tactics to evade or manipulate the law.[219] Families had to be kept together even in the case of the irreconcilable break of the intimate sphere because they were the concrete means through which the economic "plan" could become reality: they produced the work force.

Communist legislation did not build on a void, but on an already well-entrenched patriarchal organization that was being transferred from the village to the city. In the late 1960s, many of the new workers' families relied on their extensive ties with the countryside in order to improve their living standards. This economic dependence implied a continuation of the model of deference to men and the older generation as the household leaders, which had a double effect, as Michael Shafiro underscores: a "semi-urban society [was] extended into village areas," as urban couples brought new technology and products to their parents' village houses, and "a highly rural society" now occupied the urban space, but preserved its conservative habits and gender

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[218] Kligman, *Politics of Duplicity*, 50-51.
[219] Ibid., 51.

expectations.[220] Husbands were entrusted with the main decisions regarding the family; they demanded the absolute respect of their wives and children, whose roles as subordinates did not entitle them to equal treatment within intimate publics. The state, however, severely undermined men's roles by contesting and usurping their "rights" to their wives' reproductive and even sexual behavior through the strict legislation regarding abortion. The ultimate Father, therefore, remained outside the reach of intimate publics, but sought to dictate the terms of intimate discourse. This resulted both in the formation of a "second Romania" of closely-knit networks of support centered on the family, but also in the visible pretense of collaboration and consent that soon became second nature.

Although the imbalance in gender roles and expectations, as well as the stimulation of population growth, could also be observed in democratic societies between 1944 and 1971, the authoritarian states stood apart because they adopted and drastically enforced very severe legislation in this sense. Strict laws against abortion and divorce were supplemented by laws that often transformed marriage into the only means of social and economic advancement and respectability. The intimate sphere was submerged in a paternalistic, discriminating discourse that constantly undermined the pull of social modernization and introduced friction between genders and generations. Struggling intimate publics were easier to control and could not pose a threat to the regime.

The private and intimate spheres in Vichy France, 1950s Spain, and late-1960s Romania remained under the close supervision and guidance of the state, which used their potential in order to discipline and control its subjects. Civil society and the world of

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[220] Shafiro, *Romania*, 141-142.

work were split into strong publics, which were part of state institutions or were otherwise state-run, and had been co-opted from among the previously private associations, and weak counterpublics, which were marginalized, silenced, and had little or no influence on public discourse. The intimate sphere and its values were also monitored and coordinated by the state, with mixed results. Initially, dire economic circumstances brought families and communities together in a survival network, but eventually, the transformations in living standards changed social expectations and behaviors regarding the family. Eventually, the state's direct family policies created tensions between genders, generations, and social classes. The authoritarian state continued to dominate because it relied on the old strategy of divide and conquer, but added one essential element to it: its ability to entertain its subjects. The centralized and carefully monitored structures of the French, Spanish, and Romanian film industries were intended to guarantee that the distraction served to the masses contributed to the perpetuation of each authoritarian system; to a very large extent, this goal was achieved.

Chapter II: Authoritarianism and the Film Industry

The authoritarian regimes of France, Spain, and Romania sought to take command of their respective film industries in order to use them as instruments of popular seduction in support of their values and goals. In all cases, cinema production had been suffering as a result of wars, severe lack of funding, and rapid political transformations. The newly-appointed officials created the legal and business framework for the revival of the industry, and even set up the material infrastructure for the development of a national cinema; these would, in the cases of France and Spain, be preserved even after the demise of the regime. The number of films grew steadily in all three countries during this time. At the same time, they established a complex apparatus of political and economic control that allowed the state to interfere at all levels of production, distribution, and exhibition. I argue that carefully coordinated and rigorously imposed censorship made it impossible that a film would be released or exhibited even for a short time without the knowledge of the authorities. When oppositional voices did find a political, aesthetic, and financial niche to emerge, they did so with the full awareness of power representatives, but, more often than not, lacked the support of the large public, alienated by both the form and content of such films. Even foreign imports, when not banned altogether, had to pass state surveillance and approval, so they always conformed to the official ideology. In authoritarian regimes, therefore, the majority of viewers paid to see exactly those films that supported, legitimized, and reinforced the regime.

The French film industry under the German Occupation

The German Occupation was a controversial period for the French cinema, marked by the supremacy of the political over the economic. The outbreak of war brought the film industry to a standstill, as most of the personnel was first drafted and then fled the Occupied Zone. Although production was re-launched in the South soon after the defeat, the Germans delayed it in the North until April 1941 in order to set up the system that would ensure their control and profit. The paradox was that the measures taken by the occupiers to boost their domination were also beneficial to the regeneration of a fragmented industry in need of a clear business framework. Production followed corporatist and racist guidelines: fewer companies had a larger share of the market; the state imposed strict administrative and economic regulations to pay the way to unification and nationalization; and political and moral censorship was implemented at all work stages.[221] The Occupation was also a "golden age" for French cinema because it practically eliminated foreign competition, drew high numbers of viewers into the theaters, and favored the emergence of new talent. The structural and organizational changes imposed during the war would remain influential for a long time after the 1940s although the purpose and use to which they would be put differed from the initial intentions that brought them to life; the basic structure of the system persists to this day. In the early 1940s, films lacked conspicuously fascist propaganda and were sometimes ambiguous enough to allow for oppositional readings. Scholarly criticism underscores the

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[221] The political, rather than the moral, argument was always more important in the decisions taken for and against each film. See Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 156.

ambivalence of the most artistically valuable films of the period and their inconclusive support of official or oppositional ideology. I will argue that most films aimed to entertain, but remained mindful of the political context that produced them. The majority of French viewers preferred those films that went beyond the mere sensationalism of form and content and that invoked the endurance and revival of a France of culture and affect, as I will suggest. The large similarity between the idealized vision of France as it was imagined by Vichy and as it was seen by the right-wing Resistance makes it difficult to distinguish between supportive and subversive material unless it expressed more left-wing attitudes. During the Occupation audiences took refuge in films that were fully approved and supervised by a regime that wanted its citizens to be entertained and pacified.[222]

Production, distribution, and exhibition were under the control of the German authorities and the state, but most scholars agree that Goebbels did not have a clear, systematic plan for the French film.[223] There was, however, a structure in place to ensure the supervision of all releases coming from the occupied country. Initially, the Propagandastaffel (Propaganda Section), established by the military, was charged with monitoring the film scene in France, but this entity was soon in conflict with the Propagandaabteilung (Propaganda Department), which was supposed to be under the jurisdiction of the Wehrmacht in France, but was, in fact, under the authority of Goebbels's Ministry. A third office that oversaw especially the propaganda films was the German embassy in Paris, directly controlled by the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. By 1942,

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[222] Continental Films, under Greven's leadership, was exempt from the control of the French film industry, but not from that of Goebbels's Ministry.

[223] See Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema, 1930-1960* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 47-48; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 39.

the Propagandastaffel had been dissolved, and the Propagandaabteilung, through its

Filmprüfstelle (Film Control Board), was in charge of all French film activities.[224] The

German bureaucrats seized the big Paris studios, and, initially stopped all French

production. They founded their own company, Continental Films, set up a censorship

board, and established two distributors for German films dubbed into French.[225] The

more methodical control of the industry, however, came as a result of two bodies set up

by the Vichy government, but whose headquarters were in Paris: the Service du Cinéma

(the Direction of Cinema) and the Comité d'Organisation des Industries

Cinématographiques (the Organization Committee for the Cinematographic Industries—

COIC). Constituted on August 16, 1940, the Service du Cinéma was supervised by the

Propagandaabteilung in France. It had three sections: one was responsible for all

technical industries, production, distribution, exhibition, import, and export; the second

was in charge of propaganda and censorship; and the third was responsible for legal and

financial matters, including the exclusion and persecution of the Jewish community.[226] A

subsection of the Service transmitted its decisions and directives to the delegates of the

film industry in the Unoccupied Zone, thereby bringing them under German control as

well. Although the Service appointed COIC as the administrative committee responsible

for all direct acts necessary to the effective control of the industry, it preserved the right

to veto any decisions taken by this committee.[227] The Propagandaabteilung, therefore,

controlled both the Service and, implicitly, COIC. Everything was strictly screened and

directed from Paris, and the French filmmakers and crews had autonomy as long as they

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[224] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 39-40.
[225] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 46-47.
[226] Ibid., 47.
[227] Ibid.

did not stray too far from the precepts of the regime; Continental Films, under Alfred

Greven's leadership, remained outside such controls. The films that reached the public

sphere were planned, produced, and projected with the authorities' full and direct

knowledge and approval.

This centralized and carefully regulated system was, ultimately, in the hands of

three important figures who could decide the fate of French cinema. Guy de Carmoy, the

founding director of the Service du Cinéma between 1940 and September 1941, was a

former civil servant who had already proposed the restructuring of the industry in 1936.

His detailed knowledge of the situation of French cinema, as well as his desire to support

the production of high quality films, motivated him to propose reforms that were

professional in their orientation and largely liberal in their political nature. He eventually

clashed with the German authorities, was arrested, and deported to a prison camp. Louis-

Emile Galey, de Carmoy's replacement as the head of the Service, continued his policies

and was eventually arrested as well, albeit for a shorter period of time.[228] De Carmoy had

appointed Raoul Ploquin as the director of COIC, aware of the latter's earlier career as a

producer for the French-language films shot in the 1930s by Tobis and UFA. Ploquin

understood that some of the problems facing France could be solved if the German

business model were partially adopted. Although he was not a fascist, Ploquin knew and

had amiable relationships with many Nazi officials, so he used his influence on both sides

in order to promote the modernization of the French industry. His bonds with the foreign

authorities gradually deteriorated and he resigned in May 1942. In spite of the many

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[228] See Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 51; Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Presses Universitarires de France, 1994), 23-26 ; Alan Williams, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 250.

concessions they had to make, some quite outrageous especially in relation to Jewish film personnel, de Carmoy and Ploquin maintained a good rapport with the French film community.[229] The third individual who probably played the most important role in the evolution of French cinema was Alfred Greven, the director of Continental Films and the representative of the Propagandastaffel in charge of all matters related to film. A former producer for UFA, he knew Ploquin, as well as many French actors and directors. Greven was a Francophile who respected the people with whom he worked, kept silent about certain scriptwriters' Jewish or communist background, and tried to remain discreet in his dealings with his employees. He was one of Göring's friends from World War I, which explains, in part, his ability to resist Goebbels, with whom he had numerous squabbles about the French cinema. Although he read and approved all scripts for Continental, he did not attempt to impose a specific direction on French film, but insisted on a quality cinema that would also appeal to the masses.[230] These three strategically placed individuals—the "mediators" between weak and strong publics in the public sphere—made possible the unity of the film personnel, often protected artists against arrest and deportation, and allowed filmmakers more freedom than was possible in other cultural areas, which explains the lack of overt fascist or Nazi propaganda in the public sphere of cinema.

Authorities had an essential economic instrument in their hands: they could grant or refuse funding. Producers' financial situation was largely determined by the high degree of taxation that persisted throughout the period. Initially, COIC suppressed the

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[229] See also A. Williams, *Republic of Images,* 250; Crisp, "Political Economy and Industrial Structure," 49.
[230] See Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 49-50; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 45; A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 255-258.

three existing taxes and replaced them with one, but the possibly beneficial effects of this measure were severely undermined by a high nationwide tax of 18% levied on luxury goods, including cinema.[231] A further tax was levied on box office receipts and was initially 26%, then slightly higher. The division of after-tax receipts among the distributor, exhibitor, and the producers supplied the last category with only 17% of the gross; after covering the cost of prints and publicity, the contribution to COIC, and two more taxes, the producer eventually received 13% of the gross receipts.[232] Although receipts rose sharply and boomed in 1942-1943, the high cost often forced companies to apply for state funds. COIC granted all the "visas" that allowed each film to reach the big screen; by 1941, the committee was complaining that it received many more proposals than the market could support, so it took the liberty of approving only those companies that had the necessary technical and financial means to shoot, which amounted to a third of those that had submitted requests.[233] Although some Jewish and American companies had continued to fund films clandestinely, this only lasted for a very short period of time. By 1941, as economic conditions deteriorated, official funding became increasingly attractive. On May 19, 1941, COIC passed a law that permitted the Crédit National, the nationally owned bank associated with the regime, to provide a maximum of 65% or fifty million francs—whichever was the lower sum—of the total cost of production only to those films that had been officially approved. The amount of the loan, which came at a low interest rate, and the conditions for its repayment were settled between COIC and the

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[231] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 52-53.
[232] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 79-80.
[233] Ibid., 79.

Crédit National.[234] Producers now only had to provide the initial 35%, which allowed a new feature to be made before box office receipts could be gathered for the previous one. These incentives were not mandatory, but heavy taxation, which continued in spite of several reforms, gave many producers little choice but to apply for them, thereby placing them under the supervision of the funding agency. Additionally, COIC also sponsored short and animated films, both of which had become a regular component of everyday exhibitions and festivals. Furthermore, the committee also awarded a prize of 100,000 francs for the best film of the year, according to the criteria decided by a jury of critics formed especially for this purpose.[235]

In addition to financial control, Vichy and German authorities sought to monitor the film personnel in order to eliminate the influence that counterpublics could exert on the public sphere. Among the first measures taken by the regime was the elimination of those it considered "undesirable," especially Jews, communists, and Freemasons. COIC introduced a professional identification card for each individual who intended to work in the industry; this card had to be approved at the recommendation of a board of peers and could not be awarded to people of Jewish origin—estimated by some at 85% of the total personnel—and those who did not enjoy commercial and professional recognition.[236] Successive discriminatory laws were enforced by the Service du Cinéma and the Commissaire Général aux Questions Juives (General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs); they were often of French inspiration, but backed by the German authorities. The new legislation excluded Jews from all positions in the film industry and turned them into the

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[234] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 52; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 24-25.
[235] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 107.
[236] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 51-56.

easy target of right-wing publications such as *Action Française* or the infamous *Je Suis Partout*. The communists who had worked in cinema were not expelled directly by a specific law, but were marginalized and gradually removed from production units; many of them had already gone into hiding or had joined the Resistance.[237] Famous actors, directors, and scriptwriters, who had worked with the Americans, who were Jewish, or who were well-known for their opposition to fascism, emigrated to the United States, Latin America, or Switzerland; among them were Jean Gabin, Jean Renoir, René Clair, Louis Verneuil, Simone Simon, Michèle Morgan, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Max Ophüls, and Louis Jouvet.

If many oppositional figures left France, some remained in the country, but they did not have a consistent influence on the official public sphere. Others stayed, but worked under false names and were hidden by friends in the Unoccupied Zone; the best known cases were those of Alexandre Trauner, Joseph Kosma,[238] and Jean-Paul Dreyfus (Le Chanois).[239] Several underground circles gathered around figures such as Prévert, who hid actors and technicians in his own home and found them jobs at La Victorine studios in Nice, or René Lefèvre, who lived at Cap d'Antibea and was the head of the local Resistance.[240] There were several other underground groups involved in resistance activity, from the early association of technicians relocated on the Côte d'Azur to the more solid and well-organized Comité de Libération du Cinéma Français (The Committee for the Liberation of French Cinema), established in 1943 by journalist René

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[237] Ibid., 56.
[238] Joseph Kosma worked with Juan Antonio Bardem, one of the major counterpublic voices in Spain, on *Calle Mayor* (*The Lovemaker*, 1956), the film during which Bardem was temporarily arrested for his activities against the regime.
[239] Colin Crisp, *Classic French Cinema,* 188-192.
[240] Ibid., 192-193.

Bleck and which included famous names such as Louis Daquin, Jacques Becker, and Jean Grémillon.[241] By 1944, resistance was widespread and the first underground films had already been produced.[242] As scholars have emphasized, few people in the film industry collaborated with the Germans; many were active in the Resistance, but most were merely surviving and waiting for a change.[243] The situation of the French industry therefore attests to the intense life of underground counterpublics, but the degree to which they could promote their discourse in the public sphere is a matter of interpretation. The analysis of individual films often leads to ambiguous and inconclusive results, a situation that pleased both the authorities and their opposition. A good example in this sense is Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le Corbeau* (*The Raven*, 1943), a film that was attacked as anti-national by the right-wing press, and as collaborationist by left-wing journalists.[244] Furthermore, *La Main du diable* (*Carnival of Sinners*, 1943), based on a novel by Gérard de Nerval and a script written by Jean-Paul Le Chanois (who was Jewish), was, like *Le Corbeau*, produced by the German Continental and, while it was critical of those who "sold" their soul to the devil for money and love, it stopped short of giving the "devil" a clear identity. No discourse antithetical to the official one, however, could enter public circulation without the knowledge and consent of the authorities. I suggest that allowing such films to reach the screens gave filmmakers the partial illusion of artistic independence and sacrificed little of the regime's control over the public sphere.

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[241] Daquin also went to communist Romania and directed *Ciulinii Bărăganului* (*Baragan Thistles*) together with Gheorghe Vitanidis in 1958; the film was the adaptation of a famous novel centered on the peasants' uprisings of 1907.

[242] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 169.

[243] Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français*, 54-57; Alastair Phillips, "People: Migration and Exile in the Classical Period," in *The French Cinema Book*, ed. Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), 111.

[244] It is important to note that *Le Corbeau* was produced by Continental Films, whose leader, Alfred Greven, was little concerned with ideology.

Moreover, dissidents working within the public arena had to exercise a high degree of self-censorship so that their films could reach theaters. The official censorship board was the Commission de Contrôle (Control Commission), attached to the Ministry of Information since 1939 (which was yet another pre-war instrument that Vichy and the Germans were more than pleased to use). The head of this board was the Secretary General for Information and Propaganda, who responded directly to the Propagandaabteilung.[245] The Commission included three members appointed by the prime minister and representatives from the Secretaries of State for the Interior, Foreign Affairs, National Education and Youth, and National Defense, as well as from COIC, the Veterans' Legion, and the General Commissioner of the Family.[246] In the Unoccupied Zone, the Service du Cinéma was initially responsible for censorship, but the Paris Propagandaabteilung imposed the final decision on all matters; this formula became official after February 1941, when COIC unified all film production and distribution.[247] The purpose of censorship, as Prime Minister Darlan underscored in 1941, was to defend public morality and promote respect for national traditions[248]; films that were "depressing, morbid, and immoral" had to be avoided, as were those that did not present a positive vision of France abroad.[249] The many institutions represented in the Comission implicitly forced filmmakers to conform in one way or another, with the ideological requests of all possible agents of censorship.

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[245] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 29; Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 56.
[246] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 29-30.
[247] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 56.
[248] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 30.
[249] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 252.

Films had to pass three stages of control at the level of production, exhibition, and export. The synopsis and editing details had to be submitted to a consultative committee that granted the first visa. Shortage of materials, as well as the rationing of film stock, whose distribution was administered by COIC, compelled directors to work according to a very thorough plan of production, which included information about expenses and all other procedures related to the acquisition and use of materials.[250] The exhibition visa was approved only after all recommended cuts and changes were made; these ranged from re-writing dialogues, to eliminating narrative elements and even reshooting the ending.[251] The Church militated for a more rigorous control of the ethical aspects of texts, and called for the return of a 1936 ranking system, which varied from "1," for films suitable for general screening, to "3b," for films addressed to adult audiences, and "6" for very damaging films.[252] Nevertheless, the Catholics did not attract the support of the authorities and eventually published their classifications clandestinely. In addition to a very careful monitoring of production, the regime was also very vigilant about exhibition. In 1940, French authorities banned a number of 1930s films whose story, ideology, and style were considered inappropriate for the glorification of France. Important films such as *La grande illusion* (*Grand Illusion*, 1937), *La Bête humaine* (*The Human Beast*, 1938), *Hôtel du Nord* (1938), *Quai des brumes* (*Port of Shadows*, 1938), and *La Règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939) were forbidden, a prohibition that continued when the Germans took full control.[253] Furthermore, production on 16mm stock was considered technically improper, and the exhibition of pre-existing prints in that format was

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[250] Ibid., 56-61.
[251] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 31-32.
[252] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 256.
[253] Ibid., 252-253.

restricted; in effect, this measure had an impact especially on those films that did not conform to the goals of the regime.[254] The access of any film to the public sphere depended, therefore, on its compliance with numerous moral, technical, and stylistic criteria, but the most important among them was the political and "racial" adequacy of its storyline and execution. It is not surprising, therefore, that self-censorship became the most important instrument that ensured, in times of extreme economic scarcity and tension, the survival of film production and the employment of many. Counterpublic discourses reached audiences under the guise of entertaining allegories, historical films, and fantasies that necessarily responded to the expectations of authorities. It is also true that, among these authorities, there were quite a few who defended the artistic qualities of films in spite of their more or less politically explicit oppositional "messages," but these cases were few and often referred only to situations of excessive censorship. I argue that the films that reached the screen were largely supported by the regime, in one form or another.

The strategy for imports and exports also influenced the type of discourse destined for the public sphere. The French market was partially isolated from the rest of the world in 1940, when all foreign films, with the exception of German and Italian productions, were prohibited in the Occupied Zone; eighteen months later, the same law applied in the area controlled by Vichy. The result was very propitious for the French industry, as I have suggested, especially because the few foreign films imported had reasonable runs, but could not curtail the sudden gains of French films.[255] Furthermore, all positive references to British or American policies, events, or individuals were

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[254] Ibid., 253.
[255] Ibid., 53.

censored and, when they could not be edited out, the films were banned, with the clear intention of avoiding any pro-Allied popular emotion.[256] On the other hand, clearly propagandistic, anti-Semitic films, such as Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süss*, 1940), often had good box-office receipts in France, which attests to the population's xenophobia.[257] German melodramas, musicals, and comedies were also relatively successful, but it is important to remember that Goebbels had insisted that entertainment, rather than direct propaganda, was the most efficient tool to attract the masses. Germany also tried to ensure as large a share of the French market as possible, so Nazi authorities worked to prevent a French-Italian film cooperation and refused exhibition visas for joint projects such as *La Vie de Bohème* (1945) and *Carmen* (1945).[258]

Similarly, economic reasons guided the German policies toward the export of French cinema. The Nazis understood that French films brought more audiences worldwide than German productions, so they intended to build the industry of the occupied country in order to compete with Hollywood in Europe and Latin America. Furthermore, if German and even Italian films attempted to show French audiences the benefits of a life under fascist order and direction, the French films destined for export had to fulfill the same mission abroad. France was to become the attractive face of a "New Europe."[259] As would be the case in Spain and Romania, the regime was preoccupied with its international image, which, in part, explains the interest in the quality of French cinema and its support even for those directors suspected of dissidence.

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[256] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 153.
[257] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 54.
[258] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox,* 154.
[259] Ibid., 145-153.

The state of the production companies in France also had a serious impact on the dynamics of the public sphere. COIC instituted a number of measures intended to improve the condition of local businesses. It established a yearly quota of films, which allowed the fewer releases to earn more money. It also prohibited the double-feature exhibition, which had drastically lowered producers' gains in the 1930s. Finally, it established a system of control over the number of tickets sold for each film, which was enforced through regular inspections, and compelled exhibitors to return the established percentage of the box office take to producers.[260] These measures did reduce the number of companies involved in filmmaking, and often had a political and racial purpose as well. In 1941, thirty-one companies made forty-seven films; in 1942, forty-one producers released seventy titles, and in 1943, thirty-four enterprises launched forty-nine titles. Furthermore, over a half of these businesses put out about two films a year, but only twelve released five films annually.[261] I argue that, although the industry now enjoyed a well-structured administrative and financial system, it continued to rely on many firms that annually turned out a limited number of films, and had no facilities, staff, or regular distribution and exhibition contracts. The ideological control of storylines was, therefore, made possible in part, through the economic control of the resources that such small companies needed to survive.

The most profitable enterprise was, unsurprisingly, Continental Films, co-"owned" by Max Winkler, but funded by the Ministry of Propaganda.[262] Having seized the largest studios and laboratories in Paris, Continental "acquired" an extensive

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[260] A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 250.
[261] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 62.
[262] A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 255.

distribution and exhibition network, which it had confiscated from Jewish businesses, such as the Haïk and Siritzky circuits.[263] The German enterprise also had total monopoly over the films produced for export, which gave it an important advantage over French companies. Continental finally adopted the Hollywood model and signed long-term contracts with a number of well-known filmmakers and actors; this approach guaranteed its public success, especially as Greven was very discreet about the company's origins and finances. Out of the roughly 220 films made during the Occupation, Continental was responsible for thirty. The efficiency of the German company may be attributed to the "central producer system" it adopted, according to Colin Crisp: Greven, the business manager, directed all activities, which were very well compartmentalized and organized. Directors, therefore, had the freedom to engage only with the artistic, and not the economic or even technical, aspects of filmmaking.[264] Continental worked especially with figures such as Henri Decoin, Maurice Tourneur, Richard Pottier, or André Cayatte, and released some of the most popular, but also contested, titles of the period: *Le Corbeau*, *L'Assassin habite au… 21* (*The Murderer Lives at Number 21*, 1942), *La Symphonie fantastique* (*The Fantastic Symphony*, 1942), *Les Inconnus dans la maison* (*Strangers in the House*, 1942), *Au Bonheur des dames* (*Shop Girls of Paris*, 1943), *La Ferme aux loups* [*The Farm of Wolves*, 1943], or *Adrien* (1943).[265] Some of these films could be read as allegories of France under the Occupation, as was the case, for example, with *Le Corbeau*, *Les Inconnus dans la maison*, or *La Ferme aux loups*, and others were even criticized for their nationalist tones at the time, as was *La Symphonie fantastique*,

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[263]Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 50.
[264] Ibid., 280.
[265] I will use square parentheses for the films for whose titles I provide the English translation.

which might, in Goebbels's view, have given the French too many reasons for patriotism.[266] I suggest that the German authorities in France, and Greven in particular, were not especially worried about the coded messages in these films because these were often unclear and, in many cases, the interpretation could have gone—and indeed did go—both ways.

Two other producers started filming shortly after the invasion: Marcel Pagnol and Roger Richebé, both working in the Unoccupied Zone to which most of the personnel had already retreated. Pagnol was probably the closest to the "central-producer system," although he continued to direct most of the films released by his company before the war. Pagnol had his own studio in Marseilles, had hired technicians and actors, and had bought land in Provence for location-shooting. He also had his own laboratory to process prints and owned a network of cinemas.[267] Eventually, Gaumont acquired Pagnol's studios, but, as its major funding partner had been nationalized by Vichy, it did not have enough financial power to compete with Continental, so it eventually became mostly a distributor and exhibitor.[268] Pagnol ceased his activity as a film director after completing *La Fille du puisatier* (*The Well-Digger's Daughter*, 1940). Richebé was part of the COIC, and his company produced five films during the Occupation. In fact, five members of the Committee represented various producers: Pagnol wrote and directed for Gaumont, Raymond Borderie worked with Pathé, Pierre O'Connell was associated with Regina Films, Roland Tual produced for Synops-Minerva Films, and Raoul Ploquin had his own

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[266] See Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 141.
[267] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 280.
[268] Ibid., 63.

firm.[269] In order to secure a relatively stable source of money, companies had to resort to

power schemes and compromises. The smaller companies that did not have any

representative in the state apparatus often fared worse and produced one or two features.

It was the relatively undersized producers who tended to give newcomers, such as Robert

Bresson or Jacques Becker, their first opportunity to direct, thereby contributing to the

diversification of public discourse. Overall, the film companies present during the

Occupation could not have survived without relying on the regime that provided them

with money and precious film stock; this situation also made them very vulnerable to the

whims and control of authorities. I suggest that the public sphere included no stridently

dissonant voices because these could not gather the resources to access it or because they

were silenced before they could become too loud.

Film criticism and the severely curtailed activity of cinema clubs also reveal the

chasm opened between the public and the private spheres. Colin Crisp classifies the press

according to four categories of discourse, each representing a different type of interest:

the discourse of pleasure, supported by those with commercial interests; the discourse of

art, which belonged to the critics of aesthetics; the discourse of politics; and the discourse

of morality, usually backed by the religious order.[270] In the early 1940s, the political took

precedence over all other types of press discourses, especially as most publications

depended on the publicity they received from producers, who, in turn, acquired most of

their money from the authorities. A number of magazines and newspapers adopted a

right-wing, often extreme position in support of the regime. *Je Suis Partout* and *Action

Française* were the most infamous, especially for figures such as Lucien Rebatet (who

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[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid., 215.

used the pseudonym François Vinneuil), a Vichy radio host who moved to Paris in order to create a new, "French" radio "clean" of Yiddish "accents,"[271] and Robert Brasillach, a journalist who would be executed for "intellectual crimes" at the end of the war. These conservative newspapers constantly attacked the Jewish film community, militated for purges, and supported a redefinition of French cinema according to nationalist, fascist criteria.[272] *Le Film*, the only trade magazine published weekly that continued its activity during the Occupation, was also pro-German and anti-Semitic, but sometimes criticized, through the voice of Nino Frank, the insistence of censorship on apparently unimportant details.[273] These overtly political publications were only a part of the media scene; fan magazines continued to appear, even if their number decreased dramatically as a result of lack of funding. *Ciné-Miroir*, *Ciné Mondial*, *Mon Film*, *Vedettes*, or *Le Film Complet* in the Occupied Zone, and *Ciné Spectacles* and *Cahiers du Film*, a short-lived magazine that promoted Pagnol's films in the Unoccupied Zone, concentrated on genres, stars, and details about the making of films.[274]

The political and pleasure discourse were supplemented by the artistic in two other publications with a brief life, but which featured important literary and cinema figures. *La Revue du Cinéma*, edited by Jean George Auriol, was renowned for gathering the most important writers of the time and for launching the auteurist thesis. In 1943, André Bazin insisted that cinema was a team art, difficult to attribute to a single person. His ideas, however, were sidetracked as the magazine started publishing Doniol-

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[271] Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 133-135.
[272] Ibid., 143-145.
[273] See Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 63-64.
[274] See Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 220-222.

Valcroze's critical series on "auteurs" such as Eisenstein or Welles. Filmmaking was

increasingly associated with an art, especially when the vision of one individual, the

writer-director, dominated the creative and productive stages of each text.[275] *La Revue du*

Cinéma eventually refused to depend on publicity and its profit and readership decreased

dramatically.[276] A similar situation happened to *L'Ecran Français*, an underground fan

magazine that refused to depend on advertising money. Published by the Comité de

Libération du Cinéma Français, the publication was initially incorporated into *Les Lettres*

Françaises, edited by Jean-Paul Sartre and Paul Eluard. It was first published in

December 1943, and, in its four 1944 issues, it leveled serious accusations against those

who had collaborated with the German authorities, demanding their elimination from the

future French cinema.[277] *L'Ecran* was issued clandestinely until the liberation, included

famous figures such as the film critic and historian Georges Sadoul, director Jean

Delannoy, or scriptwriter Bernard Zimmer, and had a pronounced leftist spirit.

Underground counterpublics were split, however, and *L'Ecran* clashed with *Opéra*,

another clandestine newspaper issued in 1944 that represented the Comité de Résistance

de l'Industrie Cinématographique, a non-communist group that also pleaded for the

renovation of French culture and cinema.[278] The varied umbrella of the French press

during the Occupation reflected, therefore, an intense cultural life, whether film was

perceived as entertainment, as an aesthetic medium, or, especially, as a political

instrument for the education of the masses. Counterpublics could not find a voice in the

official public sphere, dominated by political or commercial interests, but developed their

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[275] Ibid., 236-238.
[276] Ibid., 217.
[277] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 171.
[278] Ibid., 171.

own hidden sphere of debate. I believe that the existence of at least two underground

publications, which had distinct ideological orientations, but militated for similar values,

indicates not only the presence of an underground public sphere, but also the profound

divide between the official and private discourses. Filmmakers, writers, and artists led

double lives, and prepared to take over the official public sphere after the defeat of

Germany, a situation unique to France because, unlike Spain and Romania, its regime

largely depended on the evolution of the foreign power that had occupied the country.

The same parallel life characterized the very limited scene of cinema clubs. In the

1930s, France had a uniquely rich critical and artistic life, which included different film

discourses, from the avant-garde to impressionism or pictorial naturalism. The

Occupation authorities completely forbid all cinema clubs, which they deemed too

dangerous for the public sphere. Colin Crisp suggests that, although several private

screenings did take place in the houses of Henri Langlois, Jacques Marel, or Jean Pleury,

these only had a symbolical value and no real impact on official discourse.[279]

I believe that French cinema during the German Occupation was a source of

refuge rather than militancy for or against the occupier and the regime. Audiences

flooded the theaters, which, in the absence of other forms of entertainment, had become

the only meeting places, heated and ready to shelter temporary communities. The tickets

sold ensured the sustainability of a system well orchestrated to serve the regime and the

German authorities, but also capable of reviving a hard-tried industry and offering

counterpublics a very timid venue for expression. The attempt to evade censorship, the

double game played by filmmakers and the political confusion that often characterized

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[279] Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 229.

official decisions and acts greatly contributed to the ambiguity and apparent escapism of the films released.[280] The occupier's presence was, however, essential to the film publics of all colors; it empowered its supporters and energized its opponents.

The Spanish film industry in the 1950s

The 1950s was a paradoxical decade for the Spanish cinema, which, as in the cases of France and Romania, needed a more coherent legislative and financial network in order to prosper. Past companies, practices, and tendencies continued to exist, but this period was also characterized by the rise of a dissident culture. The artisanal film industry was atomized as a result of lack of supplies and technical modernization; it was forced to submit to multiple centers of censorship and was heavily dependent on state support and earnings from import and dubbing licenses, which only aggravated its status in relation to foreign cinema. The number of viewers reached a record high in the 1950s; it subsequently decreased slowly, with the advent of television. Film production also grew steadily, reaching its peak in the mid-1950s. The number of specialized newspapers and journals rose, even if many only survived for a few years. Scholarly work on the filmmaking of this period has largely emphasized the accomplishments of oppositional filmmakers; even more recent considerations of popular filmmaking of the era have tended to underline the "gaps" and "fissures" that enable "negotiated" readings of dominant film texts. By contrast, I will argue here that centralization, control, and paternalism dominated the 1950s Spanish cinema, and that, in spite of the constant open

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[280] I will analyze the issue of ambiguity in more detail in a further section of the dissertation.

contradictions between the Francoist propaganda apparatus and the dissident and modernizing sectors of the film industry, most viewers paid to see precisely those products that supported, legitimized, and reinforced the regime.

The 1950s were years of profound restructuring of the industry and of the state and legislative mechanism governing it. This decade inherited some of the state-coordinated institutions established in the 1940s under the urgent impulse to create a national cinema, such as the Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficas (NO-DO), an organization created in 1942 in order to disseminate newsreels and documentaries filmed in Spain or abroad, or the Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas (IIEC), constituted in 1947 as the first Spanish film school whose first generation would graduate in 1950. In 1951, the newly-established Ministry of Information and Tourism included the Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro (General Direction for Cinema and Theater), which took over part of the tasks that had previously been split between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The Direction was in charge of the political and social aspects of production, distribution, and exhibition, while the other two ministries kept some leverage over censorship and the final decision on economic matters, respectively. The Instituto de Orientación Cinematográfica (Institute for Cinema Orientation), which used to have only an advisory role, changed its name to the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía (National Institute of Cinematography) in 1958, incorporated the economic function once belonging to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and came under the direct jurisdiction of the General Direction. The same institute eventually also included three organisms that previously were under the administration of the General Direction: the Junta de

Clasificación y Censura (the Board of Classification and Censorship), the Comisión Superior de Censura Cinematográfica (the High Commission for Cinema Censorship) that controlled the Junta, and the Consejo Coordinador de la Cinematografía (the Coordinating Council for Cinematography). Finally, another state-supervised institution involved in the film industry was the Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo (SNE, or the National Entertainment Syndicate), to which all branches of the entertainment industry had to be affiliated and which owned its own fund for the support of cinema and could offer credit to the many producers.[281] These constant mutations and transformations of the state institutions resulted from the determination to give more coherence and profitability to a national cinema that was losing ground to foreign competition. Increasingly, it was the General Direction and the Ministry of Information and Tourism that took political and economic control over production, distribution, and exhibition. I argue that it became impossible for any film to be produced without official knowledge and authorization.

As in the case of French cinema, two promising figures largely decided the fate of the cinema at the time, although neither of them remained in power for long: Joaquín Ruiz Giménez, the Minister of Education, and José María García Escudero, the first General Director of Cinema and Theater. Both men lamented the situation of their respective domains and sought to reform them, but both were eventually dismissed. Ruiz Giménez granted students and their associations, including film organizations and

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[281] For the historical data included in this paragraph, see José Enrique Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia (1951-1962)," in *Historia del cine español*, 4th ed., ed. Román Gubern, José Enrique Monterde, Julio Pérez Perucha, Esteve Riambau, and Casimiro Torreiro (Madrid: Catédra, 2004, c. 1995), 246-248; Carlos F. Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo: Cine español 1951-1961* (Valencia: Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana and Filmoteca Española, 1993), 17, 39-40, 47-48; Núria Triana-Toribio, "A Constant Concern for the Popular Classes, 1939-1962," in *Spanish National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2003), 51-52.

journals, a higher degree of freedom of speech. He was removed in 1956, after the

students' strikes. García Escudero, a former writer for the Falangist *Arriba*, was

perceived as a liberal Catholic, who militated for a complete revaluation of national

cinema. In 1952, he had to leave after he granted the neorealist *Surcos* (*Furrows*, 1951,

dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde) the highest rating of "Interés Nacional" (National

Interest) instead of awarding it to *Alba de América* (1951, dir. Juan de Orduña), the

historical pageant produced by the major Spanish studio, CIFESA, and supported by

Gabriel Arias Salgado.[282] In 1962, shortly before he returned to his post as General

Director, he complained about the lack of realism, of genuine subject-matter, and of

creativity in a cinema preoccupied too much with commercial success to be honest and of

quality.[283] He constantly militated for the education of the population through a cinema

that would encourage critical thinking rather than mere escapism, suggesting that

audiences' support was essential against the official censorship, especially to back

reforming attempts coming from within the system. García Escudero referred directly to

the *Surcos* incident, when, as he explained, it was the greater popularity of *Alba de

América* that eventually determined the state to reverse his initial decision; García

Escudero was sacked soon after the scandal. Although his stake in the matter is beyond

doubt, it remains a fact that only one of the more critical films of the New Spanish

Cinema (Luis García Berlanga's *Plácido*, 1961) figured in the top thirty most popular

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[282] The category of "Interés Nacional" was created in 1944 and modeled on Nazi Germany's top classification rewarded for "special political and artistic value." The Spanish General Direction reserved it for films that promoted the race and its moral and political principles. Such films received preferential treatment: better financial support, propitious release dates and venues, and better promotion. Consequently, the category represented an important instrument for the dissemination of state ideology. It is no wonder that *Surcos*, a film that questioned, but did not ultimately contradict the social discourse of the regime could not be accepted as superior to *Alba de América*, a historical saga glorifying the nation. See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 44.

[283] José María García Escudero, *Cine español* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S. S., 1962), 30-34.

films of the decade. [284] García Escudero's frustration supports my claim that, in spite of

the existence of a more challenging, oppositional cinema, the mass of viewers took

pleasure and invested in films that dealt in the utopian, preferred "reality" promoted

officially through ratings, subsidies, and censorship. The new, oppositional Spanish

cinema simply did not attract the numbers of spectators that would have made its texts

socially relevant.

The first, and most important, means through which the state exercized its power

over the films produced and released at the time was the financial reorganization of the

system, which took into consideration overt political criteria. The system of ratings,

distinctions, and awards was essential to the sum of money a film could receive from the

state, and led to the marginalization of films and directors hostile to the regime. This

system, therefore, functioned as the major form of censorship. Three different institutions

contributed to this situation: the Junta de Clasificación y Censura, the Catholic Church,

and the Sindicato Nacional. The Junta was created in 1952, as part of García Escudero's

plan to centralize the three uncoordinated censorship agencies that depended on the

propaganda service of the Movimiento Nacional, the national commission for

classifications, and another state agency for cinema orientation. The Junta was led by the

General Director and it included ten representatives, five from the Ministry of

Information and Tourism, three from the General Direction, and one each from the

government and the Catholic Church. It had two branches: one that implemented the

economic and protection policies, and another one that policed scripts and completed

films, but also determined which foreign films would be dubbed and which Spanish

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[284] See García Escudero, *Cine español*, 40; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 99.

productions would be exported.[285] In the case of disagreements or ministerial opposition to the decisions, the Comisión Superior de Censura Cinematográfica, with a similar composition, intervened. In order to be produced or released, all films had to pass through this censorship board, which ensured the complete surveillance of cinema. I suggest that, if dissident films emerged in the Spanish cinema, it was because they passed the Junta censorship twice—as scripts and finalized products—and passed or were never contested by the Comisión Superior de Censura. I emphasize that these oppositional texts were often marginalized and barely released in Spain, being intended for international markets rather than national audiences.

In addition to political censorship, the state also used economic levers to monitor cinema. After García Escudero's departure, new norms of protection and regulation were implemented, and the responsibility for import permits was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce while the Ministry of Information and Tourism granted permits for dubbing, according to a classification grid. Producers received a number of dubbing permits for each Spanish film made, according to the classification received by the respective film from the Junta. In turn, foreign companies that wanted their films released in Spain had to buy these permits from the Spanish producers. Initially, productions were classified into six categories and the money received from the sale of permits covered a specific percentage of the respective film production: 50% for the "Interés Nacional" category; 40% for the 1st A category; 35% for 1^{st}B; 30% for 2^{nd}A; 25% for 2^{nd}B; and no money for the third category. For each group, there was also a maximum amount each film could receive. In 1957, the system was restructured and the last two categories were excluded

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[285] Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 61-62.

from credits from the Sindicato Nacional.[286] Towards the end of the decade, the number of films awarded the last two categories and the "interés nacional" category decreased dramatically in favor of the 1st A, 1st B, and 2nd A categories, which represented about 80% of the total production.[287] This demonstrates not only the increased dependence of the popular Spanish cinema on the tastes and preferences of the Junta members, as Carlos Heredero rightfully emphasizes, but also, implicitly, the preferences of the public, as the members of the Junta rewarded those films that were also successful with audiences.[288] In my opinion, this practice led to the promotion and popularity of a number of "safe" directors, supportive of the regime's discourse, and of the same type of film formula, which was an indirect, but very efficient means of monitoring the type of messages sent to the population.

The Catholic Church also exercised an important influence on film censorship and promotion, especially as its power within the government grew. Its representative in the Junta had the right of veto over all decisions, so his opinion eventually counted more than everybody else's. Following an international congress on cinema organized by the Vatican in 1947, in 1950 the Spanish authorities established the Oficina Nacional Calificadora de Espectáculos (the National Office for Show Ratings), which depended on the Comisión Episcopal de Ortodoxia y Moralidad (The Episcopal Commission for Orthodoxy and Morality) of the Acción Católica. The morality commission drafted norms for the censorship of cinema, drawing attention to the possible social and moral danger posed by certain films. These two institutions ranked films into four categories: the first

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[286] Ibid., 43.
[287] Ibid., 45.
[288] García Escudero lamented this practice, and pleaded for the support of quality, not popular films. García Escudero, *Cine español*, 85.

was intended for all types of public, including children; the second was only for those over fourteen years old; the third, for those over twenty-one, but only if they were of "serious moral formation"; and the fourth referred to those films deemed "gravely dangerous" for everybody.[289] Although the new generation became increasingly distant from the Church, it is my impression that the number of films that satisfied Catholic demands grew constantly, as filmmakers attempted to make sure that their work could be released and well-rewarded. The strict moral censorship relaxed after 1955, with pressure coming from the young, as well as from the social modernization following improvements in the nation's economic situation. Nevertheless, I suggest that, in the 1950s, the Church placed rigorous expectations and constraints on national cinema, which resulted in ethically sanitized popular films that only reinforced the religious discourse in the public sphere.

The third state-coordinated organization involved in the economic control of cinema was the Sindicato Nacional. Its funds came from taxes on the import and dubbing permits. The credit line it offered could reach as much as 40% of a film and was to be paid in monthly installments after the film's release. As the funds of the syndicate were running out, in 1958 the Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía opened a new credit line with the Banco de Crédito Sindical, a bank managed by the Opus Dei, encouraging production companies to release at least three films a year in order to get financing; the line became functional only in 1960.[290] The Sindicato Nacional also awarded prizes according to criteria similar to those of the Junta, and privileged the films already supported by the Junta and the Catholic Church. The funds it granted also allowed it to

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[289] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 50-53; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 249-250.
[290] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 46; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 253.

regulate the number of employees that could work on each project. In 1955, Manuel Rabanal Taylor, one of the important counterpublic voices, complained about the choices made by the Sindicato: "… [S]e premia la rutina tópica y se ignora el esfuerzo creador que se sale de la vulgaridad" ("… They reward routine commonplaces and ignore the creative efforts that depart from vulgarity"). [291] I therefore argue that the state opted for an often bland, formulaic, didactic cinema not only by deploying direct censorship of undesirable films and messages, but especially by creating an economic system that pressured filmmakers into self-censorship and silence or insolvency.

How did counterpublics fare under such circumstances? I consider the case of Juan Antonio Bardem, the most vocal of the dissident cineastes, as representative of the impact of political pressure and censorship, as well as of the social indifference that transformed his critically acclaimed films into box office flops. Many of Bardem's works did receive state support. *Cómicos* (*Comedians*, 1954), his first film after his partnership with Luis García Berlanga, was awarded the "Interés Nacional" category, as well as the second prize of the Sindicato Nacional, and was selected to represent Spain in Cannes, where it was nominated for the Grand Prize. *Muerte de un ciclista* (*Death of a Cyclist*) was awarded the 1st A rating and the fourth prize of the Sindicato Nacional, as well as the FIPRESCI prize in Cannes. *Calle Mayor* was given a 1st A rating, received the fourth prize of the Sindicato Nacional, was nominated for the Golden Lion in Venice, and received the FIPRESCI prize in Cannes. Finally, *La venganza* (*Revenge*, 1958) received the third prize of the Sindicato Nacional, and represented Spain both in the Oscar and

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[291] Manuel Rabanal Taylor, "La crítica cinematográfica en España," in *Cine universitario: Revista del cine-club del S.E.U. de Salamanca* 1 (January-February-March, 1955): 57. All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise specified.

Cannes film competitions.[292] None of these films, however, appeared among the top ten most popular films of the decade in various magazines of the time.[293] The critical reception in Spain was mixed. Counterpublic journals, like *Cinema Universitario* or *Objetivo,* ranked films such as *Muerte de un ciclista* or *Calle Mayor* among the best titles produced by Spanish cinema, but also emphasized their weak points. [294] The mainstream *Primer Plano* informed its public about the successes abroad with muted enthusiasm, reviewed them in more negative terms, and allotted them little space in comparison to such commercial films as *Pequeñeces* (*Trifles*, 1950, dir. Juan de Orduña) or *Condenados* (*The Condemned*, 1953, dir. Manuel Mur Oti).[295] *Primer Plano*, a large-format coffee-table style magazine, amply covered the production of films by such regime-endorsed directors as Juan de Orduña, Manuel Mur Oti, Rafael Gil, Luis Lucia, or Francisco Rovira-Beleta. It offered its readers sensational details about the private lives of stars and it used an unsophisticated language to review films. It was simple, image- rather than text-based, and gossipy, and it was one of the most popular film magazines of the time. I

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[292] See "La protección del Estado al cine español, en 1955," *Espectáculo* 9.103 (March 1956); "La protección del Estado al cine español en 1956," *Espectáculo* 10. 130 (March 1957); Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 442, 446-447.

[293] There is a partial report made by the important Institute for Public Opinion that appeared in the officially endorsed weekly magazine *Primer Plano*: "La popularidad según la O.P. [Opinión Publica]," in *Primer Plano: Revista española de cinematografía* (12 January 1955) (Note: *Primer Plano* did not record page numbers.). The film magazine for the Sindicato Nacional, *Espectáculo*, also provides a classification of films according to their popularity, as this was certified by a survey made by the magazine among owners of cinema halls: "La opinión de los empresarios de salas," *Espectáculo: Revista del Sindicato Nacional* 9.107 (July 1956): 29. *La venganza*, as well as Bardem's next two films, *Sonatas* (1959) and *A las cinco de la tarde* (*At Five in the Afternoon*, 1960) were commercial flops. See Jesús Angulo, "Los antecedentes (1951-1962): El cine español de los años cincuenta," in *Los "Nuevos Cines" en España: Ilusiones y desencantos de los años sesenta*, ed. Carlos F. Heredero and José Enrique Monterde (Valencia: Institut Valencia de Cinematografía, 2003), 44.

[294] See Luciano G. Egido and Joaquín de Prada, "*Muerte de un ciclista*," *Cinema universitario* 2 (October-November-December, 1955): 70-78; Alonso Zamora Vicente, "Monologo en torno a 'Calle Mayor,'" *Cinema universitario* 5 (January-February-March 1957): 32-35; Luciano G. Egido, "Calle Mayor," *Cinema universitario* 5: 49-54; Marcelo Arroita-Jáuregui, "Muerte de un ciclista," *Objetivo* 6 (1955): 31-34.

[295] See Luigi Gario, "Cannes: Cronica de nuestro enviado especial Luigi Gario," *Primer Plano* (15 May 1955); "*Muerte de un ciclista*," in *Primer Plano* (17 September 1955).

suggest that Bardem's commercial failures, even when his films were intended for mass audiences, as was *Sonatas* (1959), were also the result of censorship and the lack of positive, repeated endorsement in the mass press. Even when the regime financially supported its counterpublic voices, it did so in moderate measure, never with the intent of exhibiting their work nationally, and often at the expense of the filmmaker.[296]

Censorship was, therefore, effected through multiple channels. In order to get a permit for filming, producers had to submit their scripts to the Junta first. Once they had the authorization, however, they still had to face the hurdle of finding financing, which often meant submitting the script to the Sindicato Nacional and any other private agency that could advance the funds. Even after the film was finished, it was subject to censorship by the Junta, the Catholic Church, and by different professional organizations and individuals concerned that their interests or image might be disparaged. Sometimes the release of a film was contingent upon the elimination or modification of particular scenes, as demanded by one or more of the censoring agencies.[297] This situation led producers to exercise extra precaution, strictly surveilling their own films in order to anticipate all possible complaints against their products. I argue that, as in the case of France and Romania, self-censorship was the first and most important "hurdle" that all films had to pass.

An important, yet ultimately politically ineffective, event was organized as a public platform for the interaction between official and counterpublic discourses. The

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[296] For his vocal support of the 1956 students' strikes, Bardem was jailed during the production of *Calle Mayor*. He was released at the insistence of the crew, which included American actors and professionals, but the film had to be smuggled out in order to participate in the Venice Film Festival. See Stephen Roberts, "In Search of a New Spanish Realism: Bardem's *Calle Mayor* (1956)," in *Spanish Cinema: The Auteurist Tradition*, ed. Peter William Evans (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

[297] Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 63.

ambiguity of the censorship criteria, the dependence on the direct preferences of the Junta

or other organizations, and the choking climate of the industry inspired a number of

students and their professors in Salamanca to organize the Conversations of Salamanca in

May 1955. The cinema club of the University of Salamanca, led by Basilio Martín

Patino, and the journal *Objetivo,* coordinated by Ricardo Muñoz Suay, collaborated on

the event, and invited representatives of strong, weak, and even underground publics,

from the civil governor of Salamanca, to liberal Falangist and Catholic figures, members

of the SEU, progressive independents, ex-communists, leftists, and international cineastes

and critics from Portugal, France, and Italy.[298] Irrespective of their affiliation, participants

in this counter-public sphere—unique for that time—critically debated the lack of a clear,

systematized legal and business framework for film, hoping ultimately to influence the

authorities to make changes. In their conclusions, published as a manifesto in *Objetivo,*

they stated that Spanish cinema presented a fake, cosmeticized "reality," without genuine

topics or social depth:

> El cine español vive aislado. Aislado no sólo del mundo sino de nuestra propia realidad. . . . El cine español sigue siendo un cine de muñecas pintadas. El problema del cine español es que no tiene problemas, que no es ese testigo de nuestro tiempo, que nuestro tiempo exige a toda creación humana.[299]

> Spanish cinema lives isolated, not only from the world, but from our own reality. . . . Spanish cinema continues to be a cinema of painted dolls. The problem of Spanish cinema is that it has no problems and that it is not the testimony of our time that our time demands from all human creation.

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[298] See Angulo, "Los antecedentes," 41-42.
[299] Basilio Martín Patino, Joaquín de Prada, Juan Antonio Bardem, Eduardo Ducay, Marcelo Arroita-Jáuregui, José María Pérez Lozano, Paulino Garagorri, Manuel Rabanal Taylor, "Llamamiento," *Objetivo: Revista del cinema* 5 (May 1955): 4.

Their conclusions reiterated Juan Antonio Bardem's condemnation of Spanish film in his

own speech at the event: "El cine español actual es: 1. Políticamente ineficaz; 2.

Socialmente falso; 3. Intelectualmente ínfimo; 4. Estéticamente nulo; 5. Industrialmente

raquítico."[300] ("Today's Spanish cinema is: 1. politically ineffective; 2. socially false; 3.

intellectually worthless; 4. aesthetically nonexistent; 5. industrially crippled").[301] The

group attacked the escapist nature of most productions, whose content revolved around

atemporal conflicts and whose insincere, shapeless style was incapable of expressing

genuine beauty. Bardem identified one of the causes of this situation as the intellectuals'

disregard for Spanish cinema, but the final manifesto was a detailed account of the

failures of the state to promote a coherent policy that would reform the many institutions

in charge of cinema, provide support for quality films, and protect Spanish

productions.[302] Although Bardem had called for the establishment of clear, unequivocal

censorship norms, the approved conclusions did not mention censorship at all, refusing to

acknowledge one of the most important means of state intervention.[303] In spite of its

impact within the university system and the limited public sphere of specialized journals,

the Salamanca convention did not have the institutional and social power to provoke

substantial political reforms. I suggest that, even when they had temporary access to the

public sphere, counterpublics were never given a real chance at producing a change.

Made possible by the many mediators who tried to connect the strong and weak

publics, the Conversations did not have an immediate result; quite the contrary, the 1956

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[300] "Las conclusiones aprobadas," *Objetivo: Revista del cinema* 5 (May 1955): 33.

[301] Translation by Mariana Carreño King in Juan Antonio Bardem, "Report on the Current State of Our Cinema," in *Death of a Cyclist*, Criterion Collection DVD booklet, ed. Elizabeth Helfgot (Criterion Collection, 2008): 22.

[302] "Las conclusiones aprobadas," 34.

[303] See Juan Antonio Bardem, "Informe sobre la situación actual de nuestra cinematografía," *Objetivo: Revista del cinema* 5 (May 1955): 8; "Las conclusiones aprobadas," 33-37.

students' strikes worsened the situation of some of the important figures who had organized the conference. It was only in 1962, when García Escudero, one of the participants, regained his post as General Director, that he finally implemented some of the Salamanca demands related to a clear, well-established code of censorship and to the further reform of institutions. In the 1950s, therefore, the combination of state control and support, as well as the "education" of audiences for escapism and superficial gratification, continued to legitimize and reinforce the regime.

The state also controlled all imports and exports. With the 1950s opening to the international community, Spain was invaded by U.S. films and companies, and, although the state repeatedly tried to reduce the American presence in its market, it only succeeded in instituting minor economic limitations. Spanish censorship, however, also extended over imports, often distorting the words and even plot characteristics of uncomfortable films. At the end of autarky, the United States especially, but also France, Italy, Mexico, and a number of other countries of Latin America, established their own production companies and distributors in Spain, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Spanish authorities. The government also used its power to raise the number of national films screened, but the steps taken had little effect on the market. One can only speculate about the officials' real intentions. In 1955, the General Direction instituted two types of quotas. The new distribution quota forced all companies to distribute at least one Spanish film for every four foreign films dubbed, while the 1953 exhibition quota required all screening venues to include at least one week of Spanish films for every six weeks of

foreign films.[304] These measures were supplemented by more constraints for the Americans, who had to distribute at least one Spanish film in the United States for every five American films imported into Spain. This led to the boycott by the Motion Picture Export Association of America, which included the biggest American producers and distributors. Their decision, however, led to the increase in coproductions with France and Italy, so the US was eventually compelled to return to the negotiation table. The quotas indicate the high percentage of imports, a necessary "vice" for an industry that depended on the sale of import and dubbing permits. Hollywood genres invaded Spanish cinema, with the regime's approval, and their appeal to the public influenced national filmmakers looking for profit. If the discourse of popular cinema reinforced state and church ideology, its style followed especially the American model.

The fragmentation and fragility of the Spanish film industry made it an easy prey for the authorities. The number of production companies continually grew, reaching a total of 176, of which only a small number made more than one film between 1951 and 1961; fewer still exceeded three films a year.[305] Of the 471 Spanish films released, 257 emerged from the twelve most important entities, each of which made at least ten films over the course of the decade.[306] Many companies formed around the production of a single film and then disappeared, which rendered them entirely dependent on state

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[304] The number of weeks of foreign films was reduced to five in 1958. See Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 253-254; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 47.

[305] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 78. An interesting example is the year 1959, an average year for production numbers, when 49% of registered companies produced no films, 35% produced one film, 11 % produced only one film, and 1% produced five films (these numbers include coproduction companies). Fernando Lazaro, "Visión económica de la producción cinematográfica nacional," *Documentos cinematográficos* 1.1 (May 1960): 10.

[306] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 78; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 256.

support and on the decisions of the filmmaker(s) involved. It was an industry that was easy to control.

The twelve most important companies also catered to specific audiences. Suevia Films, which overtook CIFESA in importance at the beginning of the 1950s, was the strongest of them and had an important distribution network.[307] Unlike CIFESA, it was not vertically integrated and did not tie its actors to a contract, although it was the most important star vehicle of the 1950s. Suevia Films had a diversified range of films, which included top dissident works such as *Muerte de un ciclista*, *Calle Mayor*, and *La venganza*, but was dominated by popular categories such as *cine folclórico* (folkloric cinema), *cine con niño* (cinema with children), or rural dramas.[308] IFI Producción, the Barcelona-based company led by director Ignacio F. Iquino, also had its own studio and was the second largest producer of the 1950s, although its films were mostly second-rate successes by Iquino, Rafael Salvia, and a number of B-category directors who were supporters of the regime. Benito Perojo's independent company, the third most prolific, also released second and third category films, especially of folkloric tendencies, by official directors such as Luis Lucia, León Klimovsky, or Ladislao Vajda.[309] The interests of the Catholic Church were represented by business enterprises such as Aspa Films, the fifth most productive in the 1950s and famous for hits such as *Balarrasa* (*Reckless*, 1950, dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde) or *La Señora de Fátima* (*Our Lady of Fatima*, 1951, dir.

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[307] CIFESA (Compañía Industrial de Film Español S.A.) was the closest Spanish company to the Hollywood model: it had its own studios, distribution system, and exhibition network; it hired professionals under strict contracts for a specified period of time; and it produced genre cinema. CIFESA dominated the 1940s, when its war and historical melodramas attracted large numbers of spectators, but started to decline in the 1950s for lack of viewers and the inability to adapt. Although it continued to make films until the 1960s (in many cases in coproduction with other companies), its major function after 1953 was as a distributor.

[308] See Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 257; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 92-93.

[309] See Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 257-258; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 78, 86-87.

Rafael Gil), and Pecsa and Procusa SA, two entities close to the Opus Dei, both of which hired important regime directors such as Luis César Amadori or Francisco Rovira Beleta. Many of these companies survived until the 1970s or even the 1980s, but they ceased production much earlier, often in the 1950s. They had one or two big hits, which sustained them for a long time, and only secondarily and in very limited cases did they support counterpublic filmmaking. I argue that the economic power of these twelve producers depended on their adoption of the commercial formulas of escapist cinema that made them double winners: they eluded state censorship and gained more funding. They also attracted a population so harassed by shortages and frustrations that it only sought diversion at the cinema.

The companies established by dissident figures fared much worse. They produced very few films—none of them released more than ten films for the whole decade—and were often compelled to work together. Altamira S.L. (1949-1955), Uninci (1950-1961), or Films 59 (which was established only in 1959, but lasted through the 1960s) produced critically important films—*Esa pareja feliz* (*That Happy Couple*, 1951, dir. Juan Antonio Bardem and Luis García Berlanga), *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!* (*Welcome, Mr. Marshall!* 1953, dir. Bardem and Berlanga), *Los golfos* (*The Rascals*, 1960, dir. Carlos Saura), *El cochecito* (*The Pushchair*, 1960, dir. Marco Ferreri), or *Viridiana* (1961, dir. Luis Buñuel). Some of these could not find a distributor and only premiered much later (as was the case with *Esa pareja feliz)* or were simply forbidden in Spain after a controversial pre-release screening (as was the case with *Viridiana)*.[310] These few,

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[310] Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 260; Triana-Toribio, "A Constant Concern," 58; Angulo, "Los antecedentes," 48. *Viridiana* was a project approved by the Junta de Censura, but, once it was screened in Cannes and won the Palme d'Or, the Vatican newspaper attacked it as an offense against the Church. As a

generally small-scale companies, whose films rarely managed to enjoy even moderate

public success, eventually had to close their doors because of financial insolvency. Their

major commercial "flaw," in my opinion, was their failure to meet audiences'

expectations concerning the entertainment value of cinema. Their films depicted the

sordid life of crowded cities and god-forsaken villages, and featured ill-fated protagonists

with no means of escape from their dire circumstances. Dominated by a handful of

companies—only three of which produced more than three films a year—and submitting

to the demands of the regime and audiences, the Spanish film industry was, I believe,

closer to an assembly-line than an art house; it attempted to make the most money within

the ideological limits imposed by the regime.

Film criticism and the activity of cinema clubs also contributed to this situation.

Two distinctive critical tendencies were represented by various publications belonging to,

or under the influence of, the State, the Sindicato Nacional and the Movimiento, and the

Catholic Church. The officially endorsed, and dominant, inclination was toward a cinema

of entertainment that highlighted the national past and present greatness, as well as the

moral precepts of the Church as these should be reflected in everyday life. *Primer Plano*,

established in 1940 by the Movimiento as an exclusive arena for cinema news and critical

writing, had become, by the 1950s, the major promoter of state ideology wrapped in an

appealing package. Regular rubrics such as "La pantalla indiscreta" ("The Indiscrete

Screen"), which dealt in gossip about different national or international actors, or

"Moviola" ("The Projector"), which gave viewers access to the filming set, or the regular

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result, the film was banned in Spain, and the General Director of Cinema and Theater, José Muñoz Fontán, was fired. Román Gubern and Domenèc Font, *Un cine para el cadalso: 40 años de censura cinematográfica en España* (Barcelona: SPA: Editorial Euros, 1975), 97.

interviews of film professionals, which constantly reinforced the family's importance even to the most successful in the two-page "La vida y el cine" ("Life and cinema") ensured *Primer Plano* its popularity in the 1950s. *Arriba*, *ABC*, and *Ya* supported the same inclination toward patriotism and morality in their regular columns dedicated to Spanish cinema and its protagonists.

Another series of publications militated for a cinema with an honest, unmediated approach to Spanish realities; it was inspired by the 1951 week of Italian Neorealist cinema in Madrid, and rose into the public sphere with the scandal surrounding *Surcos*. These publications found supporters especially among the young generation of filmmakers and critics, who saw in them a necessary alternative to magazines promoting an escapist cinema. *Objetivo* was established in 1953 by Ricardo Muñoz Suay and a team of critics who used to work for *Índice*, including two other PCE militants, Juan Antonio Bardem and Eduardo Ducay, as well as the liberal Paulino Garagorri. The journal published extended reviews of significant or popular Spanish and international films, and offered its own ratings, as well as documented in-depth articles about different aspects of the film industry and practice in Spain and abroad. It always adopted a critical view of the authorities and film legislation. One of its most important issues was dedicated to the Salamanca Conversations, and included the manifesto of the event, as well as the opinions of the most important participants. This small, niche public sphere, open to weak, previously underground counterpublics, was closed down by the state in 1955, after only nine issues, with a minor economic pretext, but, in reality, for fear of its possible influence among the restless student population. *Cinema Universitario*, the journal of the famous Salamanca cine club of the SEU, took over *Objetivo*'s mission after

the Conversations, only to be shut down in 1963 for political reasons. *Nuestro Cine*, established in 1961, would eventually continue this tradition, featuring articles by important leftist figures such as Bardem, Muñoz Suay, Alfonso Sastre, and, later, Víctor Erice or Román Gubern. The evolution of weak counterpublics during the authoritarian Franco regime followed a specific pattern: the underground public sphere of these counterpublics became visible as a counterpublic sphere within the official public sphere, but only as long as it did not pose a real problem to the regime. Students' riots or political divergences brought to the attention of a larger public prompted the immediate elimination of the respective counterpublic sphere, which then resurfaced under a different name, but with a similar fate. I believe, therefore, that the ideas and themes circulated within this limited counterpublic space never had a real chance of effecting any change in the official public sphere.

Underground counterpublics, however, were not the only ones to press for a change, especially in film style and the modernization of state ideology. The strong publics representing the Catholic Church also voiced their film expectations in specialized journals such as *Film Ideal* or *Documentos Cinematográficos*. Established in 1956, after the Salamanca Conversations, *Film Ideal* emphasized the need to update the range of film topics and treatments and adopt a more sincere look at contemporary Spain, which implied a support for Neorealism as well. Distributed through the network of the Catholic Church, it had a wider circulation than *Objetivo* or *Cinema Universitario*, and collaborators of more influence. García Escudero embodied the spirit of *Film Ideal*, and it was this spirit that marked his reforms after his return as General Director in 1962. *Documentos Cinematográficos*, under the financial patronage of the Opus Dei, had a

more theoretical, less moralistic inclination, and offered its limited Barcelonese public in-depth critical analyses of new Spanish releases; it only lasted for three years. This secondary, Catholic public sphere, opened as an alternative to the official, largely nationalist public sphere, gradually infiltrated the latter, and eventually produced changes with the government shuffle and the rise of the Opus Dei. Its discourse still insisted on religious values, but also attempted to make room for a new generation and the expectations that came with the expansion of tourism and foreign influences on the Spanish population. The initially weak publics it represented slowly gained the status of strong publics, but without threatening the dissolution of the authoritarian regime.[311]

Neither did cinema clubs, another form of public and counterpublic sphere, have any power to reform state ideology. The activity of Spanish clubs dated back to the first 1925 club presided over by Luis Buñuel, but it got new wings in the 1950s, especially after the establishment of the IIEC. Students found in such small associations the perfect forum for their short films and documentaries. The president of the Zaragoza cinema club, founded in 1945, considered that its mission was "fundamentalmente cultural, de estudio y meditación" ("fundamentally cultural, of study and meditation").[312] In the 1950s, this mission became one of reform, both of film criticism and of public expectations and preferences.[313] By 1955, their number had grown to twenty-five and included over 7,500 members, with the most important in Barcelona, Zaragoza,

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[311] For more in-depth information about these various journals, see Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 149-154; Angulo, "Los antecedentes," 41; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 281-282; Triana-Toribio, "A Constant Concern," 39-40.

[312] Manuel Rabanal Taylor, "Especial misión de los cineclubs españoles," *Otro Cine* 4 (1955): 14.

[313] See Rabanal Taylor, "Especial misión de los cineclubs españoles," 14; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 154.

Salamanca, Valladoid, and Madrid.[314] Two important camps could be detected, according to their Falangist or Catholic orientation and support. The intention to unite them under a national organization, expressed at the first national congress in 1952, was only set in motion five years later, when the two sides called separate meetings and, eventually, another national congress. Regional differences got in the way of the proposed national federation, so a number of Catalan cine clubs decided to form their own, independent federation. Finally, in 1958, the National Federation became a reality, but, although recognized by the state, it could not prevent the slow decline of the movement.[315] The clubs constituted small private spheres, sometimes in opposition to the dominant ideology, as was the case with most independent or SEU-based clubs, at others in support of a modernized version of the same ideas, as were the clubs affiliated with the Acción Católica. When they published their own journals, such as *Cinema Universitario* (created by the cinema club of the SEU at the University of Salamanca) or *Documentos Cinematográficos* (produced by a club in Barcelona), when they edited books, or organized conferences and film festivals, as was the case of the Valladolid festival of Catholic film, these private spheres became known outside their weak publics, but did not gain popularity beyond the limited number of their initial supporters. Even the partial power they might have had to produce a dialogue of discourses in the public sphere dramatically decreased once the clubs' activities began to suffer when they started to lack films to project. The Filmoteca Nacional, established in 1953, and the archives of embassies and private individuals eventually exhausted their collections; certain titles came to be prohibited; and, finally, the screening of clandestine imports became more

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[314] Rabanal Taylor, "Especial misión de los cineclubs españoles," 14.
[315] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 154-157 for more information.

difficult to manage. By the beginning of the 1960s, cine clubs were fewer in number and increasingly isolated from the public sphere. I argue that the regime tolerated them, as it did their journals, because they could not foster any unexpected or uncontrolled change.

