Difference within Identity. Crises of the Law in Francoist Spain

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Lorenza Tébar Villanueva.

For making unconditional love look effortless.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the functioning of the Francoist ideology. Focusing on the period known as "Desarrollismo" (1960-1975), I explore works that underscore the tensions between the ongoing suppression of political freedom and the rapid economic modernization that brought to an end Spain's international isolation, forcing a shift in the regime's discourse. This dissertation examines *Volverás a Región*, by Juan Benet, *Margarita y el lobo,* by Cecilia Bartolomé, *Presente profundo*, by Elena Quiroga, and *Don Julián*, by Juan Goytisolo and, drawing from Lacanian psychoanalysis, argues that by resorting to highly experimental narrative and filmic devices, these works interrupt the Francoist ideological fantasies and challenge the symbolic articulation of its cultural discourse, bringing forth its contradictions and paradoxes and revealing that, ultimately, the regime's obsession with imposing a homogeneous, essential (and therefore, unquestionable) Spanish identity points toward the traumatic split at its very own foundation, to difference within identity.

Introduction

The Question of the Nature of Francoism

Since its configuration during the Spanish Civil War, there has been an ongoing debate regarding the nature of Francoism; specifically on whether Franco's dictatorship is to be considered a fascist regime. According to Enrique Moradiellos,[1] several terms have been used to refer to the Francoist regime. Conservative positions often refer to Francoism as a "military dictatorship" (*dictadura militar*), thus assimilating it to 19th-century *pronunciamientos*, where a military junta would seize power with the alleged purpose of restoring social order (Moradiellos 13). Indeed, in its beginnings, the coup against the legitimate government of the Second Republic (1931-1939) was very similar to traditional dictatorships; however, Franco soon started accumulating more power: in September 1936, the Junta named him General of the national army and head of the Spanish government ("*Generalísimo de las fuerzas nacionales de tierra, mar y aire"* and *"Jefe del Gobierno del Estado Español*); in October of the same year he also became Head of State, and in April 1937 he unified all the different groups who had supported the coup into one single party, the *Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista*, also known as FET y de las JONS or *Movimiento*, of which he was the sole leader:

> In April 1937, Franco's gradual transformation into the Head of State, Head of Government, *Generalisimo* of the Armies, Crusader of the Christian faith, and leader

[1] In his book *La España de Franco (1939-1975). Política y sociedad*, Moradiellos addresses the question of the definition and nomenclature of Francoism in both the first chapter and in a subsection called "El debate sobre la naturaleza del franquismo" (*"The Debate on the Nature of Francoism"*) included in the section "Estado de la cuestión" ("State of the Art"), which the author includes at the end of the volume. All translations from Spanish are mine. For the literary and filmic works, I also include the original text in Spanish.

> of the party had turned Francoism into more than just a mere and simple military dictatorship of individualized personal power. […] Several political scientists, sociologists, and historians refer to this transformation process by conceptualizing Francoism as a paradigmatic case of a *Bonapartist dictatorial regime* or a *Caudillo-style military dictatorship*. (Moradiellos 15. Emphasis in the original).

According to Moradiellos, the Bonapartist character of Francoism consisted of the fact that Franco derived his authority from being the center and point of balance of the different groups that supported the coup, whereas the *caudillo*-like quality of his power meant that he was praised as an exceptional leader, identified with the historical destiny of the nation, and concentrated all power in his hands (Moradiellos 16). Interestingly, however, although there is consensus about these characteristics, there is still disagreement as to whether the Francoist regime should be considered an authoritarian *caudillo*-style dictatorship or a totalitarian regime similar to those of Hitler and Mussolini (Moradiellos 17).

Thus, the opposition between traditional, authoritarian dictatorship and totalitarian fascist dictatorship has articulated the historiographical debates on the nature of Francoism. This opposition is directly connected with the context in which the regime emerged. When, on July 18, 1936, several officers of the Spanish army initiated an uprising against the democratic government of the Second Republic, they thought their coup would be immediately successful.[2] The traditional urban and rural bourgeoisie, as well as a great part of the middle classes,

[2] As Felix Morrow detailed in "The Civil War in Spain: Toward Socialism or Fascism?" (1936), on the night of the coup (July 18, 1936) the cabinet of Azaña, then President of the Second Republic, went into an all-night conference, where the People's Front government was dissolved and a new cabinet was formed, led by Martínez Barrios (head of the right-wing Republican Union Party) and composed exclusively of right-wing republicans outside the People's Front. "Azaña and the republicans were preparing to make peace with the fascists, at the expense of the workers. Had Azaña carried out his plan, the fascists would have conquered Spain. But in the very hours that the misters huddled together in the presidential palace, the proletariat was already mobilizing" (49). In several major cities, among them Madrid, Barcelona, Oviedo, Malaga, or Valencia, the workers, led by communist, socialist, and anarchist parties and unions, formed militias and stopped or defeated the rebel generals. "In a word: without so much as a by your leave to the government, the proletariat had begun a war to the death against the fascists" (49).

supported the coup, as did the Catholic Church.[3] The revolt was also joined by a group of heterogeneous political formations: the Spanish fascist party *Falange Española* (FE), the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA), and the *Carlistas*.

However, workers and peasants formed militias, stopped the revolt in several major cities, and consolidated their power over roughly half of the country, thus defeating the coup. This led to the start of the Spanish Civil War. Four months later, in November 1936, the so-called nationalists were defeated in their attempt to conquer Madrid, which made it clear that the war was going to last longer than expected and, therefore, some degree of organization was going to be necessary (Di Febo & Santos Juliá 13). This meant that the insurgent bloc would need to reconcile the different political projects of all the groups that had come to form the rebel side: FE, CEDA, Carlism, the army, and the church.

Franco had been in charge of the Nationalist army since September 1936 and, after the unification of all factions into one single party, he became the leader capable of keeping the balance between them. Thus, when the first rebel government was established in January 1939, "the selection of individuals appointed to ministerial positions aimed at ensuring balanced prominence to the coalition that had supported the coup d'état and privileging Franco's trusted men" (Di Febo & Santos Juliá 18).[4] It is partly this heterogeneity at its foundation that makes it

[3] In fact, the Church's prompt backing of the rebels changed the nature of the uprising: if initially the coup had been understood as a traditional *pronunciamiento* to restore social order, "less than two months after the uprising, the first declarations by the generals against anarchy and chaos, which they attributed to the Republican government and the influence of 'Bolshevik agents,' gave way to the definition of the conflict as a Crusade and, therefore, as a war of religion and clash between two civilizations: 'Spain and the anti-Spain'" (Di Febo & Santos Juliá 16).

[4] The distribution of ministries reflected the primacy of the military (Foreign Affairs, Defense, Public Order, and Industry and Commerce). The Secretary-General of the Spanish Falange, Raimundo Fernández Cuesta, was assigned the Ministry of Agriculture, while another Falangist, Pedro González Bueno, received the Ministry of Organization and Trade Union Action. The portfolio of National Education went to Pedro Sainz Rodríguez, a representative of the Catholic right, a monarchist, and staunchly anti-liberal; meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice was occupied by the Carlists. The provinces would be administered by a powerful state bureaucracy, primarily led by Falange (Di Febo & Santos Juliá 18).

difficult to consider Francoism as fascist or not fascist insofar as, by the end of the Civil War, there were two not only different but opposed political projects within the regime, the National-Catholic and the fascist:

> At the end of the civil war, the common goal of these two movements, entailing the complete and utter destruction of liberalism, freemasonry, socialism, communism and any nationalist sentiment other than Spanish nationalism, could be said to have been achieved in the most dramatic way imaginable. But it was precisely the totality of the enemy's destruction that led the two nationalist projects into their first conflict. For the Acción Española reactionaries as well as for the church, the army, the business community and the bureaucracy, everything had now been taken care of. Having destroyed the anti-Spain, that is, Liberal and Republican Spain, at its foundations, they claimed, the causes of Spain's decline had also been torn out by their roots. At this point it only remained for them to consolidate the situation, developing a programme of institutionalization that would eventually lead to the restoration of the monarchy and the gradual diminution of the single party, which they regarded as a non-differentiated 'movement'. In contrast, the Falange saw the civil war victory as just the beginning of the fascist revolution, that is, of Spain's eternal resurgence within a kind of paligenetic system in which to pause was to perish. They envisioned this revolution in terms of a vaguely defined social revolution at home and the pursuit of empire abroad, a vision that required Spain's urgent incorporation into the Second World War. (Saz Campos "Fascism, Fascistization and Developmentalism…" 349-350)

In fact, the traditional conservative groups, the army, and the church had deeply mistrusted FE since the beginning of the war since, contrary to their own restoration project,

> Falange appeared as a modern, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-leftist group, and displayed an anti-conservative rhetoric that spoke of making a revolution and changing things in a Spain they believed to be sick but glorified above all else. It was not a typical far-right group and admitted within its ranks people from the left without –at least at the beginning of the war– asking about their political background. Within a few months, this would lead to it being labeled "leftist" in Nationalist Spain." (Thomàs 126-127)

However, during the first months of the Civil War, FE's membership had increased dramatically, which made it an indispensable element for the rebels to attain popular support

during the conflict (Thomàs 125). FE had also organized a highly efficient network of support: they had established a Press and Propaganda Service, as well as two women organizations, the Feminine Section (*Sección Femenina*) and Winter Aid (*Auxilio de Invierno*, which followed the model of Germany's *Winterhilfswerk*), which mobilized falangist women to work as nurses or take care of domestic work at the front (Thomàs 127-128). Lastly, Italy and Germany's aid during the war also contributed to Franco's willingness to perform his alliance with fascism openly, thus after unifying all the groups into FET y de las JONS, "the regime adopted fascist legislation and organizations of social control, including the party and the militia, as well as youth, women's and trade unions, and gave the fascists seemingly total control of the press, official propaganda and the streets" (Saz Campos, "Fascism, Fascistization and Developmentalism…" 347).

However, in realizing this unification, "certain issues had been made clear from the outset, including: the unquestionable leadership of Franco; the fact that Spain, whether fascistized or not, was to be considered a Catholic country" (Saz Campos "Fascism, Fascistization and Developmentalism…" 347), which meant that FE's revolutionary character was effectively neutralized. FE leaders were aware of this and, during and immediately after the war, they made several attempts to establish falangist hegemony within the regime, take over the state, and carry out their revolution. The last of these attempts happened in 1941 when Franco's brother-in-law, Serrano Suñer, at the time Chief of the Political Junta of FE and Minister of Foreign Affairs publicly demanded more power for FE and the need for Spain to enter the Second World War. Franco, however, navigated this threat: he dismissed Serrano-Suñer and named José Luis Arrese secretary general of the FE, thus sealing Franco's independence from

the party and therefore the definite subordination of the party to the state. From 1941 onwards, with Arrese as its leader, the Spanish fascist party claimed its traditional and Catholic character.[5]

After FE was defeated, in 1942-1943, the monarchists, supported by some army generals, made their own attempt to become the hegemonic power within the regime. This endeavor was defeated as well, thus consolidating Franco's control over the army and the power of the state, embodied by Franco himself, over any and each of the political formations that constituted the regime. In every subsequent cabinet reorganization (at least until 1957, when FE's irrelevance within the regime was made clear), Franco kept distributing ministries among the different groups, thus maintaining a balance between the heterogeneous forces that constituted the victors of the war.

Since 1936, both in Spain and internationally, the Spanish Civil War was perceived and conceptualized as a clash between fascism and the anti-fascist resistance. This, together with the regime's display of fascist elements during the war and the immediate post-war, consolidated the image of Franco's Spain as a fascist regime, a perception definitely sealed when, in 1946, the UN General Assembly rejected Spain's admission precisely adducing the fascist character of Franco's government (Moradiellos 213-214).

For Moradiellos, as well as for most mainstream historians, this consideration of the Franco regime as unambiguously fascist is the result of a "broad concept of 'fascism' that emphasizes almost exclusively its social dimension and downplays or nullifies its political format" (Moradiellos 213). This conceptual opposition (social function versus political format) was further accentuated by the publication, in 1964 of Juan Linz's essay "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain." In this paper, Linz opposed conceptualizing totalitarianism and democracy as

[5] For a detailed account of Falange Española's emergence, development, and integration into the Franco regime, see chapter four in Joan Maria Thomàs' volume *Los fascismos españoles.*

the two poles of a continuum[6] and observed that several regimes didn't fit any of those categories (among them, Spain). Following Gabriel Almond, Linz proposed the term "authoritarian regime" to account for them, taking Franco's dictatorship as a paradigmatic case. According to his definition:

> Authoritarian regimes are political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (except some [sic] points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones. (297)[7]

Linz's seminal essay marked a turning point in the debate about the nature of Francoism and stirred an academic debate still ongoing. According to Moradiellos, many considered Linz's contribution an attempt to white-wash the Francoist regime, and many others criticized the vagueness of some of the concepts he used, such as the distinction between ideology and mentality (216). The harshest criticism focused on "the strictly political-formalist character of the definition [of authoritarianism] and its lack of attention to the social and class dimensions of political regimes" (Moradiellos 216).

To this day, most histories of the Franco dictatorship foreground this opposition between the need to accurately describe Francoism as a historical phenomenon in its specificity and the undeniably fascist character of many Francoist institutions and discourses. Some historians, following Linz, tend to focus on the regime's historical specificities, thus differentiating it from

[6] In the 1950s, in the context of the Cold War, "political scientists such as Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski reformulated the concept of 'totalitarianism' to define all the dictatorships that shared a series of traits from a perspective that focused purely on their political format and did not pay attention to the specific social or class foundation of each of them" (Moradiellos 215). This made it possible to apply the concept of totalitarianism to both right-wing and leftist regimes, from Nazi Germany to Stalinism.

[7] Linz developed this definition against C. J. Friedrich's characterization of totalitarianism: "an official ideology, often with chiliastic elements; a single mass party unquestioningly dedicated to the ideology, near complete control of mass media, complete political control of the armed forces, and a system of terroristic police control not directed against demonstrable enemies only."

"purely" fascist regimes. Conversely, others foreground the regime's social function and consider it either fascist or a type of fascism.[8] In this sense, Linz's essay inaugurated the search for a specific conceptualization of the Francoist regime.

In the context of this search, in the last few decades, historians have come to the agreement that what characterizes the Spanish dictatorship above all is its longevity. In turn, the fact that the dictatorship lasted so long (and, therefore, evolved and changed through the years) is often considered to be at the core of the difficulties in defining Francoism.[9]

The long duration of the Spanish dictatorship has led historians to divide it into different periods. Here, I provide a basic overview of this periodization because I consider it to be at the

[8] According to Moradiellos, "in the opinion of a broad spectrum of historians of very different ideological positions, the 'social function' or 'historical mission' performed by Francoism does not in any way justify its consideration as fascism. Among other things, because that role ('function') as an instrument for stabilizing 'capitalist property relations' and strengthening the 'social and economic dominance of the capitalist class' can be and historically has been realized under very different political forms (219). Thus, for example, in *Los fascismos europeos* (1992), Elena Hernández Sandoica upholds Linz's distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and defines several basic characteristics of fascism shared by many authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in 20th-century Europe: nationalism, rejection of socialism and the support of the bourgeois and the middle classes (17). Beyond this basic set of traits, however, Hernández Sandoica considers that all of them were forms of reacting to the mobilization of the masses brought about by the modernization process that traversed 19th-century Europe and, therefore, what characterizes fascism unequivocally is its specific way of relating to the masses: While traditional, authoritarian regimes seek to demobilize them by offering a return to a better past, fascist totalitarian regimes seek to mobilize the masses to realize a revolution and fund a new society (22). For Hernández Sandoica, then, Linz's characterization of Francoism is the most accurate one insofar as FE's project of becoming hegemonic and carrying out the revolution never materialized; instead, the regime ideologically legitimized itself as a return to the true Spanish essence, identified with Catholicism and tradition. Conversely, in *La política de la venganza* (1997), Paul Preston argues that if fascist movements were responses to a national crisis, and as such are Italian fascism and Nazism to be considered, the same can be said not just about FE, but about all the conservative groups that supported the coup (34): "Any significant investigation of fascism in Spain must detach itself from the constraints of considering Falange Española in isolation. [...] The nature of fascism in Spain cannot be understood without considering the country's backward agrarian capitalism and the crisis it experienced during the 1930s. [...] That crisis fostered the development of extraordinary political measures in the form of the counterrevolutionary coalition that fought in the civil war. The nationalist alliance was analogous to the counterrevolutionary groups that emerged in Italy and Germany as a reaction to their own national crises. It differed in the balance of its components, but still played a comparable structural role." (29).

[9] According to Moradiellos, "much of the debate and controversy about the totalitarian or authoritarian nature of the Franco regime stems from each author and analyst focusing on one or another period of the forty years of history that the dictatorship experienced, with its changes and evolutions in tune with the international context" (19). Similarly, Borja de Riquer argues that "the exceptional duration of the regime is one of the fundamental causes of the lengthy terminological debate" (14). Di Febo and Santos Juliá (7), Vilar (8), Saz Campos (*Fascismo y Franquismo* 97), Payne (xiii), Casanova y Gil (308) all emphasize the longevity of the dictatorship as (one of) its fundamental characteristic(s).

root of the question concerning the definition of Francoism. Although different historians have established slightly different chronologies, they all agree in considering 1959 a turning point in the evolution of the dictatorship (1939-1959 is often referred to as "first Francoism," and 1959-1975 as "second Francoism," with some authors considering the period 1936-1939 either as part of Francoism itself or as a constitutive phase). Each of these major partitions is, in turn, subdivided into differentiated periods, each of them corresponding to a phase of hegemony of one of the regime's constituents.

The first of these periods extends from 1939 to 1945 and is usually identified with the hegemony of FE and therefore, the most openly fascist period. It was also a period of extreme economic recession due to the regimen's autarchic economic policies which led to a drastic impoverishment of the population and the emergence of an informal economy and a black market (ration books were used until 1952). Even though the war had ended, in some parts of Spain, the Maquis still waged sporadic warfare against the regime. These were in turn used by government propaganda to argue that the enemy hadn't been defeated, thus justifying the need for Franco's continuity. As far as foreign policy is concerned, Spain remained neutral during World War II but supported the Axis.

The year 1945 has conventionally been used to mark the regime's forced switch from fascism to National-Catholism due to the defeat of the Axis in WWII. However, as Saz Campos argues, in reality, this "process of desfascistization" had already started by 1941, after FE's attempt to hegemonize the regime failed. Indeed, by 1943, when it became clear that the Allies might win the war, several army high officers signed a letter asking Franco to restore the

monarchy and name Prince Juan de Borbón king.[10] Franco ignored this letter and gave key positions of power to loyal officers, thus securing his power.

Undeniably, though, the outcome of the IIWW forced the first drastic change in Francoist Spain. After the defeat of its allies, Franco found himself internationally isolated when in 1946, the Western powers, led by Great Britain, France, and the US, rejected its adhesion to the UN and pressed for the removal of ambassadors. Simultaneously, Juan de Borbón, supported by a great number of the country's elites, condemned the regime's fascist nature and demanded that Franco restore a traditional monarchy. Pressed by these events, Franco initiated a series of changes destined to create a more palatable image of the regime, without modifying his own absolute power. In 1945, the *Fuero de los españoles* was enacted, proclaiming citizens' limited civil rights; a change in the government composition took important positions away from Falangists, and gave prominence to representatives of the church and the traditional Catholic elites; the regime also got rid of the fascist salute and other displays of fascist aesthetics.

These changes inaugurated what has been called the period of the hegemony of National-Catholicism (1945-1959), with the official propaganda presenting Franco as the true leader of the Spanish people *by the Grace of God*, who would restore the nation's grandeur (identified with the golden age of Spanish Imperialism) and stir it to its historical mission: protect traditional Catholic Western values against the communist threat. In 1947, the Law of Succession to the Headship of the State was proclaimed; in it, Spain was considered a monarchy ruled by Franco as Head of State, who would eventually choose his successor. This rhetorical maneuver (from fascism to National-Catholicism) soon bore fruit. In the context of the Cold War, Spain's strategic geographical position within Europe led to the end of its international isolation: In

[10] Juan de Borbón (1913-1993) was Alfonso XIII's son and heir to the throne. Alfonso XIII (1886-1941) had abdicated and left Spain in 1931, when the Second Republic was instituted.

1950, the UN revoked its condemnation of the Francoist regime and ambassadors returned and in 1955 Spain was admitted to the UN.

The 50s also saw the reemergence of some social protests. In 1957, as part of the continued efforts to institutionalize the regime, Franco asked the secretary general of FE, Jose Luis Arrese, to develop a text outlining the regime's principles. Arrese's plan, however, mainly proposed a reinforcement of state power through the preeminence of the single party, and a return to falangist ideas. This plan was rejected by the army, the church, and practically every other group within the regime, who considered it totalitarian and alien to Spain's traditions and values. Due to these reactions, Franco dismissed Arrese's plan and instead enacted, in 1958, the Law of the Fundamental Principles of the National Movement which again presented Spain as a traditional monarchy and the state as an "organic democracy" where people supposedly participated in the government through the traditional institutions of social life: the family, the municipality and the union.[11] Economically, autarchy continued and, by 1959, the regime was bankrupt.

The period between 1959 and 1969 is usually called the developmentalism period (*desarrollismo*). The dire economic situation in which the regime found itself by the end of the 50s led to the second important renovation in the Francoist government: the ministries of commerce and internal revenue were occupied by members of a new generation of young experts, most of them members of the Opus Dei. Under the auspices of these "technocrats," the Stabilization and Liberalization Plan of 1959 was implemented. The 1959 Plan carried out a systemic rationalization and liberalization of the Spanish economy whereby massive emigration of skilled and unskilled workers to Northern Europe was promoted, the tourism industry

[11] The union here refers to the Vertical Union or *Sindicato Vertical*, established by Falange during the war, and used by the regime until its end in 1975 to manage and control workers.

developed and international investments flowed into the country. These measures led to rapid growth, industrialization, and development, accompanied by a general modernization in all aspects of life; however, political freedom and civil rights remained restricted, and the Francoist institutions did not change.

