

PERMANENT CRISIS AND EXILE IN THE CINEMATIC GAZE OF ALBERTO MORAIS

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INTRODUCTION

The Spanish Civil War continues to be a popular subject to explore in cinema, as well as in literature, theatre and academic studies. As a historical event, it has marked the individual and collective lives of millions of people, and it is for this reason that we considered it essential to focus the research described in this article on the relationship established between history and the cinematographic processes that support it and construct it. The films of Alberto Morais are proposed here as an ideal corpus for the identification of certain parallels between historical processes like the creation of historical memory in our country and the reality portrayed in a filmmaker's work. His aesthetic approach is far removed from the most common practices in Spanish cinema, which habitually opt for a picturesque *costumbrista* film style, occasionally involving adaptation, and always based on narrative elements that are easily manageable for

the interpretive competence of the spectator. *Las 13 rosas* [The 13 Roses] (Emilio Martínez-Lázaro, 2007) could serve as an example of the kind of dramatic films in which the individual suffering of the protagonists is the predominant feature. On the other hand, Sánchez-Biosca suggests that Spanish fiction of the 1990s "offers us a vision of recent decades that is stripped of drama, and even enjoyable" (2006: 78). And he adds: "These films are the product of a history, or more precisely, of a hallucination of atemporality..."

Essentially, the films of Alberto Morais propose new directions for a Spanish film tradition which, in the words of the filmmaker himself, "has moved from *costumbrismo* to post-modernity" (Miralles, 2012) without ever having passed through a modern period.

How can we make sense of or recreate events that occurred prior to our existence, especially if they are traumatic and systematically ignored by the official discourse? As Marianne Hirsch (1997)

suggests, *postmemory* could be a tool capable of dealing with such inherited memory.

Alberto Morais positions himself between two extremes. Huyssen (2002) proposes the idea of present futures and present pasts to distinguish between modernist culture and a turning to the past as a preoccupation with historical memory from social, cultural and political perspectives. Morais steers between these two ideas; he belongs to that generation that has not personally experienced the events and that has survived both the official memory imposed by the Francoists and the silence that reigned from the first years of the democratic transition to well into the first decade of the new millennium. At the same time, he invokes the idea of present futures through the silence of the survivors and of their unheard voice. In contrast with the great metanarratives or absolute truths that characterised the modern tradition and generated meaning and social cohesion (Lyotard, 1992: 19), Morais's work poses unanswered questions about this modern perspective; in other words, his films invoke the emptiness without sliding into the present past that characterises postmemory.

His work could be viewed as a version of Aby Warburg's *Atlas Mnemosyne*, an incomplete space for which a non-directional reading is needed, like that required for heterotopian spaces as defined by Foucault (Tartás and Guridi, 2013: 227).

In view of the fact that we have established a clear relationship between the political and social processes that resulted from the Spanish transition and what Morais proposes in his films, in the first part of this article we offer a brief overview of the legal and political situation of the time to contextualise the films that will serve as our case studies. The structure of this article is thus part historiography and part film analysis.

As Magí Crusells (2000) points out, films of the war and about the war are a constant source for historians. They facilitate an approach to the narrative on the events and, at the same time, to

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the gaze of the filmmaker as a great imaginer, projecting a combination of ideological, cultural and social factors.

The hundreds of films of this kind include both fiction and documentary. On television it is common to find dramas or productions based around the particular experiences of specific characters, limiting the focus to their individual perspectives, such as in *Amar en tiempos revueltos* [Love in Troubled Times] (Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, Antonio Onetti, Rodolf Sirera, TVE, 2005-2012) or *Cuéntame cómo pasó* [Tell Me How It Happened] (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau, TVE, 2001-), or that even go as far as trivialising or playing down the crimes of the dictatorship, as in *Lo que escondían sus ojos* [What Her Eyes Were Hiding] (Mediaset, 2016). On the big screen, even in prominent works like *The Spirit of the Beehive* (*El espíritu de la colmena*, Víctor Erice, 1973), *Butterfly* (*La lengua de las mariposas*, José Luis Cuerda, 1999), *The Blind Sunflowers* (*Los girasoles ciegos*, José Luis Cuerda, 2008) or *Black Bread* (*Pa negre*, Agustí Villaronga, 2010), we find the repeated use of the perspective of a child to explore the darkest years of Francoism. Giving children the protagonist's role allows filmmakers to evade the difficult task of addressing events that have not been dealt with. The historical reconstruction is then subjected to specific

narrative conventions—the classical or institutional (IMR)—and to the concept of credibility that includes anachronism as a way of appealing to the contemporary viewer (Nieto, 2016: 812-813). But on very few occasions has fiction been used to explore other narrative mechanisms that propose a detached and profoundly analytical gaze, as we find in the case of Morais's films.