The 1950s Spanish cinema did, therefore, witness the birth of increasingly vocal counterpublic spheres that demanded reform of the industrial filmmaking system, its practices, and the critical machine that endorsed its old structures. These counterpublic spheres were mediated by important figures within the state apparatus, but lacked the necessary mass support to produce important changes. I believe that the state's constant preference for an escapist cinema that evaded the grim political and social reality of the beginning of the 1950s and only emphasized the positive aspects of the transformations that occurred, as well as its economic and political censorship of counterpublics, seduced the large majority of the population into legitimating the very means through which they were kept under authoritarian rule.

The Romanian film industry in the late 1960s

Unlike France and Spain, Romania had almost no film industry before 1948. The few facilities were largely artisanal. There existed a small studio, a laboratory for editing, and a few production companies, most of which were run by the directors themselves and only released one or two films throughout their brief existence. Audiences were exclusively urban. The communist authorities, inspired by the Stalinist model, seized the opportunity to establish a centralized industrial and political structure that would eventually lead to a yearly output of about twenty films in the 1970s. Cinema became, as

articulated in documents of the time, a "weapon" against "bourgeois" customs and mentalities and an instrument in the service of the "new" egalitarian and rewarding society under communist guidance. Although state institutions changed names and even affiliation several times, by 1965 they had managed to consolidate a predictable hierarchy of offices that controlled all production, as well as the distribution and exhibition of both national and international releases. In spite of the relative freedom of expression in the written press, which only lasted until 1968, the very few films considered stylistically or thematically opposed to the regime's interests were immediately withdrawn from the market. Most critics argue that formalist innovation was, in itself, a form of opposition. I argue that experimentation with form alienated most viewers; furthermore, when it was associated with ideas considered unorthodox by the communists, it led to the banning of the film. Audiences across the country watched and re-watched only those productions that thoroughly conformed to the requirements and expectations of the Party. I suggest that their preferences were strongly conditioned by what was available, but also by the false impression that they still had the power to choose what to see.

On November 2, 1948, all industries and private properties were nationalized. Cinexfilm was the "new" state company, but, in fact, it only continued the activity of Popular Film, which was the cinema association of the Romanian Communist Party established in 1944. As a result of the nationalization act, Cinexfilm took charge of all distribution, while all theaters were confiscated by the Ministry of Arts and Information and were either closed or assigned to the newly designed institutions and mass organizations. In 1949, Cinexfilm was dissolved in favor of Romfilm, the new state enterprise that took over production and distribution, while exhibition was entrusted to

the local interim authorities. On June 7, 1950, the Council of Ministers established a

Committee for Cinematography, which included the Direcţia Reţelei Cinematografice

(Direction of the Cinema Network, DRC) and, in 1953, the Direcţia Difuzării Filmelor

(Direction for Film Distribution, DDF). A few years later, the Ministry of Culture,

established only in 1953, included the Direcţia Generală a Cinematografiei (the General

Direction of Cinematography, DGC). In 1956, the DRC and DDF were united into

Direcţia Reţelei Cinematografice şi a Difuzării Filmelor (the Direction of the Cinema

Network and Film Distribution, DRCDF), which was under the supervisionof the DGC.

By 1971, Comitetul de Stat pentru Cultura si Arta (the State Committee for Culture and

Art, CSCA), under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, included Consiliul

Cinematografiei (the Council of Cinematography), which took over the tasks of the

General Direction of Cinematography and, in its turn, supervised the activity of the

DRCDF.[316] The multiple metamorphoses of essentially the same state institution from a

"committee," into a "direction," and finally into a "council," as well as its transfer from

the Ministry of Art and Information to the Ministry of Culture, indicate the incoherence

of state decrees and the dependence of all state entities on changes in political mood and

course (in 1953 and 1956, the Romanian regime reacted to shifts in the Soviet Union by

either clamping down on all possible counterpublics or by opening up to more discourses,

which would also happen in 1958, 1962, 1965, and 1971). The only constant, however,

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[316] For a detailed description of the many institutional transformations of the late 1940s and 1950s, see Mihai Duţă, "Aspecte ale spectacolului şi repertoriului cinematografic," in *Cinematograful românesc contemporan, 1949-1975*, ed. Ion Cantacuzino and Manuela Gheorghiu (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1976), 37-39; Călin Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc (1897-2000)* (Bucharest: Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, 2000), 137-140.

was the direct and multi-layered dependence of all film activity on the state and its representatives.

The state identified with the party. The totalitarian structures set up before 1965 were preserved by the new leader, even if the newcomers initially attempted to give them a more liberal face. All institutions involved in the production, distribution, and exhibition of films had their party organizations, which were coordinated by a central bureau and a "secretary"; the individuals who represented the party had the last word in all matters. The Ministry of Culture, the CSCA, and the Council of Cinematography had their own party committees, with an important role in the approval of projects, crews, and funding. Like Franco, Ceaușescu periodically shifted party "cadres," whether they had political or managerial functions, from one job to another and from one county to another, in order to prevent them from gathering any real supporters or power. The result was that, as happened in all economic sectors, the film industry suffered from the whims of some authoritarian activists and thrived, for short periods, under the laxer criteria of others. Between 1965 and 1971, at least three different party secretaries governed the destinies of the Council, firing and rehiring filmmakers, approving and canceling projects, with a clear mission, after 1968, of tightening their control over film output.

The shift of cadres also affected the managerial and ministerial posts, a situation that did not allow any individual to influence the evolution of the industry decisively, as was the case in France and Spain. Furthermore, the dispersal of power among various offices led to the supremacy of the political directives transmitted from the higher echelons of the party, that is, from the Executive Committee and Ceaușescu himself. The limited agency certain figures might have exerted was temporary and ultimately

inconsequential. Two opposite personalities did have a say, however, in the fate of national cinema: Mihnea Gheorghiu, who occupied various administrative positions between 1963 and 1968, and Victor Iliu, who influenced the new generation of filmmakers in the classrooms of the Institutul de Artă Teatrală şi Cinematografică "I. L. Caragiale" (the "I. L. Caragiale" Institute of Theater and Cinematographic Art, IATC). Mihnea Gheorghiu was a literary critic, translator, and novelist, who had worked as a university professor and founding editor for one of the major cultural magazines, *Secolul XX*. Between 1963 and 1965, he led the Council of Cinematography and, for the following three years, he was promoted as one of the vice-presidents of the CSCA. The critics of the time remember him as an ideologue who supported the party line and managed to convince himself of the propagandistic ideals of social realism.[317] Films such as Lucian Bratu's *Un film cu o fată fermecătoare* (*A Film with a Charming Girl*, 1967), Mircea Săucan's *Meandre* (*Meanders*, 1967), or Malvina Urşianu's *Gioconda fără surâs* (*The Monalisa without a Smile*, 1967) were immediately withdrawn from distribution, as the CSCA and Gheorghiu demanded. Their major "sin" was mostly stylistic innovation, although their possible "deviations" from communist ideology could not be completely separated from their formalist explorations. These films could have reshaped the contours of Romanian cinema at the time had they been allowed to become topics of debate in the printed and televised press.

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[317] See Valerian Sava, "Lucian Pintilie: Capul de zimbru (scenariu după Vasile Voiculescu)," *LiterNet.ro* (2005) http://editura.liternet.ro/carte/143/Lucian-Pintilie/Capul-de-zimbru-scenariu-dupa-Vasile-Voiculescu.html (accessed November 11, 2010); Alex. Leo Şerban, "Filmul văzut de 42 de ochi," *LiterNet.ro* (4 June 2007) http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/4626/Alex-Leo-Serban/Filmul-vazut-de-42-de-ochi.html (accessed November 11, 2010).

If Gheorghiu made sure that the regime's ideology was consistently supported in the films of the 1960s, Victor Iliu, with a long background as a communist supporter, had more liberal inclinations and encouraged experimentation and new thematic approaches. Although he initially specialized in economics, Iliu started writing as a critic for various publications in the 1930s. After 1944, he led the National Office for Cinematography for a brief period, then attended courses at the Moscow Institute for Cinematography, where he studied with Eisenstein. Returning to Romania, and in collaboration with two directors, Jean Georgescu and Jean Mihail, he inaugurated the Institute for Cinematographic Art and the "Ion Luca Caragiale" Theater Institute in 1950[318]; in 1954, these became the "I.L. Caragiale" Institute for Theater and Cinematographic Art (IATC), the equivalent of the French IDHEC and the Spanish IIEC. In 1963, Iliu was also one of the founders, and first director, of the Association of Cineastes, the professional organization that included filmmakers, scriptwriters, and all other film personnel. Between 1966 and 1967, he was also a manager of the Bucharest Film Studios, one of the few production centers at the time. Iliu continued to write in important specialized magazines, such as *Film* in the 1950s or *Contemporanul* in the 1960s, and his articles always favored originality of aesthetics and argument at the expense of ideological concerns. He was among the few to defend directors such as Jean Georgescu, Liviu Ciulei, or Lucian Pintilie, who had been his collaborators or students, when their films were banned and severely criticized in the press of the day. Although Iliu did not directly influence the legislation or structure of the film industry, he did become a parallel center

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[318] See Dominique Nasta, "Cinema rumeno," in *Storia del cinema mondiale*, vol. 3: *L'Europa: Le cinematografie nazionali*, ed. Gian Piero Brunetta (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2000), 1475; Teodor Leontescu, "Victor Iliu," *Centrul Național al Cinematografiei*, http://www.cncinema.abt.ro/Personalitati-Detalii.aspx?prn_ID=prn-301 (accessed November 12, 2010).

of authority for the small student counterpublics of Romanian cinema in the late 1960s. If in France and Spain the most important figures of the film business attempted to mediate between strong publics—the authorities—and weak counterpublics, in Romania they either worked against oppositional voices, as did Gheorghiu, or had little power to mediate between publics and counterpublics. I believe that this situation severely diminished the capacity of Romanian cinema to open a space for dissident filmmaking.

In a state-directed economy, in which all private enterprise had been completely eradicated by 1965, the funding of any film project depended in full on the authorities' preferences and decisions. In Romania, the state was the sole owner and administrator of all funds, so its decisions were definitive and the filmmakers' dependence on them complete. In the absence of a rating system, films and directors deemed uncomfortable to the regime were banished immediately from the public sphere. By contrast, those who followed the requirements and expectations of the party had the "fortune" to produce several films in a very short period of time and were also rewarded with cozy positions in the state apparatus. Among these, the most prolific were Mircea Drăgan, one of the most indoctrinated filmmakers (with six films released between 1965 and 1971), Francisc Munteanu (four films), Geo Saizescu (three films), Gheorghe Naghi (three films), and Sergiu Nicolaescu, a newcomer who would become the major commercial director of the 1970s (with four films in the late 1960s).[319] Two essential thematic tendencies—towards "national epic," and comedy based on local humorous figures—gained commercial impetus as a result of their steady promotion through state funding. Oppositional figures

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[319] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 186-211; Nasta, "Cinema rumeno," 1475-1484; Duţă, "Aspecte ale spectacolului şi repertoriului," 44-45; Ion Cantacuzino, "Peisajul filmului românesc de azi," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan*, 51-58.

such as Mircea Săucan, Lucian Pintilie, and Malvina Urşianu were refused financial support for their projects and were forced to "retire" into producing documentaries; they would eventually be pushed to emigrate.[320] Counterpublics were, economically and politically, driven out of business. I argue that, although the several years between 1965 and 1971 were generally considered a period of ideological relaxation, the existence of counterpublics in the film industry was precarious at best; in fact, there was no coherent opposition and acts of dissidence remained singular.

The regime closely monitored all the activities of possible opponents. The emergence of the French Nouvelle Vague in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as the earlier Italian Neorealism, had their immediate enthusiasts in late 1960s Romania. France and Neorealist Italy were the major non-Eastern European countries privileged by the regime, especially when their plots touched on social issues that resonated with the official communist ideology. In 1956, with the first "thaw" after Stalin's death, communist Romania screened films such as *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, 1948), *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, 1945), and *Umberto D.* (1952), and in 1957, Cesare Zavattini visited Bucharest.[321] In the same year, the French film week brought Michèle Morgan to Romania, as well as new productions by René Clair, Robert Bresson, René Clément, and Albert Lamorisse.[322] The connection with French and Italian

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[320] See Valerian Sava, *Istoria critică a filmului românesc contemporan*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1999), 306; Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 213-229; Nasta, "Cinema rumeno," 1481-1484; Magda Mihăilescu, *Aceste gioconde fără surâs: Convorbiri cu Malvina Urşianu* (Bucharest: Curtea veche, 2006), 47-68.

[321] In the early 1950s, the Italian neorealist filmmakers also visited Spain and the two film weeks screened in Madrid had a profound influence on the young Spanish directors of the time, as I have suggested in a previous section of this chapter.

[322] Sava, *Istoria critică*, 241-242.

filmmakers continued into the 1960s, when coproductions became frequent.[323] The relative freedom to travel, together with Romanian participation in international film festivals, also contributed to the regular contact especially between the new generation of cineastes educated at the IATC and their European counterparts.[324] It is not surprising, therefore, that the major stylistic and thematic changes in the few "dissident" films drew them closer to the French and Italian preoccupations of the time. In spite of the regime's relative support for foreign imports from Western countries, authorities consistently eliminated from the public sphere all Romanian films they influenced in form, if not content. Any break of officially endorsed stylistic uniformity was considered threatening to the "message" expected of all films. Bratu's *Un film cu o fată încântătoare* follows Ruxandra (Margareta Pîslaru), an aspiring actress, through the streets and cafés of Bucharest, as she attempts to find a role to play. Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962) or Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (*Cleo from 5 to 7*, 1962) might have inspired the director's choice of topic, but it did not lead to a substantial interrogation of the young woman's status in the "new" society.[325] In spite of the film's rather ironic look at the heroine, the press attacked her "superficiality" and "cosmopolitanism," and the film was immediately withdrawn from cinemas.[326] A similar fate awaited Săucan's *Meandre*, banned after a short release in 1967; in this case, the more audacious and expressive editing and use of soundtrack, as well as the exploration of the individual's anxiety, loneliness, and hopelessness in modernity and, implicitly, in the socialist world, resulted

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[323] Nasta, "Cinema rumeno," 1480-1482; Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 184-185.

[324] Romanians even won a few prizes: in 1965, Liviu Ciulei was awarded the Palme d'Or at Cannes for best director for *Pădurea spânzuraţilor* (*The Forest of the Hanged*, 1964), in 1966 Mircea Mureşan won the Best First Work prize at the same festival for *Răscoala* (*Blazing Winter*, 1965), and in 1969, Mirel Ilieşiu won the Palme d'Or for the best short film (for *Cântecele Renaşterii* [*The Renaissance Songs*, 1969]).

[325] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 213.

[326] Ibid., 214-215.

in the more vociferous and long-lasting condemnation of the picture's

"experimentalism." *Meandre* would only be released again after 1989.[327] The Nouvelle

Vague-like preoccupations and composition of these films was complemented only by

the Antonioni-esque accents of the more commercially successful, yet profoundly

incriminating *Reconstituirea* [*The Reenactment,* 1969], Pintilie's production about the

ordered reenactment of a minor brawl.[328] Forced to reenact the fight for the camera and to

the satisfaction of the authorities, the two young protagonists engage, against their

wishes, in a game of torture, both physical and emotional, that results in the death of one

of them. For eight weeks, viewers flooded the one theater where the film was released;

banned, re-released, and banned again, *Reconstituirea* would only be relinquished from

the archives after thirty years, in 1989.[329] I suggest that, even if some productions

contesting the regime and its values did slip through the cracks of censorship during the

"thaw," audiences' access to them was barred as soon as possible and the films

disappeared from public debates and consciousness; they practically did not stand a

chance to become commercial hits. As was the case in France and Spain, counterpublic

voices reached the public sphere only with the authorities' support, but were

marginalized or forced into exile when they became uncomfortable to the regime.

Similarly to the situation in France and Spain, censorship was multiple and

operated at different production stages even in the late 1960s. The first step was

submitting the screenplay to the studio's department of scriptwriting, where it was

examined not only by professionals, but also by Party representatives. Once the film was

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[327] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 217-220; Nasta, "Cinema rumeno," 1482-1483.
[328] The film title has been translated as *The Reconstruction*. I believe a better English correspondent is *The Reenactment*.
[329] Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 221-224.

fully edited and ready for release, a whole set of institutions intervened before it could

reach audiences. The studio's censorship, doubled again by the Party, could decide which

sequences needed to be cut, which characters had to be changed or eliminated, and even

which dialogues could be modified in post-production.[330] The film had to be approved by

the Council of Cinematography and the State Committee for Culture and Art (CSCA).

Even when all these steps had been successfully completed, the final production could

still be withheld from release, boycotted in the press, ignored by the major newspapers

and magazines, or distributed in silence to remote theaters in the provinces.[331]

Commenting on the omnipresence of censorship in the written press, Matei Călinescu

identifies three stages of censorship: "pre-censorship," censorship proper, and "post-

censorship."[332] Pre-censorship referred to the repressive instruments through which the

regime built a "general atmosphere of ideological or ideology-related terror"[333]; these

included intimidating strategies such as political imprisonment, civil and penal sentences

without justification, and even torture and death. The result, in Călinescu's words, was a

"hostage mentality."[334]Although the number of such cases diminished dramatically by

1965, the strength of self-censorship continued to prevent many, and even the most

intrepid filmmakers, from overtly contesting authority, which explains the codified,

ambiguous, sometimes opaque political undertones of the few oppositional films that

were produced. With respect to censorship proper, writers and artists did not fear the

measures that might be taken against their works by professionals like themselves, who

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[330] See Mihăilescu, *Aceste gioconde fără surâs*, 49.

[331] In 1957, Iulian Mihu and Manole Marcus's *Viaţa nu iartă* (*Life Doesn't Spare*) was forbidden, but audiences could eventually see it in 1959. Sava, *Istoria critică*, 234-235.

[332] Matei Călinescu, "The Intellectual Scar," in *Censorship in Romania*, ed. Lidia Vianu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 63.

[333] Ibid.

[334] Ibid.

often understood and closed their eyes to possibly offensive film elements; the most

severe form of curtailment was instead effected by the ideological section of the Party.[335]

Post-censorship, as Călinescu defines it, was "a state of mind": once a volume was

published or a film was released, the author felt either exaggeratedly proud or troubled by

self-doubt about the true value of the often mutilated work.[336] Many directors emigrated

toward the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s in search for freedom of thought and

expression. I believe that, even in the late 1960s, censorship was more than a well-

organized institution: it had colonized the most intimate space of one's thought and

critical self-assessment.

The state also controlled the possible sources of inspiration for Romanian

cineastes: film imports. The Council of Cinematography included a special section,

formed of critics, professionals, writers, and filmmakers who decided which directors,

titles, and stars could be featured on the big screen; their choice was a "cultural and

political act" intended to reinforce the regime's philosophy.[337] Imports constituted the

majority of films projected in Romanian theaters between 1965 and 1971. Thus, out of

the 160 films in cinemas in 1965, only fifteen were made in Romania; by 1971, the 173

releases included only seventeen domestic productions.[338] Out of the total number of

foreign films, eighty to eighty-five came from the socialist bloc and supported the

communist order; sixty to sixty-five titles were brought from the rest of the world, often

several years after their release.[339] Regardless of the country of origin, the imported

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[335] Ibid., 65.
[336] Ibid., 67.
[337] See Duţă, "Aspecte ale spectacolului şi repertoriului," 42.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid., 43.

cinema centered on a fixed set of thematic preoccupations and was indebted to the

Hollywood classical style, with the few exceptions coming from Italy and France, as I

have already emphasized. Anti-fascism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, the drama of world

wars, and the conflicts between the working and the upper classes were the preferred

themes, especially for films originating in Western states. *Trial at Nuremberg* (1964,

USA), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967, USA), *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*, 1959,

West Germany), and *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966, Italy) were

supplemented by socialist titles such as *Skazanie o zemle sibirskoy* (*Symphony of Life*,

1947, USSR), *Letyat zhuravli* (*The Cranes Are Flying*, 1957, USSR), *Die Mörder sind*

unter uns (*The Murderers Are Among Us*, 1946, East Germany), *Kanal* (*Canal*, 1957,

Poland), and *Kozara* (1962, Yugoslavia).[340] Most foreign films, however, were intended

for entertainment and therefore included adaptations (*Hamlet* [1948, UK], *Voyna y mir*

[*War and Peace*, 1967, USSR], *Il gattopardo* [*The Leopard*, 1963, Italy], *Gone with the*

Wind [1939, USA]); musicals (*The Sound of Music* [1965, UK]), westerns (*The*

Stagecoach [1939, USA], *Vera Cruz* [1954, USA]), and comedies (*La grande vadrouille*

[*Don't Look Now: We're Being Shot at*, 1966, FRA]).[341] As was the case in France and

Spain, the main concern of the authorities during the late 1960s was to attract and amuse

the masses, a situation that, coming after a long period of profoundly politicized cinema,

was perceived as "liberalization." It was, in my opinion, a carefully monitored

"liberalization," convenient to the new party class.

Unlike France and Spain, Romania did not have any private film companies, so

the state had full control over all production. By 1965, there were three important studios

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[340] Ibid., 42-43.
[341] Ibid., 42-43.

responsible for all film output: Bucharest, Alexandru Sahia, and Animafilm. The

Bucharest Film Studios dated back to the pre-war period, when, in 1937, the Office of

Tourism built a small production house for touristic propaganda films in the center of the

Romanian capital. Among the first features shot in the new facilities were Jean

Georgescu's *O noapte furtunoasă* (*Stormy Night*, 1941-1942) and *Visul unei nopţi de

iarnă* (*A Winter Night's Dream*, 1944-1946), both produced under harsh conditions

during World War II. In 1950, the communist state decided to build a larger studio for its

films. In spite of already existing plans, dating back to 1940, for building a center close to

Bucharest, the authorities opted for Buftea, a village approximately ten miles away from

the capital, but with no direct railway connection to the city.[342] The Buftea studios,

considered the "Cinecittà" of Eastern Europe, took nine years to complete, and included

five extensive sets, a sound studio, a laboratory for the development of film stock, and

various buildings for period productions.[343] The Bucharest Film Studios, as a state

enterprise, produced features both in the older Bucharest location and at the new Buftea

facilities; it was responsible for all one hundred feature films made between 1965 and

1971.[344] The "Alexandru Sahia" Studio was established in 1950 for the production of

documentaries, newsreels, short films, and, starting with 1954, films intended for the

"popularization of science" among the rural and working-class population. It released an

average of twenty titles annually, but also served as a site for the forced banishment of

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[342] See Sava, *Istoria critică,* 227.
[343] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 137-139; Manuela Gheorghiu and Constantin Pătrăşcoiu, "Temeliile cinematografice naţionale. Structuri şi perspective," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan*, 30-33.
[344] See "Filmografia filmelor de ficţiune," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan*, 219-228.

counterpublic directors.[345] Finally, the Animafilm Studio was created in 1964 and intended for the production of animated films, in which Romania had a successful tradition that had started with the 1957 Palme d'Or in the Best Short Film category for Ion Popescu Gopo's *Scurtă istorie* (*A Short History*, 1956); by 1969, Animafilm released an average of twenty-six films a year.[346] All studios had the same institutional organization as any other state enterprise, which included a very well-developed party apparatus and the strict surveillance of personnel by representatives of the Securitate, the Romanian secret police in charge of political arrests. All production in Romania was, therefore, under the direct supervision of the state and the Party, so the few oppositional features released had the approval of the different Party secretaries and Securitate agents, whether these individuals were fully aware of the texts' critical potential or not. I suggest that this highly centralized and monitored state of Romanian cinema, which continued even during the most substantial communist "thaw," explains the thorough colonization of the public sphere by the official discourse.

The press and cinema clubs further supported the regime's ideology. By 1965, the only specialized magazine with a more liberal discourse, *Film*, had been shut down and the remaining national and local publications were subject to the changing politics of their managers and party representatives. *Contemporanul*, the official cultural journal, gained in variety with the arrival of George Ivaşcu, a dissident and former political prisoner, as the new editor-in-chief in the 1950s. He attracted personalities with different attitudes and relationships to the regime, from writers such as George Călinescu, Lucian Blaga, and Tudor Arghezi, the film critics Ion Cantacuzino and Ecaterina Oproiu, and

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[345] Gheorghiu and Pătrăşcoiu, "Temeliile cinematografice naţionale," 34.
[346] Ibid., 35-36.

filmmakers such as Victor Iliu, Liviu Ciulei, and Iulian Mihu, to fierce, convinced

supporters of socialist realism, the official nationalist discourse, and the classical, non-

experimentalist style such as critics Mihnea Gheorghiu, D.I. Suchianu, and Eugen Barbu,

and filmmakers such as Mircea Drăgan, and Mircea Mureşan. *Cinema*, the monthly

magazine established in 1963, soon became the most detailed publication dedicated to the

seventh art; it printed reviews of films and books, news about the latest film productions,

information about national and international stars, and readers' surveys on different

current cinema topics. Under the leadership of Ecaterina Oproiu, *Cinema* attempted to

maintain a middle ground between the implied requirements of the authorities, especially

the Consiliul Culturii şi Educaţiei Socialiste (the Council for Socialist Culture and

Education, CCES), the department in the Ministry of Culture that financed and censored

the press, and the newest trends in international film and criticism. Important cinema

articles were also included in other newspapers and magazines, from *Scânteia*, the party

daily, to *România literară*, *Luceafărul*, *Secolul XX*, *Tribuna*, or *Flacăra*.[347] There were

no recognized oppositional publications in Romania, but, in the late 1960s, the relative

openness of press censorship allowed a more balanced critical discourse than would ever

be possible again. Consequently, the name of one writer or another gave readers an

instant clue about the political orientation of the respective article. Nevertheless, even

when the more daring counterpublic discourses did reach the public sphere, they often

had to adopt a coded language that praised as well as criticized the domestic productions.

Furthermore, in the case of uncomfortable films such as *Un film cu o fată fermecătoare*,

Meandre, and *Reconstituirea*, the initially enthusiastic and even laudatory reviews were

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[347] See Gelu Ionescu, "Condiţia criticii de film," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan5*, 181-183; Sava, *Istoria critică*, 330-344.

immediately "drowned out" by stern party-sponsored criticism, and few editors still had the courage to defend their beliefs.[348] The result was, in my opinion, merely the impression of freedom, a simulated liberty that accompanied the simulated change in direction around the 1968 events.

The same duplicity characterized the activity of cinema clubs. The first such associations appeared in the 1950s and were related to students' or workers' state-organized professional life. Some of the most visible were those hosted by the local students' cultural organizations, the Timişoara CFR Club (which belonged to the railway workers), the Ploieşti "1 May" Oil Distillery, or the Braşov Truck Factory.[349] The "mission" of the clubs was to stimulate viewers' "aesthetic and ethical conscience" and "educate" them in order to understand and consolidate the "structures of the socialist society" and the "new type of humanism."[350] Many of these "clubs" appeared in the countryside, where documentary films for the "popularization of science" were the major topics of discussion. The activities of such regular meetings were, however, carefully monitored and, when they "deviated" from the expected ideological line, they were shut down, as it happened with the cinema club of the IATC students.[351] In addition to the "cultural" clubs that projected and discussed films, there were, by 1974, 300 clubs for amateur filmmakers, sponsored by important factories and plants in Timişoara, Huşi, Arad, and Caransebeş; in 1969 and 1971, they organized their first two national

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[348] See also Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 213-214, 217, 224-227; Sava, *Istoria critică*, 335-338, 341-353.
[349] Sava, *Istoria critică*, 243.
[350] Manuela Gheorghiu and Geo Saizescu, "Cinecluburile şi cultura cinematografică," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan,*195.
[351] Ibid., 196-197.

festivals.[352] Although there was no centralized union of cinema clubs until 1974, that did not prevent the party and state authorities from supervising all film associations that functioned legally in the country, many of which were initiated with the intent purpose of propaganda. I consider that the cinema clubs formed a publically controlled private sphere, which was, in effect, a pretense of free discourse.

The Romanian film world in the late 1960s did pass through a period of liberalization, but this was a temporary veneer added to a severely authoritarian society in order to attract the masses to the new power figures' projects and prepare the way for a return to totalitarianism. The industry and state organization of cinema were only in their second decade of existence and still struggling to achieve coherence and substance, which accounts for the too-often institutional changes that debilitated, rather than helped, the activities of filmmakers and crews. All transformations, however, aimed for a more consistent centralization of production, distribution, and exhibition and a stricter, multi-level supervision of the public sphere by state and party organisms. The very few counterpublic voices that could be heard were isolated, did not have a common program, and were rapidly eliminated from public life. I argue that the authoritarian regime used cinema as an instrument of direct or indirect propaganda for its newly-defined "human" face, not only for an international audience, but also for its domestic viewers, who, hopeful for a real political change, "saw" only what they wanted to see.

The film industries of France under the German Occupation, Spain in the 1950s, and Romania in the late 1960s shared two major characteristics that had serious

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[352] Ibid., 196, 198.

consequences for the types and political orientation of their cinemas. The first, and most important, was that the regime had full control over production, distribution, and exhibition, as well as over the fate of film personnel. The second common point was that the authorities attempted to eliminate all counterpublic voices from the official public sphere, although their attitude was, at times, ambivalent toward, or even supportive of, oppositional filmmaking, as long as it contributed to a favorable image of the establishment. The official domination of the cinema industry and artists was achieved by very similar means in all three countries. Thus, the national institutions established during these periods—the French COIC and the Service du Cinéma, the Spanish Dirección General, and the Romanian Consiliul Cinematografiei and the CSCA— sought to centralize, monitor, and direct all industrial activities in accordance with the principles and goals of the regime. In order to fulfill their political agenda, these states resorted to the most efficient means: economic control. Their funding schemas and systems of ratings and awards financed almost exclusively those directors whose work did not pose a threat to the public discourse, but reinforced it. The repeated screening of the same thematic concerns and style gave audiences a limited range of choices, molded their narrative and aesthetic expectations, and encouraged them to adapt and appreciate the officially-endorsed form of entertainment. A third instrument through which these three states exerted their rule over the film industry was the use of multi-layered, multi-faceted censorship, which determined the fate of cinema and its directors and led, in all cases, to self-censorship as a means of artistic and economic survival. The manipulation of the press, the enthusiastic encouragement of purely entertaining magazines at the expense of more critical publications, and the marginalization and eventual elimination, economic or

otherwise, of counterpublic journals, newspapers, and critics also contributed to the audiences' "education" to share the official visual taste and ideological disposition. Finally, the strict surveillance or prohibition of cinema clubs, which were seen as opportunities for dissident debates, only further strengthened official discourse. Although French film veered towards allegory, symbolism, and mystery, Spanish cinema turned towards comedy, musicals and folklore, and Romanian productions favored adaptations and working-class dramas and comedies, all three industries were marked by the supremacy of the political and the economic over the aesthetic. I argue that these three authoritarian regimes shot the films that were convenient to their purposes and "taught" audiences to enjoy them.

Chapter III: The Melodrama of Interiority

In Marcel Carné's masterful film, *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, 1945), the Pierrot-figure Baptiste (Jean-Louis Barrault) enthusiastically tells the rebel actor Frédérick (Pierre Brasseur) of his audiences at the Théâtre des Funambules, a melodrama house on the famous Boulevard du Temple in Paris: "Ils comprennent tout; pourtant, ils sont pauvres gens. Mais moi, je suis comme eux; je les aime, je les connais. Leur vie est tout petite, mais ils ont de grands rêves. Et je ne voudrais pas seulement les faire rire; je voudrais aussi les émouvoir, leur faire peur, les faire pleurer." ("They understand everything; however, they're poor people. But I am like them; I love them, I know them well. Their lives are small, but they have big dreams. And I don't only want to make them laugh; I want to move them, to frighten them, to make them weep.")[353] Pathos, shock, and spectacle: these have been the tenets of melodrama since its early days as pantomime, dumb show, or street music. Of all the genres and modes of literature and cinema, none has a more disputed and complex lineage than the infamous theater of the small people. Turned into mass entertainment in the twentieth century, it has supported or opposed specific political agendas ever since in order to speak to and for the many.

One of the most flexible cultural forms, melodrama moves freely across several media: popular fiction, theater, and film. Its attractiveness rests on its ability to respond to the desires and expectations of its audiences, as these are constantly produced, developed, and influenced to serve social, political, or economic ends. Criticized for its aesthetic failings, melodrama needs to be valued as a historic document testifying to the cultural

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[353] *Les Enfants du paradis (Children of Paradise)*, DVD, directed by Marcel Carné (Paris: Pathé, 1945; New York: Criterion Collection, 2002).

and social values of the day; in this sense, the investigation of film melodrama in authoritarian regimes may, at least in part, illuminate their ideological frameworks. The main purpose of this chapter is to sketch a brief history of the form and underline the specific characteristics that grant it historical significance as the cultural practice through which the masses could be seduced, manipulated, and controlled. My exploration of the ideological force of melodrama thus departs significantly from recently-dominant theorizations that emphasize instead the subversive potential of the melodramatic genre or mode.

This chapter will also examine the difference between the use and conceptualization of melodrama in the 1940s and 1950s, and the present understanding of the term. In order to bridge this divide, I propose a new, more inclusive category: the melodrama of interiority. By the 1980s, critics had begun to emphasize the importance of femininity, the domestic sphere and affect to melodrama. Thomas Schatz, for example, applied the term to "popular romances that depicted a virtuous individual (usually a woman) or couple (usually lovers) victimized by repressive and inequitable social circumstances, particularly those involving marriage, occupation, and the nuclear family."[354] Set in a "civilized," "ideologically stable" space, melodrama centered on an "internalized" and "emotional" conflict, which evolved from "romantic antagonism to eventual embrace"; its themes included the "domestication" of the protagonist(s), the "maternal-familial code," or the importance of the community.[355] Early film melodrama, however, included titles such as *Un Drame au fond de la mer* (*Drama at the Bottom of*

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[354] Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 222.
[355] Ibid., 29-35.

the Sea, 1901), *The Wheel of Death* (1912), *Les Vampires* (*The Vampires*, 1915), *The Hazards of Helen* (1913-1917), and *The Perils of Thunder Mountain* (1919).[356] The 1940s and 1950s American trade press referred to the following titles as melodrama: *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), *Crime of the Century* (1946), *Mr. District Attorney* (1947), *The Snake Pit* (1948), *Terror on a Train* (1953), and *Storm Fear* (1955).[357] Surely, these films do not necessarily concentrate on romantic entanglements, inner conflict, or the maternal-familial code, although they are not fully excluded. Why is there such a discrepancy between today's definition of melodrama and its forerunners?

This apparent inconsistency results from the parallel existence of two melodramatic impulses: one toward open, visible, physical clashes between characters and the other toward inner unrest. The latter impulse, dating back only to the second half of the nineteenth century, was redefined and scaled down to a genre by critics in the 1970s and 1980s. This second impulse is at the root of the "melodrama of interiority," the theoretical category I propose for investigation. This type of melodrama focuses on the metamorphosis of the intimate sphere, as it has been defined in the previous chapter; its conflicts are internalized and often expressed through non-diegetic, stylistic means. Unlike the "new" melodrama defined in the 1970s and 1980s, the category I suggest also includes films that have a male protagonist and are addressed to all types of audiences. The melodrama of interiority is instrumental to an understanding of authoritarian practices regarding the intimate sphere, as these were reflected and influenced by film.

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[356] For more examples, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 189-221.

[357] Steve Neale, "Melo Talk: On the Meaning and use of the Term 'Melodrama' in the American Trade Press," *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (Fall 1993): 67.

Later chapters of my study focus on Western and Eastern European contexts, but my discussion of film melodrama in this chapter centers instead on examples from Hollywood. Starting especially after World War I, Europe was invaded by Hollywood films, which were often more popular than local productions. As a result, the directors of the old continent were challenged to import, adapt, and respond to American cinema practices, from the narrative and stylistic construction of their films to distribution and exhibition strategies. Furthermore, much of the critical apparatus necessary for the assessment of melodrama has been assembled in relation to Hollywood melodrama, which is taken as the standard for the mode even in Europe. This chapter will thus lay the foundation for my subsequent analysis of the evolution and transformation of French, Spanish, and Romanian film melodrama during periods of authoritarian rule.

The genre debate

As a system . . . , genre may fluctuate. It arises (out of the exceptions and vestiges in other systems) and it declines, turning into the rudimentary elements of other systems.[358]

Any analysis of melodrama needs to begin with one question: is it a genre or a mode? Can melodrama be reduced to a specific corpus of films that may be isolated according to a number of characteristics? A discussion of the theorization of literary genres and modes, as well as of the cultural scene that produced film melodrama, will help to clarify this issue.

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[358] Yury Tynyanov, "The Literary Fact," in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (London: Longman, 2000), 32.

Genre is volatile: it metamorphoses incessantly throughout centuries, as does

scholars' understanding of its scope and implications. Literary critics have adopted two

approaches in the analysis of genre: the formalist/structuralist and the

historical/sociological. The formalist/structuralist method argues for the presence of a

constant legacy of constitutive elements at the root of any generic definition; these

elements are often theoretically determined after the abstract grouping of works into

speculative categories. Although such groupings are subjective and often contested, they

remain necessary for the explanation of literature as the logical evolution of different

cycles rather than the mere listing of a number of works into a chronicle.[359] The

historical/sociological approach maintains the transitoriness of all definitions and their

reliance on specific cultural contexts. As Tzvetan Todorov explains, genres are

"contracts" between readers and writers: "It is because genres exist as an institution that

they function as 'horizons of expectation' for readers and as 'models of writing' for

authors."[360] They evolve in close relation to the dominant ideology of the particular

society in which they emerge and whose essential characteristics they reveal.[361] These

two approaches are closely intertwined, and any individual classification of texts into one

or another genre tends to draw upon both sets of criteria.

If genres represent literary "species," with individual histories and characteristics,

modes are "natural forms," easily identifiable by all readers and covering broad literary

fields.[362] Gerard Genette suggests that the dramatic, the epic, and the lyrical are as

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[359] See René Wellek and Austin Warren, "Literary Genres," in *Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, INC., 1956), 236-237.
[360] Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," in Duff, *Modern Genre Theory*, trans. Catherine Porter, 199.
[361] Ibid., 200.
[362] See Gerard Genette, "Introduction à l'architexte," in *Théories des genres*, ed. Gerard Genette and Tzvetan Todorov (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1986), 89-161.

"natural" to all genres, subgenres, and individual texts as language is to all speakers; furthermore, genres, which are empirical categories established through observation and qualified *a posteriori*, can cut across modes and even supersede them.[363]

Literary critics agree that genres are always mixed, with each text participating in at least one genre. In a constant process of becoming, genres struggle with each other until the new supplant the old. Situated at the junction of historical reality and discursive properties, they should therefore be studied both in isolation from, and in relation to, each other. When a genre is defined in isolation from other genres, its semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic elements occupy center stage; when it is studied in its broader relationship with other genres, mode, theme, and form may connect the respective genre to others, or distinguish it from them. Finally, genres evolve in close relation to the dominant ideology and economic context of the historical period of their existence; they can influence those who "produce" texts and determine the expectations of those who receive them.[364]

The discussion of film genre cannot avoid similar structuralist-historical debates, but places a greater emphasis on production and reception. These debates gathered pace especially in the 1960s and 1970s, when critics attempted to re-evaluate popular films and to balance the growing influence of the auteurist tendency in film criticism by emphasizing the polyvalent nature of each production.[365] Film scholars argued that genres

[363] Ibid., 143-148.

[364] See Jurij Tynjanov, "On Literary Evolution," in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, eds. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), 66-77; René Wellek and Austin Warren, "Literary Genres," in *Theory of Literature*, 226-237; Tzvetan Todorov, "Literary Genres," in *A Structural Approach to Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 3-23; Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," 193-209; Genette, "Introduction à l'architexte," 89-161; Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," in *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 51-77.

[365] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 10.

included a number of codes in a complex relationship with each other; Steve Neale defined them as "systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that circulate between industry, text, and subject."[366] Generic formulas governed the production of a film, in that they provided the particular pattern and even expected reading of a film.[367] Distribution also used genre labels to determine the specific venue, time, and ticket price for each film. Likewise, as Rick Altman underscored in the 1990s, audiences relied on genre categories that led them to expect specific types of visual and narrative pleasure; their *a priori* hypotheses interacted with the films themselves in the course of viewing, transforming the initial textual meaning and even intent.[368] Finally, genre norms guided critical responses to, and reassessment of, film texts.

The formation of film genres becomes, therefore, a complex and dynamic phenomenon, involving the industry, critics, and audiences alike. Rick Altman provides a convincing description of the evolution of film genres. Initially, 1930s Hollywood studios replicated what they assumed was the successful "formula" of a film; by trial and error, they eventually arrived at a general "recipe" for a film and produced it in "cycles" exclusively associated with specific studios. When other studios "borrowed" the "formula," the genre had already been recognized and accepted by the industry and audiences. The new cycle was initially added as an adjective to the name of the genre in order to differentiate the product of one studio from another's (for example, "musical comedy" or "Western melodrama"). As soon as the new cycle had consolidated enough to be adopted on a large scale, the noun was dropped and the cycle became the genre

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[366] Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: BFI, 1980), 19.
[367] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 56-57.
[368] See Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre," *Screen 31:1* (Spring 1990):47.

(hence, the musical and the western).[369] The former genre, too vast and diversified to be contained anymore, metamorphosed into a "natural" mode. I suggest that this is the path that melodrama took soon after its "adoption" into film.

But the industry is not the only "author" that determines the genre of a film. Critics also contribute to the process and, in some cases, can radically influence its outcome. Our understanding of melodrama today is the result of a theoretical redefinition of the form. As Altman suggests, the 1970s-1980s critics "hijacked" the characteristics of the family melodrama, conflated them with those of the woman's film, and sought cultural recognition for both the "cycle" and a specific type of audience.[370] I shall return to this topic in detail in a further section of this chapter.

Finally, audiences play their own important role in the definition and recognition of a genre. In Altman's view, audiences form "constellated communities," which are groups of fans who share the same generic interest and engage in similar consumption habits.[371] Any spectator can belong to a plurality of such communities.[372] Each community produces its own "secondary discursivity," a type of communication among its members that is centered on their generic expectations.[373] Secondary discursivity does not require physical interaction within the constellated community, but can remain at the level of imagination; it has been used by the industry as a strategy for placing its products and by authoritarian regimes as a means of promoting their social and political agenda. A genre exists when it serves as a basis for the secondary discursivity of a constellated

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[369] Altman, *Film/Genre,* 60-65.
[370] Ibid., 77-83.
[371] Ibid., 161.
[372] As a side note, I would add that these communities are private publics formed around generic discourses.
[373] Altman defines "primary discursivity" as the totality of discourses produced by the interaction between the spectator and the film. Altman, *Film/Genre* 171.

community. [374] I would add that a genre can also be the product of secondary discursivity, as has been the case with melodrama.

The following section traces the cultural transformation of melodrama from a dramatic genre with roots in the eighteenth century into a mode of consciousness, as it permeated the cultural environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I suggest that, with the invention of a new medium, melodrama became one of the two dominant genres of fiction film for a brief period, only to relapse into a mode with the rapid development of newer and newer cycles into widely acknowledged genres. [375] It would briefly return to the status of a genre when feminist critics retroactively designated the cycle of domestic melodrama of the 1940s and 1950s as the melodramatic genre *par excellence*. [376]

Melodrama as a dramatic genre

Melodrama was first established as a dramatic genre of popular entertainment addressed mostly to the lower classes in late eighteenth-century France and England. This section focuses on the particular historical circumstances of these two countries in order to emphasize the close connection between the form and the social, political, and economic contexts that produced it and which it reflected. Costume dramas and historical

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[374] Ibid., 161-178.

[375] The other genre was comedy; like melodrama, comedy would become a mode.

[376] For more information about the characteristics and production of film genres, see Steve Neale, *Genre*; Thomas Schatz, *"Hollywood Genres*; Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9.2 (Spring 1984): 121-125; Neale, "Questions of Genre"; Rick Altman, "Cinema and Genre," in *The Oxford History of Film Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 276-285; Altman, *Film/Genre;* Neale, *Genre and Hollywood;* Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, "Constellations of Movie Genres: Six Paradigms," in *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 297-312.

novels, morality and sentimental plays, Gothic novels, ballads and street songs, and the

heroic pantomime of the minor theaters contributed their share to the future aesthetic and

thematic range of the genre.[377] The new form was born at the intersection of the

bourgeois drama, with its sentimental and moral tones, and the sensationalist aesthetics of

popular entertainment, which relied on thrill, exaggerated performance, and musical

commentary. According to Frank Rahill,

> Melodrama is a form of dramatic composition in prose partaking of the nature of
> tragedy, comedy, pantomime, and spectacle, and intended for a popular audience.
> Primarily concerned with situation and plot, it calls upon mimed action
> extensively and employs a more or less fixed complement of stock characters, the
> most important of which are a suffering heroine or hero, a persecuting villain, and
> a benevolent comic. It is conventionally moral and humanitarian in point of view
> and sentimental and optimistic in temper, concluding its fable happily with virtue
> rewarded after many trials and vice punished. Characteristically it offers elaborate
> scenic accessories and miscellaneous divertissements and introduces music freely,
> typically to underscore dramatic effect.[378]

Melodrama appealed to the masses because it proposed a simplified template of values

that governed the apparently uncontrollable, violent world; such a template provided the

means by which ideology interpellated its subjects.[379] The new genre relied heavily on

plots constructed around coincidences, on music, *mise en scène*, and exaggerated acting

and was anti-realistic in nature.[380] It resorted to stock characters and painted a morally

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[377] See Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), 14-24; Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," in *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 69-74; John L. Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight: Antecedents of the Motion Picture in Nineteenth-Century Melodrama," *Film Quarterly* 23.3 (Spring 1970): 23.

[378] Frank Rahill, "Setting the Stage," in *The World of Melodrama* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967): xiv.

[379] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 48.

[380] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 196; Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 16-20.

unambiguous universe, ready to assuage the public's fears of a world that was already spinning too fast; its aims were to move and instruct.

Melodrama gained prominence after the French Revolution and its initial forms responded to the traumatic events that followed 1789. Although Jean-Jacques Rousseau coined the term in the early 1770s in relation to his *Pygmalion: A Lyric Scene* (1762),[381] the sudden growth of melodrama was fostered by the specific circumstances of the Revolution: the unexpectedly long, uncontrollable deterioration of the initial crisis into violence, armed conflict, and terror. In spite of the eventual freedom of the new classes, the most enduring effect came from the severe destabilization of the social weave, political disenchantment, and a profound sense of loss. Individuals watched helplessly, much like they would do in the theater, as the surge in mass executions and violent retributions swept away everything in its path.[382] 1800s French melodrama marked the revolutionary change in ideology and politics, but, above all, it expressed the new "*populist* consciousness" of the age,[383] and left no middle ground between vice and virtue.

The nineteenth century would not grant any moment of respite, either. Bonaparte's wars, the 1848 revolutions, different movements of unification, and colonial wars raised populations against each other. The invention of dynamite would only add more tension to an already volatile century. The explosion of technology increased the speed and the intensity of living: steam engines now hauled trains across vast stretches of

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[381] Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 19; Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 87.
[382] Matthew S. Buckley, "Refugee Theater: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss," *Theater Journal* 61 (2009): 179.
[383] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 132.

land, and the development of lithography, photography, and the moving image rendered even the most intimate visible. Massive industrialization, supplemented by the radical growth of population, led to unprecedented dislocations that contributed to the crowdedness and insecurity of unprepared cities. Melodrama was the form that would reflect specific national attitudes and anxieties vis-à-vis such transformations, including, as Rahill notes, "the enthusiasm of the great masses of Frenchmen for the Napoleonic legend, the special affection of Britons for the sea, [and] rural America's mistrust of the growing cities."[384]

These often seismic alterations of political and economic structures did not necessarily affect the deeper framework of society, but crucially modified the language used to describe the interaction of social classes. The changes in French and British society in the wake of the French Revolution led to the proliferation of discourses regarding the upper, middle, and working classes rather than to what scholars consider to have been the rise of the middle classes. David Cannadine explains such transformations:

> … [I]f the middle class arose as anything during these years, it was largely as a new *rhetorical* formation. For the widely articulated claims (or denials) that this new middle class enjoyed a monopoly of decency, piety, charity, responsibility, judgment, intelligence, and sobriety were no more than idealized, imaginative assertions, incapable (as usual) of empirical validation.[385]

The existence of deep political, religious, and occupational divisions between the various factions of the middle class prevented the formation of a coherent, practical self-consciousness as a unified class. The working classes suffered from the same

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[384] Rahill, xviii.

[385] David Cannadine, "The Nineteenth Century: A Viable Hierarchical Society," in *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 74.

impairment.[386] The nineteenth century multiplied the distinctions between the various

ranks, stations, orders, and professions more aggressively and vigorously than the

previous era, and melodrama reflected this process.[387]

The divide between the middle and the working classes further widened as a

result of the rapid industrial revolution and the emerging "scientific" discourses. By

1848, the impact of technical and scientific innovations had reached France, often with

devastating effects on the lower class population, as Frederick Brown underscores. New

laws stipulated that wealth was to be divided equally among sons, which led to its

unavoidable dispersal. Attracted to work in the cities, rural populations crowded into

insalubrious tenements and dreamed of fortunes made overnight. Some did make such

fortunes, which they also quickly lost. Speculators and bankers became the images of

incarnate evil, and not for small reason. The newly rich bourgeois ruled by means of an

ideology that linked liberty, potency, and patriotism with the ability to pay taxes; the

working classes, isolated on the outskirts of society, were the "barbarians" who could not

pay.[388] Franz Joseph Gall's phrenology, Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet's "medical"

connection between female sexuality and social disease, or Cesare Lombroso's "study" of

the physiognomy of criminals were only a few of the crypto-racist theories that defined

the lower classes as delinquent and savage, and could only increase the animosity

between all social strata.

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[386] Ibid., 95.

[387] Cannadine's work focuses exclusively on Britain and the transformation of class rhetoric in this case. His consideration can be applied to France, especially as the revolution and the rapidly-succeeding regimes clearly demonstrate the variety and interests within the different social classes and the difficulty of consensus. France and Britain are especially important to the study of melodrama as a dramatic genre that originated and responded mostly to the evolution of these particular societies.

[388] See Frederick Brown, "The Boulevard of Crime," in *Theater and Revolution: The Culture of the French Stage* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 106-110.

Economy, class, and government further influenced the formation of nations and nation states. By the 1880s, the necessity of a protectionist state that would guarantee the safety of contracts and property encouraged the unification of smaller economic units into more viable state entities. Eric J. Hobsbawm contends that the "principle of nationality" that governed the establishment and recognition of the first European states underscored the urgency that a nation include a large population, a vast territory, and a sufficient supply of natural resources in order to ensure the best economic development of those it included.[389] Religious, linguistic, ethnic, or cultural differences were swept aside, but would constantly fuel conflicts, which ended in the disappearance of some of the smaller groups, the submission of others, and the hegemony of the privileged.

Such ongoing transformations in the texture of public and work life had a profound impact on the intimate sphere of those caught in the historical whirlwind. The family, no longer the center of production, was increasingly isolated, both spatially and affectively, from the economic activities that ensured its subsistence. Chuck Kleinhans notes that, with the growing specialization and division of labor, individuals lost the sense of purpose and fulfillment once supplied by work and gradually switched the focus of their interior life onto the domestic space and the private relationships it nurtured.[390] The exiled who populated this space—women, children, the disabled, the sexually "deviant," the elderly—bore the responsibility to provide the necessary emotional relief and regeneration that would continue to push the wheels of capitalism. Outside the public

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[389] E. J. Hobsbawm, "The Nation as Novelty: From Revolution to Liberalism," in *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 30-31.

[390] Chuck Kleinhans, "Notes on Melodrama and the Family under Capitalism," in Landy, *Imitations of Life,* 198-199.

forces of economic production, the family remained the major supplier of labor force; its paradoxical status was often the root of conflict and further instability.

The rapid development of melodrama after the French Revolution was also the result of a particular institutional situation shared by France and England. Pre-1789 royal patents, assigned only to a few theaters, regulated the use of spoken dialogue on stage; these theaters had a monopoly over the permissible repertoire and the aristocratic audiences that frequented them. In Christine Gledhill's view, the result was that minor theaters and popular entertainment houses became "illegitimate" and had to forge ways to avoid official constraints; pantomime, music, or street show replaced dialogue and their exaggerated expressivity, absolutely necessary in the absence of words, would soon change the aesthetics of entertainment. When, after the Revolution, theaters faced a fierce competition for audiences, they gradually had to reconsider their artistic norms in order to make room for the popular blockbusters.[391]

Immediately following the Revolution, the French rushed to see everything: "dumb show, pantomime, harlequinade, ballets, spectacles, acrobatics, clowning, busking, the exhibition of animals and freaks, and, above all, musical accompaniment and song."[392] Boulevard du Temple, also known as the Boulevard du Crime due to the high rate of criminality in the spectacles performed there, was the Parisian headquarters of the theater of the people and it soon rivaled the Comédie-Française in the number and even class of its patrons; Drury Lane and East End played the same role in London. Peter Brooks suggests that, in France, the attempt to renew neoclassical theater and focus it on

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[391] See Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 15-17; Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight," 23-25; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 82-93.
[392] Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 15.

the moral implications of domestic turmoil in order to move it away from the stiffness of the Classics was not particularly successful in changing the course of "respectable" drama, in spite of names such as Diderot and Beaumarchais.[393] The newly rich and the masses jostled each other to attend the same show. The democratization of audiences came to a halt with the Napoleonic decrees of 1807, which passed indirect moral judgment on the theaters of *le menu peuple* by assigning them second-class status and reducing their number to a maximum of four.[394] In England, the Patent Houses kept their selective audiences, but had to adopt more popular plays from the "illegitimate" theaters.[395]

The dramatic genre of melodrama, therefore, appeared in the context of an erratic century that provoked, worried, and isolated the individual. It responded to, and attempted to assuage, the anxiety and confusion of the day. Playwrights and critics quickly understood the power of the new form to reflect and influence the spirit of the masses. In 1843, Charles Nodier, one of the few to embrace the new form as legitimate theater, underscored the moral value of melodrama, which he deemed a necessity:

> The entire people had just enacted in the streets and on the public squares the greatest drama of all history. Everyone had been an actor in this bloody play, everyone either a soldier or a revolutionary or an outlaw. These solemn spectators who smelled of gunpowder and blood required emotions comparable to those they had been deprived of by the return of order. . . . They needed to be reminded, in a theme always new in its context, always the same in its results, of the great lesson on which all the philosophies are based, in which all the religions are summed up: that even here on earth, virtue is never without recompense, crime is never without punishment. And make no mistake about it! Melodrama was not something to take lightly! It was the morality of the revolution![396]

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[393] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 82-84.
[394] See Brown, "The Boulevard of Crime," 98-103.
[395] See Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 15.
[396] Charles Nodier, "Introduction to Pixérécourt's Théâtre Choisi (1843)," trans. Daniel Gerould, in *Four Melodramas* by René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, trans. and ed. Daniel Gerould and Marvin Carlson (New York: Martin E. Segal Theater Center Publications, 2002), xiv-xv.

Melodrama echoed the experience of the masses, satisfied their thirst for cathartic violence, and responded to their worries about an otherwise unfriendly universe; it was "a substitute for paradise and a vehicle for the criticism of life."[397] More than anything else, melodrama was, therefore, a historical document tracing the life, mindset, and mood of the many; it captured the spectacular instability of its age, exploited its emotional charge, and taught of the invincibility of virtue.[398]

Starting with the 1820s, melodrama focused more intensively on the urban and the working class. Its sensationalist appeal included numerous "sub-species" centered on the military or nautical, horror or crime, city life or mystery, romantic adventure, or even slavery and the frontier (when the form crossed the Atlantic). [399] By the 1890s, melodrama had become highly standardized yet so diversified that its transformation into a mode would soon be inevitable.

Constructed as a series of coincidences, twists, and reversals of fate, the melodramatic plot depicted a tumultuous world, whose rapid spinning was an occasion for shock and compassion for its victims, but not for critical contemplation and assessment. To such turmoil, melodrama opposed its moral absolutism, which, in its clarity and justice, gave audiences the certainty of a transcendental world replacing the rapidly fading religious order.[400] The unpredictability of accidents of fate was compensated by the predictability of the final resolution: virtue, identified according to

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[397] Rahill, xviii.
[398] See Buckley, "Setting the Stage," 188-189; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 86.
[399] Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight," 26.
[400] See Brown, "The Boulevard of Crime," 92; Nodier, "Introduction," xv; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 5; Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), 14-15.

specific conventions, was rewarded and vice punished. Spectators got what they had expected from the start, and went away reassured in their convictions.

Characters played an important role in the readability of the moral universe in that they were functions of the plot rather than realistic representations of ordinary people. Both hero and heroine were associated with suffering and prolonged injustice, and both started out as immaculate symbols of innocence; as the nineteenth century drew to a close, they gained in complexity, but remained at the mercy of forces higher than themselves. The hero, a handsome, devoted man, was always ready to defend his beloved; he demonstrated physical prowess and courage, but was constantly undermined in his efforts by the villain, who was the moving engine of the play. Whether male or female, this dark figure was the most active and flexible of all: he or she provoked the action, changed plans several times in order to adapt to new conditions, and aimed to take possession of everything the hero had, including the heroine's affections. The heroine was the emotional center of the melodrama. She was separated from her family and the hero early in the plot and subjected to suffering from all sides: deserted by her parents, especially the father figure, unrecognized by the hero, and struggling to feed her children, she, nevertheless, revealed impressive resources to survive under extreme duress and had enough courage and spirit to oppose and resist the villain's plans.[401] The villain's success, in fact, depended on a guardian's failure to defend the heroine (who symbolized virtue); as she could not call into question the guardian's judgment, she had to remain "mute"— often literally so—until the erring party recognized his or her fault. Brooks suggests that, in melodrama, muteness indicated extremely strenuous moral and emotional states, the

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[401] See Booth, *English Melodrama*, 16-35.

"defenselessness of innocence."[402] A fourth stock character, the comic man or woman,

provided relief from the tension accumulated during chases and breathless confrontations

and often helped the hero or heroine with energy and strength.[403] In Brooks's view, the

characters who enacted the drama of rejection and recognition had no psychological

depth, but were "pure psychic signs," easily discernible by all audiences.[404] Their

transformation throughout the century contributed to the rhetorical redefinition of classes,

as John G. Cawelti emphasizes: the aristocratic villains of the early nineteenth century

were gradually replaced by capitalists, and then by faceless, unscrupulous institutions or

systems; the submissive heroines gained strength, self-reliance, and independence; and

heroes often acquired a better understanding of social changes.[405]

An important component of stage melodrama was the situation, defined in the

trade manuals of the nineteenth century as a concurrence of dramatic or exciting

circumstances that staged a confrontation between moral opposites, introduced suspense,

and arrested the movement of the narrative.[406] Melodramatic plots were based on a series

of situations, which, unlike similar cases in tragedy or drama, were not fully motivated[407];

furthermore, the characters' only escape from entrapment came from external,

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[402] Ibid., 60.
[403] Ibid., 16-35.
[404] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 35.
[405] See John G. Cawelti, "The Evolution of Social Melodrama," in Landy, *Imitations of Life*, 36-42.
Cawelti's analysis focuses on novels and uses a vague definition for the subgenre best represented by
Charles Dickens (the "social melodrama"). Nevertheless, the gradual development of characters and topics
he describes applies both to novels and plays. His argument that the transformation of the melodrama
mirrors the transformation of social perceptions and mores remains valid in the case of the dramatic genre
as well. Peter Brooks further suggests that the Romantic aesthetics of dramatization, which took over the
"legitimate" stage in France, had its roots in the melodrama of the Boulevard and that, ultimately, the
Romantic hero, who struggles between good and evil, becomes himself a "theater of the sign," lacking any
real interiority or psychological consistency and merely enacting the once open conflict of the melodrama.
Brooks, 90-93.
[406] See Lea Jacobs, "The Woman's Picture and the Poetics of Melodrama," *Camera Obscura* 7 (1993): 128-
133.
[407] Ibid., 127.

unpredictable, arbitrary factors, ranging from natural phenomena to improbable saviors.[408] Thrown into one situation after another, protagonists seemed at the mercy of malevolent or benevolent forces; they were vulnerable rather than self-reliant, strong characters. Coincidences, sudden reversals of fate, even accidents of birth—which emphasized the impossibility of changing one's inner nature—gave the impression that characters passively submitted to everything life threw in their path.[409] This was the case especially with female protagonists in many, but not all melodramatic texts; the heroes of melodrama, weak though they may have been, still managed to find resources, even in extremis, that could break the deadlock situation.[410]

The most important quality of theater melodrama, however, sprang from its nature as a performance. The rapid development of science also contributed to the transformation of the spectators' expectations and practices of seeing. Nicholas Vardac suggests that two cultural modes permeated the arts of the nineteenth century: the romantic and the realist.[411] The romantic impulse for escape, the exotic, and the extra-ordinary had to be matched on stage by convincing sets, props, and lighting. In order to ensure a high pictorial realism, directors and producers stretched the conventions of staging and "taught" their audiences cinematic concepts even before the invention of the apparatus. By the 1820s, gaslight had replaced candlelight, so controlled lighting became part of the script, allowing for both spectacular effects and more mundane punctuation lighting such as fade-ins, fade-outs, or dissolves. Limelight was soon used to focus on the

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[408] Ibid., 133.
[409] Ibid., 135.
[410] Westerns, thrillers, or detective films abound in heroes whose charm, physical aptitude, and wits work for them in the most difficult of situations.
[411] A. Nicholas Vardac, *Stage to Screen: Theatrical Origins of Early Film: David Garrick to D.W. Griffith* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1949), xx.

actors' faces, but after Edison's 1879 invention of incandescent light, theaters replaced their sources with the newer and safer technology. By the 1890s, the stage had already developed a plethora of devices that increased the pictorial quality and sensationalism of melodramas, from the dual box set, which permitted viewers to follow parallel actions simultaneously, to multiple layers of stage décor, the moving panorama, and even complicated stage traps, which allowed actors to disappear instantly, but also rendered them secondary in importance to machinists.[412] Music, used to punctuate characters' emotion and enhance the mood of an action, was a significant ingredient, so the size of orchestration increased according to the size and type of audience.[413] Technology, therefore, radically contributed to the expression of what Brooks defines as "the inflated and the sententious"; emotions and thoughts became "plastic entities, visual and tactile models" that could represent the unrepresentable and the repressed."[414] Spectacular violence, one of the key ingredients of melodrama, marked the liberation of virtue from its previously imposed silence and was rendered in hyperbolical terms. Suggestive scenery, inflated emotion-laden acting and diction, stage tableaux that marked essential plot moments, and poignant, animated music conspired to make the ineffable visible and easily readable. Perception, emotion, and moral judgment would go hand in hand.

One notable change in the form appeared around the 1850s, when melodrama was adopted into the theater of the middle classes. The once action-oriented genre acquired a genteel layer, oriented toward the representation of emotional and psychological conflict.

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[412] Ibid., 42-61.
[413] See Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight," 30-33.
[414] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 40-42.

In this "modified melodrama,"[415] the thrills, chases, or spectacular upheavals of nature in the already standardized "action melodrama" receded in favor of the "heart" and its tensions; intense emotionalism, more flexibility in character construction, less exaggerated display of conflict, and, most importantly, a turn toward the examination of inner states, soon followed.[416] Even when it preserved the tendency towards sensationalism and spectacular events, the modified melodrama adopted an aesthetic framework that was deemed of higher quality by all audiences.

In the United States, "modified melodrama" centered on dialogue, developed within enclosed spaces, and, as in France and England, flourished in middle-class theaters.[417] Nevertheless, this form was not enthusiastically received by the press:

> The melodrama of the present-day geniture is based to a similar degree upon the theory that the most important eventualities in life come off always in the vicinity of long writing tables standing in the center of libraries in private houses and having on them a push button. Melodrama, in short, has moved indoors . . . Melodrama is essentially a thing of "exteriors." Move it under a roof and into "interiors" and it becomes effeminate, maidenly—a thing to curve the spine and benumb the pulse . . . .[418]

It is important to note the association of the new melodrama, its change of scenery, and its lack of sensationalism with interior spaces and femininity, although this journalist did not directly suggest that audiences were mostly female or that the protagonists were mostly women. The "modified melodrama," with its interest in inner turmoil, is a precursor of what I shall define as the film melodrama of interiority.

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[415] Neale borrows this term from Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967):xv. Neale, "Melodrama and the Woman's Film," 199.
[416] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 199-200.
[417] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity* 165.
[418] George Jean Nathan, "The Hawkshavian Drama," 25, qtd. in Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 166.

In France, the "action" melodrama, in which the plot rested on external confrontations between opposite forces, was transferred to the *théâtres de quartier*, the neighborhood theaters of the working classes, and was deemed as "childish."[419] In the United States, the same type of melodrama was relegated to the cheaper theaters, in which the ten-twenty-thirty melodramas were produced according to standard formulas and in increasingly high numbers toward the end of the century[420]; from these theaters, "action" melodrama was transferred to the nickelodeons, whose working-class patrons were in search of excitement through shock, as critics indicate.[421] Melodrama lost the stage, but found its way onto the screen: "For story, early films largely cannibalized the substance of the last century's theatrical melodrama. The process seems almost pat evidence for Marshall McLuhan's proposition that a new medium devours as content the medium it seeks to replace."[422] The new medium grew in importance particularly because it had swallowed the quintessential genre of the masses.

Melodrama as a mode of consciousness

We may legitimately claim that melodrama becomes the principal mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era.[423]

To the nineteenth century, however, melodrama was more than the dramatic genre of the masses; in time, it had become a "mode of conception and expression," a "certain

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[419] See Brown, "The Boulevard of Crime," 130-132.
[420] See Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 149-163. The "ten-twenty-thirty" refers to the low value of the ticket prices.
[421] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 200.
[422] Fell, "Dissolves by Gaslight," 22.
[423] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 15.

fictional system for making sense of experience," a "semantic field of force," as Peter Brooks contends.[424] It migrated back and forth between the stage and the pages of a Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky, or Henry James, and drew its creative energies from the insecurities of all classes and the desire for change.

The history of the newly-enshrined cultural mode had been long in the making. Starting with the end of the seventeenth century, literature moved away from the sacred underpinnings that had supported it toward a more private vision of the world. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, there was a renewed interest in the sacred, but also an increasing awareness of its loss. Melodrama was the form that crystallized the impulse toward transcendence in personal terms[425]; it transposed the yearning for a beyond into the unambiguous confrontation between vice and virtue. The resulting "moral occult," in Peter Brooks's terms, was, nevertheless, only a pale vestige of the profound and fluid sacred of the myth, echoing the complexities of the unconscious mind:

> The moral occult is not a metaphysical system; it is rather the repository of the fragmentary and desacralized remnants of sacred myth. It bears comparison to unconscious mind, for it is a sphere of being where our most basic desires and interdictions lie, a realm which in quotidian existence may appear closed off from us, but which we must accede to since it is the realm of meaning and value. The melodramatic mode in large measure exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult.[426]

As the site of absolute significance, the moral occult attracted every individual's idealistic hopes for the wholeness that could not be found in daily life and promised the purging of all restlessness. Brooks further underscores that this other territory of completeness and ethical justice found its way to the humanly limited consciousness

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[424] Ibid., xvii.
[425] Ibid., 16-17.
[426] Ibid., 5.

through epiphanic "moments of astonishment," or moments of "ethical evidence and recognition,"[427] when virtue was confronted by the horror of the ultimate evil only to be acknowledged as virtue and rewarded.

Both stage and novel reflected this preoccupation. Carolyn Williams suggests that stage melodrama and novelistic realism were essentially "two sides of the same epistemological and representational coin, developing in mutual implication over the course of the nineteenth century."[428] Furthermore, both forms presented the same mechanics of revelation: the situation that interrupted the continuous flow of action. [429] The tableau that captured the situation fulfilled two functions: it allowed spectators to detach from the events and it encouraged them to engage in a critical reading of the "picture." It embodied at once "absorption and theatricality" and was the visible illustration of the mystery, be it sacral or psychological in nature, that lay beyond theatrical surfaces.[430] The novel also made ample use of the melodramatic tableau, which it supplemented with free indirect speech; this literary technique had the capacity to exteriorize self-reflection and represent it for the reader. The oscillation between motion and stasis, extroversion and introversion, action and revelation, reinforced through the use of music on stage or the novel's changes in point of view, mediated the positioning of the lower and middle classes vis-à-vis the rapid pace of life.