The "developmentalism" period is thus typically identified with the hegemony of the Opus Dei technocrats in the government and with a fundamental transformation of the regime's rhetoric: the exaltation of the war as a Crusade and of Franco as the military victor gave way to a state discourse that focused on economic development through emphasis on data, charts, and specialized knowledge. As part of this new official discourse, Franco was portrayed as the only leader capable of achieving peace and therefore the necessary stability for economic development. The 1966 Organic Law of the State was a step forward towards the institutionalization of the regime; although it didn't essentially modify anything, it achieved the necessary changes to ensure its continuity. In 1969, Franco finally designated his successor: Juan Carlos of Borbón, son of Juan of Borbón. This period also saw social changes, mostly provoked by the flow of cultural and material influences from abroad, and the consolidation of a clandestine anti-Franco resistance.

Lastly, the years 1969-1975 have often been referred to as Late Francoism or *Tardofranquismo*, and are usually characterized as the rupture of the pact between forces that had allowed Francoism to endure for so long. Franco's debilitated health meant the near end of the dictatorship and, within the regime, two tendencies emerged: the supporters of liberalization and transitioning to democracy and those who tried to resist change. In 1969, another change in government showed Franco's preference for the second option. However, anti-Franco militancy kept growing, as well as strikes and protests, mostly provoked by the effects of the 1973 oil

crisis. Faced with waves of social unrest and political mobilization, the government increased repression. In November 1975 Franco died and the transition to democracy started.

It is precisely conceiving the dictatorship as a succession of hegemonies that has allowed Saz Campos to come up with the concept of "fascistization" (*fascistización*) as a way of resolving the debate about the nature of Francoism (e.g. whether it can be considered fascism or not). For Saz Campos, 20th-century European dictatorships have been studied according to two models: the totalitarian and the Marxist model. The totalitarian model establishes a continuum between liberal democracy and totalitarianism, and considers Francoism an authoritarian regime and, therefore, closer to liberal democracy than totalitarian regimes. In contrast, the Marxist model indiscriminately calls all of them fascist insofar as their "social function" is to protect capital. Over time, Saz Campos continues, those who consider Francoism an authoritarian regime admit that there were "fascist elements" and those who consider it fascist acknowledge that it had some specific particularities (*Fascismo y franquismo* 90). All in all, he argues, none of these models can explain a dictatorship such as Francoism; eventually, Franco's regime ends up being considered the least fascist among fascist regimes, or the most fascist among the non-fascist ones; or the most totalitarian among the authoritarian regimes, or the least totalitarian among the totalitarian ones (92). Ultimately, for Saz Campos, it is impossible to clarify whether Francoism was a fascist or authoritarian regime because neither of those labels captures its specificity: it wasn't a traditionally authoritarian regime because it had some fascist elements, and it wasn't a fascist dictatorship because there are elements that distance it from "proper fascism" (99). He then proposes the concept of "fascistization" to solve this conundrum:

> I view fascistization as a process affecting particular sectors on the social and political right –sectors which, when faced with the challenge of democracy, adopt certain features whose innovation and functionality are clearly attributable to fascism. The result is neither fascist in the strict sense, nor can it be characterized as

> a right-wing movement that is entirely free of fascist influence. According to this perspective, a fascistized regime –which Francoism was *par excellence*– may be seen as similar to a fascist one in terms of its anti-democratic tendencies and its adoption of some of the formal, rhetorical, and institutional characteristics of the latter, including those related to social control. However, here the fascist component's subordination to the state impedes it from determining the overall dynamic of the regime (Saz Campos "Fascism, Fascistization and Developmentalism…" 145).

The notion of "fascistization," however, doesn't solve the problem (e.g. it is a way of solving the problem without solving it). Saying that Francoism was a fascistized regime is tantamount to saying it *was and wasn't* fascist, or it was *to some extent* fascist, which doesn't clarify much.[12] Interestingly, the vicissitudes of the terminology about Francoism and its culmination on the notion of "fascistization" bring forth what I consider to be the conceptual deadlock that underlies the debate on the nature of Francoism. On the one hand, the label "fascism" isn't enough to explain Franco's dictatorship, insofar as it is necessarily an abstraction and a generalization, and therefore cannot account for the nuances and particularities of each regime or national context. Because of this, the search for a concept that completely captures the specificity of Francoism results in an endless proliferation of labels and categories (such as Linz's "authoritarianism"). From this perspective, only Mussolini's Italy can be considered a fascist regime and Franco's dictatorship can only be referred to as Francoism. On the other hand, however, even "Francoism" seems to be insufficient: when one studies the period between 1939

[12] Ismael Saz Campos first formulated the concept of "fascistization" in 1993, in his paper "El Franquismo ¿Régimen autoritario o dictadura fascista?" and has continued developing the concept ever since. Most current historians have accepted it to some degree: Moradiellos (1997), Casanova and Gil Andrés (2009), and Di Febo and Santos Juliá (2012), incorporate it into their explanations of the first years of the dictatorship. Others, such as Riquer (2010), maintain a somewhat ambiguous position: while he accepts the assumption that the longevity of Francoism is one of the fundamental causes of the terminological debate, he claims that even though the regime evolved and changed some important formal aspects, it didn't modify its primitive essence at all (14) (although he doesn't clarify what this "primitive essence" is), and goes on to emphasize the regime's social function: "[Francoism] was a regime that catered to the general interests of the social victors of the civil war: The dominant classes of the countryside and the cities. Therefore, the antidemocratic regime organized by the victors of the war aimed to restore the conservative social order and the social and economic predominance of the traditional bourgeoisies (15).

and 1975 carefully, multiple "Francoisms" seem to emerge and the limits between them are blurred: historians seem to be unable to agree on one periodization and it is generally acknowledged that some dates are merely conventional (as is the case with considering 1945 as the "end" of the fascist period when, in reality, FE had lost its hegemony already by 1941).

In *Paradoxes of Stasis: Literature, Politics, and Thought in Francoist Spain* (2019), Tatjana Gajic formulates the constitutional impossibility of the regime. In doing so, she opens a path that allows for an alternative approach regarding the impossibility of defining Francoism. According to Gajic, after the war, the alliance between right-wing parties, the military, and the church needed to consolidate a political structure that would ensure their future (that is, that would allow them to maintain power and economic privileges). That is, in order to last, the regime needed to establish political, economic, and legal foundations that could provide it with stability. However, as explained above, any attempt to establish such a foundation immediately exacerbated internal discord. In addition, the fact that Franco was the only authority capable of managing internal tensions made it impossible to foresee what would happen after his death. Trapped within this contradiction, the regime avoided defining itself and entered a logic that demanded it adapt and change in order to remain the same:

> The regime's strategy for dealing with internal discord was essentially the same as that for dealing with its future. On the one hand, Francoism continued on the path of institutionalization while keeping open –that is, postponing or deferring– a final resolution regarding its future, its definite shape. On the other, the balance between opposing ideas about its nature provided a key (however precarious) to the regime's continuity. (Gajic, 16)

However, according to Gajic, Francoism resisted considering itself as a sort of *interregnum*, since this would imply the promise of a return to liberalism at its end, an end that, as years went by, became inevitably identified with Franco's demise. The regime was thus forced

to legislate in such a way that its end wouldn't be its end (in fact, when in 1969 Juan Carlos of Borbón was designated as Franco's successor, he swore to stay loyal to the principles of the *Movimiento*). Faced with this impossible situation, the regime avoided thinking of law as a Constitution: there never was a Francoist Constitution; instead, the regime only passed concrete laws (8 in total) which in turn contained references to one another, thus forming an "open" totality: "it was a constitution that affirmed and constituted itself through time; hence, one that was permanently in the making and, thereby, through that very process of making, asserted its permanence" (Gajic, 23). The question of the future thus became, as Gajic shows, deeply imbricated with the question of the regime's institutionalization, which in turn could not be definitely established without simultaneously canceling its permanence, insofar as defining its principles in detail would have meant choosing one of its factions over the others and thus ending the stability that ensured it.

Difference within Identity

Ultimately, it seems like Francoism is impossible to define (e.g. to fully account for its specificity, for its singularity) for two main reasons. On the one hand, as historians have pointed out, Francoism changed considerably throughout the years; so much so that it is possible to speak of multiple Francoisms between 1939 and 1975. On the other hand, it is complicated to define Francoism because Francoism never defined itself (doing so, as Tatjana Gajic explains, would have been its end). In the last analysis, both reasons point to the same problem: Francoism is not identical to itself; in its constitution and its evolution, it was traversed by difference.

In this sense, I contend that there is nothing singular about Francoism. Perhaps, its only singularity lies in being a particularly good instance where a certain universality in Western

thought can be clearly seen, insofar as Francoism is, more than anything else, an obsessive search for identity.

Indeed, Francoism articulated its whole *raison d'être* around the question of identity. According to the rebels' propaganda, the 1936 coup's objective was to restore "the true Spain," to return the country to its essence which, in their view, had been betrayed by the changes brought by the Second Republic. In this propagandistic discourse, Franco appeared as the one and only savior of Spain "by the grace of god," and thus, he and his regime were to realize the nation's historical destiny.

To a considerable extent, it was this discourse that allowed the regime to govern for almost forty years without a Constitution (that is, without a clearly defined and closed body of laws). Insofar as the regime was presented as the means to realize the nation's historical destiny, it did not have to *be anything*, its sole purpose was simply to facilitate the existence of the true, essential Spain (under the threat of liberalism, communism, etc.). In other words, the regime presented itself as an ideal transparent bureaucracy whose existence was motivated solely by its function: to provide the appropriate conditions for Spain to be Spain. This idea entailed two important implications: on the one hand, defining the regime conveniently became unnecessary, since the regime itself was nothing but the guarantor of the true Spain. On the other hand, the fact that the administration or its policies changed or how much or in what direction could not be questioned, since whatever Franco did was always already by definition the Spanish essence manifesting itself.

Indeed, every aspect of the Francoist official discourse was directed at creating and enforcing an undisputable image of Spain's identity or, to put it differently, at negating difference within. Because of this, Francoism constitutes an excellent instance to critically

explore the logic of Western thought. In this sense, this dissertation argues that the regime's obsession with building a coherent, homogeneous image of Spain symptomatically points toward the traumatic split at the foundation of the very notion of identity, upon which Western subjectivity and the *logos* that articulates it are founded.

The Lacanian conceptualization of difference and identity constitutes the main theoretical framework of this dissertation. When he asserts that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship, Lacan is signaling the consequences that the Freudian discovery of the unconscious had on the way the West understands being and thinking. With Freud, the Cartesian *cogito*, the subject of consciousness and rational thought, is revealed as a split, inconsistent subject insofar as there is something within the self that the subject ignores, constituted by the discourse of the Other. This split (this difference between the way the subject misrecognizes itself as the ego of consciousness and the way the unconscious actually determines it) is the structural condition for the existence of the subject. In other words, the subject is what happens when an individual (a child) accesses the Universal, language. Language, the order of the signifier, simultaneously provides the subject with the phantasmic notion of the One (the ego upon which the *cogito* depends) and castrates it, condemning it to both an imperfect jouissance and the illusion of the possibility of attaining pure jouissance, pure identity with itself. In this sense, identity is nothing but the fantasy that results from the way the signifier works, and the more one clings to it, the more its precariousness is revealed.

The whole discursive apparatus of Francoism was organized around the Spanish identity and the so-called historical destiny of the nation. From school textbooks to church sermons, news broadcasts, or women's magazines, to name but a few, the "noble spirit of the fatherland" and the "sacred values of the Catholic tradition" were constantly praised and exalted. The works

explored in this dissertation constitute instances of impugnation of this discourse. By pointing out its contradictions and/or dissecting its logic, these works show that to the regime's constant need to reaffirm the Spanish identity underlies the anxiety of not knowing that it knows what it doesn't know: that national identity is only a fantasy destined to conceal the constitutive impossibility of identity.

As Lacan shows, within Western *logos* sexuality emerges as the imaginary articulation of that constitutive impossibility. In this sense, the connection between the unsurmountable difference within the subject and sexual difference is logical (e.g. structural) and contingent. It is the result (not the necessary result, not the only possible result, but the one that happened) of "retroactively" locating the empty marker, the point zero of difference on a specific body part: the penis. In other words, sexual difference, the symbolically determined reading of bodies that articulates "reality," is predicated upon the overlapping between the penis and the phallus, that is, upon locating on the penis the empty signifier that supports the symbolic system (e.g. language, thought) and allows it to exist.

In this sense, the policing of women and sexuality during the Francoist dictatorship is not simply one more aspect of the regime's conservative ideology, it is the mark that reveals Francoism itself as a symptom of the subjective fear of difference. Within Western *logos*, this structural fear, whose zero institution is sexuality, is in turn projected to other realms: racial, regional, religious, etc. In this sense, the Francoist discourse inherited and re-elaborated the historical racial and religious opposition to the Arab-Muslim other as a privileged space for the configuration of the Spanish national identity.

Questions of gender and sexuality, and to a lesser extent, questions regarding colonialism and racism during the Francoist dictatorship have been studied mainly from historical and

sociological perspectives. The following two subsections contain a brief overview of these issues, which constitutes the historical basis of my analysis. However, this dissertation doesn't understand them as mere conservative features of Francoism, but as constitutive of its configuration as a discourse, as I will elaborate in the next section.

Gender Roles, Catholicism and the Sección Femenina

The Francoist restoration of traditional order affected every aspect of Spain's society and culture, but careful emphasis was placed on the policing of gender roles and sexuality. Since the war, the regime imposed a strict division of gender roles and relegated women to the private space of the home and reproductive work.[13] As Helen Graham explains:

> In its bid to stabilize itself and to effect the social institutionalization of victory, the Franco regime targeted women because of the pivotal role they played within the family. The patriarchal family was seen as representing the corporate order of the state in microcosm. So, by reconstructing or reinforcing it, Francoism would, in theory, be able to operate on an atomized post-war society to build up the "new order." The family, as envisaged by the regime, was unthreatening because it connected vertically with the state rather than horizontally within society. Thus it reinforced the unity and power of the state, rather than challenging it as did the horizontal solidarities of civil society (other sorts of "family" / affective ties, political parties, trade unions, and the traditions of civil associationism). One of the major functions of the civil war had been to annihilate these threats. (184)

In *True Catholic Womanhood*: *Gender Ideology in Franco's Spain* (2000), Aurora G. Morcillo speaks of "the Francoist nationalization of women" to refer to this process of instrumentalization of women by the regime. This instrumentalization was attained by creating a

[13] In fact, legislation was passed that forbade women from working outside the home; however, as Helen Graham has shown, the conditions of extreme poverty that followed the war meant that such legislation was often transgressed by working-class women in the form of an informal economy where they worked as seamstresses, maids, laundry women and similar tasks that they could do from home (191).

specific concept of femininity and imposing it on all women (regardless of their social class) mainly through the education system: that of a "'eternal,' passive, pious, pure, submissive woman-as-mother for whom self-denial was the only road to real fulfillment" (Graham 184). In this sense, "Catholicism was inherent to the regime's definition of Spanish femininity. The new educational system aspired to promote true Catholic womanhood by appealing to Spanish historical tradition" (Morcillo 36). According to Morcillo, such tradition was shaped through historical models such as Saint Teresa or the Virgen del Pilar as ideal representatives of female sacrifice for the fatherland; the popularization of Renaissance treatises on the proper behavior of women, which emphasized chastity, marriage, obedience and silence; and Pius XI's encyclicals *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929) and *Casti Connubbii* (1930) which prescribed the separation of the sexes and different education where girls were to be groomed as future wives and mothers (Morcillo 36-42).

Especially during the postwar period, the task of educating women was entrusted to the *Sección Femenina*, the Feminine Section of *Falange Española* (SF), which became the intermediary between the State and women. The SF was founded in 1934 and remained active through the dictatorship, until it was disbanded on April 1 1977 together with all the institutions of the *Movimiento*. Since its foundation, it was led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera (the founder of FE). Under the purview of SF,

> women learned the domestic arts of cooking and infant care through their training in Social Service, in domestic schools, and through institutionalized women's professional instruction. The order of 20 June 1941 made homemaking instruction mandatory for girls in all primary and secondary schools. For domestic instruction, every high school had women teachers, who were appointed by the Ministry of National Education and endorsed by the Women's Section of the Falange. No girl could graduate without passing the courses in home economics, sewing, pattern design, arts and crafts, darning and mending, cooking, and music." (Morcillo 44)

SF attempted to reach every social sphere and social class, establishing many different institutions: official educational centers, where subjects such as needlework, political and physical education were taught by the SF; lectures commemorating José Antonio's death, held yearly on November 20, where the ideals of FE were exalted; in private schools (usually managed by the church), domestic work, physical education and formation of national spirit were taught according to the SF's directives;[14] the Institute of Professional Education for Women trained women as dressmaking, weaving, and arts and crafts teachers; in rural areas, the "Brotherhood of the City and the Countryside" was instituted "so that peasant women had the opportunity to contribute to the national effort within their home through the establishment of rural and domestic workshops whose products were then sold by SF so that women would not abandon their homes" (Dueñas 47); in urban areas, the SF created workshops and leisure activities for working-class women and the Arrows House (*Casa de las flechas*), centers for the indoctrination of young girls (Dueñas 42-52). The most important of these institutions was the Social Service program, "whereby unmarried women between the ages of 17 and 35 were encouraged (or required if they wanted employment) to provide six months' state service of which at least three constituted unpaid welfare work" (Graham 187).

However, SF's importance within the regime changed with time. It was most active during the Civil War and the early 40s and remained relevant until the late 50s.[15] During the 60s,

[14] There were many tensions between SF and the church regarding the education of girls and young women. However, as Matilde Peinado has shown, they both coincided regarding maternity as women's true purpose and as their contribution to the "glorious resurgence of the State" (155).

[15] Much has been written about the Feminine Section of Falange. In "La Sección Femenina en perspectiva. Historias y otros relatos sobre las mujeres de Falange" (2020), Begoña Barrera offers an exhaustive commented bibliography on the topic, pointing to the main historiographical discussions. First, there is the question of the SF elite's agency within the regime and the fact that, even though it was always led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, it nevertheless was a heterogeneous organization, with internal dissent increasing after the mid-1950s due to being underfunded (Dueñas 57-60). SF's ideology mirrored that of FE, fusing falangist values (abnegation, obedience, and respect toward hierarchies) with Catholic values (submission, naturalness, sweetness) (Dueñas 30). Finally, one of the most interesting aspects of SF was

the changes brought by economic liberalization provoked tensions regarding gender roles, sexuality, and women's work. Throughout the period, the regime sought to maintain the catholic values of chastity and feminine subordination while attempting to regulate women's incorporation into the job market (mainly in feminized professions) and their newly acquired role as agents of capitalist consumerism (Morcillo 55-76).

In fact, it was precisely the church that contributed to the transformation of discourses and regulations regarding marriage, sexuality, and gender. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) Catholic discourse started to focus its ideal of gender relations on notions such as comradeship, intimacy, happiness, and sexual satisfaction, which slowly replaced previous ones such as hierarchy, abnegation, and sacrifice, thus transforming the archetypes of femininity and masculinity as well (García Fernández 15). Therefore, from an image of total subordination, the Catholic church shifted to a notion much closer to that of "romantic love," which in turn opened the space for the emergence of dissatisfaction when everyday experience didn't adjust to that ideal and contributed to new demands of rights, such as female sexual pleasure, divorce or contraceptives (García Fernández 293). In other words, this shift in the church's discourse acted as a salutary lesson and, paradoxically, precipitated the delegitimization of National-Catholism. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation situate themselves within this context of changes in the conceptualization of "womanhood."

the contradiction it represented: While the women who worked for SF predicated the ideal of "womanhood" enforced by the state: woman as wife and mother, they represented the opposite: young, single women, who worked and were paid and led a somewhat independent life.

Race, Religion and the Ejército de África

Since the Middle Ages, the notion of Spanish Nationhood has been imagined according to an exclusionary logic based on race and religion. From the so-called "Reconquest" to the definite expulsion of the Jews and Muslims from the Peninsula, the proclamation of the "Blood Purity Statutes" (*Estatutos de Limpieza de Sangre*, in force between 1449 and 1835), the rediscovery and revalorization of the Islamic history in the 18th century and the subsequent renegotiations of identity in the wake of 19th-century "scientific" racism, Spanish sense of selfhood has been defined in relation with the Arab-Muslim other.

At the end of the 19th century, as a result of the Hispano-American War and the independence of Spain's last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and The Philippines) notions of race and religion were once again rehashed in a new iteration of the definition of national identity. This period saw the consolidation of the modern myth of the Spanish National Identity, which was the basis for the 1936 coup and the regime's ideological legitimation. As Sebastian Balfour explains, the 1898 military defeat and the subsequent economic crisis led to the emergence of several political projects questioning the Bourbon Restoration, all of which failed for different reasons.[16] However, many elements of these new discourses (many of which were enunciated from positions that could be considered "progressive" with respect to the Restoration) were picked up by right-wing ideology, "in particular, the idea of Spain's spiritual mission, the distrust of parliamentary politics and the belief in an essential, as opposed to plural, Spain whose roots lay in Castile and Catholicism" (Balfour 29).

[16] The Bourbon Restoration refers to the period between 1874 and 1931 when the Bourbon monarchy was restored to power under King Alfonso XII after the First Spanish Republic. This period ended with the abdication of King Alfonso XIII and the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931.