The purpose of the research presented in this article is to explore how the consequences of the war—particularly the consequence of internal exile—can be examined in a present moment through a filmmaking approach whose main objective is not to construct the canonical narrative, but to propose anti-narration as a discursive strategy. Alberto Morais constructs films in this Pasolinian sense, creating a clash between what we might define as the cinema of prose and the cinema of poetry (Pasolini and Rohmer, 1970). His work is charged with a semiotic tradition, but it is also close to a reading of the image as a product of the real. Pasolini asserts that “the linguistic instrument on which film is predicated is [...] of an irrational type” (Pasolini, 1988: 169), and he adds that it is precisely this which explains its oneiric capacity, and its object-based concreteness.

Alberto Morais uses filmmaking as a device that produces empty spaces, that reveals the site of the symptom without conducting a detective-style investigation as a historian would; following Didi-Huberman, Morais's work is much closer to the ideas suggested by Warburg with his *Atlas Mnemosyne* (Tartás Ruiz and Guridi García, 2013: 229-231): a compendium of images that say something about us and are shown to speak for themselves. And it is in this showing, and not in telling, where we stop to consider a cinematic work that explores neglect and oblivion as a constant state, that reveals the material expression of exile in a context of global capitalism, like the inhabitants of peripheral neighbourhoods excluded from major gentrification processes; open spaces which, at the same time, are framed as border

territories. Morais's films are films that sting, like Didi-Huberman's images, that burn like the films of Raymundo Gleyzer, the Argentine filmmaker who was “disappeared” during the dictatorship (Martín Peña and Vallina, 2000).

Memory, montage and dialectic come together in Morais's films to speak to us of the consequences of the Spanish Civil War in a context of global capitalist expansion: the traces of the defeat and permanent exile. An analysis of his work also requires a consideration of the recovery of historical memory. This means studying, analysing and redressing serious human rights violations like execution, torture, arbitrary detentions, disappearances, forced labour or exile. However, all of this is suspended in a kind of ahistorical perspective.

The ahistorical nature of our past is characteristic of an era referred to as “the end of history”. In such an era it is possible to find hundreds of literary, photographic and cinematic representations of events that marked a before and an after in our lives, just as Susan Sontag suggested in relation to the photographic images of the extermination camps (quoted by Sánchez-Biosca, 2009: 117). Nevertheless, there are perspectives—like Becerra's (2015) when he suggests that “the story of the Civil War has yet to be told”—that might seem to clash with the apparent mass production of all kinds of stories about the conflict.

REFLECTIONS ON THE IMAGE AND THE PERCEPTION OF REALITY AS A STARTING POINT

In between Becerra's assertion and Didi-Huberman's *Images in Spite of All* (2004) in which he examines photographs taken *in extremis* of the gas chambers and incinerators of the Holocaust, there is an unresolved debate that has been going on now for more than half a century. It is a debate that calls for a showing and telling that does not reduce the immeasurable to the calculable, consequently posing the question of how this can be done.

In the terrain of the image, the picture crystallises, summarises and perhaps limits; it clashes with the historical and problematic dichotomy of showing and telling, of the visual and the verbal exposed so effectively by Mitchell (2009) when he proposed a new direction: the iconic. The image refers to a moment and to a person, or perhaps several, who undertake to show and maintain the knowledge of that moment beyond their own lives; precisely to go on living after death.

Because as Primo Levi asserted, there are probably certain events that simply cannot be survived, and then, and only then, the image is perhaps a necessary and worthy tool for recovering a status—dismissed as naive realism in some cases or as constantly suspect in others—that would facilitate an alternative reflection and reading, like Benjamin's alternative vision of history.