Melodrama was, therefore, more than a dramatic genre; it was the expression of a profoundly destabilizing experience of reality. Its core characteristics applied to both

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[427] Ibid., 26.
[428] Carolyn Williams, "Moving Pictures: George Eliot and Melodrama," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 135.
[429] Ibid., 135.
[430] Ibid., 112.

theater and fiction, but, most importantly, replaced religious systems that had fallen out

of grace with the evolution of science and technology. As a mode of consciousness,

melodrama found its most comprehensible expression on stage, but was to endure

because it could seep into the very fiber of mass culture. It prevailed into the twentieth

century because the conditions that gave birth to it were amplified by newer and ever

more menacing conflicts.

Silent film melodrama

The advent of the twentieth century deepened anxieties surrounding human

abilities to master the world. With cinema, the mundane became a permanent source of

stimulation and excitement. Walter Benjamin compared the camera with a surgeon's

scalpel because it could penetrate reality, subjecting viewers' perceptions to the constant

shock of image motion.[431] Incapable of "reading" all frames, most spectators consumed

them collectively and passively. "Reception in a state of distraction" could transform

many individuals into absent-minded consumers,[432] but it was a means of adaptation

forced upon them by their own insatiability for the new and by the fast-turning wheels of

the crowded city.

Urban life fomented a new consciousness, more schizophrenic and individualistic

than that of the previous era. Massive dislocations of people as a result of rapid

industrialization and the growth of the working class had led to overcrowded cities,

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[431] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 232-238.
[432] Ibid., 240-241.

socially and ethnically heterogeneous. Busy streets, packed tenements, high-rise buildings, and unrelenting factory machinery overcharged the senses, provoked anxiety, and set individuals in permanent motion. Everything happened out in the open and at once.[433]

Film itself seemed to happen overnight although it had been, like most technologies, a few decades in the making. The Lumière brothers' December 1895 projection had been preceded by Thomas Edison's Kinetograph camera and the Kinetoscope viewing box, by Étienne Jules Marey's 1882 photographic gun and Eadweard Muybridge's 1878 photos of galloping horses, and even by earlier and simpler devices, such as the revolving Zoetrope or the magic lantern shows. The first works projected were typically nonfiction, varying from travelogues to news, though they were often recreated in a studio. Fiction films consisted of short scenes, mostly humorous, staged before the immobile camera. By 1905, however, the latter represented the bulk of filmmaking and national industries were rapidly expanding in order to cater to both middle- and working-class audiences; with the rise of stardom by 1909, film had finally established itself among the leading forms of mass entertainment.

For its first ten years cinema had to contend with competition from the nineteenth century's most successful popular form: stage melodrama. By 1907-1908, however, the ten-twenty-thirty melodrama, the mass-produced, highly standardized and visually excessive stage melodrama, was swiftly replaced in popularity by early film, for a number of economic reasons. The price of the movie ticket was much lower than that for the stage melodrama; furthermore, theater owners soon began to prefer vaudeville and

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[433] See Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 61-78.

silent film, which attracted larger audiences, could be run several times a day, and were less costly than the complex, labor-intensive stage melodrama. Audiences were free to walk in at any time and enjoy any succession of numbers, all of which attempted to shock and awe them. Walter Benjamin's diagnosis of distraction as a mode of perception applied especially to the early variety shows, in which the thirty-minute stage melodrama, exotic acrobats, "freaks" of nature, and one-reel moving pictures vied for the interest of the mentally and physically overstimulated spectator.

Two impulses characterized the early period of filmmaking: one was toward the exploitation of the visual spectacle specific to the medium and the other was toward storytelling. Initially, cinema did not rely on narrative to lure its spectators, but on a foregrounding of the apparatus, on the projectionist's control of the images, and the illusion of motion these images produced, as Tom Gunning has argued.[434] This "cinema of attractions" dominated film production until 1906-1907, but did not disappear completely with the emergence of a narrative cinema.[435] The pleasure initially derived from an awareness of the medium was supplemented by the satisfaction of interacting with the "story" and its characters, which was not singular to film, but inherited from the experience of the stage. Spectators enjoyed the actors' risky stunts and the real perils these entailed, and heartily participated in the representation by shouting or hissing at the villain, whether the action was performed live on stage or projected onto a screen. [436] It is

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[434] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 5th ed., ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 824-825.

[435] Gunning points out that the "aesthetic of astonishment" would later be found both in narrative and avant-grade films. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1997), 57.

[436] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 178-188.

not surprising, therefore, that the years in which stage melodrama, as the major form of popular entertainment, was replaced by the moving pictures coincided with the years during which film turned toward storytelling. Already accustomed to the machine and its illusionary power, viewers could now pay attention to an older source of excitement: the extraordinary plots of melodrama.

Geared towards audiences who were looking for a thrill, early film melodrama preserved the plots, the major conflicts, and even, in some cases, the artificial stagecraft employed for breathtaking scenes. Action melodrama survived mostly in serials, which played in cheap theaters, were formulaic, exploited coincidences and sudden revelations, used suspenseful exploits and images of excessive violence, and were mostly directed at working-class audiences.[437] Feature-length melodrama preserved the interest of the stage melodrama: it classified characters into good and evil categories, but also according to class; it focused on the hero or the heroine, with whom audiences were encouraged to identify; it made ample room for suspense, spectacle, and dramatic action; and it included multiple incidents that were unexpected and not fully motivated by the plot.

Serials played an important role in the reflection and redefinition of gender roles, especially of the figure of the New Woman in the 1920s. The serial-queen melodrama focused on young women who proved capable of heroic deeds, managed to escape their initial position as victims, and even rescued their male counterparts. Heroines often projected a double image: they were capable of facing the most difficult situations, but could also fall prey to ruthless villains. This paradoxical combination of female power and victimization was the immediate result of the social transformations that had brought

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[437] Ibid., 198-220.

women out of the house and into the working force; it also expressed men's fantasies for power and their anxieties about increasingly mobile and assertive women.[438] The New Woman defied most traditional expectations, as they had once been endorsed by the "Cult of True Womanhood": instead of purity, obedience, religiousness, and domesticity, she demonstrated self-reliance, intelligence, strength, independence, and even athletic qualities in confrontations that unfolded in full view in public spaces.[439]

Ben Singer best describes the complexity of the melodrama as a "cluster concept," the sum of five constitutive characteristics: "pathos," "overwrought emotion," "moral polarization," "nonclassical narrative structure," and "sensationalism."[440] Most fiction dramas could be located within this broad spectrum. They relied on pathos to appeal to their audiences; in the favorable plot resolutions, viewers could entertain the illusion of sharing a similar—if always deferred—fate in real life. Intense feeling, often bursting into passion, created the necessary conditions for pathos, and so did the moral absolutism of good and evil, stirred by the individual's loss of religious and patriarchal stability. Melodrama's series of coincidences, improbable, last-minute resolutions, episodic events, and disjointed plotting also worked to keep audiences in thrall. Finally, sensationalism was crucial to many silent film melodramas, emphasizing "action, violence, thrills, awesome sights, and spectacles of physical peril."[441] In its pervasive penetration of the new medium, melodrama became one of the major modes of narrative cinema.

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[438] Ibid., 222.
[439] Ibid., 242.
[440] Ibid., 44-49.
[441] Ibid., 48.

Two directions roughly paralleled the transformations of the post-1850s stage melodrama: the action melodrama (which continued the trend set by the stage) and what Michael Walker has termed the "melodrama of passion" (the direct descendent of the modified melodrama).[442] Action melodrama centered on plot, foregrounded the extreme moral polarization of characters, and made the love interest secondary to the main narrative focus; violence was externalized and visible in astonishing images of public events. Of particular interest to film historians and critics are D.W.Griffith's works, notwithstanding the role some of them played in fomenting racist stereotypes and sowing social discord. In *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Intolerance* (1916), *Broken Blossoms* (1919), *Way Down East* (1920), or *Orphans of the Storm* (1921), he adopted and improved on the structure of stage melodrama, transforming it into the matrix of the future American cinema.[443] An immediate example of action melodrama, *Birth of a Nation* revolves around the transformation of two families, the Northern Stonemans and the Southern Camerons, during the violence and political turmoil preceding and following the Civil War. Political intrigue, battlefield confrontations, kidnappings, rape, and murder unfold in public spaces and take viewers on a rapid and, at times, almost uncontrollably

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[442] Michael Walker, "Melodrama and the American Cinema," *Movie* 29/30 (1982): 16. Ben Singer makes a similar claim, but he terms the action melodrama "blood-and-thunder" melodrama and reduces the melodrama of passion to "family and maternal" melodrama. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 53-56.

[443] Michael Walker suggests that D. W. Griffith's films continued the tradition of stage melodrama, but actualized it to apply to American realities at the beginning of the twentieth century. Griffith's characters were types appropriated from the theater: the suffering heroine, the decent, yet insufficiently resourceful hero, the devious, sexually aggressive villain, the doting mothers, and the stern fathers. As in the nineteenth-century tradition, these characters were not complex and did not display any self-awareness or inner conflict; they remained types acting out different ideological scenarios. Griffith set his films in upper-class or lower-class environments, both locales being better primed for dramatic action than the mundane middle-class home (which would, nevertheless, become the scene of film melodrama later on). Focused mostly on the complicated workings of different families, these silent melodramas also displayed the well-accepted conflict between the city, as the site of corruption and violence, and the countryside, with its promise of morality and renewal. The overall tone was one of didacticism: viewers, whose strong emotional response was the main target of melodrama, were to watch, weigh, and learn from the dramas on the screen. See Walker, "Melodrama and the American Cinema," 3-12.

sensational rollercoaster in which the virtue and justness of the Southerners is opposed to the corruption and vice of the Northerners, while free and enslaved Blacks alike are vilified.

The melodrama of passion stressed pathos and emotional intensity, internalized violence, and often resorted to characters split between two choices, sometimes of equal moral weight.[444] It developed around their "internal traumas of passion (the emotions)"[445] and was not restricted to conflicts surrounding the domestic. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* is a film of indoor spaces and introduces a Chinese man's love and compassion for his young neighbor, Lucy (Lilian Gish), who is constantly maltreated by her father. Split between his sympathetic nature and a racist society that has marginalized and isolated him, Cheng Huan (Richard Barthelmess) comes to her rescue, but, to viewers' dismay, it is the father, Battling Burrows (Donald Crisp), who will have the final word. Although *Broken Blossoms* uses action (the raging fits of Lucy's father, Cheng Huan's rescue of the girl), such instances do not represent the main interest of the plot: it is Lucy's prolonged inner torment, Cheng Huan's budding interest in her, and their coming together that capture viewers' attention. Furthermore, *Broken Blossoms* adopts a poetic cinematography, produced through lighting, *mise en scène*, close ups, and even crosscutting, in order to reveal emotion and psychological transformation; in this case, it is not plot that drives the film, as occurs with *Birth of a Nation*, but style and emotion.[446]

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[444] See Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 53-56.

[445] Walker, "Melodrama and the American Cinema," 17.

[446] See Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, "The Blossom and the Bole: Narrative and Visual Spectacle in Early Film Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 33. 3 (Spring 1994): 7.

As I have suggested in these brief descriptions of two film plots, action and passion melodrama should not be seen as separate from each other, but as interlocking. Action melodrama can express intense emotion and channel it into the hero's motivations, as in the case of Ben Stoneman's hate, which inspires him to establish the Ku Klux Klan in *Birth of a Nation*. The melodrama of passion makes ample use of action especially as a means to externalize inner conflicts and emotions. Thus, in *Broken Blossoms*, Burrows beats his daughter to death in a fit of rage and jealousy. I argue that, in its silent film phase, the melodramatic mode massively imported the plots, themes, characters, and preference for spectacle and emotional appeal of stage melodrama; sound film would continue much in the same vein.

Sound film melodrama: The classical age, 1930-1960

The 1930s ushered in far-reaching changes in film industries worldwide, although it took several years before these became visible. The Great Depression ended a decade of optimism, artistic experimentation, and political radicalization, but opened the door to social unrest and intensified nationalist movements. Politics attracted the interest and resources of filmmakers and artists everywhere. In Europe, many of them joined the popular fronts—coalitions of various leftist parties—whose socialist commitment to the disenfranchised seemed the fair solution to the seriousness of the economic downfall and of fascist radicalization in the latter half of the decade.[447]

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[447] See Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Socialism, Fascism, and Democracy," in Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, 339-340.

Technology further contributed to the convulsions of the cinema world. The introduction of sound at the beginning of the 1930s intensified the rivalry between Hollywood and Europe, and led to the rise of national markets, many of which were regulated by protectionist measures. The two years that separated the introduction of sound in 1930 from the adoption of a coherent system of dubbing and then subtitling in 1932 and 1933 witnessed the boom of multinational studios, such as Joinville in Paris or Babelsberg near Berlin. In spite of the growing circulation of artists, many of whom were involved in the production of multilingual versions to be marketed both in Europe and in the United States, the advent of sound exacerbated the effects of the Depression in the film industry. Numerous musicians were fired, theaters, large and small, engaged in fierce competition with each other, and local performers lost their jobs when different venues began to specialize exclusively in film projection.[448]

Sound technology also had a profound impact on film form and perception. As soundtracks conferred autonomy to each text, the previously collective experience of the cinema gradually became more personal, especially when the ability to interact with the film, the musicians, and the performers disappeared. The dwindling of avant-garde movements, which started at the end of the 1920s, continued and was accelerated by the new technology and by the commitment to a more socially responsible art. Experimentation with sound, in the interest of the storyline, and with editing, to make up for the slow pace of speaking, conferred on films a more coherent structure and remodeled viewers' expectations of form and narrative.[449]

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[448] See Karel Dibbets, "The Introduction of Sound," in Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, 214, 217.
[449] Ibid., 217.

Hollywood dominated the film industry worldwide. In the 1930s, national

industries traversed one of their darkest economical periods as the profound

fragmentation of the film industry, the incapacity of small production companies to

release more than one or two titles a year, and the lack of coherent national policies

regarding film only added to the negative effects of the Depression and the introduction

of sound. In the United States, however, in the 1930s the studio system consolidated its

dominance and produced films based on standardized plot formulas, stock characters, and

recycled sets, costumes, and even soundtrack music numbers. Unlike the 1920s, when

particular directors, such as Griffith, Murnau, Stroheim, and DeMille, and actors like

Chaplin, Keaton, and Lloyd, had imposed their own style, disregarding any emerging

genre norms, the studio turned the production of genre films into a commercial success

that ensured its survival and prosperity. In spite of increased creativity, many European

industries faced fierce competition from the American studios, which had become

nothing less than productive assembly lines.[450]

    In his groundbreaking article on the use of the term "melodrama" in the

American trade industry, Steve Neale demonstrates that westerns (*Jesse James*, 1939),

spy thrillers (*International Spy*, 1938), gangster films (*Scarface*, 1931), crime films

(*Manhattan Melodrama*, 1934), and horror films (*Frankenstein*, 1931) were

unequivocally classified as melodramas in view of their suspenseful plot, violent action,

and strong impact on the viewer. Adventure, thrills, horror, suspense, shock, and murder

were the stock and trade of melodrama, whose major appeal was specified as male: some

melodramas were even labeled as "virile," "he-man" films, or "manly masculine"

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[450] See Altman, *Film/Genre*, 279-280, 30-49.

stories.[451] Pathos, romance, and domesticity were auxiliary concerns, which, in order to qualify as melodrama, had to be associated with an excess of psychological and emotional tension.[452] The press assessment of action melodrama as typical of the mode indicates the import of the category from silent film and stage melodrama. The use of the term "melodrama" continued to be so widely extended to the many subgenres of inter-bellum cinema that its sole purpose might have been to distinguish the dramatic, action-packed films from the other major mode of commercial fiction film, the comedy.

A third mode also appeared in the trade press of the day: drama. Neale explains that *Variety*, *Motion Picture Herald*, *Film Daily*, and the *Hollywood Reporter* classified films such as *Stella Dallas* (1925; 1937), *Imitation of Life* (1934; 1959), *Back Street* (1941), *Now, Voyager* (1942), *Sentimental Journey* (1946), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), and *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) in this category.[453] Drama lacked melodramatic thrills and physical violence, and attempted to foster "edifying emotion" rather than to excite and shock.[454] Respectable producers, such as Samuel Goldwyn or Universal Pictures, considered dramas to be quality films and took pride in releasing them. Unlike melodrama, such films were mainly addressed to female patrons and the middle classes to the same degree to which the late eighteenth-century *drame* and the nineteenth-century romantic and sentimental novels had been.[455] Dramas focused on emotions, on inner convulsions and on the pressure arising from psychological confrontations between characters. Their protagonists had become modern figures of

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[451] Neale, "Melo Talk," 72.
[452] Ibid., 66-73.
[453] Ibid., 81-89.
[454] Ibid., 75.
[455] Ibid.

more complexity: less-than-blameless heroines, heroes who did not, or could not, fight, and villains who could even muster pity from the audience. I suggest that the "drama" identified by film critics descended directly from the modified melodrama of the stage and had intimate affinities with the melodrama of passion.

One could argue, on a case-by-case basis, that some of the "dramas" were labeled as such in spite of their melodramatic characteristics. In the 1970s, one of the most widely-analyzed productions from this period was *Stella Dallas* (1937), a film raised to the status of melodramatic masterpiece by feminist criticism, but whose standing in the 1930s was far from being so clear-cut. Upon its release, *Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "[S]uperb direction by King Vidor and performances of distinguished merit by at least five players [give] this poignant human narrative of mismating and self-sacrifice a deeply moving emotional power."[456] Neale contends that the use of the adjective "human" indicated the film's alignment with the tradition of drama and its roots in the nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood.[457] However, *Stella Dallas* clearly displays a number of characteristics that connect it to the melodramatic mode: the protagonist remains the archetypal good mother, notwithstanding her multi-faceted personality, and is constantly at the mercy of her own nature and of social and historical forces that leave her little room for choice; the plot relies on twists and turns of fate rather than on cause-and-effect development; and, finally, the film does engender an intensely emotional effect on viewers, even if it replaces shock with pathos. This raises questions about the trade press category of "drama," which I suspect was a ploy by studios to rebrand and raise the

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[456] *Hollywood Reporter* (July 23, 1937):3, qtd. in Neale, "Melo Talk," 75. The earlier version of *Stella Dallas* (1925) was identified as "drama" by the *Moving Picture World*. See Neale, "Melo Talk," 75.
[457] See Neale, "Melo Talk," 75.

market value of their products. The 1930s preserved the two tendencies of stage melodrama and silent film towards overt, physically spectacular action and individualized inner conflict, even if the trade press redefined the latter as "drama."

World War II and its aftermath changed the composition and status of most film industries and had a prolonged impact on cinema production and aesthetics. Initially, the draft paralyzed national industries as many film workers were called to the front, but this situation did not last long. The temporary isolationism of the occupied countries in Europe paradoxically led to a booming of their industries which now were determined to replace Hollywood with local productions. Strict censorship and control, however, as well as discriminatory policies regarding different social and ethnic groups forced most of those who were under threat to migrate within Europe and, eventually, to cross the Atlantic. The protectionist policies of the 1930s were radicalized by the occupier, be it Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia, and the American industry, soon to profit from the massive arrival of European personnel, lost most of its European markets; it was to regain and dominate them at the end of the war.[458]

In the main combating countries (United States, Britain, Germany, and Russia), World War II stimulated the production of documentaries and newsreels, most of which exalted national unity and solidarity against the enemy's assault. Occupied and unoccupied countries, however, continued to produce a variety of fiction films, many of which remained within the melodramatic register. Westerns, war films, horror films, thrillers, or crime stories were still defined as melodramas well into the 1940s and 1950s,

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[458] See Nowell-Smith, "Socialism, Fascism, and Democracy," 340-342.

while their targeted audience was almost exclusively determined as male.[459] The source

of the well-established melodrama of the classical period was, as the trade press

suggested, the ten-twenty-thirty melodrama, with its focus on action, open confrontations,

limit situations, chases, violence, mysteries, and excess in style and form.[460] Furthermore,

as Neale underscores, the terms "melodrama" and "meller" surfaced in the trade press in

relation to other cultural forms, from serial novels, plays, radio shows, and even

television programs late in the 1950s, which indicates the range of the melodramatic

cultural mode even well into the twentieth century.[461]

After the war, Hollywood was to regain and augment its hegemony in Europe, but

this was the result of a complex state of affairs. Intent on eradicating the remnants of

Fascism, but also on preventing the return of strict protectionism, Americans pushed for

measures that would promote free trade and competition. European audiences, starving

for Hollywood products, brought high profits to distributors and exhibitors, thus

indirectly encouraging free commerce even if not always to the advantage of the

indigenous film productions. Simultaneously, local filmmakers and producers pushed for

national cultural reconstruction and for state measures that would shelter national

industries from the American invasion. It was not meant to happen: the Marshall Plan

granted Hollywood significant concessions, which allowed it to become the dominant

player in most countries. [462]

Politically, the 1950s marked the radicalization of the capitalist West and the

communist East into blocs increasingly at odds with each other; the tension in

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[459] Neale, "Melo Talk," 72.
[460] Ibid., 71.
[461] Ibid.
[462] See Nowell-Smith, "Socialism, Fascism, and Democracy," 436.

international relations trickled down to daily life. The films of this decade continued to pursue the 1940s concern with increasingly fragmented identity, female sexuality, and violence, only to add the dissolution of the family and severe generational crises to the mix.[463] The turn towards inner tension and questioning that had started in the 1940s was accelerated, and the gradual differentiation between commercial and "art" cinema only intensified the phenomenon, once "art" films grew increasingly interested in the moral dilemmas and psychological traumas of World War II and its aftermath.

Economically, local industries came out of their war difficulties. Audiences grew and reached a peak around 1955-1956, when the impact of television and the diversification of leisure venues began to seep in. Mass-circulation and specialized film magazines, festivals, film archives, film clubs and art cinemas emerged and developed at a rapid pace. Film was perceived as essential to the expression and consolidation of national identity, so the industry fought back to increase protectionist measures against massive imports of Hollywood films. When governments finally supported the production of "quality" films—which often led younger (and even established) artists to gravitate towards "new cinema" movements, as would be the case in Spain—the cultural resistance against the Americanization of cinema and, paradoxically, against the very states that funded this resistance was the first sign that film had reached the cultural status of art.

Melodrama continued to preserve its double interest in overt action *and* inner turmoil, but the major elements that defined it as a constantly metamorphosing mode remained action and sensationalism. Murder mysteries, thrillers, even romance (in the

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[463] See Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, "Film History as Masters and Masterpieces," in *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, 346-347.

rare cases in which it was associated with melodrama) of the 1940s and 1950s were often

described as "psychological" or "psychiatric" melodrama in the trade press.[464]

Furthermore, as Michael Walker explains, the melodrama of passion diversified to

include several subgroups that complemented each other and evolved well into the 1950s:

films in which the focus was on a woman, many of which continued to be labeled as

"dramas" (they would later be included in the category "woman's film"); the "romantic

melodrama," centering on the couple; the "Gothic horror melodrama"; and the

"family/small-town melodrama," focusing on the emotional interaction within and

between groups and emerging in the 1950s.[465] Female-centered narratives, romances, or

films focusing on the family were not classified as melodramas unless they included

extremes of emotional tension (as was the case with *All That Heaven Allows* [1955],

dubbed a "romantic melodrama") or thrilling action (as was the case with *House on

Telegraph Hill* [1951], defined as a "domestic melodrama" for its spotlight on a

psychopathic killer, or *Written on the Wind* [1956], which was considered a melodrama

for its "sensational themes").[466]

Interestingly, romance might fall under a critical lens in these melodramas, as it

did in the case of *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), one of the most popular productions of

the 1940s. John Stahl's film provides a good example of the indefinite status of "drama"

because it was dubbed both a melodrama and a drama by the trade press.[467] A beautiful

journalist, Ellen Berent (Gene Tierney) falls in love with a writer, Richard Harland

(Cornel Wilde), whom she hastily marries and follows to his country house. Engrossed in

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[464] Neale, "Melo Talk," 72-73.
[465] Walker, "Melodrama and the American Cinema," 17-20.
[466] Neale, "Melo Talk," 73.
[467] Ibid., 83-84.

work, Richard does not give his wife the attention she craves. Ellen grows increasingly

lonely and her obsession with her husband goes to such extreme lengths that she kills his

invalid brother and even her unborn child rather than share any of his affection with

anybody else. The film relied largely on from America's discovery of Sigmund Freud,

whose concepts it attempted to illustrate in a rather straightforward manner. Ellen's first

comment to Richard is to point out his resemblance to her father, whose ashes she will

later scatter over the New Mexico desert, grief-stricken and proudly aware of his

preference for her over her mother or sister. When Richard brings his disabled brother

Danny (Darryl Hickman) to live with them at their remote retreat in the mountains,

Ellen's sexual frustration swells, fostered not only by her husband's dedication to his

writing, but also by his concern for his brother, whose bedroom is right next to the

couple's. The elimination of Danny and of the future baby goes beyond the regular dose

of narcissism and suggests that Ellen's self-absorption is nothing short of a mental

disease. Her descent into hysteria and madness is suspensefully structured to culminate in

the thrilling climax: she attempts to kill her sister, Ruth (Jeanne Crain), whom she

suspects of having fallen in love with Richard.

Stahl's psychological melodrama of passion has the ingredients of an action

melodrama, but they are employed in the service of the tensions and conflicts

accumulated within and between the characters. The centering of the action on the female

character and the intended female spectatorship of the film, both of which were soon to

be associated with melodrama, as we shall see, were not the criteria according to which

Leave Her to Heaven was classified as a melodrama; quite the contrary, they may have

raised the status of the film and motivated *Film Daily* to label it as a "drama."[468] It was the sensationalism of the crimes, their excessiveness, and the constant level of tension experienced by the viewers as they grow increasingly aware of Ellen's potential for violence and Richard's initial blindness and developing self-denial about it. Dubbed a "murder melodrama" by *Motion Picture Herald*, [469] the film was included in the melodramatic mode for the violence of its conflicts and its potential to shock viewers.

By the end of the 1950s, Hollywood had not changed its approach to melodrama, which remained a multi-faceted mode, whose many categories continued to share, albeit in a modernized form, the same characteristics they had inherited from stage melodrama: a plot that relied on action, expected coincidences, twists and turns of fate, excesses, and limit situations; an intense appeal to viewers' emotions, in the form of shock or pathos; complex characters who, nevertheless, remained types and were unequivocally marked as moral opposites; the building of the plot toward the expected, didactic reward of virtue and punishment of vice; striking, elaborate aesthetics, often bordering on the baroque; and the appeal to mass audiences.

Furthermore, as an almost all-encompassing mode, melodrama produced a clear, ideologically controlled matrix of social values that made living in the world a matter of correct identification of well-acknowledged moral vectors rather than a constant interpretation and readjustment of one's ethical compass. It assembled a disturbing, often apocalyptic vision of the world and humanity, which it then simplified and rendered manageable. It aimed to excite and awe rather than raise doubts and foster analytical probing. Melodrama was, in its construction and address, the mode of emotional reaction,

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[468] Ibid., 83.
[469] Ibid., 74.

but also of reassuring pacification; it stirred its audiences, but sent them home with the cozy, deceptive feeling of mastery over life. In authoritarian regimes, however, melodramas suggested that such potential happiness and control over destiny came only with one's allegiance to the social and political norms determined by the paternalist state. Whether democratic, totalitarian or authoritarian, a significant number of regimes found in melodrama their most inconspicuous yet effective means of popular support.

Melodrama and feminism

Beginning in the 1970s, the term "melodrama" was applied to popular romances in which a virtuous woman, usually a mother, or a couple fall victims to unfair social circumstances. The redefinition of melodrama in the 1970s and 1980s was the product of feminist critics, who aimed to recuperate and confer artistic and political value on those texts that centered on, and were intended for, women. My brief sidetracking through feminist theory about melodrama will elucidate the reasons for the delineation of a new genre, but will also emphasize the critics' power to transform a theoretical genre into a historical one. Furthermore, my selection of feminist film theory in this section will underscore particular aspects of melodrama that will become important to the category I propose for study: the melodrama of interiority.

In *Film/Genre*, Rick Altman emphasizes the vivacity and constant metamorphosis of genres, which are the products not only of a profit-seeking industry, but also of constant critical revisions, all of which are historically and culturally bound. He considers the transformation of the genre by the feminist critics as a natural process, one that only

adds to the cultural value determined by the film press, the production companies, and the public.[470] The identification of melodrama with one of its subgenres was undertaken in several steps, and, interestingly enough, it was the indirect product of a different intention. At the beginning of the 1970s, Molly Haskell aimed to expose Hollywood's complicated history of films whose focus was on female characters. The group that she defined as the "woman's film" cut across genres and categories, from melodrama, to film noir, and even to screwball comedies. Haskell contended that the woman's film did not have a high status among Hollywood films, an idea later contradicted by Steve Neale.[471] Mary Ann Doane imported the same term, but, as Altman suggests, she reassigned it a new meaning and attempted to impose it as a new genre. The woman's film included texts that not only focused on women but were also specifically addressed to female audiences.[472] It was only in the 1970s that melodrama started to be associated selectively with family melodrama and the woman's film. By aligning the newly-identified genre of woman's film with melodrama and its longstanding literary and critical tradition, feminists sought to gain recognition for the genre.[473] However, it is not by chance that the feminists focused on classical cinema as the source for their foray into the genre, or that it was family melodrama—a term rarely, if ever, used in relation to melodrama, as Neale

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[470] Altman, *Film/Genre*, 72-77.

[471] Haskell contends that the phrase "woman's film" was used to dismiss certain texts as dabbing into a pool of lonely characters and mired in exaggerated pathos: "Among the Anglo-American critical brotherhood (and a few of their sisters as well), the term 'woman's film' is used disparagingly to conjure up the image of the pinched-virgin or little-old-lady writer, spilling out her secret longings in wish-fulfillment or glorious martyrdom, and transmitting these fantasies to the frustrated housewife"; furthermore, Haskell adds, "[t]he weepies are founded on a mock-Aristotelian and politically conservative aesthetic whereby women spectators are moved, not by pity and fear but by self-pity and tears, to accept, rather than reject, their lot." Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film," in *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 154-155.

[472] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 34, qtd. in Altman, *Film/Genre*, 75.

[473] Altman, *Film/Genre*, 77.

has revealed—that took over as the mold for the genre. The particular development of the melodrama of passion during this period provided the ideal material for a reconsideration of women's social standing: its focus on inner turmoil, dangerous female sexuality, fragmented identity, and social pressures, especially those levied on women, reflected the changes in the deeper structure of society and of the intimate sphere that would lead to the civil rights and women's rights movements of the sixties and seventies.

The first "wave" of feminist criticism relied primarily on Neo-Marxist and psychoanalytical concepts in order to reshape perceptions about gender roles and melodrama. The radical measure taken by these critics was to isolate one subgenre of melodrama—what they called the "family melodrama"—and use it as the background for their sharp denunciation of patriarchal ideology and the excessive emotional burden it placed on the intimate sphere. Although the films selected included both silent and sound cinema, the focus was on the 1950s productions of a few directors, such as Douglas Sirk, Vincente Minnelli, or Nicholas Ray. What prompted this initial criticism was the interest in the family and the small community, and their role as the ideological cradle of an increasingly problematic capitalist system. The critics also intended to raise awareness of the dramatic changes in gender dynamics in the wake of World War II.

Among the first to redirect the study of melodrama, Thomas Elsaesser contributed to its theorization in two ways: he reduced the corpus of melodrama to films set in claustrophobic spaces and which revolved around repressed desires, often for the unattainable; and he contended that such films exposed the latent hysteria of small communities and gained subversive valences through the sublimation of psychological, social, and economic conflict into *mise en scène*, music, color, gesture, or

cinematography. [474] In his analysis, melodrama evolved from its initial, post-French

Revolution form, which was characterized by direct, external confrontation between

characters, sudden violence, and reversals of plot as the standard expression of social and

inner unrest, to the 1950s and 1960s interest in the psyche, which may have been the

result of the disillusionment that came with the return to an already outdated Victorian

code of morals in small-town communities and the "intimate neuroses and adolescent or

not so adolescent maladjustments of a wider social significance." [475] The critic indirectly

recognized the existence of the two melodramatic impulses I have been emphasizing, but

in a radical move he also assigned them a teleological evolution: action melodrama was,

in Elsaesser's view, replaced by passion melodrama as a result of historical

circumstances.

Elsaesser was also among the first to make a clear connection between melodrama

and the passive victim at its center, whom he perceived as completely opposed to the

active hero of the western.[476] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith further explored Elsaesser's

categories, but adopted a more straightforwardly psychological approach and, while

reinforcing melodrama's potential for subversiveness, he also subtly underlined the

protagonists' "femininity," whether they were male or female. [477] Melodrama centered on

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[474] Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 71.

[475] Ibid., 71, 80. It is important to emphasize, however, that action melodrama continued to be produced mostly by second-class studios and studio units, which gave it a reduced social reality in that it was much less visible in the press and in critical literature.

[476] Ibid., 78-79. Two observations should be made here. By the 1970s, the western had acquired a clear status as an independent genre. Furthermore, the case of the 1920s serial-queen melodrama suggests that the connection between melodrama and a passive hero or heroine is merely the result of critical revisionism and of the selective focus on one of the tendencies of the post-World War II melodrama.

[477] Nowell-Smith, "Minnelli and Melodrama," in Gledhill, *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, 72. Lea Jacobs, however, argues that the label of "passivity" is the result of the multiplication and rapid succession of situations, which submit protagonists to extreme, limit circumstances; the only way out is, in most cases, another intervention of fate or coincidence. The melodrama hero or heroine does not provoke, cannot avoid, and cannot resolve such situations, which leaves viewers with the impression that he or she is

the oedipal drama and was mainly concerned with gender and generational conflicts; it raised questions about paternity, inheritance, and the patriarchal right to rule the family.[478] Freud's description of "conversion hysteria" provided the critic with the working pattern for film melodrama: the energy produced by repressed emotions and tensions haunted the body of the film in the form of stylistic excess. The "hysterical" moment of a film, or the moment at which the realist conventions broke down, had ideologically subversive potential and prevented any straightforward, satisfactory closure of the plot. [479] Nowell-Smith's major contribution was to replace melodrama's earlier ethical universe—what Brooks had termed the "moral occult"—with the unconscious, a more credible source of mayhem in the age of science.

The March 1977 conference organized in London by the Society for Education in Film and Television was the beginning of the second stage of the feminist study of melodrama.[480] Laura Mulvey refocused the debate on films centered on female characters and *also* intended for female audiences; female spectatorship, as a criterion for the definition of the genre, became the most important factor for critics such as Mary Ann Doane, Christine Gledhill, Linda Williams, Lea Jacobs, and Tania Modleski, to name only a few.[481]

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passive. Jacobs admits that this is not the case in other film genres, such as the western, in which the hero uses personal charm, intuition, and wit to escape seemingly impossible situations. Jacobs starts from the premise that the western is a free-standing genre, different in its structural attributes from melodrama. Her specifications are, however, useful in the case of the melodrama of passion. Lea Jacobs, "The Woman's Picture and the Poetics of Melodrama," 133-136.

[478] Ibid., 70-71.
[479] Ibid., 74.
[480] See John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility* (London and New York: Wallflower, 2004), 25.
[481] The third stage of feminist criticism would look especially at those films produced and directed by female artists or at female stardom. Such studies, however, do not represent the focus of my investigation.

Mulvey argued that 1950s melodrama needed to be reconsidered and that, although it had moments when it undermined patriarchal values, it ultimately remained a "safety valve for ideological contradictions centered on sex and the family"[482]; this astute observation will be very useful to my analysis of melodrama in authoritarian regimes. One had to distinguish between melodramas in which the female protagonist's point of view dominated the plot and those which studied familial or generational conflicts (and which were not necessarily experienced through the woman's perspective). After a revelatory analysis of plot themes and stylistics in *All That Heaven Allows*, Mulvey concluded that, in those films produced for female audiences and centered on the heroine's perspective, the final resolution, even when it apparently brought the fulfillment of a fantasy, was marked by contradictions and precluded any real satisfaction.[483]

Mulvey was not the only one to investigate subcategories within the loosely defined corpus of woman's film. One of the most important subgenres of study was the maternal melodrama, which Doane defined as a dramatic film that exploited all possible scenarios of separation between mother and child and relied on pathos to reach its viewers.[484] Maternal melodrama was "the paradigmatic type of the woman's film" because it could generate tears in response to the woman's oppression and suffering.[485] The maternal figure reflected the ideology that best served national interest: in the 1930s, the poor mother was often depicted as an obstacle against her child's access to a better social status, but, in response to the war, critics and filmmakers raised her to a symbol of

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[482] Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," in Gledhill, *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, 75.
[483] Ibid., 79.
[484] Mary Ann Doane, "The Moving Image: Pathos and the Maternal," in Landy, *Imitations of Life*, 286.
[485] Ibid., 286.

unity, nurturing, and comfort.[486] The disproportion between the woman's desire and its

fulfillment, between her transgressions and the often excessive punishment she had to

endure resulted from mistimed actions, accidents, and coincidences beyond the

character's control. Such twists of plot were the source of pathos and tears, but they also

left open the possibility of reunion and fulfillment, a felicitous resolution that was,

nonetheless, constantly deferred.[487] The pathos of the maternal melodrama was a

displacement of the violence from the diegesis onto the spectator, whom it "feminized";

in Doane's opinion, this effect had led to the cultural denigration of the subgenre.[488]

Although it is difficult to measure the extent to which individual viewers are moved to

tears or resist them, Doane's suggestion that melodrama proposes an always delayed

utopia is important to understanding the role of melodrama within totalitarian and

authoritarian regimes, an idea that I shall detail in subsequent chapters.

A few years later, Linda Williams returned to the relation between text and

spectators. She defined melodrama as a "filmic mode of stylistic and/or emotional

excess" opposed to the mode of "realistic, goal-oriented narrative."[489] The woman's film,

or the "weepie," included films directed at female audiences, in their roles as mothers,

wives, or lovers, and as subjects traditionally perceived to be inclined towards bodily

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[486] Ibid., 286-290.

[487] Steve Neale reaches a similar conclusion about the appeal of the melodrama: the pleasure that comes from crying is directly related to the existence of a fantasy whose fulfillment is denied, but which is preserved as an ideal to be achieved in another film at some other time. He also identifies the "moving" moment as the moment of revelation, when the protagonists finally catch up with viewers' knowledge. Steve Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," *Screen* 27:6 (1986): 20-22. See also Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44:4 (Summer 1991):12.

[488] Doane, "The Moving Image," 304.

[489] L. Williams, "Film Bodies," 3. Williams's classification avoids the direct identification of melodramas with passive female victims and echoes the differentiation I have been making between the melodrama of passion and the action melodrama.

hysteria and excess.[490] Referring to Freud's analysis of the child's different enigmas and the fantasies that "explain" them, Williams suggested that the melodramatic weepie was organized around the dilemma of the "origin of the self," which was "resolved" through the corresponding fantasies of the family romance and of the return to origins, or, more clearly, of the return to the union with the maternal body.[491] The desire for the ideal parents, the recuperation of the lost child, or the reunification of the couple could not be satisfied in time, which explained the characters' sense of loss and fueled their hope to return to an earlier, happier state. Fantasies were satisfied, but too late for the female characters; in spite of their often sad endings, however, such films enabled viewers to imagine the possibility of future fulfillment. This suggested that the pleasure involved in watching weepies did not only come from a masochistic identification with the heroine, but also from the fundamentally unchallenged desire for the utopian bliss of the past.

Annette Kuhn's examination of the difference between the discursive spectatorial position and the concrete, particular audiences that attend the screening added necessary details to the same debate.[492] Emphasizing the importance of the context for film production and reception, she suggested that film melodramas and soap operas addressed female audiences in different modes: one relied on textual interpellation and the other on the text's insertion into women's life routines.[493] Nevertheless, the real recipient and decoder of the film text was always already socially and culturally formed, so the construction of meaning was never from a single perspective, but emerged from the

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[490] Ibid., 4.
[491] Ibid., 10-11.
[492] Annette Kuhn, "Women's Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera and Theory," in Gledhill, *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, 339-350.
[493] Ibid., 345.

"continuity between women's interpellation as spectators and their status as social audience."[494] The spectators addressed by the film and the viewers seated in the theater were too tightly entwined to be easily distinguished and defined; they would be even more so under authoritarian regimes.

Feminist critics, acting as a particularly visible and politically powerful constellated community, intended to launch a new, theoretical genre: the woman's film. I argue that they selected one category of the melodramatic mode—what the trade press had called "drama"—defined it as the standard melodrama, and conflated the terms "melodrama" and "woman's film." Melodrama, as it became known in the 1970s and 1980s and as it is largely understood today, was thematically centered on the woman's or the couple's issues and was mostly addressed to female audiences, whom it aimed to move to pathos. At the intersection of theory and industrial practice, feminists' melodrama proves that genres can be constantly reshuffled and redefined to serve different agendas.

The melodrama of interiority

This last section will support, supplement, and depart from the different melodrama theories introduced so far in order to propose for analysis a new category: the melodrama of interiority. I have traced the evolution of two complementary impulses of the melodramatic mode that infused the new medium of film: the action melodrama of open conflict and the passion melodrama of internalized conflict. I would like to

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[494] Ibid., 348.

introduce a new category that can resolve some of the confusion surrounding the latter impulse: the melodrama of interiority. As a theoretical construction, it is positioned between the melodramatic genres and the mode, and it opposes action melodrama in the type of approach it adopts to the tensions generated among characters. In action melodrama, protagonists physically confront each other in the public sphere, but their clashes do not ultimately impinge on the intimate sphere; quite the contrary, they function to preserve or restore it. The melodrama of interiority centers precisely on conflicts within the intimate sphere: characters strive to clarify the relationships they form with each other and to adapt to new configurations of the intimate groups to which they belong.

A brief recapitulation of the major characteristics of the public, private, and intimate spheres, as defined in an earlier chapter, is necessary in order to grasp the difference between the two melodramatic tendencies and underline the significance of the melodrama of interiority to the social and cultural context of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The public sphere is the imaginary space of circulation for all discourses produced in the interaction among the state, the civil society, and the world of work; furthermore, it also covers the interplay of discourses among different private components of the civil society, the world of work, and the domestic realm as long as these are made known beyond the confines of the group that generates them. The protagonists' chases, rivalries, and struggles in action melodrama arise and unfold in full view of other groups involved; furthermore, they often include a clash between the villain and the authorities, which only strengthens the public nature of the event. The Civil War conflicts that entangle the Stonemans and Camerons in Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* are an

eloquent example in this sense, but so are the more local clashes of westerns or gangster films. At the opposite end, the intimate sphere is the imaginary space of communication of the members of a single, limited group, psychologically bound to each other in the closest manner. Its ideal role is to protect individuals from external aggression, but also to support and guide their intellectual and emotional development. The melodrama of interiority centers on the internal confrontations among the members of one intimate couple or group and their effects on the individuals and the dynamics of that group. Although these tensions may become public, the focus is not on the transformations they trigger across different publics, but on those they produce at the level of the characters' closest ties and inner lives. As I have emphasized, authoritarian regimes rose and remained in power because they fostered changes of intimate discourse, isolated intimate publics from other types of groups, especially those that opposed the regime's ideology, and introduced doubt and rivalry among members of the same intimate group. I therefore consider the melodrama of interiority instrumental to the investigation of that part of authoritarian melodrama which aimed at restructuring the intimate sphere.

The melodrama of interiority has common characteristics with what the 1970s and 1980s feminist critics defined as "melodrama" and with Michael Walker's "melodrama of passion," but it is larger in scope than both. I trace the roots of the new category back to the modified melodrama of the late nineteenth-century stage, with its preference for sentimentality, inner unrest, and complex characters, who, nevertheless, remain types. Feminist critics suggested that melodrama focused on female characters, the couple, or the family, and was especially geared towards female audiences. The melodrama of interiority, however, also includes male protagonists, can address male viewers, and is

not restricted to the couple and the family as the only possible intimate publics. For example, war films gravitating around male friendships can also be defined as melodramas of interiority, as is the case with *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930, dir. Lewis Milestone), to which I will return shortly. Similarly, priests, monks, or missionaries can also become the protagonists of such melodramas, especially in authoritarian regimes that emphasized religious devotion as an important aspect of an individual's inner life. *Fray Escoba* (*Brother Broom*, 1961, Spain) follows the tribulations of real-life Martín de Porres, a black friar who lived in racially-stratified seventeenth-century Peru. The film, produced during the authoritarian regime of Franco, revolves around the future saint's acts of inner devotion to Christ and dedication to individuals in need, tracing his emotional and spiritual development from early childhood, through his interactions with other friars of the Dominican order, until his final recognition as a holy figure. *Fray Escoba* is, ultimately, the history of a man's affection for others and of the intimate spheres he established with those he loved and supported.

Furthermore, the melodrama of interiority incorporates, but is not reducible to, the melodrama of passion. The latter insists on the characters' excessively emotional reactions, often at the expense of an exploration of the psychological, social, and economic tensions that produce those reactions. The category I have proposed stresses the internalized nature of the strife rather than its external manifestations, and does not minimize the significance of the various factors that lead to conflict.[495] As I have already

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[495] See Daniel Gerould, "Russian Formalist Theories of Melodrama," in Landy, *Imitations of Life*, 121. As a side note, it is also worth remembering that powerful passion is an important ingredient in all types of

noted, Michael Walker has identified several "generic groups" within the passion melodrama: the woman's melodrama; romantic melodrama; family and/or small-town melodrama; and melodramas in the Gothic-horror tradition.[496] Some of the films that might be included in these subcategories, however, are not melodramas of interiority, and indeed might be viewed as closer to action melodramas than melodramas of passion. For example, the serial-queen melodrama would presumably be considered a "woman's melodrama" since it focused on female protagonists. Yet the heroines of these works were caught up in a thrilling chain of abductions, escapes, and chases. These films promoted the image of the modern New Woman to both male and female audiences, but the stress was placed on physical action in public spaces, thus underlining visibility rather than inner torment.[497] *The Adventures of Dorothy Dare* (1916), *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914), or *Pearl of the Army* (1916) are only a few of the titles that support the classification of these films as action melodramas.

At the same time, some examples of the melodrama of interiority fall outside Warner's subcategories. In the final pages of this chapter, I will analyze a film that qualifies as a melodrama of interiority, but cannot be confused with the melodrama of passion or with the feminists' redefined notion of melodrama. Based on a popular novel by Eric Maria Remarque, who drew upon his own experiences fighting in World War I, *All Quiet on the Western Front* unveils the emotional distress of a group of young soldiers confronted with the horrors of that conflict. Paul Bäumer (Lew Ayres), one of the teenagers stirred to join the army by a schoolteacher's glorification of the nationalist

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melodrama; the more intense passions are, the more explosive the actions that reveal them are, which might lead to a confusion between the action and passion melodrama
[496] Walker, "Melodrama and the American Cinema," 17.
[497] See Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 221-262.

cause, represents the consciousness of the group, and the film follows his progression

from idealism about the justness of war to despair, fright, and disillusionment. An equally

important narrative thread is the evolution of the initially casual camaraderie between

Paul and the somewhat older Kat Katczinsky (Louis Wolheim) into an intimate,

affectionate connection, developed around a humanistic, anti-war discourse. One of the

emblematic images of the film appears toward the end, when Paul is carrying Kat, injured

by a shell, on his back and reminisces about their past battles only to discover that a

second shell has killed him. This realization is the culmination of an ostensibly banal day

at the front. Having returned from his leave, Paul finds Kat looking for food behind

enemy lines, once again fulfilling his customary role as provider and caretaker of the

younger recruits. The desolate landscape announces the implacable defeat of the German

army: scattered trees whose bare branches evoke despair, the ruins of a building, and

smoke rising from the battlefield in the far background. Amid this apocalyptic setting, the

two friends sit down to discover that their connection to each other, i.e. the intimate

sphere they have established, is the only reality that they can still recognize. Paul cannot

find his place at home, where young and old generations refuse to admit what all soldiers

know—that "death is stronger than duty to one's country"—and Kat deplores the

situation of the army: "No food, no ammunition, no officers."[498] The two men make a

clear distinction between soldiers, who live surrounded by the truth of their defeat and the

intensity of their devotion to each other, and all those who are not on the front lines,

whose illusions of pride and grandeur defy reality and demonstrate a clear disregard for

the lives of those they send to fight. As Paul and Kat walk toward the camera, an

[498] *All Quiet on the Western Front*, DVD, directed by Lewis Milestone (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1930; Universal City: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2007).

ominous airplane surveys the field, dropping bombs; one injures Kat and Paul decides to carry him to their quarters, fondly evoking his friend's protective nature. This couple shares painful memories of the war and its casualties; they may not belong to the same family, but they form an uncontested emotional bond. The loss of Kat leads to Paul's desolation and death in the trenches in the next and final scene. Before it closes on the stillness and muteness of death, *All Quiet on the Western Front* foregrounds the intimate spheres established by soldiers in response to the atrocities of war.

Generally centered on men's experiences, war films are perhaps not the most obvious candidates for classification as melodramas of interiority. However, *All Quiet on the Western Front* displays all the necessary characteristics: it subordinates action—the fight for survival on the battlefield, the confrontation between two armies—to the characters' psychological and emotional evolution; it resorts to exaggerated acting and dialogue in order to externalize characters' thoughts and sentiments; it relies on coincidences, mostly fatal, as the major means of advancing the plot; and it enlists style in the service of revelation and pathos.

Thematically, a number of claims made by the feminist critics do apply to the melodrama of interiority, albeit with certain qualifications. Plots rest on gender and generational conflicts, as the feminist critics suggested, but they also set the individual against other larger social and political forces. Desire and sexuality are major threats to successful social integration, and they inevitably lead to violent outbursts, which are especially visible at the textual level. Nevertheless, these are not the only causes of isolation: political upheaval, war, or economic adversities also contribute to loneliness and distress. In a society disillusioned with post-war reality, the ethical universe of good

and evil was replaced not only by the far darker personal unconscious, as the feminists contended, but also, as I shall emphasize in the following chapters, by old and new forms of religiosity, from fascist nationalism, to Spanish National-Catholicism and Soviet communism.

All Quiet on the Western Front was an immediate international success for its condemnation of war at a time when totalitarian regimes gathered pace everywhere in Europe. In addition to focusing on the relationship between Paul and Kat, the film follows an entire group of young students from their school days, through their experiences of their friends' injuries and death, and eventually to their own disappearance in the name of a nation from which they feel increasingly estranged. Incessant bombing, fighting in the trenches, and days and nights in run-down army barracks transform the initially large group into a small, cohesive, affectively well-knit intimate public. The film pits the young generation, most of whom bear the burden of war, against the old, authoritarian generation of their high-school teacher (Arnold Lucy) who, inebriated with thoughts of national grandeur, sends them to the front, or of their own fathers who, as Paul discovers on his leave, assemble in clubs to discuss the war, but have no practical and emotional knowledge of the reality in the trenches. Paul rebels against them, but they are not his only adversaries, or even the most prominent ones; hunger, sleeplessness, shells, bullets, and bombs, but, above all, the irrationality of the fight torment the young soldier more than his parents or older superiors.

In the melodrama of interiority, identity crises escalate as the young generation and women of all ages question patriarchal authority and its institutions, as the feminists also rightfully noted about melodrama. These films expose complicated conflicts, but

deflect them onto the intimate sphere and, in some cases, provide apparently simple, immediate solutions. Most protagonists find it difficult to fit into the social roles that have already been established for them. They feel increasingly impotent in the face of the debilitating bureaucratic systems that become the new, impersonal "villains" of melodrama. Tensions are aggravated by the deterioration of the Father figure who is, with few exceptions, one of the sources of distress through his absences, failures, indifference, desertion, or death.[499]

All Quiet on the Western Front is a direct response to the complex political situation in the 1930s, when international tensions arising from the Versailles Peace Treaty and the rise of Nazism and Soviet communism made another war conceivable in the near future; the potential consequences of this complicated context were the pretext for Milestone's investigation of the soldiers' intimate experiences of the fight. The war machinery is the anonymous "villain" set in motion apparently against the wishes of all soldiers; one of the characters compares it with "a kind of a fever": "Nobody wants it in particular and then, all at once, here it is. We didn't want it. The English didn't want it. And here we are, fighting." Father figures are either exemplary, but as powerless as the young men—as is the case of the soldier Kat, Paul's role model—or ridiculous and phony—as the teacher or sergeant Himmelstross (John Wray), the former postman who takes pleasure in tormenting his troops in boot camp, but cowardly shrinks away from battle.

Although the characters of the melodrama of interiority may appear to be internally divided, they are not tragic figures, even when the ending is gloomy. In a

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[499] See David N. Rodowick, "Madness, Authority, and Ideology: The Domestic Melodrama of the 1950s," in Gledhill, *Home Is Where the Heart Is*, 275.

tragedy, the protagonist is torn between opposing values and desires, between the good and evil within the self, but manages to achieve self-knowledge; through the choices made, he or she attempts to order the personal, complex inner world. In melodrama, characters remain whole and only react to a world divided between good and evil; their choices reflect outer social and economic tensions, or a given psychological "flaw" that cannot be reversed, but not self-awareness.[500] When Paul repeatedly stabs a French soldier and then has to spend the night in the same trench with the dying man, he appears to regret his actions and tries to help his victim to survive. The whole episode, however, is completely forgotten once Kat explains that, "We have to kill. We can't help it. That's what we are here for." Paul remains primarily a soldier in the service of the nation to which he sacrifices his intimate values, and the nation and those who rule it are responsible for his actions.

Stylistically, the conflicts of the melodrama of interiority are often, though not exclusively, fought within enclosed spaces, in hushed tones, through innuendos and oblique actions that are not immediately directed at antagonists. Melodramatic sensationalism may rest on the pregnant silences between characters, on muted gestures, musical punctuation, or trivial objects charged with affective intensity. When Paul leaves the hospital with his dead friend's boots after their first battle, he pauses for a few moments, and the camera cranes up, then lingers on the ownerless footwear. Slowly, but visibly, Paul's face changes from sadness to determination, and he starts running. "It felt so good to be alive that I started to walk fast," he later tells his friends. More than simple

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[500] See Robert Heilman, "Tragedy and Melodrama: Alternate Forms," in *The Iceman, the Arsonist, and the Troubled Agent: Tragedy and Melodrama on the Modern Stage* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), 25-35.

objects, the boots become, for Paul, a poignant reminder of his own mortality, and the elation he feels only hides his horror of war and death. He returns to the army quarters that have been set up in an abandoned house. The scene of Paul's epiphany of death unfolds within the well-delimited area of a former bedroom, a symbolically appropriate place for self-searching questions regarding the origin and end of the self. Objects and people crowd into a small place: a massive Victorian bed where Kat is resting, an elegant escritoire flanked by two imposing nineteenth-century armchairs, where Müller (Russell Gleason) is doing mathematics, and another bed set by a huge breach in the wall in the far background, where a man lies smoking as rain is pouring down behind him on the busy soldiers outside in the yard. This eclectic room is a suggestive materialization of the men's inner space: its coziness indicates a craving for past safety and innocence while the dense crowding of objects and the incessant rain evoke the pressures of the war. Most of the film takes place inside such make-shift spaces, from barracks, to trenches, to hospital wards, to the improvised bars behind the frontline. They reveal an interior world of constant frustration, tension, and change, but oppose it to the support soldiers may find in the intimate spheres they form with their closest fighting comrades.

Lighting, especially the expressionistic play of shadows that distorts faces, shapes, and objects, further enables melodrama's emotional and psychological legibility. The huge shadow of an off-screen cross, projected onto the wall next to the entrance door, is an ominous sign of the soldiers' ultimate fate, but also a reference to the interior solace they may find in faith.[501] As Paul confesses his thirst for life after his friend's

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[501] Christian symbolism is present throughout the film, but is especially poignant in the last shot, reminiscent of Abel Gance's *J'Accuse!* (*I Accuse!*, 1919), in which the image of now dead soldiers walking

death, low-key lighting splits his face into two halves, one in full light, the other in shadow; this image hints at the battle waged inside him between his instinct for life and his shock at his friend's death, between his euphoria at being alive and his fear of his own demise.

Finally, melodramatic editing facilitates the unveiling of inner conflicts: the frequent use of flashbacks and flashforwards, the symbolical use of montage, and the repeated use of point-of-view shots contribute to the externalization of the characters' inner states and elicit viewers' emotions.[502] In a montage of medium shots, the pair of boots "travels" with its new owners from the march to the front all the way to the trenches and death. Throughout the film, the camera insists on serial images of boots in order to suggest the transformation of human beings into the lifeless components of a machine that compulsively and mindlessly repeats acts of aggression. Franz Kemmerich's boots have long been a fetish object for the company, coveted for their irreproducibility: made from imported leather, they have been passed down from another generation and are a symbol of capitalism, as well as of German cohesion, national pride and colonial exploits. Three soldiers wear them after Kemmerich's death and all three end up injured or dead. In war, objects use people and former ideals ring destructively hollow. Rather than staging spectacular clashes between opposing armies, the melodrama of interiority underscores the moral and emotional value of apparently unimportant details in order to unveil characters' inner vulnerability and unawareness of their function as easily replaceable tools of war.

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into the distance and confronting the viewer is superimposed on the long shot of a cemetery filled with white crosses in order to emphasize the young men's martyrdom.
[502] See also Rodowick, "Madness, Authority, and Ideology," 275.

Both action melodrama and the melodrama of interiority build on the mismatch in knowledge between characters and viewers: the former exploits it to raise tension, while the latter emphasizes the psychological depth of the delayed moment of recognition, as the feminist critics insightfully underlined in their considerations of melodrama. Characters' inability to achieve the knowledge that would "solve" their dilemmas on time is determined by unexpected external events—such as wars, accidents, or natural calamities—or by inherited, equally external, contexts—such as class, income, or family circumstances. Their psychological, sexual, or emotional limitations add to their "blindness": protagonists do not care to or cannot understand what they do see, as is the case with each new owner of the boots in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.[503] Feminist critics singled out the importance of pathos, which is also the dominant emotion associated with the melodrama of interiority; it relies on spectators' inability to intervene in favor of the victims, but it also implies a belief in a future utopian resolution of similar conflicts, if not for the characters on screen, then for their viewers. That belief confers on the individual the illusion of power, and as I will detail later, it often becomes one of the most efficient instruments of mass seduction in authoritarian regimes.[504] *All Quiet on the Western Front* was censored and its screenings were boycotted in Germany and Italy at the time; it was also criticized for its politics in the United States, where the film did win Academy Awards in the best film and best director categories in 1930.[505] Milestone's

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[503] Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," 8-12.

[504] In authoritarian regimes, the illusion of control over one's life was conditioned by one's loyalty to the state and its institutions at the expense one's private or even intimate relationships with others. In this way, the regime attempted to minimize any influence the private sphere might have had on its citizens and consolidate its influence over them.

[505] Jamie Russell, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*: Review," *BBC*, November 3, 2003, http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2003/11/03/all_quiet_on_the_western_front_1930_review.shtml (accessed September 21, 2010); Chris Cabin, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*: Review," *Filmcritic.com*, August 24,

production was a melodrama of interiority that pleaded against war; the future ideal situation it proposed was peace. As nationalist forces were on the rise around the world in the 1930s, few states were eager to encourage their populations to abandon armed confrontation and work for peace. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes probably recognized the power of Milestone's production to influence masses and rejected the particular way in which the film might shape spectators because it opposed their interests. Instead, these regimes harnessed the melodrama of interiority for their own purposes, as I shall detail in further chapters.

The melodrama of interiority can, therefore, reveal serious transformations in individuals' intimate lives at times of moral and social crisis. At the level of narrative, it reflects personal anxieties, resolves them by means of a straightforward, simplified matrix of values, and constructs a fantasy of potency. Its characters stage the nuanced tensions arising within the intimate sphere, but do not achieve the self-awareness of tragic figures. Finally, the stylized use of *mise en scène* and cinematography exploits the facile impressionability of many viewers, connecting them more intimately to the world conjured on the screen. The melodrama of interiority thus may abuse audiences' sensibilities and vulnerabilities and still appear to empower them; it also can, and did, provide authoritarian regimes with the most "innocent" and efficient means of indoctrination and social appeasement.

2005, http://www.filmcritic.com/reviews/1930/all-quiet-on-the-western-front/ (accessed September 21, 2010).

Chapter IV: Thematic Cycles, Aesthetic Tendencies, and the Melodrama of Interiority in Authoritarian Regimes

The cinemas of authoritarian France, Spain, and Romania adopted many of the thematic and aesthetic tendencies of the historical period that preceded them and, in turn, continued to influence, in form and content, the following generation of directors. The most visible departure from previous traditions, which was generated by the rise of new, often younger filmmakers, was the result of aesthetic experimentation and, I argue, of an enhanced awareness of style fostered by the need to comply with the thematic direction of the regimes. The three states relied on different strategies in order to attract large audiences. France cultivated ambiguity of content and exploited the appeal of mystery films, the glory of a mediaeval or imperial past, and the bright world of entertainment. Spain aimed at a more formulaic, repetitive cinema that became a source of escapism into the glorious past or the problem-ridden, yet comical present. Finally, Romania geared toward Hollywood and the historical epic. In all three countries, the intimate sphere came under close scrutiny in popular cinema. In France, women gained symbolic power as forces of the moral regeneration of intimate publics, but advocated for the rehabilitation of the old, traditional man-centered hierarchy of closely-knit groups. Spain defined the Catholic family as the only source of self-fulfillment, while Romania insisted that intimate publics needed to be ready for self-sacrifices in the name of the fatherland. I contend that the melodrama of interiority was one of the most commercially successful instruments used to popularize official discourse, expressed in a conventional rather than innovative form. In all cases, melodrama sought to emphasize the exceptionalism and

resilience of the nation in times of trial, but did so only with the help of spectacular *mise en scène*, cinematography, and editing. Furthermore, the source of the nation's glory and strength lay in the unity, patriarchal organization, and moral vigor of the intimate sphere.

French cinema during the German Occupation

The French films released between 1940 and 1944 continued the tradition of the 1930s popular cinema, which they linked to, rather than separated from, the post-war production.[506] The massive emigration of directors, actors, and other artists led to the emergence of a young generation of filmmakers and a new, more self-conscious style. I argue that thematic ambiguity and apparently contradictory perspectives on issues related to the three tenets of official ideology—"travail, famille, patrie"—characterized the years of the Occupation as a result of both the attempt to avoid censorship and of overlapping in social values. Nationalist impulses and ideals were common to both the Vichy order and the Resistance, which, in part, explains the similar reactions to films such as *Le Corbeau* or *Le Ciel est à vous* (*The Woman Who Dared*, 1944). Although it did include a number of films that made direct reference to the times preceding and following the 1940 debacle, the French cinema of the Occupation took refuge in detective stories and mysteries about familial origins and relationships, the literary trove and the mediaeval past, adventures in the former empire, fantasies, and the world of entertainment. I suggest that this was a cinema of economic and political survival that derived its popularity from

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[506] See Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son cinéma* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1981), 225; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 84 ; A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 263.

the need to cater to the official public sphere and the moral duty and even economic

necessity to address the underground counterpublics at the same time.

Critics have emphasized the coexistence of several aesthetic tendencies during the

four years of the authoritarian regime. Jacques Siclier rightfully noted the persistence of

poetical realism especially in the films of Christian-Jaque, but also in other titles such as

Jean Delannoy's *L'Assassin a peur la nuit* [*The Murderer Is Afraid of the Night*, 1942],

Jean Grémillon's *Lumière d'été* [*Summer Light*, 1942], Albert Valentin's *Marie-Martine*

(1942), and even Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du paradis*.[507] The term "réalisme

poétique" was initially coined in relation to Marcel Aymé's novel *La Rue sans nom* set in

the working-class streets of Paris.[508] The term became especially popular in the late

1930s, with the release of Carné's *Quai des brumes* and *Le Jour se lève* (*Daybreak*,

1939). Dudley Andrew underscores the wide success of these films abroad, particularly

in the United States where they were perceived as an expression of "maturity of content

and execution"; their atmospheric rendering of reality was viewed in opposition to

Hollywood's affinity for spectacle.[509] As several scholars have noted, poetical realism

was not a movement with a mission, as was the case with Surrealism or Impressionism,

but a critical label applied post-factum to series of cinematic works centered on working-

class individuals at odds with their destinies, whose struggles became symbolical of

larger human truths and were conveyed by means of stylized photography of German

Expressionist influence, surrealist editing techniques, evocative interiors and sets, and

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[507] I will use square brackets for the translations of film titles that I supply; when the film title has been officially translated into English, I will use parenteses.

[508] See Dudley Andrew, "Introduction: A Compass in the Mist of Poetic Realism," in *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11.

[509] Ibid., 13.

refined, poetical language.[510] Discussing the characteristics of poetical realism in Carné's

oeuvre, Edward Baron Turk suggests that the aim of the texts was to "illuminate the

invisible lying within the normally visible world"; to that end, social milieu was a pretext

for creating the mood of the film, while the play on shades of light and dark represented

implacable fate.[511] Alan Williams sees similar preoccupations in the work of several

directors, especially Carné, Julien Duvivier, Jean Grémillon, and Pierre Chenal, and

scriptwriters, such Jacques Prévert, Charles Spaak, Marcel Aymé, and Marcel Achard.[512]

The association of this type of cinema with the individual's inability to emerge victorious

in his or her other struggles led to the banning of these films by the German and Vichyist

authorities. The poetical realist filmmakers had to disguise or forsake their 1930s

thematic preoccupations in order to survive, both economically and artistically, during

the Occupation.

Three major coordinates have been used to define the 1930s poetical realism: its

dominant theme (fatality), its character types (working class loners), and its style

(realistic, though well-studied, carefully designed sets and expressive, atmospheric

cinematic construction). I contend that, in Vichy France, this last trait of poetical realism

was popularized and divorced from the other two "ingredients"; it became the "natural"

characteristic of mystery and detective films, but was employed to create the dark mood

of historical or fantasy films as well.[513] Colin Crisp also extends the period of poetical

realist influence to include the 1940s decade and suggests that, although the directors

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[510] See Andrew, "Introduction," 12; A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 233; Edward Baron Turk, *Child of Paradise: Marcel Carné and the Golden Age of French Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 109; Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 156-157.

[511] Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 104-110.

[512] A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 232-233.

[513] I will suggest that neorealism had a similar fate in Spain and Romania: it influenced style more than content.

were responsible for the final effects of *mise en scène* and cinematography, this tendency

of French cinema can be more easily associated with set designers, such as Lazare

Meerson, Georges Wahkevitch, Léon Barsacq, and Alexandre Trauner, and

cinematographers, such as Armand Thirard and Jules Kruger.[514] With few exceptions,

these professionals continued to work in the early 1940s. It was not by chance, therefore,

that films such as Henri Decoin's *Les Inconnu dans la maison* (cinematography by Jules

Kruger), Jean Delannoy's *L'Assassin a peur la nuit* (production design by Georges

Wahkevitch), Carné's *Les Enfants du paradis* (production design by Léon Barsacq and

Alexandre Trauner), or Grémillon's *Remorques* (*Stormy Waters*, 1941, production design

by Alexandre Trauner; cinematography by Armand Thirard) and *Lumière d'été*

(production design by Alexandre Trauner; art direction by Léon Barsacq) were among

Siclier's titles of poetical realist works made during the Vichy. These popular titles only

continued the artists' interest in selecting the representative elements of décor and the

most effective rapport between shadow and light in order to indicate individuals' struggle

against higher forces than themselves. There were also numerous cases in which specific

elements of poetical realism infused films of various narrative interests in order to elicit

an almost standardized interpretation of character and situation. Thus, a former space of

personal comfort, such as one's own room, becomes the immediate symbol for the

perfect trap in Clouzot's *Le Corbeau*, when Marie Corbin (Héléna Manson), the chief

nurse suspected of authoring the infamous "raven" letters, is at the point of being

lynched in her narrow and austere bedroom; the living-room, and the ominous street light

penetrating through venetian blinds into this former site of familial concord, is also

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[514] See Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 320-321, 372-373, 382-383.

indexed as a trap in Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous*, when Pierre Gauthier (Charles Varnel) is menaced by the growing crowd of townspeople who see him responsible for his wife's disappearance; and even the small store in André Cayatte's *Au Bonheur des dames* could become the source of misfortune in spite of the unfortunate owner gone bankrupt Baudu's (Michel Simon) attempts to defend it against the invasion of creditors, the police, and the curious crowd outside. The stairs, another privileged space in poetical realism, represented one of the chosen sites of symbolical turmoil, whether of emotion, as is the case with doctor Germain (Pierre Fresnay) visiting his patient, Denise (Ginette Leclerc) in *Le Corbeau*, or of conviction and loyalty, as in the case of Maurice Tourneur's *La Main du diable*, in which a man attempted to stop the unsuccessful painter from selling his soul to the devil.

