Gendering the Republic and the Nation: Political Poster Art of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939

Helen M. Greeson
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GENDERING THE REPUBLIC AND THE NATION:
POLITICAL POSTER ART OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-1939

by

HELEN M. GREESON

Under the Direction of Dr. Joe Perry

ABSTRACT

The Spanish Civil War is typically presented as a military narrative of the ideological battle between socialism and fascism, foreshadowing World War II. Yet the Spanish war continued trends begun during World War I, notably the use of propaganda posters and the movement of women into visible roles within the public sphere. Employing cultural studies methods to read propaganda poster art from the Spanish war as texts, this thesis analyzes the ways in which this persuasive medium represented extremes of gender discourse within the context of letters, memoirs, and other experiential accounts. This thesis analyzes symbols present in propaganda art and considers how their meanings interacted with the changing gendered identities of Republic and nation. Even within the relatively egalitarian Republic, political factions constructed conflicting representations of femininity in propaganda art, and women’s accounts indicate that despite ideological differences, both sides still shared a patriarchal worldview.

INDEX WORDS: Cultural history, Feminism, Gender history, Interwar, Persuasive media, Poster, Propaganda, Social history, Spanish Civil War, Spanish Republic, Symbolism, Visual media, Women combatants
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POLITICAL POSTER ART OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-1939

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

by

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For my grandmothers
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1 INTRODUCTION

This project began with a session of Internet browsing through 1950s vintage advertisements for wrinkle cream. The period dress, gestures, and domestic scenes opened a window into cultural and people’s history of the everyday. Yet the women in those scenes seemed almost laughable, grinning with glee after the installation of a shiny new Frigidaire or wall oven. The tropes of femininity and masculinity used in advertising were cliché exaggerations of the extremes of gender discourse that somehow managed to sell the product. An obvious truth became apparent: persuasive media constructed discursive representations that often aligned poorly with social realities. Housewives from the 1950s were certainly not all thrilled with their roles, and femme fatales from advertisements of the 1970s may have looked unstoppable, but the workplace proved otherwise with unequal opportunities and pay. Advertising for tourism and consumer goods seemed to offer fantasies that mainstream female audiences of the dominant culture could purchase along with the product. Women seemed a natural subject matter for advertising of consumer goods due to their traditional role in domestic production.

Women were also present in non-consumerist persuasive visual media, namely political propaganda of the early twentieth century, a period in which most did not yet have the vote. Art produced during wartime took on a more serious tone, fitting since lives were at stake, not just profits. Yet these representations were no more accurate than those used in advertising. In fact, some propaganda artists cast women in fantastic roles even more out of touch with reality, including allegorical civic virtues such as liberty or justice. Further research revealed a recruiting poster for the Second Spanish Republic’s volunteer militia, produced in 1936 during the Spanish
Civil War. The piece became famous during the brief period it was displayed (Fig. 1.1) in Spain.¹ It cast a glamorous, scowling woman in the improbable role of armed soldier (Fig. 1.2).² Differences between the representations and realities of women’s changing roles in interwar Spain took on greater historical implications, but equally important are the layers of meaning present in the persuasive imagery.

The Spanish war poses challenges for historians because the conflict involved so many political, social, economic, and cultural factors, both domestically and on the international stage. Political posters touched on all of these issues in works that were viewed by large and diverse audiences who were intimately acquainted with the particulars of Spanish history. The war undoubtedly drew international attention to the ideological conflicts in Europe during the interwar period. Additionally, Spain continued trends begun during World War I, notably the use of propaganda posters and the movement of women into visible roles within the public sphere, however temporarily. Employing cultural studies methods in order to read propaganda posters from the Spanish Civil War as texts, this thesis will analyze the ways in which this persuasive medium represented the extremes of gendered discourse. This analysis will consider the context of letters, memoirs, and other experiential accounts from the war.

Visual art from the 1930s reflects the polarizing passions surrounding social change, economic practices, and regionalism. It also attests to the ways in which these factors were complicated by the influence of international movements such as anarchism, fascism, and socialism. The conflict highlighted social tensions between rural and urban life, as well as differences in

class and gender. These posters are significant because they strike at issues that still resonate in present-day Spain, including gender roles, class, religion, the role of government, memories of wartime trauma and the abuses of fascism, as well as Spain's place within the Mediterranean world and European community.

Transnational anarchist and socialist movements inspired the creation of new political and social roles for women in the Second Spanish Republic. The First Spanish Republic of 1873-1874 was plagued by civil and colonial conflicts, and ended in the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy rather than lasting change. The Second Spanish Republic of 1931 implemented a new constitution that granted women the right to vote. Change continued at a rapid pace, and in addition to assuming new political roles in the Second Republic, women gained the option to break dramatically from conservative, traditional social roles. For example, women who had previously been denied higher education at Catholic schools stood to benefit from anticlerical policies designed to separate education from the control of the church. The new constitution also legalized divorce and abortion. Anti-marriage campaigns and other bold efforts to gain equality for women in the Republic were even more radical than the opposition to post-World War I pronatalist discourses of 1920s France, as represented by the modern girl or flapper. Instead, radical Spanish women’s organizations such as Mujeres Libres and the Association of Anti-Fascist Women foreshadowed the efforts toward equality in the workplace and reproductive freedom associated with the second wave feminist movement of the U.S. and Europe in the late 1960s.

Although women’s liberation was part of the anarchist and socialist agenda, women increasingly assumed roles previously held only by men because of the stresses of civil war, which demanded women help produce, transport, and distribute the Republic’s industrial products,

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arms, and foodstuffs. Republican recruitment of women for military service, factory work, and field nursing roles promoted the left’s agenda of social and political change. Inviting women into these new roles not only inserted them into the public sphere, but also welcomed them into space formerly occupied exclusively by males. By contrast, Nationalist gender discourse acknowledged only three socially acceptable roles for women: daughters, mothers, or members of a religious order. Conservative propaganda promoted family life and evoked tradition, criticizing both the women who would insert themselves into the public sphere and foreign ideologies that brought such ideas into Spain.\(^5\) Space that the Republicans opened for women, the Nationalists attempted to shut down. Yet however pro-feminist the Republican ideology may have been, personal accounts indicate that in practice, women encountered individual and institutional resistance to gender equality.

Even within Republican artwork, representations of femininity were contradictory. Feminine roles represented in propaganda art include the political heroine, victim of violence, embattled mother, sexual threat, and wageworker. Thus, the Republic’s political factions constructed conflicting representations of femininity in propaganda poster art; however, accounts from the period indicate that despite ideological differences, both sides still shared a patriarchal world view.

### 1.1 Women in 1920s Spain

In order to examine Civil War propaganda poster art within the changing social and economic order, we must first consider life in Spain before the 1936 revolution. Right-wing military dictatorship under General Miguel Primo de Rivera sought national unity and modernization for Spain after the embarrassment of colonial losses in the New World, most of all defeat by the

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United States in the Philippines and Cuba in 1898. Barcelona and areas in the south fell under military rule in the 1920s in an effort to quiet the social unrest World War I had brought to Europe.⁶ Primo’s right-wing regime planned national unification by mobilizing a state militia, which involved the training of youth still living with their families so that they could be of future service to Spain. These roles were highly gendered, shaped by sexual divisions of labor within the family. Secular schools focused on educating boys for future careers in the military, while girls were trained in the domestic arts.⁷ The Catholic Church played a large role in education prior to the war, and it too offered highly gendered programs of study in support of family values. Catalan Jesuit Father Ramon Ruiz Amado authored several texts concerning religious pedagogy in pre-war Spain. Amado expressed the Church’s traditional view of Spanish education in the 1920s, one that resisted change: “Coeducation produces the slow ruin of society because little by little it destroys family values, making both girls and boys almost asexual … coeducation does not train women to be feminine, but rather it creates a hermaphrodite being; a mannish woman, something a thousand leagues away from we are used to seeing in our mothers and would want for our wives and daughters.”⁸ The general education available to women included morality and civic instruction, homemaking, and perhaps music lessons, but not academic pursuits that build up the individual mind. Though men had a much more varied instruction, the focus on militarism under Primo’s regime precluded resources for those men interested in more academic or practical pursuits, as well.⁹

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⁷ Ibid., 192–194.
Unsurprisingly, women who inserted themselves into public life through the traditionally male venue of politics found their personal lives the subject of mass scrutiny, and sexual double standards proved unforgiving to political careers. Feminine morality consisted of a binary, and women found they could be honorable mothers or fallen women without gray area in between. Other than marriage, a religious vocation, or a life of spinsterhood caring for an ailing or aging relative, there were not alternative paths or acceptable independent roles for women in 1920s Spain.

Despite the right’s efforts to strengthen Spain through militarism, religion, and strict gender roles, the state remained divided along class lines. The economic gap contributed to the rise of radical movements such as socialism and anarchism. Thanks to the work of social and labor activist Emma Goldman and others, anarchism spread from its roots in the Russian Empire to places like the U.S. and Spain. Goldman was born in Lithuania, which at the time was part of the Russian Empire. She emigrated to the U.S. and was involved in political activism for decades before her September 1936 arrival in Spain. She joined forces with Spanish anarchists, who had merged with the labor syndicates (unions) and served as an international representative of the CNT-FAI (National Confederation of Workers-Iberian Anarchist Federation) anarcho-syndicalist worker’s movement in the Republic.\footnote{Emma Goldman, \textit{Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution}, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 41–42.} In a 1936 letter to Spanish women published in the Anarchist Women’s periodical \textit{Mujeres Libres}, Goldman sums up the extent of Spanish patriarchy in the 1920s: “To be sure, women of many countries have brought about a veritable Revolution in their own social, political and ethical status … Unfortunately this cannot be said for the women of all countries. In Spain, for instance, woman seems still to be considered very much inferior to
man, a mere sex-object for his gratification and child-bearing." Anarchist rhetoric such as this urged an overthrow of the patriarchy in order to permit feminist advancement of the individual in school and workplace. However, the movement worked toward other goals besides feminism, which was just one example of arbitrary hierarchical power structures the radicals aimed to overthrow.

Having failed to strengthen Spain under militarism, the dictatorship of the elder Primo de Rivera further alienated segments of society with his support of the cult of domesticity and traditional gender roles. Among the disenchanted and repressed was labor, which had been organizing throughout the 1920s with Goldman and Spanish activist Federica Montseny. As labor gained momentum, gender discourse also changed. Women began to assume public roles of production outside the home, and they did so from within the framework of unionized syndicates, which rose in popularity as Spain felt the effects of the worldwide Great Depression. These labor organizations drew on the writings of Friedrich Engels, which called for revolutionary gender equality in the post-capitalist workplace as the means for ending the patriarchal sexual slavery of women through monogamous marriage. According to Marxist traditions adopted by the Republican left, gender and feminism intersected with class struggle in Spain. Both of these social groups mobilized following the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Thus, changing gender roles and the rise of organized labor were key social movements that promoted their interests during the elections of the 1930s and the subsequent civil war.

11 Letter from Goldman in “Mujeres Libres” periodical, December 1936. Ibid., 257.
12 Ibid., 27.
1.2 Course of War

Over fifteen thousand published books provide nuanced interpretations of the Spanish Civil War, with some histories accusing others of revisionism while attempting to provide their own revised version of the war. This brief summary will attempt to provide a basic understanding of the political entities and events involved in the conflict, upon which I will build my analysis.

Before the war, Spain had brief political experiences with somewhat democratic, republican government. The first Spanish Republic (1873-1874) bridged the gap between the reigns of Bourbon monarchs who would remain in power until the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931. In 1898, the Empire lost Cuba and the Philippines to the upstart empire of the United States. Spain remained neutral during World War I, and consequently did not experience the same high level of social disorder or modernizing effects the war had on the European nations that did participate. During the reign of Alfonso XIII, the last pre-Civil War king, social uprisings, and anti-clerical violence destabilized the country. Questions concerning his legitimacy as true heir fueled political crises, and separatists pushed for independence for the Basque country, Catalonia and Galicia.14

In order to quiet the uprisings under Alfonso XIII, the military suspended the constitution and declared a dictatorship, led by Miguel Primo de Rivera, which lasted from 1923 until the Second Republic was founded in 1931. Spanish industry had not developed to the same extent as France or other participants of World War I. Spain’s efforts in wartime trade for export had encouraged some industrialization, yet this weak progress was uneven within the state. Spain remained predominantly agrarian, and the countryside was made up of latifundiae, large agricul-

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tural estates. Tensions escalated between workers and the few bourgeois industrial leaders. With military backing, the Primo dictatorship kept labor and management functioning by use of force. The military, church, and wealthy aligned with the conservative Primo regime.

The global crisis that began in 1929 also reached the peninsula. Support for the Primo dictatorship eroded until even King Alfonso XIII backed the establishment of a Spanish Republic. Social movements promoting change organized into groups that varied in terms of their supporters, goals, and participation in the political institutions of the state. Anarchism was a key social movement, labor federations gave voice to worker’s groups, and political parties were affiliated with the elected officials who would participate in the political institutions of the state. On the left, the most important parties included the PSOE or Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, the PCE or Spanish Communist Party, the POUM or Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification, and the communist PSUC or Socialist Party for the Unification of Catalonia. Trotskyists shifted from the PCE in the late 1920s to the POUM in the 1930s, as their leadership fell in and out of favor with the respective groups. Trade federations included the socialist UGT or General Union of Workers, as well as local and regional labor groups. The anarcho-syndicalist movement included the CNT or National Confederation of Trade Unions and the radical FAI or Federation of Iberian Anarchists. Additionally, some movements were organized with specific concerns, significantly the communist-led AMA or Anti-fascist Women’s Association and the anarchist-led *Mujeres Libres*, which translates as “Free Women” but is typically referred to by its Spanish name. As is apparent by simply listing their names, several of these organizations existed in opposition to other entities within the major political factions: socialist, communist, and anarcho-syndicalist.

Conservative parties were arguably less divided, and worked more successfully in coalition. The prominent parties of the right include the Catholic coalition CEDA or Spanish Confed-

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15 Ibid., 7–8.
eration of Autonomous Parties of the Right, the unified fascist FET, or Traditional Falange (Pha-
lanx) of Spain, and the syndicalists of the JONS or Assemblies of the Nationalist Syndicalist Of-
fensive. Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the dictator Miguel, founded the FET or Spanish
Falange, and it eventually entered into a coalition with the JONS during Franco’s rebellion.

In the early years of the Republic, Spain was in transition from the monarchical, agricul-
tural, rural, local, and religious *ancien regime* to liberal democratic, industrial, urban, statewide,
and secular modernity. Entities that held wealth, power, or prestige under the monarchy and dic-
tatorship preferred the status quo to the dramatic changes enacted by the Second Republic.16 En-
tities that opposed the Republic included the Church, the nobility, wealthy landowners, and for-
mer military elites. Resentment grew between different social groups.17 The Catholic Church
aligned with the landed nobility, which alienated landless and hungry peasant farm workers. Un-
ions and management no longer had the military forcing them to cooperate, and the demand for
social change grew among the large numbers of rural and urban poor.18 The Republic tried to
change its economic, social, and political system simultaneously in the midst of a global eco-
nomic depression within Europe’s fragile interwar peace.

The Republican-Socialist coalition victory in the elections of 1931 failed to quiet social
unrest. Through 1933, anti-clerical and anarchist upheavals grew in Madrid and Barcelona, event-
tually spreading to other parts of Catalonia and Aragon. Farm workers went on strike in Andalu-
sia in the south, and land reform efforts continued in northern Asturias. In 1931, the Republic
granted women the right to vote. Many historians argue that women, who lacked education or

jobs, still supported the patriarchy and followed the advice of their priest and voted for the Catholic-supporting conservative CEDA party. The conservatives won the 1933 elections.

Both left and right continued to act in their own interests after the 1933 elections. In 1934, the left planned massive strikes, Asturian miners revolted, and the right detained and abused as many as thirty thousand people. In 1934, the Communist International organized the Popular Front of all democratic parties, whether proletarian or bourgeois, in order to defend parliamentary liberal democracy, solidifying the movement as anti-fascist. Both sides accused the other of not cooperating while the other was in power. The 1936 elections restored legitimate power to the left’s Popular Front, which made the Falange illegal. President Manuel Azaña’s Republic disagreed as to the nature and extent of reform. Differing opinions as to the Republic’s reforms with regard to religion, the military, organized labor, and land reform heightened tensions and resulted in disorder and violence. With the purported aim of restoring order and preventing revolution, the right staged a military coup d’état to overthrow the Republic, following the close 1936 electoral victory by the Popular Front. Rebel support was concentrated in religiously conservative Castile and Leon in the Northeast. General Francisco Franco had been working his way up the military ranks, and formed part of the elite officer corps that had been engaged in the ongoing Rif War for control of Morocco since the 1920s. In 1936, Franco assumed leadership of the rebellion that ended any possibility of peaceful solutions. The conflict divided the country into two groups who were far from organized or unified: Franco’s fascist National Front rebels on the right, and the socialist democratic Popular Front on the left.

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20 Graham, *The Spanish Civil War*, 16.
The civil war turned international when Mussolini and Hitler decided to aid Franco in the early days of the conflict. Within months, the Republic had received promises of support from Stalin. The Communist International organized the International Brigades, and volunteers began to arrive from all over the world.\textsuperscript{23} As early as August 1936, Franco directed Hitler’s Condor Legion of aerial bombers to attack civilian towns and cities in Spain, while Italians sent expeditionary forces.\textsuperscript{24} Two key political figures were killed on each side on November 20, 1936: the Republic’s anarchist military leader Buenaventura Durruti was killed in Madrid, and the founder of the Falange, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, was executed by the Republic. Each side’s respective martyred hero reappeared as subjects of artwork, thus invoking nostalgia and loss for the missing leader.

The tide gradually turned against the Republic, and Franco continued to build his government as if Spain were already his. Indeed, he had the support of not only Italy and Germany but also the Vatican, which recognized him diplomatically as a legitimate head of state.\textsuperscript{25} The 1937 bombing of Guernica stunned not only Spain but also the world for its apparent targeting of civilians. Yet the number of casualties and other basic information remains disputed. The main military maneuver that gave the Nationalists the advantage was their advance to the Mediterranean, which divided the Republic into north and south, cutting off Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia from the rest of the Republic in central Castile and southern Andalusia. Cities located within Republican territory that supported the Nationalists early on included Cordoba and Seville in the south and Oviedo in the North. Cathedrals in Seville and Cordoba still commemorate priests and other religious killed during the war as martyrs.

\textsuperscript{23} Thomas, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, 440.
\textsuperscript{24} Graham, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, 48–49.
\textsuperscript{25} Durgan, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, xv.
By January 1939, diplomatic recognition for Franco came from France and Britain. Thousands of Catalans fled over the border into France, and the arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution of republicans and other political dissidents continued as long as Franco lived.\footnote{Ibid., xvi.} With the occupation of Madrid, Franco defeated the left and announced the war was over on April 1, 1939. Yet Franco had begun to craft his state prior to victory, most likely before the rebels’ incomplete \textit{coup d’état} of July 17, 1936. Throughout the war, as he gained support through political coalitions, Franco established the iconography of his future state in wartime poster artwork.

1.3 \textbf{Sources}

In landscapes devastated by war, poster artwork delivered political messages splashed with color. Whether serving as calls to arms, laying blame, or instilling hope, poster artwork tapped into powerful emotions throughout Spain. Despite the ravages of war, thousands of posters survived and currently benefit from archival preservation. Indeed, art sources from the Second Republic are readily available through several archives in both their original and digital forms. Additionally, published book collections include posters from over twenty-five Republican government agencies, sixteen political parties of the left, seven major federations of syndicalists, and at least fourteen nationalist organizations. Nationalist posters prove far more challenging to locate, particularly within Spain, and only limited quantities appear in the digital archives of the \textit{Biblioteca Nacional de España} in Madrid.\footnote{“Biblioteca Nacional De España”, n.d., <http://bibliotecadigitalhispanica.bne.es/>.} Fortunately, other archives have begun adding more digitized artwork to their collections since this project began, and the U.S. has produced collections of posters containing some examples of fascist artwork. Because images and themes featured in Nationalist poster art endured throughout the duration of the Franco regime,
the comparatively smaller numbers of available nationalist images may be a reflection of post-
transition national shame at the messages communicated in these examples. Smaller collections
of mostly Republican art include the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives\(^{28}\) and The Visual Front – Posters of the Spanish Civil War\(^{29}\) exhibit from the University of California San Diego’s Southworth Collection. The UGT workers’ federation has an online archive of its posters,\(^{30}\) and the University of Barcelona maintains a digital collection, most of which are in Catalan and are
of local interest, again with larger global connections.\(^{31}\) In 2011, the Picasso Museum in Barcelo-
na housed a temporary collection of Spanish Civil War imagery.\(^{32}\) The exhibition received original works on loan from several of the Spanish archives listed here. I was fortunate to be studying abroad in Spain at the time, and viewed political cartoons, photographs, video footage, and original copies poster art, several of which I examine here. The printed exhibit catalog also includes artwork that was not displayed in the museum, and provides artists’ credits and other details which is missing from some archive entries.

These archival collections include hundreds of works laden with a variety of imagery. Republican posters characterize women in drastically different ways. In some examples, they are shown empowered: voting or taking up arms at the front. Yet in others, they appear as victims of aerial bombing raids, as frightened as their injured children. Posters warning of health risks cast women as threats capable of taking down armed militiamen by way of venereal disease. The Madrid archive also includes Nationalist posters featuring muscled men bearing arms or carrying the symbols of the far right, while women remain invisible. These posters also promote Catholi-


cism with crusader language and imagery such as crosses. The globe appears in several works on both sides, a visual reminder that the conflict had gained worldwide attention. The artwork is detailed and the themes are complex; therefore, I have included reproductions of the posters so the reader may engage both.

The primary challenge in acquiring and analyzing this material, aside from archive availability, is the language barrier. The majority of posters featured text in Castilian Spanish; however, a significant portion of art was produced in Republican Catalonia, featuring text in the Catalan language. In addition, many of the materials on the University of Barcelona website and other facilities in Catalonia are available only in Catalan. A very small number of posters feature text in Euzkadi, the linguistically challenging language of the Basque homeland. Archives contain even fewer posters in Galician, the language of the northwestern portion of Spain. Though these pieces require translation, they provide valuable insight into glocalization and the ways in which the regions interacted internally, with each other, and with outside entities during the conflict.