The notion of representation as a process of substitution for the real or as a producer of reality has generated a vast bibliography (Sánchez-Biosca, 2006; Gubern, Monterde, Pérez Perucha, Rimbau, Torreiro, 2009; Crusells, 2000; Castro de Paz, Pérez Perucha, Zunzunegui, Arozena, 2005) that has enriched the terrain of semiotic, philosophical and historiographical analysis. Such representation always refers to something that was there and produces an abnormally smooth and continuous reading, without interruptions, a history-telling that does not permit survivors. But it is possible to find the image it presents: an image that goes beyond a simple scene to present itself as an ongoing ideological, political and historical conflict (Becerra, 2015).

War is the prelude to any mass movement or forced displacement resulting in exile. It may have a purely political explanation, although reality and history show us that its outcome is mainly economic. Outside the trenches, the low-intensity war—adopting a term proposed by Antonio Méndez Rubio (2015) to identify differences and relationships between historical fascism and low-intensity fascism—is a war that is waged

permanently, provoking constant exiles, both external and internal, for reasons that are political, but also cultural, social, economic and, above all, global.

Our analysis of the films *The Waves* (Las olas, Alberto Morais, 2011) and *The Kids from the Port* (Los chicos del puerto, Alberto Morais, 2013) as case studies is developed through a reflection on how reality can be approached through fiction. As noted above, the possibilities include exploring the question of representation and storytelling, present in key authors like Metz or Gaudreault, although Morais's work perhaps inspires theoretical reflections closer to Bazin's, in which the idea of the real is essential. In any case, we consider the possibility of tackling the analysis from a different perspective that is not necessarily narratological. Moving onto the terrain of studies of the moving image with the contributions of Didi-Huberman, Walter Benjamin, Méndez Rubio, Warburg or Tartás and Guridi means moving away from the more common analytical approaches in film studies, but Morais's work requires something different from the conventional perspective.

HIS LAST FILM, *THE MOTHER* (LA MADRE, ALBERTO MORAIS, 2016), EXPLORES EXILE IN TERMS OF EVERYDAY LIFE, THE SELF-IMPOSED EXILE OF CHARACTERS FROM A LIFE THAT IS ALIEN TO THEM BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO SOMETHING THAT WE MIGHT CALL "THE SYSTEM"

His last film, *The Mother* (La madre, Alberto Morais, 2016), explores exile in terms of everyday life, the self-imposed exile of characters from a life that is alien to them because it belongs to something that we might call "the system". It is perhaps a deterministic view, in which the conditions that organise the life of the protagonist are beyond her control. We could speculate that the protagonist

in *The Mother* may be the grandchild of political and social exiles who has to deal—in any way she can—with a defeat, stripped of any ideological dimension. The economic factor excludes her from any kind of life in society. This idea of external/internal combined with the concept of exile is explored in depth by Méndez Rubio (2012) to explain the reasons behind his labelling of contemporary society with the term “low-intensity fascism”.

In the next section, we will focus on the state of the question related to the recovery of historical memory in Spain and its limitations, in order to examine the condition of exile as a recurring category portrayed in Morais's films.

THE REPUBLICAN EXILE AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

In addition to being forced to flee, the victims of the Civil War (former prisoners and their families) were marginalised and stigmatised so as to serve as an example. The punishment imposed was perpetual and went far beyond the time served in prison: garnishment of wages, fines, confiscation of property, disqualification from or demotion in employment, after purging, separation and banishment from their homes. The impact or consequences of the Franco regime on ownership and wealth continues to be a seldom-studied subject (Gómez Bravo, 2009: 191, 199).

In this respect, the story told in *The Waves* alludes—in the choice of objects, sets, and the faces of the protagonists—to issues explored by Gómez Bravo through the lens of Pasolini. The common, almost anonymous faces of the characters, the bareness of the rooms in which they live, like the dining room or the kitchen, express the impact of the years of abandonment by the State of its role as guarantor of the legal and economic redress called for by the historian.

“After years in the shadows,” the disaffected “found themselves faced with a mute society in which they could not speak because they inspired

fear in their companions, fear that they might be identified as political activists” (Gómez Bravo, 2009: 218). In short, the victims found impoverishment, isolation and humiliation, a kind of civil and social imprisonment that tormented them and excluded them from the new society.