Cinematography and lighting also continued the style of poetical realism. Tilted camera angles indicating an out-of-the-ordinary situation or a character's inner state of confusion appeared in all types of films, from the detective *Goupi Mains Rouges* (*It Happened at the Inn*, 1943), to the melodramatic *Le Paradis perdu* (*Four Flights to Love*, 1940), and to the playful fantasy *La Nuit fantastique* (*Fantastic Night*, 1942). Probably the most widespread element of poetical realist influence was the use of lighting to increase the secrecy surrounding protagonists' actions, motivations, and character, and to suggest ill-omened events and decisions. Half-lit close-ups, shadows blocking spectators' view to suspicious deeds or cast menacingly across rooms and faces, and foggy settings and apparitions were especially frequent in mystery, detective, and melodramatic films, but they could also surface in lighter genres. The use of a sole key-light on the heroine's eyes at the moment when she is contemplating revealing her feelings to the much

younger man who has tried to commit suicide for her in Léo Joannon's *Lucrèce* (1943);

the projected profile of the cross and the singing monk in Jean Delannoy's *Fièvres*

[*Fever*, 1942]; and the misty rain and deep darkness surrounding the journalists'

discovery of the crime site in Richard Pottier's *La Ferme aux loups* are only a few

examples in which light was used to transcend the immediate reality of the image.

Most films of the Occupation continued the 1930s preference for unproblematic

storytelling, reassuring life situations and characters, and continuity editing; they relied

on recognizable aesthetics and a new star system to attract audiences. Commenting on the

differences between Hollywood and classical French cinema, Ginette Vincendeau claims

that the latter was first and foremost an "art of spectacle" in that it foregrounded sound,

image, montage, and performance at the expense of narrative integration.[515] I suggest

that, during the Occupation, poetical realism persisted primarily in its technical aspects,

which it employed in the service of a more popular cinema, as an addition to, and not a

disruption of, the classical style of linear narrative and sutured montage. Poetical realist

mise en scène, cinematography, and lighting were often the means to make visible the

torments and transformations of the intimate sphere.

A number of films displayed, according to Evelyn Ehrlich's analysis, two formal

tendencies: one toward "pictorialism" and the other toward "literariness."[516] They

contributed to a cinema of distance, in which characters and events were observed with

detachment rather than emotional engagement. Insisting on the construction of images,

pictorialism combined long shots, rapid camera movement, and symmetrical or off-angle

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[515] Ginette Vincendeau, "The Art of Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Classical French Cinema," in Temple and Witt, *The French Cinema Book*, 138.
[516] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 97-98.

framing; it did not express characters' subjectivity and shied away from involving viewers into the plot.[517] *Les Visiteurs du soir* (*The Devil's Envoys*, 1942), *Le Baron fantôme* (*The Phantom Baron*, 1943), and *La Main du diable* are Ehrlich's examples in support of this tendency. The "literary" film foregrounded the word and "poetic language," but, in spite of the high number of adaptations, it did not depend exclusively on filmed literature. Ehrlich enumerates *Lumière d'été*, *La Duchesse de Langeais* (*Wicked Duchess*, 1942), and *Pontcarral, colonel d'empire* (1942) as exemplary of this second cinematic inclination.[518] This "artistry" of images and words functioned, therefore, as a filter that mediated between spectators and subject. Although Ehrlich's definitions are very efficient in the case of several films, there are still other titles that bridge the gap between these two categories, such as *L'éternel retour* (*The Eternal Return*, 1943) or *La Nuit fantastique*, or that cannot be easily integrated in either group, such as *Le Corbeau* or *Le Ciel est à vous*. Ehrlich's emphasis on the preponderance of form over content supports Vincendeau's argument that spectacle rather than narrative was the major thrust of classical French cinema. However, the censorship of films such as *La Fille du puisatier*, *Carmen*, or *Félicie Nanteuil* (*Twilight*, 1945) and the debates that surrounded others, such as *La Symphonie fantastique*, *Pontcarral*, or even *Les Visiteurs du soir*, entitle me to suggest that authorities were also concerned with the implications of the plot. Style transformations were necessary as a camouflage of dissident intentions, where these existed, but they did not necessarily detract viewers from a direct, personal engagement with the subject of these films; quite the contrary, a markedly stylized film was very likely to produce public reaction when it was perceived to express a political

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[517] Ibid., 98.
[518] Ibid.

view, as happened with *Les Visiteurs du soir*.[519] Scholars largely agree on the parallel existence of two major aesthetic preoccupations: one that continued the commercially successful classical cinema of the 1930s and one that emphasized artistry and a new stylistic approach.[520] I believe, however, that style was functional in the sense that it served to produce either an escapist cinema or to hide possible political comments and intentions.

Critics also enumerate a number of genres as characteristic of the Occupation. Thus, Roger Régent defined the cinema of the period as "escapist" because it consisted mainly of detective films and sentimental comedies.[521] Evelyn Ehrlich mentioned comedies, mystery films, musicals, and adaptations as dominant during the regime.[522] More recently, Ginette Vincendeau has listed comedies, romances, musicals, thrillers, and costume films as characteristic for the entire period between 1930 and 1960.[523] These considerations indicate the genres' relative constancy on the film market in spite of the different changes in the political regime.

I consider that an overview of the representative genres of Vichy cinema, while useful, may be misleading because it obscures the changes that did occur between 1940 and 1944. Although the genres remained the same, the thematic preoccupations that dominated the cinema of the Occupation responded to its ideological peculiarities. Each film had to fulfill two criteria: to be economically profitable and politically irreproachable. These two principles, however, were difficult to separate, especially

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[519] Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 142-144; 149-150; A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 259, 321.

[520] See Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 94-101; A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 263-267; Roger Régent, *Cinéma de France de "La Fille du Puisatier" aux "Enfants du Paradis"* (Paris: Editions d'Aujourd'hui, 1948), 83; Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 384.

[521] Régent, *Cinéma de France*, 23.

[522] Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 87.

[523] Vincendeau, "The Art of Spectacle," 138.

starting with 1942, when the increasing popular dissatisfaction with the foreign

occupation led to a perceivable conflict of intentions among the Propagandaabteilung, its

direct representatives in the French film industry, and the French filmmakers and

audiences.[524] To be released, a film had to pass the political censorship; to generate

income and give its director a chance for a future production, it had to address the

expectations of its audiences. The most commercially successful films of the time sought

to avoid any clear political standing and appease viewers' anxieties and concerns. Three

main narrative concerns characterized the Occupation cinema: an interest in mystery; a

preference for the reconstruction of the real or imaginary past; and an attention to

present-day struggles for emotional and spiritual fulfillment with a special focus on the

world of entertainment. I suggest that, at the root of most of the texts was the threat posed

to the family and the community by an individual's misplaced affections, passions, greed,

and dubious relationships with outsiders. Plots centered on the turmoil provoked by self-

absorbed figures, but reinforced the need for the recognition and reintegration of the

rightful group member, the "re-education" or elimination of the agent of disruption, and

the further isolation of intimate publics against all other possible intrusions.

Probably the most relevant distinction between the 1930s and the Occupation

cinema was the conspicuous increase in the popularity of films constructed around a

mysterious event or identity.[525] I argue that, set at the core of a small town, a group of

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[524] A relevant example in this sense is the release of Christian-Jaque's *La Symphonie fantastique*. Produced by Continental Films and, therefore, under the supervision of Alfred Greven, one of the major representatives of the German authorities in Paris, the film was severely criticized by Goebbels and was one of the issues of dispute between him and Greven. Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 140-141.

[525] I am thankful to Prof. Alan Williams for suggesting this aspect for investigation. According to Colin Crisp's classification of films in order of their commercial success, at least eight out of the first twenty most popular titles developed around a puzzle to be solved. Colin Crisp, "Occupation Films (September

close friends, or a family, the enigma revolves around a past trespassing on the trust and affection of an intimate other, a deed that threatens to contaminate the present community. In Christian-Jaque's *L'Assassinat du Père Noël* (*Who Killed Santa Claus?* 1941), an adaptation of a novel by Pierre Véry, a mountain village searches for the thief who has ruined the Christmas fête. His identity as a murderer is disclosed by the suffering woman whose presence haunts the streets, the church, and even several houses. For money, Ricomet (Jean Brochard), the pharmacist, once assassinated the man loved by this unhappy woman and is now on the prowl again. Symbolically, his attack on "Father Christmas," whether the Santa Claus costume is worn by the congenial toy-maker or the newly-returned baron, is an assault against both old and new order, but not one intended as a reform. The film opens toward a possible criticism of the Vichy and German alliance—the toymaker's daughter will marry the young aristocrat—but also shies away from it by giving Ricomet no other motivation than greed. Through this ambiguous position, *L'Assassinat* catered both to the censors, who were satisfied with the restoration of patriarchal tranquility, and to the counterpublic audiences, who could interpret the small village as a reduced version of isolated, occupied France. In Serge de Poligny's costume mystery *Le Baron fantôme*, the riddle surrounds the identity and fortune of the man desired by the two young women who had been raised together. The secret, which implies a breach of trust between brother and sister (i.e. the baron and the mother of one of the girls) may lead to a possibly incestuous marriage between two cousins. The intruding stranger—the "phantom baron"—is not a stranger after all, but positioned at the very heart of the close group living in and around his castle. I suggest that the threat

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1940-July 1944)" (lecture, "French Film under the German Occupation" Conference, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, October 1996).

against private and intimate publics comes from within their ranks, appears to be solved by the elimination of the originating agent, but is followed by a "ghost" that lingers on, whether as the woman whose life cannot be "repaired" in *L'Assassinat du Père Noël* or the unconvincingly sudden change in affections in *Le Baron fantôme.*

The third most popular film of the Occupation, Jacques Becker's *Goupi Mains-Rouges*, might have prompted viewers to analyze the familial conflicts generated within the enclosed space of a village as a reflection of national turmoil, as was also the case in Christian-Jaque's work.[526] Jean Renoir's assistant on *Les bas-fonds* (*The Lower Depths*, 1936), *La grande illusion*, and *La Marseillaise* (1938), Becker was a Left activist who returned to work only in 1941, when he came back from a prisoner-of-war camp; his opposition to the regime was, therefore, a reality.[527] *Goupi Mains-Rouges* was produced by Minerva Films, a private company associated with one of the COIC members, Roland Tual. Although the film had official support, it nevertheless had to pass the censorship that had criticized the "defeatist" spirit of the 1930s, so the director balanced the austere, Zolaesque atmosphere of the text with an optimistic denouement, thereby satisfying both the official appetite for reinforced authority and the counterpublics' hopes for a change in leadership. *Goupi Mains-Rouges* was an adaptation of a novel by Pierre Véry and had the ingredients of a mystery narrative, but insisted, as scholars have emphasized, on character and milieu.[528] The Goupi family, in which each member has an appropriate nickname, is afflicted by the paralysis of its patriarch, L'Empereur ("The Emperor"), the murder of its

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[526] For the classification of the film, see Crisp, "Occupation Films"; for audiences' possible perception of the plot, see A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 259.

[527] See A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 316; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 126.

[528] See A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 317; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 127; Noël Burch and Geneviève Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre des sexes du cinéma français (1930-1956)* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005), 160.

authoritarian matriarch, Goupi-Tisane ("Goupi-Teaspoon"), and the secrecy regarding the

treasure that ensures their ascendancy over the other villagers. Alan Williams suggests

that images of immobilization, such as L'Empereur's, were recurrent motifs in the Vichy

cinema and symbolized the possible disintegration of the body politic.[529] Goupi-Tonkin, a

former soldier in the colonies who feels marginalized by the family and rejected by the

woman he desires, is eventually revealed as the assassin: in a fit of rage at Tisane's

bestial whipping of one of the servants, the slow-witted, but gentle Jean, Tonkin kills her

on the spot, stealing the money she has collected from their village debtors. The

"detective" is Goupi Mains-Rouges ("Red Hands"), another peripheral figure in the

family who bears them a grudge for having once refused his marriage to Goupi La Belle

("The Beautiful"), which led her to commit suicide. This wise, non-violent, yet contested

member of the group defends Goupi Monsieur ("The Gentleman"), the young Parisian

salesman unjustly accused of the murder and isolated from the woman he loves, Goupi

Muguet ("Lily of the Valley"). Burch and Sellier emphasize the uniqueness of these two

mild-mannered men in the early 1940s cinema: in most other cases, softness and

moderation were signs of weakness in men, but Mains-Rouges' and Monsieur's self-

restraint and patience became the conditions for their higher capacity to understand and

judge others.[530] Like Christian-Jaque, Becker constructs a universe expressive of the

tensions and survival struggles of the Occupation and offers a consistent justification of

the events, promoting a patriarchy established on a different basis than force and

submission.

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[529] A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 265.
[530] Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre*, 160.

As in most other mystery films, the aggressor in Becker's film is a member of the group, possibly tainted by greed, but ultimately motivated to act by the injustice he witnesses. Tonkin's nostalgia for the colonies, his attempts to force Muguet into a relationship with him, and his scheming to appropriate the missing money suggest that he is not one of the reforming agents of the family, in spite of his momentary identification with Jean. Tonkin wants it all: the woman to whom he is attracted, the power others have refused him, and the riches that eluded him in the empire abroad. He symbolically embodies a frustrated, colonial past that haunts the family, so he must be eliminated to make room for the "new order" of Mains-Rouges and Monsieur.[531] In spite of Tonkin's suicide, the apparent happy ending is still haunted by several "ghosts": the fatherly Mains-Rouges too easily smoothes over a conflict that has lasted for a good number of years; Monsieur gives up the modern life of Paris, which he so much appreciated at the beginning, to "return to the soil" and to a life his father has imagined for him; and the seed of possible future conflict—the Goupi's hidden treasure—continues to tick its way into the new generation.[532] Becker's text had, therefore, a double address because it reflected the hopes of both Vichyist officials and the right-wing Resistance for a return to an orderly, patriarchal society. I suggest that this film, like others, centered on the elucidation of a mystery, raised viewers' doubts about the consistency and unity of intimate publics, reinforced the necessity for a patriarchal power system as the only guarantor of individual and group stability, and postponed any fully satisfactory answers

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[531] Commenting on the origins of World War I, Hannah Arendt suggests that, when the new generation of bourgeois businessmen and entrepreneurs no longer managed to find their place on the colonial market, they had no choice but to return to Europe, which underwent a process of reorganization of its internal markets and power hierarchies; this situation led to World War I, of which World War II was merely a consequence. Tonkin is the very incarnation of this latter middle class thwarted in its ambitions and dreams by the end of colonial expansion. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* 126-138, 144-145.

[532] The treasure consists of gold that has been melted into the hands of the old pendulum in the living-room.

to viewers' queries about the characters' and, implicitly, their own experiences during the Vichy regime.

The melodrama of interiority, which permeated almost all the thematic cycles of the French cinema during the Occupation, also explored the individual's incapacity for truthful and durable relationships. As was the case in the United States, the definition of film melodrama was broad enough to include a film like *Alerte en Méditeranée* (*S.O.S. Mediterranean*, 1938, dir. Léo Joannon), an action melodrama featuring three officers of different national origin who worked together to save another boat.[533] Although, as critics have noted, the Occupation cinema continued to explore the "war" between the sexes that had appeared in the 1930s films,[534] it was most revealing of the nature, evolution, and possible outcome of this conflict in melodramas of interiority. Whether centered around the couple (*Remorques*, *Douce* [*Love Story*, 1943], or *Lucrèce*) or exploring the emotional transformation of small, well-determined communities (*Les Anges du péché*, *Le Voile bleu*, or *Le Corbeau*), these films insisted on the disintegration of intimate publics as a result of the restructuring of power relation in favor of women.

Burch and Sellier identify two major types of characters: the castrated father and the energetic, regenerative woman.[535] They suggest that, following the defeat, ideas of masculinity entered a crisis that was expressed through male figures of weakness, impotence, and motherliness. Women gained symbolic power as representatives of the national moral regeneration and, unlike men, were active, ready to make their own

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[533] Siclier considers this film a "mélodrame maritime," a naval melodrama. Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 71.

[534] Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre*, 124.

[535] Ibid., 88-89.

destinies [536] Nevertheless, I argue that women employed their forces in support of patriarchy, in contradictory plots that both highlighted their ethical and affective superiority, and suggested that individual and group fulfillment could only come from the rehabilitation of the traditional, man-centered power structure of intimate publics, an idea also promoted in Spanish and Romanian films made under non-democratic regimes. The "renewal" proposed by these films was merely a simulation and its most disturbing effect was the emergence of a restless young generation, a source of potential trouble and conflict in the Occupation films.

Many mystery films revolved around an enigma connected to a trauma at the heart of a family; thus, *Les Inconnus dans la maison* examined the estrangement between a father and his daughter caused by the mother's death, while *La Ferme aux loups* emphasized the outcome of a long-term brother rivalry. In spite of such intrusions into the intimate sphere, most of these films remained within the range of action melodrama because they did not focus on the affective and relational intricacies experienced in the aftermath of distressful events, but rather followed, in a detective manner, the external clashes among different characters and the "clues" that could "solve" the puzzle. A few of the films in this category, however, concentrated on the search for emotional clarity, as well. Thus, *Marie-Martine* exposed Maurice's (Bernard Blier) pursuit both of the secrets surrounding his prospective wife's past and of the love that could bring them together. *Le Corbeau* explored the mystery surrounding the identity of the "Raven" who sent out poisonous letters and investigated the relationships involving doctor Rémy Germain (Pierre Fresnay), perceived as an intruder by the small town where he lived.

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[536] Ibid., 15-16, 87-102.

In 1917, Angèle Laval started a letter campaign against the small town of Tulle and her idea was picked up by other town-dwellers; the epidemics of rumors that broke out would become the setting for a 1932 script.[537] In 1943, Henri-Georges Clouzot turned the story into one of the most financially successful and controversial films of the Occupation.[538] After the Battle of Stalingrad ended in February 1943, when it became obvious that the Germans would lose the war, the voices of dissent within the occupied territories became louder. *Le Corbeau* was the perfect product of a complicated historical context: Greven's desire to promote a positive face of the French-German collaboration through quality rather than propaganda products, the director's critical look at a society pervaded by the "pourissement moral" of denunciations, and the possible end of the war, all contributed their share to the film's success.[539] *Le Corbeau* opens with the words, "Une petite ville, ici ou ailleurs…" ("A small town, here or elsewhere…"), followed by a high-angle extreme long shot pan of a graveyard and its church steeple; as the camera then tracks along the columns surrounding the churchyard, viewers are lured into the town, as possible witnesses of the events. Isolated from the outside world and raised to the level of an exemplary social model by the randomness with which it was "selected" as the setting for the film, this community appears under the strict scrutiny of the Church and its religious values. It is, as one soon understands, an ironic commentary on the moral dissolution revealed by the anonymous letter-writer.

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[537] Louis Chavance's script, ready in 1932 and submitted to the Société des Auteurs de Films in 1937 under the title *L'Oeil de Serpent*, found initial funding from UFA, but was eventually denied it when the denunciation of letter-writing was seen as too severe. Judith Mayne, *Le Corbeau (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1943)* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 56-57.

[538] Crisp ranks it as the sixth most popular film of the time. Crisp, "Most Popular Films."

[539] Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 237. Clouzot was, probably, attracted to the subject because of the 1940s ongoing campaigns against Jews, Communists, and Freemasons conducted by the French, initially without the specific requirement of the Germans, but, eventually, at their orders, as I have already noted in a previous chapter.

Three families begin to unravel at the seams with the arrival of Germain, but for different, albeit interconnected, reasons. The "incestuous" relationship between Dr. Michel Vorzet (Pierre Larquey) and his much younger wife, Laura (Micheline Francey), comes under great stress when Laura is attracted to her husband's younger colleague. Laura's sister, Marie Corbin (Héléna Manson), is outraged, especially as she still has feelings for her one-time fiancé, Dr. Vorzet. Exposed by her own husband as the "Raven," Laura is eventually committed to an insane asylum. The second family that undergoes several transformations is that of Denise (Ginette Leclerc), a cripple, young woman, Rolande, her teenage niece (Liliane Maigné), and Saillens (Noël Roquevert), Denise's brother and Rolande's father, who is also a schoolteacher. Both Denise and Rolande fall for Germain and both are suspected to have spread the rumors about the town's corruption by writing under the "Raven" pseudonym. The third close relationship depicted summarily, but central to the plot, is that between François (Roger Blin), a patient dying of cancer, and his mother (Sylvie). François commits suicide when one of the Raven's notes discloses to him his real health situation, so his mother goes on a hunt for the writer and kills Vorzet at the end of the film. Women appear, therefore, different from what the villagers consider them to be: Laura's irrationality, Marie's crippling infatuation with Vorzet, Denise's capacity for loyalty, or the mother's strength gradually become visible to the viewers as the possible sources of the community's inner strife.

Desire, jealousy, and envy break these intimate publics apart, but, beyond the immediate causes, Clouzot's argument becomes more complicated. *Le Corbeau* was among the very few films to depict the middle class, which, as I have suggested in a previous chapter, was the class that formed the bureaucratic apparatus of Vichy, but that

was also joining the Resistance in large numbers.[540] When the film opens, Germain, the representative of the upper middle class, is suspected of abortionist practices. By contrast with him, the town's middle-class values are authoritarian: the anti-abortionist stance threatens lives and surface respectability is to be upheld at all costs.[541] Germain's "intrusion" into the enclosed community unveils the corruption and decay hidden under the middle-class public discourse of religious and moral responsibility. I suggest that the major male characters disclose the controlling social system, as well as the discrepancy between women's desires and inclinations, and the society's expectations of them. This tension threatens to fragment the small village community, but Germain's openness to change may restore its apparent, if not profound, harmony. Germain is ready, at least, to hear what Denise has to say.

Like many other films of the Occupation, however, *Le Corbeau* refuses a straightforward conclusion. The alliance established between a more malleable middle class, represented by Germain, and an honest working class, embodied in Denise, is not necessarily the solution for a better future. In the final scene of the film, Germain, once bothered by children's voices in the schoolyard, opens the window so that Denise, lying in bed, could enjoy the fresh air. I suggest that the intimate sphere established between Germain and Denise is threatened by the prospect of children. Clouzot constantly indicated that the youngest generation, for lack of attention and love and in spite of the fascist and Vichyist ideologies which placed children and the family at the center of society, might turn out worse than their parents. The children are especially disturbing: a

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[540] See also A. Williams, *Republic of Images,* 269.
[541] In one of the scenes, the hospital manager, using one of the anonymous letters, confronts the institution accountant about embezzlement, but withdraws his accusations immediately because he is also attacked for having an inappropriate relationship with the accountant's daughter.

toddler hides Germain's letter and lies to him; furthermore, Rolande steals money from the post office, snoops around everybody, and hysterically breaks into tears at the attention the doctor pays to her aunt. I argue that *Le Corbeau* raised doubts about possible alliences between different publics and demythified the middle-class family, the former site of presupposed unity and emotional support, but did not replace it with a credible new ideal of intimate publics. Women were no longer the keepers of community cohesion, but possible agents of change. Intimate publics seemed to form, but theirs was a tentative and insecure bonding.

The film's reception went through several changes: the initial collaborationist press, with few exceptions, praised it for the realism with which it approached the "unhealthy climate of crisis" in the small village or the "unknown aspects of the interior hell that everyone fed on with constant and innocent ferociousness"[542]; where the dissonance among the regime's critical figures existed, it was mainly the expression of a more fervent fascism.[543] Parallel to the official press, the underground left-wing *L'Écran Français* lambasted *Le Corbeau*, which it compared to Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous* in a famous article entitled "*Le Corbeau* est déplumé":

> … [A]ux estropiés, aux amoraux, aux corrompus qui déshonorent, dans *Le Corbeau*, une de nos villes de province, *Le Ciel est à vous* oppose des personnages pleins de sève française, de courage authentique, de santé morale, où nous retrouvons une vérité nationale qui ne veut pas et ne peut pas mourir.[544]

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[542] Judith Mayne quotes from the official film magazine of COIC, *Le Film*, and from the equally collaborationist *Miroir de l'Écran* in order to suggest that, indirectly, these film critics expressed their dissatisfaction with the Occupation. Mayne, *Le Corbeau*, 71.

[543] For example, Judith Mayne emphasizes François Vinneuil's discomfort that the otherwise "normal" practice of letter-writing was given such a negative presentation and suggests it was a measure of his impossibility to fully engage with the film. Mayne, *Le Corbeau*, 72.

[544] Olivier Barrot, "Clandestinité, 1943-1944," in *L'Écran français, 1943-1953: Histoire d'un journal et d'une époque* (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Reunis, 1979), 14-15. Barrot quotes at length from "*Le Corbeau* est déplumé," the article written by Georges Adam and Pierre Blanchar in the first issue of *L'Écran Français* (included in the fourteenth issue of *Les Lettres Françaises*).

> To the cripple, to the amoral, the corrupted which dishonor, in *Le Corbeau*, one of
> our provincial towns, *Le Ciel est à vous* opposes characters full of French sap, of
> true courage, of moral health, in whom we rediscover a national truth which will
> not and cannot die.[545]

The article was soon to become important in the condemnation of Clouzot, Pierre

Fresnay, and Ginette Leclerc by the CRIE (Comité régional interprofessionnel

d'épuration) immediately after the end of the war. In spite of letters in favor of Clouzot

by important left-wingers such as Prévert, Pierre Bost, Simone de Beauvoir, Henri

Jeanson, Jacques Becker, or René Clair; in spite of the fact that the script had existed long

before the Occupation; and, in spite of Clouzot's secret help for the members of the

Resistance and Jews (one of the people he protected was Le Chanois), he was suspended

from work for two years. *Le Corbeau* was later rehabilitated and has become one of the

most critically and popularly appreciated French films of all times.

Overall, the mystery films that incorporated many of the elements of the

melodrama of interiority suggested that private and intimate groupings suffered from

inner turmoil caused by a change in the rapport between sexes, generations, and classes.

Women were depicted as strong characters, ready to take action, including sacrificing

themselves, in order to achieve their goals. Their success often depended on their support

for the nation and was achieved with the help of young men. Denise and Marie-Martine

are exhonerated and become the loyal partners of the men who support them, but who are

themselves unlikely hero figures, in spite of their good detective skills. Neither Germain,

nor Maurice possessed great physical powers or extraordinary courage; nor were they

stern, uncompromising patriarchs. Nevertheless, these two men did have the type of

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[545] Barrot, "Clandestinité, 1943-1944," 14-15, quoted in Christopher Faulkner, "Critical Debate and the Construction of Society," in Temple and Witt, *The French Cinema Book*, 176.

honor claimed by both Pétainists and the Resistance: they prized loyalty and defended family integrity above all else.

If films that centered on a mystery reproduced and, possibly, reinforced audiences' anxiety regarding their affective commitments, the cinema that focused on rewriting the past sought to stimulate viewers' self-confidence and self-esteem by appealing to, or inventing, figures that could inspire national pride and solidarity. A second impulse of the historical film was to encourage viewers' nostalgia for the glory hours of Napoleon Bonaparte's rule by revealing the political, social, and, especially, emotional instability that followed in the aftermath of the Empire. Finally, the fantastic at the core of another class of historical films posed a real threat to the unity of affect within intimate groups.

The historical film can be immediately identified by the details—of *mise en scène*, costume, gesture, behavior, and language, etc.—that place the action at a specific moment in the more or less recent past. Pierre Sorlin notes that, in addition to such details, each community shares a specific "historical capital," which includes dates, events, and characters that are part of that specific group and are easily identifiable by its members.[546] Furthermore, many, though not all, historical films combine references to actual events, occurrences, and personalities with fabricated stories, thereby contributing to the public reinvention of the past.[547] In the case of the French historical film exploring the life of identifiable or imaginary national heroes and heroines, the detailed narrative that gave them birth was essential to their reception. Christian-Jaque's *La Symphonie*

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[546] Pierre Sorlin, "How to Look at an 'Historical Film,'" in *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*, ed. Marcia Landy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 37.
[547] Sorlin, "How to Look at an 'Historical Film,'" 38.

fantastique, Louis Cuny's *Mermoz* (1943), or Jean Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous* center

on individuals of exemplary destiny, whose talents, courage, and open defiance of social

or practical barriers could render them symbolic of the nation's creativity and endurance.

La Symphonie fantastique glorified the life of one of France's beloved composers, Hector

Berlioz, following his rise from a medical student attracted to music to a respected

patriarch and member of the French Academy. The film, ranked by Crisp among the ten

most popular in 1942 and thirty-eighth in audiences' preferences for the entire

Occupation period,[548] provoked a scandal between Greven, the Francophile director of

the film's producing company, Continental, and Goebbels, who disagreed with the

work's nationalist tone because he considered it too inspirational to others. Referring

directly to Christian-Jaque's film, the Minister of Propaganda famously wrote in his

journal:

> I am angry to think that our offices in Paris are teaching the French how to
> represent nationalism in pictures. . . . I ordered Greven to come to Berlin from
> Paris, to give him absolutely clear and unmistakable directives to the effect that
> for the moment, so far as the French are concerned, only light, frothy and, if
> possible corny pictures are desired. No doubt the French people will be satisfied
> with that too. There is no reason why we should cultivate their nationalism.[549]

Beyond Goebbels' haughty remarks, there was a real concern that cinema could stir

unwanted emotional reactions from the occupied population, thereby generating

opposition to the German forces and intentions. Berlioz's history was perceived as

directly addressing counterpublics and, instead of rallying them in support of the

occupier, it reminded them of their difference and uniqueness. However, the film cannot

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[548] Colin Crisp, "Most Popular Films of the Occupation Years by Year of Release" (paper, "French Film under the German Occupation" Conference, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, October 1996).
[549] Joseph Goebbels, *Diaries 1942-1943*, ed. and trans. Louis Lochner (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 148), 215, qtd. in Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 141.

be easily dismissed as a mouthpiece for the Resistance. The composer's final triumph and his son's recognition are only possible as a result of the constant self-effacement of the woman who loved him and who, eventually, dies alone. Generational and, symbolically, national harmony require women's emotional and physical sacrifice, an idea shared by both Pétainists and members of the Resistance.

Thérèse Gauthier, in *Le Ciel est à vous*, was more successful in seducing the audiences because this character confronted the Pétainist ideology according to which women's place was at home, in charge of the household and children.[550] Thérèse and Pierre have to move their repair shop into the town when they are expropriated so that a new airfield can be built. When Pierre, a former pilot, re-ignites his passion for flying, his wife tries to keep him at a distance from the new airfield only to fall herself in love with the planes. Using all their family savings, the two plan for Thérèse to break the record of flying in a straight line, but, having launched herself in the exploit, she disappears from all radars. Her mother, the family friends, and the town-dwellers blame Pierre for his disregard of family duties, but, when Thérèse finally reappears victorious, everybody praises the couple's courage and celebrates her as a heroine. The film, thus, reinforced the desire for order among the middle classes, a desire that was now expressed not only by Pétain, but also by de Gaulle.[551] Produced by Raoul Ploquin, who had also worked with other left-wing artists such as Charles Spaak and Robert Bresson, Grémillon's film appeared at a most turbulent time, when the upcoming "death" of Vichy was looming at the same time as the regime encouraged even stricter vigilantism and the Germans raised

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[550] Colin Crisp ranks Grémillon's film fourth in popularity in 1943 and thirteenth in the overall classification of Occupation cinema. Crisp, "Most Popular Films" and "Occupation Films."
[551] See Paxton, *Vichy France*, 326-327.

their demands on the French. The social unrest and the increasingly felt presence of the Resistance seemed to be propitious conditions for the release of a film that would echo the nation's aspiration to freedom. Thérèse takes the freedom to pursue her own aspirations outside the family confines and to find, through her new passion, the fulfillment of sexual desire that might have escaped her before.[552] The heroine is the symbolical representative of a politically disenfranchised category, so her opposition to the official discourse of women's domesticity and meekness becomes an expression of the counterpublics' resistance to the regime.

The film, however, is also haunted by the presence of a group of orphans, who play on the airfield, march by as Thérèse and Pierre's children talk alone and abandoned in the family's garrage, cross the street when Pierre returns with bad news for the family, and walk toward the horizon at the end, when everybody is busy celebrating the heroine's return. The lonely children in *Le Ciel est à vous* repress their desires and even their revolt, a situation that does not announce a future happy nation.[553] I suggest that this neglected young generation undermines the otherwise heroic discourse of the narrative, pointing to an imminent rupture within the family's intimate sphere as a result of the mother's ambition and the father's meekness. The couple's children are emotionally crippled by their parents' self-absorption and passions.

Similarly to the discourse of mystery films, historical films centered on the outstanding destinies of French men and women reflect anxieties regarding the solidarity

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[552] Thérèse has an overtly sexual epiphany at the end of her first flight, which motivates her to take up flying.

[553] Thérèse severely admonishes her son for a minor mistake; furthermore, she and her husband use their daughter's dowry and even sell her beloved piano in order to pay for their plan. The young girl does not dare complain to her parents, but finds a close friend in her piano teacher, the only one who seems able to resonate with her.

and endurance of close relationships. Again, the "threat" to intimate publics comes from within their ranks and continues to haunt protagonists' apparently unproblematic accomplishments. These films performed, therefore, a double function: they promoted visions of self-fulfillment, but undermined them with suggestions of possible alienating effects within intimate groups. The more viewers sought reassurance, the more they obtained uncertainty and doubt under the guise of triumph. The individual's dismissal of personal aspirations in favor of duty to family and community unity appeared as the solution to such concerns.

Characters' emotional commitments are equally undermined in historical films that investigated the social transformations accompanying the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. The register of these texts was markedly melodramatic, from René Le Hénaff's *Le Colonel Chabert* (1943) and Jacques de Baroncelli's *La Duchesse de Langeais*, both adapted from Balzac's oeuvre, to Robert Vernay's *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (1943), an adventure melodrama based on Alexandre Dumas's famous text, and Jean Delannoy's *Pontcarral, colonel d'Empire*, from a novel by Alberic Cahuet. Bonaparte's adventurous life was also the subject of less popular comedies such as Roger Richebé's *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1941), in which an intelligent woman manages to save her friends' lives by word and wit, or Sacha Guitry's satirical *Le Destin fabuleux de Désirée Clary* (*Mlle. Desiree*, 1942), which centers on the "extraordinary" exploits of a fictional feminine character who, abandoned by Napoleon Bonaparte, marries one of his generals, becomes the queen of Sweden by an incredible turn of fate, and seeks revenge against her former fiancé.

Le Colonel Chabert, the most popular in this category, explored the legal and emotional consequences of the Napoleonic wars. Declared dead in battle, Chabert (Raimu) recovers from his injuries only to discover that nobody believes that he is a former colonel. He finds his wife Rosine (Marie Bell) remarried and with two children, but becomes the victim of her plotting to preserve the fortune she inherited at his "death" and the social position she has acquired by marrying a count. In spite of his lawyer's pleas, Chabert decides to abandon his dream of reuniting with his wife and to spend his life in an asylum, surrounded by other former soldiers of the Empire. The film has several memorable moments that emphasize the drama of the individual who cannot reanimate the intimate sphere he once shared with his wife and has also lost his trust in the ideals of the new state. Having escaped Rosine's attempt to institutionalize him, Chabert contacts a lawyer in order to recover his identity. The lawyer's office is at the end of a cavernous hallway, whose nooks and arches are populated with petty clerks mocking their clients, a space that seems to descend directly from the text of German Expressionism. When the colonel starts his tale of courage in the army, there is a gradual fade-out to the battlefield that preserves and intensifies the actor's eyes; this impressionistic device bears testimony to the character's inner turmoil and the intensity of this particular memory to him. Stylized through the use of low-angle key-lighting, the medium shot of Chabert revealing his deception to his defender acquires symbolical value when he declares the war to be a dreadful undertaking and considers humanity, rather than fatherland ("patrie"), the supreme ideal to be pursued in battle. The character's words must have resonated not only with audiences pacifist in intentions, but also with fascist sympathizers enamored with the idea of a supranational structure led by their own representatives. Chabert, who

declares France as his mother and Napoleon as his father, represents the ordinary individual caught in the claws of a state machine too big to fight and too rapidly changing to domesticate and control. He is lost during the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X—symbolically associated, at the time, with Pétain's regime—because he cannot forsake his memories of past glory and refuses to shed his former identity. The other two representative scenes—Rosine cutting his meat in a shrewd attempt to re-conquer his affections and his final degradation as the disillusioned inmate of a veterans' asylum—reinforce the overall impression of a man disempowered by his own ideals of "patrie" and "famille."

The film, however, resists a clear-cut analysis. The colonel's ultimate fate may be read, ironically, as an unintended representation of the inadaptability of the Vichyist discourse to the fast-paced historical transformations; in this scenario, the fate of the French heroes is to populate the isolated "asylum" of unrealistic dreams and ambitions, as Chabert decides to do. Like Pétain, Chabert is a veteran of the glorious wars of France, but also an unaccomplished father figure: he has no descendents and, in spite of his efforts and the sympathy of Rosine's children for him, he does not manage to reconstruct the family he once thought he had because he refuses to acknowledge the passing of time and his own blindness to his wife's manipulation and deceit. This unfavorable interpretation of the protagonist, whose inadequacy is similar to that of the Vichy leader, is, however, barely discernible behind the nostalgic aura that surrounds him and the popularity of Raimu. The colonel is a courageous soldier, devoted to his mother-country, and a soft-hearted man, incapable of striking back at the woman who has betrayed him. Although Le Hénaff was not among the directors hunted by the Liberation Committee

after 1944, he was one of the directors who worked for Continental Films and also directed a film of light fascist inspiration, *Coup de tête* [*Impulse*, 1944].[554] As in most other films of the Occupation, this adaptation of Balzac's novel fit into the expectations of the authorities, producing a sympathetic discourse for Pétain and his values, but left open the possibility for oppositional, ironical readings. Furthermore, it projected doubt and angst regarding the cohesion of intimate publics, here, as elsewhere, in the process of dissolution as a result of the aggressive actions of one of their key members.

A special category within the historical film was represented by texts that could be situated in a vague past, identified by means of *mise en scène* and costume, and that were haunted by out-of-ordinary presences and events. The fantastic was incarnated in the devil and his messengers, in Marcel Carné's *Les Visiteurs du soir* and Maurice Tourneur's *La Main du diable*, dissolved in magic potions in Jean Delannoy's *L'éternel retour*, or simply hidden in the basement of old castles, as in Serge de Poligny's *Le Baron fantôme*, or in the space between dream and reality, as in Marcel L'Herbier's *La Nuit fantastique*; it served as the cause for the instability of private and intimate groupings.[555] The devil transformed lovers into stones, forever prevented from a real, carnal life as a couple, or made and broke affections and destinies with the same randomness with which the war precipitated individuals towards and away from each other. Young men and women rushed into events without control or anticipation of the final outcome, but at the mercy of old spells, wills, and manipulations. The source for the breakup of intimate publics was not a breach of trust perpetrated by one of the members, as in the case of

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[554] See Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français*, 77-78.
[555] It must be noted that this category was among the most popular ones, with *L'éternel retour* topping the charts as the most commercially successful for its year and the entire Occupation and *Les Visiteurs du soir* ranking first in 1942 and fourth for the whole period. Crisp, "Most Popular Films" and "Occupation Films."

most other films, but the external agent that has brought the couple or group together. This melodramatic intervention of a *deus-ex-machina* force had a double function: it was an expression of the population's impotence in the face of the overwhelmingly unmanageable social and political context of the 1940s, but it also generated further anguish vis-à-vis individuals' capacity for full emotional and material commitment to each other.

Tourneur's *La Main du diable* was produced by Continental Films and featured Pierre Fresnay, later accused of collaboration because of his long-term employment with the German company.[556] Its script, however, was signed by Jean-Paul Le Chanois, formerly called Jean-Paul Dreyfus, a Jewish, left-wing Resistance member who had worked with Renoir in the 1930s and whose presence on the Continental payroll was well-known to Alfred Greven.[557] Although one may guess the filmmaker's and scriptwriter's dissident intentions, it is not very easy to categorize this text as a straightforward critique of the French collaboration with the Germans.[558] *La Main du diable* exploits the Faustian pact with the devil: Roland (Pierre Fresnay), an unsuccessful painter who cannot seduce the woman he loves, falls into the trap without being fully aware of the power associated with the spellbound hand he buys from a cook. In a year, his life has markedly improved, but Mephistopheles (Palau) comes to claim his pay. The more Roland keeps the hand, the higher its price is, so, by the time he decides to relinquish it, he cannot gather the necessary sum. He eventually understands that he is the last in a long chain of men who, starting with the Middle Ages, have enjoyed the occult

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[556] See A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 267.
[557] See Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 69-70.
[558] See A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 267; Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 52-53.

powers of the object, but he dies trying to return the hand to the gifted friar from whom it was once stolen by the devil himself.

Several factors encourage an oppositional reading, while others are more ambiguous. Like the French, Roland falls prey to the foreign power by force of circumstance, without having sought such an alliance and without a clear understanding of the consequences of his actions. Furthermore, like French collaborators, he enjoys the advantages of his new position without anticipating a final pay day; even when he is made aware of such a deadline, he postpones the moment when he can be free until it is too late. The very hand that is the source of the painter's success and temporary relationship with the woman he loves is the product of an act of aggression and theft, an indirect comment on the armed invasion of the country. These major correspondences between the characters and incidents in Gérard de Nerval's novella *La Main enchantée* and the actors of the Nazi and Vichy regimes were supplemented by other, more discreet aspects that were also a critique of the connection between the devil's powers and those of German authorities. For example, the new paintings for which Roland becomes famous adopt an Expressionist, dark perspective, an ironic comment on the influence of this style in European culture. Other elements were directed at the French society without necessarily connecting its deterioration with the German Occupation. The devil is a short, rather chubby, middle-aged man, whose manners and tone comment on the posture and habits of creditors and might have been a reminder of such practices in the 1930s. Finally, other details reinforce the Catholic faith as the sole guarantor of public morality, as is the case with Maximus Léo, the friar who comes back from his tomb to punish trespassers. In spite of the apparent closure of the plot—Roland, the last owner of the

hand, is found dead on the tomb of Maximus Léo—the narrative leaves open the question of inappropriate "contracts" because the cursed object and its master have, again, disappeared. Touched by the devil's malediction, the painter dies alone, forsaken by the woman he has pursued, isolated from friends, and perceived with fear by the small community of the inn where he spends his last hours. His history, while entertaining in its sensationalism, raised questions about the individual's ability to understand and relate to others under constant and severe external pressure.

If mystery films suggested that families and communities were in danger of breaking up as a result of their own members' desires and needs, historical films mostly indicated external factors—wars, the devil, etc.—as the main catalysts for the dissensions within the private and intimate publics.

The historical film was also a fertile ground for the melodrama of interiority, which permeated most of its categories. *Pontcarral, colonel d'empire* revived, as did *Colonel Chabert*, the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte's regime and explored its consequences on a former officer. In spite of his reticence with women, Pontcarral (Pierre Blanchar) is lured into marriage by Garlone (Annie Ducaux) only to find out of her real affection for Rozans (Jean Marchat), an opponent of Bonaparte's ideals. Pontcarral kills Rozans in a duel and, after he has, arguably, raped his wife, leaves his conjugal home. Several years later, having recovered his military honor, he is on the brink of restarting his life with the much younger Sybille (Suzy Carrier), Garlone's sister who has always been in love with him, but his wife returns, repentant and unhappy. Pontcarral receives her in his house, but departs for Algeria at the head of his new regiment. The two women watch him from a window.

Considered a film that encouraged resistance in the name of a past national glory, Delannoy's adaptation also reiterated the instability and illusoriness of the intimate sphere in politically unstable times. None of the intimate groups depicted had the inner coherence to endure the tension created within its ranks as a result of outsiders' interference. A victim of Rozan's manipulations and a perpetrator against her own family, Garone is the prototype of the strong, active woman who could be both the salvation and the damnation of men. Her power drive, sexual desire, and loyalty to Rozans, the "enemy" of the empire, are the major causes for the disintegration of two intimate spheres, one generated around her father and her sister, and the other barely established between herself and Pontcarral.[559] In spite of the final image of the two sisters united in their support for the colonel, I suggest that the film raised more questions about the integrity and possible resistance of relationships mended by force of circumstance.

The melodrama of interiority also trickled into adaptations of novels that examined the aftermath of the Second Empire and the reconfiguration of social classes. André Cayatte's *Au Bonheur des Dames*, based on a novel by Zola, and Claude Autant-Lara's *Douce*, the adaptation of Michel Davet's novel, approached this theme from the same standpoint, emphasizing the demise of the small trading bourgeoisie and the former aristocracy, portrayed as incapable of adjusting to the faster, more dynamic social and economic forces that were reshaping daily life and morality. In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Baudu (Michel Simon), an old merchant whose daughter is engaged to his fortune-hunter shop-assistant, takes in his nieces and nephew after their parents' death, but loses his shop, his daughter, and his entire life in a competition against the big department store

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[559] This conservative view of women was common to both Vichy representatives and parts of the Resistance, hence the film's appeal to both categories.

opened across the street. As Baudu is chased away from his property and his daughter

commits suicide, his niece Denise (Blanchette Brunoy) rises from a simple shop girl to

the fiancée of the huge store's general manager. I argue that Cayatte's film thus

underscored the precariousness of intimate groups that adhered to a rigid discourse of

class separation and self-isolation. Baudu refuses to embrace the new consumerist era and

attempts to defend the family-centered business to which he has dedicated his life. In the

final scene, his misery and devastation contrast with Denise's happiness, suggesting the

demise of the family unit following the rise of big business and, implicitly, of the state

that encourages it.

If social mobility was possible as a result of moral compromise in *Au Bonheur des

Dames*, the desire for a higher station in life became the cause of destruction for all

involved in *Douce*. Irène (Madeleine Robinson) and Fabien (Roger Pigaut), two intimate

employees of the old, aristocratic Bonafé family, plan to emigrate to Canada, but are

caught by surprise by Engelbert de Bonafé's (Jean Debucourt) proposal to Irène. Douce

(Odette Joyeux), Engelbert's young and idealist daughter, falls in love with Fabien and

offers to leave with him. She changes her mind when she realizes he is only using her to

take revenge on her father and Irène. Before Douce can return to her family, however, she

and Fabien are caught in a fire at the Opera and she dies. Her heartbroken grandmother

chases out the two intruders, Irène and Fabien, at the end of the film. As in *Pontcarral* or

Au Bonheur des Dames, the agents who trigger the profound rupture within a seemingly

consolidated family are outsiders "adopted" by the Bonfés. Furthermore, it is Engelbert's

and Douce's aroused sexual desire that ultimately undermines the family's unity rather

than the concerted action of the governess and the steward. Finally, as in the case of the

other films, women bear the responsibility of action: the authoritarian, but misguided (grand)mother, the seductress who simulates innocence, and the innocent girl who seeks independence and love are those who push the cripple aristocrat and the frustrated working-class man toward their final clash. The old house becomes a battleground between those who search for emotional intimacy (the Bonafés) and those who aim for social and financial gains. The ending of the film suggests that individuals' isolation from each other is the final outcome of class intermingling as Douce's ghost haunts both the remaining Bonafés' household and the former intimate sphere of Irène and Fabien. Autant-Lara's text, therefore, could only foster one's suspicion about outsiders and their influence on intimate publics, as well as one's reticence to, and withdrawal from, the very close relationships to which one belonged.

Among the most popular films permeated by the melodrama of interiority, however, were those with a fantastic substructure. *L'éternel retour* and *Les Visiteurs du soir* were ranked the first and fourth most commercially successful films of the Occupation.[560] If the former text adapted the legend of Tristan and Isolde for modern audiences, Marcel Carné's *Les Visiteurs* was based on an original script by Jacques Prévert and Pierre Laroche in which the Middle Ages were used as a means to avoid censorship complications. In both films, the intimate sphere established between the romantically-involved protagonists was the target of the occult forces that surrounded them, and endured only as an ideal for the viewers after the physical annihilation of the couple.

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[560] See Crisp, "Most Popular Films."

Upon its release in Paris, on December 4, 1942, *Les Visiteurs du soir* was a great

success with audiences and critics alike.[561] In the 1930s, Prévert was one of the leading

figures of the *Groupe Octobre*, dedicated to raising the self-consciousness of the working

class through performance.[562] If Carné was not exactly a member of this group, he

definitely aspired to be recognized by the Communist Party as one of their official

voices.[563] Carné-Prévert's previous collaborations, *Le Jour se lève* and *Le Quai des*

brumes, consistently insisted upon the dire economical and social conditions which

transformed the working-class heroes into tragic figures for whom there was no easy way

out. Viewers, therefore, were familiar with the partnership between Carné and Prévert,

which they may have associated with the critique on the plight of the man of the street

and the impossible choices he faced in life; it is not surprising that they rushed to the

cinemas. Furthermore, the release date of *Les Visiteurs* was only a few weeks after the

German occupation had extended over the entire France and the reviewers almost

unanimously praised it as "restor[ing] to French cinema a grandeur and style which it

seemed to have renounced."[564] Any viewer reading the newspapers, living under the

Occupation, and relatively familiar with the socialist politics of the director/scriptwriter

duo was, thus, bound to expect a film on a grand scale, in support of a free France, and

which would also reflect on the dilemmas of the common man. As Bazin later suggested,

seeing the film was a gesture of patriotism, especially in the case of this text whose

aesthetics were very demanding on the regular spectator.[565] Roger Régent, writing only a

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[561] See Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 190.

[562] See A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 221-226.

[563] See Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 76.

[564] André Bazin quoted in Turk, *Child of Paradise,* 191.

[565] See Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 191.

few years after the end of the war, remembered that *Les Visiteurs* managed to transform the public into a critically creative interpreter, "non plus l'impassible témoin d'un film, mais en quelque sorte l'auteur anonyme, par avance, de toutes les œuvres sérieuses qu'allaient entreprendre désormais [les] scénaristes et [les] metteurs en scène…." ("… not the impassible witness of a film anymore, but, in a way, the anonymous author, in advance, of all the serious work to be undertaken, from then on, by scriptwriters and directors….").[566] Carné's film, therefore, invited a political reading with an emphasis on nation rather than class.

The antifascist nationalism of the left-wing Carné and Prévert influenced their depiction of the devil (Jules Berry) and his two associates, Dominique (Arletty) and Gilles (Alain Cuny), as the foreigners who both seduced and "conquered" what seemed a perfectly untainted society. As Edward Baron Turk suggests, though, France appeared in a less than flattering light, as isolated and immobile within its (Catholic) tradition that legitimated God, the King, and the husband as protective, authoritarian figures and denied sexual desire. [567] Baron Hugues (Fernand Ledoux), lost in nostalgia for his dead wife and unable to understand reality, fell for the devil's agent (the "masculinized" Dominique) and could be compared to Pétain and his longing for the former glory of France. Anne (Marie Déa), his daughter, represented an ideal France, and, in Burch and Sellier's words, a "fameuse incarnation de la résistance spirituelle à l'occupant" ("famous incarnation of the spiritual resistance to the occupier").[568] Renaud (Marcel Herrand), Anne's fiancé, was the virile, arrogant aristocrat who was an easy prey to the devil to the

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[566] All translations from French are my own unless otherwise specified. Régent, *Cinéma de France*, 94.

[567] See Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 202.

[568] Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre*, 150.

same extent to which many of the French were attracted by the official discourse of the Germans. Finally, Gilles, the blond envoy of the devil, appeared to be morally saved in contact with Anne's pure sentiments.

Gilles, Anne, and the devil represented one type of the Oedipus scenario in which the evil father is eventually neutralized by the son, who gains the woman by subscribing to her moral quest for absolute love and trust, i.e. for the perfect intimate sphere. Anne embodies, therefore, the national ideal of redemption and regeneration, but remains a symbol rather than a real-life character. A second Oedipal triangle, however, reinforces women's capacity to deceive and manipulate. Hugues, the impotent father, gathers his strength to eliminate Renaud, his rival for Dominique's attention, only to be swept away by his awakened sexual desire and disappear with the devil. The film, therefore, both affirmed and questioned the "revolutions" carried out by women. I note that, as a melodrama of interiority, *Les Visiteurs du soir* transformed its characters into signs for specific instincts and emotions, aiming to give the historical drama of the Occupation a symbolic interpretation in terms of affect rather than reason.

The "adoption" of the two envoys into the initial intimate group of Hugues, Anne, and Renaud was, as Turk suggests, the pretext for the unleashing of the hidden forces of repressed libido.[569] Its only consequence was the undermining of the patriarchal discourse that had dominated the intimate sphere existing among these three characters at the beginning of the film. The ending proposed a new, more resilient intimate sphere established between Anne and Gilles and based on a discourse of reciprocal recognition and pure love. When the raving devil turned them into stone, the heart that kept beating

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[569] Turk, *Child of Paradise*, 198-199.

became the symbol of this perfect communion and, to the press, of the spiritual resistance of a great nation. The final image of the film was, nevertheless, one of impotence: Anne and Gilles could not take any (political) action based on the idealized values that united them. Although the film encouraged an oppositional reading that militated for resistance, it also suggested the apathy of the French society at the exact time when action seemed more possible than ever (the Resistance gained momentum after Pétain's capitulation in 1942).[570] I argue that the popularity of the film was, therefore, the result of the idealized image of the French nation constructed in the press and by word of mouth rather than the effect of a more in-depth critical reading on the part of audiences.

As in historical films, in historical melodramas of interiority, private and intimate groups fell under the internse pressure of external forces, whose effects were the isolation and loneliness of those who could not respond to the expectations of the dominant public sphere, as was the case with Baudu or Douce. Nevertheless, when such groups opposed the restrictive values and demands of the official public sphere in order to defend the nation and its ideals, as was the case with Sybille and Garlone, or Gilles and Anne, their unity gained in strength and endured in time. Such films made a subtle difference

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[570] Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit comments on the film's reception at the time: "Pendant le tournage, on murmurait déjà de bouche a oreille que cette histoire du passé etait pleine d'allusions à la situation du moment. En décembre 1942, les spectateurs perçoivent la dernière image comme un appel masqué à la résistance. Mais, au-delà de l'opinion publique, au-delà du projet de Carné, et à son insu, le film construit une codification de la résistance dont le dernier plan n'est que l'accomplissement" ("During the shooting, people already spread word that this story about the past was full of allusions to the present situation. In 1942, viewers perceived the last image as a disguised appeal to resistance. But, beyond the public opinion, beyond Carné's project, and without his knowledge, the film built a codified image of the resistance whose final plan was to succeed"). He goes on to suggest that filmmakers "ont aussi exprimé, a travers leurs créations, la volonté attentiste d'un public peu enclin aux idéologies du choc ou refusant hypocritement d'admettre certaine réalité" ("have also expressed, through their works, the wait-and-see will of a public little inclined towards ideologies of confrontation or hypocritically refusing to admit a certain reality"). Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français*, 77, 85.

between state and nation, suggesting that the hostility of public authorities was temporary and, thus, bearable.

In addition to mystery and historical films, the cinema of the Occupation devoted a large space to the everyday preoccupations, struggles, and aspirations of current, easily identifiable character types. Although most of this "contemporary cinema" avoided direct references to the shortages, apprehension, pursuits, and arrests of the war time, some of them did hint at the events surrounding France's defeat in 1940 or at its "substitute," World War I.[571] Burch and Sellier note that one of the most straightforward allusions was to the absence of men, as 100,000 died in 1940, 1.5 million were taken prisoners, 700,000 were recruited in the STO and were working in Germany, and about 60,000 were fighting for the Resistance.[572] The plot of Marcel Pagnol's *La Fille du puisatier*, whose production started before the great debacle and which was the first film to be released during the Occupation, revolved around a young officer's disappearance in battle and the complications it caused in the life of the woman who bore his child. *La Femme perdue* [*The Lost Woman*, 1942], directed by Jean Choux, also centered on the consequences of a man's war camaraderie with his wife's long-lost lover. Absence and separation were equally at the root of Abel Gance's *Paradis perdu*, in which an artist drafted to the front during the Great War lost his wife to childbirth. Maurice Gleize's *L' Appel du bled* [*The Call of the Village*, 1942], André Berthomieu's *L'Ange de la nuit* (*Angel of the Night*, 1942), and Fernand Rivers' *L'An 40* [*The Year '40*, 1941], which was banned and destroyed by the German authorities a few days after its premiere, identified the war as

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[571] Burch and Sellier count at least twenty films that located their plot in the period around the 1940 defeat. Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre*, 119.
[572] Ibid.

the source of the isolation, tension, and division of the intimate sphere, in most cases as a result of the physical separation of couples and friends.[573]

One of the more prolific themes of the contemporary cinema was the rise of a star from the ranks of ordinary people, as well as the difficulties, renunciations, and frustrations that were part and parcel of the entertainment world. The films in this category enjoyed a relatively comfortable commercial success, which encouraged further reproductions of the same "formula." Léo Joannon's *Lucrèce,* Jean Delannoy's *Fièvres*, Maurice Cloche's *Feu sacré* [*Sacred Fire*, 1942], Jean Boyer's *La Romance de Paris* [*Paris Romance*, 1940], Albert Valentin's *La Vie de plaisir* [*Life of Pleasure*, 1943], or Richard Pottier's *Mademoiselle Swing* (1941) were among the most popular, the more so if they belonged to the mode of melodrama rather than comedy.

Some of these films endorsed one of the most appealing escapist fantasies: the accessibility of the stage and, implicitly, of the public sphere, to all types of publics and counterpublics, regardless of social class, gender, or age. To those who lost their anonymity by virtue of their talent, this rapid transformation also ensured a new, comfortable economic and social status, as well as the devotion and affection they sought. Georges in *La Romance de Paris*, or Paulette in *Feu sacré* gained their audiences' recognition and reinforced their emotional bonds with their family or romantic partners. However, the optimistic endings of these films come only at the price of silencing all possible discord. Thus, Georges's mother and fiancée forget all too easily their adamant opposition to his possible career in entertainment, while Paulette has an all too sudden revelation of her attachment to André, the man she has consistently dismissed as a

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[573] See Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 275, 278-279.

romantic partner. The ideal, conventional intimate groupings unveiled in these narratives did not convince or animate audiences.

Another part of these works revealed the complications and unhappiness that could accompany success; they often centered on an already renowned star whose private life, like the private lives of the millions in the audience, was prey to temptation and suffering. The ordinariness of those perceived as extraordinary, the inconsequence of their apparent privileges, and their ultimate loneliness generated viewers' sympathy, but also emphasized the curses associated with celebrity. For Lucrèce, whose fame eventually caused her emotional suffering and for Jean Dupray, the acclaimed singer in *Fièvres*, who lost his wife and then his friend to the temptations that came with fame, public life invaded and devastated the intimate sphere. More commercially successful than their happier counterparts, these films reflected viewers' anxieties regarding the impossibility of controlling key life changes, but, at the same time, discouraged spectators from seeking access to the public arena.[574] The ideal intimate groups were, therefore, those isolated from all possible interaction and communication with others. Jean's retreat into the monastery suggests not only self-withdrawal, but also a new type of bonding, with the Church and state-endorsed Catholicism, as the only solution for the individual's inner anguishes. In war- and entertainment-related texts, the threat came from outside the intimate groups, by events that could not be controlled and that fundamentally changed the individual, rendering him or her incapable of sustaining the affective bonds in which he or she was engaged.

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[574] *Lucrèce* and *Fièvres* were, respectively, the seventh and the nineteenth most popular films of the Occupation. Crisp, "Most Popular Films" and "Occupation Films."

A third thematic tendency of the contemporary film explored the dynamics of the intimate sphere, suggesting, even in productions of a lighter mood, that close relationships were undermined from within. Conceived in the mode of comedy, such as Marc Allègret's *Les Petites du Quai aux Fleurs* [*The Girls on the Quai aux Fleurs*, 1943], Marcel L'Herbier's *L'honorable Catherine* (*The Honorable Catherine*, 1943), Maurice Cammage's *Monsieur Hector* (1940), Fernandel's *Adrien*, or Louis Daquin's *Nous les gosses* (*Portrait of Innocence*, 1941), or in the mode of melodrama, such as Abel Gance's *Venus aveugle* (*Blind Venus*, 1941), Jean Stelli's *Le Voile bleu* (*The Blue Veil*, 1942), Jean Grémillon's *Remorques* and *Lumière d'été*, or Robert Bresson's *Les Anges du péché* (*Angels of the Streets*, 1943) and *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (*Ladies of the Park*, 1944), these films portrayed individuals whose social status or emotional commitments no longer matched their desires, moral values, or ambitions. The butler who passed for his master and generated droll complications in *Monsieur Hector*, the young woman who, going blind, sacrificed herself in order to liberate her lover from his obligations in *Venus aveugle*, or the bohemian painter ready to betray the woman who loved him for money in *Lumière d'été* were only a few examples emphasizing individuals' divorce from a world that seemed to have already rejected them. Old and newly-formed intimate groupings were fragile, under constant threat, and often unconvincing as sites of protection and affective fulfillment.

Les Petites du Quai aux Fleurs was one of the most commercially successful films of the Occupation, ahead of titles such as *Le Corbeau*, *Le Ciel est à vous*, or *La Main du diable*, which were much more visible in the press of the day.[575] Rosine

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[575] Crisp, "Most Popular Films" and "Occupation Films."

Grimaud (Odette Joyeux), one of the four daughters of a widowed book-seller, falls in love and tries to conquer Francis (Louis Jourdan), who is engaged to one of her sisters. The film opens when, in a public phone cabin, she tells Francis that she has decided to commit suicide; by chance, doctor Bertrand (Bernard Blier) picks up the phone and runs after her. A series of romantic complications ensues, engaging all the young women, and the men who court them, in a chase for affection that ends well for all. Although Rosine, who constantly complains of being treated as a child, does not succeed in her plan, the final sequence reveals her as a grown-up woman, determined to start anew.

Siclier suggests that part of the charm of this film, at least for teenage viewers, came from the casting of four attractive women who walked around in night gowns and slips in the privacy of their bedroom.[576] This observation that it was the spectacle, rather than the story, that appealed to audiences may, in part, explain the success of the production, which was released toward the end of the Occupation, at a time of mental and material exhaustion. The plot revealed the incapacity of a lenient and kind-hearted patriarch to control his offspring.[577] The intimate sphere, established on the trust and affection the Grimauds share for each other, is threatened when Francis, who aspires to become part of this intimate group, provokes jealousy among the sisters, without intending to do so. Rosine, who is growing into her new sexual identity, revolts against her status as the youngest and, unconsciously relying on her infatuation with Francis, demands recognition as an adult. Although all the girls are paired with the rightful man,

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[576] Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 183.

[577] Burch and Sellier suggest that Frédéric Grimaud represents the figure of the maternal father, authoritarian, but capable of renouncing his position for the love of his daughters. This character reinforces the scholars' description of the Occupation cinema as dominated by castrated men and assertive women. Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre*, 163-165.

the ghost of generational conflict and familial rivalry haunts the ending of the film. Having followed Francis for a last time, Rosine decides to give up her pursuit and return home; she walks down a dark street, takes a taxi, and disappeared from view. Presumably, Bertrand is waiting for her, but this young girl in a car speeding to an indefinite future speaks volumes about the loneliness and unclear prospects of many women at the end of the war. In such films, intimate groups did not appear capable of regaining their foothold after a major, unexpected turmoil.

In the "contemporary" melodramas of interiority, outsiders disturbed the intimate sphere, and had a visible effect on the individual's spiritual evolution. In films that approached the problem of war and its effects on the intimate sphere—such as *Paradis perdu* and *La Femme perdue* —the man's physical absence became the cause for the disintegration of the couple; his nostalgia and moral duty for his partner eventually generated his loneliness and self-imposed isolation. In *Paradis perdu*, Pierre Leblanc (Fernand Gravey) loses his wife while he is fighting in the Great War and completely dedicates himself to his daughter to such an extent that he abandons his own chance at happiness with another woman. He dies at his child's wedding, conjuring up the image of his wife as a bride. In *La Femme perdue*, Jean (Jean Murat) follows the call of duty only to be separated from his beloved; when he reencounters her, she is married to one of his best war comrades. For the sake of the daughter he has fathered, but who only knows the other man as her parent, Jean gives up his attempt to regain his family and departs on another operation at sea. By contrast with their 1930s counterparts, such male figures of comprehension, resignation, and self-sacrifice indirectly admitted their inability to defend and preserve their families.

The contemporary melodrama of interiority manifested a special interest in the destinies of women who undertook an ennobling mission that transformed the lives of others. These films, however, were not among the most popular. *Les Anges* ranked seventieth and *Le Voile* was sixty-fourth in the preferences of the Occupation audiences.[578] Anne-Marie (Renée Faure), the proud, stubborn novice in Robert Bresson's *Les Anges du péché* seeks to move Thérèse (Jany Holt), the convict reluctant to admit her flaws, from moral paralysis and self-isolation to salvation and participation in the community. Pushing the limits of the internal rules of the Bethany order, Anne-Marie estranges, one by one, her companions in pursuit of a possible intimate sphere with Thérèse that would fulfill her religious calling. The "intruder" that constantly undermines the novice's efforts is represented by Thérèse's past, her distrust of others, and her desire for revenge against the man who has betrayed her. The ideal communion between the two is only achieved at the hour of Anne-Marie's death, when the convict, moved by the nun's selfless dedication to another human being, receives her "gift" of moral self-assessment. As Tony Pipolo suggests, the order's mission to "rescue" convicts bears similarities to the operations of the Resistance especially in the initial sequences of the film, when two Bethany sisters risk their lives to save a woman newly-released from prison.[579] Anne-Marie's spiritual quest is, therefore, also a symbolic cry for the ethical awakening of the occupied French, a transformation that Thérèse seems to embrace, albeit too late, at the moment of her second arrest for murder. The two women's intimate sphere is, therefore, achieved only in idealized form, beyond death.

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[578] Crisp, "Most Popular Films."

[579] Tony Pipolo, "Rules of the Game: *Les Anges du péché*," in *Robert Bresson: A Passion for Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40-41.

Jean Stelli's *Le Voile bleu* proposed a more straight-forward feminine mission in tune with the expectations of the Vichy regime: Louise Jarraud (Gaby Morlay), a young woman who lost her husband in the Great War and whose baby died soon afterward, decides to dedicate her life to raising other people's children. Her final reward is the recognition of those she has seen growing up and who rescue her from poverty and loneliness at the last moment. Louise is the symbolic Mother, renouncing her personal life in order to "cure" society of its irresponsibility, vice, selfishness, and greed. As Burch and Sellier emphasize, Louise is an avenging rather than charitable figure, whose purpose is to reinforce the values of traditional patriarchy and who hides, under her apparent submissiveness, authoritarian tendencies.[580] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis astutely emphasizes the camouflaged anti-Semitism of the film by suggesting that the children "reeducated" by Louise reference the Jewish children hidden by French couples starting with mid-1942, when they became the target of massive deportations as well.[581] I agree that, more than ideal maternity, Louise embodies the long arm of the authoritarian regime. The intimate sphere she establishes with all the children "abandoned" by their unworthy parents is built around the official discourse of Catholic family values and is, therefore, reemphasized in the film's favorable ending. The absent parents become the "intruders" in the relationship between the young generation and the state and are gradually eliminated from the text. Considered by some the most popular success of the Occupation, *Le Voile bleu* appealed to audiences especially in the countryside because it masked its support for the Vichy agenda under the teary story of a stoic, selfless woman

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[580] Burch and Sellier, *La Drôle de guerre,* 100.
[581] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *Hidden Voices: Childhood, the Family, and Antisemitism in Occupation France* (New York: Editions Ibex, 2004), 26-27.

defending innocent childhood from the neglect and abuse of adulthood.[582] As was the case with the cinema that alluded to the war, the films that depicted women as moral agents of awakening also underscored the spiritual transformation of the individuals involved in the exemplary intimate spheres proposed by these texts. Thérèse and Louise's "children" were "reborn" into a different, more responsible life than what they had known in the past, albeit for different reasons and different purposes with respect to their spectatorship. I believe that it is important to note that support for the regime, in Stelli's film, resulted in concrete, earthly, albeit delayed, self-fulfillment and the reinforcement of the intimate sphere of state-approved discourse.

The same highlighting of inner transformation was visible in a third category of "contemporary" melodramas of interiority centered on the world of entertainment. The protagonists of films such as *Fièvres*, *Feu sacré*, or *Félicie Nanteuil* (1942; released only in 1945) were profoundly shaken by the shattering of their intimate groups and zones of comfort. Thus, Jean Duprais (Tino Rossi), the famous singer of *Fièvres*, loses his wife as a result of an impulsive affair and is about to lose his friend for a similar reason when he turns to the seclusion of a monastery in order to avoid further grief. Paulette Vernier (Viviene Romance), the rising star of *Feu sacré*, has to suffer both personal and professional downfall before she can recognize, in the person of her constant friend, the honest partner she has been seeking. Finally, Félicie (Micheline Presle), another young actress on the path to quick success, turns her life around after she indirectly triggers the suicide of the man who has supported her career. The failure of all these characters to

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[582] Siclier considers it the most popular film of the Occupation, but Crisp ranks it only sixty-fourth in terms of box-office success. The difference may be the result of the film's lack of commercial gains in the major cities. Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 99; Crisp, "Most Popular Films."

preserve the intimate connections that had seemed functional and fulfilling for a long time was not only a commentary on artists' emotional unpredictability, but also a reflection of a deeper social anxiety vis-à-vis relationships and the temptations associated with unprecedented, "intruding" circumstances.