Indeed, the loss of the colonies put an end to the already precarious unity of Spain, which "had been constructed around a common endeavor to extend its dominion and its religion to the empire and to extract the wealth contained therein" (Balfour 29). The rightwing sectors' reaction to this crisis translated into a reinforcement of the centralizing spirit that had articulated imperial policies since they considered that it was because they had given in to the demands of the Cuban independentists that the "disaster" had occurred.[17] It was in the context of this renewed centralizing impulse, that the idea of the "Spanish essence" became a main preoccupation and was identified with the center: Castile. However, this identification of the "Spanish true character" with Castile and Catholicism also served another purpose: to exalt Hispanic spiritual values against Anglo-Saxon capitalism as a renewed bond with the Latin American Republics. This bond was understood as a "cultural" (racial) affinity against Northern European and North American supposed materialism and obsession with progress at the expense of spiritual and human values.[18] This glorification of "*Hispanidad*" was also accompanied by the idolization of an image of masculinity that emphasized the valor, honor, and virility of the Spanish men as well as the beauty and devotion of Spanish women (Balfour 30).

These ideas penetrated particularly a key sector: the military. A great number of high officers of the Spanish Army, and especially those of the African Army stationed in Northern Morocco wholeheartedly agreed with this notion of identity and Spain's mission, which according to them had to be continued in Africa (although the harsh consequences of the Cuban War had made public opinion reluctant to the idea of African Colonialism). However, one

[17] To this day, Spanish historiography refers to 1898 as "The Desaster of 1898" (*el Desastre de 1898*).
[18] This opposition between "Hispanic spiritual values" vs. "Anglo-Saxon materialism" was widespread on both sides of the Atlantic. Examples of this rhetoric are José Rodo's *Ariel*, Rubén Darío "Letanía a nuestro señor Don Quijote" or his short story "D.Q." which follows a mysterious Spanish soldier in the Cuban Independence War who behaves and acts in a noble, idealist manner, and is only identified with the initials D.Q.

important aspect of the military discourse was its disdain against politicians and the ideal that the regeneration of the country could only be attained through an "authoritarian state [that would create] a strong economy, rebuild [Spain's] military strength, and recover greatness through imperialist expansion into Africa" (Balfour 31). Franco and all the other generals who started the 1936 coup were or had been officials in the African Army.[19]

As Ignacio Tofiño-Quesada has pointed out, however, two opposing ideas coexisted in Spain's military campaigns in Northern Africa: on the one hand, that of the "Reconquest" and the expansion of Christianity as part of Spain's civilizing mission; on the other, the vindication of Spain's Islamic past as a means to legitimize Spain's right to participate in the colonization of Africa. In other words, "Spain wanted both to exploit its Islamic past (in the image of an innate African vocation) and to efface it (in the image of a Christian nation and its missionary ambitions)" (143).

It is within this context that the Civil War was defined as a "holy Crusade," and the "Reconquest" was selected as the historical precedent of the coup. Franco, who during the Republic had been promoted to Division General of the Indigenous Regular Forces of Melilla (known as "Regulares"), brought them, as well as the rest of the African Army, to fight for the coup during the Civil War, and Franco's personal "Moorish Guard" (*Guardia Mora*) was often displayed, with Moroccan attire, in ceremonies and parades. The regime's relation with Spain's religious and racial identity *vis a vis* the Arab-Muslim other is addressed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

[19] Contempt toward parliamentary politics and politicians themselves, as well as the glorification of the honor and virility of the Spanish soldiers, are the main features of the film *Raza* (*Race*). Released in 1941 and written by Franco himself, this film connected the current Spanish military with almogavars (*almogávares*), guerrilla soldier groups, originating in Muslim Iberia. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the term designated a section of light infantry within the Christian Kingdoms, as well as groups of Moorish bandits from the kingdom of Granada who attacked frontier Christian towns.

Francoism as Ideology

In this dissertation, I study Francoism not as an object, but as a discourse, a symbolic law; in other words, as ideology. I understand law as the symbolic order in the sense of the discourse of the Other; that is, as the automatism of the signifying chain that constitutes the unconscious and determines its functioning, as Lacan elaborates in "The Purloined Letter" and in the first part of *Book 11* of his *Seminar*. In "The Purloined Letter," Lacan develops the mathematical model that allows him to express the functioning of the unconscious: starting from the language he creates to systematize the random tosses of a coin, he demonstrates how, from the moment symbolization lets "reality" emerge, something of that "reality" becomes Real, a residue impossible to be absorbed by the system itself. In *Book 11* of his *Seminar*, Lacan points out the automaton-like character of the symbolic system, which works as an insistent repetition of a law that, simultaneously, contains the necessary return of the Real that repeatedly interrupts it. In this framework, the subject of the unconscious is the one whose individual speech always already belongs to the signifying chain, to the discourse of the Other that precedes it and from which it cannot disengage. The works analyzed in this dissertation know themselves to be part of the Francoist discourse as law. Thus, acknowledging the impossibility of situating themselves "outside" of it, they work within it, pointing at the places where the Real returns and the Francoist discourse is interrupted, thus signaling its precariousness.[20]

[20] In this sense, these novels take a stance that is the opposite of that taken by historiography, insofar as, anchored in the imaginary, the labels and categories of historiography can describe the Francoist dictatorship, but will never be able to define it, since the symbolic never exhausts the real. Thus, even a concept such as "fascistization" falls short: when one attends to details, one might find that there are several *periods* of fascistization and, if compared with other fascistized regimes, one might encounter *types* of fascistization. An endless proliferation of categories and subcategories attempting to close the object in itself, to make it coincide, be identical with the word that names it, only to find that the object is always different from that image conjured by language, never identical to itself. This doesn't mean, however, that historiography should be abandoned. On the contrary: its descriptive power can be extremely helpful in understanding Francoism as an ideology. In "Specters of Ideology," Žižek builds its concept of ideology according to the "Hegelian triad of In-itself – For-itself – In-and-for-itself" (10). Following this logic, Žižek situates "ideas, beliefs, concepts and so

My intervention therefore consists of striping Francoism of its ontological entity, considering it not as some*thing*, but as a structure of thought, a chain of signifiers that organizes a symbolic Law, a discourse of the Other. In other words, I approach Francoism as an ideology, I aim to interrogate it in the realm of the symbolic; that is, to explore the notions, ideas, and concepts that, articulated as fantasies, were presented as obvious and natural.[21] In this sense, I follow Slavoj Žižek's conceptualization of ideology as a "rational legitimization of the existing order" which "functions as a 'lie necessarily experienced as truth'" ("The Spectre of Ideology" 13). As Althusser had already pointed out, every subject is articulated in and through ideology (e.g. the discourse of the Other), which is deployed through the ideological state apparatuses with the aid of legal regulations and economic mechanisms and reinforced through repressive state apparatuses.

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on" (10) within ideology in-itself; the ideological practices, rituals, and institutions that attest to the material existence of ideology in Ideological State Apparatuses correspond to ideology for-itself (12) and finally, the set of heterogenous "mechanisms of economic coercion and legal regulation" (15) constitute ideology in-and-for itself. Starting from this dialectics, and superimposing it with the historiographical periodization of the dictatorship, it is possible to historicize Francoism as an ideology according to this blueprint: the period usually known as "autarchy" (from the end of the civil war until 1946) was characterized by the blossoming of a mixed discursive construct that oscillated between the fascism of Falange, the more conservative and authoritarian rhetoric of the traditional oligarchy and the military, and the exacerbated religious dogma of the Church. Eventually, following a certain "erasure" of its most openly fascist aspects after the defeat of the Axis in WWII, these discourses crystallized in what has later been called "National-Catholicism." The doctrine of "National-Catholicism," which still included many notions whose origin was the fascist discourse of Falange, was enforced through education, ecclesiastic sermons, and active propaganda during the 40s and 50s. The 50s also saw the consolidation of the Francoist ideological state apparatuses which, from the 60s on, were in charge of the repetition and continuation of the National-Catholic ideology, while the regime's public discourse "safely" switched to a rhetoric of economic development and capitalist modernization which continued until the end of the dictatorship.

[21] Since the symbolic always precedes the imaginary, notions and concepts are always the product of a previous symbolization. Lacan established the precedence of the symbolic over the imaginary in "The Logic of Castration" (*Book 5* of his *Seminar*). In what he calls the first moment of the Oedipus complex, before the paternal interdiction has been realized and fear of castration has set in, when the not-yet subject is subjected to the imaginary relation with the other, it is already subjected to the Other: it desires the desire of the M/Other. This means that the infant has already established an Other capable of being present or absent; in other words, the emergence of the ego, (e.g. of the imaginary order), is contingent on the symbolic order: before the imaginary ego is established there is already symbolization. The subject is therefore what happens when the infant accesses language, and it is constitutively lacking since its completeness (the image of the ego he establishes at this stage, to which Lacan also referred as the mirror stage) is a mythical image, a mirage, a fantasy that is both the Cause and the Object (that is, the *object a*) of the desire that will forever organize its life: the strive to attain jouissance, to be one with itself, coincide with its own identity.

In recent years, three studies have addressed different aspects of the Francoist ideology: the cultural construction of the myth of an original Spain is the central topic of *Myth and History in the Contemporary Spanish Novel* (1989) by Jo Labanyi; the historical legitimation of the regime's rise to power is conceptualized in *Narrating the Past. Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (1995) by David K. Herzberger, and the Francoist political form is theorized by William Viestenz in *By the Grace of God: Francoist Spain and the Sacred Roots of Political Imagination* (2014). Through the analysis of the Francoist discourse by these authors, it is possible to see how the imaginary fantasy of a "Spanish identity" takes shape, revealing itself as object *a*; that is, as both Cause and Object of the Francoist logic of desire. These three studies have been pivotal in my understanding of the Francoist law as configured in its discourses. Therefore, I summarize their arguments in some detail here, pointing out the places where they indicate the ideological operations that, presented as "natural" causal relations, are intended to cover up the unsymbolizable core of an impossible jouissance, or the constitutive impossibility of such a thing as a national identity.

In her 1989 study, Jo Labanyi provides a review of the historical uses of the notion of myth in the West and analyzes its utilization by FE. According to Labanyi, like other fascisms, Falange based its ideology on the notion that the modern history of the country was an inauthentic deviation from a mythical origin to which it was necessary to return. Thus, the linear and eschatological vision of history as progress, consolidated with positivism, was reworked into a cyclical vision whereby the ultimate goal of history was reintegration into the past. In this context, myth as an explanation of origin is linked to the essence of a "national spirit" embodied in "the people," uneducated and connected to the land, and therefore "natural." Myth is, then, simultaneously and without contradiction, natural and national: a product of the interaction of

earthy forces and racial factors that shape the "national character." Thus, "the notion that myth defines the nation gives the false impression that national boundaries predate history and have an essential, natural status. Myth unifies the nation by grounding it in the wholeness of nature" (Labanyi, 8).

It is in this sense of grounding the wholeness of the nation that "fascist revolution" is to be understood as a "political 'return to the roots.' In fascist ideology, 'revolution' is used in its literal sense of cyclical reversal" (Labanyi 14). In this sense, fascism involved putting into effective practice the idea of the necessity to "undo history" and return to the "national origin." In the Spanish case, Falangist thought allowed the regime to exalt violence as a mystical instance that paved the way for the return of the lost paradise identified with medieval Castile as the mythical origin of Spain, and the so-called "Reconquest" ("*Reconquista*"), became the founding epic of the nation.[22]

Now, to carry out the ideological operation of identifying Spain with traditional, Catholic Castile, especially once the war was over, the regime needed to legitimize its existence and grant its permanence. As I pointed out above, this was achieved by portraying the regime as a historical necessity, as the realization of the national destiny. To sustain this idea, the official discourse created what David K. Herzberger calls a "usable past" (16), constructed not only through the censorship of any alternative vision to the regime's version of the country's history but above all through the consolidation of a concept of history imposed as "natural." Francoist historiography was based on the idea that to historical events underlies a Truth that the historian

[22] This means that what was erected as the ideal of Spain was, symptomatically, the moment when absolutism was consolidated with Carlos I and previous liberties, rooted in medieval custom, were forfeited: "This was the time when Vasco Núñes de Balboa planted the banner of Castile upon the shores of Darien, Cortés in Mexico, and Pizarro in Peru; when Spanish influence reigned supreme in Europe, and the Southern imagination of the Iberians was bewildered with visions of Eldorados, chivalrous adventures, and universal monarchy. Then Spanish liberty disappeared under the clash of arms, showers of gold, and the terrible illuminations of the auto-da-fe" (Marx, *Revolutionary Spain*).

can "discover" and, through this discovery, reveal the Meaning of history. Thus, under the guise of objectivity, Francoist historiography "became an overt political act bound up with the Catholic/Falangist conception of truth" (20). This truth, in turn, was localized in the myth of Castile, the Reconquest, and the Catholic Monarchs as quintessential of the "Spanish character," an enigmatic core that, since romanticism, was construed as the depositary of a supposedly national essence. The historiographical task, therefore, consisted of discovering (selecting) the events that, in history, attested to and revealed this "Spanish character." This operation implied, of course, overlooking the fact that the "Spanish character" was, in fact, the *a priori* that articulated the historical narrative.

Myth, history, and nation thus intertwined to shape an ideological fantasy of "Spain," whose main attribute was being One, an organic whole united in the sameness of the "Spanish character."[23] Support for this idea was found, above all, in Menéndez Pelayo, for whom the nation was not historical, temporal, and contingent but a "timeless principle of permanence" (quoted in Herzberger 22). Understanding the nation as timeless and eternal implies conceiving anything diverging from the "authentic essence" of Spain as deviation. After all, "revolutions and invasions have a special need to disguise their illegitimacy as 'usurpers' by spawning a historiography that postulates their descent from –and return to– some lost founding tradition, which they claim had been 'usurped' by their predecessors: the mythohistoriography of the Franco regime is a perfect example" (Labanyi, 33). Ultimately, the concept of history advocated

[23] This fantasy does not originate in Falangist thought, but rather in thinkers such as Menéndez Pelayo, Ortega y Gasset, and intellectuals of the so-called Generation of '98. In all of them, the reactionary concern for identity, encoded in the need to regenerate a supposedly lost Spanish essence was constant, and it materialized in the articulation of causalities and myths that FE only had to carry to its logical consequence in the political arena: the need for a totalitarian state capable of rediscovering the Spanish through the purification of the non-Spanish. For a detailed analysis of how Francoist historiography reintegrated Menéndez Pelayo, see "Co-opting the Past: Historiography in Francoist Spain" by David Herzberger, especially pp. 20-30. In "Behold a Spanish fullness: Catholicism, cultural regeneration, and Spanish essentialism," William Viestenz shows how the doctrine of Mational-Catholicism constructed an idea of "sacred Spain" based on thinkers such as Jaime Balmes, Juan Donoso Cortés, Unamuno, and Ortega y Gasset.

by Francoism aimed at the exaltation of sameness, and its equivalent: the repression of what does not align, of what is not *the same*.[24]

In *Un haz de naciones. El estado y la plurinacionalidad en España (1830-2017)* (2020) Xavier Domenech conceptualizes the radical impossibility of the identity of the Spanish nation-state and the process through which, during the 19th century, the idea of a Spanish nation was developed. According to Domenech, the modern Spanish State emerged as the struggle of two opposite visions that emerged simultaneously; with this, he challenges the idea of an original liberal State based on a constitutional monarchy against which a democratic and plurinational alternative was then erected. On the contrary, Domenech suggests that the constitution of the Spanish nation-state arises from a fissure, in a dialectical tension for the definition of its bases that is always prior to its constitution. Domenech's proposal thus shows the falsity of the notion of a consistent origin whose stability is disturbed later by the emergence of an alternative, in favor of a constitution always already traversed by difference, by a non-symbolizable structural core. Domenech proposes that the structural antagonism of the Spanish nation-state was developed according to two concepts of "nation:" During the first half of the 19th century, the nation was understood as a "political nation," that is, a space of sovereignty and exercise of political and civil rights where the State functions as a guarantor of these rights. From the mid-19th century onward, it was reconceptualized as a "cultural nation," where the national is defined in terms of ethnic, religious, or historical identity and whose existence legitimizes the existence

[24] What I am describing here is a process of identification of sameness with origin, very similar to what Freud posited in structural terms. Indeed, the same desire for identity and wholeness the modern subject seeks underlies Freud's writings. In this sense, the main difference between traditional conservative thought and Freud's thought is that he was unable to unsee, or not willing to ignore, the fact that, as much as we try, identity is nowhere to be found, except as posited as a mythical anteriority. After all, repression, one of Freud's earliest formulated concepts, is nothing more than preventing something from entering into conscience; that is, not wanting to be made aware of an internal thought because it confronts the ego with its desire for something that it doesn't want to desire, with difference within it. Lacan's key step forward was to get rid of that mythical anteriority and, without disposing of the subject, ascertain the radical impossibility of its identity.

and exercise of power by the state. That is, from "nation" as a unity of different citizens with *the same rights*, to "nation" as a set of citizens who *are the same*, where the different is excluded. The place of sameness then shifts to the ontological realm, to a "national being," which can only be one, equal to itself.

Both conceptions, "political nation" and "cultural nation," compete throughout the 19th century in a whirlwind of popular uprisings, military pronouncements, and civil wars that culminated with the military coup of 1936 against the Second Republic. According to Domenech, the last moment in which a change in the foundation of the state and its articulation in terms of a "political nation" could have been possible was the *Sexenio Democrático* (literally "six democratic years") and the First Republic. The constitution of the capitalist liberal State in Spain is, therefore, a fissure that conservative discourse tries to erase at all costs, physically, politically, and economically repressing anything that does not align with the fantasy of a Spain that is one, identical to itself, Castilian, monarchical, and Catholic.

The political consequence of these conservative ideological operations, which date back to the mid-19th century and are presented as obvious, objective, and "natural," is straightforward (and also presented as "natural" and unquestionable): Spain exists. What is more: Spain, eternal and permanent, pre-exists Spaniards themselves, whose moral duty is to preserve and protect it. The signifier "Spain" thus supports an ideological fantasy condensing the features outlined so far in this section and, in this sense, functions as object *a*, caused by and causing the desire for identitarian certainty, that is, for the security of an origin and destiny that explain and justify human existence. In other words, the nation is nothing more than an ideological fantasy designed to cover up the traumatic fissure impossible to be integrated into the symbolic. It is not coincidental that, in Francoist discourse, the 19th-century idea of "the two Spains" is replaced by

the antagonistic vision of Spain versus anti-Spain: the "reds" (communists, anarchists, socialists, etc.) cease to be an alternative to the conception of the nation-state called Spain and become an alien, anti-Spanish element, guilty of the lack of harmonic unity of the nation, which is one and eternal. At the center of this imaginary construct, the anti-Spain becomes the fetish that simultaneously denies and embodies the structural impossibility of the nation, understood in cultural-identitarian terms.

In this sense, for Viestenz, Francoist Spain is an example of how the ethno-cultural legitimization of the nation, based on the consecration of history, culture, language, and national destiny, quickly leads to a purifying and mystically exalted violence, which is in turn seen as sacred. The mystic-religious rhetoric of Francoist propaganda referring to the military uprising of 1936 as a crusade of purification, as well as the symbolic and material exclusion of other nationalisms or political visions, point to the incompatibility of different views in the same sovereign space advocated by the rebels.

As Viestenz suggests, through this purifying zeal, the notion of national identity was assimilated into a kind of sacred cult. Politically understanding national identity as something sacred implies considering it natural and essential, and therefore, of a metaphysical nature: "the sacred as a symbolic shell that is imbued with essential qualities and meanings linked to national identity. Like a tabernacle, a nation's sacred core is purposefully mysterious –always open to interpretation and speculation" (Viestenz, 10-11). In this sense, as Viestenz argues, if national identity is essential (timeless, natural, eternal), it is not a proposition (among others) that can be denied, affirmed, or modified; and from the moment a specific proposition defining the nation is consecrated (that is, becomes essential), all possible alternatives become "profane" (12). In the regime's rhetoric, the anti-Spain thus constituted the profanation of the national identity. And if

the ideal and essence of Spain are located in a specific place (Castile) and at a specific time (the culmination of the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the peninsula), everything that comes afterward (until this essence is reinstated through the holy crusade), is a profanation: "The historical rise of political liberalism is thus construed as a lengthy profanation, a series of steps taken without 'la gracia de dios' that secularizes the purity of the state" (Viestenz, 22). Within the regime's discourse, it is Franco, portrayed as the heir of the Catholic Monarchs, who again reconquests Spain and, through the mythical violence of his crusade, emerges as a sovereign chosen by God who returns the people to their mythical and sacred identity: under his command, a return to the origin is realized, the lost paradise where the nation was one with itself is recovered.

The Scope of this Dissertation

The regime's obsession with identity (which parallels that of the modern subject) and its accompanying suppression of difference, points to what Žižek has conceptualized as the obscene jouissance of the Law: "The moral Law is obscene in so far as it is its form itself which functions as a motivating force driving us to obey its command –that is in so far as we obey moral Law because it is law and not because of a set of positive reasons: the obscenity of moral Law is the obverse of its formal character" (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 89). At stake here is, then, the enjoyment, enraptured in a form that provides the fantasy of unity, offers the metaphysical certainty of meaning, the absolute enthronement of the subject convinced of being one, identical to oneself. In this sense, Francoism emerges as the choice of something over nothing, as the erection of a law that, in the enjoyment of its form, "plugs up the 'there is no such thing' of the no relationship with the erection of a 'there is'" (Soler 216). Francoism is the culmination of a

historical effort (historical insofar as it is repetitive) to find a consistency that ensures and sustains the pleasure, undoubtedly phantasmatic but capable of keeping the anxiety of constitutive impossibility at bay. An obscene pleasure that points to the always-prior mythical unity; the object *a* that is erected to fill that void is none other than the signifier "Spain," an imaginary fixation, a chimerical object of fantasy, "the object causing desire and at the same time –this is its paradox– posed retroactively by this desire" (Žižek 69), incapable of materializing anything more than the very void of desire.