“Internal” and “exile”, two apparently contradictory concepts, are thus fused together in the Spanish post-war period as the only option for survival for those on the losing side. The intellectuals who remained in Spain, or those who emigrated and returned, ended up living in this kind of exile by virtue of having to repress their thoughts and their work. The whole of Spain was one big prison. It was a “flight of silence” (“La Huida del silencio”, 2006) that rendered the republicans invisible for political reasons. The vanquished were marginalised and deprived of their rights; their lives were hard and lacking in comfort. The young Miguel in *The Kids from the Port* lives in a working-class neighbourhood. The old Miguel in *The Waves* lives with next to nothing; his humble car, broken down in the middle of the road, suggests to us an economic situation that is not exactly desperate, but far from prosperous.

It might be expected that the arrival of democracy would have brought an explosion of information on these issues. Yet it was not the case. We can appreciate this fact in the silence of both films. Nobody pays much attention to the old Miguel in *The Waves*; in *The Kids from the Port*; the young Miguel is the grandchild, the new generation, who, perhaps out of ignorance, feels a certain curiosity. The children of the deceased, already adults at the time of the Transition, do not appear to show any respect for the identity/memory of their father. The lack of a story, of narrativity in their lives is expressed in the filmic discourse through the absence of dialogue and the length of the shots in those empty spaces so charged with meaning.

Although it is true that some of Spain's autonomous communities have attempted to respond to

the victims, and there has been some very interesting research led by academics or associations like the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH), at the national level there is currently no centralised government institution responsible for handling all victims' claims (Segura, Mayayo and Solé, 2009: 60).

THE ROLE OF THE STATE: FROM THE "OBLIVION" OF OFFICIAL MEMORY TO POSTMEMORY

The general Francoist cause, with its court proceedings against the Republic, represents the only official government attempt to assign responsibility for the conflict (Segura, Mayayo and Solé, 2009: 53, 82). There is thus an urgent need to investigate the events in order to determine the whole truth beyond the legitimising intentions of the military coup or the dictatorship, and to achieve at least some degree of justice for the forgotten generation, and for our generation as well, because in redressing human rights violations we are exercising our democratic values and humanitarian principles (United Nations, 2014: 17-19). However, so much time has now passed and there are so many gaps in the information that instead of recovering memory we would be creating it, as pointed out by Francisco Etxebarria Gabilondo (Segura, Mayayo and Solé, 2009: 62).

The protagonist in *The Waves* takes a journey outside the city, even outside the law, in the same way that the families of the victims of the Francoist repression exhumed the bodies in the ditches without the presence of judges or representatives of the State (Segura, Mayayo and Solé, 2009: 58, 81).

The long silences, the composition of wide shots showing an uninhabited periphery; an analytical composition of space produces an apparent apathy of the image. Through montage, unrelated locations create a single truth: the truth experienced by the protagonist.

The condition of the internal exile who remains in the same physical, geographical space becomes slippery terrain and, above all, difficult to quantify because it extends far beyond the years immediately after the war. In the scientific literature we find numerous prominent authors, such as Alicia Altet (2005), De la Fuente (2011) or Max Aub (2008), but research on the representation of exile in cinema is more limited.

During the long period from 1979 to 1990, laws were enacted to grant recognition and pensions for maimed republicans and family members, as well as compensation for unjust imprisonment (United Nations, 2014: 17-19). However, it was not until November 2002 that Spain's Congress of Deputies issued its first unanimous condemnation of the dictatorship. This acknowledgement would find legal expression in Law 52/2007, the so-called Historical Memory Act, which, in addition to recognizing the victims collectively, would include the removal of symbols and monuments, the creation of a map of mass graves, and the recognition of the radically illegitimate nature of the sentences and penalties issued for reasons of politics, ideology or belief (United Nations, 2014: 8, 13). Nevertheless, the complete absence of funding for the act, and the lack of empathy in government institutions for the families of the disappeared, who were accused of seeking financial gain (Campelo, 2013; Junquera, 2013; United Nations, 2014: 19), reveal the falseness of any idea of real redress when the dictatorship ended, which Morais lays bare in his films.

Morais's characters struggle to overcome their internal exile. To survive and move on, they have renounced their memories or denied friendships that have relegated them to a kind of cultural, ethical, geographical, and especially emotional ghetto. They have lost their home, their streets, claimed as crucial spaces of social engagement (Méndez Rubio, 2012: 62).

