



Hero, Martyr, or Saint? Rewriting Anti-Franco Resistance in Manuel Hueriga's *Salvador*

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The execution of anarchist militant Salvador Puig Antich in 1974 was one of the most important events in the final years of Franco's dictatorship.¹ It gave rise to an enormous political mobilisation in Catalonia and throughout Europe, and acquired a crucial symbolic status in Catalan democratic culture, with Puig Antich as a myth of anti-Franco resistance. Manuel Hueriga's biopic *Salvador (Puig Antich)* (2006) presents a deeply engaging narrative of these events. The film, a manifestation of the drive towards so-called "recuperació de la memòria històrica" in the last two decades, was widely acclaimed by audiences and critics alike, but also attacked for its sentimental, depoliticised presentation of the figure of the anarchist militant. What is at stake in the fictional revision of Puig Antich? This article analyses the uses of the past in Hueriga's *Salvador* by examining the antagonisms this film might be addressing and the kinds of consensus it tries to build. Indeed, the film was produced at a time in which the consensus of the monarchic Restoration was being eroded and new antagonisms were emerging, related to the public recognition of the legacy of the Spanish civil war, Catalan demands for increased devolution, and the development of new anti-capitalist movements. I argue that the film, through visual references to sports and games, represents metaphorically the shift from antagonism to agonism (from a relationship between enemies to a relationship between adversaries) that according to Chantal Mouffe (1993, 1999) is

1 This essay is part of the research project "Functions of the Past in Contemporary Catalan Culture: Institutionalisation, Representations, and Identity", carried out by the research group Identí.Cat (Llengua, cultura i identitat en l'era global) at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, and funded by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness (FFI2011-24751).

necessary for the existence of a pluralist democracy. I also argue, however, that the mediation of the father figure and the drive to turn Salvador Puig Antich's execution into a generational experience that elicits the identification of today's younger audiences, not only empty Puig Antich of any political content, but make a moral reflection on political violence impossible.

Produced by media mogul (and former Trotskyite) Jaume Roures, written by Lluís Arcarazo based on Francesc Escribano's book *Compte encre: La història de Salvador Puig Antich* (2001), and starred by German actor Daniel Brühl, the film presents the events through a narrative structure *in medias res*. It starts with Puig Antich's arrest in September 1973, during which he is severely wounded and police officer Francisco Anguas is killed. Upon his transfer to Barcelona's Presó Model, Salvador meets his defence lawyer, Oriol Arau (Tristán Ulloa). The first half of the film presents the story of Salvador's political engagement through Salvador's voiceovers as he gives an account to his lawyer of his involvement with the Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación (MIL) together with Santi Soler, the Solé Sugranyes brothers, Josep Lluís Pons Llobet, Jean Marc Rouillan and others, as well as his entrance into clandestinity, the MIL's bank robberies (or "expropriations"), Salvador's relationship with girlfriends Cuca (Leonor Watling) and Margalida (Ingrid Rubio), and finally his arrest. The second half of the film deals with the martial court trial in which Puig Antich was sentenced to death and the development of Salvador's friendship with prison officer Jesús Irurre (played by Argentinean actor Leonardo Sbaraglia), leading to the government's confirmation of the death sentence, the long, melodramatic scenes of the night Salvador spends with his sisters waiting for a pardon that never arrives, and concluding with his execution by garrotting and his funeral.

Critical reception of the film was generally good, although it also pointed at some issues that are related to my own analysis. While critics praised Huerga's capacity to move the audiences through a powerfully delivered and beautifully acted drama that highlights not only the unbearable cruelty of Franco's regime but also the inherent unfairness of the death penalty, they also took issue with the treatment of Puig Antich's figure. For instance, Casimiro Torreiro (2006) described the film in *El País* as "una cierta hagiografía laica". In *La Vanguardia*, Jordi Balló (2006) wrote that *Salvador* "es una película útil, clarificadora, y al mismo tiempo es una encrucijada sobre las dificultades de transmitir las claves políticas y emocionales de una época que también es la de ahora". Also in *La Vanguardia*, Eulàlia Iglesias (2006) criticised Huerga for turning Puig Antich into a