Unfortunately, archives in Barcelona and Madrid offer a limited selection of relevant textual documents in digitized format. Published collections of memoirs, letters, and other writings offer much greater depth, and make up the bulk of textual primary source material for this study. Shirley Mangini’s *Memories of Resistance* presents excerpts from oral history interviews and memoirs written primarily by native Spaniards. These offer insight into pre-war life in various regions of early twentieth-century Spain, in addition to wartime memories from women on the front and rear guard. Whenever possible, I have referred to the original Spanish-language texts cited in these memoir collections, expanding the cited text to include greater context or selecting and translating different passages altogether. Texts from popular public figures are more readily

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33 Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*. 
available, including the autobiography of Dolores Ibárruri, which offers a look inside the life of the woman who became the Republic’s most popular orator. Known as La Pasionaria for her stirring speeches, she became a deeply revered figure, rallying the Republican side.

The Spanish Civil War was an international conflict, and source material from foreign volunteers working in Spain on behalf of the Republic is included here. The writings of Emma Goldman offer an international perspective gained through her experiences with radical activism via the international anarchist movement. Her letters include analysis of relationships between factions on the left in the Republic, and focus on issues relevant to women as well as workers. As a representative of international anarchist party efforts, she oversaw the operations of the CNT-FAI workers’ federation and reported to her various contacts on the attitudes of Spanish women, their progress, and their failures. She also includes reflections on the Soviet Union and the impact of the alliance with the Communists on the Spanish left, particularly the anarchists. Edited by the transnational left scholar Gerd-Rainer Horn, the 2009 collection Letters from Barcelona: An American Woman in Revolution and Civil War differs from other epistolary collections due to the nature and presentation of its source material. Horn describes how published correspondence from the war was typically produced by authors who tended to hold their experiences aside while attempting to provide analysis, creating a “disjuncture.” Instead, Horn has chosen correspondence from Lois Orr who writes in a stream-of-consciousness manner that nonetheless includes her opinions. Lois and her husband Charles Orr were American newlyweds who volunteered to work at a POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) socialist radio station in

35 Goldman, Vision on Fire.
37 Ibid., 24.
Barcelona. Orr’s Spanish and Catalan language ability was limited; therefore, she interacted primarily with other foreign activists rather than locals. This detachment illustrates how Orr and her fellow volunteers were not only fighting for their preferred ideology in Spain, but also taking part in the socialist experiment where it happened to play out: Spain. The Orrs interacted with writers and combatants, including George Orwell and his wife at the time, Eileen O’Shaughnessy. The Orrs wrote of more than just politics, providing a window into everyday life in Barcelona with their accounts of eating well despite food rationing, adjusting to assigned housing, and obtaining toiletries and other commonplace items. However, this source material also poses problems because Orr was a foreigner with limited Catalan and Spanish language ability who may not have completely understood all she witnessed. The Orrs largely ignored the artistic heritage of the city, including the prevalence of modernism in the city’s architecture and poster art. Instead, they focused on work in politically vibrant Barcelona, a city they regarded as their best hope for socialism.

1.4 Method and Theory

The sources cited in this study reflect the politics of wartime Spain as represented in visual culture. Analysis of these non-textual sources calls for attention to the depth of meaning communicated with a single image. My methods include a close reading of examples of these visual sources, inspired by cultural studies practices in the tradition of Donna Haraway’s interpretation of the African Hall in New York City’s American Museum of Natural History. Reading individual pieces of art as ethnographic texts will reveal cultural and historical meaning re-

38 Orr, *Letters from Barcelona*.
39 Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” *Social Text*, no. 11 (Winter, 1984-1985): 20–64. Haraway analyzes the intersection of gender, race and class through her cultural studies/semiotic reading of the representations of animals, hunters and “savages” in the African Hall in the New York City American Museum of Natural History. For example, the reduced height of the “savages” compared to the taller white hunters, as well as their attire (feminized grass skirts) shows how the exhibit reflects the designer’s agreement with Teddy Roosevelt’s racial imperialism, popular at the time of exhibit design.
siding within the often-symbolic visual elements. This approach will allow a comparison of the ways in which both sides of the conflict manipulated similar visual imagery in order to construct drastically different representations that ultimately served similar purposes. Common themes include gender, religion, nationalism, and international ideological movements. My analysis considers the relationships between visual texts and context.

This analysis of visual art emerges from the tradition of cultural studies methodologies, specifically semiotics. Decoding symbols within visual imagery draws upon the theories of scholars such as Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, with their interpretation of signs, signifiers, and signified. Saussure viewed language as arbitrary. It’s symbols’ meanings were dependent upon a system of placement in relation to other symbols. Barthes carried this method forward from language to a close reading of visual imagery within context, depending on the source and intended audience of the piece. Through a series of examples including professional wrestling and burlesque, Barthes shows how a signifier image acts as a representation that communicates the signified concept. A sign includes both the concept and the image, which are combined into what he describes as myth. The meaning represented by the signifier is not fixed, and may change based on the experiences of the viewer and context.

For example, prior to the war, a representation of a dark-skinned person of Northern African descent in a piece of Spanish art might have signified a conquered medieval Iberian Muslim. Despite the reality of seven centuries of at times brutal conflict, nineteenth and early twentieth-century memory constructed representations of a decisive Catholic victory over Muslims during the *Reconquista*. As early as the 1860s, Spain attempted to expand its territories in Northern Africa. In the 1920s, Morocco presented another hope for Spanish empire and another oppor-

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tunity to conquer territory held by Muslims. Representations of Muslims from this period suggested they no longer posed a threat to Spain. Several examples survive in the exposition building at the Plaza de España in Seville, which was built in 1928 for the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929. The structure, which was built during the dictatorship of the elder Primo de Rivera, Miguel, features elaborate ceramic work, including a series of tiled alcoves dedicated to different cities and provinces of Spain. Many of the scenes featured in these alcoves are representations of the Reconquista. One example is the vignette dedicated to Cordoba, which places Christians to the right, standing smugly with arms crossed as the city's Moors bow down before them to surrender the former capital of the Islamic empire (Fig. 1.3-1.4). However, this characterization shifted again during the civil war, when representations of the dark-skinned Muslim signified the Army of Africa that carried out the Nationalist rebellion. Republican fighters feared the Africans for their reputed cruelty. In the climate of strife, fear of the fascist-supporting Moroccan Moor drew from the old fear of the medieval Muslim Moor. These fears pre-date nineteenth and early twentieth century representations of victorious Catholics, and draw upon the historical realities of the centuries long Reconquista. Thus, the concept signified by the representation of the Muslim Moor changed to reflect the context of the war (Fig. 1.5.) As this example indicates, once I have read the visual signs within a particular image, I can then analyze the content of the message through various theoretical lenses. In particular, I deploy gender studies within the transnational context of the war.

In light of the visible, changing roles women took on during the war, gender proves an essential theoretical framework for analysis of this material. Women’s liberation was an ideo-

42 Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 16–17.
43 Photos by the author.
logical goal of the Second Republic; therefore, I consider propaganda art from both Nationalist and Republican sides, throughout the life of the Republic and the war. The writings of Joan Scott and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have inspired analysis that moves beyond the experiential models of individual women and their challenge to patriarchy. Instead, these scholars encourage a larger study of representations of femininity within the changing discourse of gender. This perspective is particularly well suited to an analysis of the ways in which femininity is represented in cultural products. Historian Louise M. Newman wrote of merging the theory and practices of both women’s and gender historians. The goal was the same in each, “articulating the history of the interrelationships between ‘experience’ and ‘representation’ of cultural forms.” In order to explore the interplay between experience and representation, I consider personal accounts as well as visual artwork. My analysis follows this theoretical tradition, examining these experiential accounts as they support or challenge the representations of gender shown and constructed by poster art.

Given the influence of vernacularized global political philosophies on Spain, my approach also considers the transnational context of the Spanish war. Transnational activist groups such as anarchists and socialists articulated new political ideas with marginalized old regional identities in Spain. One example was a heightened awareness of oppression and desire for self-determination of subaltern groups within Spanish society, including Galicians, Basques, and Catalans. Regionalism was a factor in the war; therefore, this study examines posters from these regions as well. Spanish social movements supported global philosophies including feminism, but rather than merely importing them, the movements articulated these global ideas as solutions

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to local problems in Spain. The most famous feminist group, *Mujeres Libres*, arose from the anarchist movement. Nationalist Spain countered with religious and traditional appeals, conjuring memories of the Crusades and the Catholic *Reconquista*, which forms part of the national founding myth. In this manner, gender and class intersect with religion and industrial progress.

According to historians Jerry Bentley and Ross H. Dunn, a world history perspective looks beyond the nation-state as the unit of analysis and considers the impact of transnational movements as well as local connections to global concerns. The local, regional nature of Spanish culture is nonetheless infiltrated with ideology that would escalate into global war a decade later. But rather than simply cast the Spanish Civil War as a prelude to the Second World War, the world history approach addresses connections between local and global over time. This framework takes into account highlights of Spain’s long historical memory, including monarchical and succession crises, regional separatism, Islamic polities, and the *Reconquista*. Awareness of this memory aids in interpreting symbolic imagery deployed in propaganda art. Within the context of the period, world history also addresses U.S. non-interventionist policies in Europe, aiding in understanding the efforts of the International Brigades and the Soviet Union’s impact on the left, as well as Italian and German involvement on the Right.

Additionally, familiarity with persuasive media and its tactics aids in understanding the goals of the propaganda ministries as well as the possible impact the artwork may have had on its audience. Humanities and Religious Studies scholar Bruce Lincoln discusses persuasive methods deployed in slogans and artwork that rely on symbols to trigger specific types of memory with the goal of eliciting particular emotional responses from viewers. According to Lincoln, Trotsky attempted to inspire Spanish revolutionaries with slogans that were forward looking and aimed to

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craft a new social order amid the chaotic disorder and restructuring of revolution.\textsuperscript{48} He argues, however, that symbols and slogans are more effective at rousing feelings of kinship and strengthening group affinity when they are backward looking, or as Lincoln describes them, “ancestral.” Symbols can help viewers tap into memory that redefines the present group based on a perceived common ancestry from the past. In doing so, Lincoln warns, the past can be re-defined by the present, as well.\textsuperscript{49}

Other scholars are more direct in their treatment of persuasive media, terming it propaganda outright. Fine art scholar Sheryl Tuttle Ross has focused on the manipulation of truth involved in the creation of propaganda, advertising, and other persuasive visual media. Her approach, which she terms the epistemic merit model, calls for analysis of imagery in terms of the source of the message, its target audience, and the kinds of falsehoods and methods of persuasion employed by various artists. Often, its function is negative and even “dangerous” because of the image’s ability to “subvert reason” by way of “appeals to emotions.”\textsuperscript{50} She references reports of war atrocities as common subjects of propaganda, and her essay begins with a reference to Picasso’s \textit{Guernica} as a masterpiece of twentieth-century visual propaganda.

This form of persuasive political art remains relevant to the present day, not just through museum exhibitions but also in current political discourse. In recent years, austerity and banking crisis protesters created protest and street art that reused or drew upon poster imagery from the Spanish Civil War. Political art continues to mobilize groups within Spanish society and across its borders, over seventy-five years after the outbreak of war.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 19–20.
1.5 Figures

Figure 1.1 Spanish Women Called to Arms

Figure 1.2 The Militias Need You!
Figure 1.3 Plaza de España, Seville
Figure 1.4 Detail, Plaza de España, Seville
Figure 1.5 The Nationalists
2 WAR AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION: VISUAL ARTS

For reasons as varied and complex as the conflict itself, the Spanish Civil War captured popular imaginations and inspired much cultural production. Artists, photographers, and writers flocked to Spain, documenting the human suffering by way of poverty, violence, and death. World War I had scarred the minds of Europe and the United States with written accounts and imagery conveying the horrific violence visited upon the body, individual and collective, of soldiers and civilians alike. The posters themselves reflect the influence of propaganda artwork from World War I as well as the Bolshevik Revolution. Yet poster artwork, which was created expressly for disseminating information as rapidly and widely as possible, is also rooted in the elite one-of-a-kind world of fine art. This chapter begins with late nineteenth century politically themed fine art and a glimpse of the cultural landscape from which it arose. Next, I review poster art traditions that pre-dated and influenced art from the Spanish war, followed by a discussion of the conditions of production for artists and the many entities that commissioned these works to further their respective causes. This chapter closes with a review of a small portion of the literature on poster art, placing my work within the larger historiographical context.

2.1 Predecessors: World War I, Soviet Art, Fine Art, and Catalan Modernisme

Spanish fine art has a rich, centuries-long tradition of political subject matter that includes the royal family, battles, and military figures. Large numbers of these works are housed at the monastery palace of the Escorial, built by Phillip II near Madrid, and the Museo del Prado in the heart of Madrid. These scenes of discipline and military might celebrate victory as well as the ultimate patriotic sacrifice. A short walk from the Prado, where Francisco de Goya’s famous
painting “The Third of May 1808” hangs (Fig. 2.1), the monument to the Second of May commemorates those who gave their lives for Spain in the failed revolt against Napoleon in 1808 (Fig. 2.2). Historian Brian D. Bunk describes Spain’s Catholic tendency to celebrate this political martyrdom as a means of attaining “redemption through suffering.” Thus, the heroic soldier facing down the French firing squad is immortalized as a martyr and national hero in collective memory. Despite Spain’s neutrality during World War I, Bunk argues that the country deployed “the cult of the fallen soldier,” which had been a popular archetype in the rest of war-torn Europe, in visual and other communication for purposes of political persuasion. The rebels immortalized by Goya’s painting are not the only Spanish patriots commemorated by the 2 May monument. In 1985, King Juan Carlos II of Spain lit an eternal flame and rededicated the monument to all who had ever died for Spain, silently including those who died in the Spanish Civil War. Thus, the revolt against Napoleon and the civil war are two failed causes linked together through a monument that itself celebrates the memory of the sacrifice of the fallen hero.

Political themes had made their way into fine art well before the Spanish Civil War. However, these works had limited audiences of the uppermost classes that commissioned them. Mechanically printed political media often took aim at those in power instead of relying on them for patronage. Inexpensive printed materials found an audience in the popular classes, and predate the Spanish war by centuries. Reformation pamphlets and fliers were produced in Germany shortly after the adoption of the printing press, and handbills circulated during the French Revolution. Thanks to industrialization, urbanization, and improved production techniques, artists cre-

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4 Ibid., 65–66.
ated posters that are more effective, since larger, more brightly colored images reached greater audiences. When World War I broke out in 1914, the poster’s popularity rose, and its heyday would include the whole period through World War II. Poster art from the Spanish Civil War drew from traditions of politicized fine art and political posters from World War I and the Soviet Union. Yet they stand apart in style and content due to Catalan modernism, which colored the artistic, social, and political culture of Barcelona, where many posters were created.

Themes prevalent in Spanish Civil War posters continued important precedents from World War I. One example is the representation of the wounded or disabled body of soldier, a practice that was relevant and easily adaptable to the violent Spanish war. As historian John M. Kinder suggests, World War I propaganda imagery presented a more realistic rather than idealized view of war by including enlisted male bodies, which “were displayed as passive icons, tragic victims in need of public sympathy … they also came to symbolize the horrors of modern war, in particular its devastating effect on the human body.” However, Spanish propaganda took this practice a step further by featuring images of dead soldiers, militia volunteers, civilian women, and children (Fig. 2.3). Thus, imagery from the Spanish war built upon the visual tradition established in World War I of the representation of the wounded soldier’s body, expanding the horror by showing comparable civilian bodies. The Spanish Civil War was certainly not the first conflict in which civilian populations were victimized. Belgium, France, and many other places suffered civilian casualties during World War I, but Spanish posters promoted public awareness of this type of war atrocity. Rather than inviting the viewer to discuss death, examples

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7 The “Military” Practice of the Rebels, If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next, Photography, Lithography, two-color, 66 x 50 cm, 1937, The Visual Front - Posters of the Spanish Civil War, <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/visfront/newadd20post.html>.
of Spanish poster art make unwilling witnesses out of viewers, thus heightening the impact of the image as a persuasive tool.

In addition to expanding upon the content of poster art produced in World War I, Spain drew upon the rich heritage of two visual styles of posters popular in the 1930s: Soviet Revolutionary propaganda and German National Socialist imagery. German National Socialist art included sculpted, modeled figures\(^8\) and romantic depictions of family life consistent with the party’s pro-natalist rhetoric, known as romantic conservatism.\(^9\) Soviet artwork benefited from the work of artist Gustav Klutsis, who in the 1920s pioneered the photomontage technique.\(^10\) Photomontages allowed illustrators to juxtapose the immediacy of photography with the artistic license granted to graphic designers, all within a single image. In addition, Soviet posters offered Spanish artists examples of imagery of the social order to which the Republic aspired. Soviet artwork further influenced Spanish factory and farm worker propaganda with its natural realism and agitprop styles. The Soviet Union’s characterization as champion of workers’ rights made it the ideal model for Republican artists. The victory of communism captured the imagination of labor movements in Europe and the United States, but Spain’s lack of both industrialization and social modernity left it vulnerable to revolutionary unrest, as had been the case in tsarist Russia. Without a bourgeois revolution, the social order of the Spanish *ancien regime* remained. Yet the economy industrialized in the northeast, as Asturias and Catalonia struggled to meet the production demands of World War I.\(^11\) Strong labor movements developed in industrial cities and identified with political traditions of the left. Conservative values remained in place in more agricultural regions in the south.

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\(^8\) Paret, Lewis, and Paret, *Persuasive Images*, 130.


Republican Spain and the Soviet Union shared contacts since the late 1920s, and some historians go as far as to argue that the Soviets launched outright propaganda campaigns upon Spain. Whatever Stalin’s intentions may have been for Spain, diplomatic and other links between Spain and the Soviet Union encouraged the exchange of ideas and artistic styles that left a Soviet mark on Spanish Republican propaganda art. Inspired by the Soviet Union’s practices of rapid modernization under Stalin, the Spanish Republic created propaganda that emulated artwork produced by the Soviets. The Republic’s director of Fine Arts Josep Renau was responsible for safeguarding Spanish cultural heritage from aerial bombing attacks and organizing the Spanish pavilion for the 1937 International Exposition in Paris. There, Pablo Picasso displayed his satirical political cartoons “El Sueño y la Mentira de Franco,” which translates as “The Dream and Lie of Franco,” and the iconic “Guernica” (Fig. 2.4). Inspired by the young Soviet Union, Renau produced artwork that used socialist rather than bourgeois art styles, including socialist realism and graphic art instead of painting. He also rejected the portrait styles that featured Lenin, and later Stalin. The Republic produced pieces bearing the “agit-prop” insignia, which also appears on some Soviet posters. The term “agit-prop” was a shortened version of agitation and propaganda campaigns aimed at rousing audiences into carrying out the revolution’s goals of social change. Soviet poster art and newspapers were key means of communication in the days before radio and television, but the poster was particularly well suited for reaching the illiterate.

13 Print media coverage from 1936 by Barcelona’s pro-Republican newspaper *La Vanguardia Española* shows evidence of diplomatic ties that were one set of connections officially linking the Soviet Union to Spain.
15 Basilo et al., *Vinetas En El Frente*, 93–94.
in Spanish. Design communicated its own message, in addition to whatever text artists included. Soviet revolutionary posters tended to promote education, expanded roles for women, and other items on the revolutionary agenda that also held true for Spain, at least until highly charged wartime communications took precedence over revolutionary campaigns.\textsuperscript{17}

Both graphic propaganda art and fine art employed tropes and persuasive tactics borrowed from other conflicts with the aim of shifting war discourse from glory to agony, by communicating the violent realities of war. Picasso’s “Guernica”\textsuperscript{18} became famous for its artistic merit and for publicizing European-induced violence in Spain to the rest of the world. Both it and Goya’s “The Third of May 1808” offer representations of a Spain defeated, confronting the viewer with the horror and violence of modern war. This breaks dramatically from previous examples of politically motivated fine art that glorified war or, at the very least, presented its allegorically-represented virtues in a heroic light, as did Eugene Delacroix’s “Liberty Leading the People” (Fig. 2.5).\textsuperscript{19} “Liberty” captures the chaotic moment of triumph for the oppressed, with hope for the future. “Guernica” communicates what happens after that moment, when retaliation makes life far worse for those who dared put up a fight.

Even though “Guernica” communicates despair and “Liberty” inspires hope within chaos, both of these pieces would have appealed to audiences of common people. Politicized art had been commissioned for centuries to adorn royal palaces, much of it commemorating battles and warfare. One example from Spain’s golden age is in the monastery and palace retreat of El Escorial, built by Phillip II. The royal palace houses the Sala de Batallas (Hall of Battles), a series of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 9.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Picasso, \textit{Guernica}.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Eugene Delacroix, \textit{Liberty Leading the People}, Oil on canvas, 260cm x 325cm, 1830, Musée du Louvre.
\end{itemize}
frescoes (Fig. 2.6) that commemorate military victories over Muslims and the French. Troops featured in the frescoes march in precise formation, a testament to the commanders’ ability to implement control and discipline. Their victories honor their God, king, and country. Human losses were necessary sacrifices. These values offer a perspective that would have appealed to the king and his advisors. This contrasts with examples of fine art imagery produced at the end of the nineteenth century, which mark a shift with the appearance of works that appeal to a broader public, while also including more immediate perspectives on chaos and violence. Values had changed after the devastation of World War I, which introduced Europe to an unprecedented magnitude of defeat that brought anguish not only to professional soldiers but also to volunteers, draftees, and civilians. Even the victors suffered under the high human price of martyrdom for God, king and country. Fine art’s audience, content, and style changed to become more inclusive as Spain itself progressed toward liberal democracy.

Barcelona was at the forefront of the movement to advance Spain toward modernity and democracy, and the struggles resulting from these political and social goals manifested in art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Besides a centuries-long desire for political independence from Madrid, the city is the largest in Catalonia, which resembles a nation more than an autonomous region, with its own distinct linguistic and cultural heritage. Barcelona’s democratic spirit claims its roots in the thirteenth century, when artisans and laborers joined the city’s governing body, the Consell de Cent. By the 1850s, the Catalan Modernisme movement mirrored the city’s desire to expand physically from the constraints of its medieval walls. This expansion, which is known by its Catalan name The Eixample, reflected the city and region’s desire

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22 Ibid., 144.
to move the country forward into liberal democracy, rather than lingering over the loss of the Madrid-centered Spanish empire. The architect Gaudi is the most well known of the period, and his works combine the desire to modernize with a nostalgia for the medieval gothic. The workers’ movement suffered through the 1920s under the politically and culturally repressive dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, and the city came to love the Republic that granted it freedom to return to its language, music, and festivals in the 1930s. Anarcho-syndicalist Barcelona took pride in its defeat of the rebellion by right-wing generals in July 1936, and took its place in the forefront of the Republic as an egalitarian, collectivist city of workers. With the outbreak of war, artists who had taken part in modernizing Barcelona and Catalonia turned their energies toward defending the Republic.