The main consequence of the long period of exile—whether external or internal—is the inner

individual and collective fracture, which Morais makes clear when the protagonist of *The Waves* barely keeps in touch with a son who is alienated from the personal drama of his own family, or when the young protagonists in *The Kids from the Port* are charged with the task of carrying out the grandfather's request. This isolated figure is viewed as a kind of madman who, by his mere existence, pathologically evokes the memory of a time not so long ago. In this disappearance of the outside world, bodies are presented as an element of conflict, something that prevents us from turning the page because their materiality demands our attention.

PERMANENT CRISIS: EXILE AND NEGLECT IN THE FILMS OF ALBERTO MORAIS

The spectacular narrative codes that characterise the dominant institutional model have predominated in depictions of the war and its consequences (Debord, 2007). The private lives of the characters and their circumstances have generally been the focus of the story. This could be defined as the history-telling identified by Benjamin (2008), with a continuity that nullifies dialectical possibilities and, therefore, understanding and critical reflection. For this reason, and to overcome semantic or linguistic issues that could pervert the facts or their interpretation, a critical analysis is needed that adequately examines the filmic text (Crusells, 2000: 19). The films of Alberto Morais deal with war not in its acute and intense form, but in its muted and latent form. Common elements in war iconography like the ideas of "sides" or that shift the discourse to terrain bereft of discussion, the terrain of the dead, in Morais simply do not exist.

In both films—and in two earlier short films, *Umbrales* [Thresholds] (Alberto Morais, 2000) and *A campo traviesa* [Cross Country] (Alberto Morais, 2003)—what he offers us is evidence of nothingness and what lies beneath it. And this is the very

essence of exile: nothingness. In these filmic texts we find only the slightest trace of what happened.

In *The Waves*, an old man showing signs of creeping senility undertakes a journey to Argelès-sur-Mer in search of a ghost. Because all that remains are ghosts in the form of photographs, and perhaps in this device we can find a reading of Bazin's ontology of the image. The baker, who was a young girl when Miguel was locked up in the concentration camp, is the only person who tells any kind of story when she explains that sometimes people appear who ask after someone they knew, even someone they loved, who has been erased by history. A photograph, as the only iconic resource, allows us to establish a direct, indexical relationship with the protagonist's past and, as a result, with our own. The baker represents the role of witness, a role that is essential in any criminal act.

In *The Kids from the Port*, Morais articulates the construction of the film around the idea of social exclusion. It is not a film about the ones who lost the war, but about their children and grandchildren. A youth from a peripheral neighbourhood of Valencia, a cul-de-sac port district (Natzaret), enlists the help of his friends to carry out his grandfather's request: a republican army jacket has to be taken to the funeral of an old friend of the grandfather's so that it can be buried with him.

Neglect, amnesia and solitude are historical, social and geographical. They are also the other side of the coin of a modernity based on the idea of progress as a "homogeneous and empty representation of the flow of time" (Méndez Rubio, 2012: 213), as Méndez Rubio suggests in his analysis of Benjamin's theses on the philosophy of history.

THE WAVES

On the 9th of March 1939, the French government's Valière report estimated that there were 440,000 Spanish republicans in France (Serrano,

2006). The French authorities, overwhelmed by these numbers, “classified” the refugees in concentration camps, according to the official terminology of the day. Camps like Saint-Cyprien, Barcarès or Argelès-sur-Mer, the setting for the final scene in *The Waves*, accommodated exiles who were made to sleep out in the open. In the film, the old man gazes at the waves hitting the shore in a scene that suggests a return to the past. However, there are no flashbacks or cinematic recreations of what happened there. This ending is the anchor point for the whole film. The idea of a present past (Huyssen, 2002) has no place in the formula chosen by Morais, because the past is not represented.

The film begins with a burial viewed from a distance. The wide shot reveals little more than the action and the location. A mere four or five people, who will never be introduced, are attending the ceremony.

From these first minutes, the spectator understands that effort will be needed to pick up on the little clues provided in the film. Silence is the main protagonist, along with the long duration and composition of the shots. It is a film that invites the spectator to dissect what it presents, like viewing a painting.