The works studied in this dissertation belong to the "Developmentalism" period (1960-1975) because it is a period that condenses and brings to the surface the fundamental contradictions of the regime as ideology. These contradictions will be used by the works under study to reproduce and dislocate the discursive formation that is Francoism, bringing forth its paradoxes and contradictions. In this sense, all these works constitute an elaboration of Francoism as Law, that is, an exploration of its ideological functioning insofar as it anchors the subject in the stability of the known providing the jouissance of the unity of meaning, of seeing sense metonymically articulated in the discourse of the Other. Through their work with words and images, these works also function as indictments of that same Law. In this sense, the operation carried out by Benet, Bartolomé, Quiroga, and Goytisolo is similar to the one Lacan identified in Joyce:

> It is in so far as the unconscious is knotted to the sinthome, which is what is singular to each individual, that we may say that Joyce, as has been written somewhere, identifies with the individual. He is one who has earned the privilege of having reached the extreme point of embodying the symptom in himself, by which he eludes any possible death, on account of being reduced to a structure that is the very structure of LOM [l'hombre]. (*Seminar XXIII* 147)

Joyce's writing renounces the imaginary function of the "I," acknowledging the subject's dislocation with respect to the ego. Renouncing the imaginary function of the self, according to Lacan, means renouncing any search for identity in meaning. It involves a rupture with what Žižek has termed *joui-sense*, "a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a barrier of *joui-sense*, enjoyment in sense" (81). In other words, these works break with the enjoyment of meaning, which dissolves into the very fabric of the symbolic structure: the written word or the filmic image, anchoring that unsymbolizable that insists on the realm of the Real. This insistence also constitutes a political gesture that makes them "precursors" in the sense of "seeing what our contemporaries are constituting with the character of thoughts, consciousness, action, techniques, political forms" (*Seminar II*, 32), in other words, seeing the ideology unfolding before them.

Chapter 1 explores the tensions between Law and desire in Francoism. Through close reading of Juan Benet's novel *Volverás a Región*, it conceptualizes the repetitive nature of the regime's totalitarian order and the way in which the repressed keeps coming back, thus thematizing the traumatic physical and symbolic violence upon which social order is founded. Chapter 2 shows how the regime's repetitive law depends on the ideological fantasy of "womanhood." This chapter explores how, by mobilizing what Lacan called "the gaze," Cecilia Bartolomé's film *Margarita y el lobo* brings forth what the regime disavows: the fact that identity is always already mediated by the Other. Chapter 3 focuses on Elena Quiroga's novel *Presente profundo* and exposes how the ideological fantasy of "womanhood" is based on the empty signifier "woman" being situated at the place of object *a*. It examines how woman as object *a* ultimately reveals a limit within Francoist thought: "woman" functions as a cover-up of the structural gap in the symbolic order that serves to keep the Real at bay. This chapter builds

on the previous one, by emphasizing that the subject's relation to its own identity is mediated not only by the symbolic Other but more importantly, by the Real Otherness of the unconscious, the Other jouissance, difference. If chapters 2 and 3 focus on that structural gap called difference or Other jouissance (signified by the signifier "woman"), chapter 4 turns to the non-functioning of the "One" (signified by "man"). Through close reading of Juan Goytisolo's novel *Don Julián*, this chapter explores how Francoism mobilized historical, colonial-racial, and sexual discourses on identity in order to articulate the ideological fantasy of the ideal subject of Francoism. From here, it argues that the signifier "Spain" as object *a* within the regime's ideology, constitutes a sublimation of the structural gap of the symbolic, that is, of sexual (or zero) difference.

Chapter 1. *Volverás a Región*, or the Constitutive Impossibility of the Francoist Law

> Pero si de verdad te plantas ante tu razón y tu memoria sólo puedes ser revolucionario y no hombre de izquierdas. Un hombre de izquierdas huele siempre mal, a caca. Lo que importa es el hombre; el universo, para freírlo. O estás con el orden de cosas actual o estás con el hombre desnudo.
>
> Max Aub, *Campo cerrado*

Since publishing his first novels, Juan Benet's work sparked massive critical attention. *Volverás a Región* (1967) was received with interest, and Benet's place within Spanish literature of the sixties and seventies was solidified when he won the *Biblioteca Breve* Price for his second novel, *Una Meditación*, in 1969. Since the seventies, numerous critical studies have addressed his entire body of work or some specific aspects or themes.[25] Starting from the thematic and temporal classification proposed by Gonzalo Sobejano in "Direcciones de la novela española de postguerra,"[26] these studies have generally tended to place Benet outside of the development of

[25] Important monographs are those by David K. Herzberger (*The Novelistic World of Juan Benet*, 1976), Vicente Cabrera (*Juan Benet*, 1983), John B. Margenot III (*Zonas y sombras: aproximaciones a Región de Juan Benet*, 1991) o Benjamin Fraser (*Understanding Juan Benet: New Perspectives*, 2013). Edited volumes on Benet's production are abundant: *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet* (1984), edited by Roberto Manteiga, David K. Herzberger, and Malcolm A. Compitello; *Juan Benet*, (1986), coordinated by Kathleen M. Vernon and *Juan Benet. A Critical Reappraisal of his Fiction* (1997) edited by John B. Margenot III. In addition, some specific topics have given rise to critical interest, among them the representation of the Civil War in the universe of Región, studied by Malcolm A. Compitello in *Ordering the Evidence:* Volverás a Región *and Civil War Fiction* (1983) and Nora Castelli in *Juan Benet. Guerra y literatura* (2015); or the enigmatic character of Benet's writing, studied by Vicente Cabrera (*Juan Benet*, 1983), Epicteto Díaz Navarro (*La forma del enigma: siete ensayos sobre la narrativa de Juan Benet*, 2000), and Ken Benson (*Fenomenología del Enigma: Juan Benet y el pensamiento literario postestructuralista*, 2004).

[26] In this essay, Sobejano distinguished between "existencial novel," developed in the 40s, "social novel," in the 50s, and "structural novel," from the 60s on. Later, critics such as Robert C. Spires and David K. Herzberger coined the umbrella term "new Spanish novel," which included novels published in the 60s and 70s by authors such as Benet, Goytisolo, Martín-Santos, Torrente Ballester, or Martín Gaite to refer to works that question the traditional structure of "realist" novels and interpellate the reader through the auto-referential character of the text.

the Spanish novel, or as a special case,[27] due to the stylistic complexity of his works and the ambiguous connection established in them with the events of Spanish history.

The particularities of Juan Benet's style have often been linked to the use of enigmatic, ambiguous, or contradictory prose, reflecting the precariousness of the modern subject's capacity to understand the world around it.[28] Often, this enigmatic character has been connected with the image of the labyrinth,[29] referring to the complexity of Benet's writing and the resulting difficulties it poses for the reader.[30] In some cases, Benet's difficult style has been called "irrational," as it employs metaphors, oxymorons, and contradictions at all levels (syntactic, semantic, structural, and thematic) to question the language of representation which, under the pretense of a transparent relationship between word and referent, organizes Western modernity.[31]

In his essay "Prohibition and Transgression in *Volverás a Región* and *Una meditación*,"[32] (1979) Stephen Summerhill pointed out that it is common to refer to Benet's work as grounded in doubt and uncertainty. Yet, he claims that "we cannot be content to pass over all the enigmas of Benet's work as simply inexplicable; we must also take the risk of looking for their coherence" (52). He thus distances himself from previous studies, and in his article, he searches

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[27] See Robert C. Spires, "Juan Benet's Poetics of Open Spaces" (in *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet*, 1984), Pere Gimferrer ("Notas sobre Juan Benet") and José Ortega ("Estudios sobre Juan Benet"), both of the latter published in the 1986 volume ambos *Juan Benet*.

[28] In her article "Región, una crónica del discurso literario" (1983), María Elena Bravo, on the basis of a detailed analysis of Benet's writing, proposes that his novels explore the nature of knowledge and of the language with which human beings build that knowledge.

[29] See "La imagen del laberinto en las novelas regionatas de Juan Benet" (2009) where Miguel Carrera provides an overview of the bibliography on this topic in connection to Benet's style and his use of classical myths in his works.

[30] The first steps in this direction were taken by Vicente Cabrera in his book, *Juan Benet* (1983), where he suggests a double symbolic interpretation of the motive of the labyrinth: Región's labyrinthic geography as a symbol of the difficulty of its style and the labyrinth as a metaphor of the search for identity.

[31] In *Narrating the Past. Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (1996), David K. Herzberger points to the oxymoronic and contradictory nature of historical knowledge in Benet's novels, as it materializes in the memory exercise from which history (personal or regional) is always subjected to the ambiguities of memory. Ken Benson (2004) analyses Benet's prose in light of diverse poststructuralist currents.

Chapter 1 [32] Originally published in *The American Hispanist*, Vol. 4, Issue 36, 1979 and reproduced in the collective volume *Critical Approaches to the Writings of Juan Benet* (1984), edited by Roberto Manteiga, David K. Herzberger, and Malcolm Alan Compitello. I am quoting the latter.

for the underlying coherence in the novels; analyzing them from the perspective of the characters' behavior and motivations, he finds that the paradigm organizing both novels is the tension between prohibition and transgression. Summerhill's insight is at the basis of this chapter.[33]

Volverás a Región's scenario is a made-up "region" somewhere in the northern mountains of Spain called "Región" (literally, Region), which is the scenario of all of Benet's novels, much in the guise of Onetti's Santa María or García Márquez's Macondo. Región lies at the feet of Mantua, a forested hill where dwells Numa, a mythical figure who embodies the law. The novel is divided into four parts. In the first one, an omniscient narrator tells the story of the Civil War in Región. The second, third, and fourth parts are constituted by the dialogue between Doctor Daniel Sebastián and Marré Gamallo. Marré Gamallo, daughter of Colonel Gamallo, who fought for the Francoist side, is a mature woman who left Región right after the war. Years later, she returns and visits Doctor Daniel Sebastian, and they spend the whole night talking. Marré and Doctor Sebastián, however, seem to speak *at* rather than *with* each other, and in their monologues the past and the present, history and memory, intertwine forming a dense, complex discourse plagued with ambiguities and incoherence. At the beginning and the end, the narrator introduces a third character, a child who was abandoned by his mother right before the war and has spent the rest of his life waiting for her return.

Volverás a Región explores the dialectic between law and desire through the confrontation it establishes between the subjective positions of Dr. Sebastián and Marré Gamallo, as each articulates a different relationship with the law. Dr. Sebastián represents the

[33] This idea has been followed by later critics such as Ortega (in *Juan Benet*, 1986) or Labanyi (1989). The tension between desire and social restriction has also been studied in the realm of literary language and novelistic structure, in terms of an opposition between rational/irrational, history/myth, scientific language/literary language. See Herzberger (1976), Margenot (1991), Benson (2004), Rodríguez (2006) Carrera (2009).

renunciation of desire and absolute submission to the law of the Other; that is, he embodies the repetitive metonymic structure of the signifying chain. Marré Gamallo, conversely, functions as the return of the repressed, as a radical interruption of the law by the Real that always returns.[34]

Volverás a Región presents Francoist Spain as a ruin whose history has been suspended by the imposition of the victors' law; alongside this allegorical reading, it delves into the mechanisms of Western *logos*. The novel thus reveals itself as an instance of insistence on the structures of *logos* while acknowledging its own belonging to an Other articulated by the ideological apparatuses of Francoism. In this sense, *Volverás a Región* carries out a dual gesture: it explores the Spanish subject's relationship with the law of the Francoist regime and examines the meaning of the subject's being, that is, its relation with the signifier.

1.1 Subjective Desire versus Law

Dr. Sebastián assumes a position of skepticism towards "civilization," understood in the sense of social organization of a human group, as Freud described it in *Civilization and its Discontents*. For Sebastián, the family is "an organism with its own entity that transcends the sum of the creatures that compose it" ["un organismo con entidad propia que trasciende a la suma de las criaturas que la forman"]. It is the first instance of the "trap of reason" ["trampa de la razón"] (137) that ensnares and enslaves the individual restraining and silencing his instinct,

[34] I base this interpretation on Stephen Summerhill article, where he associates prohibition with Dr. Sebastián and transgression with Marré Gamallo. However, I consider that Marré and the doctor cannot be understood as characters in the traditional sense of the term, that is, as those unitary entities that populate novels we could call "realistic," and whose limits (the limits of their speech, thoughts, motivations, and actions) are clearly defined. On the contrary, *Volverás a Región* is articulated through voices submerged in a discourse that precedes and permeates them to such an extent that it is often impossible to distinguish who is speaking at any given moment. In this sense, Benet's conception of the subject is akin to Lacan's, in that those subjective positions that are Marré Gamallo and Dr. Sebastián are constructed and simultaneously diluted within the discourse of the Other. The text allows the reader to glimpse the presence of specific subjectivities, but at the same time, it reveals them as something elusive and unstable that emerges with the same ease it suddenly dissolves into the discourse that constitutes the novel.

constantly questioning him about the "object of his enthusiasm" ["objeto de su entusiasmo"] (137).[35] This "object of enthusiasm" refers to the prohibition of incest.[36] Hence, for the doctor, reason is "the trap where man has fallen, pursued by a whole crowd of unstable passions each of which has required an amputation" ["la trampa a donde el hombre ha ido a caer, perseguido por toda una turba de pasiones inestables cada una de las cuales ha requerido una amputación"] (137). However, he rectifies: "This world is not a trap, but rather a hiding place (...) that man has made for himself to hide from his own demon" ["mejor dicho, este mundo no es una trampa, sino un escondrijo (…) que ese hombre se ha fabricado para ocultarse a su propio demonio"] (138). In this way, the doctor is equating reason and world, since the world is symbolically constructed by a reason that, from the moment the first structure of human organization is established, always depends on the prohibition of incest for its existence and, therefore, can only give birth to the incomplete subject of the trauma caused by the primal scene.[37]

However, to renounce that structure would mean overwhelming loneliness. Thus, "under the pretext of affection, understanding, companionship, he begins to be devoured by a certain number of creatures who consider him their own" ["con el pretexto del cariño, de la comprensión, de la compañía empieza a ser devorado por un cierto número de criaturas que lo consideran cosa propia"] (138) to the point that "he will never again be an individual, a man in control of his actions" ["ya no será nunca más un individuo, un hombre dueño de sus actos"]

[35] In this chapter, I use the term "individual" and the masculine pronoun him/his when quoting or reproducing meanings by Freud and Dr. Sebastián. In my analysis, I will use the terms "subject," "ego," or "I."
[36] In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud claimed that the prohibition of incest is the origin of civilization.
[37] With the term "primal scene," Freud referred to the moment when the infant witnesses or infers the sexual relationship between their parents. This mythical moment in the subject's development gives meaning to the mother's desire: it is the phallus, which the father possesses and can bestow, that she desires. The primal scene thus allows for the development of the Oedipus complex. In turn, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud theorized the parricide that gave rise to social organization: the children, burdened with guilt for having killed the father to gain access to the mother –the object of their desire– agree that this object should belong to none of them. Thus, the real death of the father is followed by his symbolic immortality, the organizing principle of the species. When Dr. Sebastián refers to the world as a hiding place fabricated by man to conceal his demon, he is directly alluding to the prohibition of incest; that is, to a social order based on the premise that the subject does not desire the mother when, in fact, it has always already desired her.

(138) but rather, he will be required "total surrender, primacy of duties towards them" ["la entrega total, la primacía de los deberes para con ellos"] (138). This stance points to the Freudian thesis that love (e.g. the fact that the subject does not want to renounce the object of its sexual satisfaction), is at the origin of civilization. However, a relation of profound ambiguity between love and civilization remains because, from the moment social order is articulated, it imposes restrictions on the individual's sexuality: from the prohibition of incest within the family-communal organization to the state-legitimized heterosexual, genital, monogamous relationship, conducive to reproduction.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud articulated the inherent contradiction in all social organization as lying in the implicit tension between prioritizing the individual (individual happiness) and prioritizing civilization (creating unity, a community conducive to the survival of the species). Since complete satisfaction of the individual is incompatible with harmonious collective coexistence, civilization (the social-symbolic organization that Lacan will later call the discourse of the Other) imposes restrictions on the ways, times, and objects that can provide the individual with satisfaction: "It almost seems as if the creation of a great human community would be most successful if no attention had to be paid to the happiness of the individual" (Freud *Civilization and its Discontents* 141). Dr. Daniel Sebastián arrives at the same conclusion:

> What I don't understand is how until now [man] has not been able to draft a code that aligns with his desires, that cares about defending his most intimate nature. In contrast, there is no fatigue in drafting laws to protect his fiercest enemy, the family, society. And undoubtedly because the codes are drafted by reason, a device that hardly cares about what man is and desires.
>
> [Lo que no comprendo es cómo hasta ahora [el hombre] no ha sido capaz de redactar un código que esté de acuerdo con sus deseos, que se preocupe de defender su naturaleza más íntima. En contraste, no conoce la fatiga para redactar las leyes de protección a su más encarnizado enemigo, la familia, la sociedad. Y sin duda porque

> los códigos son redactados por la razón, un aparato al que apenas le interesa lo que el hombre es y desea.] (139)

Thus, for Dr. Sebastián, civilization is the source of human suffering. It materializes as "reason," that is, as a symbolic organization that, in turn, limits and determines the paths of subjective satisfaction, prioritizing the individual's enemies: family and society. Dr. Sebastián thus concludes that reason does not care about the individual and their desires, instead, it seeks to protect the structures of social organization that supersede the individual.

1.2 Numa, or the Sacred Law of the Father

Everything in *Volverás a Región* seems to be supervised by Numa's menacing presence, whose ontological status is highly ambiguous. Although no one has ever seen the guard, whose shots "are not confirmed but believed to come from Mantua" ["no se afirma, pero se cree, proceden de Mantua"] (11), no one dares to deny his existence. In addition, the evidence that the shots actually occur is based on "memory and hope united to repeat the echo of that single shot" ["la memoria y la esperanza aunadas para repetir el eco de aquel único disparo"] (14) from the past. In other words, Numa only exists insofar as the tacit agreement of Región's inhabitants confers upon him a mythical entity as the guard of Mantua, who shoots anyone who attempts to enter the forest.[38] Numa therefore embodies the law in Región. Through him, "all those disquieting elements society needs to repress" (Labanyi 99) are imaginarily projected in an "outside" of society, in Mantua. Similarly, the transgression of this law is incarnated in another mythical figure: the Traveler. This means that it is Región that confers upon the outsider the

[38] According to Freud, humans have found several ways to escape from the frustrations imposed by civilization, among them religion, which he describes as a "mass-delusion" (*Civilization and its Discontents* 51). Freud locates religion's foundation in the feeling of helplessness human beings feel before their fate (death), which awakens in them the need for protection from a father figure. In the novel, Numa functions as this type of fatherly entity.

status of "Traveler," thus sealing the intruder's fate as a victim of "the Sphinx's sentence to sacrilege" ["la sentencia de la esfinge al sacrilegio"] (14). Indeed, the inhabitants of Región do not hesitate to appeal to Numa for punishment for the outsider who threatens to penetrate Mantua and disturb the stability of the order established under Numa's rule. To this plea, the guard seems to respond: "Alright, I'll kill him. Don't ask me for more, I'll kill him and that's the end of it. So your conscience remains clear and the forest remains mine. That's what you wanted, isn't it?" ["Está bien, lo mato. No me pidáis más, yo lo mato y asunto concluido. Así vuestra conciencia sigue tranquila y el bosque sigue siendo mío. ¿Es eso lo que queríais, no?"] (251-252).

Sheltered by Numa's providence, Mantua emerges in the novel as the place where the repressed is confined, not to prevent it from escaping (there is nothing in Mantua that could escape) but to prevent anyone from penetrating its secrets. Thus, Numa acquires an ambiguous role in Región, both protective and threatening (Summerhill 54): He protects Región's inhabitants by shielding them from their unconscious desires and simultaneously threatens whoever wishes to access that repressed. As Adriana Minardi has observed, Numa establishes a Law that presupposes "the triumph of reason and order," and certifies "the existence of a reassuring higher will" ("Ideología, mito y ley"). This paternal, censorial, and protective figure thus affords subjective certainty to Región's inhabitants insofar as they know that, as long as they follow his rule unquestioningly, there will be no disturbance in their lives.

This certainty is allegorically connected with the cultural and economic context of the 1960s in Spain. In this sense, according to Dr. Sebastián, Numa is not "a superstition; it is not the whim of nature nor the result of a civil war; perhaps the whole organized process of a religion, combined with growth, inevitably leads to it: a cowardly, selfish, and vulgar people always prefers repression to uncertainty" ["una superstición; no es el capricho de una naturaleza ni el

resultado de una guerra civil; quizá todo el organizado proceso de una religión, unido al crecimiento, desemboca forzosamente en ello: un pueblo cobarde, egoísta y soez prefiere siempre la represión a la incertidumbre"] (221-222). In other words, Numa is not an allegorical representation of Franco, nor of the configuration of the regime as a result of the Civil War. More than anything, Numa seems to index "a cowardly, selfish, and vulgar people" who "always prefers repression to uncertainty." The novel thus identifies Numa with a certain logic of desire. This doesn't constitute, however, a moral judgment against the actual people, about whom it is said that they are the result of "the whole organized process of a religion, combined with growth;" that is, of the systematic imposition of the National-Catholic ethic (based on sacrifice for the fatherland and resigned acceptance of societal hierarchies) and the economic growth of the 1960s, which meteorically changed the purchasing power of the population. The novel thus suggests that by enforcing National-Catholicism first, and then granting material satisfaction, the regime attained a great deal of voluntary compliance or, at least, resignation.