In keeping with this spirit of modernization, women of Barcelona were able to break from the submissive roles still prevalent in other parts of Spain. The busy port and industrial city had a growing working class that included women who had begun to take jobs in textile mills and factories by 1900. They partook of wage labor ahead of their counterparts in other cities and in rural Andalusia, who would only enter the public sphere in 1936, due to the chaos and necessity of war. Despite these opportunities, poor women who did not hold factory jobs faced unsavory choices, usually limited to domestic labor or prostitution, and the city earned a reputation for the latter. In the leftist political culture of the city, bourgeois management was faulted with the loss of female purity, rather than blaming the women themselves. As historian and women’s studies scholar Temma Kaplan notes, powerful women filled roles as disparate as

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24 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 118–119.
27 Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period*, 85–86.
Catholic nuns and indigent prostitutes, tropes that collided with the masculine preferred ideals of feminine submission and purity.28 These historical, political, economic, and social conditions influenced the large number of posters that Barcelona produced for the Republic before and during wartime.

Posters from the Spanish Civil War draw upon several artistic and political traditions, including posters from World War I and fine art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Republic, artists were inspired by revolutionary art from the Soviet Union and the modernist movement in Barcelona. Particularly in Barcelona, the vanguard of Spanish modernization, syndicalism, and democratization, these political and social struggles merged into art of the period, including Civil War poster art. These influences contextualize the styles, symbols, and messages chosen by poster artists for their intended audiences.

2.2 Artists, Patrons, and Ink

Posters from the Spanish Civil War make provocative political statements, captivating viewers with their color and composition. They remain powerful testaments to the complex political culture of 1930s Spain. Perhaps because they have attained such iconic status, they seem to transcend the fact that, ultimately, they are paper and ink. They were not created to fill archives or stock personal collections, and pasting them outdoors as intended resulted in serious preservation issues.29 The fact that so many survived says something about their total number. Comprehensive catalogs of images, artists, patrons, and print houses involved in production take up volumes. War and regime change complicate matters further. Therefore, this section will make some generalizations regarding the conditions of production of poster art. For the sake of

28 Ibid., 79.
expediency, I continue to use the political designations of “Republican” and “Nationalist” with the understanding that these were by no means monolithic entities united by cohesive ideologies, especially prior to the outbreak of war. Temporally, poster production can be grouped into three fluid groups: the early days of the Republic and its construction prior to war from 1931 to 1936, wartime from 1936 to 1939, and the Nationalist road to victory from approximately 1937 to 1939. The following section discusses the creators of poster artwork, and examines how these patrons, artists, and print changed over the course of war.

In the early days of the Republic, the new state commissioned poster artwork that celebrated the triumph of liberal democracy. Consequently, electoral campaigns and political parties produced posters promoting their causes. The Republic looked toward the future and constructed a new iconography consisting mainly of allegorical representations of the new state. These often featured women in pastoral settings, either nude or classically draped, holding books, or the scales of justice. These works were sponsored by official state entities, which included the Ministries of State, Agriculture, Health, Public Education, Work and Social Assistance, and the Council of Propaganda and Press. The Catalan Generalitat (regional government), which was granted a degree of autonomy under the Republic, patronized posters from its Commission of Culture, Health, Labor, and Propaganda. Many of these entities continued to patronize the production of posters during the war, but they were joined by defense organizations, which changed the tone of poster art from triumphant to defensive Republic. Election campaign posters for parties on both the left and the right emphasized the importance voter turnout, but posters from parties aligned with the left call for votes to keep advancing European fascism out of Spain. The

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30 Jordi Carulla and Arnau Carulla, La Guerra Civil En 2000 Carteles: Republica, Guerra Civil, Posguerra, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Postermil, 1997), 51.
CNT-FAI, UGT, POUM, and other labor organizations frequently commissioned posters. Art from parties on the right, such as the Catholic CEDA-inspired Acción Popular party, created poster campaigns based on the premise that neglecting to vote was akin to suicide. Several Acción Popular posters were made in Madrid, and others were produced in Barcelona and Valencia, suggesting that presses still ran in support of the less favored parties of the right in these areas.

Although the Republic’s print graphics studios, artists, and their respective syndicates had produced propaganda prior to the war, their output in terms of numbers of designs and broadsheets escalated around the time of the rebels’ attempted coup d’état. Carles Fontserè, artist and member of a prolific artists’ trade groups, the Sindicato de Dibujantes Profesionales de Catalunya or Artists’ Syndicate from Catalonia, describes the union’s early efforts as limited, a situation that changed dramatically after the rebellion caught them by surprise. Art historian Carmen Grimau describes poster creation as surging from an “avalanche of artists” who spontaneously volunteered to create the artwork after the Nationalists’ rebellion. This thesis studies a small selection of works from well-known poster artists. However, it does not include the works of famous surrealist Joan Miro of Barcelona, the allegorical illustrations of Catalan Ramon Puyol, or the photomontages and graphic arts of Josep Renau, head of the Sindicato de Profesionales de Bellas Artes or Syndicate of Fine Arts Professionals.

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31 CNT-FAI stands for the Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo-Federacion Anarquista Iberica or National Confederation of Workers-Iberian Anarchists’ Federation. UGT stands for Union General de Trabajadores or General Workers’ Union. The POUM stands for Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista, or Unified Marxist Workers’ Party.
32 CEDA stands for Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas or Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right.
33 Fontsere, quoted in Josep Termes, Carteles de la República y de la Guerra Civil (Barcelona: Centre d’Estudis d’Història Contemporània, Editorial la Gaya Ciencia, 1978), 354.
34 Carmen Grimau, El Cartel Republicano en la Guerra Civil (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1979), 50.
The entities that commissioned poster artwork for the Republic were numerous and diverse, yielding predictably heterogeneous print media in terms of content and artistic style. Some of the most well known government organizations that commissioned art in imperiled cities *Ministerio de Sanidad* (Ministry of Health) and the *Junta Delegada de Defensa de Madrid* (Council of Delegates for the Defense of Madrid), which produced art aimed at inspiring resistance in Madrid early in the war, and later shifted toward desperate pleas for assistance. Aid came from the International Brigades, which produced art inspiring unity and resistance, while *Socorro Rojo Internacional* (Red Aid International) offered disaster assistance to families who were displaced, injured, or otherwise suffering from want. Women’s groups, organizations for friendship and solidarity with the Soviet Union and the Republic’s international supporters, youth groups, unions, parties, and government agencies produced posters bearing a range of messages that changed over time from resistance, satire, and hope to indictments, pleas for aid, and despair.

After Franco formed a coalition between the Falange and the trade unions of the far and center-right, the Nationalists’ message was centralized under a single party. Franco rejected the Republic’s tricolor flag, and many early posters feature his image with the bicolor traditional flag of the monarchy. Poster art patrons can be grouped into general categories of military propaganda agencies, youth organizations, and the *Auxilio Social* (Social Aid). With so many artists supporting the Republic and the parties of the left, the Nationalists tended to rely heavily on text and photography in their posters, rather than illustrations or graphic design. Predictably, art historians note that these compositions were not as engaging as those from the Republic. Printing capacity and offset press technology was also greatest in Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia, all

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The northwestern cities of Burgos and Salamanca fell to the rebels early on; from these and Franco’s native town of A Coruña, Falangist organizations commissioned poster artwork until the more artistically inclined and technologically capable cities of Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia came under the cultural as well as military control of the Falange. The entities patronizing poster production included various ministries and delegations, all similarly titled, of propaganda and press. Large numbers bear the imprint of the Departamento de Plastica (Department of Plastic Arts), which following Franco’s victory became the Servicio Nacional de Propaganda Departamento de Plastica (National Propaganda Service Department of Plastic Arts). The department of plastic arts concerned itself largely with reproducing slogans such as “Por la patria, el pan, y la justicia” (for the homeland, bread, and justice), or “¡Viva Franco! ¡Arriba Espana!” (Long live Franco, to the top with Spain), or “Espana, Una, Grande y Libre” (Spain: United, Strong, and Free), and placed its insignia, identifiable by a letter “P” on approved materials.

As republican artists were exiled or imprisoned, artists supporting Franco dominated the production of political posters that expanded to include artwork promoting travel and tourism as well as religious and cultural festivals. The most famous of these are the Feria held during holy week in Seville and the Festival del Caballo, celebrating horses and their history in Jerez. Replicas of these posters are still readily available at tourist shops throughout these cities. Perhaps the most famous Nationalist print media artist was Carlos Saenz de Tejada, who illustrated many

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36 Jordi Carulla and Arnau Carulla, La Guerra Civil en 2000 Carteles: Republica, Guerra Civil, Posguerra, vol. 2 (Barcelona: Postermil, 1997), 523.
scenes with heavily muscled male figures that glorify martyrdom through military service, and most notably, publicity for the lyrics to the Falangist anthem, “Cara al Sol” (Face to the Sun). His illustrations were not limited to posters; they also appeared on calendars, stamps, pamphlets, and book covers. Curiously, Saenz de Tejada is known for his pre-war production of stylized representations of libertine Parisian “new women.” These ladies would have been far out of line with the Falangist ideal of subservient, modest women who cared for their family and nation, not fashion. Artist Paco Ribera created portraits of Franco, but oddly, he also made the portrait of the Republic’s slain military hero and anarchist leader, Buenaventura Durruti.

Rather than calling audiences into action, Nationalist posters produced toward the end and after the war served to reinforce the symbols and slogans of the order favored by the Falangist state. Despite their reduced numbers compared to art of the Republic, some generalizations can be made about their content. Popular themes included allegorical representations of Francoist Spain, portraits of military personnel, memorials to Falange party founder Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, and romanticized scenes of martyrdom in battle. Some of the more provocative subjects include the repeated appearance of uniformed troops and civilians, prayers crediting Franco for defending Catholicism, photos of vandalized churches in the Republic, women nursing infants, men teaching their sons to make the fascist salute, and even publicity for the government donation of holiday gifts to children after victory.

2.3 Images and Ideology: Reviewing Secondary Literature

Catalogs and collections of poster art are a different kind of secondary source because they include the original document so the reader may engage with it. However, because of the historical context and the deployment of symbols in these works, a viewer cannot appreciate how the original was perceived by its original intended audience. Collections edited by veterans and relatives of veterans bring viewers closer to that goal, but first-hand writings about such ideological and divisive issues pose problems of perspective I sought to balance by examining a variety of materials from Spain and U.S. volunteers. My goal is to connect visual representations of femininity present in poster art with women who would have inspired the images or been addressed by them. A lack of literature on this connection between gender and poster art motivated me to contribute my research to the field. In this section, I review poster art propaganda, photography, and gender history from the Spanish Civil War in order to locate my work within the broader historiographical context.

Large, full-color poster collections are captivating in their own right. Several twentieth century compilations include examples from the Spanish war, but their brief treatment lacks the complexity and depth of the works dedicated to Spain that are mentioned here, particularly the Spanish-language books. By far, the most comprehensive collection of poster artwork in print volumes comes from Postermil publishing in Barcelona, which produced two series of books focusing on graphic art of Spain and Catalonia. Postermil’s “Color” series includes individual books on advertising, Spain, leisure, and war. The Color of War contains selections also included in the larger two-volume collection, La Guerra Civil en 2000 Carteles (The Spanish Civil War in

These books were crafted with obvious attention to reproduction of the original posters, one to a page, on glossy paper with bright colors. These books offer ample selection of images from the Republic, as do so many other collections, but it also includes the largest selection of Francoist posters of all the other collections combined. In a larger sampling such as this, the absence of women is striking, though unsurprising. Additionally, this series stands apart due to its comprehensive listings of all the artists, design houses, and patrons involved in the production of these works.

Other books offer varying degrees and kinds of content by way of introductory essays contributed by witnesses to war or art historians. One such example is Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran John Tisa’s 1979 poster collection *The Palette and the Flame*, the first of its kind. In addition to Tisa’s comments, the book also includes an introduction from Anthony Toney, another Lincoln Brigade veteran, and Luigi Longo, a leading Italian Communist who was a Commissar of the International Brigades during the war. These introductory essays of course uphold the cause of the Republic, but they provide invaluable context. Tisa’s Preface opens by addressing the problem of repression in Franco’s post-war regime, which had made impossible poster collections like this in Spain. Toney, a member of the National Academy of Design, provides a first-hand account of the flexibility of the poster as a rapid means of mass communication throughout the Republic. This collection excludes works from the Nationalists. Longo notes the difficulty in obtaining such examples, but attributes their absence to the fact that Franco’s goal was “repression, not communication.” Toney’s introduction describes the posters as “an important instrument of the Spanish Republic to solve the problems stemming from diversities within

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41 Tisa, *The Palette and the Flame*.
42 Ibid., xv.
43 Ibid., x.
its forces.” I explore that assessment in the following chapter, particularly with regard to the diversity in representations of gender.

While John Tisa may have taken his poster collection book to press first, from 1976-1977, very shortly after Franco’s death, a series of poster collections toured Italy, Barcelona, and Madrid, in an effort to “return to the Spanish public that historical memory that was believed to have been ossified by the years of deliberate neglect.” Those are the words of Carmen Grimau, daughter of the late Julian Grimau, who was active in the Spanish Community Party (PCE), went into exile, and upon his return to Spain in the 1960s was arrested and executed by the state police. Political posters were a ubiquitous part of daily life at the core of a “cultural front” that took on a “decisive role in terms of revolutionary contributions.” Grimau terms the artwork “cartel político” (political poster) and rejects the term “propaganda” as a capitalist marketing term inappropriate for socialist art. She considers the posters to be part of a European tradition stemming from the Bolshevik Revolution rather than World War I. She is not alone in crediting the Soviet Union with heavily influencing the Republic in terms of artistic style. A 2004 poster and essay collection from the Fundación Pablo Iglesias also includes examples of posters created in Spain commemorating the anniversaries of years of solidarity with the Soviets. The organization is named for a founder of the Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE), who was a master typographer by trade. This book follows Tisa’s concept of commentary followed by poster catalog, with more detailed essays from graphic artists and art historians viewing the material with academic detachment, rather than as witnesses to war. More in keeping with Tisa’s format, the Center for

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44 Ibid., xvi.
45 Grimau, El Cartel Republicano en la Guerra Civil, 9–10. Translation is my own.
46 Ibid., 19. 21.
47 Ibid., 67.
48 Ibid., 9, 88–89.
49 Alfonso Guerra and Fundación Pablo Iglesias., Carteles de la Guerra, 1936-1939 : Colección Fundación Pablo Iglesias (Barcelona: Círculo de Bellas Artes : Lunwerg Editores ; Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 2004), 33.
50 Ibid., 13.
Contemporary History Studies published its 1978 collection of Republican poster art with an introduction from Jaume Miravitlles, a leading propagandist in the Catalan government during the war. In his description of revolution and war, he argues that “the collection of posters produced in the Republic of Spain during the period 1936-1939 reflect the physical, moral, political, and social realities, providing a close approximation of that dramatic historical process.” It would appear Miravitlles sees no difference between poster representations and “realities,” at least in aggregate. I also question this assessment in the chapters that follow.

With so many types of entities commissioning posters for different purposes, poster books vary in terms of how they categorize these works. The 1990 catalog produced by Spain’s National Library attempts to group posters based on their purpose, such as allegories, portraits, election campaigns, war, and the rear guard, with detailed subcategories within each group. This volume is notable because it includes a limited number of posters from the National Front. The editor Javier Lopez Gomez placed quotation marks around the word “national” and did not capitalize it. Instead of attempting to categorize the posters, he describes specific examples employing iconography of “the absent general” Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, Franco, national Catholicism, demonic representations of Communism, and letter graphic posters of slogans. A similar catalog edited by Facundo Tomas Ferré features posters produced in Valencia. He shares his personal assessments as to the best archives, artists, persuasive methods, and other debatable points. He addresses the use of photomontage, which is controversial because of the artistic license is exercises with photographs, which Ferré notes is perceived as “the most objective visual art.”

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51 Termes, _Carteles de la República y de la Guerra Civil._
While photography was certainly prevalent in its own right, it plays a role in the graphic arts because of its use in photomontages. The poster collection books spend considerable time detailing how the process originated in the Soviet Union, and fail to address the reasons why such a process would be successful, especially given the difficulty involved in its execution. Photomontages merged fictive graphic art with photography, which viewers tended to accept as truth.\(^5^4\) A 2003 study by cultural studies scholar M. Humm addresses the psychological impact of photography on viewers, which I include here in reference to the photomontages. Specifically, Humm’s study of photography examines images of civilian war victims with relation to the publication of Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* (1938). The essay collection discussed women and war, and was published in versions with and without accompanying photography, forming a basis for comparison in Humm’s research.\(^5^5\) She argues that the edition with photographs made a greater emotional impression upon viewers. She describes visual stimuli of traumatic events, such as war imagery, as forming a “memory fetish” in which the viewer’s mind merges reality with representation. Even when the context of the event faded, the image remained as a fetish in memory, an iconic representation.\(^5^6\) Given these findings, photographs of the bodies of Spanish women and children used in political posters may have invoked emotional responses, possibly triggering the formation of memory fetishes. The most famous photographer from the war, Robert Capa, produced such iconic imagery himself. When he was featured in *Life* magazine, he was quoted as saying, “the truth is the best picture, the best propaganda.”\(^5^7\) Ironically, controversy shrouds his most famous work of a fallen militiaman, which some claim was staged. Based


\(^{5^6}\) Ibid., 646–647.

on Humm’s observations regarding the difficulties involved in separating experiences from representations, what constitutes truth in photography matters little once the image has become a memory fetish. In this regard, Catalan propaganda commissar Miravitlles’ observation is correct. Art reflects the Republic’s experience, in part because its presence helped create the memory of the event.

This thesis acknowledges the merger of experiences with representations and examines how the two operate as interrelated entities, primarily with regard to gender. Recent women’s histories have provided context through their pursuit of personal experience. Works by political philosopher Martha Ackelsberg, Spanish studies scholar Shirley Mangini, and historian Mary Nash have informed my understanding of what life was like for young women of varying social classes who aligned politically with the left during the Republic.58 Studies of women from the National Front tend to focus on the 1950s. Still, they offer insight into the paradoxical relationship between the Sección Femenina (Women’s Section) of the Falange, an institution charged with enforcing patriarchal order, and the limited political agency attained by elite women in its service. Monographs by women’s studies scholar Aurora Morcillo, historian Inbal Ofer, and Spanish studies scholar Kathleen Richmond examine the tensions between modernization, Catholicism, and women’s roles in Francoist Spain.59 However, these works focus on the personal experience of individual women rather than illuminating larger concepts of how political culture interacted with conceptualizations of gender in the Spanish Republic and Francoist regime.

Given the great variety of patrons, artists, and print houses responsible for these many works, the following chapters analyze only a small sample of posters. The organization is thematic, based on the persuasive symbols and tropes employed in these visual media. Chapter three explores a selection of poster artwork highlighting different ways in which gender was represented for persuasive purposes. These images show how the Spanish war continued trends visible in poster art from World War I, including the use of such posters and the integration of women into visible roles in the public sphere. These posters demonstrate the extremes of gendered discourse. Insofar as it is fair to speak of a unified “Nation” or Republic, these entities were gendered by political poster art as well. In chapter four, poster artwork presents relationships between regional conflicts and the international left and right in an effort to place the civil war within a larger transnational context. The posters offer drastically different visions of Spain’s post-monarchical future and reflect a deeply divided population along political, social, and economic lines.
Figure 2.1 Francisco de Goya, *The Third of May*
Figure 2.2 Second of May Monument, Madrid.

Figure 2.3 If You Tolerate This Your Children Will be Next
Figure 2.4 Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*
Figure 2.5 Eugene Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*
Figure 2.6 Hall of Battles at El Escorial, San Lorenzo de El Escorial
3 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND GENDER DISCOURSE IN WARTIME

3.1 Introduction

Women held visible roles in the Second Republic. Whether taking up arms on the battlefront or working in the home front, they were agents in a dramatic surge of feminism that was out of character for conservative Spain. Letters and memoirs from Spanish and U.S. women living on the peninsula during the war describe daily struggles for feminist women to join the revolutionary democratic movement that cut against the grain of the authoritarian regimes rising to power in Europe in the 1930s. War propaganda from both the Nationalist and Republican sides show gender representations that communicate proper roles for women within each political ideology’s vision of the ideal Spanish society. Republican Popular Front propaganda art encouraged women to take on factory and other jobs, a practice consistent with the socially and politically progressive agenda of the Left. This marked a change from female confinement in the home, inviting women into what was previously an exclusively male space.¹ However, women assumed these male roles, in part, due to necessity and stresses of war, which demanded women’s labor in order to meet the Republic’s manufacturing and other needs. By contrast, the Nationalist side promoted the strength of its men as heads of the families that formed the basic unit of the state. Propaganda from the right evoked traditional Catholic gender roles and divisions of labor, opposing both the women who would insert themselves into public space and the men who would allow such a change.² This chapter will show how warring political factions constructed conflicting representations of femininity in propaganda art for different persuasive purposes. The archetypes shown here include women as public individuals, victims, and as threats to manliness.

¹ Mangini, Memories of Resistance, 5.
² Ibid., 74.
However, analyses of personal accounts included here indicate that women’s experiences differed from the official gender discourse of the Nationalist and Republican sides. Despite pro-feminist propaganda produced by the Republican Left, in practice, men from both Nationalist and Republican Spain continued to share a patriarchal worldview.

In this chapter, I analyze posters and personal accounts produced during the war, comparing the experiences described by women’s voices with the gender discourse present in visual culture. I consider this interplay between discourse and experience within the social and political structures of wartime Spain. Letters and memoirs written by politically active women illuminate the ways in which the Republic’s stated goal of feminism played out in real life for actual women. These experiences provide context for gender representations in discourse, as constructed by poster art, but they also interact with the posters through bi- and multi-directional exchange. The individual nature of these personal accounts limits their utility as measures of the collective success of the movement. However, they show the goals and frustrations that linked these women in their common challenge to patriarchy. Differences between representations of gender in poster art and personal experiences suggest uneven progress by the feminist movement, and possible manipulations of truth present in war propaganda.3

My analysis of propaganda art from the period focuses on the manner in which the physical bodies of men and women are represented in poster art, as well as the language used in persuasive media. These sources are multi-vocal, communicating messages as varied as the social movements and labor groups that commissioned them. They often disagree with each other, and with personal accounts. As letters and memoir excerpts suggest, individual and collective memories of the experiences of men and women from different classes in Spain often differed from the discourses of politics and propaganda. These socially constructed hierarchies of gender and class

not only intersect, argues historian Joan Scott, the two are inextricable. She wrote, “The concept of class in the nineteenth century relied on gender for its articulation.”