“símbolo-víctima” of Francoism, by means of “una mitificación que ni se arriesga cinematográficamente, ni profundiza en complejidades y contradicciones políticas”. And writing for *Avui*, Esteve Rimbau (2006) notes the limitations of Huerga’s film in terms of its representation of political conflict: Puig Antich becomes “un altre somiatruites que entra en una espiral de violència”, and the film, argues Rimbau, reduces political activism to a thriller and makes use of melodrama in order to denounce the death penalty.²

It is also unsurprising, given the importance of the events around Puig Antich in the Catalan public consciousness, that Huerga’s film should have given rise to a rather intense debate that had to do to a large degree with the way *Salvador* contextualises the figure of its protagonist. Former members of MIL and militants of anticapitalist movements attacked Huerga for his depoliticisation of the events,³ while historians criticised the film for the absence of workers in it, an absence that vividly contrasts with the MIL’s orientation towards the working class as a political subject (Domínguez Rama, 2007; Tébar Hurtado, 2009; Arroyo Rodríguez, 2007). But the most interesting aspect, in my opinion, of the public debate to which the film gave rise had to do with the effects in the present of the rewriting of the past performed by Huerga, because these effects involved the redrawing of political frontiers between “us” and “them” (that is, between antagonistic positions) at a time of a budding political crisis both in Catalonia and in Spain.⁴ Thus for example the film offered theatre critic Marcos Ordóñez (2006) the pretext to publish a long article in *El País* which pre-

2 Gordillo (2008: 85) makes a similar point in an article about Spanish films dealing with the death penalty. Sánchez Noriega (2012) discusses the film in the context of an overview of historical and political biopics in Spanish cinema. For a sociolinguistic analysis of linguistic ideologies and uses in Huerga’s film, see Gimeno Ugalde (2011).

3 A group of former militants of the MIL and other revolutionary organisations launched a manifesto against the film, signed by MIL Societat Anònima (2006), and entitled “*Salvador*, una mortalla de luxe per un producte de misèria”; it can be accessed at <<http://salvadorpuigantich.info/>>. The website <<http://salvadorpuigantich.info/>> is regularly maintained and contains biographical information on Puig Antich, writings about the MIL, and an archive of critical pieces on the film. The promoter of the manifesto was Txema Bofill, former militant of the Grups d’Acció Revolucionària Internacionalista (GARI); see García Grenzner (2006) for an interview. Manuel Huerga’s *Salvador* website too features an archive of the controversy; see <<http://manuelhuerga.com/salvador/spip.php?rubrique8>>. Salvador Puig Antich’s sisters came out in support of the film in an open letter (Puig Antich, 2006).

4 On this issue, the essays by Labanyi (2008) and Druliolle (2008) are very useful analyses of the politics and the ideologies of memory in contemporary Spain.

sents as victims of Francoism both Puig Antich and Francisco Anguas, “un policia atípico” who loved film and books, in an ideological gesture that aims at suturing the unexamined political divisions inherent in the Restoration of the constitutional monarchy (I’ll come back to this article later). On the other hand, from other political positions *Salvador* was fiercely attacked as an attempt from certain left-wing quarters to conceal the role of other political sides in the struggle against the late Franco regime. Thus for example Salvador Sostres (2006a) wrote in *Anni*:

La pel·lícula és l'enèsima mentida d'una esquerra que vol explicar la resistència des de l'anarquisme o des del socialisme i llevar-li qualsevol accent patriòtic, quan en realitat, el que en democràcia s'ha consolidat és el nacionalisme i han naufragat per sort totes aquelles idees demencials i sanguinàries.