THE MAIN FEATURE OF MORAIS’S WORK IS THE EMPTINESS THAT SURROUNDS THE PROTAGONIST. EMPTINESS IN THE DULL, ORDINARY SPACES

The main feature of Morais’s work is the emptiness that surrounds the protagonist. Emptiness in the dull, ordinary spaces: the cemetery, the city as an inhospitable place, the highways as an example of progress and a site for mere transit where Miguel is transported to himself and his memory. In the words of Méndez (2012: 194), this outside world in a process of disappearing would be what

characterises the idea of the post-city and would in turn be replaced by a virtual and technological hyperreality, a world that is completely alien to Miguel. In one scene, we see him use an old phone booth in the street to call his friend. This element is presented in the same way as his car, as a relic of the past.

There is a presentation in every movement, in every frame, that distances us from any idea of the representation of a present past. The main character is not described; we know nothing about him, and we only barely understand what is going on. A house that reflects the austerity of his life; a sewing machine in a corner as a trace of a deceased wife. In short, one trace after another.

The protagonist asks a friend for help in a shot that is constructed frontally. The absence of shot/reverse shot and the use of the sequence shot, which Bazin (2008) advocated in his quest to approach reality through truth, form part of the filmic discourse proposed by Morais. Objects have a fundamental value because their placement in the scene is an ideological statement. As Pasolini explains, a goblet is not the same as a glass, a linen tablecloth is not the same as a cotton one. Cinematic language establishes a relationship with reality and what Morais shows us (objects, bodies, gazes) are signs in themselves. It is this reflection that recalls the idea of Warburg’s *Atlas Mnemosyne* (1929) described in Tartás and Guridi’s article (2013). It is an open and endless process—which can be connected with the idea of the anti-story in Morais’s work—like a method of heuristic research of memory and images. In a kind of collage or montage, the images overlap, open out or break up to create new connections or, in Morais’s case, to point out those connections silenced by the official discourse. The concept of postmemory would have its place here, where it arises as an opportunity to undermine the macro-narrative.

The spectator’s gaze scans the frame/film in search of the relationship between bodies and objects. The composition generates a meaning

that goes beyond the sum of knowledge, as Foucault ([1969] 2009) suggests in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*. This going beyond entails the possibility of crossing the boundaries of the frame and suggests what Didi-Huberman (2013) refers to as “archaeology of visual knowledge”, in a clear allusion to Foucault. We can find an example of this in the sequence where Miguel gets out of the car and begins a walk that is in a certain sense oneiric, as he is always seems to be suffering from narcolepsy or the onset of cognitive decline. The internal montage of the shot provokes the Warburgian dialectical moment, just when Miguel, on looking around, finds his past.

He walks in a present that leads him to witness a moment of the past, and all this happens without any cross cutting or flashbacks; everything is contained in the same shot.

The situation captured in this composition runs throughout the film. Already in the short film *A campo traviesa* (2003), Morais was proposing the juxtaposition of space and time in a combination which, while it may be technically defined as a cross cut, in reality was something more complex from a filmic/discursive perspective, to the point that the actor involved shares different characters. This creates a reading that is uncomfortable and shocking, but completely free of any element of spectacle in the Debordian sense.

The internal montage of two periods of time in one allows the gaze on the past that Benjamin’s Angel of History was never permitted to experience. While a hurricane wind pushed him forwards, building progress on the very foundations of barbarism, in this composition Morais intends a dialectical gaze that takes us there and back again. The Falangist who looks at Miguel is presented as our past and present. It is possible that only from an apparently senile or deluded perspective are we able to confront our own memory.

Miguel, in his journey to the point of origin that is Argelès-sur-Mer, gradually uncovers the traces of those wounds that have yet to heal. The

echoes of the gunshots of the firing squad against a cemetery wall is something that we can still find on our landscape today.

The warm embrace between Miguel and the French baker who as a young girl used to deliver bread to the concentration camp, and who is now an old woman) refutes the disappearance of the outside world. This woman, who formed part of that world (on the other side of the concentration camp fence), and Miguel, imprisoned in two different eras (that of the war and that of his internal exile), meet to confirm their own existence. It is the only emotional moment depicted in the film.

THE KIDS FROM THE PORT

The film begins with a wide shot, offering a dull, mechanical view of the activity at the port of Valencia. The neighbourhood in which the protagonists live is a place left out of the big initiatives of the Valencian government in recent years. Neither the Formula One championships nor the America’s Cup reach this district.

Morais’s choice of Valencia as a setting for his films is not incidental. The capital of the Second Spanish Republic from early 1936 through to the 31st of October 1937, the city took a battering in the war and in the years immediately after it (Salvador, 2008).