Scott’s analysis suggests connections between feminist and labor goals and the prevalence of feminine imagery in representations of the Republican left. Scott notes that reformers in nineteenth-century France “depicted workers in terms coded as feminine (subordinated, weak, sexually exploited like prostitutes), labor and socialist leaders replied by insisting on the masculine position of the working class (producers, strong, protectors of their women and children).”

Republican posters contain many representations of weak females, yet others show contrary traits as well, including women as single-parent providers and protectors. As social constructs, gender and gender-specific labor roles change as societies change. Therefore, in the turmoil of the civil war, as women took on male-identified roles by necessity and or choice, the surrounding discourse and gender-related representations changed from traditional to egalitarian, even in terms of military service. Yet as the war progressed, the discourse returned to focus on the protection of women and children.

### 3.2 Industrial and Agricultural Workers

In wartime, the Republic found itself with limited trading partners, appealing for aid from countries that had adopted a “non-interventionist” stance. As a result, Spain had to boost domestic production, despite its lack of modern industry. What industry Spain possessed had been concentrated toward the mining towns of the north, particularly in Asturias. Andalusia, to the south, was primarily agricultural. Much has been written about the fabled Soviet military aid, which for all the in-fighting it caused between factions on the left, seems to have trickled into Spain rather than arriving in the anticipated torrent. By contrast, the Nationalists were able to obtain large

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5 Ibid.
quantities of modern German and Italian military equipment, including submarines, tanks, and air power.⁶

With the purpose of increasing domestic production, the Republic commissioned posters that communicated goals of maximizing industrial and agricultural output, while bringing industry into the provincial south. Inspired by the Soviet Union’s goals of accelerated modernization under Stalin, the Spanish Republic emulated artwork produced by the Soviets. Numerous posters from the Republic bear the logo of “agit-prop” campaigns. These images featured workers engaged in production required by the Republic in support of the war effort, including female laborers. The artist from Madrid known as “Parilla” created artwork for several Republican government ministries and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). One poster he created for the party in 1937 features a female worker, who appears between the gears of the large machine she repairs in a poster (Fig. 3.1) which reads, “Women also want to win the war, let us help her!”⁷ The composition resembles the famous 1920s photograph by Lewis Hine, “Power House Mechanic Working on Steam Pump,” in which the male worker wields a wrench while surrounded by machinery.⁸ The male worker in Hine’s photo showcases bulging muscles while conforming to the shape of the machine. Neither holds true for the woman in the poster, who does not appear in tension with the equipment that surrounds her. However, even though she has entered the public sphere and made great strides by taking on a masculine role working in a factory, a man stands in the foreground, presumably supervising her as she works. It appears he is helping her help Spain win the war simply by allowing her to work in the factory. Though his sleeves are rolled up indi-

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cating he is ready to work, he does not join in alongside her. The bottom left bears insignia that indicates this is an agit-prop piece from Sector Sur, the primarily agricultural and socially traditional southern region of Spain, where workers’ organizations encouraged increased industrialization. Text at the extreme bottom of the piece indicates endorsement by the fine artists’ union, “Sindicato de Profesionales de las Bellas Artes,” which was associated with the UGT, Unión General de Trabajadores labor federation.

Agricultural labor, which seemed less masculine, strong, and productive, is nonetheless cast in a starring role in another poster from the PCE (Fig. 3.2). This pastoral scene bears the insignia of the Comité Provincial de Madrid (Rural Committee based in Madrid) and the Sección Española de la Comunista International (Spanish Section of the Communist International), which suggests Soviet support for the Spanish communist parties. As befits a poster produced by the Secretaria Femenina (Women’s Ministry), a female figure is featured in this artwork. The text reads, “Woman farmer! Your work in the country strengthens the spirit of those in combat.” Both in translation and in the original Spanish, the word espíritu (spirit) has multiple meanings ranging from morale to souls to ghosts. This ambiguity allows for several possible interpretations. The smiling agricultural worker casts as her shadow a soldier with rifle, linking the rural farm on the home front to the urban battlefront. Yet the shadow also links the woman to the man she supports. This frustrates liberation in the sense that her work is not her own; she continues to support men. Her domestic production may be valued as critical to the war effort by the Republic, but her work remains domestic production in the provincial, pre-industrial private sphere. In terms of visual design, her image takes the foreground and is the one bearing physical substance. The masculine figure is placed behind her, and though it bears the weapon, it is merely an intan-

gible shadow. The visual symbolism of man shadowing woman is in tension with the textual as-
sertion that the woman supports the man.

Although the Republic produced artwork aimed at increasing agricultural production and
political support in the south, personal accounts document the influx of volunteers with technical
training who aided industrial production in urban centers. Leftist Republican factions welcomed
volunteers from overseas to reinforce those Spaniards with experience working communications
and other equipment. Among these volunteers were the Americans Lois and Charles Orr, who
worked for a POUM workers’ party radio station. In a 1936 letter, Lois Orr shared Goldman’s
impatience with the slow pace of feminist change, even in ostensibly progressive Barcelona. Orr
wrote, “The women are all tremendously painted and curled and quite common looking; their
empty heads – as a rule – don’t understand exactly what this revolution means; and they still
have the psychology of women enchained for so many hundreds of years.”10 Thus, Orr arrived
determined to support the revolution and emancipation, filling roles working outside the home
that were previously reserved exclusively for men. However, her tone indicates more than just
impatience. She reveals a patronizing attitude, lacking empathy for the so-called empty-headed
women who found themselves that way thanks to the educational system that prepared them ex-
clusively for the domestic duties required by marriage. Instead, Orr suggests that in light of their
ignorance, she wished to liberate Spanish women from themselves.

Orr quickly encountered resistance to her revolutionary fervor from her fellow com-
pañeros (comrades) on the left. Soon after her arrival in Barcelona in 1936, Orr discovered the
man she would be working for was unable to obtain the blue coveralls issued by the party for use
by women militia and workers. She wrote that she would buy some, since she had not brought

10 Letter ca. October 1937 from Lois Orr to a distant family member, address missing. Orr, Letters from Barcelona, 82.
much clothing.\textsuperscript{11} Her decision to purchase the party uniform indicates her desire to belong, which was frustrated by the man in charge. Orr’s difficulties were only beginning. In a 1937 letter to her brother, Orr described her attempt to join her husband’s division at the front. She found her application denied by a man organizing the move, and wrote, “I could not go because of – sex discrimination, I call it. They said they didn’t have facilities for women … that’s outright discrimination, I think, especially since the other women went.”\textsuperscript{12} Despite the changes to representations of feminine roles in Leftist discourse, this personal account indicates that the ability to work outside the home, and the public spaces specific women would be permitted to fill, were still controlled by men in positions of authority, even on the Republican side. Conversely, the Falange made public those views many individuals on the left still clung to in practice: despite wartime necessity, traditional roles were more desirable for women. The 1939 Spanish Labor Charter was officially ordered and made public by Nationalist Spain as its military forces put down what remained of the Republic. The charter mimicked a similar order from Italy, and the Italian document had been based on Pope Pius XI’s May 1931 encyclical, “On the Reconstruction of the Social Order.” The social order the Pope discusses reconstructing was that of Europe prior to World War I. The papal encyclical linked economic and gender concerns, claiming that economic situations requiring women to work outside the home were a crime from which women needed protection. In classic pro-natalist language, the encyclical argued, “It is the gravest abuse, which must be completely eradicated, that the mother, because of the low salary of the husband, finds herself forced into lucrative art, abandoning her peculiar duties and chores at home and,
above all, the education of the small children.”13 Thus, Franco’s regime mimicked the Italian labor order and papal encyclical and opposed feminine participation in “lucrative art,” or wage labor in the public sphere. Class intersects gender in this case, as the right takes the seemingly contradictory position of aligning with workers’ syndicates and advocating for better pay for lower-class laborers. By raising male worker pay, the right could argue that women need not work in the waged economy, thus implementing gendered social control while supporting the interwar position of the Catholic Church. The Nationalists and the Church held that the maternal role of women was central to future citizens and the survival of the state, while the left argued that this rhetoric was an attempt to revive patriarchal methods of control. Despite severe economic austerity and deprivation, women were shut out of factory work or received drastically lower wages under Franco, a grim reversal from the economic and social freedoms briefly afforded to them under the Republic.14

3.3 Women as Victims of War

Though Lois Orr expressed enthusiasm for traveling to the front, women who remained at home also faced the perils of war. Aerial bombardment by the German Condor Legion, Italian air and artillery units, as well as smaller numbers of Portuguese, Irish, French, and other foreign volunteers of the Nationalists forces caused civilian casualties on the home front and became a recurring, evocative theme of Republican propaganda.15 The number of civilian casualties and other facts of the attacks remain obscured by conflicting personal accounts, exaggeration, and

14 Reference draws from Morcillo’s work rather than quotes from the Papal encyclical, which also appear on these pages. Morcillo, True Catholic Womanhood, 34–35, 71–72.
15 Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, 939.
concealment. Propaganda as well as examples of fine art contributed to the rising emotions, and accounts of Nationalist attacks consequently became legendary. Perhaps the most famous piece of political art from the period is Picasso’s “Guernica,” which he painted for the Spanish government to display at the World Exposition in Paris in 1937, and later the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Republican propaganda posters, which in the early days of war had confidently presented positive imagery, turned defensive, focusing on the negative, grisly loss of life as both a rallying cry against the Nationalists and urgent appeal for international aid.

Although women’s liberation efforts supported the entry of women into the workplace, education, and other options in addition to motherhood, the mother and child archetype continued to appear in political imagery. A common archetype is a version of the classic artistic trope of the Madonna and child, which at first seems out of place given the anti-Catholic sentiment in the Republic. Indeed, motherhood and healthy childhood are upheld by Republican artwork as a universal human ideal. The trope represented aspirations that were within reach of ordinary people, and not just members of the political and religious elite. However, the mother with child scene turns macabre in wartime, featuring terrified women holding frightened or even dead children. The famous Ministry of Propaganda poster (Fig. 3.3) “What Are You Doing to Prevent This?” features a woman and child cowering beneath the crumbling building that towers above them, while planes fly menacingly overhead. Although an artist sympathetic with the anti-clerical and feminist Republic created this art, the composition of mother and young son draws upon the popular and deeply ingrained archetype from Catholic art of Madonna and child. Unlike the idyllic pastoral scenes in which most traditional Madonna and child portraits were set, this

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16 Ibid., 606–608.
18 What Are You Doing to Prevent This?, Photographic print and lithography, two-color, 80 x 56 cm, ca 1936, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive, <http://www.alba-valb.org/resources/media/What%20are%20you%20doing.jpg>.
piece represents a perversion of the figures making up the holy family. The setting and human
distress experienced by these figures highlights the irony of the Nationalist decision to attack a
Madonna and child, among many civilians. In this example, the mother protects her child, which
may signify the country’s future. However, even in this image commissioned by the left, that na-
tional future appears represented in poster art as a male child.

In addition to accusing the right of harming women and children, this piece makes further
accusations as to how much damage the Nationalists were willing to inflict upon Spain under the
guise of “saving” it. In the background, the structure is an apartment building, suggesting the Na-
tionalists attack not only women, children, the elderly, and the ill, but also working-class people
with no social influence who nonetheless sustain the economy. As a residence, the structure
serves no military purpose, marking this as an attack on civilians. The text indicates this attack
took place in Madrid, the capital of Spain, which ominously indicates a lack of hesitancy on the
part of the Nationalists to attack not only their own people, but the symbolic, historic and politi-
cal head of the nation, in order to advance the right’s own goals. In addition to urging action on
the part of the viewer, the English-language text indicates this piece was intended to appeal to
the American and British public, whose governments had declined to aid the Republic. The use
of photography intensified the reality of the image, strengthening the appeal for humanitarian aid
and military action from organizations like the International Brigades, which supported the Re-
publican cause and sought to persuade democratic governments to do likewise.

Although the loss of wives and mothers was undoubtedly tragic, women filled other roles
in the lives of men who would mourn their loss. Young women on the Republican home front
were also at risk of air bomber attacks, and posters called for the construction of shelters to pre-
vent further casualties. In Fig. 3.4 the victim of Italian and German fascist bombs presents a dif-
ferent feminine archetype. The choice of an attractive woman, scantily clad in a sleeping dress and posed like a pin-up girl suggests an appeal to a male audience. Her fair skin and white clothing imply innocence soiled only by the blood drawn in the attack. Blood pools beneath her on the tiled flooring often found in basements and kitchens. The text calls for reinforced bomb shelters in order to avoid tragedies such as these, caused by nighttime aerial attacks that left victims vulnerable in their homes. In this image, the woman lies inert, dead not merely wounded, reinforced in the text by use of the word “victimas.” However, this woman’s appearance also speaks to the nature of the lost femininity she represents. In “What Are You Doing” (Fig. 3.3), Spain faces attacks on its stoic wives and mothers. This work suggests that the young wives, girlfriends, and sisters of republican men were at risk of something akin to rape and murder by the enemy. However, the Spanish Nationalists do not carry out the rape themselves in this symbolic representation. That act of aggression and dominance is executed by proxy, as evidenced by the Italian fasces and the German swastika present on the phallus-shaped bombs. This representation of the Nationalists is particularly damning due to the implication that Franco’s forces would not stop at injuring Spanish women themselves, but would also invite their allies to assist in the metaphorical rape.

These discursive representations of strife reflect a gendering of war and violence between the sexes. Republican feminist rhetoric may have differed from daily practice, but the same can be said of the Nationalists. Following air raids, bodies of women and children victims were pulled from their homes onto the streets to be tagged and processed. The dead were moved from the private sphere to the public in whatever condition the bombs happened to find them, which included various stages of undress. Ironically, the Nationalists claimed women needed protection

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and a life safe at home, yet they violated the home, women, and their children by ordering sustained aerial bombing of civilians. It was the Nationalist attacks that led to the appearance of women’s nude bodies in public spaces, where the dead could then be photographed. These images of death also appeared in propaganda and political fine art including works by Picasso featuring distorted bodies, frequently with prominent breasts. Women’s bodies became victims of Nationalist aggression, adding to the public spectacle of violence.

Poster artwork commissioned by the left provided visual imagery of the roles women could realistically expect to fill as factory, agricultural, humanitarian aid, or other workers. These representations of women were alternatives to traditional domesticity. Whether they were perceived as desirable or not, these were real images women could relate and aspire to when imagining their own futures. As the war progressed however, one of those roles included becoming a casualty of fascist bombers. This artwork bears the seal of the “Ejercito de Andalucía” or the army division of Andalusia in the conservative south, yet it indicates it was produced by a coalition of the UGF and CNT workers’ organizations from Valencia, painted by the Republican artist known as Parilla. The text reads, “Comrades of the rear guard, with more shelters we can avoid new victims.” Therefore, this piece was created with the coordinated efforts of workers’ movements based in Catalonia in the north and the Andalusian army in the south. The bloody violence and allusions to rape perhaps resonated more strongly in the conservative south, alerting civilians to danger and encouraging the construction of shelters and other items of necessity to protect all victims.

By contrast, the feminine ideal prescribed by the Catholic right was the Virgin Mary, whose simultaneous motherhood and virginity presented an impossible goal for women. The cult of domesticity went beyond confinement to the private sphere and absence from political or other
forms of public life. Prescriptive discourse of Spanish conservatism called for abnegation or sacrifice and suffering endured by the woman on behalf of her family and the state, which would redeem her from her purportedly weak nature.\textsuperscript{20} The manipulative power of this discourse is clear since any woman who strove to emulate the Virgin Mary was doomed to failure. No matter how sincere her abnegation and sacrifice, she would never adequately fulfill her role. But regardless of how faithfully she followed the accepted model of Catholic womanhood, no matter how many children she had, her life and that of her children were of no value to the Nationalists if she sympathized with the Republic. Thus, women served a purpose for the Nationalist side only as mothers to future citizen soldiers of the Falange.

Predictably, personal accounts indicate that the choice of nun, dutiful daughter, or self-sacrificing wife and mother had left many women unsatisfied. During the elder Miguel Primo de Rivera dictatorship, Constancia de la Mora, socialite granddaughter of a prominent conservative politician from Madrid, rebelled against the traditional Spanish aristocracy by defying the Catholic Church through her divorce and remarriage.\textsuperscript{21} De la Mora summarizes the expected trajectory of privileged Spanish women, which was limited to the convent or courtship culminating in marriage and motherhood:

My coming-out was the first step in the life my parents had planned for me. After that, for a year or so, I could flirt, and dance and go to parties – always at my mother’s side of course. Then my father would examine the social and financial position of my beaux. At nineteen, I would be officially engaged to a solid, sensible gentleman with money and position. At twenty, I would have a great church wedding, a Paris trousseau, and a three months’ wedding trip. And after that – well, but after that there was nothing to talk about. My life would be secure, settled, begun and ended at the same time.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Morcillo, \textit{True Catholic Womanhood}, 40.
\textsuperscript{21} Mangini, \textit{Memories of Resistance}, 11.
De la Mora’s account communicates the unhappiness and helplessness many women experienced in connection with marriage, a gloom made worse by feelings of being trapped due to Catholic prohibitions against divorce that were legally enforced. This account also demonstrates the way in which the patriarchal structure controlled women by placing their destinies in the hands of men. First, fathers would exert considerable influence in the choice of a suitable husband, who would then take on the responsibility of caring for the woman who lies at the center of the transaction while exerting little control over her own fate. Swept away by the allure of luxurious clothing and the reprieve from convent education granted by a full social calendar, upper class women were prone to disillusion implied in de la Mora’s account: after the wedding trip, there was little to look forward to in married life. These personal accounts indicate tensions between the sexes, aggravated by the Catholic ban on divorce and Spanish society’s traditional courting practices and roles for women.

The 1931 constitution legalized divorce and implemented civil marriage. This opened new possibilities outside of traditionally prescribed feminine roles. In a letter to her sister dated 1936, Republican volunteer Lois Orr discusses the changing marriage discourse in Spain, and what that might mean for children. She wrote, “I don’t see any reason why people should be legally tied together except in case of children. The thing that should keep them together would be continued love … be ‘companions’ – as they say in free revolutionary Spain, where nobody is tied to anybody.”

Orr had been married less than a year at the time, and continued to write more specifically about Charles, her new husband, “I wouldn’t worry if C. wasn’t faithful all his life to me. I certainly won’t be all mine to him – in thought and deed. Of course, I can’t tell if it would ruin anything else – just having intercourse; I’d have to see. It would be those other things

23 Letter dated November 16, 1936 from Lois Orr to her sister Orr, Letters from Barcelona, 91.
that would matter.”24 While she did not expressly regret having married, after living in Spain, Orr supported the new “free love” attitude that foreshadowed the spirit of the New Left and the second wave feminist movement of the late 1960s. Orr embraced the new Republican variation of the marriage discourse, despite having recently married under the traditional mores of the more ostensibly progressive U.S. However, she makes an exception: men and women should marry if they have children. In both personal accounts and in discourse of posters presented here, child rearing remained a crucial factor in defining appropriate feminine roles for women in Republican Spain.

Orr suggests child rearing is socially significant enough to supersede the goals of feminine emancipation from the obligations of marriage. However, some leftist political rhetoric recognized that maternity frustrated women’s abilities to engage in political activism or military service. The anthem of Anarchist women’s liberation group *Mujeres Libres* urged women to march, “fists upraised, women of Iberia, toward horizons pregnant with light, on paths afire, feet on the ground, face to the blue sky.”25 Here pregnancy appears metaphorically, alluding to the event as occurring outside the woman’s body – a goal over the horizon which inspires hope but also an estranged disembodiment – a postponement of female biological function which had previously been characterized as a woman’s sole purpose in Catholic marriage, and indeed, in Spanish life.

### 3.4 Women as Sexual Threats and Victims

Propaganda cast women in complex roles, including sexual threats, victims, or both. Women who took political action and entered the public sphere to do so were subject to moral

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24 Ibid., 92.
scrutiny and criticism. Memoirs indicate that female actions were often branded as immoral by men in positions of power, whether warranted or not. For example, Falange *Sección Femenina* activist Mercedes Formica noted that in her youth, she and other girls who were considering attending college were seen as “a mixture of prostitutes and comedy actresses.” In traditional Spanish society, unmarried women who ventured out of the home were the subject of much disparaging talk, especially if they belonged to the middle and upper classes. Chaperones were customary to protect a single woman’s most prized possession; her virtue. The notion of making an honest woman through marriage was a reality.

Early war propaganda urging women to enter the public sphere in order to provide necessary materials for the war effort had to convince women the work they did was vital to the cause, and worth the risk of placing their reputations, and that of their fathers or husbands, in peril. Memoir accounts indicate that women who took on roles as political activists in the Republic exercised caution when discussing feminist subjects. Otherwise, they risked falling out of favor with their respective parties, as was the case with attorney and feminist Clara Campoamor, who described her experience in the Republican parliament as, “Losses of control amid fits of masculine nervousness that transcended Parliament … aggression resulting in attacks upon my person rather than my ideas … isolated from my ideological colleagues and attacked with animosity by all, such that sometimes I suspected I was hated by many, and unfortunately my suspicions were well-founded.” The more successful anarchist leader Federica Montseny presented a matronly, maternal image in her black string shoes and conservative black dresses with prim white collars, and was more readily accepted by Republican men. Montseny notes something similar about Dolores Ibárruri. The legendary *Pasionaria* was “A Spanish woman, dressed in black, who gave

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moving speeches, who pronounced epic slogans such as ‘they shall not pass’ – in addition to her comrades putting up with her as an equal, even though she was a woman – all this caused her to soar to the top.”

However, Montseny observes that fellow leftist Margarita Nelken, who appeared glamorously dressed in photographs, did not fare as well, due in part to the fact that Nelken “had a very ‘free’ lifestyle, which clashed with all the prejudices of the period.”