Whereas Sostres vindicates the role of Catalan nationalism in the anti-Franco struggle (and this is a position that he might not be holding nowadays, as he writes for *El Mundo* and participates in *tertulias* on far-right television station *Intereconomía*), journalist and author Pilar Rahola (2006) accused producer Jaume Roures of rewriting history in order to bury the anarchist legacy. In an article in *El País*, she wrote:

Especialmente feroz fue la inquina con que determinada izquierda, con sus múltiples cabezas trotskistas, demostró contra el movimiento libertario, hasta el punto del puro desprecio y la más pura demonización. Esa misma izquierda que, en vida y muerte de Puig Antich, ninguneó severamente a Salvador, hoy ha producido la película. Por supuesto, me alegra ver cómo algunos saben superar sus sectarismos adolescentes, a favor de la recuperación de la memoria. Pero recuperar la memoria también incluye recuperar las miserias que el antifranquismo cobijó. La película *Salvador* no sólo las olvida, sino que algunas de esas miserias la condicionan para mal. Algo de su alma trotskista le debe quedar, pongamos por caso, al bueno de Jaume Roures. ¿Será esa alma la que ha olvidado la canción *Margalida*? ¿O la que despoja a Puig Antich de su carácter libertario? La historia la escriben los que vencen, y ello vale también cuando se escribe la historia de la resistencia. (Rahola, 2006)

Ordóñez’s opportunism and Sostres and Rahola’s virulence suggest that at stake in the film is the struggle to present a dominant narrative of anti-Francoist resistance. Such competition for symbolic domination is apparent in *Salvador* from the very beginning. Indeed, the film’s credits sequences inscribe Puig Antich in a historical continuum and establish a specific discourse about history and conflict. The opening credits show a wall with anti-Francoist graffiti, and subsequently a number of icons and symbols of leftist political struggles of the ninety-sixties and ninety-seven-

ties (Che Guevara, Salvador Allende, May 68, the Vietnam war) are projected onto it, together with documentation from Puig Antich's case and a stylised yet disturbing image of a garrotte. The closing credits, by contrast, display archival images of the coronation of king Juan Carlos, the women of Greenham Common, the Sandinista revolution, the Intifada in Palestine, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the war in former Yugoslavia, Osama Bin Laden and 9/11, the second Iraq war, the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid, Guantanamo, anticapitalist riots... Thus, global political conflicts frame Puig Antich's experience, and the figure of Salvador stands, in the director's words, as a "símbolo de una generación" (Hueriga, 2004), as a suturing element that links these two sets of disconnected political events.

Hueriga himself insists, in an interview with María Camí-Vela, that his intention is "conectar el pasado con el presente" (Camí-Vela, 2007: 243). However, the linking of past and present is performed by means of two operations that are far from neutral. Firstly, Hueriga establishes a rather intriguing opposition between the past as particular and the present as universal: "La película habla de una historia en el pasado, en clave española, de algo universal y presente. Las dictaduras continúan en el mundo y la pena de muerte sigue existiendo en muchos países" (Camí-Vela, 2007: 244). Secondly, as Hueriga (2004) says in his "Memoria del director", his project to establish Puig Antich as a "símbolo de una generación" is founded on a narrative based "en hechos reales rigurosamente documentados" that allows for "la recuperación de un escenario sociológico que apela a una memoria colectiva de amplio espectro entre el público, tanto el que vivió aquella época como también el público joven que puede encontrar elementos de identificación con el personaje, a quien verán como un rebelde con causa" (Hueriga, 2004). Historical truth is thus placed in the service of audience identification not so much with a historical character, but rather with a mythical figure, and, far from appealing to the spectators' knowledge in order to interpellate them to engage in a moral and political argument, this requires forcing the viewer into becoming a clean slate.⁵ Indeed, in the same interview cited above, Hueriga justifies the film's narrative structure saying that "no hay que suponer que el espectador va a ver la película con conocimiento, sino que el espectador es una página en blanco" (Camí-Vela, 2007: 228). Yet obviously, it is the narrative structure itself that constructs the audience's ignorance (regardless of the level of knowledge it may have about the historical events). In this respect, making

5 On this subject, see also García (2005) and Hueriga (2006).

Puig Antich a generational symbol is tantamount to turning him into what Ernesto Laclau calls an “empty signifier” that becomes the object of a struggle for hegemonic meanings (Laclau, 1996: 36–46).