The cinema of the Occupation reflected a preoccupation with economic survival, but also with the redefinition of intimate groups, the threats that hung on them, and the ruinous effects of the war. Many of the films had a confusing combination of elements that supported the official discourse of patriotism and familial order, and details that invited oppositional readings and suggested the pressures generated by the war on the intimate sphere. Two were the main factors that led to the instability and even breakup of the intimate sphere: the individual's inability to function according to already existing emotional expectations and commitments; and an external, uncontrollable event or condition, whether it had to do with the war, a mystery, or the fantastic. In spite of reorganized and reinstated close relationship, the films remain haunted by the specter of loneliness and the affective dissolution of families and friendships. They reflected, but also amplified, personal anxieties related to the war and the occupation.

The melodrama of interiority exploited in detail the insecurities and affective instability that seemed to erode intimate publics as a result of individuals' refusal of self-assessment and adaptation to changing contexts. As Burch and Sellier have emphasized, there was a major shift in power relationships that favored women as figures of strength, redemption, and regeneration. In spite of this apparently progressive discourse, women were often the instruments that supported a restoration of patriarchal order. Such a metamorphosis of gender relationships, however, was the result of extraordinary

circumstances that took different forms, from the turmoil in the aftermath of the empire, to the restructuring of social classes in the wake of the Second Empire, to various wars, and even to the manifestation of fantastic forces. I argue that, under these special conditions, intimate groups proved instable and precarious, susceptible to intruders who emphasized protagonists' weaknesses and exploited their desires and instincts. Such a discourse was, paradoxically, satisfactory not only to the regime, but also to the Resistance because both militated for an ethical reawakening of the French, albeit with different goals in mind. Vichy sought to restore a traditional, agrarian, and patriarchal society as the only possible solution to the moral and affective impasse of the nation. To the underground counterpublics, the only morally acceptable answer to the country's cul-de-sac was liberation from the occupier. The vulnerability and dissonance of the intimate sphere suggested by the films made during the German Occupation reflected audiences' anxieties, attracting them into the plot. The situations depicted by the French cinema were often ambiguous enough that they allowed for multiple interpretations, favoring the occupier and the Vichyists, but also the covert counterpublics.

Spanish cinema in the 1950s

…[E]l franquismo se encarga de deslegitimar los espacios políticos, culturales y emotivos que entran en crisis con la victoria nacional.[583]

(Franco's regime seeks to delegitimize the political, cultural, and emotional spaces that enter a crisis with the national victory.)

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[583] Annabel Martín, *La gramática de la felicidad* (Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2005), 69.

If the French cinema developed primarily in relation to the power structure established by the Occupation forces, 1950s Spanish cinema sought to impose Catholicism as the basis for national revival. The film production of the 1950s continued the tendencies of the late 1940s, but also made room for additions and innovations. Consumerist behavior was often at odds with the regime's support of traditional, Catholic values, but resulted in a culture of evasion necessary in order to preserve the political apathy of the population. The exceptionalism of the Spanish nation, its indomitable resilience in times of trial, and its reliance on the always-supportive Catholic faith were the major ideological ingredients that artificially boosted self-esteem and contributed to the rise of Spanish popular film as the most important form of entertainment of the decade. I argue that escapism, complemented by easily accessible aesthetics, was the major "virtue" of commercially successful cinema. Escape into an illustrious past or a humorous, albeit problem-ridden, present, into a mythical rural civilization or the feats of wonder of religious figures held most audiences captive to a formulaic, repetitive cinema that sought to compensate for the poverty and misery of daily life.

The incongruence between this vision of glorious Spain and the Spain of rural exodus, housing shortages, political censorship, and stifling morality did not go unnoticed, however. Alienated by a religious education that could offer little in response to daily worries, many young people slowly migrated from the nationalistic-revolutionary discourse of the Falange towards a type of Marxism fraught with disillusion and aesthetic rebellion against the stale forms of popular cinema and culture. This "other Spain" produced its own discourse of allusion and open, unsutured textuality, but its films were only a minority expression in relation to the dominant cinema.

The 1950s witnessed a gradual transformation toward a new type of aesthetics as a result of young directors' rise. Marsha Kinder notes that two models dominated the film scene— classical Hollywood cinema and Italian Neorealism—and interacted with a third, specifically Spanish influence with roots in older cultural forms, whether these were those of *españoladas* (folkloric musicals and comedies set in Andalusia), *zarzuelas* (light operettas), and the *cuplé* (urban torch song), or came from *sainetes* (popular farces) and *esperpento* (absurd, grotesque dramatic genre).[584] I suggest that, although both Hollywood and Neorealism could be, and were, used as a means of social critique, they were mainly vehicles for the discourse of the regime, as this entered a period of modernization of style rather than content.

Classical Hollywood cinema relies on a straightforward explanatory model for the protagonist's actions, which positions the viewer in a favorable, largely omniscient relation to the story.[585] The plot, ordered chronologically, follows a cause-and-effect line and leads to often undisputed closure for the various narrative threads it has opened in its development. Although external events, such as natural or social phenomena, may influence the plot, the protagonist's choices, desires, or individual traits are the major causes for the conflict. Goal-oriented and with a clear motivation for their actions, the main characters live in an easily recognizable "reality," with clear marks for the depiction of mental or perceptual subjectivity.[586] This narrative pattern is the prime suspect for

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[584] See Marsha Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription of Neorealist and Hollywood Conventions in Spanish Cinema of the 1950s: Falangist Neorealism in *Surcos*," in *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993), 20. 18-54

[585] There are a number of exceptions especially related to detective, mystery, or horror films, whose appeal relies precisely on the restrictions imposed on viewers' knowledge.

[586] A more detailed description can be found in David Bordwell, "The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917-1960," in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, ed. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1-85.

audience manipulation because it can "legitimize" each event as the "logical" result of a character's specific desires and system of values. Protagonists may win or lose according to their adherence to those norms and expectations dictated by the ideology in support of which films gather their momentum.

Hollywood dominated the box office in 1950s Spain. Of 2447 foreign films imported between 1950 and 1960, 1075 came from the United States, more even than the indigenous production that totaled only 769 films, including coproductions.[587] Audiences' uncontested preference for American cinema could, as Marsha Kinder suggests, have turned against Franco's regime as these films glamorized a more liberal culture and could have "corrupted" the Spanish public.[588] In effect, as Kinder also emphasizes, the films that received permits for import were strictly controlled by the Junta de Censura; they were also dubbed with such care that, in extreme cases, the relationships between characters were modified in order to avoid any possible moral slip.[589] Furthermore, Hollywood was itself subject to the Hays Production Code (1934-1968), which insisted on the sterilized depiction of crime, sex, and violence, as well as on the enforcement of a largely Christian morality. American cinema might, at times, have given the impression of a more tolerant, broadminded society, but its sinners still bore the full responsibility of their actions and plots were resolved in accordance with the traditional social values supported by the Spanish regime as well. *I Confess* (1953, dir. Alfred Hitchcock), one of the most popular films in 1956 Spain according to theater

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[587] José María Caparrós Lera, "Nacionalidad de las películas de largometraje autorizadas para la exhibición en España," in *El cine español bajo el régimen de Franco (1936-1975)* (Barcelona: Ediciones de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1983), 232-233.

[588] Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 20, 25.

[589] One of the most notorious examples is that of John Ford's *Mogambo* (1953), in which the relationship between two spouses was transformed into one between siblings so that the heroine could fall in love with another man. Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 33.

owners, focused on the burden that a Catholic priest had to carry for one of his parishioners who confessed his murder to the Church, but refused to admit his guilt to the authorities.[590] When the priest was accused by the police, the real murder's wife could not but tell the truth about her husband. The film had all the ingredients so much appreciated by Franco's regime: it transformed a religious figure into a possible martyr in defense of the holy orders of the Church and it conferred on the family, and the woman, the civilizing role of righting the moral wrong of her partner. Hollywood's influence, therefore, was largely accommodating to the regime, not only in its aesthetic and narrative response to the tensions that characterized both societies after World War II, but also, as I suggested in the previous subchapter, as a result of the substantial American investment that it represented.

Neither was Neorealism the perfect tool for the social and political critique of Franco's Spain; quite the contrary, it proved easily approachable by the reformist elements within the regime. Neorealism surged in Italy at the end of World War II in response to the popular, escapist cinema of Fascist Italy, but also as a result of the bombing of the Cinecittà studios that made shooting on location an affordable and feasible means of film production. Unlike classical Hollywood, its plots relied more on coincidences and chance encounters, and were organized according to chronology and not in a clear cause-effect sequence. The neorealist focus was on the everyday, apparently irrelevant actions of usually working-class characters, and endings avoided perfect closure, refusing to suggest a straightforward interpretation of the events to which

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[590] Theater owners classified this film as the third most popular with audiences, after a Mexican and an Italian film (*El derecho de nacer* [*The Right to Be Born*, 1952] and *Anna* [1951]). See "La opinión de los empresarios de salas," *Espectáculo: Revista del Sindicato Nacional* 9.107 (July 1956): 29.

viewers were positioned as witnesses. Because of their critical, direct, often anti-clerical perspective on post-war Italy, the first Neorealist films came in conflict with the Italian Catholic Church and even with the post-Mussolini government that condemned them for their lack of patriotism. Furthermore, these initial Neorealist dramas were not popular with Italian audiences, who, as was the case in Spain, were more attracted to American cinema.[591] The films' apparent denial of clear-cut solutions for the daily dramas of their protagonists and their rejection of a controllable logic of plot development represented the critical instruments through which the younger Italian directors intended to make viewers aware of the poignancy of the little dramas that went on around them. These did not, however, shelter Neorealism against corruption by both left- and right-wing ideologies, especially as the films themselves often resorted to Hollywood editing, manipulative musical scores, professional actors, and studied composition in order to suggest possibly favored readings.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Spanish take on neorealism was diverse and intended to satisfy both publics and counterpublics. Two weeks of Italian Neorealist films in 1951 and 1953 in Madrid, direct encounters with filmmakers such as De Sica, Lattuado, or Zavattini, as well as the desire for a critical alternative to the official cinema led the young directors just graduating from the IIEC to adopt neorealism as a reformist aesthetic approach that could challenge the traditionalist expectations of Franco's Spain and its cinema of evasion.

The 1955 Salamanca Conversations, however, proved that these young directors were not the only advocates for a change: right-wing members of the strong publics that

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[591] See David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, "Italy: Neorealism and After," in *Film History: An Introduction*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 361-262.

participated in the regime also supported such a transformation of Spanish cinema, albeit

with a different goal. García Escudero considered that the most valuable characteristic of

neorealism was that it opened viewers' eyes to those who suffered and promoted love for

the disenfranchised as the "solution" to social problems; neorealism was, in this sense,

closely aligned with Christian (and Catholic) ideals: "Yo diría que, aunque [el

neorrealismo] no sea cine cristiano, está en la antesala del cristianismo."[592] ("I would say

that, although [neorealism] is not Christian cinema, it is a precursor to Christian

[cinema].") Christian neorealism, supported by the publications coordinated by the

Catholic Church, used the new style as an appropriate, modern vehicle for faith, easy to

assimilate by young audiences. In this sense, I suggest that Spanish neorealism preserved

its capacity for contestation, but turned it to the advantage of a regime that was

reinventing itself and attempted to gain the adherence of its least enthusiastic supporters.

The authorities also appreciated neorealism for its positive impact abroad, where Spain's

fascist past was underplayed in favor of a more progressive, humanist image, so

necessary when the country was attempting to emerge from its social and economic

isolation.[593]

Three forms of Spanish neorealism materialized in the 1950s, according to one of

its faithful historians, José Enrique Monterde: "el neorrealismo como moda"

("neorealism as fashion"), in the work of Rafael Gil, Sáenz de Heredia, Manuel Mur Oti,

Ignacio Iquino, Luis Lucia, or Antonio del Amo, to name but a few; "el neorrealismo

como modelo regeneracionista" ("neorealism as a model of regeneration"), in the films of

Bardem, Berlanga, or Fernando Fernán-Gómez; and "el neorrealismo como modelo a

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[592] Juan Cobos, "Conversación con J. M. García Escudero," *Film Ideal* 2 (November 1956): 11.
[593] See Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 34.

superar" ("neorealismo as a model to transcend") in the cinema of Marco Ferreri,

Berlanga, or Carlos Saura.[594] The first type, of neorealism as fashion, partially adopted

the practices of neorealism: on-location shooting, plain, even impoverished settings, and

the focus on the often trivial, daily problems of the marginalized and the poor. Its prolific

directors, backed by constant financial and media support, transformed this formula into a

very commercial venture when they paired it with the most popular mode, comedy (as

was the case with Iquino's *El sistema Pelegrín* [*The Pelegrín System*, 1952]), or with

Hollywood-endorsed formulas such as detective film noir (in Sáenz de Heredia's *Los ojos*

dejan huellas [*Eyes Leave Traces*, 1952], José María Forqué's *La noche y el alba* [*Night*

and Dawn, 1958] or Lucia's *La muralla* [*The Wall*, 1958]) and literary adaptations (in

César Fernández Ardavín's *El lazarillo de Tormes* [1959]), or with religious themes (in

Rafael Gil's *La Señora de Fátima* or Iquino's *El Judas* [*Jude*, 1952]). Marsha Kinder

suggests that the representatives of the second and third type of neorealism employed it

as a counterpoint to classical Hollywood techniques in order to expose the aesthetic and

social stereotypes to which cinema resorted in its depiction of a mythologized national

unity. Furthermore, the use of neorealism by these young filmmakers was also intended

to highlight the importance of the collective (the family, the group of friends or of

workers, etc) in relation to the individualism promoted by Hollywood-inflected texts.[595] I

suggest that these dissident directors were most successful when they adopted the most

commercial formats, such as comedy, as the dominant mode of their films. Berlanga's

Calabuch (*The Rocket from Calabuch*, 1956) and *Plácido*, and Bardem and Berlanga's

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[594] José Enrique Monterde, *El neorrealismo en España. Tendencias realistas en el cine español*. Tesis
doctoral. (Barcelona: July 1992), qtd. In Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 292-301.
[595] Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 37-40.

¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall! reached the top thirty-five most popular films of the decade

because they poked fun at Hollywood conventions, but also at the regular individual's

grand hopes.[596] I argue, therefore, that audiences preferred films that did not conflict with

the dominant ideology, or, if they did, they preferred ones in which the conflict could be

exploited for laughter. Neorealism was not necessarily a tool that undermined the regime,

but one that could also be employed in its service.

The third, visible influence on Spanish cinema originated in specifically Spanish

cultural forms. With few exceptions, the films that relied on such forms had an

unambiguous commercial justification, but also spread the Francoist belief in the

exceptionalism of the people and their customs, even if they were not necessarily made

with this intention. The popularity of *españoladas*, the folkloric musicals set in

Andalusia, was not a product of the regime's direct involvement in their promotion, but

only continued a pre-Republican and Republican trend in Spanish cinema.[597] Luis's very

popular *El sueño de Andalucía* [*The Dream of Andalusia*, 1951], *La hermana San*

Suplicio (*Sister San Suplicio*, 1952), or *Un caballero andaluz* [*The Andalusian*

Gentleman, 1954] reflected the affinity of a huge mass of new city dwellers for the

emotional comfort and pleasure provided by the cultural genres they knew. The cuplé, a

predominantly urban musical genre, emerged toward the end of the 1950s and often

added erotic ingredients to the narrative recipe, especially as its protagonists were female

singers who dedicated their lives to the stage. Juan de Orduña's *El último cuplé* (*The Last*

Torch Song, 1957) and Luis César Amadori's *La violetera* [*The Flower Girl*, 1958], both

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[596] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 99; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 262; Caparrós Lera, "Las películas más populares del cine español según el público," in *El cine español*, 236-237.
[597] See Triana-Toribio, "A Constant Concern," 62-63.

featuring the sex symbol Sara Montiel, were the most popular films of the decade

because they efficiently combined the easy readability of melodrama, the reputation of

the feminine star, and the rising prominence of the musical genre among a population that

now identified more closely with the city.[598] The influence of picaresque novels, sainetes,

and esperpento infused cinema with a particularly Spanish propensity for the mixture of

the tragic and the comic. The nostalgia for an idealized rural life in Edgar Neville's *El*

último caballo (*The Last Horse*, 1950) or the small dramas of the characters who seek

their fortune in a radio show in Sáenz de Heredia's *Historias de la radio* (*Radio Stories*,

1955) were popular precursors of the more incisive, and therefore threatening to the

dominant ideology, dark humor of the collaboration between Marco Ferreri and Rafael

Azcona in films such as *El pisito* (*The Little Apartment*, 1959) and *El cochecito*. I believe

that, in spite of these last few exceptions, the specifically Spanish cultural forms adopted

during the decade reinforced its escapist and comforting nature, and, like the

contributions of classical Hollywood and Italian Neorealism, largely reflected the

concerns and interests of the dominant public sphere.

Given the intense cross-fertilization of styles and approaches in the 1950s cinema,

and taking into consideration the constantly shifting paradigm for genres I have outlined

in a previous chapter, it is not surprising that it is difficult to provide a clear description

of genres. The 1955 classification of the films produced that year illustrates the contagion

between various forms and the supremacy of the mode of comedy:

> Comedias dramáticas: 12; Comedias cómicas: 4; Comedias humorísticas: 5;
> Comedias musicales: 1; Comedias sentimentales: 10; Comedias de época: 2;

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[598] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 99; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 262; Caparrós Lera, "Las películas más populares," 236-237.

> Dramas: 3; Melodramas: 1; Psicológicas: 1; Biográficas: 1; Religiosas: 1;
> Policíacas: 6; Folklóricas: 5; Taurinas: 2; Sin clasificar: 4.[599]

> Dramatic comedies: 12; Comical comedies: 4; Humorous comedies: 5; Musical
> comedies: 1; Sentimental comedies: 10; Period comedies: 2; Dramas: 3;
> Melodramas: 1; Psychological films: 1; Biopics: 1; Religious films: 1; Detective
> films: 6; Folkloric films: 5; Films with bullfighting: 2; Without classification: 4.

The particular situation of one film may provide a clue of the subjectivity of genre

classifications at the time. Ladislao Vajda's *Marcelino pan y vino* (*The Miracle of

Marcelino*, 1955) focuses on the life of an orphan abandoned at the gate of a Franciscan

monastery. Marcelino (Pablito Calvo) grows up a carefree child, whose funny adventures

often catch the friars unaware. One day he gets bitten by a snake, and, after struggling to

stay alive, starts inquiring about his mother. Soon, he finds out that the Jesus Christ on

the crucifix in the attic has come alive, so he begins to steal bread and wine for the divine

apparition. In return, Marcelino asks to be reunited with his mother, and the Christ grants

him his wish under the astonished eyes of the friars, who then declare Marcelino's death

a miracle. Classified as a "fantasía infantil" ("children's fantasy") by *Objetivo*,[600] the film

could easily have been included in several other genres. It focused on a religious

revelation, so it could also have been labeled as a religious film. It provided enough

moments of laughter to be categorized as a dramatic comedy. Finally, it was inspired by a

character from the national folklore, so it could have also been labeled as a folkloric film.

The combination of thematic, generic, and modal characteristics makes it impossible for

any film to be incorporated exclusively in only one group, as was the case with this

particular list. Furthermore, it is also difficult to determine which of these characteristics

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[599] "Clasificación por géneros de la producción española de 1955," *Espectáculo* 105 (May 1956): 29.
[600] P.G., "Marcelino pan y vino," *Objetivo* 5 (May 1955): 30.

was considered as dominant by the editors who established the classification. Given such difficulties, any attempt to classify any group of films into genres is bound to fail.

An overall image of the film production at the time is, however, necessary, especially in order to emphasize audiences' and filmmakers' preference for specific topics. I shall provide a description of a number of thematic cycles characteristic for the period in order to suggest that these may have contributed to raising the self-esteem of regular citizens by encouraging them to see themselves as an integral part of a resilient nation of exceptional destiny and may have also granted audiences a space to relax and elude daily worries. Four dominant cycles—the historical, contemporary, religious, and folkloric—insisted both on the duty of the individual toward the nation, its faith, and its moral laws, and on the reserve of solace, support, and pleasure that the community could provide in return. Most of the 1950s productions could be attributed to one of these four groups. Secondary thematic cycles included films centered on children's adventures, biopics and hagiographies, detective films, and films dedicated to bullfighting or football, all of which tended to transport viewers into a world of fantasy that had little to do with their daily lives, but that allowed them the gratification of shared pain or success. These cycles were not clearly separated from each other; quite the contrary, as the example of *Marcelino pan y vino* illustrates, they often combined their discourses into one coherent narrative.

The historical thematic cycle slowly changed its thrust from the preference for the lives of representative national figures or famous novel protagonists in heritage dramas, and to the nationally relevant anti-communist activities of more historically anonymous characters. Produced mostly by CIFESA, the heritage films often centered on a female

character who became the symbol of a resolute, morally uncompromising, brave Spain

fighting an enemy that was much more powerful and numerous. *Agustina de Aragón* (*The*

Siege, 1950), *La leona de Castilla* (*The Lionness of Castille*, 1951), or *Lola, la piconera*

(*Lola, the Coalgirl*, 1952) transformed women into paragons of loyalty, sacrifice, and

dedication to their family, their community, and, implicitly, the nation. They embodied

the very virtues that the regime encouraged in its female subjects, but became public

figures, an image somehow at odds with the constant insistence on women's retreat into

private life. At the beginning of the 1950s, however, these films still preserved the

ultranationalist spirit that had surged during and after the Civil War, so these feminine

figures appropriately dramatized the importance of all citizens to the preservation of

national integrity and sovereignty.

The most popular of them, *Agustina de Aragón*, was a melodrama of action

centered on an Aragonese woman who fell, by chance, in the middle of the conflict

between the Spanish and the French troops. Convinced of her fiancé's betrayal to the

French, she pairs up with one of the captains of the resistance in order to defend Zaragoza

against the foreign armies. Played by the famous theater actress Aurora Bautista,

Agustina was an overly dramatic character, whose passionate impulses, grandiose

speeches, and bombastic gestures gave her the intensity of a patriotic symbol, but refused

her the depth of a realistic character. She was Spain incarnate, and, in my opinion, the

winners of the Civil War encouraged a population barely coming out of the hunger years

to find in this protagonist the strength to resist under duress. The war for independence

from the French was a recurrent topic in 1950s cinema, even in films whose dominant

thrust was not historical: Marcelino's parents were killed by French troops; in *Luna de*

sangre [*The Blood Moon*, 1952], the protagonist tried to enlist in the Spanish army, but was rejected, which discretely indicated his initial weakness; and in *Cuerda de presos* [*The Prisoner*, 1956], an artist who quoted from Voltaire and Rousseau provoked a strong anti-French reaction. I suggest that national character was defined in opposition to an external enemy, a strategy that had only served to justify the necessity for an isolated regime, cautious about its involvements with the international community.

History also figured prominently in films that emphasized Spain's allegiance to the values of the capitalist West. If the initial image of the nation under siege fitted the autarchic policy of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, as Spain was gradually accepted into the international community, the demonic foreigner was increasingly the Russian or the communist. *Murió hace quince años* [*He Died Fifteen Years Ago*, 1954] traces the kidnapping of a Spanish boy by Russian communists, who raise him to reject the values of his family. Converted into a militant, the young man returns to Spain with the secret mission to kill his own father. The redemptive influence of his cousin and his former nanny, as well as the integrity of his biological father, prevent him from fulfilling his task, and he dies defending his family against the communist intruders. The coherence, unity, and Catholic faith of the Spaniards, who are bound to each other by their love and belief in the family, is opposed to the strict hierarchy of the group of plotters who are united only by their wish for revenge. The same dedication of the family for the individual was also the center of *La espera* [*Waiting*, 1956], which follows a young woman's long wait for her husband, a Blue Division soldier who has gone missing in Russia, and of *Rapsodia de sangre* [*Rhapsody in Blood*, 1957], a film that centers on the Russian invasion of Budapest and the love of a young couple who oppose the foreign

oppressors.[601] I suggest that, in these films, Spain appeared as the country where intimate groups were inextricably bound by national sentiment and where individuals were free to choose their own way in life.

The Civil War started to appear in films that continued to glorify the courage and moral integrity of the Nationalist side, but also recognized the losses suffered by the Republican side. Ana Mariscal's *Con la vida hicieron fuego* [*They Turned Their Lives into Fire*, 1959] centers on two former Nationalist militants, Quico (Geroge Rigaud) and Armandina (Ana Mariscal), who reminisce over their lives dedicated to permanent war with the other side. In spite of his nascent attraction to Isabel (Malila Sandoval), Armandina's daughter, Quico convinces her to allow the young woman to marry the son of a former Republican executed by the Francoists. The older generation's realization that their own world of conflict has to disappear so that the new Spain can find its harmony is expressed in bouts of self-searching dialogue, which gives the film a more meditative tone than usual, as Heredero suggests.[602] Nevertheless, its message is one that dominated the period: national reconciliation might become the source of future prosperity. Such reconciliation, I argue, was represented as mostly the result of the generosity of the Nationalists, as was the case with Armandina and Quico, which only further legitimized Franco's rule and did not represent an honest offer of peace. Real-life persecution did continue well into the 1950s, even if in milder forms.

The melodrama of interiority permeated all the categories of the historical film, but tended to focus especially on reinforcing the moral and emotional values promoted by

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[601] The Blue Division was sent by Franco to fight on the Nazi side in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

[602] Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 207.

the regime. In 1956, Guillermo Jiménez Smerdou noted at the end of his analysis of

Spanish life and its reflection in cinema: "Aunque nos duela muchísimo decirlo, en el

actual ambiente medio español hay bastante hipocresía. ¡Cuántos por defender un puesto

privilegiado en la política o en la sociedad aparentan unos sentimientos falsos y

contrarios a sus ideas! En religión, en política, en moral . . . hay hipocresía."[603]

("Although it pains us to say it, there is plenty of hypocrisy in today's Spanish society.

How many diplay false sentiments contrary to their ideas in order to defend a privileged

position in politics or in society! In religion, politics, morality . . . there is hypocrisy.")

Having described cinema as a refuge from economic worries, he then suggested that very

few films depicted the "Spanish spirit" with authenticity and honesty. Although these

comments may very well apply to all societies at all times, they nevertheless expressed

the critic's preoccupation with a moral reality that did not seem to emerge out of a

cinema of painted cardboard, clichéd characters, and superficial conflicts. Melodrama,

however, did bear the responsibility of materializing the shifting schemas of justice and

ethics, but it did so under pressure from a regime that expected its subjects to be faithful

followers rather than free citizens. I argue that, in the 1950s, the Spanish film melodrama

of interiority reflected these expectations: it isolated intimate groups from other private

publics by promoting the image of the family as the only source of self-fulfillment; it

placed the intimate sphere under threat by inserting an element—be it a person or an

idea—whose serious anti-Catholic and anti-national inclinations could lead to the break-

up of the group; and it split the individual internally, by making him or her both victim

of, and perpetrator against, himself or herself, and others. The tensions within the

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[603] Guillermo Jiménez Smerdou, "Aspectos de la vida española en el cine español," *Espectáculo* 9. 107 (July 1956).

intimate sphere, as they were reflected in film melodramas, found a temporarily satisfactory solution on screen, but its improbability and illusoriness only left audiences looking for more. The popularity of the officially endorsed cinema was a function of this constantly induced craving.

The melodrama of interiority was part of various thematic cycles, from the historical film (*Locura de amor [Love Crazy]*, directed by Juan de Orduña in 1948), to the Spanish film noir (*La calle sin sol* [*The Street without Sun*, 1947]), or rural melodrama (*Orosia* [1943]). Adapted from a nineteenth-century play by Manuel Tamayo y Baus, *Locura de amor* was a remake of the earlier version directed by Baños and Maro and looked to the past as a source of self-esteem and escapist diversion. Doña Juana (Aurora Bautista) is the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, who are deemed the founding parents of Catholic Spain and are well-known for their intransigent policies against the Moorish and Jewish populations. Her marriage to Don Felipe (Fernando Rey), the Dutch prince of the House of Habsburg, is plagued by conflicts with her father and by the prince's philandering. Juana's fits of anger against one of her ladies-in-waiting, the Moorish Aldara (Sara Montiel), whom she identifies as her husband's mistress, leads to her being declared insane, a convenient move for Don Felipe, who becomes king. His sudden death, however, sends Juana on a mourning pilgrimage around the country, highlighting her unbridled devotion. Orduña's film had all the ingredients of a blockbuster: it resorted to lavish sets and costumes; it featured two important stars (Aurora Bautista and Fernando Rey) in the main roles and two aspiring celebrities, Sara Montiel and Jorge Mistral (as the Castilian captain loyal to Juana). Furthermore, it depicted the past as an idealized time of national glory and transformed historical, larger-

than-life figures into vulnerable human beings, eliciting audiences' sympathy. Don Felipe, the unfaithful husband, was portrayed as an intruder who schemed against the Spanish kingdom and family, but who, nevertheless, retained his patriarchal right to rule as a result of his wife's affection. A victim in her time, Juana became a martyr and a symbol of fidelity against all odds. Released only a decade after the bloody Civil War that had torn the country apart and had widowed many women, *Locura de amor* must have resonated with all those who still longed for the husbands who never came back. I suggest, however, that the text's major support for the regime consisted in its undeniable paternalist discourse that emphasized the importance of family cohesion against intruders and the groups they may represent or with which they engaged. Thus, not only is Felipe a foreigner with his own agenda, but he is also connected, through his lovers, with the very counterpublics Catholic Spain attempts to silence (the Moors). Juana is, therefore, the melodramatic heroine torn between duty and love and "rescued" by forces larger than herself: fate eliminates the treacherous husband and allows the queen to mourn him, a duty in tune with her own emotions. Family, nation, duty, and God merge into the one long shot of Juana and her wandering cortege at the end of the film.

Until the 1950s, the melodrama of interiority displayed several characteristics: a steady reliance on nineteenth-century plays and novels; a predilection for historical and rural themes; and the constant interest in the unity of the family as emblematic for national cohesion. I argue that social hierarchy, patriarchy, and the woman's essential role as mother and primary guardian of morality were Catholic-inspired themes that projected the comforting image of a secure, easily readable universe in which compliance with century-old ethic codes ensured one's access to happiness. Always perceived as a

threat to the family in its moment of crisis, counterpublics were rarely "redeemed" and incorporated into the national group, although they were not necessarily annihilated by the end of the film. By restoring family order and harmony, the pre-1950 melodrama of interiority conferred the impression of stability in a profoundly unstable, evolving world.

The 1950s films marked three major points of departure from their antecedents, especially the pre-Civil War texts. The first was the result of counterpublic voices like Bardem, Berlanga, Ferreri, Saura, or Fernán-Gómez, whose productions displayed significant differences from the official cinema. These directors' innovative approach to plot and aesthetics has led Annabel Martín to identify two ideological trends of melodrama: "compensatory" and "crisis" melodrama.[604] Compensatory melodrama, mostly connected with the classic Hollywood cinema, was politically conservative and supported the state discourse; it depicted social conflicts with an unambiguous, didactic resolution and presented the family as a refuge of peace and order.[605] Martín also suggests that, in general, the rupture produced at the level of the melodramatic text, defined as the moment of excess in content or emotion, or, in Brooks's view, the moment of astonishment, contains within it the possibility for ideological transgression. Furthermore, melodrama can function as a Foucauldian heterotopic space of reflection, confirmation, contestation, and subversion. In the case of the melodrama of compensation, however, the moment of excess remained within simple, easily controllable patterns of interpretation, whose purpose was to support unequivocal social standards. Martín suggests that it was in what remained silent and hidden in the plot that

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[604] A. Martín, *La gramática de la felicidad*, 87.
[605] Ibid., 87, 108.

one should look for the elements of possible contestation.[606] I believe that the moment of excess can preserve its capacity to raise questions about the general ideological support of the text only in the case of an ambiguous, open ending and only for those audiences that had come ready for an oppositional reading of the respective film. This was not the case with compensatory melodrama.

Crisis melodrama, usually associated with neorealism, focused on an ultimately unsolvable conflict, depicted marginalized figures, and exposed the political and social failures of the regime.[607] Martín rightfully highlights the existence of these two parallel directions in the 1950s Spanish reality (compensatory and crisis), but two caveats need to be made. Not all compensatory melodramas were devoid of critical underpinnings; for example, the melodramas that resorted to "neorealism as fashion" (i.e. only adopted the neorealist style, but not its thematic preoccupations) were critical of the social, and, implicitly, political reality of Spain, but remained faithful to its ideological discourse about private and intimate publics. *Surcos*, *Hay un camino a la derecha* [*There Is a Right Way*, 1953], or *La guerra de Dios* can be included in this category. Furthermore, as Marsha Kinder has already emphasized, classical Hollywood, a style associated especially with compensatory melodrama, was also an instrument for regime criticism, especially when paired against neorealism in the oppositional filmmakers' work.[608] Finally, I would observe that the choice of style did have a bearing on the texts' popularity, so that neorealism sold fewer tickets, even if the films had compensatory, appeasing plots.

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[606] Ibid., 79-80.
[607] Ibid., 87-88, 108.
[608] Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 37.

The other two departure points from the pre-war melodrama concern the situation of counterpublics and intimate groups. After 1950, characters that represented counterpublics were either remorseful and had a chance at redemption, or were physically eliminated by the end of the plot. As National Catholicism gained more political ground, the visibility and significance of ecclesiastical figures in the act of repentance became more palpable. The third point of departure from the pre-1950 melodrama was that protagonists were never fully virtuous or vicious, but gained complexity without depth: they were simultaneously victims and perpetrators without, however, reaching or demonstrating an awareness of their double nature, as would be the case with the characters of a tragedy. The individual's dualism placed intimate groups under a permanent instability, a situation that reflected the anxieties fostered by the insecure social reality of an authoritarian regime in economic and ideological transition. Melodramatic situations were often superficially resolved by recourse to circumstance and *deus ex machina* reassuring endings.

The melodrama of interiority infiltrated the four dominant thematic cycles, often reaching enough popularity to rival comedy, in its various generic embodiments. The most popular title of the historical melodrama of interiority was *¿Dónde vas, AlfonsoXII?* (*Where Are You Going, Alfonso XII?*, 1958, dir. Luis César Amadori)*,* a heritage film centered on the first marriage of King Alfonso XII. Andrew Higson has used the term "heritage" in relation to British costume dramas of the 1980s and 1990s. The word refers to a group of films—whether based on real or fictitious historical events, and on literary

works—that display an intense interest in the detailed reproduction of a fetishized past.[609]

Usually centered on a romance, heritage films perform a double function: they engross

viewers in the particulars of the plot and the characters' psychological and affective

processes, but they also present a range of "attractions," in Gunning's sense of the word,

thereby encouraging spectators to pay at least equal attention to the spectacular *mise en*

scène, costumes, and mores.[610] In the 1950s Spanish cinema, heritage films "sold" an

idealized vision of the past, focused on the glory and power of exemplary individuals. In

¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?, the young king of Spain (Vicente Parra) falls in love with his

cousin, María de las Mercedes (Paquita Rico) and is only too happy to see that, in spite of

her connection to the French court (she is the granddaughter of the King of France), she

has been raised and behaves like a genuine Spanish girl. His mother, Queen Isabel II

(Mercedes Vecino), believes that María is unsuitable for her son. She has been planning

an alliance with another important European royal court, especially as the Carlists are

threatening with war, so the king's choice could endanger his rule. Having proven his

superiority in the ensuing political and armed confrontations for the throne, the young

king eventually marries the loyal, loving María, but she dies prematurely within only six

months of the wedding. There was a huge gap between this escapist, tragic romance at

the royal court and *Agustina de Aragón*, with its cry of battle for Spain. By the late 1950s,

history was no longer an opportunity to inflate nationalist sentiment and use it to mask

poverty and repression, but, I argue, had become a source of spectacle and gratifying

pathos. Shot in color and using elaborate costumes and settings, *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso*

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[609] Andrew Higson, "The English Heritage Film in the 1980s and 1990s: Mapping the Field," in *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.
[610] Ibid., 39, 41.

XII? also featured songs by the celebrated Paquita Rico, which only contributed to the metamorphosis of the past into fantasy. History had become an opportunity for spectacle and commercial exploitation.

History was also an opportunity for a subtle reinforcement of Francoist expectations for private and intimate groupings. In *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?*, the core of the intimate sphere is initially established around the mother-son relationship, which functions as a symbol for the necessary sacrifice the older generation needs to make for the good of the nation. Dethroned by a republican coup d'état, Isabel decides to abdicate, while in exile, in favor of her son, a young, energetic man who could draw together the necessary political support for a return to the country and power. The opening scene emphasizes the complete identification between nation and family as the queen reads her abdication act "… por la felicidad y la ventura de la patria y de los hijos de [su] amada España…" ("… for the happiness and good fortune of the country and of the children of [her] beloved Spain"). In this context, María, whose royal lineage is less than perfect, is only an intruder, the representative of a political and social counterpublic, especially as she is also depicted, historically inaccurately, as one of the people: she goes to school in a convent, sings for her friends, and believes in the Gypsy soothsayers she meets on her journeys. Alfonso's marriage to her appeared, therefore, as an act of trespassing, but gratified audiences' expectations for a compensatory, rags-to-riches plot. The "intruder" of lower status could, nevertheless, be integrated into the body of the family and the nation, and María's devotion to her husband gains her the admiration of various members of the royal court, from her sister-in-law to the king's butler. The diverse participants in her funeral demonstrate that the king's marriage has perfected a union of all social classes

and political groups in the country as republican sympathizers, family members, Church bishops, and the people in the street come together to pray for her soul. *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?* was, therefore, a narrative of national reconciliation, which suggests that the cohesion of the intimate sphere, considered to be a woman's responsibility, was essential to national unity. The young queen's untimely departure was, indirectly, the sacrificial act that restored the monarchy's, and the king's, connection with his subjects, an idea emphasized by the last scene of the film in which Alfonso signs as a king a number of documents necessary for the governance of the country. The integration of counterpublics was, therefore, deemed possible under certain circumstances: when they demonstrated loyalty and dedication to the unequivocally patriarchal establishment as was the case in *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?* or *Ama Rosa*; when they suffered and were possibly redeemed, as in *Pequeñeces, De mujer a mujer* (*From Woman to Woman,* 1950), and *La violetera*; or when they represented the independent spirit of the nation, as in *La leona de Castilla*. In all cases, such an integration, I argue, was intended to consolidate both family and nation.

A similar intention was also supported in films that surveyed the more recent history of the Civil War, World War II, or the anti-communist present. In *Con la vida hicieron fuego*, Quico and Armandina, the two former Nationalist militants, accept Falín (Ángel Aranda), the son of a former Republican, into their family because they need to adapt to the young generation's different world and political conscience. Without this adaptation, the family and the nation are at an impasse. In the anti-communist *Rapsodia de sangre,* the young pianist is accepted by his fiancée's father, an anti-Russian professor and militant, only after he has demonstrated his loyalty to the family by offering to

convert to Catholicism, his fiancée's religion, and by providing the Hungarian revolutionaries with the pretext to start the 1956 insurrection. I suggest that counterpublics demonstrated, in these cases, the eagerness and commitment to build a future different from current regrets or foreign oppression, and, thus, served the nation that "adopted" them.

A second thematic category is that of "contemporary" films. These assumed various shapes, from the grave, yet very schematic darkness of Spanish film noir, to the seriousness of films centered on social concerns, or the often satiric humor of comedies. I suggest that the general tendency was to adopt a moralizing stance towards the events and characters involved, usually expressed either by means of a voiceover that opened the film and sometimes accompanied its protagonists throughout, or by recourse to explanatory titles that set unambiguous, ethical parameters from the start. As neorealism permeated popular cinema, protagonists gained depth and delinquency acquired more nuanced causes. Nevertheless, all crime had its punishment, albeit in a milder form for those characters that admitted and repented for their deeds, especially if they sought forgiveness from the Church. The regime, therefore, created clear templates for the interpretation of contemporary situations, promoting an image of order and control. I believe that the stability and consistency of its doctrine, as highlighted in films, gave audiences a sensation of security and inspired fantasies of well-deserved social progress. As the young directors stated during the Salamanca Conversations, this was a cinema of fake concerns, posed in simplified terms as the opposition between good and evil, and with rehearsed solutions that gratified moviegoers' expectations and strengthened the reputation of the state and its representatives.

Largely inspired by Hollywood film noir, Spanish detective films lacked the ambiguity and even depth of character of their American counterparts. The police were never shady characters with a dubious past, but paragons of morality and justice. The few female characters were not exotic women luring the protagonist into a trap, but mostly models of faithfulness and integrity. The combination of neorealist and film noir aesthetics, however, conferred on these films their aura of mystery and narrative excitement. The puzzle to be solved took various shapes, from the classical, straightforward pursuit of a drug dealer in *Brigada criminal* [*Crime Unit*, 1950, dir. Ignacio F. Iquino], to one man's jealousy and envy over his former schoolmate's wife and wealth in *Los ojos dejan huellas.* In *Los peces rojos* (*Red Fish*, 1955), the death of an imaginary son was the center of investigation, while in *El Expreso de Andalucía* [*The Andalusian Express*, 1956] and *Los atracadores* (*The Robbers*, 1961), young men attempted to gain independence and outdo their fathers. Class differences between two rivals in *La noche y el alba* and the psychological and sexual deviancy of a child molester with an authoritarian wife in *El cebo* (*It Happened in Broad Daylight*, 1958) provided more plot diversity. The intense preoccupation with class and generational differences was constantly resolved in favor of the upper classes. Furthermore, fathers' moral code and honor remained an ideal only fully understood and respected when it was often too late to save the trespassers. I argue that the would-be benefic paternalism of detective films legitimized Franco's state paternalism, classifying possible revolts as misguided attempts doomed to fail.

The intimate sphere and religious faith represented the only ways out of the crises provoked by the economic, matrimonial, or generational strife in films with a strong

social inclination and that often resorted to "neorrealismo como moda." The soldier's attempts to give his army horse a new life ends only when he leaves the city and establishes an ideal community with his friends in Edgar Neville's *El último caballo*. Jacinto (Antonio Vico), the middle-aged beggar who aims for the glory he has never known as a bullfighter, finds his only satisfaction in the admiration of his nephew, Pepote (Pablito Calvo), in Ladislao Vajda's *Mi tío Jacinto* (*My Uncle Jacinto*, 1956). Evaristo (Fernando Fernán-Gómez) and Marta (María Rosa Salgado) look frantically for a new apartment when their building is threatened with demolition only to end up living on the street with nobody who could help them but each other in Nieves Conde's *El inquilino* (*The Tenant*, 1957). In *Día tras día* (*Day by Day*, 1951), the constant support and care of a Catholic priest saves a young man from a possible life of crime, while the death of a famous surgeon's son eventually reunites the family and draws the father to the Church in *La herida luminosa* [*The Radiant Wound*, 1956]. I argue that didacticism, the infantilization of the regular citizen, and Church and state paternalism dominated such incursions into social territory, condoning the intervention of official institutions into the private and intimate spheres as the means of salvation and happiness.

Comedies, many of which were musicals, reinforced the same patriarchal values, but relinquished didacticism in favor of laughter and a happy ending. The search for the perfect partner prevailed over all other topics and attracted large audiences, which indicates their increased appetite for uncomplicated distraction. The collaboration between Pedro Lazaga, José Luis Dibildos, the scriptwriter, and Fernando Fernán-Gómez at the end of the 1950s produced a series of very popular comedies whose interest lay with the young, more modern generation. Inheritance and its complications cause the

humorous misadventures of a would-be-rich bachelor in *Ana dice sí* [*Ana Says Yes*, 1958], while in *Luna de verano* (*Summer Moon*, 1959), two foreign young women come to discover Spain and its literature only to get involved constantly in funny events they misinterpret. Finally, in one of the most commercial films of the decade, Rafael J. Salvia's *Las chicas de la Cruz Roja* (*The Red Cross Girls*, 1958), four young women of different social background volunteer to raise money on the streets of Madrid and dream of their perfect weddings. I note that these films offered an ideal image of a society in transition, whose new models of femininity and masculinity put on the European clothes of the late 1950s, but had limited aspirations and continued to celebrate the same paternalistic voice of the early 1950s.

Melodramas of interiority exploring contemporary life emphasized the necessity for the isolation of intimate groups and a cautious attitude towards counterpublics. In plots centered on urban life, counterpublic discourses tended to infiltrate the intimate sphere and threaten its cohesion. In *Hay un camino a la derecha*, Miguel (Francisco Rabal) desires the best for his family, but is disheartened by the lack of any serious perspective. He decides to get involved in the black market, to which he is introduced by his sister-in-law's boyfriend. The result is that Miguel's son is run over by the racketeers' truck as they are trying to get away from the police. The association with economic, and moral, counterpublics has fatal effects that, through the mediation of the church, are eventually turned in favor of the family. At the end of the film, Miguel and Inés (Julia Mártinez) welcome their new baby, Víctor, who bears the same name as their older son. "Ahora… comprendes que la familia es algo muy importante, la más importante de las instituciones humanas…" ("Now you understand that the family is very important, the

most important human institution…"), concludes the grave voice at the end of the film, as the medium shot of the mourning parents dissolves into a painting of the Sacred Family under inspirational, choral non-diegetic music. The unattributed, God-like voice, a symbolical embodiment of the ever-present state, adds that one's happiness comes from playing the role that he or she has been given in life. Miguel and his wife are drawn closer by their son's death and renounce any further ambitions that might endanger the family, seen as a sacred unity. In *La herida luminosa*, Enrique Molinos (Arturo de Córdova), a famous doctor with a rich extra-marital life, is seduced into an affair with his niece, which leads to his final estrangement from his wife and son. In a *deus-ex-machina* turn of events, the niece dies in a car crash and the son has a heart attack, which inspires the doctor's epiphany, in religious tones, about the importance of family and Catholic faith. Part of the religious counterpublics, Dr. Molinos is brought back into the "flock" through his son's holy abnegation and indirect sacrifice, but only after having suffered twice and repented for his deeds. Finally, in *La muralla*, intimate groups break apart under the pressure of economic pursuits. Don Jorge (Armando Calvo) suffers a heart attack that makes him reconsider his life, so he decides to return his fortune to the son of the man he once robbed. His family, however, turns against him, for various reasons: his daughter cannot marry the rich young man to whom she is engaged; his mother-in-law refuses to renounce the advantages of a comfortable status; and his young wife, in spite of supporting his initial choice, ends up lamenting her situation. The protagonist's guilt and desire for redemption divide a family connected only by material wealth, leading to Jorge's death and possible struggles over the fortune. Having defied the Catholic discourse that could solidify their connection, the intimate groups in *La muralla* are

pulled apart by private interest, which was often the basis for counterpublic discourses. Like Miguel and Dr. Molinos, don Jorge is simultaneously a perpetrator and a victim; if the first two characters "attack" their own families, whose trust they break, and suffer the consequences, don Jorge recklessly builds his family's fortune on another family's suffering only to be mistreated by those he has protected. Similar discourses regarding the economic forces threatening to pull intimate groups apart percolated into the intimate sphere in *Surcos*, *Día tras día*, *Quema el suelo* [*Burning Ground*, 1952, dir. Luis Marquina], or *Todos somos necesarios* [*We Are All Necessary*, 1956, dir. José Antonio Nieves Conde], and in all cases it was the religious discourse, based on repentance and redemption, that could keep the family together. I argue that these films aimed to accomplish several goals at once: recognize the regular individual's economic hardships, condemn the influence of counterpublics, and propose a "solution" that annihilated such counterforces—whether by incorporating them into the social weave or by physically eliminating them –and reinforced the value of Catholic doctrine.

The melodrama of interiority also coupled with the film noir of the 1950s, which often focused on the individual's awareness of a personal failure and the attempt to retaliate by harming others. In *Los ojos dejan huellas*, the most commercially successful of film noir melodrama, Martín Jordán (Raf Vallone), who was expelled from the university and now makes a living as a perfume salesman, decides to take revenge on a former schoolmate Roberto Ayala (Julio Peña) for the latter's success as a lawyer. His downfall comes when Roberto's wife Berta (Elena Varzi) vindicates her husband's death by calling the police and having herself killed by Martín exactly as they arrive to arrest him. Vallone's character is constructed as a representative figure for counterpublics,

whether they are economic or political[611]; he only makes his way up the social ladder by means of murder and the seduction of a would-be victim, Berta. Although her reasons for avenging Roberto's death are not clear—she is well aware of her husband's frequent escapades with other women—she is the typically faithful wife who has to defend, even postmortem, her family's integrity. Counterpublics could only be eliminated by means of the family's sacrifice, which, in this case, means Berta's death.

The sacrifice of a family member as a necessary step for the consolidation of intimate groups was also true in other film noir narratives: in *Los peces rojos*, Hugo (Arturo de Córdova) has to "kill" the son he has invented in order to gain confidence in his partner and himself; in *Madrugada* [*Dawn*, 1957, dir. Antonio Román], Amalia (Mara Cruz) understands her husband's commitment and love for her only after his death; and in *No dispares contra mí* [*Don't Shoot Me*, 1961, dir. José María Nunes], a young man rebels against his father and the authorities only to find his death at the hands of the French woman he trusts. In these cases, the influence of counterpublics had devastating effects because they exploited the protagonists' lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. Those who could not atone and reintegrate into the family, as was the case in *No dispares contra mí*, paid with their lives.

Three secondary thematic cycles specific to the 1950s, and part of the historical and contemporary cycles, included films whose protagonists were children and films dedicated to the two major forms of mass entertainment at the time: bullfighting and football. Three children actors dominated the decade—Pablito Calvo, Joselito (José

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[611] The reason for Martín's exclusion from the university is not clear, but his critical attitude toward it suggests it may have been an act of injustice; it is not far-fetched to assume Martín may have been on the wrong side during the Civil War.

Jiménez Frenández), and Marisol (Josefa Flores González)—and had distinct appeal.

Calvo, recruited by a magazine for the role of Marcelino that would bring him

international fame, was the first source of the public's craze for children-based cinema:

his round face and big eyes became the perfect image of the orphan whose innocence and

kind heart could not save him for a better fate. *Marcelino pan y vino*, *Juanito* (1960, dir.

Fernando Palacios), and *Alerta en el cielo* (*Sky Alert*, 1961, dir. Luis César Amadori)

exploited, in melodramatic key, the sentimentality and pathos associated with the figure

of the ill-fated child. Joselito and Marisol, whose careers soared after 1956, became

famous for their extraordinary voices and were cast in musicals. If Joselito, himself from

a large, poor family, embodied the abandoned child, the orphan, or the Picaro with an

angelic voice, Marisol, who came on stage at the end of the decade, represented the

middle class.[612] As Heredero notes, all children were always attached to an adult, in many

cases a representative of the Church, who replaced the absent parents and who took upon

himself or herself the responsibility that would have been charged to the system.[613] I

suggest that, far from being vehicles of criticism, children's exploits were only another

source of spectacle and facile emotionalism.

Bullfighting and football also supplied more opportunities for cheap

entertainment. Biopics took advantage of the celebrity of football players such as

Ladislao Kubala or Alfredo di Stéfano, or employed real-life toreadors in fictional

narratives about bullfighting in films such as *Tarde de toros* (*Afternoon of the Bulls*,

1956, dir. Ladislao Vajda), *El niño de las monjas* [*The Child of the Nuns*, 1959, dir.

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[612] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 233.
[613] Ibid., 229.

Ignacio F. Iquino], or *El traje de oro* [*The Golden Suit*, 1959, dir. Julio Coll].[614]

Bullfighters populated many other films and were romanticized figures representing the

moral integrity and physical prowess of the nation. In films of neorealist extract,

however, pursuing the dream of becoming a famous toreador brought about the

character's disillusion and even downfall, as was the case with the drunkard uncle in *Mi*

tío Jacinto, or young men from the outskirts of society in the not-so-popular films by

dissident directors such as Marco Ferreri (*Los chicos* [*The Children*, 1959]), Carlos Saura

(*Los golfos*), or Bardem (*A las cinco de la tarde*). The immediate commercial hits that

focused on football and bullfighting promoted virility, strength, and authority as the

Spanish ideal of masculinity, a self-gratifying fantasy that rallied audiences to the

theaters, but could not keep them there for long-lasting periods of time.

A final important category associated with the historical cycle was that of literary

adaptations. Inspired especially by the novelists and dramatists of the nineteenth century,

who, with few exceptions, excluded the modernizing European inflections of the

"Generation of '98," these films were an excuse to elude the historical present and

produce a cinema of "quality," a trend also popular in Europe and the United States at the

time. Elaborate settings, meticulous attention to props, and extravagant costumes were

the source of spectacle and the popularity of a film such as *Pequeñeces*. Based on a novel

by Luis Coloma, the film kept history in the background in order to expose the political

plotting, the vanity, and the gossiping that characterized Spanish society in its nineteenth-

century transition through a brief republican period. Its indirect attack on the disorder

caused by "improper" political choices and its support of a strong monarchy that would

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[614] Ibid., 272.

establish the rule of law and of the Church were expressed in the suffering of virtuous figures such as Elvira (Lina Yegros), the faithful wife and loving mother, who, abandoned by a cheating husband, has to endure her son's accidental death, but who finds in the Church the strength to forgive the moral culprit for her misfortunes, Curra Albornoz (Aurora Bautista). The return to religion comes, in Curra's case, with the realization of her guilt in the deaths of her son and Elvira's, a moment exploited for tears at the end of the film, but which is barely motivated by the character's evolution to that point. Curra is incapable of loyalty and honesty to her family and, implicitly, of fostering and defending their intimate sphere. Having exposed the female protagonist's sexuality as excessive, Orduña pleaded for a strong state that would eliminate fortune-hunters such as Elvira's husband, for a Church-based discourse of the intimate sphere under the benefic influence of women such as Elvira, and for the punishment and repentance of those who were not satisfied with their station in life.

Literary adaptation adopted neorealism toward the end of the decade, but popular cinema used it mostly as a means of access to an international market rather than as an instrument of criticism.[615] The commercial success of *El lazarillo de Tormes* was, in large measure, the result of a narrative stripped of its most incisive, anticlerical tones. An orphan, Lazarillo (Marco Paoletti) is the Picaro figure who becomes the victim of a blind beggar, a stingy old man, and, eventually, a company of actors. Sixteenth-century Spain, as it appears in the anonymous novel, is one of hunger, petty crime, and violence, and

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[615] Bardem's *Calle Mayor* was an adaptation of Carlos Arniches' play *La señorita de Trévelez*, in which neorealism and Hollywood melodrama complemented each other and opened spaces of criticism against the contemporary Spanish society. Similarly, *Sonatas* was based on a novel by Valle-Inclán, and exposed the political conflicts in nineteenth-century Spain and Mexico as a blueprint for the twentieth-century crises in Spain. Neither film, however, was a popular success at the time.

eventually converts the young boy into a delinquent. The connections with 1950s Spain might have transformed the film into a vehicle for disclosure and condemnation, but they were underplayed in favor of the young actor's photogenic looks and the character's droll impishness. I argue that *El lazarillo de Tormes* was a form of escapist entertainment and its popularity depended on viewers' emotional engagement with the protagonist. The same recipe for commercial efficiency was pursued by other adaptations, such as Manuel Mur Oti's *Cielo negro* (*Black Sky*, 1951), based on a novel by Antonio Zozaya, *Cañas y barro* [*Reeds and Mud*, 1954], based on a novel by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez in which passions ran amok in a small village, *Fedra* (1956), a crude reading of Seneca's play in exaggeratedly erotic key, or *Ama Rosa* [*Nanny Rosa*, 1960], a tear-jerker by G. Sautier Casaseca centered on a woman who raised her own son as his nanny.[616] These films also adopted the conventions of classical Hollywood, with a straightforward, cause-and-effect narrative line, studied acting, and stylized editing, as well as settings and costumes. I argue that both neorealism and Hollywood contributed to the spectacular nature of literary adaptations, and to their popular success.

Similar ingredients characterized another dominant thematic cycle: the religious cinema. This group of films suffered several metamorphoses that closely followed the political and social changes of the 1950s: the rise of the Catholic Church as a substitute for the Falange and its fascist doctrine, but also the emergence of young counterpublics within the Catholic Action toward the end of the 1950s. Consequently, the religious figures who populated the films, be they priests, friars, or nuns, also traversed several stages, preserving their status as exemplary individuals, always ready to sacrifice

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[616] See also Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 164-171.

themselves for the good of others and of the faith. One of the most frequent motifs was that of self-examination, change, and redemption, a symbolic path for national unity after the Civil War. Such narrative of self-discovery, however, was only possible by divine grace, and, if the moment of epiphany might have been personal, its effects went beyond the one individual it concerned. *El Judas* follows the inner rise of a man from the position of "Judas" in the "Passion of Christ" he plays on stage and in real life, to that of a benefactor who gains the trust of his family and the village, but pays with his life his former callousness and brutality to them. In the more socially-oriented *Pequeñeces*, *Hay un camino a la derecha*, *La muralla*, or *La herida luminosa*, the protagonists reaches self-awareness only through the death of another, but always under the patronage and with the benediction of the Church. The self-narrative encouraged by the regime was, therefore, deeply enmeshed in Catholicism, and was organized around the revelation of the divine. I suggest that the unquestionable authority of the Church in this intimate, individual matter was transferred onto the state, whose officials were also clerical figures. The films of the religious cycle promoted and naturalized the regime's subtle invasion of the intimate sphere.

A second category included in this cycle focused on missionary figures, with a specific stress on saint hagiographies toward the end of the decade. The priest or the nun was the often sole provider of material or emotional support, wearing the robe of the parent for the orphans, the marginalized, and, especially, those easily led into crime. I argue that in the films with a significant social bias, which often employed the "Catholic neorealism" promoted by the advocates for an aesthetic change within the regime, the cleric pacified the rebels and restored the integrity of the community. At the beginning of

Cerca de la ciudad [*Close to the City*, 1952], the camera pretends to follow the ordinary life on the outskirts of Madrid only to discover a community plagued by misery, whose salvation comes from the young priest who uses his savings for the children. He morally coerces the one well-off lady to turn her house into a shelter for the poor. A similar protagonist, but with a more serious mission, father Andrés (Claude Laydu) fosters the unlikely conciliation between the exploited miners of a remote village and the management that has oppressed them in Rafael Gil's *La guerra de Díos* (*I Was a Parish Priest*, 1953), but only when an unfortunate—or God-sent?—collapse of a mine wall traps together the daughter of the mine-owner and the son of the miners' leader. Hagiographies followed the same pattern of the priest or nun as a savior figure. Two of the most popular films of the decade were Luis Lucía's *Molokai, la isla maldita* (*Molokai*, 1959), in which the Belgian Father Damián (Javier Escrivá) transforms the lepers' prison island into a space of peaceful and cordial living, and Juan de Orduña's *Teresa de Jesús* (1961), in which Teresa de Ávila (Aurora Bautista) achieves a similar spiritual harmony among her followers by shying away from the pomp and layers of empty conventionality of the Church and by dedicating herself to the mission with which she feels directly entrusted by Jesus Christ. I note that the scripts of such films, however, relied on atypical, highly improbable social scenarios, and exaggerated, often in sentimental key, the exploits of the fictional or historical characters. Capable of solving all problems that might come their way, the clerical figures in this category were models of self-sacrifice, strengthening the official social discourse and reassuring audiences that they would, one day, be relieved of their suffering.

A third category of religious cinema dealt exclusively with fantasies of revelation and miracles, and was closely associated with the one of the secondary thematic cycles, the child-centered films. *Marcelino pan y vino* and *La Señora de Fátima* were two of the most popular films of the decade, in which children witnessed, and became the bearers of, divine grace. In both cases, the revelation compensated for the lack of an ideal family: Marcelino, in spite of the friars' care and affection, longs for a mother's love, while Lucía (Inés Orsini) suffers when her father becomes violent and her mother refuses to believe her. The divine apparitions answer the child's wish for the original unity with the mother, as Marcelino joins the celestial mother he has craved and Lucía's family regains its peace.[617] I suggest that, in addition to the huge popularity of their child-actors, these films drew audiences with their promises of a parallel, redeeming reality, yet another source of escapist fantasy. They promised the recovery of the ideal, original intimate sphere.

The religious cycle was often so closely monitored by the Catholic Church and the Catholic Action that its directors complained about the strict supervision.[618] Juan de Orduña's film about Teresa de Ávila's exploits had to wait for ten years and several changes in the administration before it could be made, and even then it was severely truncated and censored not only by the state Junta, but also by various Catholic organizations and orders.[619] The result was a religious cinema that did not question the often conservative, clichéd models it had to promote, but reproduced them superficially and with more attention to the sensationalism of the plots rather than the depth of the

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[617] The film was not spared its own political undertones: the Virgin's discourse also incorporated an indirect accusation of Russia as the country that had turned its back to the church and that could be reconverted through people's faith before a better world could emerge.
[618] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 192-193.
[619] Ibid., 193.

social issues approached. The priests and nuns that paraded across the screen were, in spite of their gravity and pretensions of spiritual vigor, only another string of the "painted dolls" exposed, with little effect, at the Salamanca Conversations: colorful, but empty.

The religious melodrama of interiority explored the theme of repentance and redemption, adding the motif of the outsider, always a representative of the Church, whose self-abnegation leads to the stability and harmony of intimate groups and the conversion of counterpublics. *Balarrasa* was one of the first films with a religious theme to gain wide popularity in the 1950s. A former soldier, Javier (Fernando Fernán-Gómez), decides to put on the robe of a priest after his recklessness has led to the death of one of his friends. Before being ordained, he visits his family only to find them splitting apart and involved in a life of gambling and small crime that started after the mother's death. He becomes the source of his family's reformation, and, with the help of his younger sister, Javier "Balarrasa" reunites his siblings around the old father, whose reputation and status he restores. Nieves Conde's film explores several recurring topics of Spanish cinema in the 1950s: the transfer of political power from the military to the Church; the necessary link between (paternal) authority and religious faith and observance; the dependence of a family's moral resilience on the feminine figure; and the role of the Church as the essential adhesive of the intimate sphere. Catholic faith was the instrument of moral redemption in many films of the decade, whether they centered on religious subject-matters or had historical or folkloric dominants.

Missionary figures in other films oscillated between direct, unequivocal action against the counterpublics they deemed dangerous to the lives of their communities, as in *Molokai*, or self-sacrificing, self-denying belief in their call and in the goodwill and grace

that governed all human interaction, as in *Teresa de Jesús* and *Fray Escoba*. In fantasies like *Marcelino pan y vino* or *La Señora de Fátima*, the innocence and openheartedness of children mediated between the believers and non-believers, achieving the miracle of complete integration into the religious world of all those who doubted, from the little village where Marcelino played his childish pranks, to the father and the skeptical state representative sent to investigate the revelations in Fátima. In the 1950s religious melodrama of interiority, the "moral occult" was unequivocally identified with the Catholic divine realm, whose ethical principles and laws were the ideological support of the regime; consequently, religious counterpublics were often depicted as economic and social counterpublics that could attract audiences' opprobrium, such as the cruel mayor of the village where Marcelino and his friars lived, and Lucía's violent father in *La Señora de Fátima*, or even the many petty functionaries and lower clergy who bullied Friar Martín (in *Fray Escoba*) because of his poverty and race. Their conversion to faith or their elimination provided, therefore, further legitimation to the regime.

The films of the fourth dominant cycle—the folkloric cinema—centered on specifically Spanish traditions, customs, and cultural forms and endorsed the image of a nation unique in its passions, values, and achievements. From the *españoladas* that promoted flamenco and the romanticized figure of the Gypsy, to the rural melodramas that traded in unleashed emotion, and to the *bandolerismo* of films that often borrowed the characteristics of the Western, folkloric cinema was essentially a fantasy park for the most diverse tastes and expectations, and, therefore, included numerous secondary thematic cycles.

Españoladas were probably the most exclusively escapist in their appeal. Promoted with great enthusiasm, they were vehicles for stars such as Carmen Sevilla, Lola Flores, or Paquita Rico, whose characters regularly made the front cover of *Primer Plano*. These films were often romances in which couples passed through several trials, caused by family rivalries, Gypsy origins, a third love interest, or a shady past, before they could come together, often "sealing" their intimate sphere with a final song about love. *La niña de la venta* (*The Girl at the Inn*, 1951, dir. Ramón Torrado), *La pícara molinera* [*The Cunning Miller*, 1955], or *Pan, amor y… Andalucía* (*Bread, Love and Andalusia*, 1958, dir. Javier Setó) gravitated around the exotic image of the woman whose singing and dancing were among the few forms of erotic sublimation accepted by the regime and, in my opinion, the reasons for the popularity of these films. When the urban *cuplé* replaced the interest in the rural *españoladas* toward the end of the decade, the hints to illicit sexuality associated with the heroine became more visible and indispensable to the plot.

Folkloric melodramas added pathos to the erotic spectacle of atavistic passion and craving often turned into obsession. There was a constant allusion to uncontrollable emotional attachments that prevented individuals from resting until they found their death. The family, often established on unstable grounds, was at the mercy of such passions that broke up the state- and church-endorsed publics in favor of illegitimate relations, with disastrous endings. *Luna de sangre*, *Condenados*, *Fuego en la sangre* [*Blood Fire*, 1953, dir. Ignacio F. Iquino], *Cañas y barro*, or *Como la tierra* [*Like the Land*, 1954, dir. Alfredo Hurtado] had almost interchangeable plots in which women paid for their extramarital attraction with their lives, but not before repenting to their husbands

and their families. The dramas flared up in an atemporal universe, with few, if any, links to the world beyond the small community of the village, which allowed them to function as parables of a rural world in possible decline. The repression following the Civil War, the years of hunger, the growing migration to the city, and failed agrarian reforms haunted the texts of these films, often in the form of one of the partner's absence, whether it was the man, who enrolled in the army, as in *Cañas y barro* and *Luna de sangre*, was away on business, as in *Fuego en la sangre*, or was in prison, as in *Condenados,* or whether it was the woman, attracted to the dynamic life of the city in *Como la tierra*. This absence was essential to the mismatching that eventually caused the woman's death. Defined by the lovers' obsession with each other, the intimate sphere brushed off the public emphasis on duty and the preservation of class and status, an attitude that conferred on the illicit couple the status of a counterpublic. If the role of the moral censor was attributed to the community, the contribution of failed mother figures to the final misfortune further indicted women for the moral decomposition of the family. In *Cañas y barro*, the heroine is raised by a constantly sick, distant, even violent aunt, while in *Como la tierra*, the unhappy marriage of the son is urged by his mother on her dying bed and in *Luna de sangre* the hero's mother finally agrees to his marriage only because the future wife might prevent the son's enrollment in the army. Father figures do not fare much better: they are weak in *Cañas y barro* and *Luna de sangre*, covet the young woman in *Fuego en la sangre* and *Cañas y barro*, or are absent in *Como la tierra*. With few exceptions, the films end with the death of the "perpetrators" against public morality, an outcome that often relies on sheer coincidence. Thus, in *Luna de sangre*, a husband kills his wife and her presumed lover in an act of rage only to regret this rash step

immediately. Furthermore, in *Fuego en la sangre*, the tormented heroine attempts to build a new life with a different man, but is gored by a bull in the last scene, when she runs out of the house, remorseful for having shot her former lover. Finally, in *Como la tierra*, the penitent protagonist returns to her husband only to be shot accidentally when she intervenes in the fight between the two rivals. I argue that these films endorsed a world in which lack of male authority and deviant female attractions and aspirations caused the rampant jealousy and carnal passion that brought down the family. They attracted audiences with promises of forbidden passions exposed, and also served them moralizing tales that reinforced the regime's insistence on patriarchy and the woman's infantilized position, yet crucial responsibility as the moral agent of the family.[620] The man's necessary ascendancy within intimate groupings was an indirect expression of the state and its leader's authority over the nation. The final punishment seemed excessive, especially as, given the strict censorship, the plot itself was not very explicit about the couple's guilt. This surplus of emotion and violence could have given rise to questions regarding the ideology behind the film. Surprisingly, unlike their comedy counterparts, folkloric melodramas did not achieve any lasting popularity and did not reach the top thirty most popular films of the decade.[621] I suggest that the firm didacticism of these films determined audiences' rejection, in spite of the existence of spaces of contestation opened by moments of excess. Viewers related to the overall product rather than to the critically selective parts of it.