1.3 Francoist Ideology and the Subjective Certainty of Nationhood

Through its veiled reference to National-Catholicism, *Volverás a Región* initiates a reflection on the functioning of the regime's ideology through the words of Dr. Sebastián. The novel suggests that by articulating a cultural and historical discourse sustained by repression, censorship, and the creation of myths, the victors' discourse became an all-pervading ideology permeating and determining Spanish subjectivity. In so doing, it provided a sense of security: the certainty that there is such thing as a homogeneous, essential Spain and that, by staying "true to it," the constitutive contradiction of society (subjective desire versus law) could be resolved. However, Dr. Sebastián asks:

> Did a common denomination imply common rights? Wasn't it enough to be called Sebastián or Mazón or Tomé to know how little they had in common? What rights could they all enjoy equally just because a word (…) embraced them all to destroy that differential condition that had baptized them?
>
> [¿Una denominación común implicaba unos derechos?, ¿no bastaba con llamarse Sebastián o Mazón o Tomé para saber lo poco que había de común entre ellos?, ¿qué derechos podían gozar en común sólo porque una palabra (…) les abrazase a todos para destruir aquella condición diferencial que les había bautizado?] (223)

In the universe of a small town like Región, last names immediately speak of each citizen's economic status, and that word that supposedly unites them all, "Spain" or "nation" does not erase that difference. The doctor implies that the fatherly, godly protection of Francoism only provided the mirage of a resolution: a return to the original Spain where class struggle did not exist; that is, the certainty of a shared identity at the expense of equal rights. According to Dr. Sebastián, then, the key ideological operation of Francoism consisted of substituting class struggle for national identity:

> What matters is his [man's] society, his religion, his state, and his silence (…) no one exploits anymore but we are all exploited, by the state, by religion, by the common good, by whatever, and against which no one can fight so that far from suppressing exploitation, exploitation has been transformed into something invulnerable and sacramental. (...) What the generation of my father did not know is that that common force that was supposed to liberate them from their oppressors was, unconsciously, sly and insidious (and worse still, with everyone's consent) going to be transformed into an impersonal and elective instrument of exploitation against which, by its very nature, there is no fight possible.
>
> [Lo que importa es su sociedad, su religión su estado y su silencio; (…) ya nadie explota pero todos somos explotados, por el estado, por la religión, por el bien común, por lo que sea y contra lo que nadie puede luchar de forma que lejos de suprimir la explotación lo que se ha hecho es transformarla en cosa invulnerable y sacramental. Lo que no sabía la generación de mi padre es que aquella fuerza común que había de liberarles de sus opresores iba, inconsciente, taimada y sibilina (y lo que es peor, con el consenso de todos) a transformarse en un instrumento impersonal y

> electivo de explotación contra el que, por su propia índole, no cabe lucha alguna.] (222-223)

Employing both repressive and ideological state apparatuses, Francoism consecrated its own discourse, thus becoming "an impersonal and elective instrument of exploitation against which, by its very nature, there is no fight possible" insofar as, being an unquestioned, naturalized truth, it determined subjectivity. The regime's hegemonic discourse was based on displacing the focus of socio-political debate from class struggle to national identity; in so doing, as the doctor notices, subjective happiness or satisfaction became contingent on the "happiness" of the state itself. In other words, for the regime, saving and preserving (their fantasy of) Spain takes precedence over procuring equal rights and dignity for all citizens within the Spanish state.

In this sense, within the realm of collective human organization (e.g. society or "civilization") which, just like subjectivity, is always already mediated by the symbolic, "class struggle" occupies the same structural place as the subject: "there is no class struggle 'in reality:' 'class struggle' designates the very antagonism that prevents the objective (social) reality from constituting itself as a self-enclosed whole" (Žižek "The Spectre of Ideology" 21). Faced with its constitutive lack, the subject comes up with a "symbolic fiction" or fantasy, the ego, to plug up that hole between "reality" and its symbolization. In Francoist Spain, the symbolic fiction of the nation assumes that same role. And just like the subject's ego is constantly traversed by the unconscious (by the difference within) provoking all sorts of symptoms, the regime's insistence on national essential unity is nothing but a symptom, with the specter of class struggle emerging time and again as the Real hole impossible to cover: "Our victory wasn't partial, it was total and

for everyone. It wasn't administered to favor any one group or class, but the whole nation" (Franco *Pensamiento politico de Franco*, 124, quoted in Roca).[39]

Indeed, the regime's propaganda often insisted that there were no classes in Spain, repeatedly negating class conflict in favor of seamless national identity: "Our victory isn't that of a person or a party, it is the victory of faith, traditions, homes, of the countryside and the city, of the factory and work, of the rich and the poor; it has been the triumph of all, and the defeat only of the anti-Spain" (Franco *Pensamiento politico de Franco* 68, quoted in Roca).[40] Furthermore, according to Franco, his victory "was not the victory of a group or a class, as the ringleaders in exile intend to convey" (Franco *Pensamiento politico de Franco* 54, quoted in Roca).[41] With these words, Franco in fact touched upon the core at stake in the conceptualization of ideology: the tension between a "spontaneous experience" of reality and a symbolic organization enforced and naturalized "from above;" in short, a tension between "reality" and "ideology" (Žižek, "The Specter of Ideology" 19). In the latter quote, Franco is affirming the existence of a "reality as such," described by himself for what it *really* is, versus the false tale (ideology) of the Republicans in exile, who supposedly lie concerning that same "reality." Žižek resorts to Lacan's concept of the Real to do away with the false opposition "reality versus ideology:"

> (What we experience as) reality is not the 'thing itself,' it is always-already symbolized, constituted, structured by symbolic mechanisms –and the problem resides in the fact that symbolization ultimately always fails, that it never succeeds in fully 'covering' the real, that it always involves some unsettled, unredeemed symbolic debt. *This real (the part of reality that remains non-symbolized) returns in the guise of spectral apparitions* ("The Specter of Ideology" 21. Emphasis in the original).

[39] Nuestra victoria no fue una victoria parcial, sino una victoria total y para todos. No se administró en favor de un grupo ni de una clase, sino en el de toda la nación (124).
[40] Nuestra victoria no ha sido de una persona ni de un partido; ha sido la victoria de la fe, de las tradiciones, de los hogares, del campo y de la ciudad, de la fábrica y del trabajo, del pobre como del rico; el triunfo de todos y la derrota solo de la anti-España (68).
[41] No se trató de la victoria de un grupo o de una clase, como pretenden hacer ver los cabecillas exiliados (54).

Just like the subject's symptoms point to the unsymbolizable Real of the trauma upon which its subjectivity is organized, in *Volverás a Región*'s universe, Mantua harbors the specters of Spain's history, as I will discuss later.

1.4 Dr. Sebastián, or the Renunciation of Subjective Desire

Región's submission to Numa's law is the result of a historical process: for centuries, battles originating from the confrontation between opposing formulations that believed they could resolve the tension between desire and law took place in Región, leading the country to exhaustion and despair.[42] According to the doctor, "when a society has reached such a degree of disorientation that it even nullifies its instinct for survival, it spontaneously creates by itself a balance of antagonistic forces that, upon collision, destroy all its reserve of energy to seek a state of peace –in extinction– that is more permanent" ["cuando una sociedad ha alcanzado ese grado de desorientación que llega incluso a anular su instinto de super vivencia, espontáneamente crea por sí misma un equilibrio de fuerzas antagónicas que al entrar en colisión destruyen toda su reserva de energías para buscar un estado de paz —en la extinción— más permanente"] (184). This collision of forces refers to the civil war, which emerges in the novel as the rupture with an order prolonged for centuries and as a period of absolute destruction at the end of which "the victor inaugurated and imposed his law" ["el vencedor estrenaba e imponía su ley"] (287). A law that obeys no truth other than force and, above all, chance.

[42] This historical confrontation between opposing formulations can be understood as a reference to the conflicts between liberalizing and conservative impulses that have occurred on the peninsula since the beginning of the 19th century up to the Civil War.

Throughout the novel, Dr. Sebastián traces a convoluted connection between the development of the war in Región and the card game that took place about ten years earlier between Gamallo (Marré's father) and the Gambler, in which Gamallo wagered the engagement ring of his fiancée, María Timoner. After the last game, María Timoner left with the Gambler, and Gamallo set out to find her accompanied by other young bourgeois men from Región. The novel does not reveal the outcome of this expedition; we only know that Gamallo had a daughter with another woman and, years later, at the start of the war, he returned to Región (which declared itself loyal to the Republic) as a soldier for the rebel side.

During the war, despite their military inferiority, the Republicans were familiar with the terrain, so they managed to halt the rebels' advance and protect Región during the first Summer of the war. After the defeat, Gamallo drafted a report addressed to the "High Command" ("Altos Mando") accounting for the causes of the defeat and proposing an attack plan to take Región after the Winter. Although the report "was nothing but a chain of sophisms that even the most inexperienced staff officer (...) could debunk with a marginal comment" ["no era sino una cadena de sofismas que el más inexperto oficial del Estado Mayor (…) podía echar abajo con un comentario marginal"] (64), due to a series of reasons that had nothing to do with the war in Región but were the result of the course of the war in general, Gamallo's plan was chosen, and he was promoted to colonel. The plan contained instructions not only to win but also to seal the victory with an operation of cleansing and extermination of all opponents motivated, in Gamallo, not by loyalty to the ideals of the rebels, but as a personal vendetta against Región itself, which he understood had robbed him of his honor years earlier.[43]

[43] The civil war in Región unfolds in the interweaving of the evolution of the conflict throughout the country and the local particularities. Benet believed that the rebel faction could have won the civil war much more quickly if their priority had been simply to win instead of to annihilate the "anti-Spain:" "In a war between strangers –and especially in a

If at first glance, then, it seems that the course of the war in Región was largely determined by chance and by the personal history of those who participated in it, Dr. Sebastián introduces a new conceptual twist when he suggests that, ultimately, it was Time that determined the events, insofar as it is Time that establishes a law. This idea is also developed through a parallelism with the card game between Gamallo and the Gambler.

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modern conflagration– rarely does one side seek the extermination of the other, contenting itself with a negotiated peace that yields the fruits it could not achieve through non-belligerent politics. Countries need each other, and all, in one way or another, accept their coexistence; it is the modification of the statute of that coexistence that can introduce a *casus belli* but never coexistence itself. This was not the case for the Spaniards, who refused to acknowledge the existence of the other and were prepared, therefore, to suppress it by force of arms. It is not surprising that the spirit that animated the warlike attitude –which shunned victory if it did not come with extermination– translated into a series of campaigns of unusual and ambiguous characteristics." (Juan Benet, *Qué fue la guerra civil*, 39) The civil war events in Región, described in great detail in the novel, is one of these ambiguous and unusual campaigns, due to the personal motivation underlying Gamallo's plan and, above all, the moment at which it was selected, which determined the reasons for its choice: "In March 1938, both in the Northern Army Group and the High General Staff, a certain number of officers of the highest rank –who watched with well-founded suspicion the political activity surrounding the organisms of the new State– could not avoid their own fear at the progress of the Aragon offensive: their triumphal frenzy was to be transformed, in mid-April of that year, with the spectacular capture of Vinaroz and the splitting of the Republican map in two, into a craving for speed first and vertigo at the abyss later. Certain material executors of the war understood in those days that until then they had only sought victory, neglecting its consequences and inevitable outcome and leaving it to the men of the rear –who never picked up a rifle or wore boots– to take advantage of their triumph. All the offensives, if they can be called such, that will be planned in the spring and summer of 1938 will translate, by the express desire of the High Command, into battles of attrition, into frontal attacks with which to wear down the ranks –the field ranks often replaced by political officers– in long campaigns of useless attrition with the sole purpose of prolonging until its ultimate consequences a war concluded with a roster of winners too numerous and unsettling. (...) The Gamallo Plan was, therefore, one of those last-minute plans" ["en marzo de 1938, tanto en el Grupo de Ejércitos del Norte como en el Alto Estado Mayor un cierto número de oficiales de la más alta graduación –que con fundado recelo observaban el hormigueo político en torno a los organismos del nuevo Estado– no pudieron eludir su propio temor ante los progresos de la ofensiva de Aragón: su frenesí triunfal había de trocarse, a mediados de abril de aquel año, con la espectacular toma de Vinaroz y la división en dos del mapa republicano, en apetito de velocidad primero y en vértigo ante el abismo después. Ciertos ejecutores materiales de la guerra comprendieron por aquellos días que hasta entonces no había hecho sino procurar la victoria, descuidando sus consecuencias y su inevitable desenlace y dejando a los hombres de la retaguardia –que jamás empuñaron el fusil ni calzaron las botas– el aprovechamiento de su triunfo. Todas las ofensivas, si se pueden llamar así, que se plantearán en la primavera y verano del año 38 se traducirán, por deseo expreso del Mando, en batallas de usura, en ataques frontales con los que desgastar los cuadros –los cuadros de campo sustituidos a menudo por oficiales políticos– en largas campañas de inútil atrición al único objeto de prolongar hasta sus últimas consecuencias una guerra concluida con un plantel de vencedores demasiado numeroso e inquietante. (…) El Plan Gamallo fue, por consiguiente, uno de aquellos de última hora"] (64-65). In other words, the war of attrition was to serve not only to annihilate as many opponents of the "new state" as possible but also to reduce the number of "winners" who could vie for positions of power. Benet thus points to the problematic constitution of the government structure that followed the war, trapped in the impossibility of defining itself without provoking a new internal confrontation. In *Qué fue la guerra civil*, Benet refers to Franco's consolidation as Head of State as "the true coup d'état that more than one historian has described as the '18th Brumaire' of contemporary Spain" (32).

The Gambler, a day laborer working at Región's mine, had been given a mysterious coin by the ferrywoman who crossed workers through the river between Región and the mine.[44] When the Gambler played the coin, he always won, whereas when the coin was not in play, he always lost. In one game, Gamallo, having lost all his chips, bet the engagement ring he had given to María Timoner. Faced with the ring, the Gambler withdrew the coin. This dynamic continued for nearly a year: the Gambler played the coin until Gamallo lost everything and played the ring; before the ring, the Gambler withdrew the coin, and Gamallo won everything back, in such a way that the ring and the coin were never at stake against each other. This back and forth went on for almost a year and "over so many months (...), both players understood that the woman, represented by the ring, was included in the pot. And she confirmed it, confident in the power of the coin" ["a lo largo de tantos meses (…) ambos jugadores comprendieron que la mujer, representada por la sortija, se hallaba incluida en el lote. Y ella lo corroboró, segura del poder de la moneda"] (240). From the moment Gamallo put the ring at stake, Maria Timoner, humiliated, desired and trusted in the victory of the Gambler, since the coin never lost.

This situation continued until the day when, exhausted, "spurred on by a wink from Time" ["espoleado por un guiño del Tiempo"](242), Gamallo finally demanded that the Gambler put the coin at stake against the ring. The Gambler agreed and they played what would be the last game. Before seeing the cards, that is, before knowing who had won but sure of his victory, the Gambler left the table and exchanged a few words with Maria Timoner, who left the room immediately. At that precise moment, Gamallo understood that, whatever the outcome of the game, Maria Timoner was going to leave him. When the Gambler returned to the gaming table, he lunged at Gamallo and stabbed him in the hand, for "he no longer had time to explain that he

[44] The ferrywoman is another mythical figure in the novel, reminiscent of Charon, who transported the miners from the old mine, located at the foot of Mount Mantua, across the river to the area of Región.

was not responsible for the deception, that therefore there was no theft but that it was an appropriation that Time had sanctioned and consecrated by obliging him to accept the rule" ["ya no tenía tiempo de explicar que él no era el responsable del engaño, que por tanto no había robo sino que se trataba de una apropiación que el Tiempo había sancionado y consagrado al obligarle a aceptar la regla"] (243). In other words, in the confrontation between the coin and the ring, chance gave the victory to the ring, to Gamallo. Nevertheless, Maria Timoner had already chosen the Gambler.

The novel does not describe the scene, which the reader has to reconstruct through the monologue of Dr. Sebastián, who is more interested in the temporal logic that led the Gambler to act as he did, than in the specific events. We only know that once Gamallo understood everything in just an instant, the Gambler no longer had time to explain that "there was no bid on his part but a mere acceptance of a setting and a function that chance was now trying to mock. It was Time that linked two independent acts: a move that contradicted and invalidated all previous ones and the commitment acquired through these" ["no había envite por su parte sino una mera aceptación de una puesta y de una función de la que ahora el azar trataba de burlarse. Era el Tiempo el que unía dos actos independientes: una jugada que contradecía e invalidaba a todas las anteriores y el compromiso adquirido a lo largo de estas"] (243). The implication is that the prolongation in time of the coin's victory had sealed the fate of the three of them even before the final game took place. And it is precisely because Gamallo's entire understanding occurred in just that instant, that the Gambler had no time to explain that "it was not his intention to rob the soldier –let alone harm him– but to force time to go back on its move and restore order" ["no era su intención robar al militar –ni mucho menos herirle– sino obligar al tiempo a desdecirse de su jugada y restituir el orden"] (243), an order that had been established by force of repetition over

the preceding months, an order that established that the coin always wins the game. However, "it was Time itself that, as a stingy and capricious distributor of its own decisions, turned respectful adherence to his acquired commitments into wrongful action, to which He had to respond whenever He had induced them by turning the play into law" ["era el Tiempo el que, como distribuidor cicatero y caprichoso de sus propias decisiones, transformaba en acción dolosa el respeto a sus adquiridos compromisos ante los que Él tenía que responder toda vez que los había inducido al transformar la jugada en ley"] (243). Time had transformed the repetition of chance (the repeated victory of the coin) into law, and by suddenly changing it in the final game, it made the Gambler a thief and a cheat, when, after all, he was only complying with the law imposed by Time itself: the coin wins (and therefore María Timoner must leave Gamallo).

Thus, through the card game, the novel formulates a tension within *logos*: chance versus causality. It is suggested that the random repetition of an event will be understood by human thought as a causal relationship, from which a seemingly natural law can be deduced and, being a "natural law" it always must necessarily be fulfilled. However, what is formulated as a natural order is nothing more than the effect of human thought. As Jo Labanyi points out, the novel seems to claim that "appeal to a fixed natural order is illusory because there is no such thing as a natural order: only natural history. Order exists only as a mythical projection of the human mind" (98). The Gambler, therefore, appeals to a non-existent natural order; it is thought that has established a law based on an alleged causality, with Time as its alibi; but this false natural law only functions until Time decides (and it eventually does decide) to change it. Ultimately, the implication is that it is the deceptive causality governing rational thought that creates time, which is in turn experienced by the subject according to that sense of causality. However, the trap from which rational/representational thought (the Other's law) cannot escape is the subject's desire (its

unconscious). In the novel, the contradiction between the two determined the Civil War: the Gambler, with his causal thought, causes Gamallo, who in turn joins the war to destroy Región. And because of this, Región

> is what remains of that time, voices, sighs, a few shots at the end of Summer... it's all the sustenance of our post-war period. (...) The present has already passed and all we have left is what one day didn't happen; the past is not what was either, but what wasn't; only the future, what remains for us, is what has already been; (...) only the hands of a cheap clock move to indicate a wrong hour, not so much to measure that immeasurable and free time that the Gambler has bequeathed to us with infinite generosity, but to materialize with its endless circular movement the nature of the void that surrounds us, of the silence that follows an ultrasonic Past whose echoes resonate in the realm of ruin, the final bugle calls (...) trying to ascend from a gaseous yesterday to a memoryless today only to fall again and again (...) not into oblivion but into indifference, and only resurrect with the distant gasps of an approaching motor on a dusty road toward which they come (...) to seek refuge in the delirious hospitality of the survivors, the specters of a tantalized yesterday.
>
> [es lo que queda de aquel entonces, voces, suspiros, unos pocos disparos al final del verano… es todo el alimento de nuestra posguerra. (…) El presente ya pasó y todo lo que nos queda es lo que un día no pasó; el pasado tampoco es lo que fue, sino lo que no fue; sólo el futuro, lo que nos queda, es lo que ya ha sido; (…) sólo las manecillas de un reloj barato se mueven para señalar una hora equivocada, no tanto para medir ese tiempo inmensurable y gratuito que el Jugador nos ha legado con infinita largueza como para materializar con su interminable movimiento circular la naturaleza del vacío que nos envuelve, del silencio que sucede a un Pasado ultrasonoro cuyos ecos resuenan en el ámbito de la ruina, los últimos cornetazos (…) tratan de ascender de un ayer gaseoso a un hoy sin memoria para caer una y otra vez (…) no en el olvido sino en el desinterés, y que sólo resucitan con los estertores lejanos de un motor que se acerca por una carretera polvorienta en pos del cual acuden (…) a acogerse a la delirante hospitalidad de los supervivientes, los espectros de un ayer tantalizado.] (245- 246)

The novel suggests that the rational thought that seeks to impose itself upon nature actually brings about the suspension of history in Región. The suspension of history, in turn, entails the annulment of desire, to the point that, according to Dr. Sebastián, Numa "perhaps no longer exists except as a crystallization of fear or as a formula that describes (and justifies) the

composition of the residue of a body from which all desires have been sublimated" ["quizá ya no existe sino como cristalización del temor o como fórmula que describe (y justifica) la composición del residuo de un cuerpo del que se sublimaron todos los deseos"] (221). The novel thus seems to wonder whether Franco and the regime are still necessary for Francoism to endure, given the success of its ideology in creating a certain logic of desire. With this, the text acknowledges the link between temporality and desire, insofar as the temporal stagnation of Región is necessarily accompanied by the sublimation of desire.

Dr. Sebastián, as representative of Región, emerges as such a position of total renunciation of desire. His speech fuses, in this sense, with the discourse of the Other, which is why it is often impossible to differentiate Dr. Sebastián's interventions from the voice of the omniscient narrator. According to Lacan, when the subject accesses language the humanization of its desire takes place by gaining recognition (by the other and the Other) ("The Function and Field…" 243). After that, jouissance is installed on the "rails of metonymy", and thus it will be eternally deferred in the symbolic order ("The Instance of the Letter…" 431). Therefore, it is the symbolic order that grants the subject the dimension of temporality. And the subject who, like Dr. Daniel Sebastián (and all of Región), has completely renounced its desire, has effectively stopped the time of its history.