Unsurprisingly, women who inserted themselves into public life through the traditionally male venue of politics found their personal lives the subject of mass scrutiny. Sexual morality, the feminine virtue most often called into question, was perhaps perceived as a woman’s greatest prize and was therefore denigrated. The mother/whore binary proved unforgiving to political careers. Yet Lois Orr found herself persuaded by leftist anti-marriage campaigns, which suggests differing standards of sexual norms for women who benefited from the safety of group anonymity. Montseny refers to men “putting up with” the very visible Ibárruri and herself, implying significant tensions between the sexes, even on the Republican side.

Women seeking higher education and political activism were not the only feminists whose morality was questioned. Milicianas, Republican women combatants, frequently appeared in photographs and graphic art, perhaps because they were such a novelty in Spain and the war was so well covered by the foreign press. Their existence sparked much tension on both sides, as Nationalist discourse likened them to prostitutes and Republican art celebrated them. The Republic also launched poster campaigns against disease, acknowledging that women took on more roles on the front than that of combatant or military support. Woman combatants and prostitutes occupied the same geographical space, the war front, which may explain the conflation of the two feminine roles in some males’ memory accounts. Given the tendency of questioning femi-

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29 Mangini, Memories of Resistance, 31.
nine sexual morality and the history of prostitution in warfare, it is likely that male combatants who expressed disapproval of women on the front discounted their efforts by labeling them as prostitutes.

Prostitution and the spread of disease have always posed problems for fighting forces, and the female combat and military support presence on the front aggravated awareness of the issue. Although the sexual liberation of women was seen as a logical and worthy goal in the Republic, little written evidence remains of guidance given to women in caring for their sexual health or well-being, even in the anarchists’ publication Mujeres Libres, created by women for women.31 The organization sought to eliminate prostitution, but unlike charity work performed by upper classes who viewed financially disadvantaged prostitutes as morally bankrupt or undisciplined, anarchists saw prostitution as an indicator of economic injustice.32 These beliefs align with Friedrich Engels’s view that monogamy and prostitution, which he regarded as opposites, were “nevertheless inseparable opposites, poles of the same social condition.”33 Whatever its root social and economic causes, prostitution was responsible for spreading disease and remained a health and social concern that political posters addressed. Warning of the dangers of disease, one poster (Fig. 3.5) from the Republic’s Catalan War Health Ministry (Consejo de Sanidad de Guerra, CSG) reads, “Protect yourself from venereal illnesses as well as bullets.”34 In the background, a nude female torso is shown headless and armless, inhuman flesh present exclusively for the needs of the soldier in the foreground, who turns his head dramatically as if struggling to look away. In this example women pose the threat of disease via their sexuality, a reality geographically entangled with miliciana presence on the front, which allowed for easy conflation of

32 Ibid., 170.
34 Cataluna Consejo de Sanidad de Guerra, Guarda’t Dels Mals Veneris Com De Les Bales, Graphic Art Poster, 54cm x 37cm, 1937, Guerracivil.org, <http://www.guerracivil.org>.
miliciana and prostitute roles by the opposing Nationalist side. In this example, the feminine figure is anonymous and depersonalized, offering no friendly or intellectual companionship, only her sex. Roland Barthes addresses female nudity in his essay on the mythology of French burlesque. He argues the contradictory position that women are “desexualized” once they have stripped themselves naked; the trappings of performance, including elaborate costumes and dance, allow the performer to clothe herself against the male gaze aimed at the spectacle she enacts. In keeping with Barthes’s analysis, the figure in this artwork is nude and therefore desexualized. However, she lacks the ability to clothe herself with dance. The male soldier figure’s interest in this female is limited to what he can do to her, rather than regarding her as a willing participant. If she lacks sexuality and lacks agency, then the poster’s viewers become unwilling voyeurs in a case of patriarchal dominance of a female by a male, a dynamic contrary to the spirit of the Republic where this art was displayed. Thus, the poster shocks and shames its viewers as part of its message. Yet the poster also draws on a patriarchal and biblical Eve trope. The torso is completely lacking in any human agency, yet somehow it poses an implied threat, one as dangerous as bullets. It is headless and therefore lacks a voice, has no arms to detain the man or legs with which to pursue him. Ironically, despite being objectified and reduced to mere genitals, the feminine form is shown as enticing and entrapping the male, a powerful position capable of bringing about his downfall.

Though women were certainly capable of transmitting disease and therefore did pose threats to men at the front, the economic want and social conditions that drove women to prostitution indicate they were victims themselves. Other women who occupied the same geographic space as prostitutes were also treated as objects. A miliciana on the Majorca front wrote in her diary about sexual advances made by male militiamen, noting how she feared their anger upon

35 Barthes, Mythologies, 84–87.
rejection, and how she considered giving in to make peace.\textsuperscript{36} Theoretical or abstract liberation may have been a common Republican goal, but intimate relations between the sexes seemed a matter of personal or religious morality that many felt was outside the realm of politics. Sexual politics grew tenser as gender roles and relationships between the sexes changed.

Yet prostitution was a reality that presented problems in defining gender roles in discourse, particularly on the right. Nationalist language fails to address where and how men (who are presumed to have such urges as part of their nature) should satisfy their lust. If wives and mothers were pure vessels of maternity, there must have been prostitutes, yet this does not fit into the social order and gender roles promoted by the discourse on the right. Rather than accepting that some women must necessarily provide this service, “fallen women” were denigrated, perhaps in order to lighten the burden of guilt on the male conscience. The Republic legally banned prostitution in 1935, and through the artwork included with this educational piece and other efforts, anarchists and other factions on the left worked to eliminate it from Republican discourse as an acceptable practice. On the right, Franco’s code of morality included prostitution as one aspect of sexuality governed by the Catholic Church. The Church’s magisterial teachings, explained in the catechism, forbid sexual activity beyond procreative marital sex. This included pre-marital and extra-marital relations, birth control, masturbation, pornography, abortion, and homosexuality.\textsuperscript{37} Again, no place existed in the post-war social order for the needs prostitution filled, including the satisfaction of socially unacceptable lust and the economic necessity of independent women who fell outside patriarchal structures and thus, were denied a living wage at honest work. Women whose husbands were missing after the war, perhaps imprisoned, exiled or killed and buried in unidentified mass graves, received such low wages that prostitution became

\textsuperscript{36} Nash, \textit{Defying Male Civilization}, 115–116.

their only means of survival. Indeed, according to the Patronato de Protección de la Mujer, a “Francoist foundation for the re-education of ‘fallen’ women,” reports of prostitution and disease increased after the war, despite Franco’s strict Catholic moral code.  

In the Republic, advocacy for widows, single women and those driven to prostitution appeared in persuasive political print literature and poster art. The Mujeres Libres publication (Fig. 3.6) entitled “Prostitution” presents a gritty visual representation in which a woman finds herself forced into a life of shameful denigration rather than the errant perception of wanton lust. The semi-nude female is represented in a body-conscious way. She appears reduced to flesh, cornered by a shadowy male figure. He appears dark, crouching low to the ground as if a beast on the hunt, while she shrinks away helplessly as he surrounds her. His large hand rests on her body, and her clingy clothing highlights her genitals. These are not the idealized, uplifted breasts of a pinup girl seeking male attention. The viewer is invited to witness a female unwillingly on display, unwillingly sexualized in this situation. Barthes notes that amateurs new to burlesque cannot hide behind the skill of their dance movements or elaborate costumes, thus their awkwardness imprisons them “in a condition of weakness and timorousness.” This woman appears scantily clad, but lacking in artifice. The accompanying text suggests that moral responsibility for the woman’s personal human dignity falls on the shadowy man, yet the image is ambiguous. The publication faults social and economic structures, not lust, with the rise of prostitution. This piece called for humane treatment of women prostitutes, casting them as victims deserving of human dignity and an honorable means of supporting themselves and their families during times

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40 Barthes, Mythologies, 86.
of crisis. The text appeals to men to “help women feel responsible for their own sense of human dignity.”\footnote{Cooperativa Obrera Avant, \textit{Prostitution}.} The text pleads for agency of female sexuality, which under the patriarchy had fallen under the control of fathers, priests and husbands, and implies some degree of ignorance as to a woman’s own dignity. Women are to take part in their own humanity, yet men are the ones to whom the appeal is directed.

Thus, Spanish society appears to have a broad concept of feminine morality that classified socially unacceptable non-sexual behavior as immoral. Prostitution seems a figurative, gendered construct deployed as criticism against women who attempted to sell non-sexual efforts for wages, rather than laboring domestically. Whether truly sexual or figurative, prostitution and wage-labor employment were only some of the methods women used to combat economic want in the wartime Republic. War caused food shortages and disruptions in transport that made life even more difficult for those who had been hungry before. Both left and right referenced the gendered quality, or perhaps virtue, of abnegation or sacrifice. In addition to chastity, abnegation is perhaps “the most valuable quality of women on both the Left and the Right, according to all treatises on the subject,”\footnote{Mangini, \textit{Memories of Resistance}, 43.} a virtue advocated by Ibárruri on the Left as well as Pilar Primo de Rivera, leader of the \textit{Sección Femenina} (Women’s Section) of the Falange. The quality of feminine abnegation evokes stoic archetypal imagery of self-sacrifice and martyrdom.\footnote{Ibid., 42–43.} In reality, male enlistment and casualties thrust uneducated, unskilled women who knew only Spanish patriarchy into provider roles, forcing them into the hardship of economic independence in an unequally compensated labor market. With regard to the interwar period in Europe, Joan Scott writes that women’s personal experiences of war, filled with deprivation, “contrast dramatically
with the official discussions of heroism and valor aimed at mobilizing national support.” She argues that war is the ultimate sexual disorder, reversing the perceived “natural” order of heroic, manly men and private, self-sacrificing women confined to the domestic sphere. This reversal in the social order changes the perception of gender roles, rendering men “weak and impotent … while women are strong, taking over public life, abandoning husbands and children, ugly, domineering.” The other side of the strong woman who threatens social harmony by earning her own salary through factory or other honest work is the woman who fails to do so honorably, yet in the absence of her enlisted husband must still provide for her children. Thus, the Nationalists cast their social order as protective of women, ensuring they would not need to find work beyond the home. Yet this amounted to domestic confinement, offering no honorable alternatives within patriarchal structure for women who desired or needed a means of survival outside of marriage or religious life. If prostitution increased when societies lacked legitimate means for women to provide for themselves, then social hierarchies such as that of the Nationalists served to perpetuate the very structures that placed women in jeopardy.

3.5 Woman Combatants

Although many groups of women were scrutinized during the war, those who volunteered to serve in the militias came under heavy criticism. Shifts in gender roles appeared with the rise of various socialist, communist and anarchist groups within republican Spain, yet few images were as arresting, even to present date, as that of the female combatant. The existence of women soldiers, nurses, and other groups at the front was controversial and shrouded in myth. Additionally, the radical discourse of women’s groups such as Mujeres Libres differed from that of most

45 Ibid.
other parties and movements across Spain, and did not necessarily reflect individual war experiences. In an effort to de-mystify the iconic miliciana, recent scholarship has brought together the accounts of many women volunteers. Rosario Sanchez, known as “Rosie the Dynamiter,” and Lina Odena became emblems of feminine heroism. Sanchez was admired for leaving her family for the front and eventually losing a hand in combat, and Odena for committing suicide when captured by African legionnaires. Regular women volunteers shared the frustrations with the lack of male support volunteer Lois Orr details in her letters. French volunteer Mika Etchebehere recalled a conversation between milicianas Manuela and Nati and some male militia volunteers. Manuela addresses the men first, “We are from the Pasionaria column, but we would prefer to stay here. They never wanted to give us girls rifles. We were only good for washing dishes and clothes.” These male soldiers also dismissed them for their apparent inexperience with weapons, to which Nati replied, “Of course we know [the rifle], we can even dismantle it, grease it, everything … we also know how to fill cartridges with dynamite. But if you don’t want to give us a rifle, at least let us stay to make soup and sweep.” These desires to serve the Republic in combat through one military column or another often ended in frustration and derision. Etchebehere expresses these concerns in her account of the reply from Manuela, which met with jeers from the militiamen: “I heard that in your column milicianas have the same rights as the men, that they do not wash the clothes and the dishes. I have not come to the front in order to die for the revolution with a dish cloth in my hand.”

Though women combatants expressed a desire to fight for the revolution, necessity seems the primary motivation for their actions, not feminism. In fact, they did not often embrace feminism or even regard themselves as feminists. Perhaps the most famous feminine activist, orator

Dolores Ibárruri, sided with Engels in her desire to enact proletarian revolution first, since the resulting economic changes would supposedly bring social equality between men and women. Known as “La Pasionaria” for her stirring speeches, Ibárruri commented, “In general, I am not a feminist. I like women to participate in battles under the same conditions and with the same rights as men. To create a feminist movement out of the struggle of classes seems a little absurd, because the re-vindication of women is to be found within the fight for democracy.”\textsuperscript{48} Her language indicated confidence in the inevitability of women’s liberation without need for struggle.

Journalist H.E. Kaminski refuted the notion of women combatants posing an inconsiderate distraction to men on the front, noting, “It is useless to mention here vanity serves no purpose and that women do not use lipstick or powder. The majority wear short hair like men, to the point that often it is difficult to distinguish them.”\textsuperscript{49} Kaminski noted that despite this, the men seemed ambivalent. Yet the male soldier he references sounded comfortable with women on the front. Kaminski quoted the solider as saying, “We would be bad revolutionaries if we wanted to prevent a woman from giving her life in the fight against Fascism.”\textsuperscript{50}

Propaganda indicates conflicting discourse with regard to women combatants and political activists. Ibárruri was a fervent yet matronly speaker who made popular the battle cry, “\textit{No pasarán}” or “They shall not pass.” The famous slogan appears on a poster (Fig. 3.7) featuring a female combatant taking aim.\textsuperscript{51} The anarchist-led Valencia CNT produced this poster early in the war, in 1936. Its bright yellow background and hand-drawn lettering make the iconic slogan, “No pasarán” appear to be dripping with blood. These elements draw the viewer’s eye away from the background and lower figures to emphasize the female combatant at the top. The

\textsuperscript{48} Mangini, \textit{Memories of Resistance}, 43.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{No Pasaran!}, Lithography, 44 x 33 cm, 1936, Biblioteca Nacional de España, <http://bdh.bne.es/bssearch/detalle/76958>. 
woman is the focal point, placed physically higher within the composition than the other figures, whose bodies direct the eye upward toward her. She appears androgynous except for her slightly longer hair. Perhaps like Ibárruri, the younger female combatant in this poster has de-emphasized her sexuality in order to more effectively fill her role in defending the Republic. Ibárruri would often appear clad in a conservative black dress with a demure white collar, a style popular with widows and other matrons, which resulted in her acceptance within the Spanish left.\textsuperscript{52} The younger combatant in this image may have downplayed her feminine appearance in order to be accepted on the front. Alternatively, she may simply have chosen to wear her hair short in the popular modern style of the 1920s and 1930s.

However, as was the case in other posters (Fig. 3.4, “Comrades of the Rear Guard,”) the Republican state itself appears in visual representations as gendered feminine in some propaganda. One famous example appears in wartime photography (Fig. 3.8) shot in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{53} The poster artwork (Fig. 3.9)\textsuperscript{54} featured in the photograph bears the exhortation, in Catalan, “The Militias Need You!” The overall-clad militia woman points her finger at the poster’s audience, a provocative gesture that may have unsettled male viewers, rousing them to prove that their manly courage was at least equal to that of the militia woman. But, the militiawoman figure also addresses women, daring them to follow the lead of an emancipated young woman like themselves. The second-person, finger-pointing appeal is not a new persuasive tactic. It appeared previously in the well-known 1914 World War I poster (Fig. 3.10) by Alfred Leete featuring the British Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener, who “wants you to join your country’s

\textsuperscript{52} Mangini, “Memories of Resistance,” 31.
\textsuperscript{53} Spanish Women Called to Arms.
\textsuperscript{54} Arteche, Les Milicies Us Necessiten!
army.”55 The British poster was so successful that artist J.M. Flagg created similar art for United States in 1917, the iconic Uncle Sam posters (Fig. 3.11) in which the scowling, finger-pointing male figure states, “I want you for U.S. Army.”56 In both British and U.S. examples, the word “you” is emphasized by larger-sized text or the exclusive use of the color red. These posters were so successful they were also used during World War II. Although the Spanish example certainly follows in the tradition of these earlier Anglophone second-person appeals, the use of a woman as military combatant by illustrator Cristobal Arteche sets it apart. The embodiment of the nation, which is carried out by the masculine Secretary of War in Britain and Uncle Sam in the U.S., is performed by a woman in the Spanish Republic. Arteche had traveled the Americas and in his youth, painted ladies’ fans in Cuba. He lived in Paris before returning to the Republic and producing his posters in Madrid and Barcelona in 1931. After the war, he lived in exile in Paris and Argentina, and died in Madrid in 1964.57 Regardless of any intentions by the artist Arteche and his Artists’ Syndicate to inspire men and women who were wavering about joining the war effort, the choice of representing the military and the nation itself with a woman is indicative of a willingness of the Republic to characterize itself; democracy, and the left, as feminine. The Spanish figure, though clad in military attire and clutching a rifle, does not appear with unusually large muscles or other masculine features, and instead recalls the figure of Marianne from the French Republic. The nature of the female body is not challenged in this representation; the woman appears average, rather than particularly strong. Thus, in this representation, the state does not appear as a strong entity, but rather as an incorporative, democratic, gender-inclusive

one, as evidenced by the CNT-FAI labor union flags, the flag of the autonomous region of Cat-
alonia, and militia members.

The Spanish militia woman is not the only female to present the second-person command in propaganda art. A series of famous U.S. World War I naval recruiting posters (Fig. 3.12 and 4.13) by poster artist Howard Chandler Christy featured women in military uniform and includes gender-focused, second-person appeals. With her hands casually tucked into her pockets, Christy’s blonde lets her hair trail loosely from beneath her cap. Given this posture, her statement becomes suggestive, “I want you for the Navy.” The phrase “I want you” appears on the top right of the piece, with the qualifier “for the Navy” placed beneath the figure, indicating a pause, which when paired with her pose, becomes sexually charged by the innuendo. Thus, the figure’s feminine appeal attracts men and persuades them to enlist. Unlike Christy’s girl, the Spanish figure appears rigid, the arm bearing her rifle fully extended. She wears blue coveralls not as a form of gender role-play but because that was the uniform of female militia members. Also, the expression on the face of the Spanish militia woman is serious. The visual appearance a woman in traditionally masculine military uniform appeals to firmly established cultural norms of masculinity including roles of provider and protector of women. Thus, this appeal taps into guilt created by the gap between discursive and actual gender roles. Even though the Republic supported measures liberating women, propaganda artists still made use of gendered tropes in order to persuade audiences whose personal opinions were not always yet in line with the pro-
gressive government. Yet this poster also addresses women who might have felt empowered by

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the chance to assume such an emancipated, modern role. Another Christy poster (Fig. 3.13)\textsuperscript{59} bends gender roles to exploit masculine guilt by featuring a female character in military uniform. Again, her hair is shown curling around her hat flirtatiously, and her facial expression is playful. She appears to have just snapped her fingers as the text reads, “Gee, I wish I were a man. I’d join the Navy.” She expresses a desire, whether real or just imaginary, to do precisely what the Spanish militia woman has done. Probably most telling is the text at the bottom, an exhortation that alludes to the sex act itself, commanding the viewer to “Be a man and do it.” Christy spares the flirty female figure from directly questioning the male audience’s masculinity, but in the Spanish poster, the figure implies the accusation herself. Therefore, the Spanish militia woman figure fills a different role by virtue of her status as a military volunteer. This fact makes her gendered appeal that much more compelling by appealing to masculine guilt in her audience. Christy’s appeal, which resembles a bait-and-switch gimmick, is successful precisely because women do not assume masculine roles, despite playing in their clothing.

Although early Republican poster campaigns such as “The Militias Need You” encouraged women to enlist, this discursive support for women combatants was withdrawn shortly after it had begun. As discussed, experiential accounts indicate Republican support of feminism and individual women proved uneven on the front. Discourse and possible Nationalist misinformation conflating women with prostitutes heightened the controversy surrounding the provocative feminine fighter icon, rapidly leading to her discredit in both Falange and Republican discourse. Rosie the Dynamiter addressed the criticisms aimed at the militia members, both male and female: “Spaniards are very critical. They called the milicianas prostitutes and the milicianos thieves. And when the Brigades arrived, they called them every name in the book. I never saw anything … one would have to be very stupid to go to the front lines to be a prostitute, where

\textsuperscript{59} Christy, \textit{Gee, I Wish I Were a Man}. 
you can get your head blown off.’’60 Later posters represented women in more traditional humanitarian roles, as well as socialist realist heroic factory and farm worker roles on the home front. Poster art shifted its focus in order to ask women to provide more support on the rear guard. Likely motivated by a desire to end the controversy, socialist Prime Minister Largo Caballero finally ordered women to leave the militia altogether in 1937.61

3.6 Elections, Voting and Gender

Propaganda media found new audiences, purpose and methods when it came to the issue of women’s suffrage. Due to its nature, representative democracy relies on the opinion of the voting public to enact changes on the highest levels of government, thus at least in part, change moves from the bottom to the top. In order for an aspiring political leader to ascend to a position of power, the public must be persuaded to exercise their power to move the potential leader from the bottom to the top. Unlike the industrial societies in Britain and the U.S., Spain had relatively little experience with elected government and the flow of power from bottom to top. On the contrary, monarchy and dictatorship were by nature top-down power structures. Therefore, persuasive media took on a doubly important role in participatory democracy while reaching new audiences, including still recently enfranchised women. Women won the right to vote in 1931, but paradoxically, many activists on the left feared the female vote, including playwright and founder of the Feminine Association of Civic Education Maria Lejárraga. According to Lejárraga, women voters leaned toward the right mainly due to their support of the Catholic Church. This traditional devotion persisted even though, “The clergymen have kept them in a state of such ignorance over centuries that, to tell the truth, there are few Spanish women … who know how to recite the creed … the only religious duty that is universally understood by the devout Spanish

60 Rosie the Dynamiter, quoted in Mangini, Memories of Resistance, 84.
61 Nash, Defying Male Civilization, 110.
female is to do whatever the priest says.” In this manner, Catholic clergy were part of the patriarchal structure of pre-Revolutionary Spain, joining fathers and husbands as the males charged with caring for and controlling female religious as well as lay unmarried women and wives. Lejárraga’s fears proved correct and indeed, the church-supported CEDA (Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right) party won the 1933 elections.