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[620] Although these films were not among the most popular of the decade, they initially fared relatively well with the public; for example, *Cañas y barro* and *Condenados* were voted among the fifteen most popular films in 1955. See "La popularidad según el Instituto de la Opinión Pública," *Primer Plano* 743 (12 January 1955).

[621] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 99; Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 262.

Films centered on the specifically Spanish *bandolerismo*—the lives of legendary bandits—provided a more direct argument for state justice and authority. With few exceptions, the once popularly acclaimed Robin Hoods, whose feats of courage implied the often violent attack on authorities and the rich in favor of the marginalized and the poor, acquired, in the 1950s Spanish cinema, the image of ruthless, bloodthirsty criminals, whose purposes no longer had the aura of nobility and justice they once did.[622] In *Carne de horca* (*Sierra Morena*, 1953, dir. Ladislao Vajda), the famous outlaw Lucero (Fosco Giachetti), sung in the ballads of Andalusia, is depicted as a cruel, ransom-hunting man, connected with corrupt officials and more of a terrorizing than righteous figure. Similarly, in *Torrepartida* (1956, dir. Pedro Lazaga) bandits are a constant threat to the civil guard and the population of a small town, and become an instrument of revenge for the mayor's disgruntled brother. Finally, the bandits of *Sentencia contra una mujer* [*Sentence against a Woman*, 1960, dir. Antonio Isasi-Isasmendi] kidnap a rich young groom on the day of his wedding and plague him with doubts that his wife will not pay the ransom. By contrast, the outlaw retained his mythical status in films in which his revolt was not necessarily against the representatives of the state, but against foreign forces, whether these were the American occupiers of a Mexican village in *El Coyote* (1955, dir. Joaquín Luis Romero Marchent) or the abusive owners of an Andalusian mine in *Amanecer en Puerta Oscura* (*Whom God Forgives*, 1957, dir. José María Forqué). The latter film was based on a screenplay by Alfonso Sastre, an important dissident playwright, so censorship forced the producers to set the film in the nineteenth century

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[622] By contrast, late 1960s Romanian cinema promoted the image of haiduks—local Robin Hoods—, who, like the future communists, fought for economic and social justice against the propertied, corrupted classes. I shall return to this idea in the next section.

and include ample explanatory titles indicating that only at that time did political turmoil and social distress justify the revolt of the miners at the time. I argue that the demythologization of the outlaw represented a direct attack on underground counterpublics. Portrayed as corrupt, violent men, bandits threatened not only state officials, but also the regular population. Breaking the law was in favor of the nation only when it belonged to a distant, exotic past or land; present Spain was different in the regime's imagination.

The popular Spanish cinema of the 1950s was, therefore, a playground for various stylistic influences and thematic concerns, but all of them served to legitimize, strengthen, and uphold the official discourse. The final recipe was not complicated: audiences were given spectacle and pleasure, but always in the form and content that suited the regime's ends. The nation, unique and exceptional, represented the primary fantasy with which audiences were encouraged to identify.

In the melodrama of interiority, the family was depicted as a manifestation of the Holy Trinity, social hierarchy was ordained by a higher power, and trespassers could be saved only if they followed a trajectory of sin-repentance-redemption. The stress was on the danger that appeared as members of intimate groups associated with counterpublics, whether for economic or more personal reasons, such as inner insecurities or uncontrollable passions; the results were, invariably, the possible dissolution of the intimate sphere, the estrangement of intimate groupings, and the death of those who had stepped astray. The restoration of such intimate groups was, therefore, always the result of a sacrifice, and was often performed by an ecclesiastic or religious-like figure. Counterpublics could be reintegrated into the national body, but only once they had

renounced their own discourse and had demonstrated their loyalty and dedication to the state and its principles; in most cases, such transformations only came as the last act before one's death. I argue that the melodrama of interiority was, in this way, a popular instrument through which the state's strategy for the silencing of the private sphere and the isolation of the intimate sphere materialized in subtle and seductive forms. Audiences who bought tickets to popular cinema were subjected to the moralizing didacticism on the screen, but, as good "children," could also take a pleasure ride in a spectacular world of facile emotionalism. For it, they paid in critical and political apathy.

Romanian cinema in the late 1960s

If the Spanish cinema of the 1950s relied on Catholicism as the moral force that would revive and reunite the nation, late 1960s Romanian cinema sought to establish new narratives of historical and ideological origins for the nation. The first years of Ceauşescu's rule continued the major ideological and stylistic orientations of the previous decade, with very timid attempts toward a modernization of rhetoric stimulated by the rise of a new generation of graduates from the Institute for Theater and Cinematographic Art (IATC). After Stalin's death, Romania was one of the very few countries in which, under the guise of liberalization and independence a new type of dictatorial entrenchment was promoted, using nationalism as the "religious" basis to seduce the population. Authorities conceived of film as one of the most important instruments to educate the masses and produce the "new man," i.e. the ideal communist whose calling was to build a more just society. The early years of the new regime saw the full development of the

Romanian film industry, which, toward the end of the 1960s, led to the release of both

Romanian and foreign superproductions. Furthermore, there was an increasing opening

toward the West, especially towards countries such as the United States, France, and

Italy, a situation that led to the modest, yet visible changes in aesthetics. Finally, the

incipient nationalist discourse contributed to the rehabilitation of former historians,

politicians, and artists, many of whom had been fierce opponents of communism and had

even perished in its prisons, in an attempt to use their work to support the new socialist

project, as Lucian Boia emphasizes.[623] Under such circumstances, I argue that the cinema

of the late 1960s was marked by the effort to reconstruct the past, often at a grand scale in

the style of Hollywood and Western European super-productions, in order to provide the

communist project with an extended genealogy that would justify its present-day

authority and, especially toward the end of the decade, the messianic appearance of the

long-awaited Leader. Film, much like all other arts, literature, and the press, was

expected to make, not reflect, history.

Writing in 1970, Dumitru Radu Popescu, one of the well-known playwrights of

the time, expressed his disappointment that there was no real Romanian school of film:

> There is no dispute that we have many talented people, but the films do not fulfill our expectations, or our demands. They are hybrid films, placing a variety of heterogeneous images on the film strip. They do not bear a visual testimony, nor are they the materialization of an idea. Instead, they remain a fog that we try to stuff full of too many things at once, and what happens is that all of them remain suspended and there is no force to connect them and give them meaning and credibility.[624]

[623] Lucian Boia, "Communist Discourse: Recovering the Past," in *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 75-76.
[624] Dumitru Radu Popescu, *Cinema* (Bucharest: April 1970), qtd. in Mira Liehm and Antonín Liehm, "Film and Reasons of State: Romania after 1963," in *The Most Important Art: Easter European Film after 1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 348.

The writer excluded a few directors from his comments—Liviu Ciulei, Victor Iliu, and Lucian Pintilie—in order to suggest that the vast majority of productions, including big-budget films about historical figures and events that were very popular at the time, lacked consistency of style and depth of argument, as well as a contact with everyday reality that would make them persuasive.[625] The strict control and censorship exerted by the state as the only owner of all means of production resulted in the almost total absence of counterpublic voices from the public sphere. Furthermore, even different nuances of the same ideology were sanctioned so that the world was separated, in true melodramatic fashion, between those who were for and those who were against the socialist revolution. The late 1960s, however, did register a limited opposition to the dominant discourse, but, with few notable exceptions, it was largely one of style rather than content. The empty hybridity noted by Popescu had its source in the adoption of different aesthetic models, all of which were merely grafted onto the same theme of the "new man's" socialist victory rather than organically developed in relation to a plurality of topics. I argue that the films appeared foggy because, at best, they were stylistic exercises rather than living, breathing organisms.

Several were the aesthetic tendencies that characterized the cinema of this period. The classic, invisible editing of Hollywood dominated all cinema intended to educate the masses, as was the case in France and Spain.[626] The neorealist inclination to on-location shooting, non-professional actors, collective characters, and the long take was visible

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[625] D.R. Popescu's characterization of the 1960s Romanian cinema is similar in content, if not in form, to the description J.A. Bardem made for the 1950s Spanish cinema at the 1955 Salamanca Conversations; in both cases, these artists considered that national film was one of empty content and "painted dolls."

[626] Although economic profitability was important to the state, it counted for less than political and social control over audiences. More often than not, however, these factors went hand in hand because the type of grand narrative that would soon contribute to the personality cult of the leader was also very popular for its well-staged, impressive spectacle and nationalist tones.

especially in the films devoted to rural life or the exploits of young people on working sites. The Nouvelle Vague bore its weight on the more experimental filming of urban life, often contributing to the authorities' attack on a cinema that did not reflect what they perceived as "Romanian realities." The most important ideological model, however, continued to be that of socialist realism, whose schematic, superficial representation of reality, as well as plot clichés remained visible in many films. I contend that it was the adoption of a Hollywood aesthetics and the tempering of socialist realism that accounted for the popularity of most films.

The doctrine of socialist realism placed an emphasis on typical characters in typical situations, a premise that eliminated the principle of verisimilitude. Art was to depict the revolutionary potential of reality rather than reflect it objectively or aim for transcendence. Protagonists were, therefore, heroic human beings engaged, as was cinema, in the reshaping of the world in the spirit of socialism. I note that, by the 1960s, this model had suffered several changes in Romanian cinema in that, although it preserved and even amplified the emphasis on the exemplary hero, it had loosened its narrative structure under the influence of Western cinema. The films centered on the experiences of working-class figures continued to emphasize the importance of having a clear, ground-breaking project, but always dedicated to the good of the socialist nation. Characters, however, tended to be less straightforwardly positive or negative, while the top party representatives did not always have the best intentions. Thus, in Virgil Calotescu's *Subteranul* [*Underground*, 1967], a young engineer advanced a new method of drilling only to set one oil rig on fire as a result of a mistaken evaluation of the situation. In Andrei Blaier's *Apoi s-a născut legenda* (*Legend*, 1968), a group of

travelling workers went from place to place at the request of their supervisors, but,

although they were successful in building the new railway, they failed to settle down,

have families, and feel a sense of inner accomplishment.[627] Finally, in Gheorghe Turcu's

Castelanii [*The Castle Dwellers*, 1965], the manager of the state farm, who pursued his

private interest to the disadvantage of the village, blocked a young engineer's initiative to

drain one of the flooded fields. Although they did not center on contemporary issues,

historical films, particularly those that would be classified as "national epics," also

adopted the discourse of socialist realism. The protagonist incarnated all the physical and

moral virtues of the nation. Tudor Şoimaru in Mircea Drăgan's *Neamul Şoimăreştilor*

(*Falken Fights*, 1965) or Mihai in Sergiu Nicolaescu's *Mihai Viteazul* (*Michael the*

Brave, 1971) struggled for the unity and integrity of their families and their homeland,

demonstrating the unflinching determination and belief in the project of reconstructing

the nation that any other socialist hero displayed.

Romanian cinema also adopted the model of Italian Neorealism, appreciated for

its predilection for social topics, as well as for its 1960s turn toward the exploration of

inner life. In the 1950s, an IATC professor and one of the few continuing pre-war

Romanian directors, Jean Mihail, had employed neorealist aesthetics to depict the class

struggle in films of Stalinist ideological inspiration such as *Brigada lui Ionuţ* (*Ionut's*

Brigade, 1954) and *Râpa dracului* (*The Devil's Ravine*, 1957). By the late 1960s, the

stylistically reformist aspect of neorealism had been co-opted in support of the dominant

concern with the heroism and singularity of the working-class or lower-class rural

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[627] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 213.

protagonists.[628] The neorealist attention to the sparse details of *mise en scène* had become a "fashion" that pervaded all genres, from comedies centered on the adventures of a countryside young man turned truck driver, in Geo Saizescu's *Balul de sâmbata seara* (*The Saturday Night Dance*, 1968), to war films emphasizing the underground activity of young communists, as was Francisc Munteanu's *Tunelul* (*The Tunnel*, 1967), and to Andrei Blaier's working-class drama *Dimineţile unui băiat cuminte* (*The Mornings of a Sensible Youth*, 1967). Neorealist aesthetics did match an interest in the vacuity of emotional life in the modern world in Lucian Pintilie's *Reconstituirea*, a film produced during the 1968 Prague uprising and which examined the vanity, corruption, and indifference to violence of a small-town cast of authorities that included the local district attorney, the police officer, and the party representative. The film's huge popularity, as I have already noted, worried regime officials, who immediately withdrew and banned it.

The Western tradition most criticized and censored by the regime was the French Nouvelle Vague, which had become very popular especially with the film students after the relative liberalization of commercial and cultural exchanges with France. Insisting on their personal vision of the world, the directors of the Nouvelle Vague intended to modernize both script and style so as to defy conventions and raise viewers' awareness of film as a medium. Their distrust of all types of authority, whether political, paternal, or gender-related, expressed the protest of a young generation who sought to revolutionize cinema. It was, however, the wrong kind of revolution for the Romanian communist regime as it could inspire a critical reevaluation of its social tenets and political hold on power. Although the use of disjunctive editing and rather eccentric cinematography

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[628] A similar corruption of neorealist style had also occurred in Spain and was identified as "neorealismo como moda" in a previous section of this chapter.

became part of a large variety of films, from rural melodramas, such as Mircea Mureşan's

Răscoala (*Blazing Winter*, 1965), to Romanian "westerns," such as Dinu Cocea's

Răpirea fecioarelor (*The Abduction of the Maidens*, 1968), it was inconsistent and always

remained at the surface level of the text in that it did not have self-reflective qualities, but

was often intended to express and amplify characters' subjective perception of events.

Several films did adopt Nouvelle Vague's emotional and even ethical concerns especially

regarding gender identity and relationships, but, not surprisingly, they were easy victims

of censorship. Lucian Bratu's *Un film cu o fată fermecătoare* follows a young,

unconventional woman, a would-be student of film and theater, through the streets and

cafés of Bucharest, as she engages in temporary conversations with friends,

acquaintances, and unknown people. Inspired by Nouvelle Vague films, the Romanian

story displayed an original sense of irony vis-à-vis the protagonist's dreams. Ruxandra's

(Margareta Pîslaru) wanderings about the city, however, raised Elena Ceauşescu's

eyebrow, as Călin Căliman suggests, so the film was withdrew from the market and

forbidden because it went against the principles of communist morality.[629] A similar

situation awaited Mircea Săucan's *Meandre*, but for a text that did pose questions

regarding the individual's inner emotional equilibrium in a society that, according to

official propaganda, "ensured" its citizens' happiness. Although the film explored a

theme that could have been relatively popular—a woman's oscillation between two men

and the complications created by the men's rivalry in her and her son's lives—audiences

did not rush to see it even during the brief period when it ran in theaters because, as

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[629] Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 213-215.

Căliman notes, its complex aesthetic language made it less accessible to many.[630] The complicated narrative structure, which relied on flashbacks, repetitions, and ellipses, demanded the type of critical acuity that the Nouvelle Vague directors were seeking in their spectators. Filmmakers such as Manole Marcus, Liviu Ciulei, Lucian Pintilie, Mircea Săucan, Lucian Bratu, Malvina Urşianu, and Savel Ştiopul opened their works to a dialogue with Western film only to see their productions heavily censored or removed from theaters. I argue that a real engagement with the political, social, and moral concerns that had generated Italian Neorealism or the French Nouvelle Vague was, therefore, consistently blocked by the authorities in the pre- or post-production stage of a film, which explains the disjunction between form and content that Popescu qualified as "heterogeneity" of images. Romanian directors, familiar with Western cinema, adopted and mixed its spectacular aesthetics, but often applied it to the hollow ideological substance of socialist realism.

The construction of the "new man" could not be possible without a substantial grounding in communist aspirations and right to govern. I suggest that film contributed to the creation of a new national mythology, in which past heroes and events became the precursors of the current leadership, and to the glorification of the socialist citizen, whether he or she worked in the countryside, on a new constructions site, or in a state-owned factory. Two were the major thematic tendencies of the late 1950s: the historical film, whose mission was to "document" the past in a way that justified the power of the unique party and which was often invoked with the help of spectacular aesthetics, and the "contemporary" film, which centered on present-day dilemmas and championed the

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[630] Ibid., 217.

average, working-class individual as the paragon of industriousness, inventiveness, morality, and patriotism. Although both categories included comedies, these tended to be grouped especially around the life of a couple or the adventures of the uninitiated in the village or in the city. Adaptations represented about one third of the entire production and were mostly associated with the historical film; the cultural prestige of specially selected texts, always interpreted in ways favorable to the regime, could only reinforce the claims that communism, as the most advanced form of socialism, was the long-awaited force that would insure individual and national prosperity.

In a 1965 interview, Mihnea Gheorghiu, the president of the Council of Cinematography, announced the project of the "national epic cinema," which would include especially costume drama and was intended to educate the young generation.[631] This mission became even more acute when, at the Ninth Congress, the main figures of the Romanian Communist Party decided that the historical film should include the most important moments in the formation, evolution, and struggle for independence of the Romanian people, as well as biopics dedicated to the major kings who had militated for social rights and national unity. A special attention was to be given to the efforts of the working class toward political sovereignty and social equity.[632] Directors were no longer expected merely to reflect on the past, but to rewrite it in a didactic, simplified manner that would attract the masses; they had become mere craftsmen. In this sense, the new type of historical film, the "national epic," was to be financially and politically supported

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[631] Mihnea Gheorghiu, "Interview," *Variety* 238.12 (12 May 1965), qtd. in Bogdan-Alexandru Jitea, "Istorie, politică şi film în regimul comunist," *Limba româna* XX. 5-6 (2010), http://www.limbaromana.md/index.php?go=articole&n=993 (accessed January 14, 2011); see also Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 207; M. Liehm and A. Liehm, "Film and reasons of State," 254.

[632] "Epopeea naţionala," *Cinema* IV.8 (1966): 2 and Călin Căliman, "Filmele idealului de independenţă şi unitate naţională," *Cinema* XXVI.10 (1988): 2-3, both qtd. in Jitea, "Istorie, politică şi film."

in all detail. The first production in this cycle was Lucian Bratu's *Tudor* (1963), which

glorified the leader of the 1821 uprising against the Phanariot rule in Wallachia.[633] Tudor

Vladimirescu (Emanoil Petruţ) was depicted as the ideal national leader, whose sense of

social justice, attachment to the land, and unwavering protection of the disenfranchised

held many promises for the future. His downfall and eventual death were brought about

as a result of his allies' betrayal. The film completely eliminated Vladimirescu's inability

to work with his allies, his increasingly proud stance, his duplicity toward the landowners

who had backed him up, and his eventual brutality towards his own troops when he

feared that they might deceive him. Between 1965 and 1971, four more films would

follow the same path. Mircea Drăgan's *Neamul Şoimăreştilor* was based on a novel by

one of the most appreciated writers of the period, Mihail Sadoveanu, and chronicled the

exploits of a young man, Tudor Şoimaru (Mihai Boghiţa), who devoted his life to defend

his king against the malicious scheming of the nobles. Şoimaru returns to his parents'

home in order to help his people to regain the lands that have been stolen by one of the

boyards plotting against the king. To his ideal, Tudor sacrifices his youth and his private

life because he constantly has to be away from his family and the woman who love him.

Violence, motivated by the instinct for revenge, dominates the narrative, as nobles are

beheaded and soldiers lose their lives in fierce battles. Brutality also marks the ending of

the film: Tudor slaughters his father's enemy and embarks on a new campaign against the

treacherous boyards. His was, therefore, the symbolical struggle of the popular leader

against a corrupt and socially unjust system. Tudor represented the peasantry who, in

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[633] The Phanariots were a Greek group that gained power and functioned under the patronage of the
Ottoman Empire. Wallachia was the southern part of Romania; Moldavia and Transylvania were the other
two major provinces of Romania, one slightly to the east and the other occupying the center and western
part of the present-day state.

spite of its majority in numbers, remained the most conspicuously silent political counterpublic. Their saga for social rights in a blood-thirsty seventeenth century was depicted as similar to that of the communists during World War II, with the sole difference that the twentieth-century working class would succeed and assume power in the name of all the previously marginalized, dispossessed, and silent generations. The fulfillment of this messianic destiny is emphasized through the voiceover narrator who, as the army of peasant soldiers is rushing into the horizon, confesses that their blood runs through his veins; from its position of power, the disembodied voice is, therefore, an indirect proof that their ideals will eventually be achieved by the generation contemporary with the author and the film itself. I argue that the communist vision of history was one in which the dominant counterpublics gained the public sphere, necessarily eliminating, rather than integrating, the former publics by means of justified violence. This idea preempted the existence of any other type of counterpublics because those in power now "spoke" for them. Opposition could only come from those overthrown by the revolution of the many, and they could only have malicious intentions. The film discourse supported the clear separation into "us" versus "them" that dominated public life, conferring on it historical substance.

Sergiu Nicolaescu's *Dacii* (*The Warriors*, 1967) and its sequel *Columna* (*The Column*, 1968), directed by Mircea Drăgan, reinforced the thesis that the oppressed would one day claim the power that was rightfully theirs, but adopted a more nuanced perspective on the matter. Both films explored the events surrounding the Roman conquest of Dacia, the former Thracian state roughly located on the territory of present-day Romania. The outcome of the invasion was the formation of the Romanian people:

while the Dacian kings sacrificed their sons to the gods hoping to secure a victory against the aggressors in *Dacii*, they made peace and joined the imperial governors in rebuilding and modernizing the country in *Columna*. Spectators were, therefore, encouraged to view themselves as descendents of both people, combining the sturdiness of one with the resourcefulness of the other. Mihai's sixteenth-century fight to reunite the former lands of Dacia in Nicolaescu's next heritage film, *Mihai Viteazul*, reinforced audiences' perception that they were the rightful owners of the land and its resources, ushering in the new, blatantly nationalist phase of the communist regime.

The "national epic" was the most commercially successful thematic category: *Tudor*, *Neamul Şoimăreştilor*, *Dacii*, and *Mihai Viteazul* were the most popular films in two decades and in the top ten most popular Romanian films of all times.[634] The source of this reputation resided not only in the nationalist, self-indulgent images they promoted, but also in their spectacular *mise en scène* and cinematography. All films were shot in color and paid great attention to the details in costumes, settings, and props, which they used to transform their characters into idealized figures. Tudor Şoimaru wears the plain tunic of a small landowner and the simple costume of a peasant in the final sequence, but both costumes indicate his straightforwardness, humbleness, and loyalty to his people. Similarly, Mihai Viteazul wears dark, unadorned clothes and the modest hat of his original birthplace even when he becomes king of all three provinces, which suggests his devotion to the nation rather than a thirst for power. In the case of all films, the Ministry of Defense approved the use of army troops for the battle scenes, in which weapons,

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[634] See Manuela Gheorghiu, "Patosul epopeii naţionale," in Cantacuzino and Gheorghiu, *Cinematograful românesc contemporan*, 59; Andrei Gorzo, "Amintirile sunt făcute şi din asta," in *Bunul, răul şi urâtul în cinema* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2009), 31.

helmets, shields, and armor were stylized versions of museum pieces. Such a carefully controlled reconstruction of the past at a grand scale conveyed a sense of material immediacy of the age, but also romanticized events and people, transforming them into figures of dream. Finally, the use of large casts of famous actors also contributed to the rise in ticket sales and the enduring popularity of the films. I suggest that viewers saw a glorified, ideologically cosmeticized vision of the past and were encouraged to think that what they saw had once been real.

A second category of historical films centered on war films, which examined the circumstances and consequences of the two world wars, the underground resistance of young communists, and the anti-fascist insurrection of the Romanian army. In Liviu Ciulei's *Pădurea spânzuraţilor* (*Forest of the Hanged*, 1965), the dissolution of the Austro-Hungariain Empire forces Apostol Bologa (Victor Rebengiuc), a Romanian soldier in the imperial army, to turn his arms against his brethren, causing him inner turmoil that leads to his desertion and execution. Constantin Neagu's *Baladă pentru Măriuca* (*A Ballad for Mariuca*, 1970) and Radu Gabrea's *Prea mic pentru un război atât de mare* (*Too Small for Such a Great War*, 1969) reflected on children's experience of and involvement in wars, transforming them into innocent witnesses of a nation's undeserved suffering.

Many of the films in this class "documented" the subversive activity of fictional communist figures who sought to stall or prevent all German actions. As Mira and Antonín Liehm note, the emphasis on the role of the Romanian troops in the fight against Hitler's soldiers was intended to erase the country's previous support for Nazi

Germany.[635] Romania had been Germany's ally for most of the war and only turned

against the Axis powers on August 23, 1944, a date that was at the center of many of the

late 1960s films. In Lucian Pintilie's *Duminică la ora 6* (*Sunday at 6,* 1965), Anca (Irina

Petrescu) and Radu (Dan Nuțu) fall in love with each other and risk their lives for the

dream of a new society. The young woman is killed in an armed attack, while Radu,

betrayed by his next partner, is eventually arrested by the police. Pintilie's careful

framing, the alternation of rapid cutting and long takes in order to punctuate inner states,

and the recurring image of the elevator as a symbol of human destiny are only a few of

the aesthetic means that could deviate viewers' attention from the plot to the style itself.

Radu's impassioned speech that his mission is to make possible a socialist world is the

only clear indication of his membership in the communist underground. Without this

rather forced expression of his credo, the film would have followed more closely the

Nouvelle Vague's interest in the individual's fight against a hostile state authority. By

contrast, Francisc Munteanu employed neorealist aesthetics in support of a visibly

ideological project. In *Tunelul*, a café singer (Margareta Pîslaru) helps two young men to

evade the Nazi authorities who are looking for them. The dark, arched street passages

wall-papered with posters and notes, the old café heavy with cigarette smoke, or the bare

room that serves as the hiding place for the two communists emphasize the high risks

they take and, implicitly, their exceptional qualities.

The individual heroes of such films were replaced by the collective character of

the Romanian army in films such as *Procesul alb* (*White Trial*, 1965, dir. Iulian Mihu),

an adaptation of a contemporary novel by Eugen Barbu centering on the events

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[635] M. Liehm and A. Liehm, "Films and Reasons of State," 349.

surrounding August 23, 1944, and *Castelul condamnaţilor* (*The Castle of the Condemned*, 1969, dir. Mihai Iacob), in which a small Romanian company of soldiers receives the news of the end of the war, but is given one more mission: to capture and annihilate a network of German officers who are planning to flee Europe. The task is successfully accomplished, but not without the sacrifice of some of the soldiers. Iacob's film emphasized the Romanian contribution to the defeat of the Nazis and underscored the courage and unity of the troops. As most films of the time, it conferred on viewers immediate satisfaction through identification with the cause and aspirations of heroic characters on screen. I suggest that war films, like the "national epics," insisted that counterpublics had a moral ascendancy over right-wing authorities that justified their claim for power and, implicitly, legitimized a regime established on their behalf.

A third interest of the historical film was to create and promote the "legend" of Amza's haiduks, the local nineteenth-century Robin Hoods whose adventures always drew crowds to the theaters. Dinu Cocea's series opened with *Haiducii* (*The Haiduks*, 1966), but included as many as six films by 1971: *Răzbunarea haiducilor* (*The Revenge of the Outlaws*, 1968), *Răpirea fecioarelor*, *Zestrea domniţei Ralu* (*The Dowry of Lady Ralu*, 1970), *Haiducii lui Şaptecai* (*The Outlaws of Captain Anghel*, 1970), and *Săptămâna nebunilor* (*The Week of the Madmen*, 1971). The plots, most of which were written by Eugen Barbu, a very prolific writer of the time, were relatively simple and always underscored the protagonists' desire for social justice and equity. The haiduks steal from the rich to give to the poor, oppose and hunt the Ottoman occupiers and their indigenous collaborators, and live in a harmonious community, in which each of them plays his precise role. Women admire and support them unconditionally. I suggest that

the major attraction of these films was their entertainment potential. Shot in color, they combined two elements that always sell: sex and violence. In *Răpirea fecioarelor*, Amza (Emanoil Petruţ) and his men's absence from their village lead to the abduction of all the young women who are taking part in a wedding, as well as to the brutal, graphic murder of the groom, nailed to a huge gate by the Ottoman assailants. Once in the harem of the brutal Pazvanoglu (George Constantin), the girls are forced to wear very revealing clothes and to join the other women, who are already well-trained dancers and aim to please their masters. The film also seems to take other licenses from "socialist morality": Amza loves Aniţa (Marga Barbu), but refuses to marry her; religion is featured prominently as the source of strength and unity; and belly dancing is not a talent to be discarded even by the staunchest defender of women's autonomy, Aniţa. At the root of these apparent violations of official doctrine lay, however, a cause dear to the authorities, as it had been to French and Spanish authorities: the defeat of the foreign rulers and their local disciples, as well as the recapture and redistribution of national wealth. When necessary, haiduks like Amza did settle down to have a family and children. Furthermore, Romanian Christian orthodoxy was the ideology that distinguished the virtuous peasantry from the corrupt and vicious Muslims. Finally, the female body was used not only as a tool that enabled Aniţa to distract the Turks and liberate the maidens, but also as a strategy to attract audiences. I argue that, with the promise of entertainment, these films also "delivered" the same discourse about the virtues of counterpublics. The haiduks, like all their cinema predecessors, had to resort to all means of struggle in order to obtain even the smallest amount of public recognition in a century not ready for the "big" change. The historical film provided, therefore, a sense of national belonging and self-

esteem and gave urban audiences, most of whom were first-generation working class, as I have already indicated in a previous chapter, the sense that they were the end recipients of a century-old project of social justice and unity.

Between 1965 and 1971, the number of melodramas increased steadily, but, as one can notice, they were mostly melodramas of action that centered on war conflicts, socialist realist plots, bandit stories, and mysteries. Many such films, however, had, as a secondary interest, generational or gender divergences, but these were summarily dismissed in favor of the more important concern with the security of the nation, the fate of a rural or working-class community, the lands, women, or villagers saved by the haiduks, and the identification and capture of the criminal. In *Castelul condamnaţilor*, a war melodrama, the plan conceived by the Romanian troops to seize the Nazis hiding in a castle in the Tatra Mountains was successful only when they rallied to their side Eva (Irina Gardescu), a local girl, and her lover, Dankwart (Emmerich Schäffer), a German officer who disagreed with the measures taken by his co-nationals. In *Vremea zăpezilor*, the confrontation between Paul (Ilarion Ciobanu) and his father-in-law took the form of a confrontation between the "new man" and the generation that attempted to prevent him from contributing to a different future for the entire village. *Răpirea fecioarelor* revolved around the haiduks' close relationships with their wives, mothers, and sisters, but focused on their feats of arms intended to protect their families. In all cases, I argue that the intimate sphere represented the source of moral and emotional force for heroes engaged in noble, difficult missions.

A more complicated analysis of inner dilemmas and emotional complications was undertaken in films that abandoned the relatively rigid clichés of melodrama and focused

on the modern introspection of characters. Unlike the melodramatic protagonists, these new figures understood and attempted to cope with their position in the world; most of them were intellectuals questioning their affective and ethical association with others. Some of these films explored the fragility of emotional commitments in a society under constant revolution. One of the most incisive analyses of the intimate sphere in times of political and social division was Liviu Ciulei's *Pădurea spânzuraţilor* (*Forest of the Hanged*, 1965), which examined the individual's inner trajectory from idealism to social awareness and national commitment; the text preserved melodramatic elements.

The film was an adaptation of Liviu Rebreanu's 1922 novel that reflected on the moral and affective crisis produced by World War I and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Apostol Bologa (Victor Bologa) is a Romanian young philosophy student who joins the imperial army in order to demonstrate his maturity and manliness. Together with Czech, Hungarian, Slovak, Austrian, and Croat officers, Bologa is sent to fight in Transylvania, against the Romanians. The film opens with the premonitory scene of the hanging of a Czech captain accused of having deserted to the enemy; Bologa, nervous, but eager to do his duty to the Empire, supervises the entire operation. In a later discussion with his Czech friend, Otto Klapka (Liviu Ciulei), he confesses that, although he has come to war looking for answers about himself, he has yet to find one. Klapka's assertion that courage comes from rejecting the war sets the Romanian thinking and he looks for comfort with Mueller (Emmerich Schäffer), an Austrian soldier of socialist convictions. This key moment that provokes Bologa's interior struggle against his former self is constructed with great care to the details of the setting and the composition of the frame. Mueller invites Bologa into his quiet retreat, which is an abandoned, old-fashioned

carriage and a symbol of old-forgotten times of idealized simplicity. The two converse in the presence of books written by German Romantic poets and Muller, at the Romanian's request, plays his flute. The fire of a candle flickers over their faces at crucial moments and projects the Austrian's face onto the windows of the carriage, a strong visual suggestion that the soldier has gradually become the conscience of the officer. Bologa asserts that he has always fulfilled his responsibilities to the state because the state is more important than the individual. Mueller's ghostly reflection replies that nothing should be above the individual and adds that one should feel accountable for all war victims, regardless of their nationality. The officer's latent doubts about his role on the front erupt in full force.

When he is given the order to destroy the Romanians' search light that invades the imperial army camp from the other side of the village, Bologa believes that, after this mission, he can request his relocation to another front. He is successful, but is denied the transfer. Accused of treason by the Romanian prisoners he has captured, betrayed by the rich woman with whom he has fallen in love, disappointed by the petty ambitions of his family and his fiancée, he finds refuge in the arms of Ilona (Anna Széles), a simple, yet virtuous girl and witnesses, powerless, the drama of her family and the peasantry forced into poverty and hunger by war generals. Bologa deserts and tries to reach the Romanian side, but is caught and sentenced to death by hanging.

The night before his execution, Ilona brings him food into his cell. The scene reveals the strength and depth of their intimate connection without the need for

melodramatic excess of form, as critics have emphasized.[636] Dressed in the black garments of a widow, Ilona opens her basket silently and takes out the food. Without uttering a word, Bologa sits down to eat, watching her intensely. She stands up to put his coat over his shoulders or to salt his food, but no words are spoken between them. The minimalist *mise en scène*, which includes only a table and two chairs, contrasts the cold, peeling surface of the cell wall, suggestive of the war's indifference to human beings, with the warmth emanated by the couple and emphasized through the discreet lighting of their faces.

Pădurea spânzuraţilor unveils the conflict between the state and the individual, between military camaraderie and attachment to one's nation. The plot also expresses the more general theme of one's inner search to belong to a community. There are several intimate spheres that serve as steps in the protagonist's rising self-awareness: the camaraderie that connects Bologa to Klapka, and which vanishes when he realizes the Czech's cowardice[637]; the deep friendship that binds the Romanian officer to Mueller and triggers his interior metamorphosis; and the love and loyalty that unites him to Ilona. Although the war gradually separates Bologa from all those to whom he is devoted, he does not remain a one-dimensional victim of fate. He fights against conformity and the pretentious certitudes of his family and comrades, but, mostly, he struggles against his own preconceptions and older self. He feels increasingly guilty for his part in the war machine and, unlike the melodrama hero, he takes action, fully conscious of the dangers

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[636] Marian Ţuţui, "Vedere prin ochiul spânzurătorii," in *Cele mai bune 10 filme româneşti ale tuturor timpurilor stabilite prin votul a 40 de critici*, ed. Cristina Corciovescu and Magda Mihăilescu (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010), 33-34.

[637] Klapka initially tried to run away with the first victim of the film, but lost his courage and returned to the company, where he continued to ingratiate himself with the generals.

he faces. Like the character of a melodrama, however, Bologa takes action when it is too late and he understands too late something that audiences have known from the beginning of the film: that one cannot fight against his or her own nation without suffering for it. He is not saved by a *deus-ex-machina* and his death is not the result of a divine punishment, but the reflection of the impassivity and brutality of war. Unlike most other films, *Pădurea spânzuraţilor* depicted the state's direct intervention in the emotional and rational allegiances that individuals desired to make. Far from being models of virtue, public authorities worked against the intimate publics they perceived as obstacles in their path. Rebreanu's novel, which had accused the Austro-Hungarian officials of corruption, served to block the censors' possible rejection of such a negative representation of the state. Released shortly after the Cuban missile crisis, Ciulei's work was appreciated by critics for its universal anti-war stance, the humanity of his characters, and the precision and expressivity of his style. It was, however, his last film. Faced with an increasing opposition to, and censorship of, his ideas the director continued to work as a film actor, but return to his initial vocation as a stage director and eventually emigrated to the United States in the 1970s.[638]

In spite of its strong international echo and enthusiastic approval by critics, *Pădurea spzuraţilor* was never as successful as the "national epics." Although many of these films strictly followed the political rise of their heroes as the manifestation of a national project for unity and independence, two such melodramas mainly focused on the intimate sphere of their protagonists, which became symbolical of the origins of the Romanian nation. *Dacii* centered on the family of Decebal, the leader of the Dacian tribes

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[638] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 183.

located on the territory of present-day Romania, and its transformation during the years that preceded the Roman invasion of the first century C.E. Convinced that a sacrifice to the gods would prevent the Romans from conquering Dacia, Decebal (Amza Pellea) agrees to offer his own son, Cotyso (Alexandru Herescu), to Zalmoxis only to discover that his act was in vain. His daughter, Meda (Marie-José Nat), falls in love with Severus (Pierre Brice), the Roman young man raised by the Dacians. The family's emotional trajectory incarnated the nation's own metamorphosis, from mourning, to rebellion, and to final acceptance of a new era in the union between Meda and Severus. *Dacii* was the most commercially successful film of the time, watched by roughly nine million viewers; it has remained one of the most popular to this day.[639]

Ranked seventh in the top ten most popular Romania films of all time, *Columna* continued the history of the Dacians by concentrating on the immediate period that followed the Roman conquest of 105-106 C.E. The occupation by a foreign military army, however, was depicted as an opportunity for the country's modernization and, as was the case in the previous film, became a matter of the internal restructuring of the symbolic family. I argue that, together, *Dacii* and *Columna* suggested that the advancement of any nation depended on its capacity to shake off resentment and antiquated, destructive beliefs in order to adjust to and embrace the new; it was, unmistakably, the ideology of the socialist transformation of the nation. Furthermore, in order to be effective, such a change had to occur at the level of the intimate groups and the discourse of loyalty that connected them.

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[639] See Gheorghiu, "Patosul epopeii naționale," 59; Andrei Gorzo, "Amintirile sunt făcute și din asta," 31.

Columna opens with the decisive battle for Sarmizegetusa, after which the Dacians have to withdraw into the mountains. Decebal (Amza Pellea) consigns his nephew, his only heir, to Andrada (Antonella Lualdi) to be taken to a secret hide-out while he tries to raise a new army against the Romans. Betrayed by Bastos (Gheorghe Dinică), he is surrounded by Tiberius's men, but commits suicide rather than be captured. His faithful friend, Gerula (Ilarion Ciobanu), is caught, but manages to run away, dragging Bastos with him. Tiberius (Richard Johnson) is entrusted by the Roman authorities with building a new city in the mountains, but, as the soldiers engage in the project, they realize they cannot succeed on their own. The commander enlists the help of a Dacian leader, Ciungu' (Ştefan Ciubotăraşu), whom he has befriended along the way. As the settlement is being built, Gerula's men keep killing Roman soldiers. Sabinus (Florin Piersic), one of Tiberius's close friends, falls in love with Zia (Sidonia Manolache), a beautiful Dacian whom he chases out of a group of women engaged in a morning ritual. One day he follows her and discovers the tribe's secret village. With a group of Romans, he attacks and takes them prisoners, but, during the fight, Gerula blinds him and then runs away with the boys of the tribe, including Decebal's nephew. Andrada is among the prisoners and she is taken by Tiberius into his home and treated as an equal. He falls in love with her and offers her freedom, but Ciungu' and his men advise Andrada to stay with Tiberius because Gerula would kill her. A few years pass and Andrada bears Tiberius a son, Traianus, whom the father declares the free and independent citizen of Rome and Dacia. Meanwhile, Gerula has raised the Dacian boys into young men and, during one of their regular raids, they kill Ciungu.' Tiberius wants to avenge the death of his friend, but has no time because a new, migratory tribe is at the gates of the city.

Wearing animal masks and viciously cruel to their enemies and even to each other, these new invaders attract Gerula's aversion and he orders his army of men in battle on Tiberius's side. Although the fierce struggle is won by the Roman army, Decebal's nephew is killed and Gerula, enraged, kills Tiberius when the latter has come to pay his respects. Long lines of Romans and Dacians mourn for Tiberius, while Gerula promises Traianus that he will raise him to have the courage and skill of a Dacian king. The boy, however, leaves him to join the mourners, and Gerula watches, isolated and forsaken by all, as the young figure disappears into the crowd.

Columna, like *Dacii*, relies on fictional figures raised to the dimension of mythical heroes. Tiberius is strong and just, loyal to his kin, but generous and open to the people he has to rule. One of the most effective intimate spheres established in one of the first episodes of the film is that between this Roman officer and Ciungu,' a wise old man who recognizes the occupier's force and asks his tribe to show no resistance. Tiberius is sensitive to Ciungu's requests for autonomy and, when he returns to the Dacian leader for help, the two form a friendship that endures in spite of Gerula's attacks. Tiberius and Ciungu' are connected by a common project—to build a city for both nations—that echoes the regime's 1960s project for the socialist reconstruction of the country. The working-class enthusiasts in other films here wear the stylized apparel of Dacians and Romans and, as they erect walls and temples, their leaders consolidate their emotional connection.

A second, equally important, intimate sphere is that between Andrada and Tiberius, the "parents" of a new nation, who also bond as free individuals rather than as occupier and occupied. Their union is not motivated by a common future project, but by a

very real, present threat: Gerula and his blind thirst for revenge. If this outside danger brings them together, their son gives them a future, and both parents strive to instill in him the values of their own nations, with a didactic respect for each other's traditions. Tiberius names his son after the emperor and raises him to be a good and faithful Roman soldier and leader, while Andrada tells him of Decebal's feats of glory and virtue. This model family, however, is built on patriarchal rules, and Andrada complains to Ciungu' about her husband's commanding ways: she has to wear Roman clothes, her baby bears a Roman name, and Tiberius would like to take her to Rome one day. The old man harshly condemns her intention to run away with her son, reminding her that a child needs both his parents in life. The 1960s propaganda for family integrity and woman's secondary role to the husband and the father found in the endearing Ciungu' one of its most potent speakers precisely because his words did not have the hollow sound of those uttered by socialist realist heroes. As melodramatic protagonists, Tiberius, Andrada, and Ciungu' do not change, much like the said socialist realist heroes: the Roman is a figure of justice, Andrada one of maternity, and Ciungu' embodies the wisdom of his people. Nevertheless, they had the viewers' sympathy probably because they seemed more humanized: Tiberius and Ciungu' could, and did, get drunk, which was an occasion for a humorous interlude, and Andrada renounced her pride when she realized that Gerula might indeed kill her. I argue that the intimate connections established among these characters conformed to and promoted the ideals of the regime, but were presented in less conspicuous ways and coated in the attractive veneer of times long gone.

The only character who loses his appeal, in spite of his rectitude and honor, is Gerula. His constant preoccupation with the Dacians' revenge for the murder of their

leader and his refusal to acknowledge the necessity of modernization eventually alienate him from everybody else. He is the only one incapable of engaging in an intimate sphere with anybody around him. The boys he raises as fighters respect him, but do not consider him one of them, so that, when he asks them to fight for the Romans, they are not convinced until Decebal's nephew speaks in his favor. In the communist mythology, Gerula is the old-time party fighter whom the new power sought to discard in order to consolidate its own rule.

The film's appeal to the public was, therefore, multilayered. The mythology of a nation built out of the best Roman citizens and soldiers, as Tiberius characterizes them, and of the wise, hard-working, skillful Dacians was intended to inspire in the regular viewers a sense of pride and self-esteem that would partially compensate for the hardships of real life and would partially instill in them enthusiasm for the constructive project of the communists themselves. A second source of attraction was the grand scale reconstruction of an idealized old world, in which Dacians and Romans wore clean, well-tailored, colorful costumes, dwelled in tidy, cozy wooden chalets in the mountains, and built temples and roads with the speed of modern-day entrepreneurs. Their battles were monumental and so were their dreams. Finally, a major point of interest was the involvement of foreign actors. *Columna* was a Romanian-German co-production that had the British Richard Johnson play Tiberius and the Italian Antonella Lualdi in the role of Andrada; they may not have been the A-rate stars of the time, but, for Romanian audiences, they were exciting personalities to be watched dubbed in Romanian. Based on a simple, appealing script and relying on the spectacle of melodrama, Drăgan's film drew

audiences to the state project of reconstructing the past in order to announce the imminent and liberating arrival of communism.

The "contemporary" film also reinforced the perception that the "new" Romania was the home of a different "breed" of citizens, "awake" and educated according to the humanitarian creed of equity and prosperity for all. These texts often featured a community—the workers on a construction site or in a factory, as well as the rural laborers united into a collective farm—that was involved in a daring project and relied on the resourcefulness of all its members in order to succeed.[640] Nevertheless, the heroes started to gain complexity, if not depth, and aesthetics became more nuanced, even if they continued to be perceived as a means to express a doctrinal thesis rather than as an organic part of the whole. Themes varied according to the type of universe and topic to be explored; thus, melodramas and comedies were set either in the countryside or in a working-class environment, and they tackled subjects varying from individuals' self-searching and coming of age, to the interaction within a couple, to mysteries surrounding acts of violence. With few exceptions, all films clearly separated between good and evil, "us" and "them," the communist working class, peasantry, even young university graduates and the bourgeois saboteur, honorable counterpublics and wicked publics.

The positive transformations of village life as a result of the collectivization had long been an important topic in cinema, especially as audiences needed to be convinced that expropriation was a "noble" goal. Dinu Negreanu's thesis film *Viaţa învinge* (*Life Triumphs*, 1951), followed by adaptations with a pronounced ideological bias, such as Victor Iliu's *Mitrea Cocor* (1952) and Paul Călinescu's *Desfaşurarea* (*Development in a*

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[640] See Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 211.

Village, 1955), had set the tone by dividing the rural population into the rich, who opposed the restructuring of agriculture, the poor, who fought for equal rights, and the party representatives, who solved the most threatening of conflicts in favor of the weak and vulnerable.[641] I suggest that, by 1965, the Manichean separation of characters had been slightly tempered, but not eliminated. In Alecu Croitoru's *Merii sălbatici* (*The Wild Appletrees*, 1964), a young woman was forced to marry the son of the rich landowner in spite of her love for a man of her status, an emotional conflict that amplified social differences.[642] In Gheorghe Naghi's *Vremea zăpezilor* (*The Time of the Snowstorm*, 1966), a family conflict between father and son-in-law acquired the symbolical proportions of a confrontation between the old and the new, selfishness and generosity, treachery and honesty.[643] Gheorghe Turcu's *Castelanii*, however, preserved the officially endorsed thesis that the young and underprivileged were always right and unjustly marginalized, but treated it in the lighter tone of comedy.

The melodrama of interiority permeated especially the films centered on the rural world. In Manole Marcus's *Zodia fecioarei* [*Under the Sign of Virgo*, 1966], Dita (Anna Széles) and Dionis (Sorin Postelnicu) act in an amateur play during a village fair, fall in love with each other, and decide to get married. When the young woman's mother finds out about the prospective union, she tries to prevent it because of the adultery she once committed with the boy's father. The world of the village, with its unchanged rhythms and disturbing secrets, is the atemporal, mythical background for the young couple's search for emotional stability. In Gheorghe Vitanidis's *Facerea lumii* (*The Making of the*

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[641] Ibid., 149-153.
[642] Ibid., 192.
[643] Ibid., 191-192.

World, 1971), the construction of intimate sphere is, again, subjected to the ideological expectations of the regime. A worker's young daughter falls in love with the owner of a horse stable, but, as the 1948 nationalization approaches, she is appalled to find out that the man she loves has brutally murdered all the animals rather than allow them to be taken over by the state. In both films, the innocents who show devotion to and faith in the intimate relationship they form with others are the victims of external, uncontrollable conditions or events.

The same is the case with Petre (Ilarion Ciobanu), the protagonists of Mircea Mureşan's *Răscoala*, another adaptation of a novel by Liviu Rebreanu. Set around 1907, when the peasantry took up arms against the landowners in a country-wide uprising, the film focuses on the inner turmoil of the hero, who becomes the symbolical figure of the revolutionary. Petre accumulates anger, resentment, and humiliation only to explode into violence against the landowner and the woman who have caused his anguish. He is motivated by a single wish—he wants to own land—and he follows all possible routes to accomplish his goal; bloodshed, however, is his final answer. Petre lives on the lands of Miron Iuga (Emil Botta), a cruel, avaricious old man who regularly mistreats his servants and orders their brutal beating when he mistakenly believes they are robbing him. Iuga's son, Grigore (Ion Besoiu), is an educated young man, with more understanding of the fate of the peasantry and with liberal views: he urges his father to give land to his peasants, but to no avail. Grigore's wife, the beautiful Nadina (Adriana Bogdan), cheats on him, which leads to their divorce and to old Iuga's desire to buy her lands. Petre and the other peasants also ask Nadina to sell them part of her property, but she laughs at their proposal. Another source of discontent for the protagonist is his inability to marry Florica

(Ana Felicia Chiriţa), a loyal, loving young peasant, who is raped by the son of old Iuga's man of trust. When Petre's mother dies after a long disease caused by poverty and hunger, his mind is made up: he organizes the villagers and they go to ask old Iuga for justice, inspired by the news about similar revolts all over the country. The peasants execute the landowner while Petre chases and rapes Nadina; the army eventually kills many of the rebels in an open-field confrontation. Petre dies with his eyes to the sky, mourned by his younger brother.

As is the case with the other films in this category, an external, uncontrollable factor leads to the dissolution of the intimate sphere: the peasants' lack of land. In a communist regime that had forced nationalization and promised the "fair" state distribution of wealth, Rebreanu's plot could not have been more appreciated. Petre's fall was, therefore, the fate of a justice fighter who had prepared the way for the utopian socialist state. It is the lack of land that prevents Petre's marriage to Florica when her father refuses the protagonist's proposal. It is also the lack of land that leads, indirectly, to the death of the mother. And, finally, Nadina's humiliating refusal is a response to Petre's poverty and, implicitly, of powerlessness. The protagonist feels robbed of all connections he has formed, including that with his best friend who is killed by Iuga in front of his eyes. By the time he snaps, Petre has become a lonely, enraged man who needs to regain a sense of self-esteem and can only find a source of inner support in the other peasants. His total dedication to a community and his sacrifice for a future generation made him the uncontestable hero of the great communist saga.

Like the films set in the rural world, the texts centered on the working class and its dilemmas also idealized counterpublics and their struggle for public recognition. Paul

Călinescu's *Răsună valea* (*The Valley Resounds*, 1949) was considered the "real"

beginning of Romanian cinema because it was the first film produced after the

nationalization of industry. The plot revolved around a group of workers who had

volunteered to build a railway across a mountainous region, but who were sabotaged by

their own foremen and "old-time" engineers. This propagandistic approach was

replicated numerous times, in films that varied the subject matter and often introduced a

complementary romantic storyline, but that did not deviate from the major theme: the

victory against all odds of the underprivileged group or individuals and the successful

completion of their project.[644] By 1965, films had begun to recognize the deficiencies of

Stakhanovism and concentrated more on the emotional complications of life on a

construction site. Virgil Calotescu's *Subteranul* and *Camera albă* (*The White Room*,

1965) examined the negative consequences of untamed energy of the group and the

individual, while Blaier's *Apoi s-a născut legenda* and *Dimineţile unui băiat cuminte*

emphasized the soul-searching effect of work and the personal sacrifices demanded of

conscientious individuals. Other films focused exclusively on the suffering of the

marginalized classes. Francisc Munteanu's *Dincolo de barieră* [*Beyond the City*, 1965],

an adaptation of George Mihail Zamfirescu's drama *Domnişoara Nastasia* [*Miss*

Nastasia, 1927], revealed the misery and daily danger experienced by the unfortunate

dwellers of a poor neighborhood at the periphery of Bucharest. Their vain aspirations to

justice and social rights were echoed by the widows of one of the most important 1930s

strikes in Mircea Drăgan's *Golgota* (*Golgotha*, 1966). The protagonists of these working-

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[644] Some of the films to be included in this category are Jean Mihail's *Brigada lui Ionuţ* and *Râpa dracului*, but also Liviu Ciulei's *Erupţia* (*Eruption*, 1957) and *Valurile Dunării* (*The Danube Waves*, 1960), or Horea Popescu's *Omul de lângă tine* (*The Man Next to You*, 1961).

class dramas had high ethical standards, the ability to deny their personal happiness and even physical integrity on behalf of an ideal, and the resilience to pursue their goals. I argue that they were heroic figures offered as models to audiences, often with an ideological obstinacy that did not make them very popular.

It was by means of comedy that the same figures appealed to audiences. This filmic mode, however, was open to irony towards its characters and to a more critical evaluation of their aspirations, if not of the system itself. Haralambie Boroş's *Corigenţa domnului professor* [*The Teacher's Failed Class*, 1968] adapted from a short story by the dissident writer Ion D. Sârbu, lacked the indicting clarity of the original, but retained, in its absurd plot situation, an indirect critique of state bureaucracy, even if it changed the initial focus from the system to the individual.[645] The victim of a mistake, a history teacher is required to pay taxes for two buffaloes he never had. He tries in vain to clarify the administrative errors that have brought him in this situation only to be dismissed from his job, forsaken by his wife, and forced to retire to the countryside where, as he steps off the train, two buffaloes are waiting for him, hitched to a wagon. If the man's obstinacy was the source of laughter in Boroş's film, the hero's hesitation to act was the premise for the humorous complications in Geo Saizescu's *Balul de sâmbătă seara*, in which Papă (Sebastian Papaiani), a young man from the countryside, becomes a driver in the city and, on his daily journeys, meets and falls in love with two women, one blond and one brunette. A daydreamer paralyzed by his incapacity to renounce one of the girls, the hero eventually submits them to a test only to discover that neither corresponds to his imagination. In spite of flaws such as pride and self-centeredness, the protagonist

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[645] See also Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, 205-206.

remained the public's favorite because of the naïveté, awkwardness, and romantic failures that humanized him in comparison to the other, perfect communist heroes. Finally, in Aurel Mihăeş's *Vin cicliştii* (*The Cyclists Are Coming*, 1968), an old-fashioned trainer disappoints one of the members of his cyclist team, pushing him to found an all-girl squad and win against his former teammates. The film reinforced the rivalry between the old and the new, insisting that the resistance to modernization, as this was conceived by the faithful socialist "soldier," could only lead to the ruin, more or less comical, of the unrepentant opponent. I suggest that, whether melodramas or comedies, adaptations or original texts, the films that explored the social, affective, and moral dilemmas of the rising working class emphasized the extraordinary qualities of individual or collective heroes and suggested that these resulted from, and ensured the future success of, the socialist mindset.

The urban setting was the location of the individual's self-searching and the couple's negotiation of inner equilibrium in more dramatic texts, which were often more daring in their analysis of the contemporary world than the films in any other category. One special social group targeted in these "contemporary" films was that of young men and women trying to assess and redefine their relationships to themselves and to the others around. This particular attention to the transition between adolescence and early maturity was not surprising because, as recent graduates of IATC, the directors who approached such a topic were reflecting on their own dilemmas and inner metamorphosis. Bratu's *Un film cu o fată fermecătoare* and Savel Ştiopul's *Ultima noapte a copilăriei* (*The Last Night of Childhood*, 1968) used Nouvelle Vague aesthetics to introduce fragile protagonists, who hid their confusion under an attitude of rebellion that hurt rather than

protected them. In Știopul's film Lucian (Liviu Tudan) falls at odds with his divorcing parents, his best friend, and the artists' community he intends to join after graduation. His inner disorientation is only further amplified by his romantic involvement with an older artist and with his best friend's lover. Neither Lucian, nor Ruxandra, the heroine of Bratu's film, had the stability, lucidity, and sense of purpose "required" of the "new man" (or woman, for that matter); furthermore, rather than discovering a true path through socialism, they seemed untouched by its utopian promises and even "swam" against its current, which explains the short life of these films in Romanian theaters.

A special case in this category was Lucian Pintilie's *Reconstituirea*. Vuică (George Mihăiță) and Nicu (Vladimir Găitan) are two recent high-school graduates who, for lack of an occupation, fight with each other in a bar and injure the waiter. Arrested, they are summoned to participate in a reenactment of their brawl that is to be filmed and screened as educational material against violence and alcohol abuse. The authorities involved—from the district attorney who supervises the whole "project," to the police sergeant who watches all their moves, the party representative who uses the opportunity to relax fishing in the nearby stream, and even the young "director" excessively preoccupied with the framing of his "characters"—repeatedly demonstrate their indifference and even callousness towards the young men, whom they perceive as the mere objects of yet another tedious day at "work." At the end of the shooting, each of them passes unmoved by Vuică who, having accidentally hit a stump during the reenactment of the fight, soon dies in his friend's arms. Nicu's despair explodes into a new round of violence towards the mute passers-by who walk without stopping, equally unresponsive to the drama. Pintilie's film was censored for the unprecedentedly critical

depiction of state and party officials, but the film's more serious accusation was, in my view, that against the anonymous workers who, like the workers in Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), have turned into a mere mass of bodies and seem immune to the pain of others. Nicu's perplexed look into the camera and, implicitly, towards the viewers is a mute interrogation of their own involvement in the reproduction of power and state authority. By contrast with the enthusiastic, heroic, purposeful youngsters in most other films of the time, Pintilie's surviving protagonist is moody, scared, and aimless, attesting to a society that had gone amuck rather than the flawless community of "new men." I argue that Pintilie's film revealed the existence of new counterpublics and unveiled the corruption that came with power, as was the case with all the authorities charged with the reenactment. It is impossible to assess the degree to which this critique appealed to the viewers who filled the two Bucharest theaters for the short time *Reconstituirea* was allowed to run, but the popularity of the film and the authorities' fierce ban on its screening for the next twenty years speak volumes about the cinema's perceived potential to move and "educate" people.

Some couples were plagued by a similar inner restlessness as that of Pintilie's protagonists, which threatened their integrity, alienating individuals not only from each other, but also from a society they perceived as too distant and insensitive to their anxieties. In Săucan's *Meandre*, Gelu's (Dan Nuțu) search for a connection with his biological father, a famous architect who has devoted his life to his work, reveals the deep rift between his parents, but also between his mother and her current husband. The film employed a highly symbolical *mise en scène* and cinematography, which made it almost unreadable to viewers, but nonetheless threatening to censors because of its

ambiguity and double entendres. A large section of the narrative is set within the labyrinthine walls of a house, where time collapses, allowing characters to traverse their lives as they traverse from one room to the other. Reproduced from the retroactive perspective of the wife and mother (Margareta Pogonat), this portion of the film reveals her hesitation between the two men, her loneliness, and her self-isolation from the world around. Similarly, the heroine in Malvina Urşianu's *Gioconda fără surâs* engages in a lucid analysis of her past only to discover that her twenty-year old denial of emotional involvement has estranged her irremediably from the man she loves.[646] In Gheorghe Vitanidis's *Răutăciosul adolescent* (*The Malicious Adolescent*, 1969), a famous doctor, successful both in his career and his romantic liaisons, discovers that a severe disease threatens his life and realizes that he has never experienced any deep attachment to those around him. The film insists on the impossible love story between this conceited, lonely man and the beautiful nurse that comes to his help, but lacks the depth of insight of the previous texts; it is soon repudiated by the authorities for its nude shots of the heroine. I suggest that these films examined the interior world of a real counterpublic rarely acknowledged in the 1960s cinema, the intellectuals, highlighting their solitude and their position as misfits. There was no revolutionary cause or heroic deed to be praised; quite the contrary, these couples were besieged by doubt about their condition in a world with which they did not resonate. All films fared poorly at the box office, but *Meandre* was politically withdrawn and never screened again until 1989.[647]

Another division of contemporary films, which would gain in numbers especially in the 1970s, included detective films in which the police officer was the incontestable

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[646] Ibid., 215-216.
[647] Ibid., 217.

hero, defending both state and moral law.[648] In Alexandru Boiangiu's *Maiorul şi Moartea* (*The Major and Death*, 1967), the protagonist refuses to harbor an accomplice to a murder who has provided him with vital information about the deed; his refusal to compromise on his ethics, as well as his courage to uphold his decision even when confronted with serious threats to his life, confer on him the exemplary qualities of the officially endorsed socialist hero. Vladimir Popescu Doreanu's *Runda 6* (*Round 6*, 1965) and *Amprenta* (*The Fingerprint*, 1967) and Ştefan Traian Roman's *Simpaticul domn R.* (*The Likeable Mr. R*, 1969) featured similarly righteous protagonists, whose ingenuity, dedication to their profession, and defense of the weak became representative of the fatherly, protective power of the state itself.

In addition to the historical and contemporary film, the Romanian cinema of the late 1960s produced a good number of fantasy films inspired from popular fairy tales and literary works, or based on original scripts that were often, but not always, intended for a young audience. Famous for his animation films, Ion Popescu-Gopo directed *De-aş fi Harap Alb* (*The White Moor*, 1965), based on a well-known Romanian children's story in which the youngest of a king's sons is enslaved by an evil foreigner, but manages to regain his freedom through feats of great courage and with the help of those he has, in turn, protected.[649] *Faust XX* (1966), Gopo's second project, was a science-fiction film in which an old scientist, sensing that his death is near, accepts that his soul and mind be transferred into the young body of his assistant. Jean Georgescu, a director well-known

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[648] A similar thematic tendency existed in both French and Spanish cinemas. Detective films attracted viewers interested in the puzzle to be solved, but were also easy vehicles for the promotion of the regime's ideological expectations.

[649] In 1957, Ion Popescu-Gopo was awarded the Palme d'Or in the Best Short Film category for *Scurtă istorie* (*Short History*, 1957).

for his bold comedy adaptations and his pre-1944 films, produced *Pantoful Cenuşăresei* (*Cinderella's Slipper*, 1969), a musical comedy that transferred the plot into present-day Romania as the love story between a doctor and the box-office cashier of a theater; this was the last film of the director, who lived until 1994. Elisabeta Bostan's *Tinereţe fără bătrâneţe* (*Kingdom in the Clouds*, 1969), an adaptation of another renowned Romanian fairy-tale, follows the fantastic exploits of the unique son of an old royal couple as he attempts to achieve the destiny promised to him at birth: endless youth. When his dream is finally fulfilled, the protagonist unknowingly breaks the rules of the magic kingdom where he lives and is thrown back into old age and mortality. The same category included Alecu Croitoru's symbolical *Vârstele omului* (*The Ages of Man*, 1969), in which two children search for a red flower and grow older and older until they reach the sea, and Bostan's earlier *Amintiri din copilărie* (*Childhood Memories*, 1965), based on the autobiographical book by Ion Creangă, one of the most popular nineteenth-century Romanian writers, in which a boy's adventures and mishaps are retold through the loving and understanding eyes of the adult. I suggest that these films were popular not only because of their spectacular *mise en scène* and, in some case, special effects, but also because they provided audiences with the ideal escape into dreams of a perfect world. Furthermore, in many cases, they exploited the viewers' nostalgia for the safe haven of their own childhood and endorsed a sense of national community especially around the texts that had been chosen from what was considered the Romanian literary pantheon.

Between 1965 and 1971, Romanian cinema witnessed a brief period of liberalization, which encouraged not only experimentation with form, but also a timid emergence of dissident voices into the public sphere. The majority of films, however,

gained popularity because they entertained audiences, offered them an escape into the idealized past, promised an equally exemplary future, and stimulated nationalist sentiment. I argue that viewers were encouraged to identify with the cause and efforts of exceptional heroes, representatives of formerly marginalized counterpublics, and to consider devotion to the fatherland as the supreme objective in life. More than the socialist utopia promised by the contemporary film, it was the "religion" of nationalism and the appeal of extravagant adventures that filled theaters and "sold" the official discourse to the masses.

The few melodramas of interiority of the late 1960s suggested that a desired, utopian society could only be the result of a national project to be undertaken by a collectivity under the leadership of an exemplary hero. An important step toward the unification of the masses in support for such a project was, in my opinion, to convince them that the past had included a series of moments that had prepared the advent of communism. The melodrama of interiority was essential to the legitimization of such a reconstruction of history. If the non-melodramatic films represented the intimate sphere as the site of inner questioning and the source of the protagonist's often distressing rise of self-awareness, melodramas depicted it as an idealized space of moral and emotional support for the hero's project. These films indicated that a change in society could only originate from the transformation of the close relationships among the members of a family. I consider that, although cinema claimed that equality between genders and generations was the primary achievement of the new regime, the patriarchal structuring of power of intimate publics, which favored the young man over his partner or the older generation, was reinforced as the source of the protagonist's authority and public force.

The intimate sphere could only be the victim of human weaknesses, such as greed, ambition, selfishness, all associated with the blamed middle and upper classes, or of uncontrollable, historical forces, which the communist reorganization of history would soon eliminate. I argue that the films that did become popular promoted the vision of a perfect world to be achieved through the common effort of all, but centered on an intimate sphere whose discourse reproduced the official discourse of hierarchy and order even if it masked them as the free choice of equal individuals.

Chapter V: The Popular Melodrama of Interiority: Texts in Contexts

The most popular films produced during the authoritarian regimes in France, Spain, and Romania employed the instruments of the melodrama of interiority in order to reassure their populations that all hardships and suffering would one day be transcended. The three most commercially successful productions focused on the idealized reconstruction of the past, whether it was that of legend, of the cabaret star, or of mythological leaders and ancestors. Intimate groups were separated by the unavoidable intervention of inescapable external authority, individual's own weaknesses and jealousy of counterpublics, or by history's inevitable march. Nevertheless, the texts always reinforced the possibility of spiritual harmony in a realm beyond the world of the flesh, in the patriarchal family, or in the permanence of a nation that transcends the individual. The rewriting of the past appealed to most viewers because it was achieved by poeticizing word, space, and light, by fetishizing the world of cabarets, and by sensationalizing ancient cultures and events. The melodrama of interiority was popular because it was spectacular in content and form.

*L'éternel retour***: Death and rebirth**

Jean Delannoy, the director of the *L'éternel retour*, believed that the film's unprecedented success was due to its ability to shift audiences' focus from the dangers, frustrations, and suffering of daily life to the individual's spiritual aspirations and struggles: "In essence, the virtue of *L'éternel retour* was to show that during this terrible

period when one could die an abominable death, one could also die of love."[650] The

legend of Tristan and Isolde is the basis for a modern drama in which Patrice (Jean

Marais) and Nathalie (Madeleine Sologne) fall helplessly in love with each other, but,

separated by hasty commitments and the jealous plotting of others, can only be united in

death. Although nothing in the narrative seems to connect the characters and their

situations to the real-life hardships of the period, the conflict at the heart of the plot must

have resonated with many viewers: external authority opposed the individuals' intimate,

affective connections with each other, provoking their death, but falling short of defeating

their love. In spite of the protagonists' tragic end, the film provided its audiences with a

much-needed reassurance that their anguish was temporary, that beyond the world of

flesh there was a world of spirit that could not be conquered by force. I argue that

L'éternel retour held the promise of a perfect intimate sphere that was, nevertheless,

constantly deferred for those in front of the screen. Delannoy's text de-historicized

events, transformed its characters into icons, and poeticized word, space, and light in

order to transpose its spectators into a parallel reality that could be the basis for their

addictive hope of change.

The film opens with a long shot of an isolated castle surrounded by tall, old trees.