At the moment when Región realizes that its civil war was decided in a game of cards, they also understand that destiny (shaped by the inaccessible secrets of subjective desire and the chaotic chance of nature, which obeys no law) is a powerful force against which there is no negotiation possible. The novel suggests that it is the fear of the incontrovertible destiny (death) and the acknowledgment of its capriciousness that sustain the religious need for a paternal figure capable of offering some security, even if said security comes at the expense of subjective desire.

Numa thus emerges as the ultimate superego externalization, to which Región surrenders without reservation.

Significantly, the doctor opposes time and destiny when he argues that memory (through which the subject builds itself in its history, always trying to be identical to its ideal and thus loved by its superego) is nothing more than the record of pain and only knows how to speak of a Destiny that is "not what man must be but what is different from what he intends to be" ["no lo que el hombre ha de ser sino lo distinto de lo que pretende ser"] (257). While there is desire, the subject tries to tell its own story, which is always already subjected to the Law of the Father, so "it can only be what his imagination did not foresee. Imagination is a faculty only given to creatures who have a destiny not to fight against it but to deny it to themselves" ["solo puede ser lo que su imaginación no previó. La imaginación es una facultad que sólo se da en las criaturas que tienen destino no para luchar contra él sino para negárselo a sí mismo"] (258). The subject can only ever see itself as an ego, that is, it cannot see itself where it really is (Lacan *Seminar 2* 243), it cannot access the unsymbolizable repressed. Thus trapped in a speech always-already determined by the discourse of the Other, the only thing left for the subject is "a logic to think about the future and a past to check the results" ["una lógica para pensar acerca del futuro y un pasado sobre el que comprobar los resultados"] (99), a logic designed by a reason that insists on imposing its order at the expense of unconscious desire and the inherent chance of nature, thus inaugurating human suffering.

After centuries of confronting the anxiety of being faced with society's constitutive impossibility, Región accepts absolute submission to the superego in the figure of Numa in order to attain the stability and certainty it promises; in exchange, it sacrifices desire, thus putting an end to its history. In this sense, Región is "a town that for thirty years had desired nothing more

than to lack desires and let the few it retained be consummated, which as the best solution to the uncertainties of the future and the sentence of an unequivocal destiny, had chosen to despise the present and forget the past" ["un pueblo que durante treinta años no había deseado otra cosa que carecer de deseos y dejar que se consumaran los pocos que conservaba, que como mejor solución a las incertidumbres del futuro y a la sentencia de un destino inequívoco, había elegido el menosprecio del presente y el olvido del pasado"] (34). In other words, the renunciation of desire necessarily entails the renunciation of history: "Everything ends when desire is exhausted, not when hope is clouded" ["Todo termina cuando se agota el deseo, no cuando se nubla la esperanza"] (100). Established in this double renunciation, Región finds itself in a sort of homeostasis in which, protected and threatened by Numa, it experiences no other disturbance or change than the cyclical visit of the Traveler whose sacrifice functions "as an expulsion of vital, anxious energy to maintain a stasis resistant to historical movement" (Viestenz 98).[45]

Región thus becomes a space where time flows but not history. There is no change or event in Región, only a cyclical time marked by Numa's shot, whose witnesses only hear "invocations and laments, that senile crackling of a thousand desires aborted half a century ago" ["invocaciones y lamentos, ese chisporroteo senil de mil deseos abortados medio siglo atrás"] (250). It is Región who invokes the shot in which "a kind of survival is at stake" ["está en juego una clase de supervivencia"] (250) in death itself; a survival that depends on there being a transgressive element to confirm the punishing and therefore protective power of a Numa that only exists in the tacit agreement of the inhabitants of Region.

[45] In her article "Narrative perspective in Volverás a Región" (1984), Esther W. Nelson extends this idea to the very structure of the novel, which reflects narrative *stasis* in the tension between monologues and digressions that intertwine past, present, and future in such a way that the narrative pushes the reader in several directions simultaneously, causing a contradictory sense of stillness and immobility as the reading progresses.

Region therefore places an entelechy in the place of the sovereign to exempt itself from a history that, for centuries, has only meant the anxiety of confronting society's constitutive impossibility. In exchange, in payment for its services, Numa only demands "no anxiety and above all that no one harbors any hope other than the punishment of the transgressor (...). Peace, no matter how ruinous, is always peace. I take care to maintain it here just as you guard it down there" ["nada de inquietud y sobre todo que nadie abrigue otra esperanza que la del castigo del transgresor (…). Una paz, por muy ruin que sea, es siempre una paz. Yo me cuido de mantenerla aquí al igual que vosotros la celáis allá abajo"] (252). This precarious peace refers to the propaganda apparatus launched by the regime around 1964 to commemorate the twenty-five years of supposed peace after the end of the Civil War. This propaganda presented Franco no longer as the military victor of the Civil War but as the leader capable of guaranteeing peace and, with it, the necessary stability for economic growth. The novel thus seems to supplement the Francoist discourse: The Francoist peace is a peace that can only be sustained as long as the people contribute to keeping order; that is, denounce any transgression (denounce anyone who dares say "I," who dares desire something different than what the regime has consecrated as desirable) and demand their punishment.

Región has resigned itself to not desiring and has externalized its superego in search of certainty. In this way, there is no room for guilt: since no one desires anything, no one is "I" in Región and there is no inner ego-superego conflict in its inhabitants. Dr. Sebastián personifies this logic: "it is as if he has become so embittered by his inability to transgress that he decided to give in completely to society and carry its prohibition against passion to an extreme" (Summerhill, 56). In addition, Numa, as a religious construct, exempts from guilt: "Do not call yourselves cowards or despicable, because in your callousness there is a whole science of

destiny" ["no os llaméis cobardes ni ruines, porque en vuestra ruindad hay toda una ciencia del destino"] (251). No one in Región needs to feel guilty for demanding the death of the Traveler-transgressor, as they are simply following the Father's law to the letter. A law created by themselves and necessary for maintaining the certainty that provides them with absolute homeostasis, even if it comes at the cost of having lost their desire and their history, that is, at the cost of a living death. After all:

> Yes, there is no doubt, it's Time that we still haven't managed to understand; it's within time where we haven't learned to exist and it's after time –not after despair– when we resist accepting death. The Gambler was right, he hadn't cheated at all, it was time that refused to accept the validity of his reasons and instead accepted a stupid combination of cards.
>
> Sí, no hay duda, es el Tiempo lo que todavía no hemos acertado a comprender; es en el tiempo donde no hemos aprendido a existir y es tras el tiempo –no después de la desesperación– cuando nos resistimos a aceptar la muerte. Tenía razón el Jugador, él no había hecho trampa ninguna, fue el tiempo quien se negó a aceptar la validez de sus razones y aceptó, en cambio, una estúpida combinación de cartones. (252)

The language of representation distances human beings from the world and from their own eternally deferred desire, inaugurates time, and with it, the history of civilization, which is the history of the irresolvable contradiction between subjective desire and the order of society. Región forgets its past and by leaving its future in the hands of Numa, cancels it, insofar as Numa's order is based on preventing any change. In this sense, Región renounces its history. In contrast to history, understood as the narrative created by memory, stands time, which can only be, in Dr. Sebastián's words "the dimension in which the human person can only be unhappy, it cannot be otherwise. Time only appears in misery and thus memory is only the record of pain" ["la dimensión en la que la persona humana sólo puede ser desgraciada, no puede ser de otra manera. El tiempo sólo asoma en la desdicha y así la memoria sólo es el registro del dolor"] (257). Memory, enslaved by a reason that imposes its logical order (its history) on nature and

desire, is incapable of recording events; instead, it "distorts, enlarges, and exaggerates them, but it is not only that; it also invents to give an appearance of lived and gone to that which the present denies" ["desvirtúa, agranda y exagera, pero no es sólo eso; también inventa para dar una apariencia de vivido e ido a aquello que el presente niega"] (247). Memory is then nothing more than the verbal record of what never was; for the Real does not access the symbolic order.[46]

Significantly, the first chapter of the novel, entirely narrated by the omniscient narrator, closes with a reflection on trauma. Trauma inaugurates a subject decentralized from its ego and doubly articulated in the tension between a verbal order that imposes causality upon it and thus condemns it to a historicity that perpetually distances it from enjoyment, and an-other order, an-other temporality condemned to silence, whose silencing only manages to heal a wound whose traces, however, reason cannot rid itself of:

> There is a word for each of those moments that, although the understanding recognizes, memory never recalls; they are not transmitted in time, nor are they even reproduced because something –habit, perhaps instinct– will ensure they are silenced and relegated to a time of fiction. Only when that moment occurs, another memory –not complacent and in a certain way involuntary, which feeds on fear and draws its resources from an instinct opposed to survival, and from a will contrary to the eagerness for dominance– awakens and illuminates a time –not measured by clocks or calendars, as if its own density conjures the movement of pendulums and gears within it– which lacks hours and years, has no past or future, has no name because memory has forced itself not to legitimize it; it only has a scarred yesterday, in whose own insensitivity the magnitude of the wound is measured.
>
> [Hay una palabra para cada uno de esos instantes que, aunque el entendimiento reconoce, la memoria no recuerda jamás; no se transmiten en el tiempo ni siquiera se reproducen porque algo –la costumbre, el instinto quizá– se preocupará de silenciar y relegar a un tiempo de ficción. Sólo cuando se produce ese instante otra memoria –no complaciente y en cierto modo involuntaria, que se alimenta del miedo y extrae sus

[46] On the topic of memory in Benet, see: "Tiempo y tiempos en *Volverás a Región*, de Juan Benet" (1991) by Jesús Pérez Magallón; "Juan Benet's Bergsonism: time, memory, and knowledge," (2013) by Benjamin Fraser; "Historia y memoria. Revisitando a Juan Benet" (2019) by Adriana Minardi; *Narrating the Past. Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (1996) by David K. Herzberger, specially chapters "History and the Novel of Memory" and "Narrative enigmas: History and Fiction in Juan Benet."

> recursos de un instinto opuesto al de supervivencia, y de una voluntad contraria al afán de dominio– despierta y alumbra un tiempo –no lo cuentan los relojes ni los calendarios, como si su propia densidad conjure el movimiento de los péndulos y los engranajes en su seno– que carece de horas y años, no tiene pasado ni futuro, no tiene nombre porque la memoria se ha obligado a no legitimarlo; sólo cuenta con un ayer cicatrizado en cuya propia insensibilidad se mide la magnitud de la herida.] (93)

Only after this reflection do the voices of Dr. Sebastián and Marré Gamallo enter the novel's text. Both voices can only be understood in terms of what they are unable to say, no matter how hard they try. Faced with the impossibility of attaining desire, mastering destiny, or even being able to explain themselves through words, Dr. Sebastián and Región, renounce their subjectivity and surrender to order: "no trace of hope, in this land of disillusionments, has prevailed since time was sealed with the click of the latch or with the shot from Mantua; for our health, nothing better could have happened" ["ningún resto de esperanza, en esta tierra de los desengaños, ha prevalecido desde que el tiempo fue sellado con el clic del picaporte o con el disparo de Mantua; para nuestra salud nada mejor podría haber ocurrido"] (253). Within that order, Región finds certainty and stability in renouncing life.

That stability is potentially disrupted by Marré Gamallo's appearance since the order split out of history established by Región through the figure of Numa cannot prevail "as long as there remains a postcard, a yellowed photograph like the one you bring, a memory of any kind with which to probe the abyss of a today that is nothing but a was, a something that has never existed because what exists was and what was has not been" ["mientras quede una postal, una fotografía amarillenta como esa que usted trae, un recuerdo de cualquier índole con el que sondear el abismo de un hoy que no es sino un fue, un algo que no ha existido nunca porque lo que existe fue y lo que fue no ha sido"] (253). What exists, that is, what reason and memory sanction as such, is invested with ontological status to make sense of the present; whereas what was,

recorded in an-other order that is not symbolic, has not been, insofar as it is inaccessible by language. Language, the symbolic order, is the single and fraudulent instrument of a subject condemned to the impossibility of giving meaning to its existence (which can only occur in language), and to eternally question its relationship with that existence (with the signifier). The search for that meaning is what Región has renounced by submitting completely to Numa's law.

For this reason, due to her potential to disturb an order that, although only capable of offering a precarious peace, still shields the inhabitants of Región from subjective uncertainty, Marré becomes Traveler, a transgressor, and therefore Dr. Sebastián can do nothing but plead with Numa to stop her and prevent, once again, any possible disturbance: "Leave things as they are and do not allow her to arrive. Those who do not resign themselves to their misfortune, in our land, bring catastrophe upon themselves. Leave things as they are and fulfill your commitments in the same way that we obey your mandate" ["Deja las cosas como están y no la permitas llegar. Aquellos que no se conforman con su desgracia, en esta tierra nuestra, acarrean la catástrofe. Deja las cosas como están y cumple con tus compromisos de la misma forma que nosotros acatamos tu mandato"] (312). This invocation to Numa echoes the Catholic prayer "Our Father," and reveals what such prayer entails: Under the form of a plea to a merciful father, underlies the potential for punishment. For in "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven / and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" punishment is always already implicit as the alternative to forgiveness.

Forgiveness and punishment require each other and depend on the all-powerful will of a Father whose sovereignty is located in the heavens (Mantua), but extends to the earth (Región), and takes the form of commandments that, subjectively internalized, ensure the maintenance of God's order on earth or of Numa's in Región. If in Catholic doctrine the son of God sacrifices

himself to redeem a sinful humanity, offering it the certainty of eternal salvation after death, Región reveals the truth hidden beneath that logic. It is humanity who sacrifices: from the moment it accepts and internalizes the order of a god created by the subject out of its inability to face the uncertainty of its destiny and the meaninglessness of its being, it condemns itself to a life marked by guilt and debt. Región embodies this logic taken to the extreme: total renunciation of desire and absolute subordination to an externalized superego, and with it, the disappearance of guilt and the cancellation of life.

Volverás a Región carries to the extreme the logic underlying the rhetoric of the regime. The novel suggests that this ruinous Región, populated by the living dead is, in fact, and being extremely faithful to its premises, the ideal Spain that Francoism aspires to. Región constitutes the most perfect realization of the implicit project of the regime: a society where there is no repressed because all its components submit, without a hint of conflict, to the law. The novel explores the similarities between the sacralized and supposedly savior and protective figure of Franco constructed by the Ideological State Apparatuses and the religious need for subjective certainty at the core of rational thought. In essence, *Volverás a Región* suggests that for the Spain desired by Francoism to materialize, all that is needed is the death of all Spaniards: to unilaterally accept death in life, the absolute sacrifice to the Law of the Father.

1.5 Marré, or the Return of the Repressed

If Dr. Sebastián represents absolute submission to social order, the renunciation of desire, and with it, of history, Marré Gamallo represents the fidelity, always antisocial, to subjective desire. During her conversation with the doctor, Marré reflects on the heavily repressive education she received both at boarding school and within her family environment. She considers

such education a "pedagogical insufficiency" ["insuficiencia pedagógica"] (261), especially concerning sexuality. Confined in a decaying Region and under the tutelage of an elderly aunt, such education represented nothing more than "a useless and annoying shell that I had to get rid of at all costs to receive the sun of my time" ["una cascara inútil y enojosa de la que a todo trance tenía que despojarme para recibir el sol de mi tiempo"] (262). As a teenager, in the years immediately before the Civil War, Marré was experiencing a restlessness that, immersed in the bourgeois repressive environment as she was, she couldn't see for what it was: sexual drive.

During the war, the Republican soldiers from Región kidnapped Marré intending to use her as a hostage to negotiate with Gamallo. Marré, who barely had a relationship with her father, spent almost the entire conflict in the Republican barracks in Región and, after the fall of the town, was taken towards the mountains with the last of the Republican fighters. At that time, explains Marré:

> the soul will recognize with singular and cruel lucidity that a single fear, a single pride, and a single selfishness have come to sew together so many heterogeneous circumstances to provoke *degout* and return the castles of an innocent age to the sand. Because it hardly discovers, questions, or hesitates. It only waits. I'm talking about desire; I cannot refer to it without associating it with the war.
>
> [el alma reconocerá con singular y cruel lucidez que un único miedo, un único orgullo y un único egoísmo han venido a coser tantas circunstancias heterogéneas para provocar el *degout* y devolver a la arena los castillos de la edad inocente. Porque apenas descubre ni se interroga ni vacila. Tan solo espera. Le estoy hablando del deseo; no puedo referirme a él sin asociarlo a la época de la guerra.] (264)

Marré experiences the war as a period of anomie when, cut off from the bourgeois order in which she had lived ever since her childhood, she discovers sexual pleasure:

> In those final days of the war, in the truck's cabin and the hostel room, I had reached the depths of what has come to be called existence. And then there was no need for words, nor for memory, and even less for feelings: there was no guilt or fault or morality, there could be no sin or repentance or reprieve.

> ["En aquellos días finales de la guerra, en la caja de la camioneta y en la habitación del albergue, había tocado el fondo de lo que se ha dado en llamar la existencia. Y entonces no había necesidad de palabras, ni de memoria ni –menos aún– de sentimientos: no había culpa ni falta ni moral, no podía haber pecado ni arrepentimiento ni moratoria."] (165)

It could be said that, through this sexual experience, Marré "comes into being where she was" and that, momentarily, and only in a place and time where all order has been suspended, her ego and her ideal coincide in Marré, in sexual pleasure she is one with herself. That is why words, memories, and feelings are not necessary. If the symbolic order gives birth to the subject of lack, the impossible whole subject dispenses with words, since naming her desire and ceasing to desire are the same thing, perfect homeostasis, a return to where it was.[47] Marré Gamallo had never been able to imagine an object for her desire because she had never even known about the existence of sexuality as such. Without any previous fantasy, what overwhelms her in her early sexual encounters is an experience of immense magnitude that is inscribed not in the symbolic, but in the Real, in her body. Words are unnecessary, a superfluous residue, because Marré's experience is not an object that comes to respond to a previously articulated desire but an experience, a Real that overwhelms her, a pleasure that we could call "pure," not mediated.

After the war, however, Marré reintegrates into bourgeois society. She gets married and leaves Región. At first, she tries to convince herself that her behavior during the war was the result of the conflict itself, and she finds excuses, like everyone else around her does, for the transgression she committed. This attitude doesn't work, however, because deep down Marré

[47] Lacan summarizes Freud's discovery of the unconscious in the formulation "Wo Es war, soll ich werden" ("Where It Was, I must come into being," "Function and Field…" 435). The subject of language spends its life trying to become (return to) where it was; that is, where it mythically projects the subjective unity of its ego and its ideal, before entering the symbolic universe through the paternal prohibition that forever precludes the desired object. In the novel, Marré comes into being where she was insofar as, due to the repression in which her life has unfolded, her sexual enjoyment is not, in any measure, mediated by language.

doesn't feel guilty. On the contrary, she insists on traveling with her husband to Muerte's brothel, where she spent the last days of the war, fueled by an "impatient desire not to tell the story but to tell it with pride" ["deseo impaciente no de contarle la historia sino de contarla con orgullo"] (265). In other words, once assimilated back into bourgeois society, Marré becomes subject to the law again, she re-enters language as a subject of lack. Inserted into that symbolic order, once again positioned as a signified in an eccentric place in relation to the signifier that names her, she feels the desire to tell her story, to explain herself in a narration that particularizes her as a subject, which is impossible, because reintegrated into the symbolic, her speech depends, once again, on the discourse of the Other, the social order represented by her husband and her mother-in-law.

As she explains to Dr. Sebastián during their conversation, from the moment the war ends, Marré conceives of herself as split: a part of herself (which she refers to as "the recluse" or "the captive") has been silenced:

> If there was one thing I had understood, it was that from then on there were two different women who should not be confused if I wanted to preserve the integrity of the recluse; that both should defend themselves from the contamination of the other and that a third –much more logical, measured, and respectable– would watch over and guarantee the coexistence, independence, and personality of both.
>
> [si algo había comprendido era que a partir de entonces existían dos mujeres diferentes que no debían confundirse si es que yo quería conservar la integridad de la reclusa; que cualquiera de las dos debía defenderse de la contaminación de la otra y que una tercera –mucho más lógica, ponderada y respetable– celaría y garantizaría la convivencia, la independencia y la personalidad de ambas.] (149-159)

The recluse is then silenced not to be destroyed but saved, kept within the inner core of a woman who continues her life as if the parenthesis of war had not taken place. Between the repressed recluse and an imaginary ego that mirrors society, there remains a third superego instance, "logical and respectable," which watches over the separation. Marré thus contains her

own Numa whose mission, like that of the guardian of Mantua, is not to prevent the recluse from escaping but to prevent the other (the ego) from an encounter with the most hidden part within herself. Marré points to the fact that the ego needs to be protected from seeing its image falter when confronted with unconscious desire; that is, from facing the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the self, and its precarious status as a subject. In short, the recluse is guarded so that the other can tell herself her own story and reassure, in such narrative continuity, subjective certainty.