Between the 1933 and 1936 elections, Spain was led by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the 1920s dictator, Miguel. Although his tenure in office was brief, Jose Antonio left behind enduring ideological traditions. Perhaps his most prominent act was founding the Falange party Franco would later align himself with for his thirty-five year rule. On the evening of October 29, 1933, Jose Antonio announced the creation of the party during a convention at the Theater of Comedy in Madrid. Despite having arrived at his office by electoral means, he speaks against liberal democracy in his address, “Suffrage, that farce of pieces of paper placed inside a crystal urn, carries the privilege of telling us at a moment’s notice whether God exists or not, whether truth is truth or not, whether the homeland should remain or whether it should, at a moment’s notice, commit suicide.” Jose Antonio argues that democracy, even representative democracy, could not be trusted to determine the fate of the fatherland because it depended on individual opinions that could be incorrect or subject to change. In his desire for an absolute truth, he insists patriotic totalitarianism backed by the military is the answer because, paradoxically, it ensures equality. He stated, “And we come here to fight so that the totalitarian state might extend its means to the powerful and the humble alike.”

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62 Mangini, Memories of Resistance, 27.
64 Ibid., sec. Indice Cronologico, 29 Octubre, 1933.
Another part of Jose Antonio’s legacy was the Sección Femenina (Women’s Section) of the Falange, which he founded and appointed his sister Pilar to lead. The SF held little political influence until after the 1936 elections and the outbreak of war. With the creation of these political institutions, the Falange and SF, Jose Antonio established gender constructions Franco would later practice when he consolidated the parties of the right in 1937, under the Decree of Unification.65 Through his SF, Jose Antonio also constructed the official Falange party gender discourse. Thus, the younger Primo de Rivera influenced both political practice and social discourse on the right.

With the goal of reversing the 1933 election, the left worked to win over the female vote before the 1936 elections, making women the target audience of visual propaganda. As practical for a persuasive media campaigns, the rhetoric and imagery varied depending on whether the medium’s audience was male or female. In a Communist party’s Popular Front election poster (Fig. 3.14), a woman is shown with child in tow, moving forward purposefully with her ballot in hand.66 In the lower left foreground appear the forces which hold her back, personified by a bourgeois in top hat and formal wear, a monarchist, and a nun in her habit, complete with rosary beads. These caricatures crush the workers that lie bleeding beneath them, sparing only a mother weeping over her child. The figure of the woman physically bridges the gap between the banners and flags in support of the socialist youth, the Communist Party, the Communist youth, and the Republican Union. Banners call for the return of 30,000 prisoners and bread for siege and counterattack victims by voting for the Popular Front. The tricolor flag of the Republic flies in the background and is echoed in the poster’s color scheme of red, gold, and blue. The woman voter

65 Richmond, Women and Spanish Fascism, 5–6.
emerges vote in-hand, empowered despite her detractors. In stark contrast, an Acción Popular party poster from the right includes a male voter as a powerless victim to the extreme: hanging from a noose. The text claims, “It is suicide to not vote against the revolution and its accomplices.” The masculine representation appears lacking in all agency and power despite the fact that as a right-wing party, Acción Popular formed the core of the Catholic CEDA party, which was instrumental to the right’s victory in 1933. Therefore, at the time of the election this poster promotes, the right was still in power and men certainly held more political influence than women. Thus, the realities of the distribution of political power are reversed in the poster’s imagery to suit the parties’ respective needs in these visual examples. In the 1936 election, the Republican Left parties succeeded in defeating the Nationalist Right by a contentiously narrow margin.

The perceived threat to manliness communicated in the Nationalist poster is in line with Joan Scott’s claims of prevalent militarist and misogynist discourse during the interwar period. The threat of women seizing political control thus encourages men to take action in order to restore the traditional social order, absent throughout Europe since World War I, returning the country to its pre-Republic traditions of Catholic Church-defined, patriarchal gender and social roles. Although Spain did not participate in World War I, the Spanish revolution and Republican years represent a similar disorder of the nation, one that disrupted social structures due to economic and military necessity. Scott argues that restoration of order is often cited as just cause for the imposition of social controls, and in this manner, the success of peace and stability depends

upon highlighting sexual difference and the reversal of feminist gains from the Republican pe-
period so that gender roles and relationships between the sexes return to the familiar old ways.70
Gender historian Mary Louise Roberts also cites World War I as a pivotal event that resulted in a
“discursive obsession” with feminine gender as nations struggled to redefine socially acceptable
roles for the different classes and both sexes.71 However, Spain’s citizenry lacked the social and
political freedom to come to terms with issues of class and gender after the civil war, due to the
victory of Franco’s regime. The abolition of political parties, implementation of censorship, and
reform of the law shut down women’s exploration of new gender roles. Whether the Nationalists
aimed to please their influential male supporters or impose their ideology as a statement of vic-
tory and power, Spanish women on both Republican and Nationalist sides were victims not just
of civil war, but also of Franco’s peace.

3.7 Conclusion: Constructing Francoist Spain

The Nationalist victory in 1939 offered an opportunity for the party to redefine and re-
state its goals as it became the ruling regime. The state communicated its official discourse
through visual iconography, political speeches, and press releases. Representations of Franco
created during this time show the leader’s attempts at visually defining himself as head of the
new Spanish fatherland. In the Nationalist poster “The War Has Ended” (Fig. 3.15),72 the figure
of Franco occupies half of the composition. He appears as the concerned, sober, and measured
paterfamilias, making the classic fascist appeal of the masculine embodiment of the people’s na-
tion. Clad in military regalia rather than monarchical finery, he assumes the role not just of mili-
tary commander, but also of a statesman above party. In one hand, he holds his hat, in the other,

70 Ibid.
71 Roberts, Civilization Without Sexes, 5.
72 Paco Ribera, La Guerra Ha Terminado, Graphic Art Poster, 68cm x 94cm, 1939, Imperial War Museum Spanish
a cane. His uniform displays the insignia of the Falange: the yoke and spray of five arrows mirrored on the flags lying still in the background. The stagnant flags seem out of place with the color guard, which appears to be marching, evoking a paradoxical sense of modernization without change. The red berets of the Carlists, loyalist to the old monarchy whom Franco won over, are visible on a few heads in the background. The Maltese cross insignia he displays on his uniform is associated with the Order of Jerusalem, connected with not only Hospitalar lore, but also the *Reconquista*. Monarchs traditionally gave the cross to military commanders or those who demonstrated their lineage belonged to certain heraldic orders. The medal resembles that of the Spanish Cross, awarded during the war to members of the German Luftwaffe Condor Legion, which Franco directed when Germany lent him air bomber services. In the upper right, bombers fly overhead.

Perhaps more striking than medals or insignia is the prominent fur collar adorning his cloak. The pelt appears to originate from a fox or another common animal, not the ermine characteristic of royal attire. Franco was an avid hunter, and his decision to appear clad in fur is both practical and symbolic, evoking memories of feudal times when hunting was the privilege of the nobility, who were also the masters and fatherly caretakers of their ancestral lands. The use of fur suggests a return to a familiar past rather than the struggles and chaos of modernity. Statues erected to Franco throughout Spain often featured him on horseback, further building the image of the leader as masculine provider, religious crusader, and master in command of his property. He appears in several state-approved photographs wearing a similar fur-trimmed cloak, yet the look is more functional and conservative than luxurious. The austerity of the regime is reflected in the simplicity of the statement in the lower left-hand portion of the poster: “On this day, with the red army captured and disarmed, the Nationalist troops have reached their highest military
objectives. The war has ended. Yet the figures marching in the background are not jubilant. Some are facing forward, but others have their heads turned toward Franco as if waiting for his next command. The text makes no appeals to the emotions and it makes no mention of the imprisonment, exile or forced labor that the effeminized “red army” of the Republic was forced to submit to under the command of his masculine, Nationalist dominance.

After this victory, Franco remained in power for over thirty-five years. At the end of his life, a democratic transition produced a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government. Yet decades after Franco’s death, Spain’s struggles with memory, gender and democracy still make front-page news. The summer of 2011 in Madrid, a street named *Paseo del Doctor A. Vallejo Nágera* was renamed by the city’s Forum for Memory *Calle Contra la Impunidad* (Street Against Impunity). Signs suggesting new names such as Street of Freedom appeared affixed to the official placard bearing the street name (Fig. 3.16). The man for whom the street had been named, Dr. Antonio Vallejo Nágera, was the director of psychiatric services under Franco, and according to local newspapers was “responsible for justifying the abduction of children and the involuntary commitment of single mothers to psychiatric facilities after the Civil War.” His reactionary hopes for “purifying” Spain recalled the *Reconquista* against Muslims and Jews as well as Golden Age glorification of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). Despite his historic nostalgia, his scientific methods were modern. He published articles in support of eugenics, which was popular with other segments of the European right. In his 1937 treatise *Eugenésia de la Hispanidad y Regeneración de la Raza* (Eugenics of the Spanish and Regeneration of the Race), he gives voice to the aspirations of the Spanish right:

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73 Ibid. Translation is my own.
75 Ibid. Translation is my own. 
It is not merely a question of returning to the human values of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is a matter of putting them back into the thoughts, habits, and conduct of the nation, with the aim of morally healing the environment in such a way that the phenotype may be strengthened and the genotype does not degenerate.76

As this text indicates, Franco’s vision for the Spanish nation was a dramatic change from discourse of the modern, feminized, socialist Republic with its iconography of gender and class equality, to the traditional, masculine, right wing state of the Nationalists. Although neither the Republic nor the nation was strong, the Nationalists communicated more consistent social and economic gender roles than the Republic. However unattractive their design or unpopular their message, Nationalist artwork presented a unified image of masculinity and strength that was readily understood and familiar to Spaniards. In most posters characterizing the new Spanish nation, women are invisible. When women do appear, they assume strictly maternal roles. Indeed, the Republic’s representations of women were ambiguous, at best. At its heart was the question of agency, whether economic, political, or sexual. Poster art shifts from displaying politically empowered women exercising their newly obtained right to vote to economically disenfranchised prostitutes. Brightly colored images of women combatants may have dotted the landscape of Barcelona in the early months of war, but these images were replaced by appeals to foreign aid featuring women protecting their children. These approaches and appeals, made by a heterogeneous collection of artists’ syndicates, ministries, and political parties, fail to offer a unified vision of modern feminine agency. These varied sources of artwork created compelling, inclusive imagery that avoided alienating sectors that might have immediately supported Franco. Yet the strength of their diversity was their weakness, and they failed to create a consistent gender discourse for the Republic. Personal accounts indicate that despite the Republic’s egalitarian

goals, in practice, some individual men within the Republic still adhered to traditional, patriarchal roles. Thus, women’s wartime liberation was brief and failed to significantly change the minds and social structure of Spanish society, allowing the reinstatement of traditional gender roles after the war. With the support of the Catholic Church, Franco’s moral codes imposed these gender roles based on biological difference, which would confine women to traditional, prescribed maternal roles until after *El Caudillo*’s death in 1975
3.8 Figures

Figure 3.1 Women Also Want to Win the War, Let Us Help Her

Figure 3.2 Woman Farmer! Your Work in the Country Strengthens the Spirit of Those in Combat
Figure 3.3 What Are You Doing to Prevent This?

Figure 3.4 Comrades of the Rear Guard More Shelters Prevent New Victims
Figure 3.5 Protect Yourself from Venereal Disease as if They were Bullets
Figure 3.6 *Mujeres Libres* Prostitution

Los “music-halls” y las casas de prostitución siguen abarrotadas de pañuelos rojos, rojos y negros y de toda clase de insignias antifascistas. Es una incomprensible incoherencia moral que nuestros milicianos—luchadores magníficos en los frentes de unas libertades tan queridas—sean en la retaguardia los que sienten y aún extiendan la depravación burguesa en una de sus más penosas formas de esclavitud: la prostitución de la mujer. No se explica que espíritus dispuestos en las trincheras a todos los sacrificios necesarios para vencer en una guerra a muerte, fomenten en las ciudades la humillante compra de carne, hermana de clase y de condición.

**COMBATIENTES:** No seas vosotros, nuestros propios camaradas, los que entorpezcalla, con una conducta de señoríos, una labor de por sí tan difícil. Ayúdanos a que todas las mujeres se sientan responsables de su dignidad humana. No sigas atropellando a las que, como único medio de existencia, tienen que soportar vuestra tiranía de compradores, mientras nosotras nos esforzamos en hallar el medio mejor de emancipar estas vidas.

**COMBATIENTES:** Cooperad con nosotras en esta ardua tarea.
Figure 3.7 They Shall Not Pass!

Figure 3.8 Spanish Women are Called to Arms
Figure 3.9 The Militias Need You!

Figure 3.10 Lord Kitchener Wants YOU
Figure 3.13 Gee, I Wish I Were a Man

Figure 3.14 Vote for the Popular Front!
3.15 The War Has Ended
Figure 3.16 Dr. Vallejo Nágera Street Becomes the Street Against Impunity
4 CIVIL WAR IMAGERY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

British historian Kevin Foster addresses the challenges of reading and writing about the past, focusing his attention on the ways ideologically charged events can appear “refashioned” over time. He describes how in his studies of British and Irish literature “the complicated landscape of the war has been stripped down to its most elemental, topographical forms,” adding that “the baffling experience of the war has been reduced to an array of decorative postures -- clenched fists and fascist salutes.”\(^1\) Foster’s work appears in a guide to teaching representations of the war edited by Noel Valis, which discusses the challenges instructors may face when trying to convey the complexity of the Spanish landscape to students who lack general knowledge of European history, much less Spain. Perhaps in an attempt to make the material more accessible, Valis notes that textbooks tend to characterize the Spanish war as a prelude to World War II in which the forces of international fascism and socialism used Spain as proving grounds for their newest weapons technologies.\(^2\) This view is oversimplified and problematic for many reasons, chiefly because it overlooks the complexity of social, economic, and political issues present in Spain. It also denies the Spanish agency for their destinies and accountability for their actions. Although international anarchist, socialist, and fascist thought influenced Spain, these philosophies were vernacularized by the Spanish entities that adopted and tailored them to improve particular conditions of domestic life. These ideologies deepened existing tensions regarding class, gender, religion, and urbanization. Linguistic and cultural differences aggravated relationships between the state and regions like Catalonia and the Basque country, which had struggled for

\(^2\) Ibid., 7.
centuries for varying degrees of autonomy. Similarly, foreign military intervention amplified the
classic rebellion from a domestic disturbance to an international crisis.

This chapter places wartime poster art in transnational context by examining the ways in
which these images reflected arguments concerning international involvement in the nation’s
internal civil war. This small sampling of images and writings are rich with visual symbols of
Spanish globalization that drew upon memory of the imperial past and the regional present, re-
velling multi-directional relationships between region, state and the international community.
Such imagery varied dramatically. Some posters commissioned by the right called for a return to
an imagined Spanish imperial past as a Catholic crusader nation charged with saving souls that
would be doomed under secular socialism. Pro-Republican art claimed that foreign fascist inter-
vention was disastrous for Spain, and called for international aid to the democratic Republic’s
cause. These poster examples are noteworthy because they communicated the concerns many
people had in 1933, which some history texts related in hindsight, that a fascist victory in Spain
would have significant repercussions in Europe and the world.

During the 1930s, a world still recovering from the devastation of World War I was
plunged into economic depression. As Spain convulsed with revolution and civil war, the
world’s premier democracies, Britain, France, and the United States, chose a policy of neutrality.
The international socialist and Communist Left was in power only briefly, and was able to offer
only limited aid. The one exception, the Soviet Union, was experiencing its own internal con-
flicts. Some of the posters included in this chapter plead for aid on behalf of the Republic, char-
terizing the outcome as a failure of the international community of liberal democracies to pro-
tect one of its own from fascism. Analysis of these posters benefits from hindsight of a post-
World War II gaze that assumes war between Axis and Allies was inevitable. These posters indi-
cate that from 1936-1937 there was still hope that foreign intervention could stop the Germans and Italians, and prevent further violence. Much propaganda artwork justified its requests for assistance from democratic and socialist states precisely because German and Italian fascists, aiming to expand their influence, had already intervened in Spain. Republican art cast international fascist support of the rebels as a violent outrage, while assistance democracies granted to the Republic were characterized as humanitarian aid. Conversely, Nationalist propaganda used anticlerical sentiments from the Republic to characterize itself as a defender of Catholicism, drawing upon crusader language and imagery to demonize the Republic and question its Spanish authenticity. These persuasive approaches suggest that World War I had not put an end to the tendency of states to form alliances and authorize foreign intervention in support of nations whose sovereignty was threatened. Some causes, if presented as sufficiently worthy, could merit U.S. and British involvement. This chapter places the Spanish Civil War in global context by analyzing the ways in which poster art drew upon Spain’s changing role as a global power, highlighted regional variations within the nation, and appealed for international intervention against the transnational force of European fascism.

4.2 Memory, Spanish Global Stature, and Liberal Democracy

Exploration of the changing collective memory of historical events across time aids in understanding many of the signifiers present in propaganda art. The images analyzed here draw upon events dating back to early modern and even medieval times when Spain played different roles in the world.

Poster art addressed Spain’s global stature, which may have seemed particularly subject to change during wartime, when social and political order was in a state of millenarian chaos. Spanish identity and its position within global systems varied across its history, perhaps more
than its European neighbors. Iberia has been considered a colony of the ancient Celts, ancient Romans, Visigoths and Islamic Empire, making it part of the Mediterranean world system. This perspective shifted near the end of the fifteenth century, as Spain ventured into Atlantic trade. Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, developer of world-systems analysis theory, argued that the Columbian exchanges of 1492 between Europe and the Americas initiated modern globalization due to integration of the Americas in the capitalist world economy.³ Under this assumption, Spain and Portugal initially created the Atlantic world system. Monuments such as the Statue of Isabella the Catholic and Columbus in Granada (1892) were created after the fact to commemorate the memory of Spanish empire in the Americas. The statue may have marked four hundred years of empire in the America, but at the time of its completion in 1892, much of Latin America had already won its independence. The year 1492 also marks the fall of the Islamic Nasarid dynasty in Granada to the Catholic monarchs, shifting Spain’s focus from the peninsula outward, and from conqueror to conqueror. Nationalist poster art included African territories in Morocco that were under Franco’s control, rekindling nostalgia for the Reconquista and the sixteenth-century Golden Age of visual and literary arts. The outward gaze of these posters implies that fascism would expand, imposing its constructed national culture and social order upon its subjects.

Although the Reconquista is hundreds of years in the past, Spaniards continue to encounter significant remnants of the former Islamic empire, particularly in the Andalusian south, by way of the architecture and layout of walled medieval cities that survive today. One example is the Great Mosque of Cordoba. Locals call it La Mezquita, which means “The Mosque,” but its official name as a Catholic place of worship is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption. Layers of Roman, Visigothic Christian, Umayyad Muslim, and Catholic influences survive in the

site’s architecture. The Islamic double arches in the forest of columns and the high Renaissance nave added later serve as a constant reminder of the *Reconquista*. Memory of this perceived heroic past may have inspired hope in Spaniards who felt disillusioned by the loss of overseas colonies, including the Philippines and Cuba, to the United States. Thus, for propaganda artists, the Islamic past and *Reconquista* imagery were relevant tropes that tapped into emotions including pride and loss, useful for persuasive purposes.

Early twentieth century Spain was at a point of transition into modernity. It could shrug off the social order of the *ancien régime* in favor of a more forward-thinking, egalitarian future under liberal democracy. Alternatively, it could turn from such seemingly frightening calls for upheaval and revolution and instead seek refuge in the comforts of the past, as imagined and invoked by powerful leaders. As disparate as the ideologies of the Nationalists and Republic were, even within these groups, factions and sub-groups weakened the whole with their conflicting beliefs. Furthermore, different regions within Spain countered the assumption that the country could even be represented by a single state with a unified national identity. The decaying, polyglot empire had connected regions across Iberia and northern Africa, areas that valued the respect for individuality the Republic offered. Nationalist propaganda constructed the state and appealed to followers by drawing upon imagery of the period when Spain was powerful and characterized itself as unified. Modernization seemed to offer two options: a democratic, socialist, secular Republic or a fascist, clericalist, and oligarchic state. As humanities and religious studies scholar Bruce Lincoln has noted, invoking the past helps create the present by strengthening the imagined link with ancestors and their struggles, while building group identification. ⁴ Domestically, fascism called for restoration of the social order of the *ancien régime*, which the Republic

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had dismantled so rapidly without implementing a replacement.\textsuperscript{5} In terms of Spain's place in the world, invoking the past suggested a new Spanish empire with territorial aspirations that were communicated in the symbols present in poster art.

The Spanish arms (Fig. 4.1)\textsuperscript{6} Franco chose to represent his new state used symbols from Spain's powerful imperial past, which also indicated the direction in which he would lead the future fascist state. This particular poster was produced by prolific artist Carlos Saenz de Tejada. Saenz was born in Tangiers, illustrated fashion models in 1920s Paris, and returned to Spain in the late 1930s. Ironically, his illustrations of 1920s women are not traditional, maternal figures favored by the Falange. Instead, Saenz featured elongated, stylized figures reminiscent of the “new woman.”\textsuperscript{7} This 1938 poster establishes Franco’s iconography for the new state and shines light on his opinion of gender roles within his vision of the new Spanish state. The coat of arms featured here is a physical object held aloft by heavily muscled men. The man on the left wears the blue shirt of the Falange, while the one in the center is clad in the regular military uniform. The last man on the right wears the red beret of the Carlists, who supported restoration of the monarchy. The poster was printed in Renteria, a town near San Sebastian in the Basque country. Prior to war, the area had supported the Carlists. The different uniforms suggest different factions uniting in common effort, but whether they are truly that different is questionable, considering the three males look as if they might be relatives. Because of their position holding the arms, the symbol of the state, these figures signify the persons on whom the state would rely for support. All three figures hold positions within the military, are large, and masculine. The hands holding up the arms are oversized, the shirtsleeves bulging from the muscles beneath. Limbs are

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{7} Pulido, “Y Sáenz De Tejada Creó a La (Nueva) Mujer.”
lengthened and unshaven necks are broadened. All these visual cues communicate patriarchy, power, and brute force at work. This image suggests that men, particularly able-bodied men serving the state armed forces, are the people who matter under Franco.