From the window of a daunting tower, Gertrude (Yvonne de Bray) calls for her son

Achille (Piéral) only to find out from a servant that the wicked young dwarf has killed yet

another animal. Gertrude finally manages to catch Achille spying on her conversation

with Amédée, her husband (Jean d'Yd), but before she has a chance to punish him,

Patrice arrives. He is her dead sister's son and the object of envy for the entire family

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[650] André Halimi, "Interview with Jean Delannoy," in *Chantons sous l'occupation* (Paris: Olivier Orban 1976), qtd. in Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 116.

because he is the preferred nephew of Marc (Jean Murat), the rich, but solitary owner of the castle. A heated discussion over dinner ends with Patrice's secret proposal to Marc that he marry a young woman with whom to enjoy a more rewarding life and spite Gertrude and her family. The next day, the nephew sets out to find the perfect bride. At a bar in the small town across the sea, Patrice saves Nathalie from the hands of her violent fiancé, Morholt (Alexandre Rignault). He is injured and taken to the house Nathalie shares with Anne (Jane Marken), the woman who has raised her after her parents, like Patrice's, drowned. The young man seems smitten with Nathalie, but he suggests that she marry his uncle. Although she initially refuses, Morholt's return convinces her that she needs to go away. They leave, but not before Anne, who is known for her curing potions, gives Nathalie a liquid that would make her husband fall in love with her. Anne labels the vial "poison" in order to prevent others from using it. Nathalie marries Marc, himself immediately taken by the girl's surreal beauty. Gertrude, Achille, and Amédée plan to raise Marc's suspicions that Nathalie and Patrice are lovers. Soon after the wedding, a powerful storm keeps Marc, Gertrude, and Amédée away from the castle where Nathalie and Patrice take refuge in front of the fireplace. They share cocktails, but, unbeknownst to them, Achille has poured in the contents of the "poison" bottle. Nathalie finds the empty container, but does not reveal its history to Patrice. Gertrude's plotting fails, but, eventually, she succeeds when Marc catches Patrice kissing Nathalie in her bedroom. The two escape together and spend the winter in an isolated mountain cabin. When Marc finds them, Nathalie leaves with him, convinced that she has become a burden for Patrice. The young man wanders into town and settles in with his friend, Lionel (Roland Toutain), and his sister, dark-haired Nathalie (Junie Astor), another set of lonely children

whose parents seem to have abandoned them. The second Nathalie falls in love with the hero and he decides to marry her, but wants to have one more look at his first love. He enlists Lionel's help and the two go to the castle at night, where Patrice is shot in the leg by Achille. The men manage to return to the island where the protagonist collapses and sends his friend to bring him the blonde Nathalie. Lionel's sister remains to take care of Patrice, but, when her brother does return with her rival, she lies to Patrice and he dies. An ailing Nathalie makes her way to the fishermen's hut only to join him in death; Lionel, his sister, and Marc watch them helplessly.

L'éternel retour was a demanding project that required careful attention to sets and props, but also an appropriate location for the many exteriors of the castle or the sea. The production started on March 15, 1943, six weeks after Germany's surrender at Stalingrad and a few weeks after the beginning of the massive drafting of French workers into the STO. It was a time for reconsideration of allies and redefinition of political strategies that made Germany suspicious of its former partner, Italy, and more attentive to the activities of the French opposition. The film was produced by André Paulvé's company that, by late 1942, had entered into an arrangement with Cinecittá to create CIMEX (La Société Cinématographique Méditerranéenne d'Exploitation). 60% of CIMEX was the property of the Italians, who had contributed with the necessary funding and even locations for films such as *Lumière d'été* and *Les Visiteurs du soir*.[651] The tightening political conditions, however, led the German Filmprüfstelle to reject Delannoy's request to shoot on the Mediterranean.[652] Furthermore, although CIMEX appeared in the film credits, André Paulvé was the front name responsible for the film

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[651] See Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 24.
[652] Ibid., 116.

and his company Discina distributed it. I argue that, in spite of its Italian funding, *L'éternel retour* was primarily a French production tapping into what was made to appear as the national reservoir of the fantastic and the mythical.

None of the historical episodes that were the source of so much social and political confusion was even slightly mentioned in Delannoy's film. Furthermore, there was a clear concern to erase any possible clue that might locate the plot spatially or temporarily. Thus, neither the castle nor the island where Patrice met Nathalie bears a name, so characters refer to them using common nouns. The relationship between different spaces is also confusing. If viewers could imagine Marc's home situated across the sea from Nathalie's village and Lionel's small town positioned within a reasonable distance from the castle, it is impossible to place the mountain cabin where the lovers take refuge after their escape. Furthermore, such vague locations obscure the logic of some of the characters' actions and motivations without raising viewers' suspicions. The film kept an absolute silence about Marc's discovery of Patrice and Nathalie's hiding site without stirring spectators to question the couple's choice of home. Similarly, Patrice's decision to settle in with Lionel and his sister in a town so close to the castle that Amédée could just walk into could also have been the source of debate if audiences' attention had been geared toward the film's verisimilitude to reality rather than its melodramatic emphasis on archetypal situations and characters.

In addition to spatial ambiguity, time also seemed to pass in unclear patterns, whether it moved too slowly or simply burst ahead by several months. For example, the plot suggests that there are barely a few days from the moment the protagonists meet and Nathalie's wedding to Marc, which might have raised viewers' skepticism regarding

Nathalie's honest intentions in taking such a quick decision. By contrast, from the moment the lovers run away during what appears to be early fall, to Marc's arrival at the cottage covered in snow, the film uses only a simple combination of fade-out and fade-in to mark the time. A similar type of cinematographic punctuation—in this case from the panorama of frozen mountains to the heat of a summer's day—marks Patrice's arrival at Lionel's garage. In the tradition of melodrama, these rapid transitions construct time as a well-ordered sequence of particularly significant moments in the evolution of the protagonists' intimate sphere, with a special emphasis on coincidence. Thus, at the precise time when Nathalie appears to have got sick in the freezing cabin, Marc manages to find the two lovers. Afraid that she will eventually become a burden to Patrice, who may reject her, the young woman decides to leave him. The second time leap is equally supplemented by a twist of fate as Patrice ends up not only at a friend's house, but also at the door of another Nathalie who will fall in love with him. I suggest that the rapid temporal shifts, coupled with chance encounters and events, decisively determine the evolution of the couple's intimate sphere. As is the case with spatial incongruities, the progression of time camouflages important controversies regarding the characters' motivations and actions, conferring on them a sense of fatalism. As melodramatic characters, Patrice and Nathalie submit to the whims of fate. I argue that space and time were, therefore, used as a means of transposing audiences from a possible engagement with real characters, which would have implied a more direct reference to historical events, to an emotional investment in a mythical dimension. This narrative strategy had two immediate advantages: it passed censorship and provided a sense of hope for the fulfillment of the intimate sphere, only momentarily deferred.

Jean Delannoy bore most of the responsibility for the film's evasion of contemporary issues. Unlike most 1940s directors, who, as Colin Crisp underscores, came to cinema from the world of letters or theater, Delannoy did have knowledge of and experience in editing. A former actor, set designer, and journalist—he would also write for the underground *L'Écran Français*—he had also worked as an editor for Paramount between 1930 and 1935.[653] He was a mid-level director in the late 1930s, but, as critics have noted, he was known for his interest in religious and spiritual topics.[654] His films during and shortly after the war, expressed his preference for the investigation of ethical questions, the clash between one's affective allegiances and uncontrollable social circumstances, and the inner torment of characters who also fell prey to their own instincts and desires. In *Fièvres*, a singing star finds refuge only in religious devotion after he has succumbed to the charms of an admirer and lost the woman he loved. In *L'Assassin a peur la nuit*, the protagonist undergoes a profound moral transformation after falling in love with a virtuous young woman. *Pontcarral, colonel d'empire* ends with the protagonist's renewed vow of fidelity to the nation as the only emotional territory that could offer him a sense of worth and inner stability. In *L'éternel retour*, Patrice and Nathalie are brought together by their attraction to each other and a sense of shared experience as orphans. One of the most memorable images of the film is the close-up tracking shot of the protagonists' profiles as Patrice, injured by Morholt in the bar brawl, is being carried away and Nathalie is following him, the grave tones of the soundtrack punctuating her steps. The faces of these two beautiful young people become effigies of pain, anticipating the dramatic outcome of their earthly relationship. Theirs is

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[653] See Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 165.
[654] Ibid., 319.

no longer an ephemeral, secular connection, but one of universal proportions to which audiences, much like the mute customers watching this procession in the bar, become witnesses emotionally involved in the couple's fate. Delannoy's next film, *Le Bossu* [*The Hunchback*, 1944], also attempted to transform its seventeenth-century narrative of family loyalty, hidden identity, and regained honor into an expression of a symbolic hero's quest for social and affective recognition. I suggest that the essentializing tendency of *L'éternel retour* was, therefore, also the result of the director's particular fondness for the articulation of the metaphysical reality beyond the visible, the "moral occult" of melodrama.

Delannoy, however, also had the ability to make the preternatural become part of a recognizable reality. Writing in 1943, shortly after the film's release to great success, André Bazin suggested that the essential quality of cinematography was that it rendered the transcendental perceptible in the things themselves:

> It is not the fancifulness of special effects that here creates the mystery, but the quality immanent in things and people, for which the cameraman can take almost all the credit. The shots of *Les Visiteurs* had a Mediterranean precision, all in black and white. Those of *L'éternel retour* give us a greater spiritual satisfaction because they incarnate the mystery and in some way make it perceptible in the grain of things.[655]

Bazin opened his review by noting the incompatibility between a modern drama and a legend, an incongruity that, I should add, concerned audiences' expectations of a particular genre. By carving the fantastic into the fiber of everyday life, Delannoy made the presence of the love potion, essential in the Breton legend, a superfluous detail rather than the key to the plot. Thus, long before Achille poured the liquor into Patrice and

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[655] André Bazin, "Jean Delannoy's *L'Eternel Retour*," in *French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance: The Birth of a Critical Esthetic*, ed. François Truffaut, trans. Stanley Hochman (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1981), 41.

Nathalie's cups, spectators already knew that the two had fallen for each other. The unhappy outcome of the lovers' final reunion could be predicted at the moment of Nathalie's hasty marriage to Marc and was, furthermore, carefully prepared by the narrative's insistence on the jealous plotting of Gertrude and her family. I suggest that, in addition to making the fantastic become a palpable presence, Delannoy also, paradoxically, highlights the actuality of the story. Patrice and Nathalie appear as an everyday couple of the 1940s coping with hostile circumstances.

Delannoy's predilection, nevertheless, was for the archetypal at the expense of the historical and it was supported by his collaborators. The film's script and dialogue were signed by Jean Cocteau, who had already collaborated on Marcel L'Herbier's *La Comédie du bonheur* (*Comedy of Happiness*, 1940) and Serge de Poligny's *Le Baron fantôme*, and who was to write also for Robert Bresson's *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*. These texts center on individual experiences in an apparently timeless universe in the sense that, even when they are period films, they are detached from any tangible political or social realities. Règent notes that *L'éternel retour* transformed Marais into the French Siegfried, which led the British to catalogue it as Nazi, but that the Nordic influences in Cocteau's script did not necessarily qualify it as such.[656] Ehrlich adds that Cocteau's interest in poetry and allegory also contributed to the film's detachment from real life, which made it one of the prime examples of the "cinema of isolation."[657] Finally, Alan Williams suggests that *L'éternel retour* echoes Cocteau's belief that the

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[656] Règent, *Cinéma de France*, 203-207.
[657] Ehrlich defines the cinema of the Occupation as one of isolation not only because of its segregation from international film, but also because of its "sense of remove from life," its hermeticism, and the sensation that characters were "suffocating in an airless environment, observed from a detached, scientific distance." Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox*, 97; 116-117.

role of art is personal rather than social transformation.[658] Indeed, the cinematic text

insists on essentializing especially the protagonist's heroic qualities, transforming athletic

Patrice into the symbol of human perfection and devoted Nathalie into a representation of

feminine suffering. The other characters are not round, real people either, but, in the

tradition of melodrama, psychic signs of authority and jealousy (Gertrude), impotence

(Amédée), pure malevolence (Achille), and patriarchal dissolution (Marc). Furthermore,

in the beginning of the film, there is a stark contrast between the evil "racial misfit,"

Achille, and the "Aryan," utterly idealized, supernaturally blond Patrice and Nathalie. I

believe that, even if not intended as a support of Nazi ideology, Delannoy's film did,

therefore, have the ingredients that made it popular with the authorities, which is,

probably, part of the reason why Cocteau was among the artists accused of collaboration

in the initial days after the liberation.[659]

Film is, nevertheless, a collective art, so it is almost impossible to separate the

merits or shortcomings of the script from those of the entire product. Jean Delannoy's

contribution was essential in bringing together the crew of *L'éternel retour*. Roger

Hubert, the cinematographer of the film, was part of the well-established 1930s

generation, having worked especially with Abel Gance (*Mater dolorosa*, *Lucrèce Borgia*

[Lucrezia Borgia, 1935], *J'accuse!* [*I Accuse!*, 1938]), but also with Marc Allégret

(*Fanny* [1932]), Jacques Feyder (*Pension Mimosa* [1935]) and even Marcel Carné (*Jenny*

[1936]). His preference for the expressionist tradition of stylized lighting, contributed not

only to set the mood of the film, especially in the shots of the isolated, gloomy castle, but

also to construct characters such as the outlandish Achille. Georges Auric, the composer

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[658] A. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 321.
[659] See Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma français*, 92.

who was one of Delannoy's most constant partners, complemented Hubert's play on shadows and semi-lit figures by using music as a gate to a metaphysical dimension rather than as a means of emphasizing the physicality of the protagonists' experience. One of the most memorable sequences of the film transforms Patrice into a symbol of fated heroism. As he secretly climbs up a spiral staircase to Nathalie's bedroom, Hubert's canted camera and strong contrast between the preternatural moonlight penetrating through the rhythmically spaced tower windows and the darkness of the night confer on Marais a hallucinatory beauty and the aura of doomed lover. Auric's delicate music builds momentum, gradually introducing the harp to mark Nathalie's anticipation of the encounter as a magical communion of spirit and desire with Patrice. Cocteau's script was, therefore, not the only one responsible for the ethereal dimension of the essential sequences of the narrative. I suggest that Hubert and Auric, under Delannoy's direction, had the merit of infusing the twentieth-century setting with a dose of the fantastic that blended naturally into the mood and development of events.

I suggest that *L'éternel retour* was commercially successful because it exposed a conflict that was very much at the heart of French experience during the war: the clash between socio-economic demands and one's affective bonds and commitments. Drawn to each other, Patrice and Nathalie place filial duty, social security, and deference to authority before their loyalty and affection for each other. An otherwise benevolent father figure to his nephew, Marc does not hesitate to use his patriarchal power to banish his young rival and recover his bride, even if only in body and not in spirit. Lionel and his sister eventually convince Patrice, against his emotional instincts, that his marriage to the new Nathalie might shield him from loneliness and could even lead to a thriving family

business. Desire is organized in a triangular, Oedipal model: Marc, Patrice, and the blond Nathalie are engaged with each other beyond what appears as a simple rivalry between two men for one woman; Lionel, Patrice, and the brunette Nathalie form another intimate group animated by a complex emotional structure; and Gertrude, Amédée, and Achille represent an unusual family structure in which the child's desire for, and independence from, the mother are constantly in a fragile, yet functional, balance. I argue that the conflict between authority and desire prevents the first two intimate groups from reaching any measure of unity and harmony, while the third group draws its survival from the uncontested power of the matriarch. The appeal of the film's ending was that, while it supported a hierarchical social structure as the only viable organization of the family and, implicitly, the nation, it also preserved intact the ideal of an egalitarian intimate sphere built on mutual trust and love.

In *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, René Girard explains that desire is always mimetic and involves a triangular model of subject, "mediator," and object. The subject only imitates the desire of the mediator—perceived as a godly, absolute figure—to whom he or she is attracted.[660] In Delannoy's film, Marc and Patrice's initial relationship is marked by an intense, reciprocal devotion, which is the focus of Gertrude's envy and constant bickering. After a heated debate during the family dinner, the two men retire to the study to discuss her complaint that, unlike Edith, Marc's dead wife, and Solange, Patrice's dead mother, she has been constantly neglected because she is the mother of a dwarf who, in his turn, suffers from being different. Through Gertrude's complaint, the film denounces the Nazi policies regarding the Other

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[660] René Girard, "'Triungular Desire," in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1965), 2-4.

even as, given Achille's raw brutality to animals and malevolent scheming, it expresses its approval of war-time discrimination. As was the case with many other popular texts, Delannoy's production endorsed both a dominant and an oppositional reading, appealing, therefore, to publics and counterpublics alike.

Gertrude indirectly exposes her brother's excessive attachment to his nephew at the expense of the rest of his family, but, having been introduced to Achille's cruel habits and her own violence to her husband and son, viewers cannot but approve of Marc's preference. The room where Marc and Patrice retreat suggestively represents the type of intimate sphere established between them. A massive desk and a chair are the only pieces of furniture surrounded by walled-in shelves of neatly ordered old books. Georges Wakhévitch, one of the most appreciated set designers of the time, proves, in this case, to have a special eye for the details that reveal the characters' inner world. This room is Marc's universe, defined by his claim to authority as the family provider and sole male survivor of generations of noblemen, but also by his passion for reading and attempt to evade the world around. He admits to Patrice that he has treated him as his own son and would love to live alone with him, and the young man reminds him that they share the same pain of having lost those they loved the most. Seated on the desk, Patrice, young, blond and in a light-colored suit, towers over his uncle and appears as Marc's idealized vision of himself. A low-angle, medium shot of the nephew, from the older man's perspective, frames him within two symmetrical door columns and envelops him in a soft lighting that accentuates his profile, creating the image of a Roman or Greek figure of the type revealed by war-time art that insisted on a return to classicism. The homoerotic charge of the camera's gaze at Patrice reproduces Marc's, suggesting his affective

dependence on his nephew. When the young man proposes that he procure a young wife for his uncle, there is no opposition; quite the contrary, Marc becomes excited and heartily concurs to the plan. The initial father-son relationship has acquired, in the course of a conversation, almost incestuous tones only to end up as a sexual pact in which the young man is to provide the woman that would replace him in his uncle's affections. Patrice is, therefore, what Girard has termed the "mediator" between Marc and Nathalie: it is because Marc is attracted to Patrice, whom he perceives as the idealized image of masculinity, that he conceives of Nathalie as the object of his desire and eventually identifies his nephew as his rival. Marc does not share Nathalie's bedroom and he is much more physically close to Patrice than to his own new wife. Nathalie is, therefore, the initial outsider into the intimate sphere shared by the two men.

She is not, however, a complete stranger to Patrice at the moment they meet; he is drawn to Nathalie because, in her, he recognizes his archetypal other. They first meet at the bar where Nathalie confronts Morholt, who, drunk and violent, throws glasses at everybody. Patrice comes to her defense, but gets stabbed and is carried to Nathalie's house to recover. The next morning, even before finding out each other's name, the two discover that they have lost their parents in similar circumstances, as a result of a shipwreck. "Nous sommes les enfants de la mer" ("We are the children of the sea"), concludes Patrice. Cocteau, however, relies on a language artifice—the double meaning of the same phonic complex, "mer"/ "mère" ("sea"/"mother")—in order to emphasize the symbolical origin of the couple as the offspring of a universal mother, split at birth, but intended to reunite sooner or later. It is significant that, before Nathalie and Patrice pronounce each other's name, i.e. before they acquire a definite, historical identity, they

sense that they have been destined for each other as the perfect halves of a transcendental

oneness. Cocteau's poetics are matched by Hubert's classicizing construction of the

individual frames involved in the shot reverse-shot dialogue. Nathalie sits down on the

bed where Patrice is slowly waking up after a difficult night. She is the center of a

medium shot taken from the young man's perspective, in which low-key lighting, with a

special emphasis on backlighting, softens Sologne's features and gives her the aura of an

ethereal being. The use of selective focus, which blurs the background plane and adds to

the "transcendental" quality of the image, reinforces viewers' impression that Patrice's

experience is one of an ahistorical encounter with an archetype rather than a physically

material woman. Filmed in a medium close-up from Nathalie's point of view, Patrice

becomes a symbol of wounded masculinity, the ideal man temporarily paralyzed, but

spiritually alert to the others' inner anguish. The use of strong key lighting, centered on

Marais's forehead and cheek bones, supplemented by very tempered fill lighting,

accentuates the actor's facial features, transforming him into the sculptural embodiment

of an atemporal heroic prototype. I argue that word, space, and light are essential in

building spectators' awareness that they are witnessing a metaphysical encounter and

that, in the tradition of melodrama, characters embody sacred essences rather than

represent tangible, real human beings with qualities and flaws. Referring critically to

Cocteau's sketching of chimerical individuals, Jacques Siclier noted that, "… Jean

Delannoy n'eut à filmer que des ombres des personnages et un couple des statues" (" …

Jean Delannoy only had to film shadows of characters and a couple of statues ").

The intimate sphere established between Nathalie and Patrice is revealed as

perfectly harmonious to viewers, yet remains only a matter of perception to the

protagonists themselves. They fail to acknowledge their common destiny for different reasons. Patrice remains faithful to his promise to Marc, so his first reaction is to propose to Nathalie on behalf of his uncle. The promise of an end to her socio-economic worries attracts Nathalie. Patrice offers her "life" in exchange for the nightmare she is experiencing with Morholt, and he details his proposition: "Vous auriez un chateau, une voiture, des domestiques, des arbres, de paix, de l'argent, de l'amour…" ("You will have a castle, a car, servants, trees, peace, money, love…"). Nathalie's tears turn to disappointment when she realizes that Patrice is proposing on behalf of his uncle and she storms out of the room. Morholt's arrival at the house convinces her that she must escape a life of abuse, misery, and poverty, so she agrees to marry Marc, a man she has never seen. What appeared as a promise for a close, ideal relationship built on love and trust rapidly dissolves into a potentially ruinous situation as a result of the characters' denial of their own desire.

The "intruders" into the intimate sphere—Patrice's unbreakable filial commitment and Nathalie's wish to evade an existence of subjection and penury—reflected audiences' own anxieties about the threats that plagued the inner lives of couples and families during the war. Like Patrice and Nathalie, the French felt orphaned of a protective state and, therefore, responsible for fending for themselves under all circumstances. I suggest that, as a melodrama of interiority, *L'éternel retour* reflected the ageless conflict between love and duty, whether to self or to another, and responded to viewers' very palpable fears of emotional isolation and economic turmoil.

A melodramatic device, the love potion becomes the vehicle through which the protagonists have the vivid revelation of their common destiny at a moment when it is too

late to undo their respective social commitments. A powerful storm keeps Gertrude,

Amédée, and Marc away, while Patrice and Nathalie meet, fortuitously, by the fireplace.

The hero, concerned about the young woman's sadness, decides to offer her a "magical

mix," a glass of alcohol that might enliven her spirits. Amid strong thunder and lightning,

the two share a cocktail, unaware that Achille has poured Anne's bottle of "poison" into

the glasses. They lie down side by side in one of the film's most memorable shots that

anticipates their tragic end. In her long, white dress, Nathalie is the image of the delicate,

celestial bride, the perfect companion to Patrice's lighthearted hero. Their conversation

borders on the poetic: watching the shadows of the fire projected on the ceiling, Patrice

comments that the ceiling is dancing, but Nathalie contradicts him, claiming that it is the

fire that is dancing. Their words suggest a state of modified consciousness and two

modes of perception that supplement each other: the young man observes a change in the

immediate, physical world, while the woman describes the movement of an immaterial,

intangible substance. When Nathalie sits up, visibly transformed, Patrice notices the

alcohol's marvelously intoxicating effect, but, to viewers privy to Achille's deed, the

couple's words become a direct reflection of their inner metamorphosis as a result of

falling in love.

The characters' revelation of their feelings for each other is melodramatically

staged in a medium shot in which the two are symmetrically positioned to the log fire that

illustrates their attraction to each other. Troubled by unclear premonitions, Nathalie

confesses her fear, but cannot name its object. When lightning strikes again, Patrice

slowly approaches her, declaring his readiness to protect her against the storm. Nathalie's

words, "C'est toi! C'est toi!"("It's you!"), reinforced in his approving silence, indicate

both lovers' realization of their mutual affection. This melodramatic moment of astonishment is fraught with more premonitions, as the outside storm becomes symbolical of future emotional distress. When Achille throws them the empty bottle, Nathalie perceives his gesture as merely an additional confirmation of their revelation. Even to spectators, the potion is only one among the many other factors that facilitate the characters' acknowledgement of their indissoluble connection to each other. The cozy atmosphere of the room, the storm, the alcohol, the dancing fire, and the absence of the other characters have all contributed to the moment. I argue that at the heart of Patrice and Nathalie's intimate sphere lies the matter-spirit/animus-anima complementarity of their archetypes.

Marc becomes the intruder in this relationship and his claim to the woman, socially supported as a consequence of the marriage, becomes a symbolical act of authority and aggression against ideal intimate groups. His attitude towards the lovers is one of patriarchal benevolence as long as the couple's behavior does not confirm his or Gertrude's suspicions. He chastely kisses Nathalie good night and asks her not to give others any reason for gossip. He also talks to Patrice in a caring, friendly voice, urging him to leave on a hunting expedition in order to protect Nathalie from the attacks of others. He places Nathalie on a pedestal, perceiving her as the embodiment of an ideal that was lost with the death of his first wife, Edith. Nathalie is offered Edith's room, which appears as a mausoleum raised to imprison the new occupant within her husband's solitary, long-lasting fantasy. This bedroom is isolated at the top of a tower, dominated by a Victorian bed, but open to surveillance because various doors, corridors, and galleries end there. When Patrice declares his love to Nathalie, lights turn on and Marc,

Gertrude, and Achille appear almost out of nowhere, as ultimate guardians of the law. To Marc, Nathalie is a delicate, untouchable object, which he aims to protect because she encapsulates his intangible love for Patrice and his past, equally intangible, dreams of conjugal harmony. He cannot and does not establish any intimate connection with Nathalie because he does not perceive her as a real person. Marc is the soft father figure described by Burch and Sellier, yet, when he feels betrayed, he imposes his will on others and sends Patrice away. He is a Pétainist, reactionary figure, too attached to the past to understand and react to the present.

When Patrice is chased away, he soon gets involved with his friend, Lionel, and the brunette Nathalie, both of whom perceive him as an ideal partner and encourage his integration into their family. The siblings are yet another pair of quasi-orphaned children: their parents live in Morocco and seem to have abandoned them. The war had forced many families to separate, preventing some of the members from returning to France especially in the case of the categories targeted by the authorities such as the Jews, the Freemasons, or the communists. Lionel immediately greets Patrice as one of "them," the abandoned children, the outcasts of society. The more self-assured, independent attitude of Lionel's sister, her dark hair, her smoking habit, her more masculine dressing style, and bad reputation do place her into a different category from the fair-haired Nathalie, suggesting the social marginality of the siblings. If Marc, his sister, and her family constitute the empowered publics given their economic and social status, Lionel and Nathalie represent the liberal counterpublics, resisting the conservatism of almost everybody around them.

Lionel immediately installs Patrice in his mother's bedroom, a large space populated by mirrors, paintings, vanity tables, chic chairs, and screens. The choice of this room, which is much bigger than any other in the house, is an indirect reflection of Lionel's enthusiasm and affection for his friend. It is also Lionel who insists that Patrice marry his sister, explaining to him that they are the only family he has got at the moment. He repeatedly emphasizes their condition as abandoned children, considering that this circumstance should confer on them unity against an authority that has forgotten them.[661] It is also Lionel who confronts Patrice about the blond Nathalie, whom he perceives as a threat to their emerging intimate group. Patrice admits that he has agreed to get married because he likes living with the siblings and, especially, because he likes Lionel and thinks he will be cured of his attachment to his uncle's wife. Lionel immediately understands his friend's first allegiance to the woman he loves, but, in agreeing to help him see Nathalie one more time, he also demonstrates his ability for empathy and even self-sacrifice, the basic qualities of the future intimate group he hopes to achieve. The affective triangle of Lionel, Patrice, and Nathalie is, therefore, organized around the men's relationship. Like Marc, Lionel attempts to consolidate his relationship to Patrice by means of a woman. He offers his guest non-conditional friendship, a mixture of love and loyalty, which must have rendered him popular especially among those viewers for whom such male solidarity was essential to emotional and physical survival during the war. Men who had fought in the war, were part of the Resistance, or had been enlisted in the STO probably appreciated Lionel's devotion.

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[661] When Patrice worries about the parents' reaction to his possible marriage to Nathalie, Lionel underscores his and his sister's independence from them in such matters. Later, in order to convince Patrice to marry his sister, Lionel urges him to make his own family rather than wait for his uncle to find a wife for him.

There are also unmistakable homoerotic sentiments between the two men, especially noticeable in the last part of the film when the mortally injured Patrice asks Lionel to bring Nathalie so that he can see her once more. Cocteau's relationship with Jean Marais was fairly well-known at the time and probably inspired the type of interactions suggested between Marc and Patrice, or Lionel and Patrice; in part, the film's success was also the result of its appreciation by the gay community. As Patrice is lying on the overturned boat in the shed, Lionel bends over him, caressing his forehead and holding his hand, trying to alleviate his pain. Their dialogue becomes more intense, and the camera tracks in, revealing one man's physical suffering and the other's distraught expression. The intimacy between the two grows palpable as Patrice, his voice slowly breaking down, pulls Lionel closer to his face while the background is gradually blurred, accentuating the two figures and conferring on them the aura of symbols. The interplay between the striking key light used to emphasize Marais's agonizing look and the much softer frontal lighting that reveals Lionel's distress suggests the complementarity of the two, which, as in the case of Nathalie and Patrice, is the basis of their intimate sphere. Thus, if Patrice burns intensely and is physically consumed by his pain, Lionel tames his emotions in order to assist his friend. Lionel's ideas and actions vis-à-vis Patrice constantly demonstrate a position of reason and practicality. He suggests the marriage when he senses that Patrice is attracted to his sister, building on his friend's feelings rather than propose an alliance with no real basis. He supports the would-be union as a path to emotional and economic stability for all parties involved. Finally, moved by Patrice's tears for the first Nathalie, he reconsiders his plans and helps his friend in the hope that their night-time trip to Marc's castle will eventually bring some closure to

Patrice. Lionel is the reliable, loving partner who admires and tries to aid the man he loves; the intimate sphere established between the two men is durable and uncontested. The "Aryan"-looking Patrice is embraced and protected by the counterpublics who oppose the authority of the lord of the manor, which transforms the protagonist himself into a figure of resistance.

Patrice gets closer to the second Nathalie because he assumes she could offer him the inner stability he seeks. He is attracted to her, but confesses to Lionel that there is a gap between attraction and love. Having been informed by Amédée that Nathalie and Marc are getting closer every day and, convinced by Lionel's arguments about the advantages of joining their family, Patrice eventually opens to the possibility of a commitment. Nathalie's self-confidence, frankness, and inner strength are qualities that eventually appeal to Patrice and he proposes to her at the end of a scene that mirrors his initial dialogue with the blond Nathalie. This sequence opens with Patrice, who, suffering from an invisible, emotional wound, is sitting up in bed when Lionel's sister comes in to talk to him. Patrice confesses that he sleeps as much as he can, which surprises Nathalie, for whom sleeping is only a waste. To her enthusiasm about life, he opposes his disillusionment and revolt against the implacable flow of one's destiny. The difference between the two is emphasized in their gestures and gazes. Patrice feels troubled by her questions and looks into the distance, forced to reevaluate his recent past, while Nathalie's inquisitive eyes never leave him. Unlike the blond Nathalie, whom viewers may associate with the metaphysical and the spiritual, the brunette Nathalie is a very real, levelheaded individual, the clever and sensitive "bad girl" of cinema. Her room is full of photos of stars and books, and the radio keeps her constant company. Nathalie is

remarkable for her power of observation. She senses and understands everything much faster than her brother. She immediately notices Patrice's barely perceptible reaction to her name and confronts him about it. She also rightly guesses that his emotional paralysis is connected to his uncle's house. Finally, the moment Anne shows her the photo of the other Nathalie, she understands that she is only a substitute for the partner that Patrice cannot have; the intimate sphere she thought she shared with him is not real. Her disadvantage is that she is a flesh-and-blood woman competing with an ideal.

Nathalie, however, deals the final blow to the two lovers. As Lionel's boat is approaching, carrying Marc and his fragile wife, the brunette Nathalie lies to Patrice in a fit of jealousy. Although she immediately repents and tells the truth, the young man dies, unable to fight the infection caused by Achille's bullet. The melodramatic use of cinematography and music fetishizes the moment of death and transforms Marais into a national icon. Initially, Patrice sits up and, with his last strength, he asks about Nathalie's arrival. The grave non-diegetic music intensifies as Lionel's sister, caught in an expressive close up, decides to hide what she sees. The grim tones lose intensity in order to allow Marais's feeble voice to repeat the question. The low-key lighting creates a halo around his body and the camera tracks in to a medium close up, revealing his eyes closed because of extreme extenuation and pain. Patrice is no longer a character in a film, but the religious expression of suffering that many would have associated with Christian sainthood. At the moment of death, the high-angle close up on his head, the dark, abstract background, and the chiseling light on his cheek bones confer on him the timelessness of a statue. When the blond Nathalie lies next to him, shrouded in a white cloak, the two cease to be human beings and become symbols of transcendence. Marc and then Lionel

immediately recognize them as the embodiment of a higher essence, inaccessible to human beings. From a high-angle position, the omniscient camera tracks back to reveal the lovers stretched out on the overturned boat, amid the fishing nets, ropes, hull structures, and other boats. Orphans of the sea, they seem suffocated by the paraphernalia of earthly life. When the objects and people around them disappear by means of a dissolve, they remain alone on the boat, surrounded by open arches through which one can glimpse the sky, the sea, and the rocky shore. Patrice and Nathalie symbolically return to the sea, to the Great Mother who offers them the freedom to love. I argue that this last frame of the film suggests that there is a space where the lovers' union is possible, that suffering is temporary, and that obstacles belong only to the world of the senses. *L'éternel retour* ends, therefore, with an image that resonated with all types of publics and counterpublics. The lovers' "floating" peacefully into eternity was an indirect hint at Christian martyrdom to be rewarded in afterlife, a conclusion that would have satisfied the Vichy authorities. The idea of superhumans who defy death, return to pure oneness, and are to be reborn again could not but please the Nazi officials in charge of French cinema. Finally, the escape of the misunderstood and the persecuted beyond the reach of authority was, probably, a dear thought to those who opposed the regime. This double address—to both official publics and counterpublics—contributed to the ambiguous nature of the film. In all cases, the appeal to an indomitable intimate sphere that would endure in face of hostility or temptation was the antidote to the fear, confusion, and distress of real life.

This grand ending, however, cleverly diminishes a different commentary that the film makes in relation to intimate groups and their endurance. The only close relationship

that resists unchallenged to the end is that established between Gertrude, Amédée, and Achille. A stern patriarch, Gertrude controls and manipulates both men, but manages to preserve their loyalty and support. The opening sequence is revelatory to the type of interaction that confers stability to their family. Gertrude is looking for Achille only to find out that he has killed one of the dogs on the property. As she walks up and down the Gothic corridors of the castle, her son is hiding in Patrice's room, watching her every movement. Achille's constant surveillance of the others, supplemented by their refusal to acknowledge his destructive potential, will, eventually, make him the instrument of doom when he shoots Patrice in cold blood. Gertrude does complain to Amédée about Achille's violence, accusing him of having instigated it. The two talk in the weapon room while Amédée is meticulously cleaning the barrel of a riffle. For Gertrude's husband, firearms are fetishized objects that compensate for his lack of power in the family. The dominant mother also leaves her mark on the son, whose acts of brutality are a means to undermine her power. Gertrude's attempt to control both men has, therefore, encouraged them to take refuge in more or less harmful "hobbies."

Amédée and Achille, however, are not silent members of their family: the former questions Gertrude's parental skills, albeit with no success, while the latter takes any opportunity to rebel against his mother. Amédée calmly explains to Gertrude that her refusal to consider her son a grown-up man leads only to frustration and further acts of defiance. Gertrude gets irritated by her husband's passing remark about her short height, taking it as a direct attack that makes her responsible for Achille's stature. Amédée further demonstrates a better understanding of his son's character, alerting Gertrude to Achille's habit of listening at doors. When the dwarf comes in, Gertrude suffocates him

with gestures of affection only to discover that he has stolen one of Patrice's ties. Menacingly, she moves toward Achille, ready to hit him when her nephew's arrival attracts her attention. Gertrude easily passes from rage at her son's acts of cruelty, to self-defense against charges of responsibility for his life, to exaggerated care and displays of love, and, finally, to harsh discipline as a means of coping with Achille's unruliness. In his turn, the son mocks obedience and assumes the part of the child in order to manipulate his mother. This intimate public seems to thrive on animosity, resentment, and confrontation, yet, when it is necessary, they jump to support or protect each other. At dinner, Gertrude defends her son against Marc's incriminations for having killed the servant's dog. Achille gladly collaborates with his mother in setting the trap that would prove to Marc that his nephew and wife have betrayed his trust. Finally, at his wife's appeal, Amédée goes to town to tell Patrice of his uncle's supposedly blissful marriage in order to provoke him into action and thus further estrange him from Marc. The most dysfunctional of all possible publics proves to be the most enduring because they rely on their instinct to protect their self-interests against all others. In the official public sphere, the three may have been perceived as the threat that comes from counterpublics—after all, Achille does embody the type of "misfit" that the Nazis sought to exterminate—and that could lead to the dissolution of intimate publics.

L'éternel retour employed the tools of melodrama in order to expose the characters' inner turmoil and allow viewers to indentify the moments of astonishment. The choice and arrangement of sets had an important effect on the overall reaction to the narrative. Marc's castle, for example, is a Gothic labyrinth, whose numerous arches, secret passages, and narrow corridors offer protection only to Achille and imprison

almost everybody else. Furthermore, well-emphasized visual motifs were used to express the characters' thoughts or emotions. For example, the shadows of the "dancing" fire appear twice: in the scene in which, "drunk" with the elixir, Nathalie and Patrice acknowledge their love; and in a later scene, when the two are in their mountain cabin and a pensive Nathalie, having realized that Marc has arrived for her, decides to leave Patrice so as not to become a burden to him. The same musical theme supplements these images, contributing to the nostalgic mood of the second sequence and indicating the heroine's sorrow at the decision she has to take. Another stylistic element that functions to support the melodramatic construction of characters as types or signs rather than complex human beings is the constant blurring of the background of a shot in order to emphasize the respective figure's symbolical value. During their first dialogue, Nathalie is the vision of virtue and spirit; in Patrice's room, the second Nathalie, her eyes fixed on the hero, becomes the tempting "bad girl" of the plot; finally, at the moment of his death, Patrice's sculptural face suggests valor, integrity, and sacrifice. Revelatory sets, visual motifs, music, and cinematography are supplemented by the inspired choice of props and costumes. Achille steals Patrice's tie, an ironic reference to his phallic deficiency. The blond Nathalie tends to wear long, white dresses, which give her the air of the ideal, chaste bride and oppose her to the brunette Nathalie, whose buttoned up vests and neck scarves suggest modernity and self-control. The protagonists' fashion style had, in fact, a considerable success with audiences. Marais's pullover and Sologne's straight, simple haircut were immediately adopted by many who had become enamored with the characters. [662] I believe that viewers were, thus, encouraged to read the film as the

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[662] See Siclier, *La France de Pétain*, 149.

confrontation between clearly-defined moral forces, which only enhanced the popular appeal of melodrama.

The poster also facilitated the interpretation of the film in terms of a conflict between good and evil, love and wickedness. A statuesque Nathalie, seen in profile and wearing a white bridal gown, appears almost detached from the other figures as a darker shadow envelops her, indicating both her intangibility as a spiritual essence and her potentially tragic destiny. Nathalie looks straight at Patrice and their serious faces appear locked in a dialogue that remains imperceptible to the viewers. They live in their own world, as essences separated from mortal engagement with concrete form, an idea underscored by the lack of any clearly contoured space, object, or other identifiable shape. The style of the poster followed, therefore, the classicizing tendencies promoted in Nazi and Fascist art, whose purpose was to revive antiquity, emphasize order, and highlight the heroic human figure. By contrast with Nathalie's white dress, Patrice's figure is colored in striking red, an indication of his intense desire and emotion. The couple appears, therefore, as a balanced combination of opposites: spirit and matter. At the center of the image, however, lies the shadow of the dwarf as a symbol of the ominous hand of fate that would separate the two. If viewers can easily distinguish the facial expressions of Patrice and Nathalie, Achille is merely a dark, deformed shape that seems to be spying from inside a secret corridor, waiting for the right moment to attack. The title of the film uses red initials (for "L" and "R"), but adopts black for the rest of the letters, with the names of the actors in white, preceding the title, and the introduction of the rest of the crew in red, following the title. This combination of colors reinforces the centrality of the dwarf figure, suggesting the possible invincibility of evil; the red initials,

however, indicate a possible transcendence based on deep affective devotion. Even before entering the cinema, therefore, viewers had a glimpse of the plot, its major conflict, and its possible outcome. In its use of essential form and color, the poster identified, in the manner of melodrama, the opposed forces whose eternal confrontation played on screens as much as in real life.

L'éternel retour revolves around individuals' efforts to come together into consistent, durable intimate groupings, providing two types of discourses that could constitute the basis of the intimate sphere: one that emphasizes opposition to others, group interest, and a strict power hierarchy and the other that relies on the ideal of love, communication, and freedom of choice. Gertrude and her family fare better than others because, in spite of their squabbles, each member faithfully plays the part expected of him or her when the group has a precise goal in mind. Achille's acts of malice gain in magnitude under the protection and sometimes with the encouragement of his parents. This intimate group is the image of the unity, strength, and even ordinariness of everyday evil. Its resistance is, therefore, an indirect criticism of the impotence of authority figures, such as Marc, and even of heroic figures, such as Patrice. It is difficult to attribute a specific identity to such a group. In one way, Achille's handicap played right into the Nazi vision that it was "necessary" to "purify" the race, so the negative symbolism associated with this family would have satisfied the censors. In another way, the dwarf's pompous name might have been an ironic hint at the Nazi Aryan doctrine, especially as the character belonged to one of the powerful upper classes; combined with the visible dominance of the family over the castle, this detail might have served to identify them with the occupier. I consider that, as was the case with many other films of the

Occupation, this dual reading of the same narrative element appealed to both publics and counterpublics, thereby contributing to the financial success of the work.

More than anything, however, *L'éternel retour* glorified one's self-sacrifice to love and justified it with a vision of blissful, transcendental wholeness. Nathalie decides to return to Marc because she fears she may become a burden to the man she loves. In his turn, Patrice remains loyal to Nathalie and his vision of their love, which puts him in the path of danger and leads to his death. These archetypal figures regain their peace only once they have escaped the everyday world, governed by social contracts and commitments. None of the other individuals who are emotionally open to, and show confidence in, those around them achieves any measure of happiness. Marc, who has raised, loved, and admired Patrice and who, to grant his nephew's wish, welcomes and then falls in love with Nathalie, is left alone to mourn for both. Lionel and his sister, both of whom immediately embraced Patrice and offered him the affection and fidelity that he was missing, are eventually heartbroken and mute. Even Anne, the woman who has so faithfully protected and helped Nathalie and Patrice, is, by force of circumstance, forsaken by all. I argue that Delannoy's melodrama of interiority reflected viewers' anxieties regarding the possible evolution of their intimate relationships towards loneliness and suffering as a result of an unstable, economically and socially demanding context. In the lovers' reunion, however, the text supplied the promise of future reward; it was a good promise for both publics and counterpublics.

El último cuplé: **Divide, conquer, entertain**

"No es género pequeño cuando la artista es grande" ("There is no small genre when the artist is great"), declares Juan (Armando Calvo), a renowned impresario, to María Luján (Sara Montiel), the young, talented woman he wants to convince to sing *cuplés* in Juan de Orduña's *El último cuplé*. No doubt, the same line would also have flattered most melodrama actors or actresses of the time. And the similarities between the *cuplé* and the melodrama do not end here. Discredited as the "low genre" ("género ínfimo"), the *cuplé* needed a figure that could free it from its burdensome connection to taverns and low-famed locales. In María, it found both its chance to access the more respectable stage of middle-class theater, but also its culmination and end. Very likely the most popular film of the 1950s,[663] *El último cuplé* revived the presumed rags-to-riches story of the early twentieth-century stage world, conferring the illusion of possible success on the many disenchanted viewers of the 1950s. I argue that the film aimed for sensationalism and recounted an idyllic reality that had never existed in order to reinforce conservative gender roles, raise doubts about the solidity of the intimate sphere, and cast counterpublics as possible dangers for the unity of intimate publics.

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[663] Caparrós Lera lists it as the fifth most popular film of Franco's entire regime, ahead of the other very popular melodrama of interiority of the 1950s, *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?*; he uses a classification made by the Institute for Public Opinion in 1968. Caparrós Lera, "Las películas más populares," 236-237. José Enrique Monterde also indicates that Orduña's film was the best selling film and, I would add, the best selling melodrama of interiority in Madrid in the 1950s. Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 262. Carlos Heredero, however, lists *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?* as the most popular according to the number of days both films lasted in cinemas, followed by *El último cuplé*. Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 99. All classifications raise multiple questions that vary from the number of seats, to the actual number of viewers on each day, and even to the politics of each distributor and exhibitor. Heredero's list does reinforce the popularity of Orduña's film, even if it does not consider it the most commercial of the decade. In the absence of box office numbers, which were not kept for the 1950s, I consider that there is enough evidence to support the popularity of *El último cuplé* and analyze it as one of the most significant melodramas of interiority in terms of its appeal to audiences.

Although the Church ranked it in its third category, intended for films that were morally threatening, the ill-fated history of the woman who lived only for and through her "art" was one of the favorite productions of Franco's authoritarian regime.[664] The film received a 1st A rating by the Junta de Clasificación y Censura and the first prize of the Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo, which entitled it to a rich percent of state support[665]; furthermore, it was produced by CIFESA, once the major company of the regime, and directed by Juan de Orduña, the most successful filmmaker of the time. It is, therefore, safe to admit that the state, the film company and director, and audiences fully collaborated in the triumph of *El último cuplé*. Having identified the film as "un éxito sin precedentes en nuestro cine" ("an unprecedented box-office hit in our cinema"), Joaquín de Prada and Luciano G. Egido also wondered, "… ¿[Q]ué han visto en esta película toda una generación de españoles para identificarse con ella en esa forma tan sincera?" ("What has an entire generation of Spaniards seen in this film to identify with it in such a sincere manner?")[666] I would answer t.hat the film was a paradoxical, yet addictive mixture of a gratifying, spectacular vision of the could-have-been past and an anxiety-ridden illustration of the present. Orduña's text used the appeal of the melodrama of interiority in order to seduce its viewers to support an authoritarian ideology and practices regarding the private and intimate spheres.

CIFESA (Compañía Industrial Film Español, S.A.) was the most successful company of the 1940s, especially popular for its grand historical films, whether they

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[664] Miguel Juan Payán, "El último cuplé," in *Las cien mejores películas españolas de la historia del cine* (Madrid: Cacitel, SA, 2005), 204.

[665] See Monterde, "Continuismo y disidencia," 262; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 447.

[666] Joaquín de Prada and Luciano G. Egido, "El último cuplé," *Cinema universitário* 6 (Oct-Nov-Dec 1957): 56.

evoked the near or the distant past glory; it was perceived as the emblem and mouthpiece of Franco's early regime. Established in 1932 and initially functioning only as a distributor for Columbia Pictures, CIFESA soon became the Spanish equivalent of any important Hollywood production company, and the only one to achieve that status. It had its own studios, contracted personnel, and a direct line to state support. Between 1939 and 1941, it enjoyed monopoly of production, but it reached its peak between 1947 and 1952, with grand scale productions such as *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1948, dir. Rafael Gil), *Locura de amor*, *Pequeñeces*, *Agustina de Aragón*, *La leona de Castilla*, or *Alba de América*.[667] Love, nationalism, Catholicism, and heroic sacrifice were the major ingredients of CIFESA films, and, with few exceptions, they would largely be preserved even after 1952, when the company had to restrict its activity to distribution and only occasionally took risks in production.[668] One of its preferred partners was Orduña Films, established in 1942 by the director who had launched so many blockbusters for CIFESA and had opened the South American market for Spanish films.[669] In 1956, a second crisis hit CIFESA, caused by the economic trial against the Casanova brothers, the owners of the company; it lasted until 1963 and completely ruined them.[670] *El último cuplé*, a joint venture of Orduña Films and CIFESA, was the last major triumph that allowed both companies to resist a few more years. I suggest that, from the start, this film was intended to achieve two goals: to please—or, at least, not to antagonize—the authorities in order to

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[667] See Peter Besas, *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema under Fascism and Democracy* (Denver, CO: Arden press, 1985), 25-26; Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 89.

[668] This change was the result of the scandal created around the rejection of *Alba de América* in favor of *Surcos* for the National Interest Prize in 1951, a point I have already discussed in an earlier section. In spite of his friendship with Carrero Blanco, an important figure of the regime, Vicente Casanova, the long-time owner of CIFESA, complained about the obstacles raised by García Escudero against his productions and had to restrict the activity of the company.

[669] See Heredero, *Las huellas del tiempo*, 84-85, 91.

[670] Ibid., 92.

obtain the necessary funds, and to attract and satisfy viewers. Orduña chose the melodrama of interiority as a narrative template for several reasons: this form centered on the inner conflicts of ordinary individuals, which allowed it to approach the significant changes in contemporary Spanish society; it gratified viewers' expectations, but also created anxieties that drew them to similar films in search of the ever elusive uncontested satisfaction; and it satisfied audiences' thirst for the spectacular, whether this was rooted in images of violence or in indirect hints at sexuality. The focus on a musical genre renowned for its erotic surcharge and for the sentimentality of its "stories" provided viewers a further source of pleasure. It was also a gesture that flattered audiences' taste in entertainment by revealing the history of a popular form similar to melodrama and which had already gained the status of respectable art.

As I have already defined it, the melodrama of interiority revolves around transformations of the intimate sphere, but characters refrain from open, direct, physical action in favor of psychological and emotional reactions. As a tool, it served the intentions of the regime to popularize the necessity for a restructuring of the private and intimate spheres so that these would connect to the ideological expectations of the authoritarian state. *El último cuplé* employed several "instruments" in that sense: it completely obscured the social, economic, and political context in which the events were set; it cast doubt on the possible influence of private publics on the individual's intimate affairs; and it allowed the female protagonist to thrive only within intimate and public spheres structured on patriarchal, authoritarian grounds. Although opting between a career and a family is not a topic exclusively specific to authoritarian cinemas, the terms in which this choice is made are. Women were reserved only a subordinate role in the

intimate or public sphere, and private and intimate groups were isolated from each other and from the public sphere.

Although Orduña's film was set in the very recent history (roughly between the 1910s and the 1950s), the tumultuous events that had transformed Spain from a monarchy into a republic and then into an authoritarian regime were completely obscured in the plot. María Luján starts as a young singer in a chorus; her aunt (Matilde Muñoz Sampedro) intends to turn her into the great singer she has never become because of a hasty marriage. To that effect she enlists the help of Juan, the rich impresario constantly in search of new talents, who manages to chase away María's honest suitor, Cándido (Beni Moreno), and transforms her into an international star. While they are in Paris, María is rudely approached by a Russian duke (Alfredo Mayo), whom Juan provokes to a duel. Juan gets shot and María decides to share her life with him. They continue their successful travels abroad, but, on one of their returns to Madrid, she falls instantly in love with Pepe (Enrique Vera), a younger man who dreams of becoming a bullfighter, but who is engaged to Trini (Julita Martínez), his long-time girlfriend. María helps him to fulfill his dream and fights for his heart, not knowing that he has promised to marry Trini. Eventually, Pepe is killed in the bullfighting arena and María, distressed and impossible to console, gives up singing on her doctor's advice. She embarks on a life of gambling and drinking in Paris only to return to Spain in 1939, chased away by World War II. She tries to regain her former glory, but, in the 1950s, Juan and his friends find her singing in El Molino, a quasi-anonymous nightclub. The successful impresario organizes a grand event intended to restore María to her deserved place in the public's conscience and

manages to fill up one of the imposing, respectable theaters in Madrid. Having apparently regained her reputation, María dies on stage, singing about her past love.

The frame narrative consists in María's retelling of her life story for Juan and his friends in 1950s Barcelona. In spite of the establishing shot of Plaça de Catalunya, the film moves quickly indoors, initially to the private-public interior space of El Molino, one of the many small nightclubs of the city, and then to the even narrower confines of María Luján's dressing-room. With few exceptions—a walk in the park, a duel on the outskirts of a city, a fun fair, or a bullfighting arena—the entire plot develops in similar interior spaces, which completely obscures all public political and economic life. There is no mention of the 1951 or 1956 strikes in Barcelona, World War I is reduced to a brief parade of soldiers and an intertitle announcing the 1919 armistice, and World War II becomes merely the protagonist's immediate reason for leaving Paris. Furthermore, the setting of María's 1930s troubled life in the casinos and taverns of Paris conveniently removes the necessity of even mentioning the Civil War. Marsha Kinder explains that the Spanish Civil War was a taboo topic for all films of the 1940s and 1950s because it was considered a menace to national unity and to the newly-forged image of a Catholic, non-fascist harmonious state that Franco intended to promote.[671] Although this is true, it is not by chance that the protagonist passes through her most dire period at the same time as Spain, that she loses all her fortune to foreigners, or that her closest supporters—her aunt, Juan, or the public—die or simply disappear from her life. María is the prototype of the everyday individual whose choices lead to her isolation, and loneliness, an immediate figure of identification for both sides of the war that, by the 1950s, had become equal

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[671] Kinder, "The Ideological Reinscription," 38.

victims of economic and political adversity. I suggest that *El último cuplé* acknowledges the hardship, but, by constantly refraining from making any connection between the protagonist's fate and that of Spain, personalizes such suffering to the point at which it becomes exclusively a matter of individual destiny; the enclosed, private spaces of the film reinforce the same strategy. The result is the possibly larger emotional identification with the protagonist's misfortune in the absence of a critical hint towards her connections with one or the other side of the Civil War. As a melodrama, *El último cuplé* moves, but does not challenge.

Social expectations are, therefore, disconnected from any specific political regime and they appear as irrefutable, atemporal moral laws; those who defy or attempt to modify them are bound to fail. The film's private publics involved in show business live on the outskirts of what is deemed as respectable society, which was not a novel situation in cinema; what is new was the amplification of the competition and corruption that dominate this environment and transform such groups of people into threats against, rather than supporters of, intimate publics. Before viewers can meet the young María, they are introduced to the middle-aged diva of the theater, who parties and drinks champagne with an older gentleman, a state official who brags about spending part of the municipal budget for the woman. Stardom is depicted as an effect not of talent and hard work, but of perverted practices that set members of the small theater community against each other. It is a lesson that the aunt knows very well when she provokes a brawl with a possible rival or when she later manipulates María to ask Juan for money and thus become indebted to him. The cheating and backbiting that dominate such private publics

percolate into the intimate public created by María and the aunt, setting the young singer on a path that she may not have taken on her own.

If private publics do not form a unified private sphere and even contribute, indirectly, to the destabilization of the intimate sphere, intimate groupings are equally incapable of producing a long-lasting discourse that could weld them together. The root of their division is the disparity between individuals' aspirations and emotional attachments, and the social expectations they have to face. The intimate sphere is the result of the interaction generated among intimate groups; ideally, it ensures each member protection from external, destabilizing interference and it guides thought and affect. María's intimate spheres are never a source of privacy, but one of continuous turmoil, mostly engendered by the partners she or others choose for her; the outcome is her oscillation between her position as an unaware victim of others' scheming and her own perpetrating actions in defense of her ideals or emotions. The character's volatility and weaknesses, however, acquire the deceptive mask of melodramatic heroism, which was one of the different factors that may have charmed viewers to convince others to buy tickets to the film. I argue that vulnerability, divisiveness, and instability, both social and emotional, were the hidden message woven into the glamorous appearance of glorified suffering; they may have had an unsettling effect on audiences, but they were also addictive because of their melodramatic camouflage. *El último cuplé* is a compensatory melodrama that provided audiences with an appealing, convincing "explanation" for María's unhappy fate and encouraged them to dream that, if they avoid her "mistakes, their own lives would have a much different outcome.

María's most problematic intimate sphere revolves around her relationship with her aunt. Orphaned early in life, the protagonist has been raised by a former singer in a cabaret chorus who has always fetishized the career she could have had if she had not married for love. Frustration and impotence mix indiscriminately with instincts of love and protection for the niece. Discussing Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's *La mitad del cielo* (*Half of the Sky*, 1986), Susan Martin-Márquez notes the existence of a double model of mother in later Spanish film: the "patriarchal" and the "phallic."[672] The patriarchal mother supports androcentric social codes in order to gain power, usually over other women, while the phallic mother contests them from within. In María's aunt, the 1950s produced an apparently hybrid model, patriarchal in her relationship to her niece, whose life she tries to control, but phallic in her attempt to raise María's aspirations above the expected roles of wife and mother. Nevertheless, the aunt's seemingly non-conformist gender norms exist only in support of her own interests and power over María. She opposes the young woman's infatuation with Cándido, a young, poor shop-assistant, advising her to aim much higher. She goes even further and simulates illness in order to force María to borrow the necessary money from Juan, the rich impresario she has eyed as a partner for her niece. Indebted to him, the young singer feels compelled to forsake all her scruples about the relationship and become his protégé. The aunt enjoys the wealth and fame generated by this relationship, so, when María falls in love with Pepe, she instantly opposes their connection. On his first visit to the house, she reminds him that he is cutting short her niece's rehearsal and rolls her eyes when she realizes María's

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[672] Susan Martin-Márquez, "Inculcating the Feminine: Socialization within Patriarchy and Matriarchy," in *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema: Sight Unseen* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 232.

attraction to him. The melodramatic excessiveness of the moment suggests that her support for the young woman's career has never been disinterested: nestling a salon dog in her lap, the aunt clutches a box of chocolates, munching on them as she observes the rehearsal with the flashy satisfaction of her life "accomplishments." In the end, with the help of one of Pepe and Trini's neighbors, the aunt manages to cast doubts on the young man's intentions and forces a meeting between Trini and María. The singer is so disconcerted by the event that she decides to rethink her liaison and initially refuses to go to Pepe's first important bullfight. Unable to concentrate, he dies killed by a bull. The bullfighter's duplicity with regard to both women, however, mitigates, in part, the aunt's meddling and confirms the necessity for community "eyes," that is, for spying neighbors, or private publics on the watch, whose judgment, always in the favor of the official moral order, appears just. Twice the possible source of María's split from the men she loved, the aunt is the passive-aggressive patriarch who clutches her niece as she does chocolates and dominates their intimate sphere by manipulation and deceit. The aunt is an ambiguous figure, both helpful and too controlling, liberal and conservative in her views, defending María's, but, mostly, her own interests when she tries to influence her niece's choices in men. María is her aunt's victim as much as she is the victim of the private publics who surround her.

She is not, however, a completely innocent or helpless victim. She passively agrees to or initiates the break of all intimate spheres she establishes with the men in her life. Although she appears deeply connected to Cándido, whom she repeatedly defends against her aunt and to whom she pictures herself married, she only sheds a few tears on reading his good-bye letter. Cándido, in spite of the signification of his name, is not

completely naïve in his relationship with María: he disapproves of her aunt's intrigues in support of Juan, but he is equally troubled by María's attraction to the limelight. Apparently because of his great love for her—"accessorized," in the pure melodramatic tradition, with a declaration accompanied by a forlorn fiddler in the park—Cándido easily renounces his pursuit when Juan dramatically paints María's destiny as incompatible with the desires of mortals. His seemingly excessive self-sacrifice, however, is only a self-gratifying camouflage of his own incapacity to control the intimate sphere he shares with María. Cándido resents the moment she wins the beauty competition and, implicitly, everybody's attention; he dislikes her pleasure in the moment; and he immediately rejects his engagement to her for the mere suspicion that her nascent "career" is based on a more intimate connection to Juan. The young man embodies the moral expectations of the official public sphere: he is ready to sacrifice even his own ethic integrity for his woman—he has no problem stealing the money María needs for the aunt—but cannot change his expectations of a patriarchal intimate sphere. María is ironic about how their relationship would have evolved when, in the establishing scene of the film, she bursts into laughter and tells the little girl who bears the same surname as Cándido that, "…[P]or un momento me visto madre de diez hijos" ("… [F]or a moment, I saw myself as the mother of ten children"). The intimate sphere between the two is, therefore, undermined by Cándido's and the aunt's domineering expectations, but also by María's own preference for a different life. The film's emphasis on the melodramatic spectacle of suffering, however, places most of the moral burden for the break-up on implacable fate, encouraging viewers to commiserate with the young couple and preserving the ideal of a patriarchal intimate sphere intact.

The same ideal is reinforced through the spectacular death of Pepe in the bullfighting arena, a death that cleanses him of betrayal and transfers the weight of responsibility on the shoulders of the two women who claim his love. María's *coup de foudre* with the young would-be matador comes at the height of her success as the materialization of the very narratives she has been disseminating through her *cuplés*. If Cándido is the official personification of moral uprightness, Pepe is his opposite: an erotically alluring figure of ambiguous commitments. His choices reflect the machismo of the authoritarian society and suggest a new type of power imbalance within the couple's intimate sphere. Pepe hits on María at a funfair, while he is with Trini, and his boldness, as well as the sexual implication of his glances and words—"Oiga, si usted me quisiera…!"["Hey, if only you liked me…!"]—immediately attract María, now in her thirties. The young man manifests the same audacity in the bullfighting arena, where he jumps in uninvited and, without training and with little experience, provokes the bulls. Pepe's reactions are instinctual, unpolished, and unaffected by any thought regarding their possible consequences. The intimate sphere established between María and him is not rooted in a common ideal of a traditional family, as was the case with Cándido, but on the immediacy of physical attraction, on her maternal support for his ambitions, and on his calculated exploitation of her affection in order to forge his way into the public arena; it does not have the ingredients to last.

There is one detail, however, that grants this unlikely intimate sphere its force: Pepe is both the protagonist of María's fantasies, as they are concretized in her songs, and the appearance of her ideal public. He materializes out of the anonymous audience of a *cuplé* at the funfair and acquires the face and words of the long-sought, and long-sung,

lover. Their first real introduction to each other takes place within the intimate space of María's home and reveals the eroticism of the connection between the performer and the audience. The scene opens with a long shot of a sumptuous, yet cozy salon, separated from the other rooms by several layers of red and white curtains that shelter this isolated world of privilege and comfort. Three feminine figures populate the space, conferring on it an aura of intimacy: María, singing and leaning on a piano in the foreground; Luisa (Lali del Amo), the friend who has followed her everywhere, now quietly reading in the background; and the aunt, watching her niece's performance with unconcealed pleasure. The stasis of the camera gives this first shot the quality of the melodramatic tableau vivant, accustoming viewers to María's much improved economic, social, and personal situation. The velvety modulations in Montiel's voice transform the *cuplé* into the palpable matter that unites the three women into a seemingly harmonious intimate group. As viewers are soon to discover, when María has to abandon singing, she also loses her friends, her aunt simply disappears, and she is left alone. The source of her wealth and fame—her voice— is also the source of her inner stability and well-being.

María is now an older, more experienced, and more self-confident woman than in the first film scenes. Wearing a long, black, transparent robe on top of a dress, she is smoking a long cigarette and starts walking with provocatively slow steps toward a lounge. The camera follows, enchanted; the next cut is to a medium shot of the singer, whose attractive features are softly reinforced through the use of high-key lighting directed from a slightly high angle at her face. This self-aware performance, disguised under the pretense of self-reflection, is directed at nobody else but the 1950s audiences and hints at the absence of a lover for whom she is waiting. The moment is interrupted by

Pepe's on-cue arrival: he is the imaginary lover who responds, within the diegetic space, to her indirect call for a public, and also the imaginary public who answers her desire for a lover. Invited in at María's insistence, he "survives" the aunt's questions, becoming the intended, unique audience for "Sus pícaros ojos" ("His Wicked Eyes"), the *cuplé* that literally describes their accidental encounter at the funfair.

The following shot/reverse shot sequence gradually establishes the characteristics of the intimate sphere between María and Pepe, hinting also at the possible sources of threat. The opening low-angle, medium shot of María is matched by a medium shot of Pepe, uneasily seated on a chair that seems too big for him and looking up at her; this framing indicates their initial status as performer and admirer as the basis for their mutual attraction. As the song progresses, so does the singer's affection for the man, as suggested in the reduction of camera distance from a medium shot to a medium close up of María. The same camera, however, preserves its position vis-à-vis Pepe, as it does from Lucía and the aunt, both of whom disapprovingly perceive him as the intruder into their previously peaceful intimate sphere. He becomes more assertive and his eyes no longer look up to María, but straight on. The young man's increasing self-confidence results not only from what Laura Mulvey would describe as possession of the gaze, but also from his awareness that he is, in turn, an object of admiration for María. The couple's narcissism and desire for a devoted public fuel the intimate sphere they establish and become the sources of their fall. María's later fear that he has abandoned her—suggested by her worried look at herself in the mirror, checking for the signs of ageing on her face—prompts her to stay at home on the day of his important corrida. In turn, Pepe looks nervously to the stalls to see her, refusing to believe that she is not his own adoring

spectator. His death marks the death of her own capacity to sing because it implies the absence of her intimate connection with her public. The melodrama masks María's silencing under the ill-fated heart disease she develops after Pepe's disappearance, which becomes an uncontested source of pathos. I argue that, by losing Pepe, María is also deprived of two intimate spheres (with her lover and her audience), hence her rapid decline into gambling and drinking.

It is the paternal figure of Juan who rescues her once again many years after she has returned from Paris. He is the only one with whom María has established a working, if not fully satisfactory, intimate sphere. He first notices her when she literally stumbles upon him on her way out to meet Cándido, but it is the aunt who pulls the strings that bring them together. Convinced of María's potential, Juan assumes the part of Pygmalion only to fall into the same trap as the Greek sculptor. María treats him with initial distrust, especially as the musical genre he proposes for her—the *cuplé*—has an infamous reputation. By the time they reach Paris in 1919, their relationship has consolidated and Juan is now part of the intimate group of María and her aunt. The young woman, however, regards him more as a father figure than as a lover, and looks for his moral approval. One evening, the audience at the Moulin Rouge pleads with María for a song, which she generously grants them, but, at the end of the performance, a Russian duke takes the liberty to kiss her. Juan provokes him to a duel and gets shot. The hospital ward where María comes to visit him becomes the site of their reciprocal "vows" of faith taken in the benevolent presence of a crucifix. The austerity of the white room, as well as the contrast between María's black clothes and veil and Juan's white gown, prefigure the deficiency of their connection, the incompatibility between them, and María's future

negative actions with regards to him. This is the closest that María comes to a marriage, but it is a "marriage" she contracts out of a sense of duty while wearing the black attire of a funeral.[673] It is a reciprocally advantageous partnership that endures as long as they travel and her success remains at its high. A member of the business community and, indirectly, of the establishment, Juan confers on her the stability and protection she needs, hence the favorable light in which he is presented: he has always been pushed by honorable intentions and animated by sincere love for María. I suggest that Juan represents the state that takes all its subjects, especially the vulnerable, under its wing.

But Juan is unable to offer her the passion she craves as an artist, as she confesses to him in their break-up scene after she has secretly fallen in love with Pepe. The missing erotic energy undermines the intimate sphere between María and Juan, transforming her into a perpetrator against the man who has faithfully supported her. The film, in the tradition of the melodrama, sentimentalizes this situation by appealing to the popularly accepted exceptionality of the artist, but Juan's invocation of her oath of faith, as well as his self-sacrificing stance at the end, when he agrees to support Pepe's career at her pleas, can only weaken María's justification for her behavior. As in the case of Cándido, the man's withdrawal at the expense of his own emotional integrity produces the melodramatic pathos that encourages viewers to sympathize with his position, which is also the officially endorsed moral position. María's initial denial of her relationship with Pepe is intended as a maneuver to manipulate Juan, especially as it is supported by the exaggerated acting of innocence: Montiel pouts her lips, lowers her eyes, and plays with

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[673] Juan hints to the existence of more things in life than he could ever give her and repeatedly asks her to ponder her commitment so as not to regret her decision later; given his older age and gunshot wound, he may be hinting at a possible sexual infirmity.

the lace sleeves of her dress. Furthermore, the kiss she forces on Juan at the end of the

scene contributes to spectators' perception of the woman as a vamp, a *femme fatale* who

leads men to their doom in the most popular Hollywood tradition.

The critics at *Cinema universitário* commented on the misuse of the kiss in *El*

último cuplé: "Más que una expresión de amor es una muestra de desesperación (los

amantes se besan cuando el amor ya no existe) o de pago (se besan en el momento del

ajuste final de cuentas)." ("More than an expression of love, it is a proof of desperation

[lovers kiss when love no longer exists] or of payment [they kiss at the moment of the

final accounting].")[674] A few lines later, they add,

> Claro está que esta particular visión del amor favorece a la película, estando en
> adecuada consonancia con el conjunto. En la evocación producida en sus
> espectadores, el amor no existe. El amor queda en el hogar, en casa, al abrigo del
> aire exterior, y aquí sólo existe el placer aislado y furtivo.[675]

> It is clear that this particular vision of love is advantageous to the film as it is in
> adequate harmony with the whole. In the evocation produced for its viewers, love
> does not exist. Love remains at home, within the house, sheltered away from the
> outside air, while here there is only isolated and furtive pleasure.