The drive to elicit the young audience’s identification is what explains, I think, the producers’ choice to show the “human side” of Puig Antich, or as Ana Domínguez Rama puts it, how the “terrorist” that became a “el símbolo de una generación (antifranquista)” was also a “buen chico” (Domínguez Rama, 2007: 865), a purity of character that Daniel Brühl’s child-like persona strongly reinforces.⁶ On the other hand, the drive to elicit identification is echoed in the script by Salvador’s motivation to become involved in politics after the brutal murder by the police of young Enrique Ruano, “estudiante como yo” (it is in fact remarkable how the style and look of the students demonstrating on Plaça Universitat and rioting against the police at this point in the film are similar to today’s students). Furthermore, the reduction of Puig Antich to a generational symbol also entails a process of deideologisation and stylisation. Indeed, the radical agenda of the MIL is condensed in the script to the following lines: “Queremos cambiarlo todo, acabar con el viejo mundo y construir una sociedad sin clases, libre de verdad. Aunque sabemos que sólo con palabras no se consigue nada”. On the other hand, the activism of the MIL is presented through the conventions of the thriller and action movies (as in the sequence of the robbery of the Banco Hispano Americano, with its fast pace to the tune of Jethro Tull’s song “Locomotive Breath”), or through stereotypes, as is the case of Cri-Cri and Sebas, the two beret-wearing French anarchists who join forces with the MIL and whose first appearance is heralded by non-diegetic accordion music. The animation sequence after the “expropriation” of a printing press, complete with comic and pop-art imagery, stylizes the ideology of the MIL almost to the extent of simple aesthetics.

The film’s focus on the death penalty, the choice of an international star like Daniel Brühl and the decontextualisation, deideologisation, and stylization of Salvador Puig Antich’s circumstances have something to do, I would argue, with the fact that the producers were seeking an international market to recover their 6 million euro investment, and therefore were trying to give Puig Antich’s story a universal appeal by reducing it to a poignant human tragedy. However, Salvador’s humanisation (that is, his

6 For an example of a reading of the film imbued by this view of Puig Antich’s “human side”, see Meseguer (2006).

universalisation) runs parallel to the evolution of the character whose arc is the most pronounced. It is also one of the most controversial characters in Huerga's biopic: prison officer Jesús Irurre.⁷

It is important to look into Irurre's character because by focusing on the prison officer's "human side" and his affective (rather than ideological) evolution in terms of his identification with Puig Antich, the film is producing ideological effects that might be systemic. This is shown by Marcos Ordóñez's controversial article in *El País*, "El otro muerto", in which he evokes his acquaintance with Francisco Anguas, the "policía atípico" that, like Puig Antich, loved books and film (Ordóñez, 2006).⁸ By reclaiming the memory of a member of the Brigada Político-Social who nevertheless, just like Puig Antich, was "a nice guy", Ordóñez's article draws a political frontier between "us" (all those who lived under Francoism) and "them" (some kind of abstract entity that would be the Francoist regime). In this way Ordóñez establishes an equivalence between Puig Antich and Franguas that is meant to supersede other oppositions between "us" and

7 Indeed, Txema Bofill, the former revolutionary activist who campaigned against the film, accuses Irurre of being a torturer even after Puig Antich's execution: "Y Jesús Irurre, el carcelero, que pasa de torturador a revolucionario, es la más infame de las mentiras. Fue uno de los más violentos. Torturó a nuestros compañeros y lo siguió haciendo después de su ficticia conversión. En todo caso se habrá convertido a demócrata como miles de franquistas de la maquinaria represiva" (García Grenzner, 2006: 23). By contrast, Francesc Escribano writes the following in his epilogue to his book on Puig Antich: "Jesús Irurre tenia vint-i-tres anys. Conèixer en Salvador va canviar la seva vida de manera radical. Va augmentar la seva consciència i el seu compromís polític. En la dècada dels vuitanta va ser expedientat per denunciar la corrupció en el sistema penitenciari espanyol. Actualment continua treballant com a funcionari a la presó d'Eivissa" (Escribano, 2001: 184–185). See also Salvador Sostres's interview with Irurre, reproduced in Huerga's website (Sostres, 2006b).