The symbols deployed in the arms themselves by the monarch (or in Franco’s case regime) speak to its lineage and aspirations. The very fact that Franco chose a coat of arms bearing a crown is incongruous, given his status as leading military commander, the Generalissimo and Caudillo, a position that was neither monarchical nor hereditary. Yet its presence, and that of the Carlist in this work, suggests that Franco was aiming to gain or retain the support of monarchists. Arms of the Republics, including the Second Republic, replaced the crown with castles or the red Phrygian cap, icon of the French Revolution. The ribbon at the top behind the eagle reads “España, Una, Grande y Libre,” (“Spain, united, mighty, and free”), a popular slogan of the day. Filled with heraldic symbols, the fields in Franco’s arms draw upon many historical references related to the central Spanish regions and celebrated Reconquista kingdoms Castile and Leon. These are represented by castles and lions, recalling the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. His use of this imagery recalls the Spanish golden age, the period of imperial expansion, wealth, and power. The striking black eagle also appeared on the fifteenth century arms; however, eagles are a classic symbol of European royalty used for centuries, which also became part of German National Socialist iconography. Later versions of the Spanish arms include the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the center, politicizing Catholicism and placing it under Franco’s control as if the Church was a national rather than universal institution. Other symbols of the Catholic monarchs, which had not appeared on royal arms since, are the yoke and array of five arrows present at the bottom of the shield. These would become the primary symbols of the Falange, appearing in red on uniforms, official correspondence, and the party flag, which
the Falange founder Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera is shown holding in one example of fascist poster art (Fig. 4.2). The two columns supporting either side of the shield lying outside of the eagle’s wings are the Pillars of Hercules, which signify the straits of Gibraltar. Combined with the Latin motto, “Plus Ultra” (“further beyond”), this iconography signifies Spain’s expansionist aspirations. Franco’s regime promoted an anachronistic revival of the age of Spanish imperialism. Particularly when combined with the rise of fascism in other parts of Europe, this posed enough of a threat that it became a popular trope of Republican propaganda art, examples of which are discussed in detail below.

The Reconquista of Spain from the Muslims was a centuries-long historical process that was constructed retrospectively into a victory narrative and founding myth for the Francoist state, posing historiographical problems for works produced while his regime was in power. Although evidence of architecture, infrastructure and other scientific advances was plentiful and accessible in archives such as the collection at the Escorial, Catholic nationalist discourse cast the medieval Islamic presence in Spain as “contaminating” the Spanish. Rather than relying on nonexistent racial or ethnic markers for social divisions, after the Reconquista Spaniards imagined society was divided into three castes based on religion, with remaining Jews and Mozarabs placed beneath Catholics. These divisions or distinctions were nonetheless believed to be biologically determined based on the limpieza de sangre (blood purity of lineage). Thus, Nationalist propaganda aligned Catholicism with Spanish nationalism. The anti-clerical movement, which opposed the Catholic Church’s support of landed elites, was cast as not only anti-Catholic but

8 Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera Salutes with Flag of the Falange Espanola, n.d., Xtremerightcorpora-
teblogspot.com, <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_ulwtFAYnZKg/TOhUANMpeI/AAAAAAABiA/bKVfquY7SII/s1600/cartel-falange.jpg>.
11 Ibid., 49, 67–68.
also anti-Spanish. Further, the discourse of Spanish Catholicism promoted by the Falange showed hopes for imperial expansion, in this case on religious grounds. The National Front’s 1937 poster “One Crusade” (Fig. 4.3) was commissioned and approved by the official state ministry of propaganda, the Servicio Nacional de Propaganda, Departamento de Plástica, as indicated by the small insignia in the lower right, the silhouette of the eagle with the letter “P.” This design features a globe with a cross-shaped shadow cast upon the image of Spain at the center, highlighted in red. The translated text reads, “Spain, spiritual leader of the world,” recalling Crusader and Reconquista discourses and the notion of a united Christendom, with Spain at the center, leading the way. Despite the internal struggles of civil war, the Falange promoted imagery that looked outward, drawing upon notions of religious and national superiority in order to appeal to a society weary from the decay of its empire.

Art from the Republic addressed class as well as religion and national identity. A famous poster commissioned by the Ministry of Propaganda, “The Nationalists” (Fig. 4.4), displays a group of figures on a ship resembling a caravel, flying the National Front slogan “Arriba España.” Some sources credit the artist Cañavate with this work, but most attribute it to Juan Antonio Morales, a painter from Valladolid in Castile-Leon, who spent time in Cuba during his youth. In this poster, the figures surrounding the Nationalist slogan are not Castilian Spanish. The military man on the left bears Italian fascist insignia on his sash. The man in the suit with a monocle on the right wears a swastika on his lapel and holds a bag, presumably filled with money, representing the interests of the foreign bourgeois capitalist elite who would exploit the

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13 Morales, *Los Nacionales*. 
Spanish working classes. The Catholic Church, which had aligned itself with the bourgeois class and its clients, also has international influences. The Cardinal in the foreground signifies the Spanish church's connections with the Vatican, rounding out a group of international characters with interests in Spain’s local affairs. The two dark-skinned figures in the rear, one wearing a fez, represent Franco’s military divisions of Moroccans, as do the faces peering through the port-holes in the bottom of the boat. These dark-skinned fighters recall the Army of Africa and its role in the rebellion and war. They also signify medieval Muslims, thereby reviving prejudices as old as the *Reconquista*. The two memories merge in this imagery, and the Moroccan fighter draws upon old fears of skilled “Moorish” fighters. This piece indicates the relevance and power of the *Reconquista* myth at the time of the war. Perhaps even more striking are the Republic's assertions as to the extent to which the Falange, which Franco represented as truly Spanish, was supported by, and therefore indebted to, foreign powers.

The boat itself bears a plaque that reads “*Lisboa,*” capital of Portugal, as well as “*Junta de Burgos,*” the meeting in which the bicolor Spanish flag was adopted by the National Front, thus rejecting the tricolor Republican flag. The “*Junta de Burgos*” is also the name of a 1512 decree outlining the crown’s imperial power over indigenous peoples in the Americas. The artist again suggests Franco has expansionist aims by linking him to the Spanish Empire of the past as he himself did. Catalans, Asturians and Basques might not have identified themselves as Spanish, but the characters in this piece are even less so. Spain itself hangs from a gallows, a vulture waiting eagerly above. This piece serves as a key example of the many discursive tropes the Republic deployed in poster art, including those designed to counter Falangist persuasive tactics.

The presence of the Moroccans bearing rifles draws attention to the role of North Africans in Franco’s military offensive. In a word, the Army of Africa proved indispensable to the
Nationalist victory. Without the Army of Africa’s 45,000 troops under Franco’s command, and other enlisted Moroccans totaling 80,000 men, Franco would likely have met early defeat.\textsuperscript{14}

Franco himself is quoted as saying, “without Africa I cannot explain myself to myself or to my comrades in arms.”\textsuperscript{15} Historian Andy Durgan further describes Franco’s ideological appeal to the northern Africans; Franco characterized the battle as a clash of the world’s major religions against the atheist Republic, which would end only in total destruction and unconditional surrender.\textsuperscript{16} Further foreign intervention, in the form of Italian and German airlifts, transported Franco’s rebel troops onto the peninsula where they fought the Republic.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, several levels of irony are present in Franco’s construction of the Nationalist state as a throwback to the sixteenth century reign of the Catholic monarchs. First, although Franco deployed troops that were residents of a Spanish protectorate, they were not themselves Spaniards compared to the Iberian Republicans they attacked. Perhaps more significant is Franco’s political stance concerning religion. After relying on Muslims to defeat secular and Christian Spaniards, he then characterized himself as unquestionably Catholic, adopting the yoke and arrows (Fig. 4.1-4.2), symbols of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. They had insisted on \textit{limpieza de sangre}, preventing Muslims and Jews from holding positions of power and eventually expelling them from Spain in the sixteenth century. Despite these contradictions and at the expense of diversity, Franco represented Spain as unified under National Catholicism.

Development of a single nationalism from one, unified Spanish culture proved problematic for early twentieth century Spain, which had a limited transportation system and Catholic rather than national secular schools. Although nineteenth century war against the French may

\textsuperscript{14} Durgan, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, 32–33.
\textsuperscript{15} Graham, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, 33.
\textsuperscript{16} Durgan, \textit{The Spanish Civil War}, 33–34.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 37–38.
have temporarily unified the country under a common political cause of independence, in the early twentieth century Spain was still a diverse collection of regions with distinct linguistic and other cultural traditions. Neighboring France had modernized and unified its national culture through state-sponsored secular schools, military conscription, and infrastructure improvements benefiting travel and trade,\textsuperscript{18} practices Spain had not shared. Poster art produced by the Republic borrowed imagery from political events favoring liberal democratic traditions occurring outside of Spain, including the French revolutions. One example, “The New Marseillaise”\textsuperscript{19} (Fig. 4.5), superimposes photography of civil war combatants over a red duotone reproduction of Eugene Delacroix’s “Liberty Leading the People”\textsuperscript{20} from the July Revolution of 1830 in France. The photomontage artist is the famous German Dadaist John Heartfield, whose politically charged work protested World War I, Weimar capitalism, and Nazism. The choice of red signifies the prevalence of socialist parties in the Republic, but the use of French revolutionary imagery aligns the Spanish Republic with other popular movements opposed to monarchy and social hierarchies. By selecting Delacroix’s work, Heartfield chose to celebrate French liberalism over the forces of nineteenth century reaction, while overlooking any anti-French nationalist sentiments on the part of the Spanish. For the Republic, the goals of political, economic, and social revolution transcended nationalism, countering the key appeal of the Falange.

Both the National and Popular fronts had drastically different visions for the future of Spain, and each side regarded the other as presenting a disastrous outcome for the country and its neighbors. The Nationalist Front’s powerful religious and \textit{Reconquista} imagery is incompatible


\textsuperscript{20} Delacroix, \textit{Liberty Leading the People}. 
with the Republic’s liberal, secular society. The Falangist goal of strengthening the Spanish military was reflected in its repressive policies of political and cultural unity. Spain would have one political party, one language, and one culture. Political unity would come at the expense of freedoms associated with liberal democratic traditions. Cultural unity would likely have strengthened national identity, but it would have come at the expense of the regional variations present in Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia. For centuries, these places strove for autonomy from the central government in Madrid, and they resented the linguistic restrictions and mono-cultural hegemony of other regional traditions such as flamenco, which Franco selected as representative of all of Spain in seemingly arbitrary fashion. For optimistic supporters of each side, their respective ideology of choice seemed best and was therefore destined to prevail. Yet neither fascism nor democratic socialism was destined to succeed based on merit. As anthropologist Eric Wolf suggests, this determinist view of civilization having a “genealogy” by which classical culture led to medieval Christendom, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and so forth is flawed. He denounced this view for turning history into a “moral success story” which progresses in linear fashion through time toward some “final apotheosis” of virtue. Ultimately, merit held little sway in the face of mechanized warfare backed by international military powerhouses.

4.3 Transnational Ideologies and Regional Variations of Poster Art

Divided Spain, stripped of overseas colonial possessions, seemed an unlikely recipient of foreign attention during the period following World War I. Yet aid, weapons, food, and volunteers flowed into Spain from around the world, and a conflict between political factions within a single country converged with broader geopolitical tensions and escalated into an international war with results that would outlast the conflict itself. As secondary literature suggests, rather

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than any qualities particular to Spain itself, the polarizing ideologies of fascism and socialism seem to have attracted volunteers to the site of battle, which happened to be located in Spain. The international community became involved in the local conflict for reasons manifest in examples of poster art. Republican propaganda and personal accounts of foreign volunteers demonstrate the left’s desire to aid the new socialist workers’ revolution. Anarchists favored revolutionary change, while socialists and Communists worked toward first winning the war to preserve democracy, then socialism. These accounts communicate disappointment when the movements suffered setbacks, but did not express the level of abject fear of fascism present in propaganda posters. Nationalist posters communicated stability to counter the Republic’s sweeping changes, which are referenced in these accounts. Memoirs place the social movements driving production of poster art into context.

Perhaps impassioned because of British, U.S., and French government non-intervention, approximately 40,000 volunteers from over fifty countries mobilized on behalf of the Spanish Republic as part of the International Brigades. Defying bans prohibiting citizens from participating in foreign combat, they risked reprisal and volunteered. Propaganda celebrated the volunteers as offering a gesture of international solidarity in fighting with the Republic. Yet making these appeals and giving thanks for them drew attention in propaganda discourse to the presence of foreigners fighting in Spain. Placing emphasis on the foreign presence, national pride, and Spanish unity, Franco nonetheless surpassed the foreign intervention of the Republic by enlisting military assistance in the form of 20,000 German troops, 70,000 Italians, and thousands of Portuguese. Despite fascist rejection of Islam on “religious and ‘racial’ grounds,” Franco relied heavily upon the Moroccan Army of Africa. Smaller numbers, approximately 1,000 to 1,500

volunteers, arrived from Britain, Ireland, France, Romania, and Russia to fight for Franco. They fought not only in support of fascism but also in defense of Catholicism or monarchy. Still others fought to oppose the spread of Soviet Communism. Thus, propaganda from both Republicans and Nationalists accused the other of mortgaging Spanish interests to foreigners. However, Republican artwork is memorable and damning in its representations of the notorious aerial attacks carried out on Spanish civilians by the German Condor legion and Italian bombers in support of General Franco’s forces.

Before foreign aid or volunteers arrived in Spain, foreign political ideas had already crossed the border. Spain’s success against Napoleon marked a century of multiple, failed attempts at institutionalizing liberal constitutional reforms. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, anarchist and socialist groups had organized on the peninsula. Spanish neutrality during World War I did not isolate Spain from the economic hardship participating countries suffered or the social changes taking place in neighboring France. These and other factors all contributed to the adoption of transnational ideologies capable of offering the country dramatic change. European Marxism and Italian fascism clearly influenced factions within society and political groups. However, anarchism and specifically union supported anarcho-syndicalism had gained a significant following in Spain, distinguishing it from the clash between right and left that would continue throughout Europe after the end of the Spanish war.

Although Spain did not participate in military operation of World War I, it felt the impact of social change brought on by war in the rest of Europe. The rise of organized labor through the anarcho-syndicalist movement, centered in Barcelona, is a key example. Indeed, the violent activism of organized urban labor earned support for Miguel Primo de Rivera’s 1920s dictatorship

23 Ibid.
24 Roberts, Civilization Without Sexes, 5.
from monarch Alfonso XIII. Anarchist activists note the success the movement had in Spain, which contributes somewhat to the discourses of Spain being “backward” and fueling comparisons to Imperial Russia, yet the Spanish case was different enough to offer hope of success, inspiring international activists to travel to the peninsula. Russian-born, American anarchist Emma Goldman arrived in Spain in 1936 and observed the organization of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT-FAI workers’ movement. Goldman wrote in a letter dated October of the same year, “The Spanish are a race apart and their anarchism is not the result of books. They have received it in their mothers’ milk. It is now in their very blood. Such people do not wield power for very long.” The lack of liberal democratic traditions and isolation from Europe, as in the case of Russia, posed challenges for the success of such popular movements that focused on dismantling hierarchical power structures of dominance and subordination. However, Goldman distinguished the Spanish experience from that of Russia, and presents a more promising outlook for the movement. In June 1937 she wrote:

The Russian Anarchists, what were they but a handful of refugees from other lands and exiles from prisons, unorganized and at each other’s throat … No wonder they played such an insignificant part and they permitted Lenin and his group to steal the wind from the revolutionary sails. Not so the Spanish Anarchists. They had perfected a remarkable organization. In spite of all persecution, prison, torture they hammered away for 25 years about the importance of anarcho-syndicalism and Libertarian Communism.

Although she praises the Spanish, she does not lose sight of how the aims of the international anarchist movement transcended the particulars of the Iberian conflict, writing, “More than the Russian Revolution, the Spanish is our Revolution.” Goldman’s presence in Spain reveals

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25 Graham, The Spanish Civil War, 5.
27 Ackelsberg, Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women, 40–41.
29 Ibid., 44. Goldman’s emphasis.
her movement’s interest in the success of anarchism rather than expressing specific concern for the Spanish people themselves.

Other accounts from foreign volunteers indicate similar allegiances to social movements rather than the Spanish people. These texts also note the heterogeneous makeup of the Republic. Barcelona hosted foreign and domestic volunteers of various leftist factions engaged in publicity efforts. Posters, newspaper, and radio were some of the media used in these communications. In her correspondence, American volunteer Lois Orr, who worked for a socialist radio station, discusses the complexities of politics and simple minutiae of everyday life. But her letters focused on the organization and the movement, and said little about the Spanish people she was there to help. Instead, she told of her interactions with other foreign nationals, “the cream of the intellectual crop of Germany, and the French and English comrades are intensely interesting.”30 Orr’s husband Charles admitted to her having a better mastery of German than Spanish or Catalan languages; her co-workers, Italians, Germans, Dutch, and English, “All speak, as these educated continentals do, German, English, French, and Spanish.”31 This comment suggests that while the educated elites spoke the major continental languages of Europe, the uneducated did not. Thus, these volunteer workers seemed to have regarded members of the Republic they were committed to supporting with a bit of disdain or even prejudice against their local and uneducated background. For the Orrs and their volunteer colleagues the urban, educated factory worker seemed on higher ground than the provincial farmer who spoke Catalan with intense local pride. Indeed, Lois Orr rarely referred to party workers as speaking Catalan.

However, Orr was aware of both the global and local nature of the conflict she joined, and her position caught between radio political propaganda and the reality she experienced. In a

31 Letter dated October 7, 1936 from Lois Orr to her family. Ibid., 76.
1936 letter to her sister, she wrote, “I can't explain what I mean; it's just a feeling of how unimpressive are the people who really make things happen, who really make history. And when you are close to all these things they look different.” Her assessment of the party she chose to support certainly changed as she viewed it from across the Atlantic and later from within. However, her writing suggests she had become disillusioned by the disparities between the discourse of the new political system and her realities. She added, “It’s really the little points and shades of meaning that decide things; I get a feeling here that history concentrates on the little things.” She ended her discussion, “you can be vague and high-minded in America, but here you must understand and appreciate the tiny nuances, as well as having a broad oversight, or you are lost.”

Orr's comments indicate she opposed regionalism and cast it as a liability to the anti-fascist cause. In a letter to her parents in early 1937, she noted that if she were a “loyal Catalan” she would refer to the city in which she worked, Barcelona, as part of Catalonia and not part of Spain. She wrote, “These people here are fiends on this subject of Catalanism,” and added that, “this spirit of nationalism has no place in a worker’s world, of course.” In response to her mother, who apparently urged Orr to experience the local color, she wrote, “this isn’t a tourist cruise and the most important thing about the Catalan workers at this particular moment is … the fact that they are the vanguard of the world working class: Emphasis on the things they have in common with workers all over the world.” While indifferent to local custom, Orr put to rest centuries of regional strife, uniting Catalans with Spanish in the interest of the workers’ movement. In this case, local interests yielded to global concerns. Yet the problem of regional separatism is contradictory. The Falange supported a Spanish monoculture as part of its nationalist mission, invalidating the identities of the separatist regions. However, Orr also invalidated regional

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32 Letter dated January 6-27, 1937 from Lois Orr to her sister Anne. Orr’s emphasis. Ibid., 120.
33 Letter dated February 4-12, 1937 from Lois Orr to her family. Ibid., 126.
34 Letter dated March 4-7, 1937 from Lois Orr to her family. Ibid., 139.
pride in favor of an international socialist movement in which class is the single category of difference, globally. Thus, these memoir accounts contextualize the social movements fueling the production of poster art on behalf of their respective causes.

As Goldman indicates in her letters, regions within Spain adopted anarchist approaches to social reorganization. However, economic factors were perhaps equally important, and syndicalism provided hope to workers who sought alternatives to client-patron relationships that appeared alongside the social order of the *ancien régime*. Problems of modernization, industrialization, separatism, and workers’ rights interacted and fueled anarchist support, particularly in urban areas of Spain including the significant port and factory city of Barcelona in Catalonia, the mountainous mining regions of Asturias and the Basque country, all located in the north. A 1936 CNT-FAI propaganda poster (Fig. 4.6)35 communicates the party’s platform symbolically through art. The artist, Toni Vidal, produced several political illustrations for the anarchist magazine *Tierra y Libertad* of Barcelona, where this poster was printed. The magazine, named after the anarchist slogan “land and liberty,” kept publishing and circulating new editions, albeit without the FAI logo.36 Vidal’s composition places armed combatants behind large, three-dimensional letters that read, “CNT-FAI,” literally presenting the anarchist-led labor federation as a structure fighters could support or get behind. It may shield combatants from oncoming fire, yet the structure prevents a neat arrangement of military forces by separating individual combatants from each other. Revolution is under way, undeterred by images of casualties or other realities of war. Of the thirteen militia members visible in this poster, four of them are women. The CNT-FAI flag flies above, divided diagonally in half between the CNT portion of the more socialist-leaning contingent in red, and the iconic black flag of the anarchist FAI. In the distance,

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factory smokestacks rise alongside skyscrapers, noting the urban and industrial social base of the movement. Vidal includes the date, July 19, 1936, which marks the far right rebels’ *coup de etat* and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. A representation such as this would have educated the public about the nature of the CNT-FAI. As in the case of most of these images, the message could have been easily understood by anyone viewing the poster, including the less educated lower classes and women who nevertheless may have been more politically knowledgeable than bourgeois viewers.

As Lois Orr notes in her letters, regional identifications further divided and weakened the Republic. Centuries-old rivalries and pride could be repressed outright, as did Franco, or they could be tamed in the face of a common enemy, for the benefit of the Republic. A carefully nuanced approach by Republican propaganda artists encouraged cooperation between the separatist regions. In the face of international intervention, the Republic and National Front took different approaches. Rather than homogenize the national cultures of Spanish separatist regions in propaganda, Republican artwork instead recognized their individuality as separate entities working together voluntarily in the interest of unity. However, this had not always been the case. Before the Nationalists’ *coup de état*, the Basque country, or Euzkadi, was at odds politically with the rising far-left of Catalonia. The Carlist pro-monarchy movement was particularly strong in parts of the Basque country, and devout Catholics tended to align themselves with the Vatican. For those who regarded the Republic with suspicion, if not contempt, the rebel *coup de état* further divided already conflicting opinions. That changed after the April 26, 1937 aerial attack ordered by the Nationalist rebels on Guernica (or Gernika.) Refugees moved south into Catalonia, where representatives from the Basque country *(Delegacio General d’Euzkadi a Catalunya)* commissioned posters to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis following the attack, and to express
gratitude to Catalonia for receiving the Basque people. A 1937 Catalan-language example of
these goodwill posters (Fig. 4.7)\(^{37}\) was printed in Barcelona and created by artist Serra Molist,
who produced several pieces to this effect, and also produced posters for the Union of Christian
Workers (UTC, Unio de Treballadors Christians de Catalunya.) This poster includes a small im-
age of the Catalan arms at the upper left corner, and a long line of figures march in silhouette,
ending on the right side with multicolor images of suffering women with children. In the back-
ground the Basque flag flies, yet the composition communicates solidarity and gratitude despite
any regional differences. These separatist groups shared a history of, cultural repression and the
imposition of cultural hegemony by Madrid. This and other solidarity posters gather potentially
divisive sentiments in the Republic and redirect these at the Nationalists. In this way, they aimed
at uniting distinct entities behind a common cause, and just as importantly, against a common
aggressor.