Throughout the years, and driven by "the recluse," Marré makes several attempts to return to Región only to be always halted by those other parts of herself that owe allegiance to the established order. In this sense, Marré is aware that "there is no possibility of shaking off and getting rid of education, norms, or anything else except at an early age that I had surpassed; and the adult woman, much as she may try, has incorporated into her behavior a moral sediment that, no matter how hard she tries, she can no longer uproot without destroying her most intimate fibers" ["no hay posibilidad de sacudirse y librarse de la educación ni de las normas ni de nada sino a una edad temprana que yo había sobrepasado; y la mujer adulta, mal que le pese, ha ido incorporando a su conducta un sedimento moral que, por más que lo intente, ya no podrá arrancar sin destruir sus fibras más íntimas"] (152). In other words, Marré knows that she cannot free herself from the subjection to a symbolic order within which she was born as a subject. Hence, for her, her experience of the war, insofar as it involved a union between desire and jouissance, signifies a loss of continuity in her discourse, a hole within her self-narrative that can only take shape by omitting that episode of her life:

> Certainly, I lost track of discourse in the back of the truck (...). Because that's precisely what is forgotten, in those days when memory is absent. I believe that only the body is present, perhaps bound, gagged, and stupefied. A body that, for such moments, needs to be alone and rejects the company of those unwelcome companions, memory,

> consciousness, education, and everything else. Then, the body will not be able to remember anything, like a drunkard reintegrated into domestic order after a night of turbulent wandering.
>
> [Sin duda, perdí el hilo del discurso en la caja de la camioneta (…). Porque es justamente eso lo que se olvida, en aquellos días en que la memoria no está presente. Yo creo que solo está presente el cuerpo y tal vez maniatado, amordazado y atontado. Un cuerpo que para tales momentos necesita estar solo y recusa la compañía de esas acompañantes inoportunas, la memoria, la conciencia, la educación y todo lo demás. Luego, el cuerpo no será capaz de recordar nada, como el borracho reincorporado al orden casero tras una noche de turbulento callejear.] (266)

Years later, Marré discovers the deceptive nature of that narration perpetrated by her own memory: "because memory –now I see it clearly– is almost always the revenge of what was not –what was is engraved in the body (...) only what could not be is kept at the level of memory – and in indelible records– to constitute that column of debt with which the soul wants to counterbalance the existence of the body" ["porque la memoria –ahora lo veo claro– es casi siempre la venganza de lo que no fue –aquello que fue se graba en el cuerpo (…) solo lo que no pudo ser es mantenido en el nivel del recuerdo –y en registros indelebles– para constituir esa columna del debe con que el alma quiera contrapesar el haber del cuerpo"] (115). Marré understands that the representation of herself with which she has survived for years, relegating "the recluse" to silence, is a treacherous narrative, limited to recounting what was not, because what was remains engraved in the body and, as Real, cannot access the symbolic.

That narrative is interrupted in "a moment in which –in the presence of a memory catalyst (...)– a fissure occurs in the apparent cortex of time through which it is seen that memory does not keep what happened, that willpower does not know what will come, that only desire knows how to unite them but (...) vanishes as soon as the odious order of time is restored in the soul" ["un instante en el que –en presencia de un catalizador de la memoria (…)– se produce una fisura en la corteza aparente del tiempo a través de la cual se ve que la memoria no guarda lo que pasó,

que la voluntad desconoce lo que vendrá, que solo el deseo sabe hermanarlas pero que (…) se desvanece en cuanto en el alma se restaura el orden odioso del tiempo"] (114). In a flash, in a forgotten image (the photograph she discovers by chance among her papers), the Real blinds the discourse of representation for a fleeting moment impossible to verbalize. Once again time, insofar as inaugurated by language, emerges as the staunch enemy of the always-deferred pleasure the subject tries to reach through a narration that, as Marré discovers, is always a betrayal of the self, because the Real (what was) is not symbolizable and, out of the reach of language, there always remains, in a scarred yesterday, the indelible record of the body.

In this sense, the way Marré understands time does not differ substantially from that of the doctor: "I have concluded that time is everything that we are not, everything that has been spoiled and failed, everything wrong, perverted, and despicable that we would have preferred to set aside, but that time forces us to carry in order to hinder and burden an emboldened will" ["yo he llegado a la conclusión de que el tiempo es todo lo que no somos, todo lo que se ha malogrado y fracasado, todo lo equivocado, pervertido y despreciable que hubiéramos preferido dejar de lado, pero que el tiempo nos obliga a cargar para impedir y gravar una voluntad envalentonada"] (301). For both of them, time is what remains outside the subject. However, insofar as he has submitted to the law and completely renounced subjective desire, Dr. Sebastián renounces time, thus accepting his fatal destiny: a living death under the threatening protection of Numa, condemned to the eternal repetition of the repressive shot. Conversely, Marré, sees time as an outside of the history constituted by her speech, filled with what was. She realizes that the story she tells of her own life leaves out the inaccessible and unnamable Real, forever reminding her that her will is not hers and that she will never be the subject of her own story.

However, she cannot help but return to Región, fueled by the need to relive or revisit the past that memory, trapped in the discourse of the Other, cannot deliver. Marré returns to Región looking for what remained exempt, in that "other temporality," constructed in the indelible but inaccessible register of that unconscious "other memory" that she cannot access. In this sense, Marré's return to Región is driven by a compulsion to repeat the jouissance she once enjoyed, a return of the repressed that can no longer be subdued by the superego's grip:

> I feel my authority increasingly relaxed over those parts that before the conflict knew how to march in unison and boast a unique order and discipline, but since the war they have begun to wage war each on their own, to ridicule command and destroy themselves in a thousand sporadic actions. I suppose I come for all that, in search of a certainty and a repetition."
>
> ["siento cada día más relajada mi autoridad sobre aquellas partículas que antes del conflicto sabían marchar de consumo y hacer gala de un orden y una disciplina únicos, pero que desde la guerra se han puesto a guerrear cada cual por su cuenta, para ridiculizar el mando y destruirse en mil acciones esporádicas. Supongo que vengo por todo eso, en busca de una certeza y una repetición"] (301).

This certainty Marré seeks is the opposite of what Dr. Sebastián has achieved for himself: if he (and all of Región) has found certainty in the law, in the deadly repetition of the same, Marré seeks a certainty that explains her desire, her ultimate particularization in speech. Thus, *Volverás a Región* suggests that personal history is always "regional" in the sense that the subject's speech is never the individual speech of its ego, but is always traversed by the discourse of the Other, always dependent on the "discursive region" to which it belongs. Marré's is the return to which every subject is condemned, an attempt to reenact the mythical scene where the ego coincided with the ideal. In this sense, the imperative of the title is prophetic: you

will return to question your own being, you will try to tell your own story again without ever coinciding with the ego that protagonizes it.[48]

1.6 The Historical Return of the Repressed

The historical event that takes center stage in the novel is the Civil War, however, mentions of it are often accompanied by references to past conflicts in the peninsula. For example, the presence of a battalion of the African army in Región during the Civil War is connected to "the same linen sacks loaded with the dried fruit of the Rif, the same Moorish dust that twelve centuries ago waded the same river with the same voices" ["las mismas talegas de lino cargadas con el fruto seco del Rif, el mismo polvo mogrebino que doce siglos atrás vadeara el mismo río con las mismas voces"] (83). In the novel, Mantua emerges as a mythical space where the remnants of the battles of history have accumulated. At the end of the Civil War, the few republican soldiers who survived also took refuge in Mantua. Fleeing from Colonel Gamallo's cleanup operation, they sought refuge in its "forbidden grounds" ["terrenos prohibidos"] (89) where

> years later it will be said that [they are] a ghostly army (...), a new spectral regiment that has come to join the fierce Carlist volunteers (...), the monastic and blond and armored knights (...), the resentful guardians and rangers of the old mansions (...), the old and hostile shepherds. (…) In reality, there is not a single accurate report regarding those fugitives who –on a very cold morning in January of the year 1939– left the last sheepfold and, climbing painfully through the heather-covered slopes, vanished into the fog.
>
> [años más tarde se asegurará que se trata de un ejército fantasmal (…) un nuevo regimiento espectral que ha venido a unirse a los fieros voluntarios carlistas (…) a los monásticos y rubios y acorazados caballeros (…) a los rencorosos guardianes y

[48] Although the official translation of the title into English is *Return to Región*, *Volverás a Región* actually translates literally as an imperative: "you will return to Región."

> guardabosques de las viejas mansiones (…) a los viejos y hostiles pastores. (…) En realidad no hay una sola noticia exacta con referencia a aquellos fugitivos que – una mañana muy fría de enero del año 1939 – abandonaron el último aprisco para, trepando penosamente por entre las laderas de brezo, perderse en la niebla.] (89-90)

Those fallen in the battles of history remain in Mantua as specters, whose traces take the form of "a large, red flower" ["una flor grande y roja"] (189) with an "attractive and pernicious appearance" ["aspecto atractivo y pernicioso"]: "the villager curses it, never picks it or removes it, nor dares to take the cattle where it sprouts. (...) Because it always grows where a human residue rests, a bone or a scapular that is demanding revenge, remembrance, and redemption from the world of the living" ["el paisano la maldice, no la coge jamás ni la extirpa ni se atreve a llevar el ganado donde ella brota. (…) Porque nace siempre donde descansa un resto humano, un hueso o un escapulario que está pidiendo venganza, recuerdo y redención al mundo de los vivos"] (189-190). Just as the subject is condemned to wonder about its desire without ever being able to liberate itself from the signifier chain that determines it, *Volverás a Región* suggests that the repressed also returns in collective history, only to be again and again subsumed not only by the hegemonic order at a certain, historical moment but by *logos*; that is, by the same logic of Western thought that represents the subject as a knowledgeable object: an ego whose historicity materializes in the homogeneous, empty time of "progress."

In this sense, the Francoist regime emerges in the novel both as the hegemonic order of 1960s Spain and as an extreme representative of Western thought. As explained in the introduction, in its official propaganda, the regime presented itself as a historical necessity that resolved the (constitutive) problem of Spain. The official discourse's insistence on concealing class antagonism and reaffirming (enforcing) national homogeneity confirms the regime's obsession with having resolved the historical problem of the "two Spains:" according to the official discourse, there were never two Spains (two alternative conceptions of the state) but a

Spain and an anti-Spain (the True essence of Spain and those who wanted to destroy it). *Volverás a Región* seems to respond to that propaganda by showing that insofar as it wholly participates in the logic of *logos*, that is, in the obsession with transparently representing identity, Francoism is nothing but a repetition, a new iteration of the same. A formulation that, no matter how hard it tries to repress and hide them, cannot get rid of the ghosts of the past, insofar as they remain there, in the traces of what was without being symbolized, demanding revenge and redemption.

What past, however, is to be "revenged," "remembered," and "redeemed"? Just as it impugns Francoism for claiming to have found an absolute resolution to the everlasting conflict between subjective desire and law, the novel also rejects that same kind of certainty when it comes from a left-wing perspective, embodied in the figure of Professor Aurelio Rumbal.[49] Rumbal was a left-wing intellectual who arrived in Región a couple of years before the war and began teaching afternoon informal classes at the town's high school. At first,

> he occupied the width of the blackboard with an undeniable truth, which, brimming with freshness and vigor (something like 'there exists in all gases a constant relationship between pressure, volume, and temperature') introduced a new spirit into the classroom that soon spread to the street. (…) he had the supreme insight (...) to limit himself to obvious and undeniable truths that for that audience –scarce but in a certain way select, attached to old customs, which had experienced the eviction of their firmest beliefs and were so in need of relief– constituted an invaluable source of trust and security, after so many years of futile sacrifices, uncertainties, and discomfort. (...) his speeches became more enigmatic and harder to swallow, when (once confidence was restored) he moved from simple truths to compound ones, from mere exposition to exhortation.
>
> ["ocupó la anchura del encerado con una verdad incontestable, que rebosante de frescura y vigor (algo así como que 'existe en todos los gases una relación constante entre la presión, el volumen y la temperatura') introdujo en el aula un nuevo espíritu que pronto se propagó a la calle. (…) tuvo el supremo acierto (…) de limitarse a verdades palmarias e incontestables que para aquel público –escaso pero en cierto

[49] Throughout the text, Rumbal is also referred to as Rombal, Rembal, Rubal and Robal by Dr. Sebastián, thus making it explicit that memory is not to be trusted.

> modo selecto, apegado a las viejas costumbres, que había vivido el desahucio de sus creencias más firmes y tan necesitado de un alivio– constituían una fuente inapreciable de confianza y seguridad, tras tantos años de inútiles sacrificios, de incertidumbres y malestar. (…) los discursos fueron haciéndose más enigmáticos y duros de tragar, cuando (una vez restablecida la confianza) pasó de las verdades simples a las compuestas, de la mera exposición a la exhortación."] (31)

In other words, through scientific knowledge, logic, and reason, he restored confidence and provided certainty to the confused inhabitants of Región, trapped between an obsolete order and the new Republican one, which in turn didn't seem to be solving anything. However, together with that scientific certainty, Rumbal also begins to impose his political truth. At a meeting after the war breaks out, he starts his speech: "We, the intellectuals, have the duty," thus creating "a denomination and a bond that (…) was accepted with astonishment and ratified by silence. (...) When [the meeting] ended, everyone had understood that the time had come to pay the debt they had contracted with him, a few months earlier" ["una denominación y un vínculo que (…) fue aceptado por el asombro y ratificado por el silencio. (…) Cuando terminó todos habían comprendido que era llegado el momento de abonar la deuda que habían contraído con él, pocos meses antes"] (31-32). In other words, the novel suggests that the discourse that under the protection of science and reason offers certainty demands in return a commitment to the ideas that that same discourse presents as Truth. The logic of debt is the same as that of religious faith: it provides a subjective certainty to believe in, in exchange, that certainty must be defended, if necessary, with one's own life.

It is never clear what Rumbal's exact political adscription is, although it seems safe to assume that he might have been a member of one of the left-wing parties or unions that existed during the republican years. The fact that the novel establishes such a parallel between Francoism and left-wing ideologies suggests agreement with those political scientists who,

during the 1950s, subsumed fascism and communism under the banner of "totalitarianism." In this case, the novel might seem to be advocating liberal democracy and, therefore, vindicating its only antecedent in Spain's history: the Second Republic.

However, *Volverás a Región*'s critical stance regarding "developmentalism" (discussed above) and the Second Republic suggests things are a bit more complicated. The period of the Second Republic is associated in the novel with a certain sense of immobility in Región; as if there was a sense of something new that never actually materializes in a real change.[50] In fact, according to Dr. Sebastián: "in my father's time, it was still believed that these things [society, religion, state] had to be cared for and protected to serve the individual (...) it was believed that it was possible to redeem him from his slavery and free him from exploitation by his peers" ["en tiempos de mi padre se creía todavía que había que cuidar y celar esas cosas para servir al individuo; (…)se creía que era posible redimirle de su esclavitud y liberarle de la explotación por sus semejantes"] (222). Dr. Sebastián's father's time is not the Second Republic, but the first decades of the 20th century, a period of political effervescence, when workers and peasants had started organizing in unions and under the banners of anarchism and socialism.[51] Therefore, the

[50] For example, Marré refers to her youth, during the Second Republic, as years of aborted change: "In my time, it was like this, the new relationship between the sexes was nothing but the elimination of all those rites and sacrifices that undoubtedly led to marriage but were not replaced by anything else. So, that friendship was impossible if it didn't lead, just like before, without rituals or solemnity, to marriage" ["en mi tiempo era así, la nueva relación entre los dos sexos no era sino la eliminación de todos aquellos ritos y sacrificios que sin duda conducían al matrimonio pero que tampoco fueron sustituidos por otra cosa. De forma que esa amistad era imposible si no conducía, igual que antes, sin ritos ni solemnidad, al matrimonio"] (262).

[51] There is a possibility (although there is not enough proof in the text to affirm it without doubt) that through the figure of Rumbal, the novel is criticizing the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) and, specifically, its performance during the Civil War. To put it short, in the regions of Catalonia, Valencia, and Aragon, when the militias had stopped the coup, they had also seized political power and started a social revolution (means of production were collectivized and managed by workers, free education and health services were provided, etc.). During the war, European liberal democracies refused to provide support to the Second Republic, only Stalin's Russia did, which meant that the PCE became very powerful very quickly (the Spanish Communist Party had only been founded in 1921, and it didn't have many members until the war started). Concurrently Stalin, afraid of Hitler, made a pact with Great Britain and France that Spain would not turn into a Communist state. As a result, within Republican Spain, the PCE led a systematic cleansing of "Trotskyists," a label that, in fact, referred to anyone who advocated social revolution, whether they were members of the anarchist unions, the Socialist Party, or the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista-Workers' Party of

novel doesn't seem to be vindicating the Second Republic (e.g. liberal democracy) but a sort of opening up of political life to active participation, a period receptive to uncertainty and therefore impregnated with the possibilities of imagining a revolutionary event capable of exploding *logos* itself, of creating *ex nihilo* a new Text of history, in the sense that Žižek understands Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History:"

> for Benjamin, revolution is not part of continuous historical evolution but, on the contrary, a moment of 'stasis' when the continuity is broken, when the texture of previous history, that of the winners, is annihilated, and when, retroactively, through the success of the revolution, each abortive act, each slip, each past failed attempt which functioned in the reigning Text as an empty and meaningless trace, will be 'redeemed', will receive its signification. In this sense, a revolution is strictly a *creationist* act, a radical intrusion of the 'death drive': erasure of the reigning Text, creation *ex nihilo* of a new Text by means of which the stifled past 'will have been'" (Žižek *The Sublime Object of Ideology* 161)

What is at stake in *Volverás a Región* is, then, a radical reconfiguration of the symbolic. For the novel, a revolutionary event is one capable of accounting for the Real, that is, an event that avoids configuring itself as a new law and finds a way of accounting for and dealing with the constitutive antagonism of any social organization (instead of denying and repressing it).[52]

However, there doesn't seem to be, in *Volverás a Región*, the promise of a possible revolution. The reason for this impossibility is that human beings are cowards, and with good reason. Marré Gamallo illustrates this logic: Since the end of the war, she makes successive attempts to detach herself from the bourgeois social order to which she belongs and follow the

Marxist Unification). Rumbal might be identified with the authoritarian PCE that led the Republic during the war, whereas Dr. Sebastián's father's time might be the previous epoch of emerging parties and unions actively thinking of alternatives to traditional politics.

[52] In this sense, the impulse that led to the establishment of the Second Republic can also be understood as a concealment of class struggle: the class antagonism that had fueled social unrest through the first thirty years of the 20th century was displaced into the problem of a specific form of government: "monarchy versus Republic." However, once the Republicans won the elections and the king abdicated, the bourgeois Republican government proved it wasn't a real alternative, but a timid series of reforms that didn't solve the problems of the majority of the population.

desires of that part of herself she has secluded, but she never follows through. When it comes down to it, the desire for security takes hold of her:

> Certainly, I didn't lack the resolution to desert decency, order, and scruples, but I lacked courage, the capacity for sacrifice, and the necessary clarity to embrace the scoundrel creed of depravity, in which, inevitably, I would find myself alone, with no one to accompany me and no one to turn to in the event of failure.
>
> [sin duda que no me faltaba resolución para desertar de la decencia, del orden y de los escrúpulos pero me faltaba valor, capacidad de sacrificio y la lucidez necesaria para abrazar el credo canalla de una depravación en la que, por fuerza, me iba a encontrar sola, sin nadie que me acompañara y nadie a quien recurrir en la eventualidad de un fallo.] (152)

In other words, individually rejecting the law can only lead to the most absolute isolation and the renunciation of any subjective certainty. Marré Gamallo finds herself, therefore, in an impossible situation: To renounce the law that restricts her desire is to be left alone, existentially alone, to have no certainty, no belonging. More than that, it means losing all possibility of even imagining an object of desire, insofar as she would have (if this were possible) been excluded from the symbolic order that validates such an object of desire. Marré can only desire a potential reunion with Luis Timoner within the language in which she is already inscribed. She knows that her return to Región will culminate in her death, and her sentence will be executed the moment she crosses the boundaries of Mantua, the moment she confronts her ego as a mere fantasy.

1.7 The Child, or the Non-Relation with the Law

The novel suggests that the only way to not be trapped in the Law is to have never been. This position of absolute independence from the symbolic order is inscribed in the novel by a third figure that incarnates a relationship with the law alternative to the complementary ones

embodied in Marré Gamallo and Doctor Sebastián: it is the non-relationship with the law, present in the child who barely appears at the beginning and the end of the novel.

After the well-known opening paragraphs that begin the novel with the detailed description of the topography of Región, the next section introduces the child abandoned by his mother before the war began.[53] The novel doesn't even provide us with the name of this child, who remains trapped in the specular relationship he develops in his game, "a solitary combat with the twin player, and intoxicated, for the chimeric transposition of his own image to a fictitious activity" ["solitario combate con el jugador gemelo y embriagado, por la quimérica transposición de su propia imagen a una actividad ficticia"] (17). Facing the departure of the mother, the child doesn't hesitate to "sacrifice his reason to maintain the integrity of a babbling, disoriented, and abandoned person" ["sacrificar su razón para mantener la integridad de una persona balbuceante, desorientada y abandonada"] (19). In other words, he refuses to accept the possibility that the Father occupies, as a signifier, the place that belongs to it. In this way, the novel suggests, he manages to maintain his integrity as a subject, as he has not been split by the discourse of the Other, but as a result, he is not a subject, insofar as he is completely deprived of speech and condemned to absolute solitude. This does not mean that the child does not feel anguish at the separation from the mother, but he is unable to give it meaning: the Name-of-the-Father has not set in, thus preventing him from participating in the symbolic order and therefore from giving the abandonment a meaning that could be shared with an-other.

After some time, "the departure of the mother becomes the only symptom of his abandonment" ["la marcha de la madre se transforma en el único síntoma de su abandono"] (17)

[53] It has often been suggested that the intricate topography of Región symbolizes the difficulty of reading, identifying the reader with that Traveler who sees their strength overwhelmed by the wild nature of the place. See "El lector-viajero en *Volverás a Región*" (1979) by Luis F. Costa and "El discurso de la ruina: lo gótico en *Volverás a Región*" (2005) by John B. Margenot, III.

since beyond it, he cannot establish any relationship: “his own perdition may begin with the fact of not knowing anything else but seeing himself” [“es posible que su propia perdición comience por el hecho de no saber otra cosa que verse a sí mismo”] (17). Unable to access the symbolic order, he remains anchored to the realm of the imaginary; in that state “memory, removed from play, can only bring images of boredom and signs of that condition” [“la memoria, alejada del juego, no sabe traer sino imágenes del hastío y los signos de aquella condición”] (17) of abandonment.