An outdoor wide shot shows an elderly man walking into the frame with his back to the camera, dressed only in his underwear. A car stops, and a couple convince the old man to get inside it. All this happens under the attentive gaze of Miguel, the film’s protagonist, a youth of around fifteen.

The old man could easily be the old Miguel, the protagonist from *The Waves*, in his state of mental and physical decline. The fleeting portrait offered in both films of the generation of the children of those who lost the Civil War is not arbitrary either.

The breakdown that has rendered what happened invisible definitely affects the children of

IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT SPANISH CINEMA HAS SO OFTEN MADE USE OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CHILD AS AN INNOCENT WITNESS OF THE EVENTS, AS EXPLAINED ABOVE, AND SO RARELY OF THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ELDERLY

the victims, and it is in many cases left to the grandchildren to break the silence and take the initiative in the search for the disappeared and the exhumation of the mass graves.

While in the first film Miguel's son and his wife maintain a minimal relationship with no emotional bond whatsoever to the old man, in the case of *The Kids from the Port* the father-child relationship is all but non-existent. The old man is often locked up, probably due to previous escape attempts.

Both men are treated like children, leading to a breakdown that has a lot to do with the rift created in relation to the recovery of historical memory and with the ones who actually undertake these quests.

It is significant that Spanish cinema has so often made use of the perspective of the child as an innocent witness of the events, as explained above, and so rarely of the point of view of the elderly, except in the case of documentaries. A lack of democratic maturity has been one of the criticisms made by leftist parties of the half-hearted policies of memory recovery and redress today. The children who lock up the old man in *The Kids from the Port* are like a democratic state with authoritarian tendencies, incapable of taking the time to listen to the petitions of their father/father-in-law or to empathise with the other.

As noted above, the young protagonist in *The Kids from the Port* shares the name Miguel with the elderly protagonist in *The Waves*. This playing with names could be related to the representation of the categories of "grandparent" and "grand-

child" they respectively portray, as well as being the name of Morais's own grandfather, a victim of the post-war reprisals to whom the filmmaker offers a private tribute.

The main plot of this film is the journey that young Miguel and his friends take through a Valencia unknown to tourists, and unknown to the protagonists themselves, who travel as far as their feet will carry them through a marginalized Valencia, again in search of a cemetery. Miguel is trying to fulfil the promise his grandfather made to a late friend: to get an army jacket in his grandfather's possession to the friend's funeral to be buried with him.

The journey, through different cemeteries in Valencia, is again a series of images with the power to speak for themselves.

It is worth noting here that Valencian cemeteries (specifically, the General Cemetery and the Cementeri de Paterna) were in fact the subject of a dispute from 2006 to 2008. The source of the dispute was none other than the attempt by certain victims of the dictatorship to recover the remains of loved ones buried in mass graves inside these cemeteries, and the refusal on the part of the authorities to recognise their right to do so (Velert, 2006).

The kids get lost in the city, wandering around in circles until they run out of the little money they have. All they have with them is the army jacket, which is never shown in close-up, but relegated to the natural space normally given to an item of clothing being carried. In other words, there is an awareness in the filmic space of the place of such things, not in a close-up or a detail shot, but only as something hanging over the protagonist's arm. This absence in the film's composition nullifies the dramatisation that an object like this would be given in other films. They reach the cemetery the day after the burial. Miguel's friends are caught stealing food in a supermarket and Miguel is left to face the newly laid grave alone. He will leave the jacket there, as one more fragment of the forgotten past.

The photograph of the young girl at the Argelès camp in *The Waves* and the jacket in *The Kids from the Port* both serve the same function. While in narratology we would speak of the trigger, in the realm of memory—*mnemosyne*—these are the links that connect and activate the memory. Paradoxically, they are elements which, in the end, serve no function. The photograph does not bring back the body, nor does the jacket reach the dead man. Both are precisely this: the presence of absence. They are objects that await a reactivation, pieces of an atlas—Morais's work—that transcend the frame to become recognisable to the characters and to the spectators, who are forced to activate their memory. The gaze looks beyond the shot to take in the object, the place that burns, "the site where its eventual beauty keeps a place for a secret signal, an unappeased crisis, a symptom" (Didi-Huberman, 2012: 28).