Appeals for local support connect the region with the international ideology it must fight.
For example, local identification permeates the black and white photograph (Fig. 4.8)\(^{38}\) of a foot
stamping out a swastika in “Crush Fascism.” The photo is attributed to Pere Català Pic, who was
a prolific Catalan photographer with photo credits from cigarette paper and vermouth advertise-
ments. In this work for the Catalan government propaganda ministry (Commiserat de
Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya), he features an espadrille (espardenya in Catalan),
which is a shoe local to Catalonia and Aragon. Its inexpensive, homespun canvas and jute con-
struction makes it commonplace regional footwear. The pictured shoe is fraying, implying it is
well worn by a worker. Yet the humble, local shoe wields power as it crushes the symbol of in-

\(^{37}\) Serra Molist, Catalans, Euzkadi Appreciates Your Help, Graphic Art Poster, 50 x 65 cm, 1937, Biblioteca Na-
cional de España, <http://bibliotecadigitalhispanica.bne.es:80/weblent/DeliveryManager?application=DIGITool-
3&owner=resourcediscovery&custom_att_2=SimpleViewer&pid=77697>.

\(^{38}\) Pere Català Pic, Aixafem El Feixisme, Photograph, 100 x 70 cm, 1938, Memoria Digital de Catalunya - Universi-
ternational fascism. The separatist identity, which historically opposed cultural hegemony imposed by a centralized national government, appears in this photograph as an asset, with regional pride serving the cause of anti-fascism.

A 1937 poster from Madrid (Fig. 4.9) emphasizes the foreign “other,” exhorting the Spanish to “Rise Against the Italian Invasion of Spain.”39 Artist Jose Espert, whose work also appears under the name Josep Spert, is credited with creating Mexican film posters in the 1940s. In this work, commissioned by the Committee in Defense of Madrid, a new Italian leather boot has landed on the Spanish capital. Identified by the Italian flag, soldiers appear neatly packed within the giant boot. Their bayonet-tipped rifles and heads are all in perfect alignment. This rigid positioning of the troops is reminiscent of the discipline, order, and military precision associated with fascist regimes. The boot bears the insignia of the Italian fascist party, the fasces. The bundle of sticks bound together with an axe protruding is one of the most common elements of Italian fascist iconography, and signifies the collaboration between the founder of the Spanish Falange, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and Mussolini’s Italian fascist party. Fires rage in Barcelona, the Basque country, and Asturias to the north, as well as Seville, Granada, and Murcia in the south. As the boot suggests, Franco’s forces had undertaken military campaigns aimed at weakening the Republic by dividing it in two, in part thanks to foreign intervention by the Italians.

Perhaps encouraged by the influx of international volunteers, the Republic continued its appeals to other states to abandon policies of neutrality. Given the Nationalists’ alliance with Germany and Italy, neutrality amounted to assisting the fascists by way of omission. Economic policy and international exports motivate the thoughtful Catalan-language poster (Fig. 4.10)

39 Jose Espert, Levantaos Contra La Invasion Italiana En España!, Lithography, 100cm x 70cm, 1937, <http://www.guerracivil.org/Carteles/Espert/GCE_0756_Espert_invasio2.jpg>. 
“Stranglers of the Spanish People, the Many Reasons Why Neutrality is False.” This piece was commissioned by the Catalan Commissariat of Propaganda and was printed by a local graphics house with the approval of the CNT-UGT parties. This artwork details the complex realities of global political economy. It claims, “The real reason for false neutrality is foreign investment in Spain.” Lines connect foreign interests to Spain with regard to factory-produced goods, mining products, and other commodities. Rather than a realistic view of the globe, this map shows Spain’s symbolic position not as a peninsula but as an island isolated from its neighbor France. This view is representative of the non-interventionist practices undertaken by Western Europe and the United States. The image delivers a global perspective of Spain’s connections with the rest of the world, with bi-directional commodity chains drawn in. This poster reminds viewers that diplomatic neutrality is impossible in a world of trade and international investment. It also suggests that foreign economic interests were aligned with capitalism and fascism, and stood to benefit when the Republic was “strangled to death.”

The international nature of the crisis progressed from the influx of ideologies to military movement to appeals for humanitarian aid. The humanitarian organization Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid) produced a series of propaganda posters communicating several messages about socialist prisoners, combatants and their families. These images pled for international assistance, demonstrated the ways in which aid benefited local populations, and offered hope of comfort to those in need. The 1937 poster “Asturias” (Fig. 4.11) by the Catalan artist Tomas comforts citizens, assuring them that, “today as it was yesterday, Red Aid of Spain will

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continue to care for your families.” The use of a miner and the word “yesterday” mentioned in the text is likely a reference to the 1934 revolt of Asturian miners, which resulted in subsequent suffering. As a miner-turned-militiaman prepares to hurl a stick of dynamite at the enemy, a shadow of a wife and children watch from the rear, presumably protected by the International Red Aid while the head of their household is at war. This poster communicates reassurance to the home front, those in battle, and perhaps serves to persuade those who fear for their families to proceed with enlisting. The family appears symbolically at the rear of the battlefront, outlined over the green hills that identify the cool, damp climate of the mountainous region, shown gray and barren by the war. By contrast, in another poster (Fig. 4.12) also produced in Valencia, Spain appears as a map of areas in need of assistance. The text reads, “Red Aid International is Where Needed.” An aid worker is shown placing a truckload of supplies in Andalusia. More trucks and crates filled with clothing, medication, bandages, and other aid supplies appear off to a deterritorialized side. The aid worker’s use of a map of Spain, as well as his size relative to it, implies Spain is merely one of many areas he serves. No matter the size of the country of the conflict raging within its borders, international aid is greater.

In its campaigns to secure foreign military aid for Spain, Republican propaganda also appealed to global fears of fascist expansion in Europe. If states would not answer to their sense of personal responsibility or even guilt and abandon neutrality to help the Republic, then perhaps the prospect of a fascist Europe would finally rouse them into action. The local Spanish conflict could easily serve as a vehicle for further fascist gains in Europe, and even beyond. In the 1936

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Republican poster “Tomorrow the World, Today Spain” (Fig. 4.13) France is shown in black, implying it is the next target of fascist aerial attacks. Hitler points toward a healthy-looking toddler situated on the map near Paris, directing his Luftwaffe planes as they fly toward the capital in formation. In contrast, for Spain, it is too late. Hitler protrudes from the northwest portion of the peninsula, above a collection of dead bodies bearing numbered identification cards. Though only France is shown, the text indicates “the world” is next. The poster was printed in Barcelona by the same group that published Tierra y Libertad magazines, but unfortunately, not much has been written about “Grupo DAS,” who signed the piece. The photomontage seems to merge fictional graphics with realistic photography, as if the Nationalists’ fantasies of fascist expansion could also materialize. A memorandum reproduced below the figure of Hitler bears the swastika and German letterhead. The memo itself is from a German military official to a Spaniard, Colonel Souza, who appears to be coordinating efforts with the German fascists. The poster allows viewers to conflate the images and create their own narrative of what Hitler intended to do with the children of France. Although the Republic could have created this poster using Mussolini, whose fascist state formed the model for the Falange, the choice of Hitler, the more discursively demonized figure, may also have served to heighten viewers’ fears.

In retrospect, historians have reported that Spanish Falange volunteers fought in support of Hitler in the División Azul or Blue Division in World War II. It is also known that Franco formally declined to join the Axis, and Spanish support of Germany did not affect the outcome of war. However, during the Spanish war, it was unclear whether Franco’s expansionist aims


would boost those of Germany and Italy in a joint effort to conquer Europe for fascism. An arresting photomontage poster (Fig. 4.14) was produced by the Republic’s Ministry of Propaganda in both French and English. It reads, “Madrid, The ‘military’ practice of rebels” followed by a photo of a dead child, and more text reading, “If You Tolerate This Your Children Will be Next.” The photo’s foreground placement in front of a sky filled with planes in formation conflates the victim’s fate with aerial bombing attacks, implying a causal chain that might not necessarily be accurate. This implication amounts to what fine art propaganda theorist Sheryl Tuttle Ross refers to as a “manipulation of truth” aimed at “subverting reason” in order to make a stronger appeal to the emotions, in this case fear. The use of the second person, “your children will be next” makes the message and the threat extremely personal, and expands the scope of the war to any viewer of the French or English-speaking world.

4.4 Conclusion

Writings of war volunteers and propaganda illustrate the interconnectivity of Spain with Europe and the world at large. By raising awareness of foreign enemy intervention in its regions and appealing to the international community for aid, the Spanish conflict is a civil war within the international conflict between left and right and the struggle for modernity. The globe itself appears as an element of visual design and testament to Spain’s awareness of the international nature and consequences of the war. These artistic representations of the spherical world in space evoke a sense of global consciousness. In the Republic’s 1936 Catalan-language poster “Win for the Sake of the Worldwide Proletariat” (Fig. 4.15), flags of the Republic, Catalonia, the CNT-

45 The “Military” Practice of the Rebels, If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next.
FAI, and the UGT flags fly over a blue globe. Created for the Partit Republicà d’Esquerra (Republican Party of the Left), this work represents the unity of the left under the Republican government led by President Azaña. No longer divided along regions or national borders, the socialist goal of revolution by the international proletariat takes precedence in this work. The graphic design studio and print shop responsible for this work, Seix & Barral of Barcelona, identified itself as a collectivized business in the small print of the lower left corner.

Although Nationalist posters tended to look outward when it came to expansion, particularly in terms of religion, the state reversed itself and took on an isolationist stance after the outbreak of World War II. I include the 1942 poster (Fig. 4.16)48 “Franco maintains the peace of Spain,” not only because of this change in outlook, but because it demonstrates that within Spain, world war was a continuation of the struggle between fascism and socialism that had devastated Spain, which by comparison appears healthy. The composition includes a globe aflame, with all of Eastern Europe and most of the west all but eradicated, reduced to mere cinders. Yet there sit Spain and Morocco, intact, with a Nationalist bicolor flag bearing yoke and arrows. A depiction of the angel of death passes overhead riding a stylized horse and leaving destruction and darkness in its wake. These flying figures call to mind the horsemen of the apocalypse, but they also resemble the work of Picasso during his blue period. This link between Picasso and the airborne angel of death is ironic given Picasso’s opposition to aerial bombing in the Spanish War, which was well known due to the publicity surrounding his masterpiece, “Guernica.” This piece is also ironic because in 1942, the symbolic aerial specter of death shown in this poster is international socialism, but during the Spanish Civil War, the reverse was true, as Nationalists rained death upon the very country they claimed to protect. Regardless of the ethics of Franco’s relationships

with Germany and Italy during World War II, this poster emphasizes that Spain is spared. After the recent devastation of Civil War, that message would have brought relief to its viewers.

Thus, political art from the Nationalists and Republic demonstrate the ways in which fascist and socialist ideologies polarized Spain, further dividing a country already struggling with social and economic conflicts including the burdens of industrialization and modernization. This very weakness of the former empire that had lost its colonies, likely contributed to the popularity of a figure like Franco who would invoke Spain’s former glory days, as if nostalgia could solve problems of the present and future. Despite its emotional appeals for foreign assistance, the Republic found itself isolated from the international community, at least officially. Although Franco would construct his state as homogeneous and pure Spanish, the *pronunciamiento* or far right *coup d’état* that challenged the Republic and led to war carried out by Moroccan troops and strengthened with Italian and German aid. Islamic troops came under his control, yet Franco imposed National Catholicism in Spain using imagery of the Catholic monarchs. Republican artwork documents and parodies these inconsistencies. Rather than a single, unified Spain, poster art from various labor groups, parties, and propaganda ministries celebrate regional variations, creating artwork that shows gratitude and solidarity between these groups as they fought fascism together.

What began as a civil war within one country became a locus of international conflict where the competing ideologies of the day, fascism and democracy, would engage in battle. Spain became one of many countries to come under fascist control during the period. What set Spain and Portugal apart was the persistence of fascism after World War II. Portugal became a charter member of NATO in 1949 and Franco would shape public discourse to distance himself from Hitler after Germany’s defeat. After Franco’s military advances, the allies chose not to in-
tervene. Unlike defeated Germany and Italy or liberated France, Austria and the rest of formerly fascist Europe, Spain remained under Franco’s control long after the end of World War II.
4.5 Figures

Figure 4.1 Spain, United, Great, and Free

Figure 4.2 Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and the Flag of the Falange Española
Figure 4.3 One Crusade, Spain Spiritual Leader of the World

Figure 4.4 The Nationalists
Figure 4.5 The New Marseilles

Figure 4.6 CNT-FAI
Figure 4.7 Catalans, Euzkadi Appreciates Your Help

Figure 4.8 Crush Fascism
Figure 4.9 Rise Against the Italian Invasion in Spain

Figure 4.10 Stranglers of the Spanish People
Figure 4.11 Asturias, Red Aid Cares for Your Families

Figure 4.12 Red Aid International is Where Needed
Figure 4.13 Tomorrow the World, Today Spain

Figure 4.14 If You Tolerate This Your Children Will be Next
Figure 4.15 Win for the Sake of the World Proletariat

Figure 4.16 Franco Maintains Peace in Spain
CONCLUSION: ECHOES OF WAR AND FASCISM

As the protests around the Mediterranean rim spread to include other parts of the world, even the U.S., it is clear that propaganda artwork produced during the Spanish Civil War created enduring political imagery that still speaks to Spanish and global struggles over class and gender. In May 2011, I was fortunate to visit Spain during political campaigns for local elections and witnessed the rise of popular protests against the socialist (PSOE) government’s austerity measures and handling of the banking crisis, protests that continue today against the conservative (PP) government. In each city I visited, social and political protest media in the form of posters, stickers, graffiti street art, banners hoisted over encampments, and handwritten cardboard signs all echoed fragments of art and politics of the civil war. Perhaps the most obvious political statement was the red paint splattered onto public buildings, remnants of paint-ball attacks. Falange founder Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, who was executed in the early days of the Republic, nonetheless retained followers who carved his name into the stone sides of cathedrals. Fig. 5.1 and Fig. 5.2\(^1\) show contemporary views of the Granada and Cuenca cathedrals, splattered with red paint. The group claiming responsibility for the paint-ball attacks leaves its calling card in the form of stickers affixed to the exteriors of buildings and utility poles. This photo (Fig. 5.3) from Barcelona shows a Catalan-language sticker from the local paint-ball group, which calls itself the CNT, using the same initials as the anarchist movement from the 1930s. In this case, CNT still stands for the National Confederation of Workers,\(^2\) which is a contemporary protest movement advocating for gender equality and economic reforms reminiscent of the 1930s. In addition to looking inward at Spain’s problems, this group claims solidarity with social movements of the

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\(^1\) Unless otherwise noted, photographs in this section are my own.

Mediterranean rim, evidenced by the paint-ball attack on the Syrian embassy in Madrid in May 2011, during the Syrian government crackdown on protestors. Street art addresses key concerns such as rising unemployment, bank failures, and housing evictions, but older symbols remain, including pro-anarchist and anti-Nazi graffiti, freshly painted on banks, churches, and even near the Alhambra palace in Granada (Fig. 5.4, Fig. 5.5, and Fig. 5.6). Autonomy movements continue in the Basque country and Catalonia, apparent in a sticker (Fig. 5.7) posted in Barcelona that reads, “Catalunya is neither Spain nor France.” Protest encampments or acampados in the cities form operation centers and command posts for protesters who occupy public plazas, set up tents, and encourage protesters to create their own signs and display them. One example of a handmade protest sign (Fig. 5.8) reads in translation, “The revolution will be feminist, or it will not be.” Well-organized encampments in Granada and Barcelona provided free food, reading materials and WiFi Internet service. Protesters received FedEx packages of batteries, medical supplies, food, and permanent markers. Used cardboard boxes from these shipments were repurposed to create posters. Groups of artists collaborated on large banners strung over the encampments, and one such banner displayed in Granada featured a likeness of Rosie the Riveter (Fig. 5.9) and the English text, “Yes we camp!” The play on the Mexican-American farm worker slogan, “yes we can” (si se puede) is doubly inventive for its play on the words “can” and “camp.” The English-language text stands out in a Spanish-speaking country. Further, with such a rich history of feminist iconography in the Republic’s political poster art, it seems ironic for young protesters to turn instead to imagery from the United States. Demonstrators identified themselves as the Spanish Revolution on websites and social networks such as Facebook, and used #SpanishRevolution as one of its many hash tags on Twitter. All this took place on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of civil war.
Although the war appeared no longer taboo among the younger generation, Spain in 2011 still displayed many of the wounds from the conflict and its aftermath. Class conflict questioned whether the country had a sufficiently democratic government, and calls for gender equality still resonated. Anti-clerical graffiti demanded an even more secular state, while other protesters opposed the rejection of applications for the construction of mosques in once-Islamic Andalusia. Yet protestors arrived on trains that are part of a sophisticated public transport system begun under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, and demonstrations took place on paved, well-lit plazas constructed during the Franco period. Perhaps the trauma and horror of the war and reaction enacted by Franco served a modernizing purpose analogous to effects of the world wars in the rest of Europe, aiding the transition from *ancien regime* monarchy to liberal democracy via violent revolution. Whatever its conclusions, the nation still struggles to acknowledge past conflict even as it faces new and substantial challenges in its uncertain future, along with the rest of the European community, the states involved in the Arab Spring, and states in distant parts of the world affected by the recent global banking crisis.

Despite retaining certain tropes and symbols, movements, governments, and persuasive visual art all change and respond to each other. Poster artwork of the civil war addressed the public roles women had taken in the Second Republic, both responding to the change and calling for it. The period of social destabilization and revolution ushered in feminism that was out of character for most of conservative, Catholic Spain. Yet despite the Republic’s egalitarian stance, accounts from women of the period note daily struggles with individual men who resisted the sudden, dramatic change. Poster art from the Nationalist side succeeded in representing the Francoist rebels as masculine, united, and strong. Indeed, their reactionary views of women, however unpopular, at least provided consistent imagery that was familiar throughout the country. Perhaps
due to its diverse political traditions and heterogeneous social bases, art from the Republic presented women in a variety of capacities including victims, combatants, workers, prostitutes, voting citizens, and stoic mothers. A consistent vision of the new Spanish woman was lacking in poster imagery of the left, and the varied roles women filled during the Republic failed to outlast it.

Clearly, gender inequality was only one issue of many that plagued Spain in the early twentieth century. Fascist and socialist ideologies polarized Spain, further splitting and weakening a country already burdened with social and economic issues while undergoing modernization. Additionally, Spain had fallen into imperial decadence with the loss of most of its remaining colonies. Its African protectorates in Morocco and Rio Muni in Equatorial Guinea served to inflict tragedy and violence upon its people. Most likely, this weakness added to the appeal of fascism and its rhetoric of unity, strength, and foreign expansion. Poster artwork reveals emotional and logical appeals the Republic made to the international community, yet it found itself isolated, at least officially. Regionally distinct Republican posters show respect among the provinces, quieting rivalry and dissent. They acknowledge diversity and cultural texture the Francoist regime would repress by force. Yet despite Franco’s claimed desire to restore Catholic purity to the nation, even he credited his rise to power to Italian, German, and largely Muslim Moroccan assistance. Republican posters took note of these inconsistencies, which perhaps were counteracted by the image of strength the Nationalists communicated through their imagery of the absent Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and the heavily muscled men shown supporting the state without the presence of women in political life.

George Orwell is frequently quoted for his description of Barcelona, which notes, “The revolutionary posters were everywhere, flaming from the walls in clean reds and blues that made
the few remaining advertisements look like daubs of mud.” Indeed, reds and blues still stand out against grime and faded posters, but contemporary artists also wield spray cans, paint ball rifles, and permanent markers. The flag of the Republic still flies in places like Cordoba (Fig. 5.10), and despite my best efforts to purchase one, shopkeepers complained they were unable to keep them in stock. The flag of the Falange was available in a small shop in Seville, and that was the only place in which I saw a contemporary version of the fascist yoke and arrows. Aside from the Republican flag itself, Picasso’s Guernica is perhaps the most iconic image of the war. As recently as April 2012, elements borrowed from the painting appeared in new anti-war artwork distributed on social networks (Fig. 5.11) as part of a movement showing solidarity with the Iraqi people. The design includes a vignette from Guernica, featuring a mother in agony with her dead child, an Iraqi flag added to the figure of the child. As these images demonstrate, Spain still struggles with economic, political, and social issues. These further complicate the country’s conflicting memories of civil war, thirty-five years of fascism, a transition to democracy, and now an economic boom and bust that has left many feeling social justice has not been served. Yet social movements continue their tradition of promoting democratic change both at home and across borders within the Mediterranean world.

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5.1 Figures

Figure 5.1 Primo de Rivera Paintballed at the Granada Cathedral
Figure 5.2 Primo de Rivera Paintballed at the Cuenca Cathedral

Figure 5.3 Barcelona CNT 2011
Figure 5.4 Fight for Anarchism, Toledo

Figure 5.5 Toledo Anti-Nazis
Figure 5.6 Thirteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Alhambra and Anarchism

Figure 5.7 Catalunya is neither Spain nor France
Figure 5.8 The Revolution will be Feminist or it will not be
Figure 5.9 Rosie the Riveter in Granada, Yes We Camp!
Figure 5.10 Flag of the Second Republic and Communist party banner, Cordoba
Madrid con el pueblo iraquí

GOBIERNO DIMISIÓN OTAN NO BASES FUERA

12 abril

MOVILIZACIÓN INTERNACIONAL CONTRA LA GUERRA

MONCLOA 19:00 h

PLAZA DE ESPAÑA

Figure 5.11 Madrid is with the Iraqi People
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