María appears, therefore, as incapable of a long-lasting commitment, of sincerity, and of

restraint. Her inability to preserve any of the intimate spheres she has formed with the

men in her life, from her engagement to Cándido, to her vows to Juan, and even her

dedication to Pepe, is repeatedly emphasized through the men's apparent readiness to

abandon their pride in order to allow her to pursue her calling. She is the one who would

not compromise and her one major flaw is her unchecked, narcissistic passion for the

stage. As the opposition critics notice, the film reinforces the official image of the

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[674] De Prada and Egido, "El último cuplé," 57.
[675] Ibid.

intimate sphere as isolated within the four walls of the conjugal home, the only environment where true love and companionship are deemed possible. I suggest that the film identifies María's exposure and dedication to private publics, from the world of the stage to her theater audience as the source of her fall, but also as the implicit "lesson" against the interaction between intimate and private publics.

María, however, is not simply a perpetrator against the men in her life, but also a possible victim. As I have suggested, the aunt manipulates her into abandoning Cándido by appealing to her sense of duty. Cándido leaves her on the dance floor, unhappy with her success, which does prefigure conflicts between them even without the aunt's intervention. Furthermore, Juan plays the helpless sufferer so well on the hospital bed that he triggers her protective instincts and sense of responsibility; María later admits that she has tried to love him, but has failed. Finally, Pepe betrays her trust by reinforcing his commitment to Trini and constantly plays on the singer's feelings in order to gain the necessary support for his own ambitions. These details are scattered throughout the film, giving María a complexity that is more engaging for modern audiences.

An outright condemnation of the woman, therefore, would not have brought the same number of viewers into the theaters (as was clear from the failure of the many folkloric melodramas, which I have already emphasized in a previous section). Orduña adds one more melodramatic touch by reinforcing the exceptionality of María's destiny at the end of the film. He uses her last performance as an opportunity to glamorize suffering, but also to reaffirm the importance of abiding by publicly accepted moral expectations. Juan, the older and wiser patriarch figure, rediscovers María, after intense searches, on the stage of El Molino and decides to return her to the public who once

appreciated the *cuplé*. Symbolically, his act of recuperation echoes the official public discourse of national unity and harmony, particularly favorable to those who confess and repent of their past. María is the representative of the buoyancy and effervescence of the artistic circles that Franco's authoritarian state sought to censor and control. Furthermore, she spends the 1930s, the period considered especially toxic by the regime, in the casinos and bars of a republic deemed to be as dangerous to the Nationalist ideals as the Spanish republic of the time was. When she returns in 1939, it is not by chance that her former audiences do not "recognize" her for she comes as a pariah, having defied the norms of respectability with her affair with Pepe and having rejected her country for a life of squandering. The words that trigger her memories express her acknowledgement of her mistakes, but, in the spirit of melodrama, not of her own responsibility over her destiny.[676] Juan and the public he conjures up for María in the final scene of the film are, therefore, the representatives of the 1950s paternalist state that has, in its benevolence, decided to rescue its lost sheep; to the audiences of *El último cuplé*, they appear as her only salvation from misery. I argue that the film endorses the authoritarian project of a patriarchal organization of the public and intimate spheres by allowing María to thrive only within such structures, under the surveillance and guidance of her aunt and Juan. The implied conclusion of *El último cuplé* represents the intimate sphere as the scene of constant conflict and interference by outside, destabilizing forces, emphasizing the value of its isolation from private counterpublics and its adherence to regime-endorsed, androcentric norms and configurations.

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[676] She describes herself as a young girl who, one day, found out about a light and tempting wine for beautiful women that one consumed with elegance, but whose expensiveness was revealed only too late.

The evolution of the *cuplé* is the second life story that unfolds on the screen. Serge Salaün tracks its origins to the 1800s *zarzuelas* that included "couplets," or songs inspired by French cabaret songs.[677] After 1900, when various "salones" appeared everywhere, especially in big cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, the *cuplé* became one of their standard forms of entertainment. Initially addressed to men and relying on double meanings with sexual connotations, the *cuplé* adopted a more sentimental content in the 1910s. The singers were infamous for their tumultuous lives and numerous love affairs, but also increasing wealth. By 1925, it had become a form of respectable entertainment, thematically focused on tragic love, and performed by highly appreciated singers, who used elaborate costumes, choreography, and *mise en scène*; the salones were replaced by theaters and high-quality cabarets.[678] In the 1930s, the *cuplé* turned into a form of mass entertainment, especially as it was adopted by film, radio, and stage revues that featured young, attractive chorus-girls and singers.[679] I suggest that the evolution of the form bears a significant resemblance to that of stage melodrama toward the appearance of the "modified" melodrama of the upper and middle classes, the precursor of what I have termed the melodrama of interiority. In this sense, *El último cuplé* is a self-reflective film that raises the status of both forms and flatters audiences' cultural tastes and expectations.

El último cuplé opens with the lifting of the heavy velvet curtain of an honorable, middle-class theater and a voiceover that dedicates the film to the many female singers who have enchanted their audiences and whose *cuplés* have been gathered into the fictitious story of María Luján. The disembodied, somber male voice stands in for the

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[677] Serge Salaün, "The *Cuplé*: Modernity and Mass Culture," in Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, 90.
[678] Ibid., 91-93.
[679] Ibid., 94.

uncontestable authority of the narrator who creates and controls the narrative; it is the voice of a father who wants to honor his "children." Juan embodies this voice when he convinces María that, far from being a disreputable form of entertainment—as suggested by the mocking tone with which María defines it as "género ínfimo"—the *cuplé* can become a mixture of drama and art in the hands of a good performer. The indirect hint may be to Raquel Meller, one of the most famous singers and actresses of the 1920s, whose rapid rise from a seamstress to a world-renowned artist was the result of her complex performances that transformed the *cuplé* into a national cultural form. María, like Meller, is a path-opener: she wears less gaudy dresses, adopts more restraint gestures and poses, and eventually abandons the nightclub for the theater, whether in Madrid, Paris, or New York. She sings one of Meller's hits—"El relicario" ("The Locket")—but she also sings other successful songs such as "Clavelitos" ("Carnations") or "Ven y ven" ("Come and Come") popularized by less refined singers such as Pastora Imperio, La Fornarina, or Amalia Isaura.[680] Orduña's protagonist gathers, therefore, both the erotic energy of the earlier performers and the sophisticated elegance of the later artists, which endears her not only to her diegetic audiences, but also to the non-diegetic, 1950s viewers.

The final scene of the film marks the climax of María's career and life, as well as that of the *cuplé* in its respectable, high-quality form for the theater. At the beginning of the sequence María's dressing-room is full of journalists and friends who have come for the big night of her return. True to her life passion, she advises any young *cuplé* singer with a good voice "que dé su corazón, que nazca y muera en cada cuplé" ("to give her

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[680] Ibid., 91.

heart, to come alive and die in each *cuplé*"); her insistence on the qualities of a performer more than those of a singer emphasizes her appreciation for the form as a dramatic art that draws on the artist's internal reservoir of emotions. Once on stage, María prefaces her singing by confessing that, in all her years of absence, she has missed the audiences' applause the most. Revived two decades after Pepe's death, her interaction with the public of the grand theater suggests that she has always considered her anonymous audiences as the source of her life satisfaction. The stage is the same as the one in the beginning of the film, when viewers were introduced to the history of the *cuplé*, but it is now adorned with several impressive flower arrangements. Their presence as the only décor symbolically connects the stage with María's inner emotional world, now solely animated by her dedication to her audiences. Wearing a somber black dress, she begins her song in a quiet tone, her eyes lowered and immobile. The camera remains frozen, allowing viewers to notice the slightest changes in her performance. As the lyrics tell the story of the man who promises his undying love, María raises her eyes, shedding discreet tears as she modulates her voice to capture the intensity of her emotions.

The medium shot effigy of the suffering woman of the first stanza is replaced by the close up of the artist who relives the drama of her lover's death of the second stanza. Béla Balász explains that the close up opens a new dimension that goes beyond the space of the facial features:

> Facing an isolated face takes us out of space, our consciousness of space is cut out and we find ourselves in another dimension: that of physiognomy. The fact that the features of the face can be seen side by side, i.e., in space . . . [,] loses all reference to space when we see not a figure of flesh and bone, but an expression, or in other words when we see emotions, moods, intentions and thoughts, things which although our eyes can see them, are not in space.[681]

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[681] Béla Balász, "The Face of Man," in Braudy and Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism*, 306.

The close up is, therefore, an instrument for the transformation of the visible into the invisible, of space into time, of the slightest transformation of physiognomy into the evolution of a feeling or a thought. María's teary eyes look up, conjuring the image of the man whose death she invokes in verse. I argue that what viewers experience is not simply her face, but her emotional fragility, the history of her anguish, and her vulnerability. As María's voice can barely gather the words into song, all her former "sins," her destructive ambitions, and her fluctuations vis-à-vis the men in her life that have been suggested at the surface level of the film disappear into the glamorized, even erotic picture of the suffering woman. This is the climax of the affective connection between viewers and artist, the moment at which they imagine themselves part of her intimate space; this fiction, however, cannot last, and her death shortly after only seals spectators' fascination with her and, implicitly, with the film. The *cuplé*, with its focus on sentimentality and its elaborately staged performance, provides the appropriate frame for the seduction of the audiences of melodrama, encouraging them to take pleasure in the narrative and images of suffering.

In addition to the interest in personal stories of adversity and anguish, both melodrama and the *cuplé* attract viewers by means of two other narrative-related attributes: they encourage spectators to preserve the sense that an ideal result remains possible, if not in the fictional world on screen, at least when they themselves may be confronted with similar situations in life; and they create and satisfy expectations, conferring on viewers the impression of mastery over the plot. María's evolution is marked, at every stage, by the spectators' sensation that they are witnessing a constantly delayed utopia. This impression is supported by the insertion, at the surface level of the

text, of a number of *faux pas,* easily detectable and imputable to the protagonist, and by the concealment of those factors that may have compelled her to make a specific choice. At the beginning of the film, without doubting her aunt's sudden affliction, María runs to Cándido for the money "needed" to treat her and, when he suggests stealing it from the shop-owner for whom he works, she thanks him for his offer. Cándido's arrest triggers a more morally questionable action than the one she initially tried to avoid (returning to the theater chorus): she has to appeal and become indebted to Juan. The aunt's ploy is never revealed to María, nor is her and her aunt's financial situation a matter of interest for the plot, hence the difference in knowledge between the character and the viewers that allows the latter to assume a different turn of events in their own, possibly similar, cases. Such relatively negligible "mistakes" are supplemented by more dramatic ones, with dire consequences on the singer's life. Pepe's duplicity towards both Trini and María becomes immediately apparent to spectators, especially because the scenes in which he vows faithfulness to each woman succeed each other on cue. For example, the scene of Pepe's initial visit to María ends with the last words of the song she sings for him: "Y si dices tú que sí, ya verás/Si te quiero de verdad" ("And if you say yes, you will see/If I really love you"); the words are repeated by Trini as a reproach to Pepe in the very next shot ("Tú no me quieras de verdad; algo te pasa" ["You don't really love me; something is going on with you"]). Even when she finds out about his betrayal, María refuses to admit that he may be manipulating her. Unlike the protagonist, who does not internalize her possible misfortune or her own responsibility for it, viewers are given a larger picture of the events, which allows them to judge her choices. I suggest that the result of this dramatic irony is double-fold: pathos and hope. The pathos emerges from the eventual match in

knowledge between the protagonist and the spectator, a match that comes too late for María to relive her life and avoid suffering. Viewers' pleasure, however, does not solely reside in such matching of perspective, which confirms their appreciation for life situations, but emerges equally from the utopian possibilities of "if only."

Spectatorial satisfaction is also the effect of Orduña's calculated, didactic anticipation of the outcome of individual scenes and of the entire film. For example, at the funfair, Juan and María split: he goes to a soothsayer and she is attracted to the *cuplé* singer in whose audience she meets Pepe. Juan returns with her "fortune": she will enjoy fame, luck, and, after the age of thirty, a great love. María's relationship with Pepe only confirms what viewers already know. Furthermore, the final *cuplé*, whose lyrics tell the story of a love tragically ended with the man's death, has already been twice inserted as part of the non-diegetic, instrumental soundtrack: once, when María confronts Pepe about his dishonesty and eventually believes his vows of love, and a second time when, on the day of Pepe's fatal bullfight, she looks at herself in the mirror, probably doubting his commitment. By the time viewers hear the song at the end of the film, they can already recognize it; this knowledge further grants their earlier revelation of María's imminent fall and empowers their position vis-à-vis the plot.

The narrative of *El último cuplé* employs various tactics that attract viewers to the official vision with regard to the private and intimate spheres. Thus María's personal evolution is isolated from the historical and social context that profoundly influences it. Furthermore, Orduña's text methodically delegitimates all possible intimate spheres she attempts to establish against the moral codes of the nineteenth century and, especially, of the 1950s. In addition, the filmmaker uses the history of the *cuplé* as the means through

which viewers can sympathize with the artist. Finally, by creating and compensating viewers' expectations, the film also grants them the impression of mastery over the narrative and, implicitly, over life beyond the screen. I suggest that the characteristics of melodrama were essential to the film's success and the popularization of the regime's ethical principles regarding the private and intimate spheres.

Melodramatic spectacle and style are the extra-diegetic instruments that supplemented the efforts of the narrative to spread authoritarian ideology in a seductive rather than blatantly propagandistic form. Among these, the choice for the erotic appeal and fame of Sara Montiel was, by far, the most convincing, rivaling with the thrust and scope of the narrative. Having already been cast in secondary parts in a number of Spanish films, among which *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, *Locura de amor*, or *Pequeñeces* were the most popular, Montiel had already achieved the status of an international star by 1957. *Primer Plano* featured her prominently on its covers, followed her career in Hollywood and her personal life in Spain, so she became one of the most appealing young stars of the 1950s. *El último cuplé*, however, was her first big hit and led to a series of similar productions that started the secondary thematic cycle of films centered on the lives of singers; *La violetera* was the third most popular film of the decade, and *Mi último tango* (*My Last Tango*, 1960, dir. Luis César Amadori) and *Pecado de amor* [*Sin of Love,* 1961, dir. Luis César Amadori] faired very well at the box office. Montiel was a successful actress by 1957 because of her beauty, deemed representative of Spanishness, her voice, warm and capable of subtle inflections, and her sex-appeal. Orduña did not shy away from exploiting all her qualities, transforming the film into a vehicle for the actress:

she featured in no fewer than fourteen musical numbers, wore low-cut dresses, and gestured and revealed her legs provocatively.

The official poster relied on Montiel's appeal in order to attract audiences. Positioned in a medium shot, with her body slightly turned to her left, she looks toward an invisible entity to the right. She wears a respectable dress, whose lace covers her chest and neck, and a scarf and carnation, both reminding viewers of the Andalusian traditional headwear. Montiel keeps her arms akimbo, hidden behind a dark shawl that is yet another hint at Spanishness. Her pose is one of provocation, but also one of distant pride vis-à-vis the onlookers, attracting them and inciting their curiosity about the missing addressee of her look. The poster completes the appealing call to viewers by emphasizing the titles of the famous *cuplés* promoted in the film, each of them floating in colorful bubbles around the figure of the woman as hints to her life trajectory. The actress's name features in large, red letters and white shadows, reminiscent of the lights surrounding the names of *revue* and music-hall stars. I suggest that this poster promised an intimate portrait of a star (Sara Montiel) and a story about a woman's mystery in the form of popular entertainment; it successfully sold the film.

History is also a source of spectacle in the choice of locations, costumes, gestures, or customs. Consequently, the world evoked in the film is one of idealized situations and individuals, perfectly suited to what viewers like to imagine, but can never experience. Most of the spaces inserted in the film are surrounded by an aura of glamour, inaccessible to the 1950s viewers, and therefore attractions in their own way: the small stages of nightclubs veiled in nostalgic remembrance; the intimate salons of famous women; the Moulin Rouge and the French casinos; the prestigious stages of expensive theaters; and

even the bullfighting arena. Furthermore, there are no traces of poverty, squalor, or misery in the supposedly ordinary spaces. Although María is merely a chorus girl and even quits her job at some point, and her aunt does not work, they live in a reasonably spacious apartment, furnished with a big bed and table, several chests and cupboards, and a large gramophone. Neither do the two women wear ragged clothes; on the contrary, María changes several outfits, all of which display intricate combinations of color, lace, and ruffles, and are tightly fitted to emphasize her chest and waist. The theatrically striking nature of locations and costumes is supplemented by the eroticism of gestures, as in Montiel's famous smoking scene and her body poses when she sings. Finally, in Pepe's infatuation with bullfighting, the film exploits viewers' fascination with violence and one of the incontestably Spanish past times. The "props" of melodrama, therefore, essentially contributed to the success of the film and, implicitly, to the popularization of the official social expectations hidden under the idealized picture of a history that never existed.

El último cuplé was released only one year after the strikes of 1956 and at the same time as a new government, technocratic in its orientation, but stricter in its adherence to Franco's regime, was taking office. The incoming officials, including a new, more conservative Minister of Education after 1956 and the long-lasting, conformist Minister of Information and Tourism, needed a period of social tranquility in order to implement the new economic strategy. Dissident voices such as Bardem, Berlanga, or Fernán-Gómez directed projects intended to be more commercial and less critical of the regime in order to be able to cover their costs. Bardem's historical costume melodrama *La venganza*, Berlanga's *Los jueves, milagro* (*Miracles of Thursday*, 1957), and even

Nieves Conde's *El inquilino* had to conform to multiple and mutilating changes dictated

by the Junta de Censura in order to be released and, even with these changes, they were

not successful at the box office.[682] I argue that, by contrast with the texts of these

oppositional directors, the most popular films of the time, like *El último cuplé*, refrained

from any social commentary and concentrated on characters and publics who seemed to

exist merely within a simulacrum of historical time. *La violetera*, *¿Dónde vas, Alfonso*

XII?, or *Molokai*, the most commercially successful films produced after 1957, continued

the tradition of escapism into the past or to exotic lands and evoked idealized images of

publics that enjoyed an aura of legend within the collective imaginary. Like *El último*

cuplé, these texts raised concerns about the individual's closest connections with others

and cultivated anxieties regarding the interplay between various types of publics. Like

María Lujan, their protagonists were increasingly isolated from their peers and sought in

vain for a long-lasting emotional stability. Individuals appeared engaged in a constant

confrontation with forces that threatened the affective cohesiveness of their family and

close group of friends, and only won such battles when they conceded to the moral

expectations of authority figures who represented, indirectly, the 1950s state. I suggest

that, in order to be profitable, such films enlisted the tools of melodrama: schematic,

easily readable and predictable characters and plots, exaggerated recourse to emotion,

and multi-layered spectacle. The regime divided, conquered, and entertained.

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[682] In order to be able to release *La venganza*, Bardem had to change the title and even some of the scenes so much that its initial two hours and forty-five minutes were reduced to one hour and forty-eight minutes. Berlanga's film was so thoroughly disfigured by the censors, especially by the representatives of the Church, that he wanted to withdraw his name from the credits. For his part, Nieves Conde had to shoot another ending for his film; even after the changes, *El inquilino* was only released in Madrid three years after its international release in France and at the Karlovy Vary film festival. Román Gubern, "La tenebrosa era de Arias Salgado (1951-1962)," in *Un cine para el cadalso*, 91-95.

Dacii: Sacrificial offerings and the loss of intimacy

The appealing simulacrum of history was also the strategy adopted by the 1960s Romanian authorities in order to advance their own political agenda. The most popular film during Nicolae Ceauşescu's early years in power was a melodrama that sought to recreate the past in order to promote the communist social project as the messianic completion of century-old aspirations for unity and justice. *Dacii* was a spectacular super-production, with hundreds of soldiers caught in well-orchestrated battles, a dynamic cinematography novel for its time, and foreign actors who conferred on it a prestige singular in the epoch among Romanian audiences. The film imagined a mythical land of fierce warriors, who invoked invincible, arcane gods and refused to declare themselves defeated by the empire that had conquered the world. Their foremost loyalty was to the nation, whose strength and endurance arose from the integrity of intimate groups. The intimate sphere cultivated loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice for the community, at the expense of the individual's pursuits, as the only guarantees for the survival of the fatherland and its people. *Dacii* was the first in a series that would continue well into the 1970s and would remain popular even after 1989. I argue that the film historicized fictional characters and events, "chronicled" local habits and customs, and transformed this legend into a source of spectacle, pleasure, and veneration. Viewers were offered a reason to feel proud not only about imaginary ancestors, but also about the capacity of Romanian cinema to produce a film that could compete with Hollywood in force and grandeur.[683]

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[683] See also Gorzo, "Amintirile sunt făcute şi din asta," 44.

In his memoirs, Sergiu Nicolaescu suggests that his first feature film paved the way for the open expression of national sentiment: "Filmul *Dacii* este prima manifestare publică de artă a naţionalismului românesc de după 1947." ("*Dacii* is the first public art manifestation of Romanian nationalism after 1947.")[684] The director did not exaggerate too much. His film may not have been the first in the long list of national epics glorifying Romanian history, but it did set a standard of cinematographic sensationalism that the others sought to emulate.[685] *Columna*, *Mihai Viteazul*, *Ştefan cel Mare—Vaslui 1475* (1974), *Burebista* (*Burebista, the Iron and the Gold*, 1980), *Vlad Ţepeş* (*Vlad the Impaler: The True Life of Dracula*, 1982), and *Mircea* (*Proud Heritage*, 1989) centered on providential figures whose sincerity, honor, and bravery won them the admiration of their people and the fear of their enemies. These kings were betrayed or fell victim to forces they could not control, but their qualities and goals were to be embodied in the communist leader, the films intimated. *Dacii* and *Mihai Viteazul*, Nicolaescu's next super-production, set the trend for the 1970s cinema, which sought to rewrite the Sovietized narrative of the past and supported full-blown nationalism as the sole discourse of history and politics. Lucian Boia considers that this apparent recovery of the past was a concerted attempt to engineer consent for the regime:

> Nationalism became the decisive historical and political argument [in the 1970s]. United throughout their whole history, united around the single party and the Leader, the Romanians were infused with the vocation of *unity*, in other words, the subordination of the individual in the face of the national organism and, at the same time, a strict delimitation of their own nation in relation to others. As a political instrument of legitimization and domination, nationalism gained

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[684] Sergiu Nicolaescu, *Destin şi film. Destăinuirile unui cineast* (Bucharest: Axioma Print, 2009), qtd. in Valerian Sava, "Sergiu Nicolaescu*, mîntuieşte-te*!," *Observator cultural* 540 (September 2010) http://www.observatorcultural.ro/FILM.-Sergiu-Nicolaescu-mintuieste-te*articleID_24225-articles_details.html (accessed 20 January, 2010).

[685] The first film in the series is *Tudor* (1962), directed by Lucian Bratu; it was followed, in 1965, by *Neamul Şoimăreştilor*.

advantage from the amalgamation of the authentic nationalist tradition and the specific aims pursued by the communist dictatorship. It seemed like a recuperation, when in the first instance it was actually a *manipulation*.[686]

Romania was not different in its intentions from France under the Occupation or 1950s Spain; it differed, however, in the scale and intensity with which these aims were pursued. In all cases, daily social and economic frustrations could increase the population's restlessness toward the state, so the authorities resorted to nationalism as a compensatory emotion for the masses. They used the past in order to establish a set of ideal qualities and values, unique for the dominant publics and which could rally them to support the state project while alienating counterpublics. I argue that there was, indeed, a vocation of unity, but it was supplemented by an implied vocation of divisiveness: Jews, Freemasons, communists in France; former Republicans and left-wingers in Spain; the middle and upper classes, as well as other ethnic and religious minorities, in Romania were only a few of the groups excluded from the official discourse, but whose mere presence conferred consistency on such a discourse. Nationalism was a weapon to unite, but also to divide.

Hobsbawm suggests that the leftist nationalist movements established around World War II were also connected with the promise of "social renewal and liberation."[687] The Romanian communist ideology of the late 1960s emphasized the necessary social revolution as a recuperation of a pre-1866 national identity. Between 1866 and 1944, a German dynasty was enthroned in Romania in order to stop corruption and the incessant skirmishes between the local power groups. As Boia emphasizes, this period was

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[686] Lucian Boia, "Communist Discourse: The Exacerbation of Nationalism," in *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 77.

[687] Eric Hobsbawm, "The Apogee of Nationalism, 1918-1950," in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 145-147.

underrepresented in communist mythology, in spite of the fact that the modernization of the country had been achieved under Carol I, the first of the German kings, while the 1918 union of Transylvania with Romania was accomplished by Ferdinand I, Carol I's heir.[688] The same period had witnessed the rise of the middle classes and political parties. The return to the pre-1866 history, therefore, contested the legitimacy of all but the poorer social classes, a perfect ground for the biased reconstruction of history in favor of the working class, defined as the de facto descendent of the formerly oppressed . The "arid space" between 1866 and 1944, therefore, highlighted the need for a messianic figure that would "save" the nation and embody all its hopes for social regeneration, as Boia underscored.[689]

Finally, I suggest that state-sponsored nationalism was, paradoxically, the Romanian authorities' indirect recognition of their own fraudulent position as the "elected" of the people. The dictator and his party wanted to control the masses, but they also wished to be loved. The less secure about the population's support the regime was, the more it craved it, and the more intense the representation of past heroic figures was. The Party's turn toward the Asian model of the communist state after 1971, the harsh economic policies it imposed in order to accomplish its vision of socialist modernization, and the increasing policing of public life in the 1970s and 1980s rendered it gradually unpopular even with the one category it had constantly privileged: the newly-risen working class. *Dacii* was one of the first films to mark the regime's indirect admission of its growing unpopularity.

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[688] Boia, "From Burebista to Ceauşescu," in *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 223
[689] Ibid.

I argue that Nicolaescu's film assisted in the state's manipulation of its population. It opposed the unity and solidarity of the Dacians to the constant intrigues and rivalries of the Romans, thereby suggesting the moral superiority of one group over the other. The ultimate victory of the empire over Dacia was the result of an invincible war machine to which the locals fell victim in spite of their virtues. Furthermore, while the film remained absolutely silent about the Roman soldiers and exclusively focused on the Roman aristocracy, the Dacians were represented as a shepherd civilization whose leaders lived as regular families and, although respected and admired, remained close to those they represented. I suggest that the confrontation was no longer between two ancient peoples, but between two very palpable social classes whose antagonism was central to communist ideology. Decebal was a man of the people, as much as Ceauşescu considered himself to be one, with a strong connection with the faith and customs of the past and an unshakable determination to defend his land and the integrity of his community. He put his nation's interest above his own family, sacrificing his children for the victory against the Romans, and he rode to battle ahead of his troops. He was loved and followed by all.

Dacii had all the premises to become a box office hit. It was a Romanian-French coproduction, financed mostly by the Romanian state and shot at the Buftea Studios and on location in the Bucegi Mountains. As was the case with some of the previous and subsequent productions, many of the scenes benefited from the presence of the Romanian army, now clad as Romans and Dacians and working for no extra money. Nicolaescu conceived his text on a grand scale and filmed it with full access to all necessary money and human forces. Furthermore, he managed to bring to Romanian screens international

actors, even if they were B-rated stars. Pierre Brice, who had one of the leading roles, was famous for his role as Winnetou in a German series that had also reached Romanian theaters. Marie-José Nat, who had worked with directors such as Henri-Georges Clouzot and André Cayatte, was an attractive actress whose physiognomy set her apart from Romanian stars and attracted more viewers. Georges Marchal, who played the vicious Fuscus, was famous for his many roles in epics produced by the Italian film industry. The critics of the time praised *Dacii* not only for its technical merits, which were mostly connected with the magnitude of the project, but also for its potential "critical" effect on viewers who were encouraged to ponder national identity and glory.[690] Even one decade later, Romanian critics felt the need to emphasize the importance of the film in terms that reminded readers of the essential tenet of Romanian communism: the individual's deference to the nation (and, implicitly, the state). In 1975, Manuela Gheorghiu noted about Titus Popovici's script for *Dacii*: "Poate că cel mai mare merit al scriitorului este acela de a fi izbutit să ne transmită sentimentul istoriei, certitudinea continuităţii unui destin naţional înăuntrul căruia se topeşte destinul individual."[691] ("Probably the scriptwriter's highest merit is that he succeeded in conveying to us a sense of history, the certainty of the continuity of a national destiny that dissolves within it individual destinies"). I suggest that the grand scale of Nicolaescu's project was intended to assure spectators of their ancestors' glory.

    Dacii was set during Domitian's rule (81-96 C.E.), when the Romans had reached the Danube and were about to invade the territory of present-day Romania, then known as the land of the Dacians (and baptized by historians as Dacia). Fuscus (Georges

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[690] See M. Liehm and A. Liehm, "Film and Reasons of State," 350.

[691] Gheorghiu, "Patosul epopeii naţionale," 62.

Marchal) and Attius (Geo Barton) discuss a secret plot against the emperor and argue

whether to cross the river, but are interrupted by the arrival of Septimius Severus (Pierce

Brice), Attius's son and one of the most esteemed generals of the imperial army, and of

Domitian (György Kovács), the emperor himself. Attius manages to avoid the invasion of

Dacia by offering to take Domitian's request for gold to Decebal (Amza Pellea). On his

way, however, he is killed by a Dacian spy, a murder deeply regretted by the local king.

The Romans invade and conquer one of the fortresses. They receive their enemy's

messengers, but misinterpret it as a sign of submission and send Severus to sign a pact

with Decebal. The Roman general is well received and the Dacian king reveals to him

that Attius was, in fact, a local warrior working under cover. Although Decebal tries to

convince Severus to join the Dacians, the Roman refuses to change camps and returns to

Domitian with the Dacians' rejection of peace. Decebal decides to sacrifice his own son,

Cotizo (Alexandru Herescu) to Zalmoxis, the supreme god, in order to obtain the deity's

help against the Romans. His daughter, Meda (Marie-José Nat), who has grown up very

close to her brother, contests his decision and is sent away. Meantime, the Romans are

moving fast towards the mountains, but are defeated in an attack ordered by Fuscus;

Severus is believed dead, but he has managed to escape alive from the battle. As he is

trying to cross the mountains, Meda spots him and shoots an arrow at him. Realizing who

he is, she takes him into her house and helps him heal. The two fall in love, but, when the

Romans have finally reached the mountains, Meda hands him over to Decebal. Again, the

Dacian king attempts to convince Severus to desert from the imperial army, but he fails.

The Roman returns to his troops only to discover that, following the lost battle, Fuscus

has killed his best friend and decimated his legion. He confronts Fuscus, who provokes

him to a fight, but Severus manages to kill his rival. The Roman and Dacian armies face

each other on the battlefield, ready for the final combat, when Severus offers to duel

Decebal and avoid the armies' clash. When Decebal kills Severus, the war is on. The

final shots of the film represent the fierce battle as it was captured in stone on the famous

Trajan's Column in Rome.[692]

One means through which the film played an important role in the promotion of

official ideology and attracted large audiences was its detailed "recreation" of events,

people, places, and customs. Commenting on Siegfried Kracauer's "The Little Shopgirls

Go to the Movies," the Romanian critic Alex. Leo Şerban questions the ability of cinema

to represent history other than by recreating it and suggests that neither Nicolaescu, nor

the audiences of the time were fully aware of the influence of the present on the

represented past:

> "Micile vînzătoare" invocate de Krakauer - dar şi "micii meseriaşi", "micii
> tehnicieni", "micii ingineri" care gustau filmele lui Nicolaescu - erau, cu toţii,
> imuni la chestiuni legate de etica reprezentării. Dar iubeau, cu toţii,
> cinematograful. (Cinematograful lui Sergiu, mai ales!) Cinematograful devenea,
> aproape, un soi de releu magic care aducea Trecutul aproape - în prezentul sălilor
> de cinema. Cinematograful *devenea*, de fapt, Trecut, printr-o substituire iraţională.
> Filme precum *Dacii* sau *Mihai Viteazul* erau nu doar manuale de istorie în
> imagini, ci însăşi Istoria: simplul fapt că acele lucruri erau *văzute* era suficient
> pentru a (a)credita *o anumită imagine* a acelei Istorii... Erau, toţi aceştia,
> conştienţi că Trecutul este "reconstruit" - pentru că "reprezentat" - de prezent?
> Deloc; regizorul însuşi nu era conştient de asta. "Îndrăzneala" lui se mărginea -
> cum spuneam - la a pune pe ecran nişte eroi şi nişte figuranţi, pe cai sau pe jos, şi
> la a crede sincer că *asta* este Istoria![693]

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[692] The first sequences of *Columna*, which was intended as a sequel, were also those of a battle between the Romans and the Dacians, echoing these last images. That battle, however, was set in 106 C.E..

[693] Kracauer explains that films about the past necessarily represent the era in which they are made: "Today's world can be recognized even in those films that are set in the *past*. It cannot examine itself all the time, because it may not examine itself from all sides; the possibilities for inoffensive self-portraits are limited, whereas the demand for material is insatiable. The numerous historical films that merely illustrate the past . . . are attempts at deception according to their own terms. Since one always runs the danger, when picturing current events, of turning easily excitable masses against powerful institutions that are in fact often not appealing, one prefers to direct the camera toward a Middle Ages that the audience will find

> "The Little Shopgirls" invoked by Kracauer—but also the "little craftsmen," "little technicians," "little engineers" who appreciated Nicolaescu's films—were all immune to the problems posed by an ethics of representation. But they all loved the cinema. (Especially Sergiu's cinema!) Cinema almost became a type of magical relay that brought the Past closer to the present of the cinema theaters. Cinema *became*, in fact, the Past, by means of an irrational substitution. Films like *Dacii* or *Mihai Viteazul* were not only illustrated history textbooks, but History itself: the mere fact that those events were *seen* was enough to credit to *a certain image* of that History…. Were all these people aware that the Past was "reconstructed"—because it was "represented"—by the present? Not at all; the director himself was not aware of it. His "audacity" was limited—as I have already noted—to transferring onto the screen heroes and extras, on horse or on foot, and to believing that *this* is History!

Şerban is right to underscore the significance of the present, and its ideology, in the rewriting of history for large audiences. Indeed, the heroes and events one sees on the big screen are always the product of a contemporary imagination and cannot be otherwise. Furthermore, in the case of the Romanian national epics, the public nature of their (re)presentation transformed viewers into direct witnesses of the events and passed onto them the thrill of each battle, sacrifice, or wild banquet. All historical films fulfill this goal, in more or less sensational ways. However, I believe that it is very difficult to prove that all 1960s audiences were unaware of the regime's hidden hand in the making of the film. It is even more difficult to accept that the director and the scriptwriter were fully "innocent" of the effect of the present onto their film when they gave their main character lines imbued with communist rhetoric such as, "… [Ş]i vom rămâne aici, oricâte furtuni

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harmlessly edifying. The further back the story is situated historically, the more audacious filmmakers become." Siegfried Kracauer, "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies (1927)," in *German Essays on Film*, ed. Richard W. McCormick and Alison Guenther-Pal (New York: The Continuuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2004), 100-101. Şerban contests Kracauer's observation that film might incite the masses to revolt against a system, explaining that Hollywood has demonstrated that any criticism against a system loses its subversive power the moment it is represented in film. Alex. Leo Şerban, "Micile vânzătoare…'" *Atelier LiterNet* (31 May 2005): http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/2428/Alex-Leo-Serban/Micile-vinzatoare.html (accessed 21 January 2011).

vor trece peste noi!" ("…[W]e'll stay here , no matter how many storms we will face!"[694]) or "Legea-i una, aşa cum au fãurit-o strămoşii noştri, bună sau rea, aşa cum pământul este al nostru, bun sau rău!" ("The law is only one, as it was left by our ancestors, good or bad, the same way this land belongs to us, good or bad!"). A stronger argument against the filmmaker's naiveté is the introduction of a secondary character, Domitian's chronicler, who repeatedly distorts the events and the dialogues he witnesses in favor of the emperor and whose role in his epoch was, ironically, similar to that of the filmmaker himself.[695] Nicolaescu and Popovici cannot be "accused" of blindness to any historiographer's distortion of truth; they can, however, be deemed responsible for their "blindness" to their own ideological manipulation of audiences.

The strict opposition between the Dacians and Romans was, probably, the most conspicuous strategy through which the film created, from the start, the premise of an "us" versus "them" confrontation, reflecting the communist regime's clear delimitation between the lower and upper classes, but also between the dominant and the minority ethnic groups. The foreignness of the actors playing the Romans reinforced this antithesis: if Brice and Marchal were French and, therefore, more likely to be perceived as glamorous additions to the plot, György Kovács, who played the role of Domitian, was

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[694] The English translations of the characters' lines have been taken from the official translation of the film. *Dacii*, DVD, directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu (Bucharest: Romania Film, Franco London Film, 1967; Bucharest: Cine TV Film, 2006). Unless otherwise noted, I will rely on the official subtitles of the film.
[695] Although the chronicler can be interpreted as a stand-in figure for the director himself—and, therefore, the source of tongue-in-cheek humor related to the ideological mission of the film—I believe that this was an indirect effect of Nicolaescu's attempt to depict the Roman emperor and his court in negative terms. A possible subversive reading of the chronicler is not complemented by other similar moments in the film.

a Hungarian Romanian who was typecast as the villain in almost all his films of the 1960s and 1970s.[696]

The antagonism between the Dacians and the Romans, as reflected in the film, was one of moral substance: while the former were fighting for their home and for what rightfully belonged to them, the latter were engaged in a war of conquest. The opening of the film establishes this conflict even before the credits roll. The first shot centers on the exterior wall of a fortress, decorated for a celebration, but apparently empty. A capsized cart occupies the middle ground of the frame, as a sign of the disruption of private life. The two elements of the *mise en scène* depict the settlement as one of organized, vibrant, and productive life, now abandoned as a result of the crisis announced by the grave soundtrack music. A new drum beat dramatically introduces the Roman army from the high-angle point of view of a hidden fortress witness, revealing its impressive size, order, and perfect organization. This is a war machine whose appearance is uncannily similar to the grand parades organized for Ceauşescu especially after his visit in North Korea in 1971. This time, however, the display is entirely dedicated to the audiences, who are invited to identify with the fortress dwellers. Although its primary intention was to emphasize the invincibility of the empire and provoke awe, this image also manages to flatter the viewer, positioned in control of the panorama of the Roman legions. The next cuts, all introduced by very regular, mechanical drum beats, reinforce the pleasure of the omnipotent observer and narrow the camera distance to the army: a high-angle long shot

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[696] He played an Austrian officer in *Pădurea spânzuraţilor*, the detached rich and indifferent host of an upper class party in *Serata*, and Mihai's direct rival to the throne in *Mihai Viteazul*, to mention only a few of his roles. Kovács was a well-known actor at the time, whose physiognomy, in some cases, and ethnic origin, in the case of other directors, suited such roles. The Romanian Communist Party did, in spite of its rhetoric, take discriminatory measures against ethnic minorities such as Hungarians, Germans, etc., as I have already noted in a previous chapter.

of a few divisions is followed by a low-angle medium shot of a perfectly aligned row of soldiers, another long shot, frontal this time, of the ranks, and, finally, a medium close up of a torso decked out in the golden armor of the commander. As the camera is tilting up to the man's head and helmet, the impression is one of strength, discipline, and tenacity. From the start, the images reveal what Decebal will soon admit: that, even if they lose a few battles, the Romans will win the war. When this Roman captain calls for the gates to open, the echo of his words amplifies the gravity of his proposal in the name of an empire: "Deschideți porțile! Vă dăm viața și libertatea!" ("Open the gates and we'll let you keep your life and your freedom!"). The Romans are self-confident, undeterred by obstacles, and arrogant towards their enemies. It is a "mixture" constantly reiterated in Fuscus's conceitedness and Domitian's attitude towards his generals and the generations to whom he dedicates his "chronicles." I suggest that *Dacii* depicts the Romans as the victorious makers of history, much as the middle and upper classes were perceived during the communist regime; they have the power of "life" and "freedom" over all others.

The next shot of the film, however, suggests otherwise. Standing up on the fortified wall, and perceived from the low-angle point of view of the Roman commander, the leader of the Dacians appears as an indomitable deity, proud and daring. His question—"Cine sunteți voi?" ("Who are you?")— undermines his interlocutor's earlier position because it implies the anonymity of the empire and it places the "barbarian" in power. When the soldier replies, "Stăpânii lumii!" ("The masters of the world!"), the camera adopts the Dacian's point of view and the high-angle extreme long shot of the Roman contrasts with the haughtiness of his words. "Veți fi dacă noi vom pieri!" ("You will be if we perish!"), adds the fortress warrior, now in a medium close up that

accentuates his facial expression of determination and fearlessness. By contrast with the

shiny armor of his opponent, the Dacian wears a metal helmet, the traditional shirt of a

shepherd, and the cape of a leader. He represents a rural civilization, less sophisticated

than that of his enemy, but as fierce. At his battle cry, hundreds of men rise from the

mountains, rushing into the fight with fury and energy. The title, in bright red letters,

identifies them as the ancestors of Romanians, while their clothing and position suggest

their stronger connection with the underprivileged social classes. Theirs is, as Nicolaescu

suggests, the battle cry of the peasant or the worker against the powerful of the day.

Decebal, the Dacian leader, was another important narrative element that

endorsed the official discourse and was conceived to attract viewers' affection. He was

part of the first triad of monarchs—Dromichetes, Burebista, and Decebal— whom the

regime hailed as the forefathers of the nation.[697] Although such a historical figure did

exist, he had less in common with Amza Pellea's character than with Ceauşescu himself.

Lucian Boia notes that, starting in the late 1960s, there was an important emphasis placed

on "holders of power," rather than revolutionary figures, because they could embody the

communist dictator's aspirations towards people's emotional support for the Leader,

independence from the Soviet domination, and a possible role in international affairs.[698]

The hero appreciated by the president was the "providential man, the guarantor of social

stability and the interests of the nation, its guide on the difficult road of history."[699]

Nicolaescu's Decebal fulfilled all the criteria of the person Ceauşescu imagined himself

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[697] Boia explains that, in order to establish a precise dynasty, the communist historians resorted to sometimes unorthodox interpretations of documents and artifacts. Thus, a simple inscription on one Dacian pot that read "Decebalus per Scorilo" led to the historical "truth," underlined in this film, that Scorilo was Decebal's father (the word "per" was, supposedly, the Latin "puer," "child"). Boia, "From Burebista to Ceauşescu," in *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, 221

[698] Ibid., 220.

[699] Ibid., 226.

to be: he was calculating, had a superior vision of his and his people's mission in history, and placed his nation and land above his family.[700]

Decebal first appears in the film as the judge of a tournament organized for the enjoyment of the masses. Wearing a white cape and the dark cap of the outstanding warriors, he dominates the medium close up that also includes the priests in white robes, the public watching him with reverence, and, farther in the background, the Dacian flags in the shape of a wolf. The king seems, therefore, to be rising from the people and embodying both their raw energy and the spiritual force of the priestly caste. The flags, as symbols of strength and loyalty to the group and its leader, also indicate the tribe's close ties with the past and its beliefs.

Not long after this moment, Decebal realizes that a Roman attack is imminent, but, most importantly, that he will not be able to fight it without the support of Zalmoxis, the nation's god. His decision to oppose the imperial troops rather than send them the gold they request, as the High Priest urges him, affects his own family because, in order to ensure his army's success, Decebal has to "send" his son to the god with a message. His speech emphasizes his awareness that this very painful sacrifice and the battles that will follow will be essential to the identity of his nation.[701] The moment is transferred to an atemporal level by means of its symbolical *mise en scène* and cinematography. Decebal and the priest meet in the underground temple, where the ashes of ancestors are kept as reminders of the nation's endurance throughout centuries. It is this lineage, with which he feels connected beyond time, that Decebal wants to bring into the future. His

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[700] Ceauşescu created an entire mythology around his heroic deeds as a teenager, when he left his family to fight for the cause of communism. See Boia, "From Burebista to Ceauşescu," 225.

[701] Cotizo is Decebal's only son and is appreciated by all as a model of virtue, kind-heartedness, and courage; these qualities, more than his status as the king's son, singularize him as the sacrificial victim.

people's responsibility is, therefore, that of transferring to their heirs qualities such as respect and loyalty to the nation and thirst for independence and self-government. When the priest suggests that Decebal could save his peers if he repressed his pride, the king refuses, knowing that he will lose the war: "… [D]acă ne vom bate în aşa fel ca de-a lungul veacurilor să le fie ruşine şi acelora care-n sinea lor se gândesc la plecarea grumazului, atunci noi am câştigat" ("… [I]f we fight so bravely that, centuries from now on, those who want to surrender will be ashamed, then we will win the battle…").[702] Decebal's perception of his significant role in determining the qualities and goals of a young nation dominates over all present emotional concerns emphasized by the priest. I argue that, like the promises of socialism, the king's promises are for the future, to which the present must be sacrificed. As he utters these words, Decebal moves his gaze away from his interlocutor, as if he were speaking directly to unseen addressees; the otherwise very dynamic camera does not move, but "listens" intently as the mute observer that would later testify to this moment. The leader achieves with the 1960s mute spectators the intimacy that he denies his own family.

Decebal is depicted as a lonely man, whose connection to his children is a constant matter of state affairs. When Severus, who has come as Domitian's messenger, is invited as a guest to the Dacians' party, both Meda and Cotizo resent his presence and openly express their aversion to the Romans. From the position of the authoritative patriarch, Decebal excuses his children's reaction and orders Meda to pour wine for Severus; when she does, Cotizo, visibly affected, leaves the table. There is a smoldering conflict between the king and his offspring, motivated by their more radical views

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[702] In this case, I have modified the official subtitles of the film for a better rendering of the sentence and its original meaning.

towards their enemies, but also by their very close bonds to each other. Unlike the soldiers and people who gather to witness Cotizo's sacrifice, Meda hides away, wears mourning clothes, and closes her eyes. She soon questions her father's decision and behavior. The scene takes place in a corner of the Dacian banquet hall where the warriors have launched into a mad celebration of Zalmoxis, slaughtering sheep, dancing feverishly, and drinking pots of wine. Decebal, who has given permission for the party, is pensively watching this Dionysian explosion of raw energy, savagery, and chaos when Meda approaches him. The shadows of the dancing men, projected onto the stone walls of the hall and onto the faces of the two isolated interlocutors, acquire a double signification. On one level, they underscore the transitoriness of these individuals by contrast with the mountain cave where the events unfold and, implicitly, with the nation and its ideals as represented in the Leader. On another level, the shadows represent the intrusion of the public sphere, with its demands and demons, into the familial bonds established between Meda and Decebal. Meda disputes her father's readiness to sacrifice Cotizo and raises questions about the righteousness of the god himself. Decebal reaffirms his loyalty to the laws of sacrifice, eschews her accusations about his premature sign for celebration, and simply pushes her away when she emphasizes the futility of her brother's death and the silence of the skies. For the young woman, the absence of the rain that would have indicated the god's support is the immediate proof that the distant deity no longer understands or resonates with the people. Meda represents modernity and the need for change, but she also voices the 1960s criticism of religion and its destructive influence on individuals, which suggests that Decebal may not be ready for the times to come. At the end of her speech, the camera tracks down to her level and the dancing

hoards invade the foreground of the frame. She becomes the ordinary individual swept up by History, a second sacrifice to the ideal of an independent Dacia. The ties between Meda and her father are, nevertheless, mended off-screen. I argue that the intimate sphere between father and daughter reproduces the power relations between citizen and Leader that structure the public sphere; in spite of her criticism, based on very personal attachments, Meda remains unquestionably loyal to her father's and her tribe's ideals.

Initially, Decebal does not succeed in establishing a personal relationship with Severus and this failure prevents the Roman from joining the cause of his real ancestors. Decebal's first attempt to get closer to Severus takes place in the presence of the empty funeral urn dedicated to Attius. The dialogue is filmed as a shot/reverse-shot sequence, which isolates each man within an individual frame and indicates the distance between them. At the end of their conversation, Decebal requires that Severus, raised and trained with Dacian money, fulfill his duty to the tribe; the Roman refuses to acknowledge the request. He reinforces his point on the following day, when Decebal, in his official position, asks the same question. Most of the interaction between the two only occurs in public spaces, on the battlefield or in open view of the Dacian and Roman armies. They eventually become intimately connected after Severus and Meda have fallen in love and, most importantly, when Decebal confesses his desperation to Severus: "Atunci, în noaptea aceea când între noi doi se hotăra soarta copilului meu, am nădăjduit. Nu te-am putut ruga pentru că era vorba doar de copilul meu. Acuma e vorba de tot şi te rog…." ("That night, when we decided my child's fate, I had hopes. I couldn't ask you anything. Only my son's life was at stake. But now our entire fate is at stake. Please…."). Decebal praises and names Severus his son. The moment Severus agrees to help, the men share

the frame as equals. The next day, when they have to fight each other, Severus prefers to die rather than oppose the Dacians. "E tot ce-am putut să fac pentru tine" ("This is all I could do for you"), he whispers to Decebal. The king has sacrificed a second son. The intimate sphere established between Decebal and Severus rests on honor, courage, and a common understanding of the individual's responsibilities to the nation; paradoxically, it drives its energy from the denial of private life in favor of public duty.

If Decebal's affective bonds are always under the sign of his official commitments, Meda's relationships initially appear to exist outside such obligations. In spite of her desires and doubts, however, she is yet another sacrificial figure, eventually renouncing her inner harmony in favor of her people's peace. The first "private" characters introduced by the film are Cotizo and his sister. In a Heimat-like mountain setting, the two hunt deer and then retire to an isolated, idyllic house in a clearing. They live here alone, as private individuals, without the pomp and protection one would associate with royal heirs. Meda's relationship to Cotizo is unclear at first, when she behaves toward him as toward a son, but also as toward a lover: she teaches him how to hunt, is protective of him, and plays with him. She prepares his food and clothes for the upcoming tournament and asks him to fetch water. Cotizo proudly replies that a warrior is exempt from "women's chores" and, as she teasingly wrestles to get him out of bed, he responds by twisting her arm. When Cotizo discovers that Meda has given him a white horse as a present, his boyish enthusiasm makes him jump onto the stallion and ride away. From the porch, Meda watches him and smiles, the iconic image of motherhood. In spite of his "rebellion," which echoes the socially-accepted machismo of the 1960s, Cotizo is equally attached to his sister. The intimate sphere established between

Decebal's children is, therefore, depicted as the ideal familial space of privacy, love, and inner growth. The ambiguity of the interaction between the two is characteristic of the relationship between a mother and her teenage son or between two young lovers, when the power relationships are slowly being established. Cotizo is, as Decebal and the High Priest know, the "purest" sacrificial victim because he has not reached sexual and political maturity yet and has not, therefore, been "contaminated" by the world.[703] I emphasize that the film identifies the intimate sphere that has "produced" Cotizo as the ideal reservoir of moral and spiritual vigor so necessary to the tribe at its most difficult moments. The royal family appears, therefore, as source and model for the nation's endurance through history.

Meda's other intimate connection is with Severus, but, as in the previous case, this, too, will be surrendered to the needs of the state. Decebal's daughter literally hunts Severus who, after the terrible defeat of his army, is attempting to reach his troops. When she recognizes him she brings him into the house she once shared with her brother and tends to his wounds. One of the most memorable images of the film is the medium shot of Meda, wearing the traditional Romanian shirt, bent over the agonizing soldier, wiping his face with gentle strokes. The overhead close up of Severus opening his eyes, seen from the young woman's point of view, combines two elements of interest: his idealized, manly expression, emphasized through the use of strong, lateral key lighting that accentuates his profile, and the geometric pattern sewn on his pillow, which was easily

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[703] René Girard explains that the purpose of a sacrifice is to prevent a further spread of violence; consequently, the sacrificial victim needs to be the member of the tribe least connected with the possible source of violence. Cotizo is the desirable victim because he is the yet uninitiated member of his tribe, the one least "infected" by human desire and corruption. René Girard, "Sacrifice," in *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1972), 14-15, 26-28.

identified as traditionally "Romanian" by the 1960s viewers. Meda has revived Severus

from the dead as she could not do with her brother, and, through her care, she has

symbolically baptized him as a Dacian. He is no longer one of "them," but one of "us."

The film then launches in an unnecessarily prolonged series of bucolic scenes as the

young protagonists run into meadows, meet by sparkling mountain waters, roll down

more fields in bloom, and debate death and resurrection in the company of majestic

mountain peaks in the background. In Meda's philosophy, the individual does become

more important than the state, as in Mueller's socialist musings in *Pădurea spânzuraţilor*.

She asks Severus, rhetorically, whether people's mission should not be only to live and

be happy, and he replies, sincerely, that he has never thought of it because he has only

been a soldier so far. They meet, therefore, in a paradisiacal space and a time out of time,

the type of "heaven" promised by communism in its pacifist discourses.[704] The earthly

existence of their intimate connection only lasts as long as the two armies are at rest; the

moment the Romans arrive, Meda turns Severus in to her father and puts on the black veil

of a widow, the same she once wore for her brother. Her last act is to set the house on

fire, which suggests her recognition that intimacy cannot be recovered. I suggest that

Decebal's daughter is the most inquisitive and even revolutionary character of all

because, in her questioning of war, she indirectly questions the basis for nationalism. She

and the feminine counterpublic she represents completely disappear from the film,

sacrificed so that the overall ideology of Romanians' glorious ancestry can prevail. Under

times of historical duress, there is no room for any other discourse of the intimate sphere

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[704] It is important to note that the film was released not too long after the Cuban missile crisis and only one year before the 1968 Prague Spring. Nicolaescu's text was, therefore, responding to the increasing tensions not only between the two political poles, but also within the Eastern bloc.

than the one promoting self-sacrifice and absolute dedication to the male Leader and the

nation. In Nicolaescu's film, intimate groups exist only as "nurseries" for the state's

soldiers. The intimate sphere is dominated by a patriarchal discourse that silences all

other voices in the name of the nation.

Dacii stirred the viewers' pride about their origins by glamorizing the past and

transforming it into a hybrid mixture of imagined history, mythologized spaces, and

identifiable "Romanian" tradition. Time refused to conform to a clear historical logic.

Thus, the ritual of sending a human messenger to Zalmoxis, the Dacian supreme deity,

was mentioned by Herodotus in his work compiled in the fifth century B.C.E., but, by the

first century C.E., it had disappeared in Dacia.[705] Furthermore, the tournament organized

for the young men at the beginning of the film belongs to the Middle Ages rather than

antiquity. These "confusions" enhanced the aura of mystery and romanticism that

surrounded the Dacians' esoteric practices, thereby contributing to the appeal of the film.

The utopian thrust of *Dacii* was also promoted in the choice of locations. The

Dacian settlement mentioned—Argidava—is situated close to the Danube, in the south-

western part of Romania and most other Dacian settlements can be found in the Retezat

Mountains, to the west of the Bucegi Mountains, where the film sets its action. The

choice of a ridge in central Romania was motivated by the presence of the spectacular

stone in the shape of a human head, the Sphinx, where Cotizo is sacrificed. Furthermore,

mountains dominate the landscape of the film, whether they appear as unconquerable

witnesses of human history in the aerial views following the introduction of the title, or as

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[705] "History of Herodotus/Book 4," *Wikisource, The Free Library,*
http://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_Herodotus/Book_4&oldid=1946768 (accessed
January 23, 2011).

a space of mystical transcendence surrounding the sacrificial victim. Steep cliffs become traps for the uninitiated in the case of the Romans' defeat by the Dacians or the menacing background when Severus runs away from the battlefield. Finally, mountain meadows and forest clearings are intimate spaces of love in the scenes involving Meda and Severus, or the sheltering spaces of home for Meda and Cotizo. The mythologization of space is continued in the construction of interiors. Severus's secret ancestry can be retrieved only at the bottom of a circular cave. By descending towards the gallery of funeral torches and ashes, the Roman returns, symbolically, to his origins and to the origins of time, as well. The temple of the High Priest, where the Dacian king decides to oppose the Romans, is supported on columns that imitate Constantin Brancusi's famous Endless Column, a monument of great national pride and a *lieu de memoire* for Romanians. Similarly, Meda's house is a "museum" of folk art, from the carved wooden furniture and small barrels, to the leather pouches for water, the metal knives and arrows, the animal skins on the floor and walls, and the woolen covers, pillows, and rugs ornamented in patterns better known to the 1960s viewers than to the Dacians themselves. Meda's costumes also follow the logic of the spectacle rather than historical accuracy. At the initial party where Decebal orders her to pour wine for Severus, she is dressed as a mediaeval princess, in a long, simple dress complemented by a white veil. Shortly afterward, when she wounds and then heals Severus, she wears a stylized version of the countryside white skirt, black apron, and red or black flower-patterned blouse still sold to foreign tourists coming to Romania today. The careful construction of the *mise en scène* and selection of costumes and props transformed kitsch into the recognizable, and, therefore, "genuine" expression of what constituted "real" Romanian culture.

Furthermore, such details gave the film audiences the feeling of familiarity and closeness

to the protagonists; they created the false impression that the dilemmas and solutions of

such mythical figures were those of the ordinary citizens whose inner peace could only be

found in a devotion to the nation.

In addition to the *mise en scène*, cinematography also catered to the visual

pleasure of the masses. Gory sights of battle were "documented" in detail, as was

Cotizo's impaling during the mystic ritual or the graphic slaughter of sheep during the

Dacians' Dionysian feast. The pan dominates the film, from the monumental views of the

mountains, to sweeps against the direction of racing armies, and to the overview shots of

deadly battlefields as in the case of the mass of trees toppled over the Romans in the

mountain pass confrontation. Fast crosscutting also magnifies the impression of the

uncontrollable speed of attack and death. I argue that the function of such views was to

provoke wonder and awe not only about the courage of the ancient Dacians, but also

about the capacity of Romanian cinema to capture such epic battles.

The poster for the film also expresses, in condensed form, the ideological and

aesthetic intentions of the project. Decebal's colossal profile dominates over the image of

the fortress, the Sphinx, and armies fighting, with two figures, a Roman and a Dacian in

full battle gear in the foreground. The king's fierce eyes, chiseled cheekbones, and stern

mouth suggest his determination, courage, and authority over the people and places he

surveys. His gold-trimmed cap and crimson cape indicate his status as a leader, while the

red background that surrounds his face gives the impression of a sky in flames, a

reminder of spilled blood, but also a direct hint at the red communist flag. Decebal

appears as the visionary Leader, whose patriotic aspirations would find their completion

in the 1960s General Secretary. It is for his ideal, divinely inspired, that men defend their home and their citadel, and it is through him that they endure through the ages with the strength of the Sphinx. Everything is rendered on grand scale: the effigy of the king, the armies, the title of the film, and even the names of actors and crew that float in the flaming sky or on the white walls of the fortress. Nicolaescu's film unmistakably sought to (re)produce the heroic past as a source of national pride and unabashed sensationalism.

Dacii was the first well-organized attempt of Romanian cinema to produce a coherent nationalist discourse propagated with the help of the melodramatic spectacle of epic battles, esoteric human sacrifices, and romantic rendezvous amid awe-inspiring mountains. I argue that the fictional characters, events, even the settings of the film created the popular impression of an "authentic" history and, thus, imposed the officially-endorsed narrative of the Romanian people's origins as the "true" story of the nation. Decebal, the leader of the unconquerable Dacians, was a providential figure, whose honor, bravery, and, most significantly, vision of history were to be re-embodied in the communist leader of the 1960s. To ensure the moral and spiritual continuity of the nation, however, the leader and his many followers had to accept the most emotionally costly loss: that of the intimacy and privacy of their more personal relationships. During a time of hardships for the fatherland and its people, private life was to be denied in favor of public duty. The ordinary "craftsman," "technician," and "engineer" in Nicolaescu's audience was to identify with the ordinary Dacian warrior and his king who were, nevertheless, mere flawed precursors of the other—the communist—Leader.[706]

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[706] Decebal's strict observance of an antiquated religion and his refusal to consider his daughter's pleas were not subversive elements of the film, but well-accepted shortcomings that were to be overcome in the future generations. *Columna*, the film that succeded *Dacii*, emphasized the positive aspects of the Roman

Conclusion

The major difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is the apparent absence of coercion and fear, the sensation that one is free to act according to one's own feelings and convictions. I have argued, however, that authoritarianism intends to co-opt the individual to its own world view, to impose its values and practices as the "medicine" that one needs to take in order to overcome historical misfortunes such as world wars and economic hardships. To that effect, such regimes proffer the most insidious transformations at the profound level of one's intimate relationships with family and friends in order to influence people's thoughts and emotional commitments to each other and, especially, to the establishment.

Such a time-consuming, delicate process of control and seduction could not have been achieved without the collaboration of two essential components: a thorough restructuring of both public and private life, and the careful cultivation of a vision of social harmony that could compensate for all daily frustrations. In the initial chapters of my dissertation, I suggest that the purpose and activity of major state institutions—the presidency, the parliament, the government, etc.—were corrupted and appropriated by one political force in the service of one ideology. Furthermore, the rich and vigorous life of private associations, organizations, and various other groups in a democracy was drastically curtailed by the authoritarian power that sought to monitor all types of gatherings, formal and informal, that might pose a threat. Finally, the state's politics of intervention in matters such as marriage, reproduction, education, etc. aimed to

conquerors, suggesting that the Romanian people was born out of the best representatives of the two nations; Romanians were depicted as modern in thought and fair to all in government.

manipulate and direct individuals' intimate allegiances and affections. The state was to become a constant and indelible presence of one's daily existence.

The three most popular films in authoritarian France, Spain, and Romania— *L'éternel retour*, *El último cuplé*, and *Dacii*—achieved their level of commercial success by various means. They were directed and produced by filmmakers and companies favored by the regimes, which gave them access to a well-oiled system of promotion and distribution. They benefited from the presence of stars who were nationally well-known, which encouraged audiences to buy tickets. Furthermore, the spectacular nature of the melodramatic narratives and aesthetics, transmitted via the media or by word of mouth, convinced more viewers to go and see them. Finally, these three films added one more element that stimulated spectators' self-esteem at a difficult historical moment: they created the image of the nation as one's own family, insisting on its nobleness, cultural heritage, and endurance against all odds. These grand-scale productions fetishized an invented common past and transformed it into the ideal locus of national and personal fulfillment.

Films may not have dramatically influenced the relationships within private and intimate publics, but they had a major contribution to the normalization of the new type of social interactions and expectations fostered by a controlling state. I argue that cinema, among other cultural forms, functioned as the "remedy" served to alleviate the effects of the state's intrusions into one's private life. Film popularized official norms and expectations, but also promised solutions and happy endings to those who adhered to them. The melodrama of interiority was commercially successful because it acknowledged the fragmentation and turmoil of the intimate sphere, but offered a

coherent and easy explanation for such an undesirable outcome; furthermore, it proposed a set of clear values that could eliminate the strife and distress provoked by unruly desire or thought. Melodramas gave viewers the illusion that they were still in control of their lives, proposing, as sole condition, the spectators' acceptance of a patriarchal family and state. They aimed to seduce and conquer.

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Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, La (The Passion of Joan of Arc). Directed by Carl Theodor Dreier. Paris: Société générale des films, 1928.

Pecado de amor [Sin of Love]. Directed by Luis César Amadori. Sevilla: Cesaréo González Producciones, Producciones Benito Perojo, and Transmode Film, 1961.

Peces rojos, Los (Red Fish). Directed by José Antonio Nieves Conde. Madrid: Yago Films and Estela Films, 1955.

Pequeñeces (Trifles). Directed by Juan de Orduña. Madrid: CIFESA, 1950. DVD. Valladoid: Divisa Home Video, 2009.

Petites du Quai aux Fleurs, Les [The Girls on the Quai aux Fleurs]. Directed by Marc Allégret. Nice: CIMEP, 1944.

Pisito, El (The Little Apartment). Directed by Marco Ferreri. Madrid: Documento Films, 1959.

Plácido. Directed by Luis García Berlanga. Madrid: Jet Films, 1961.

Pontcarral, colonel d'empire (Pontcarral). Directed by Jean Delannoy. Paris: Pathé, 1942.

Prea mic pentru un război atât de mare (Too Small for such a Great War). Directed by Radu Gabrea. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1969.

Procesul alb (White Trial). Directed by Iulian Mihu. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1965.

Quai de brumes, Le (Port of Shadows). Directed by Marcel Carné. Paris: Ciné-Alliance, 1938. DVD. New York: Criterion Collection, 2004.

Quema el suelo [Burning Ground]. Directed by Luis Marquina. Madrid: Hesperia Films, 1952.

Răpirea fecioarelor (The Abduction of the Maidens). Directed by Dinu Cocea. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1968.

Rapsodia de sangre [Rhapsody in Blood]. Directed by Antonio Isasi-Isasmendi. Barcelona: Isasi, 1957.

Răscoala (Blazing Winter). Directed by Mircea Mureşan. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1966.

Răzbunarea haiducilor (The Revenge of the Outlaws). Directed by Dinu Cocea. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1968.

Reconstituirea [The Reenactment]. Directed by Lucian Pintilie. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1969.

Remorques (Stormy Waters). Directed by Jean Grémillon. Paris: MAIC, Edis, 1941.

Romance de Paris, La [Paris Romance]. Directed by Jean Boyer. Paris: Pathé, 1941.

Săptămâna nebunilor (The Week of the Madmen). Directed by Dinu Cocea. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1971.

Señora de Fátima, La (Our Lady of Fatima). Directed by Rafael Gil. Madrid: Aspa Films, 1951. DVD. Madrid: Karma Films, 2008.

Sentencia contra una mujer [Sentence against a Woman]. Directed by Antonio Isasi-Isasmendi. Barcelona: Isasi, 1960.

Sistema Pelegrín, El [The Pelegrín System]. Directed by Ignacio F. Iquino. Barcelona: IFI Producción, 1952.

Sonatas. Directed by Juan Antonio Bardem. Madrid: UNICI and Barbachano Ponche, 1959.

Ştefan cel Mare—Vaslui 1475. Directed by Mircea Drăgan. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1974.

Stella Dallas. Directed by King Vidor. Los Angeles: Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1937. DVD. Los Angeles: MGM, 2005.

Subteranul [Underground]. Directed by Virgil Calotescu. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1967.

Sueño de Andalucía, El [The Dream of Andalusia]. Directed by Luis Lucia. Madrid: CCFC, 1951.

Surcos (Furrows). Directed by José Antonio Nieves Conde. Madrid: Atenea Films, 1951.

Tarde de toros (Afternoon of the Bulls). Directed by Ladislao Vajda. Madrid: Chamartín Producciones y Distribuiciones, 1956.

Teresa de Jesús. Directed by Juan de Orduña. Madrid: Agrupa Films Cooperativa Cinematográfica, 1961. DVD. Barcelona: Divisa Home Video, 2008.

Tinereţe fără bătrâneţe (Kingdom in the Clouds). Directed by Elisabeta Bostan. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1970.

Todos somos necesarios [We Are All Necessary]. Directed by José Antonio Nieves Conde. Madrid: Sagittario Film and Yago Film, 1956.

Torrepartida. Directed by Pedro Lazaga. Madrid: Santos Alcocer, 1956.

Traje de oro, El [The Golden Suit]. Directed by Julio Coll. Madrid: Eolo U.C., 1960.

Tudor. Directed by Lucian Bratu. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1962.

Último caballo, El (The Last Horse). Directed by Edgar Neville. Madrid: E. Neville, 1950. DVD. Madrid: Manga Films, 2008.

Último cuplé, El (The Last Torch Song). Directed by Juan de Orduña. Valencia: Producciones Orduña Films, 1957. DVD. Burbank, CA: DVD Vision, 2003.

Un film cu o fată fermecătoare (A Charming Girl). Directed by Lucian Bratu. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1966.

Vârstele omului (The Ages of Man). Directed by Alecu Croitoru. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1969.

Venganza, La (Vengeance). Directed by Juan Antonio Bardem. Madrid: Suevia Films, 1958.

Venus aveugle (Blind Venus). Directed by Abel Gance. Paris: SociétéFrance Nouvelle, 1941.

Vin cicliştii (The Cyclists Are Coming). Directed by Aurel Miheleş. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1968.

Violetera, La [The Flower Girl]. Directed by Luis César Amadori. Sevilla: Producciones Benito Perojo, Trevi Cinematografica, Vic Film, 1958. DVD. Burbank, CA: DVD Vision, 2003.

Viridiana. Directed by Luis Buñuel. Madrid: UNICI, 1961. DVD. New York: Criterion Collection, 2006.

Visiteurs du soir, Les (The Devil's Envoys). Directed by Marcel Carné. Paris: Productions André Paulvé, 1942.

Vlad Ţepeş (Vlad the Impaler: The True Life of Dracula). Directed by Doru Năstase. Bucharest: Romania Film, 1982.

Voile bleu, Le (The Blue Veil). Directed by Jean Stelli. Paris: CGC, 1942.

Zestrea domniţei Ralu (The Dowry of Lady Ralu). Directed by Dinu Cocea. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1972.

Zodia fecioarei (Virgo). Directed by Manole Marcus. Bucharest: Filmstudio Bucureşti, 1966.