8 Ordóñez's article was controversial and elicited a number of letters to the editor. In one of these letters, Galician writer Suso de Toro (2006) praised Ordóñez for reconstructing a complex, "nuanced" memory of late Francoism that includes the "human side" of the dead policeman, and wrote: "si queremos tener un día una memoria completa de lo que fueron aquellos años de agonía del régimen y de pacto de las libertades, y si queremos saber quiénes somos realmente alguien debería hacer un día la película que integre también la historia de ese policía de 'la [Brigada] Social' muerto. Se quiera o no se quiera, ese policía tiene una historia, y esa historia también es nuestra". The next day, however, *El País* published a letter by former anti-Franco activist Joan Bové Maeztu (2006), giving a different account of the film-loving police officer presented by Ordóñez: rather, Anguas was the officer who savagely tortured him when he was arrested in 1972. For an extended analysis of Ordóñez's article see Tébar Hurtado (2009: 4–7).

“them” (namely Francoists and anti-Francoists) that he considers simplistic and reductionist because they reproduce the same simplistic, confrontational terms of Francoism: “Suele decirse del franquismo que era una época gris. No. Era una época en maldito blanco y negro” (*ibid.*). This equivalence between Puig Antich and Anguas – expressed in words like “Dos muertos. Dos asesinatos” (*ibid.*) – allows Ordóñez to imagine the possibility of an encounter between terrorist and policeman based on shared generational interests: “Pudieron haberse conocido. [...] Pudieron haberse entendido. Cosas más raras se veían entonces. Pero tomaron caminos contrarios” (*ibid.*). The failed, imagined encounter between Puig Antich and Anguas is thus, for Ordóñez, a metaphor for a consensus that would bring together contrary positions in Spanish political culture: a consensus which Francoism always stood in the way of, and which the so-called “transition to democracy” supposedly rendered possible.⁹

I would argue that the film performs a similar operation through the development of the friendship between Salvador and Irurre. The latter makes his first appearance as Salvador arrives in prison, and Irurre is shown beating up an inmate. He later acts as an eager enforcer of Francoist language policy by ensuring that conversations between Salvador and his sisters during their visits are conducted in Spanish. He also confronts Salvador’s lawyer in the bar outside the Model prison proclaiming abstract moral norms (“No se puede ir por el mundo matando a la gente”). In the second half of the film, however, Irurre undergoes a remarkable evolution that is mediated by sports and games, and by the figure of the father (Puig Antich’s father, but also Irurre’s own position as father of a dyslexic son who, like Salvador, is left-handed).

Almost exactly half-way down the film, Irurre is in Salvador’s cell, inspecting a food package sent by the family. On the desk he finds a letter written by Salvador to his father, and Irurre interpellates him about their relationship, saying: “Muy orgulloso estará de ti, ni siquiera te viene a ver”. Salvador replies: “No me toques los cojones”, and Irurre reacts by grabbing him by the collar and orders him to address him as “usted”. Irurre leaves the cell angrily, and walks along the prison’s dark corridors all the way to his office, where he sits by himself and starts reading Salvador’s letter to his father. We then hear Salvador’s voiceover reciting the text of

9 My account is indebted to the analysis of the ideologies of consensus and normalcy in contemporary Spain that Luisa Elena Delgado puts forward in her forthcoming book *La nación singular: La fantasía de la normalidad democrática española (1996–2011)*.

the letter, while we see a cross-cutting of shots of the three men: Salvador speaking, Irurre reading in his office, and Salvador's father returning home after work, sitting down to read his son's letter, and making an unsuccessful attempt at replying as Imma, Salvador's sister, watches tenderly over him. The dark background and direct, soft lighting on the men's faces, together with the use of close-ups and medium shots, gives this scene an effect of intimacy despite the radical separation and the impossible communication between them. This effect is stressed at the end of the scene, when we see a medium shot of Irurre, clearly interpellated by the words he is reading, lifting his eyes from the page and staring into the horizon, while Salvador (almost a ghostly presence as an extreme close-up of his face dissolves in and out of the frame) speaks the concluding lines of his letter:

