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Studying the Unstudied

One of my goals when choosing a topic for my senior thesis was to bridge the two sides of my Romance Languages and Literatures Major: Italian and Spanish. During my Italian Senior Seminar Course in the fall, my professor, Dr. Charles Leavitt IV, directed me to an interesting film in Hesburgh Library's Wagstaff Collection. The film, named *L'assedio dell'Alcazar*, was an Italian film about the Nationalist's siege of Toledo during the Spanish Civil War. After my first viewing, I knew that Italian production set in Spain was the perfect bridge between my interest in the two countries and their similar fascist histories. Surprisingly, a few searches on Hesburgh Libraries' One Search revealed to me that few academics had written on *L'assedio dell'Alcazar* despite the many questions it raised about international fascism. With this lack of previous scholarship, I knew I was going to have to rely on primary source documents to build an argument for my seminar paper and eventual honors thesis. While the task of discovering information on a relatively obscure Italian film from the 1940s seemed daunting, the resources and collections of Hesburgh Libraries helped me to uncover a wealth of information on the intriguing but understudied film from the *Wagstaff Collection*.

Throughout the fall semester, my seminar course did an excellent job of informing me of all the resources available for my research through Hesburgh Libraries. Our meeting with Visual Resource Curator Denise Massa helped me to integrate visuals from the film as well as outside sources into my essay. The result was a powerful comparison between the visuals of the Spanish Nationalists in *L'assedio dell'Alcazar* and the Italian Fascist leaders of the 1940s (Fig. 1 & 2).



Figure 1

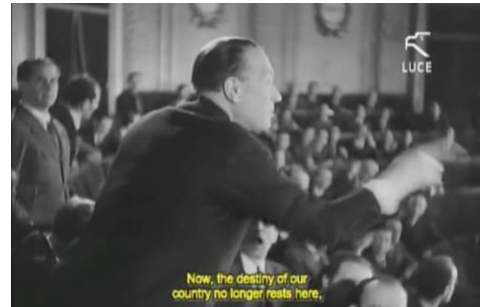


Figure 2

The integration of visual resources significantly aided the argument of my essay; however, the most impactful visit the class made to the library was our visit to Special Collections. During our survey of Special Collections' Italian catalog, I was able to browse through the University's collection of *Il Cinema*, a fascist cinema magazine that contained reviews of *L'assedio dell'Alcazar* as well as ideological articles on the role of cinema in the fascist regime. From the volumes displayed during our visit, I could tell the primary source film reviews had the potential to add incalculable value to my research. After the class's tour, I returned to Special Collections to browse the volumes of *Il Cinema*. Over the course of my visit, I was able to discover a rich dialogue between commentators of the Spanish and Italian film industries throughout the pages of *Il Cinema*. The articles I found revealed an international effort to create fascist cinema that transcended national interests in favor of an international fascist values system.

The idea of an international fascist ethic discussed in the magazine *Il Cinema* and represented in the film *L'assedio dell'Alcazar* became the focal point of my seminar paper and eventual honors thesis. Books like John Coverdale's *Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War*, and Javier Rodrigo's *Fascist Italy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, both available through Hesburgh Libraries via online access, gave me insight into the political cooperation between Italy and Spain during the Spanish Civil War. With their thorough analysis of the regimes' political collaboration, I was able to draw connections between the geopolitical

cooperation of the regimes and their cinematic cooperation. Gran Piero Brunetta's books *Il Cinema Italiano Di Regime: Da "La Canzone Dell'amore" a "Osessione"* and *Cent'Anni Di Cinema Italiano*, available in Hesburgh Libraries General Collection, paired perfectly with the work of Javier Rodrigo and Coverdale to further highlight the interplay between the regime and the Italian cinema industry while also providing me with some of the only published information on *L'assedio dell'Alcazar*. By the end of my seminar, I had a firm grasp on Italy's view of the Spanish Civil War and how it hoped cinema could build an international fascist ethic.

When I began to turn my seminar essay into an honors thesis in the spring, I decided to investigate whether I could find similar articles about international fascist cooperation in the Spanish cinema magazines of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Remembering the class we were given on Subject Matter Librarians by the Italian Subject Librarian Tracy Bergstrom, I decided to reach out to the Spanish Subject Matter Librarian to help find these resources. Hesburgh Libraries' Special Collections Curator, Latin American, Iberian, and Latinx Collections, and Spanish Subject Matter Librarian, Dr. Erika R. Hosselkus was able to help me quickly locate Spanish magazines similar to *Il Cinema*. In a few days, Dr. Hosselkus provided me with four different online databases where I could access Spanish Cinema magazines from the time of *L'assedio dell'Alcazar*'s release. The magazines *Radio Cinema* and *Primer Plano* (accessed through the *Biblioteca Dixital de Galicia* and the *Filmoteca de Catalunya*) revealed an even deeper conversation between the Spanish and Italian film industry than I could have imagined as well as Spanish reviews of *L'assedio dell'Alcazar*. By the time I finished my honors thesis, titled "Coproducting Fascism: How Italy and Spain's Cinematic Cooperation Demonstrates International Fascist Values," I had a rich picture of the political and cinematic dialogues between the two countries from the time of the films release.

Although I began my project worried about finding information on a relatively unstudied film, Hesburgh Libraries quickly lead me to more information than I could have possibly imagined. By leveraging the knowledge of Subject Matter Librarians and the rare and extensive collections of Hesburgh Libraries, I was able to shed light on an international fascist movement in the cinema industry that has been largely understudied. As a result, I am left proud of the fact that Hesburgh Libraries allowed me to not only join a conversation through my research but open a new one.