CONCLUSIONS

Exploring the issue of exile in the context of the Spanish Civil War through a filmmaking approach that maintains no characteristic iconographic element—except for two small dolls of an extremely well-known brand (Playmobil) in army uniforms and with shotguns in hand that appear at key moments in both films—could prove risky.

But perhaps it is here, beyond the reach of imagery and cliché, that a different way of looking at history can be established. The state of the question outlined in the first part of this article makes it clear that, from a historical, political and social perspective, there is still a lot to be done.

Filmmaking has made use of the story as a category, of the power and weight of verbal language to articulate a narrative which the image has supported and represented, but without the capacity to mean anything on its own. The films of Alberto Morais operate in the opposite direction. The story emerges out of the image, its juxtapositions and its framing, and not the other way around.

Collage is used throughout his work and not just in one film or another. With a methodology out of Warburg's *Atlas*, his films propose a new system for relating images.

His filmmaking thus examines the agonising wait for recognition that thousands of relatives of victims of the war are still enduring. The journeys of their protagonists—the old Miguel who travels to Argelès or the teenage Miguel who delivers the jacket to the cemetery—pay tribute to those victims, recognise their truth and stand with them.

Morais explores unresolved questions and the lack of will to resolve them. It is of this weariness and emptiness that his work speaks: a kind of mourning marked by the absence or lack of government attention that exposes the solitude of the victims, and the orphanhood to which our ignorance relegates us, but that also reveals to us our contemporary identity. Far from failure, the invisibility or lack of recognition is the driving force of his films, spearheading a new direction for cinema. There is little here of *costumbrista* strategies or more canonical modes of realism; on the contrary, Morais works with what is left unspoken and with personal experiences—extreme in this case—to reach the spectator.

Beyond pure entertainment or a mere consumer product, as pointed out by Román Gubern (1987), the image can be a source of scientific knowledge. Examining cinema through cinema is always much more complex when the result of the analysis effectively exposes reality; perhaps for this reason, finding the exact position from which to speak of the image continues to be a matter of twists and turns. ■

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PERMANENT CRISIS AND EXILE IN THE CINEMATIC GAZE OF ALBERTO MORAIS

Abstract

The Spanish Civil War continues to be a popular subject in film productions, as well as in literature, theatre and academic studies. As a historical event, it has marked the individual and collective lives of millions of people. Internal exile for reasons of politics or mere physical survival gave way to another, apparently lesser form of exile. The social, economic and cultural ostracism of the Franco years is perpetuated as a product of policies based on the capitalist system. This article examines the idea of internal exile and neglect as a state of permanent crisis that is explored in the films of Alberto Morais, whose main characters are the Spaniards who were on the losing side in the Civil War. A short but consistent filmography positions Morais's work in an innovative place in Spanish cinema in relation to this issue. The frequent invisibility of the consequences of the Civil War in terms of government policies—particularly exile and neglect—finds expression in Morais's films, which focus on the oblivion to which the victims of the war have been relegated.

Key words

Cinema; Historical memory; Internal exile; Alberto Morais; Franco's regime; Spanish Civil War.

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CRISIS PERMANENTE Y EXILIO EN LA MIRADA CINEMATOGRAFICA DE ALBERTO MORAIS

Resumen

La Guerra Civil española continúa siendo objeto de representación cinematográfica, de producción literaria, teatral y ensayística. Como acontecimiento histórico, ha marcado la vida individual y colectiva de millones de personas. El exilio interior, político y de pura supervivencia física dio paso a otro aparentemente menor. El ostracismo social, económico y cultural de los años del franquismo se perpetúa como producto de políticas basadas en el sistema capitalista. La propuesta que sigue en estas líneas se preocupa por la idea de exilio interior y abandono, por un estado de crisis permanente que evidencia el cine del director Alberto Morais y que tiene por protagonistas a los que perdieron la guerra. Una breve pero contundente filmografía posiciona su cine en un lugar novedoso en el cine español respecto al tema que nos ocupa. La frecuente invisibilidad de las consecuencias de la guerra en las políticas gubernamentales —exilio y abandono principalmente— encuentran en su cine su materialización, donde se insiste en la desmemoria a la que se ha relegado a las víctimas.

Palabras clave

Cine; memoria histórica; exilio interior; Alberto Morais; franquismo; Guerra Civil española.

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