No tengo conciencia de mártir [...]. Y aunque políticamente nunca estaremos de acuerdo, deseo, desearía tu apoyo moral como padre, como hombre que ha conocido temporadas borrascosas en su vida, pero que nunca ha renunciado a principios que cree justos. [...] Tenemos demasiadas cosas en común para no calibrar el significado exacto de estas palabras. [...] Sé que, aunque dolorosamente, intentarás comprender a tu hijo.¹⁰

Cut to the prison's yard, where Salvador is playing basketball by himself under Irurre's surveillance. Irurre catches a stray ball and returns it to Salvador, who challenges the latter to join him in the game. After some awkward exchanges, their game takes off, but the fast cutting of the scene, while the two men are playing, is interrupted when Salvador accidentally touches Irurre's head, whose flat cap falls to the ground. A moment of tension ensues. In a POV shot we see Salvador's pacifying gesture through the bars of the surveillance booth, where another prison guard is watching the scene. Silent glances are exchanged between Salvador and Irurre, till the latter says, "No pasa nada". We see him picking up his cap through the bars of the surveillance booth once again; Irurre directs a glance at his colleague, who is observing the scene. Then the game resumes.

Cut to Salvador's cell, where he wipes the sweat from his face. Salvador picks up a book and lies down on his bed:

SALVADOR: Mañana la revancha.

IRURRE: Sí, sí, ya veremos. (*Pause.*) Tú siempre leyendo, ¿eh? ¿De qué va ése?

SALVADOR: La *Iliada*. Es la historia de Aquiles.

10 This is an edited version of the actual letter sent by Puig Antich to his father; substantially its content is faithful to the original. A transcription can be found in *Escribano* (2001: 114–115).

IRURRE: Ah, sí, sí, el del talón.

SALVADOR: Es un héroe que lucha en la guerra de Troya y sabe que morirá en esa guerra, porque su madre se lo predice. Pero también que su muerte le hará inmortal.

IRURRE: Vaya tontería.

SALVADOR: Cuando lo acabe, si quieres te lo paso.

IRURRE: ¿Yo para qué lo quiero?

SALVADOR: Pues no sé. Para tu hijo.

IRURRE: Mi hijo no... no... no lee bien.

SALVADOR: ¿Cómo que no lee bien?

IRURRE: Sí no es que no sepa. Es que se hace lío con las letras y...

SALVADOR: ¿Es disléxico?

IRURRE: Y zurdo. Pero se lo vamos a corregir.

SALVADOR: ¿Pero por qué? Déjalo que escriba con la mano que quiera.

IRURRE: ¿Tú qué sabes?

Cut to the prison offices where Irurre, clearly moved, is reporting his conversation with Salvador to another officer who, indifferent to what is being said, smokes and fills in a crossword puzzle:

IRURRE: Me dice, bueno, mi hermano es psiquiatra, si quieres le pregunto, pero... lo que les pasa a los dixléxicos [*sí*] es que piensan diferente, vaya, que como piensan con imágenes les cuesta entender las letras y las palabras escritas, que se distraen a la mínima, pero que si se les enseña con métodos adecuados pueden aprender a escribir, a leer, a estudiar, pueden ser médicos, arquitectos, lo que quieran, como cualquier otra persona. [*He picks a drawing by his son, featuring a house, a tree, a male figure in a green uniform, and the words "Mi padre" with the r written backwards.*] Eso me ha dicho. Curioso, este chaval, Salvador, ¿eh? [*He stares at the prison gallery through the ubiquitous bars.*] Lástima...

I would argue that these scenes present a visual metaphor of the shift from antagonism to agonism (from a relationship between enemies to one between adversaries) that, according to Chantal Mouffe (1999: 13), is necessary for the existence of a pluralist democracy. A modern democracy, Mouffe claims, requires the recognition of the antagonistic nature of the political itself, and for this reason democracy can only be fostered “si se admite con lucidez que la política consiste siempre en ‘domesticar’ la hostilidad y en tratar de neutralizar el antagonismo potencial que acompaña toda construcción de identidades colectivas” (Mouffe, 1999: 14). The crucial issue that for Mouffe accompanies the recognition of the inevitability of antagonism consists in defining the terms of a political relationship that is compatible with pluralism and does not aim at ultimately reaching a consensus. Such a consensus would in fact deny the antagonistic nature of the political:

La vida política nunca podrá prescindir del antagonismo, pues atañe a la acción política y a la formación de identidades colectivas. Tiende a crear un “nosotros” en un contexto de diversidad y de conflicto. Ahora bien, [...] para construir un “nosotros” es necesario distinguirlo de un “ellos”. Por eso la cuestión decisiva de una política democrática no reside en llegar a un consenso sin exclusión –lo que nos devolvería a la creación de un “nosotros” que no tuviera un “ellos” como correlato–, sino en llegar a establecer la discriminación nosotros/ellos de tal modo que resulte compatible con el pluralismo. (Mouffe, 1999: 16)

The creation and maintenance of a pluralist democracy thus requires institutions that are able to transform antagonism into agonism, and to establish the practice of a democratic ethics that turns the enemy into an adversary who will be opposed but not destroyed:

Once we accept the necessity of the political and the impossibility of a world without antagonism, what needs to be envisaged is how it is possible *under those conditions* to create or maintain a pluralistic democratic order. Such an order is based on a distinction between “enemy” and “adversary”. It requires that, within the context of the political community, the opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated. We will fight against his ideas but we will not question his right to defend them. (Mouffe, 1993: 4)

The film represents this shift from enemies to adversaries by means of the metaphorical use of the imagery of sports and games. It is indeed through engagement in the physical game of basketball (with the contact between bodies and the homoerotic charge it involves) that Salvador and Irurre are able to engage in a relationship that does not entail the destruction of the other. Not by chance are both men shown later on playing a game of chess while discussing the Vietnam war, vividly contrasting in the final part of the film with the Urtain boxing match Puig Antich's father watches as his son is told that Franco's government has given the *enterado* to his death sentence. In a way the film suggests that the engagement of the enemy through sports and games that turns him into an adversary is the legacy of Puig Antich's ultimate sacrifice, his contribution to the construction of the Spanish democracy that was about to be born.¹¹

11 Indeed, Josep Ramoneda (2006) wrote in an article in *El País* that “da escalofrío cuando, a estas alturas, en plena normalidad democrática, algunos vuelven a desenterrar el viejo discurso español de la política como lucha a muerte entre el amigo y el enemigo. Éstos me temo que no verán nunca la película *Salvador*. La considerarán detestable sin haberla visto”.

However, the sports metaphor is mediated by the figure of the father. In the same way that today's young audiences are able to identify with Salvador because he was "estudiante, como yo", the film establishes an emotional continuum between fathers and sons despite their impossible communication: "Tenemos demasiadas cosas en común", says Salvador in his letter to his father – a father who had himself been sentenced to death and pardoned in the last minute (Escribano 2001: 29). But far from explaining the effects of the Civil war and the dictatorship on the generation of the parents, the mediation of the father figure in the film turns the brutal antagonisms of the final years of Francoism into a family melodrama. It does so mainly in two ways. Firstly, by reducing political militancy to adolescent rebellion: as MIL activist Josep Lluís Pons, nicknamed Queso, tells his *falangista* father who visits him in prison, "A lo mejor, después de todo no somos tan distintos", echoing Salvador's appeal to his father for some kind of communication and closeness, but also suggesting that the fascist activism of Queso's father in his youth is analogous to the insurrection of the MIL in that both would be manifestations of a putative youthful drive to rebel and change the world. Secondly, this effect is performed by collapsing a discourse on pluralism into a melodrama involving prison officer Irurre, whose son is left-handed and thinks differently ("con imágenes" instead of words) from all the other children, and Salvador, the left-handed, charming, visionary terrorist who is both a role model and a stern warning for misfit children like Irurre's son. In this sense Huerga's family melodrama proposes the integration of potentially intractable difference into the acceptable boundaries of a consensus built around emotional identifications that transcend every political divide.

Manuel Huerga's film transforms the events around the arrest, trial, and execution of Salvador Puig Antich into a generational experience, and in doing so it props up in several ways the ideology of consensus on which the Restoration of the Spanish constitutional monarchy was built. On the one hand, the film universalises this particular case by removing its specificity in political and ideological terms, turning Puig Antich into a mythical figure. This is not simply an effect of the film, but a stated intention of the director and producers. As Huerga says in an interview, "[e]ntrar en el detalle de la ideología del MIL, me parece innecesario. En cuatro o cinco frases a lo largo de la película queda clara la utopía de estos jóvenes. Lo importante es querer cambiar las cosas. [...] Lo importante es el espíritu de rebeldía, que en la juventud no sólo es un derecho, sino una obligación" (Camí-Vela, 2007: 243). Thus for Huerga the importance of the figure of

Salvador Puig Antich does not reside in any kind of political content (that is, in a specific political antagonism) but in its mythical capability, that is in the fact that it encapsulates the rebellious spirit of youth. On the other hand, it renders a reflection on political violence almost impossible, because it moves the focus away from moral and political issues and into a question of empathy. By emptying the narrative of its political content and placing the emphasis on emotional identifications, Huerga's film prevents a proper examination of the motivations, the causes and the consequences of the use of political violence in the last years of Franco's dictatorship, and runs the risk of prompting the trivialising interpretation that Puig Antich's militancy (and by extension that of the other groups involved in the armed struggle at the time in Europe) was simply the terrible result of an unresolved adolescent rebelliousness.

Thus, Huerga's *Salvador* (*Puig Antich*) tries to build an emotional consensus around an abstract argument against the death penalty. And as much as it is fair to present Puig Antich's case as evidence against the death penalty in general, the film flattens the history of the resistance against Franco, its political complexities and its moral ambivalences. Instead of examining the past in order to establish reparative justice and explore responsibilities, past and present, *Salvador* leads the audiences simply to empathise with the victims in ways that could in fact be called pre-political. ■

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Resum: L’execució del militant anarquista Salvador Puig Antich el 1974 va ser un dels esdeveniments més importants dels últims anys de la dictadura franquista. Va donar lloc a una enorme mobilització política a Catalunya, i va adquirir un estatus simbòlic crucial en la cultura democràtica catalana, en la qual Puig Antich figura com a mite de la resistència antifranquista. La pel·lícula *Salvador* (2006), de Manuel Huerqa, presenta un relat profundament emotiu d’aquests fets. La pel·lícula, una manifestació de l’impuls cap a l’anomenada “recuperació de la memòria històrica” de les darreres dues dècades, ha estat molt ben rebuda per la crítica, però també atacada per la seva presentació sentimental i despolitzada de la figura del militant anarquista. Què hi ha en joc en la revisió ficcional de Puig Antich? Aquest article analitza els usos del passat a *Salvador* de Manuel Huerqa, tot examinant els antagonismes socials que tracta la pel·lícula i les menes de consens que intenta construir. ■

Summary: The execution of anarchist militant Salvador Puig Antich in 1974 was one of the most important events in the final years of Franco’s dictatorship. It gave rise to an enormous political mobilisation in Catalonia, and acquired a crucial symbolic status in Catalan democratic culture, with Puig Antich as a myth of anti-Franco resistance. Manuel Huerqa’s biopic *Salvador* (2006) presents a deeply engaging narrative of these events. The film, a manifestation of the drive towards so-called “recuperació de la memòria històrica” in the last two decades, has been widely acclaimed by the critics but also attacked for its sentimental, depoliticised presentation of the figure of the anarchist militant. What is at stake in the fictional revision of Puig Antich? This article analyses the uses of the past in Huerqa’s *Salvador* by examining the social antagonisms this film might be addressing and the kinds of consensus it tries to build. [Keywords: Historical memory; uses of the past; Catalan cinema; Huerqa, Manuel; Puig Antich, Salvador; *Salvador*; Catalan culture; anti-Franco resistance] ■