Thus for the child, the departure of the mother has foreclosed all possibility of access to the law of the Father; nothing means anything unless mediated by her. He cannot remember, for example, the morning of celebration for the end of the war, because “memory refused to accept it, perhaps because it did not come endorsed with the steps of his mother” [“la memoria se negó a aceptarla, tal vez porque no venía avalada con los pasos de su madre”] (19) who had left promising to return “the day after tomorrow” [“pasado mañana”] because “she knew that beyond tomorrow there was no notion of time in the child’s mind” [“sabía que más allá del mañana no existía en la mente del niño una noción del tiempo”] (16). In other words, since he hasn’t been incorporated into language, time does not pass for him except in relation to the image of the mother: Whatever changes occur externally, the child cannot establish a meaningful relationship with them and remains anchored in a temporality alternative to that demarcated by the language of representation in which he does not participate. The relationship he is able to establish with the woman in charge of him, Adela, is based on following the domestic order she sets with her actions, without these holding any meaning for him. When other people speak to him, he cannot respond, as he does not possess the language keys that would allow him to recognize and be recognized by the other:

> There, the loneliness that only the child can measure –uninterested in naming each thing and unable to express mood through gesture– can be measured; there lies the response (...) to the rejection of the longing for freedom and the desire to forget that longing in order to, in seclusion or abandonment, construct one's own laws and one's own code and one's own reason for being, even if they only serve to roll balls down a hallway in the gloom.
>
> [Allí se mide la soledad que sólo el niño –no interesado en dar un nombre a cada cosa e incapaz de expresar con el gesto el estado de ánimo– puede medir; allí está la respuesta (…) a la recusación del anhelo de libertad y al deseo de olvidar ese anhelo a fin de, en la reclusión o en el abandono, edificar sus propias leyes y su código propio y su propia razón de ser aunque sólo sirvieran para hacer correr unas bolas por un pasillo en la penumbra.] (25)

Only the child can measure the loneliness into which he is thrown by not being interested in naming things, that is, in establishing a relationship with the external world mediated by words, a relationship that begins with having a proper name, which the novel symbolically deprives him of. In this solitude, there is a rejection of the desire for freedom, which in the child does not constitute an absolute submission to the law (as in Dr. Sebastián) or a struggle against it (as in Marré Gamallo), but rather a "prior" resistance: remaining in a stage *before* the imposition of the signifier, he is no subject. The child does not renounce freedom; he simply does not know it because he does not know the law; that is why he can build his own laws and, with them, give himself his own reason for being, even if it lies solely in playing with balls for hours.

After Adela's death, the child comes under the guardianship of Dr. Sebastián. With him, he establishes a similar relationship, based on respecting a purely domestic order materialized in the organization of daily life. At the end of the novel, from his window in the doctor's house, the child (now an adult) sees Marré approaching in a black car and gets excited, thinking she is his mother who returned (the mother had left in a black car). The doctor sedates him, locks him up,

and responds evasively or changes the topic each time Marré Gamallo, during their conversation, hears his screams.

When the doctor comes up to see him in the morning, the child's feelings of anger and frustration are evident in the look he directs at his guardian, "not so much to look as to be seen" ["no tanto con objeto de mirar como de ser visto"] (314); that is, to be recognized in his desire, which is only activated in the specular relationship with the Mother. The doctor tries in vain to convince him that Marré is not his returned mother, but communication between them is, as it has always been, impossible, and the child kills the doctor: "when his head was struck against the wall his glasses fell to the ground and the word 'son' came out of his mouth, as if fall and word were the two actions of a mechanism" ["cuando su cabeza fue golpeada contra la pared sus lentes cayeron al suelo y de su boca salió la palabra 'hijo,' como si caída y palabra fueran las dos acciones de un mecanismo"] (314). At the moment the child kills the father he becomes his son; there, at that moment when he is overtaken by anguish, seeing the doctor standing between him and his desire for the mother, and kills him, the resolution of an impossible Oedipus occurs, the first and only time when, momentarily, the child attains the status of subject. However,

> throughout the rest of the night in the closed and solitary house, nearly overcome by ruin, hurried footsteps could be heard, cries of pain, shattering glass, furniture colliding with walls; the sound of walls and irons being pounded, a sustained sob that on the brink of tears culminated in the impact of a body against closed doors. Until, with the light of day, between two barks of a solitary dog, the echo of a distant gunshot came to restore the usual silence of the place.
>
> [durante el resto de la noche en la casa cerrada y solitaria, casi vencida por la ruina, sonaron los pasos apresurados, los gritos de dolor, los cristales rotos, los muebles que chocaban contra las paredes; los muros y hierros batidos, un sollozo sostenido que al límite de las lágrimas se resolvía en el choque de un cuerpo contra las puertas cerradas. Hasta que, con las luces del día, entre dos ladridos de un perro solitario, el eco de un disparo lejano vino a restablecer el silencio habitual del lugar.] (315)

The final paragraph of the novel shows the child, once freed from authority, still confined in the house, in Región, in perpetual solitude, isolated from everything and everyone due to his inability to communicate with others. At the same time, the echo of the distant gunshot suggests Marré's death at the hands of Numa, that is, the reaffirmation of the law in Región. The child is the only one capable of certifying the death of authority, the only one who possesses an alternative to Numa. However, it is an incommunicable alternative and therefore unrealizable, as it cannot be shared.

Volverás a Región thus presents subjective rejection of the law (whether it be Marré's antisocial search for her desire or the child's impossibility as a subject) as tantamount to a life marked by the utmost solitude. With this, the novel suggests that any radical rupture with the symbolic order can only be made to happen collectively. However, even then, it requires accounting for the Real, for the constitutive lack in the subject and the Real antagonism of society and, therefore, it requires renouncing subjective certainty, which causes overwhelming fear and anxiety.

Volverás a Región does not propose an alternative nor does it attempt to illuminate a path. By turning Numa into the object of a collective delirium of a religious nature linked to the need for subjective certainty, it points to the empty core that articulates the symbolic order. Faced with this abyss, any alternative that presents itself as an unequivocal option, whatever form it may take, establishes an economy based on debt and sacrifice: the subject endowed with an answer to the question of its being owes body and soul to the prophet capable of providing it. The novel uses the figure of Numa to insist on this logic of debt captured in Western thought and deploys a game of relationships with him as law that delves into the constitutive contradiction of the symbolic order, that is, that confronts us with the Real. If the subject feels the need for subjective

certainty, it is precisely because it is inserted into the symbolic order. Because desire cannot take shape unless it is returned by the signifying chain, the subject remains incomplete, unable to attain identity with itself in its speech, which is always already indebted to the discourse of the Other.

Volverás a Región insists on this gap in the symbolic through the writing itself. In this sense, the novel articulates itself doubly as insistence and resistance: by thinking them through to their ultimate consequences, it insists on revealing the mechanisms that articulate Western *logos*; simultaneously, in its ambiguous writing, resists it. *Volverás a Región* refuses to narrate the story of its characters in a traditional, "realist" manner; instead, it establishes an ambiguous language that seems to allude to events that remain in the shadows, which the reader, accustomed to representational language, intuits and tries to reconstruct in search of something to anchor the text. An impossible anchorage that always remains shrouded in doubt, as each sentence, laden with subordinations and intricacies, simultaneously refers in a veiled manner to seemingly objective events, supposedly subjective thoughts, and speculations uttered by voices that, in turn, dissolve within the rest of the voices present in the novel. In this way, the writing itself erases the boundaries established by *logos* and questions the dichotomies of thought: the objective versus the subjective, the real versus the imaginary, the historical versus the mythical lose clarity and reveal the dependence of these dichotomies on a representational language that is contingent on the denial of the constitutive void of the symbolic.

With its dual gesture of insistence and resistance, the novel suggests that the abstract question of the subject's relationship with the signifier can be articulated in a concrete context, in a particular instance of that relationship. Thus, Marré Gamallo and Dr. Sebastián's relationship with Numa, or the child's non-relationship with him, not only point to an allegorical meaning

that explores the Spanish subject's relationship with Francoism but also highlights the fact that, within *logos*, both the position of the subject and that of the law exist. Thus, thanks to its use of literary language, *Volverás a Región* thinks about the political question of the Law and the philosophical question of the subject's being, intertwined in the same text. Its renunciation of the supposedly transparent language of reason allows the novel to articulate an ambiguous text, capable of referring simultaneously and even in the same sentence to specific historical events and to the logic of desire that underlies them. Ultimately, the novel insists on the Real and avoids the temptation of subjective certainty (of creating a new Numa) in order to try to open the doors to an active consideration of the structures underlying Western thought.

Chapter 2 Challenging the Fantasy of "womanhood." The Gaze as interruption in *Margarita y el lobo*

Que el pasado se hunda en la nada
¡Qué nos importa del ayer!
Queremos escribir de nuevo
la palabra mujer.

Lucía Sánchez Saornil, "Himno de mujeres libres"

Margarita y el lobo (*Margarita and the Wolf*) is a medium-length film directed by Cecilia Bartolomé in 1969. It was her final project as a student of the *Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía* (Official School of Cinematography), where she became, together with Josefina Molina, one of the only two women who graduated in the specialty of "film director." Because the atmosphere in the EOC was, to some extent, more permissive than other institutions (García López 313) with several "progressive" professors and students who opposed the dictatorship, *Margarita y el lobo* passed the EOC's internal censorship, allowing Cecilia Bartolomé to graduate. The regime's censorship, however, prevented *Margarita y el lobo* from being shown in theaters and included Bartolomé among the directors deemed "non-compliant" with the regime; this made it impossible for her to pursue her own projects until after Franco's death (García Sahagún 2016). Bartolomé continued to develop a career in the film industry, mainly working in advertising; she also directed the feminist road movie ¡*Vamonos Bárbara!* (*Let's go Barbara!* 1978) and what can possibly be considered the savviest documentary about the so-called "Spanish Transition" to this day: *Después de…* and a second part entitled *No se os puede dejar solos* (*After…* and *You can't be left alone* respectively; although they were filmed in 1979-1980, they were not released

until 1983, due to censorship and bureaucratic setbacks). In 1996 Bartolomé filmed *Lejos de África* (*Far from Africa*) becoming virtually the only Spanish filmmaker to have dealt with Spanish colonialism in Equatorial Guinea in the second half of the 20th century. Despite all this, Bartolomé remains a "forgotten" filmmaker within Spanish film studies.[54]

Cecilia Bartolomé developed *Margarita y el lobo* in the very specific context of the EOC. The EOC was inaugurated in 1962 by José María García Escudero, who also coined the term "*Nuevo Cine Español,*" ("New Spanish Cinema") supposedly with the goal of improving the general quality of Spanish cinema.[55] In actual fact, the EOC was part of a much wider marketing operation initiated by the regime in the 1960s, in an effort to create an image of Spain as a modern, developed, European nation-state. The mission of the EOC was to support the development of the NCE in the fashion of the "new cinemas" that had been born in other European countries since the fifties (notably, the French *nouvelle vague*). Within the EOC, students were required to create *cinema d'auteur*, the expectation being that some of the films produced by the EOC's graduates would be valued at European film festivals which, it was hoped, would improve Spain's image internationally.[56] The influence and techniques of *cinema d'auteur* are apparent in *Margarita y el lobo*, which constitutes a highly experimental, auto-referential film.

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[54] In her book, *Desenfocadas. Cineastas españolas y discursos de género*, Barbara Zecchi offers a brief recount of Cecilia Bartolomé's personal and professional trajectories. Augusto Torres includes Bartolomé in his volume *Directores españoles malditos* (2004). Only one monographic text has been devoted to her: *Cecilia Bartolomé. El Encanto de la lógica* (2001), by Josetxo Cerdán and Marina Díaz López.

[55] García Escudero was the director of the *Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro.* The EOC had been called *Instituto de Investigaciones y Experiencias Cinematográficas* until 1962, when García Escudero was hired in order to modernize the Spanish film industry. Altogether, the institution was active from 1947 until 1976.

[56] For a detailed historical account of the context and functioning of the EOC, see "¿Una dictadura liberal? (1962-1969)" in *Historia del cine español* and "The Liberal Dictatorship and its Agony (1962-1975)" in *100 Years of Cinema.* Chapter 6, "Strategic Auteurism" in *A companion to Spanish Cinema,*" offers a very detailed analysis of the lights and shadows of *cinema d'auteur*; of particular interest is the section "Editing in the Woman Amateur," by Susan Martin-Márquez, who explores the inherently sexist character of the concept.

Who, however, watched *Margarita y el lobo* when it was released? Being the work of a student still in training, what makes it worth critical attention? In "Miradas invisibles: mujeres en la Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía (1947-1976)," Sonia García López explains that these types of projects were usually shown in the EOC and watched mainly by professors and students, some of them were even sent to specialized festivals and/or utilized for educational purposes; therefore, its status was mixed: halfway between the public and the private, between institutional and independent (316). García López uses Foucault's notion of "archive" as a theoretical frame to approach these school projects, and understands them as "foundations of a regime of enunciability […] in a discursive space that was not entirely public but also not completely private" (317).[57] Within this framework, *Margarita y el lobo* is particularly attractive. On the one hand, the Francoist censorship forbade it, which indicates that this medium-length film directed by a student was perceived as dangerous enough for the regime to try to block Bartolome's career as a filmmaker even before it had started. On the other hand, in recent years, *Margarita y el lobo* has been consistently included in film festivals and workshops about cinema and feminism (Guillaumón Carrasco 289), which suggests that the film generates relevant meanings.

In *Margarita y el lobo*, Cecilia Bartolomé accomplishes an effective critique of the Francoist ideology, not simply by opposing contemporary hegemonic discourses; but by revealing ideology "*qua* generative matrix that regulates the relationship between visible and non-visible, between imaginable and non-imaginable, as well as the changes in this relationship" ("The Spectre of Ideology" 1). Through the characters Margarita and Lorenzo, as well as through her ability to allow the gaze to emerge as object *a*, Cecilia Bartolomé sheds light on the symbolic fiction that organizes the coetaneous Spaniards' relation to "reality" within Francoism.

[57] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish are my own.

2.1 "Womanhood" and "woman"

Margarita y el lobo skillfully activates the idea of "womanhood" which circulated in Francoist Spain: that of the obedient wife and sacrificed mother whose source of happiness and realization as a human being was to be located in taking care of her family and attending to her domestic duty.[58] This idea of "womanhood" is articulated by the movie in order to be challenged, interrupted, every step of the way. However, such interruption avoids erecting an alternative image of what "womanhood" is or should be; instead, the film sets out to analyze this concept of "womanhood" to reveal its internal contradictions, problematize its relationship with actual women and shed light on the limits and weaknesses of the type of subject who needs such an idea of "womanhood" to exist and to contemplate itself in its existence.

The film narrates the romance between Margarita and Lorenzo, focusing on the tensions and conflicts that develop between them and culminate with their official separation; which is the first scene in the movie.[59] In fact, following the contemporary precepts of *cinema d'auteur* the film articulates a complex narrative: starting *in media res* from the moment they sign the separation papers, it jumps between flashbacks and the present time of the story. The flashbacks are not chronologically ordered, and thus the viewer is required to actively reconstruct the story, which is presented mainly through conversations between the two main characters. *Margarita y el lobo* is also an experimental musical where the songs constantly cross the borders between the story being told and the act of telling, and between past and present. It is through the fragmented

[58] As explained in the introduction, his monolithic idea, implemented by National-Catholicism during the 40s and 50s, started to be threatened in the 60s, due to the effects of the Plan de Desarrollo of 1959. For a detailed recount of the period see Aurora G. Morcillo's volume *The Seduction of Modern Spain. The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*, especially the chapter "Perfect Wives and Mothers."

[59] Divorce was actually prohibited in Spain until 1981. During the dictatorship, separation was regulated by an ecclesiastical court, which only guaranteed the physical and economic separation of the spouses, although they were still considered married and, therefore, they could not, for example, marry someone else.

character of verbal exchanges and actions, together with the irony present in the songs, that the idea of "womanhood" emerges in the film. Simultaneously, the disruptions of narrative progression and the transgression of genre expectations point to the unattainable Real that underlies said fantasy of "womanhood."

Margarita is a middle-class young woman who does not exactly conform to the traditional image of "womanhood" supported by the Francoist ideology; Lorenzo is an upper-class young professional who defines himself as "open-minded" and "willing to listen to all political positions" but who, as the movie evolves, reveals himself more and more in line with those in power and especially with their vision of what "a normal life" should look like, a vision which includes what "womanhood" is. Lorenzo's self-perception as broad-minded and reasonable is a recurring theme in the movie from the beginning when, right after signing the separation papers, he states that what drew him to Margarita in the first place was, precisely, that she was "attractive, personal, different" ["atractiva, personal, diferente"] (3.06).

However, these qualities that Lorenzo finds fascinating at first, clash with his expectations for his life, and the flashbacks that show their relationship are consistently pervaded by conversations (playful discussions at first, open arguments later) about how Margarita should dress, behave, and even desire. For example, in one of the first flashbacks in the movie, Lorenzo says: "My poor dear, you need a man, you won't get anywhere by yourself, even if you act tough" ["pobrecita mía, necesitas un hombre, sola no vas a ninguna parte, aunque te hagas la fuerte"] (6.33) and in a later flashback, which shows their wedding, Lorenzo sings "you don't know part of life, you've never wanted to try it, and in abandonment and total surrender to love, there are joys. You don't know these joys, you despise them for their simplicity" ["no conoces parte de la vida, no has querido probarla jamás, y en el abandono y entrega total al amor hay

alegrías. No conoces estas alegrías, las desprecias por su sencillez"] (10-04) to the melody of "All You Need is Love" by the Beatles. The song represents in a direct way what Lorenzo is feeling at this particular moment: it is quite clear that he hopes for a traditional life in which Margarita discovers a sense of fulfillment in her role as wife and mother.

Music is, however, exploited further by the movie. The present of the story follows Margarita as she goes on with her life. After separating from Lorenzo, she moves to a new apartment and works as a songwriter. Some of her songs are inspired by her relationship with Lorenzo, and they intersect with her memories in such a way that sometimes the people in the flashbacks are singing, which indicates that Margarita is using things that Lorenzo and/or herself said as material for her songs. This technique is used in one of the most interesting scenes in the movie, which articulates the core of its political intervention from a feminist perspective. This scene is a flashback that corresponds to the early days of Margarita and Lorenzo's romance, where the lovers sing the following conversation:

> L: Why do you insist on stifling the best within you? I know what the best within you is.
> M: Do you? What is it?
> L: The fact that you are a woman.
>
> [L: ¿Por qué tratas de ahogar lo mejor que hay en ti? Porque yo conozco lo mejor que hay en ti.
> M: ¿Sí? ¿Qué es?
> L: Que eres una mujer.] (8.17)

This conversation is part of a playful discussion where the lovers are seen playing and kissing. These sentences are half-spoken and half-sung by the characters, but the actual song can also be heard playing while the characters are visibly not speaking or singing. Therefore, the song represents simultaneously what Lorenzo or Margarita said at a certain moment in the manner of a musical and what Margarita is composing in the present, which acts as a soundtrack.

The singing shifts from one realm to the other without warning and thus contributes to creating a feeling of confusion for the audience that echoes that of the characters. Frustrated by Margarita's rejection of his only half-formulated ideas, Lorenzo looks directly at the camera and sings "she doesn't want to be a woman" ["no quiere ser una mujer"] (9.08) immediately followed by a shot of Margarita, also looking at the camera and holding her head between her hands in clear sign of desperation asking "tell me, what does it mean to be a woman?" ["dime, ¿qué es ser una mujer?"] (9.15). Confronted with this question, Lorenzo answers: "a woman is made to love" ["una mujer está hecha para amar"] (9.17).

What is interesting about this conversation and others similar throughout the film, is the opacity of the term "woman." Although many ideas regarding "womanhood" circulate in the movie, both explicitly and implicitly, the term "woman" always seems impossible to define: the best thing that Margarita has is being a woman but according to Lorenzo, she seems to not want to be a woman (even though she clearly is) and when she requests a definition, Lorenzo cannot provide a direct answer; instead, he responds what a woman is *made for*. He can state her purpose, what she can be useful for, but not what a woman *is*. Thus, the film shows how "woman" is merely "a collection of male fantasy objects dressed up in culturally stereotypical clothes: i(a), that is, an image that contains and yet disguises object (a)" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 117).

Those fantasy objects, imaginary traits projected on all women indistinctly within the ideological frame of the dictatorship, constitute what I call "womanhood." Through statements as the ones mentioned above and also by means of the movements of the camera and editing (as will be examined in the next sections), *Margarita y el lobo* explores the imaginary construction of "womanhood" in the Spain of the 60s. This fantasy of "womanhood" (or "womanhood" as

fantasy) is systematically interrupted by Margarita in so far as she is a woman, but cannot be assimilated to "womanhood." In the interstices between the imaginary fantasy and the Real woman, the film stages the failure of the symbolic. There is a gap before which speech is rendered practically useless, reduced to trying to go around that undefinable element which nevertheless keeps coming back.

In this sense, borrowing the terms Lacan uses in book XI of his *Seminar*, Lorenzo represents *automaton*, whereas Margarita embodies *tuché*. In *Seminar XI*, when he opposes these two Aristotelian terms, Lacan is trying to work out the concept of repetition and its inherent connection with fantasy and object *a*. As Bruce Fink suggests in "The Real Cause of Repetition," the concept of repetition in Lacan's *Seminar XI* is twofold: on the one hand, it is associated with fantasy and, therefore, with the imaginary. It refers to a kind of "return with a difference" (224) and it consists of the repetition of the subject's symptoms, which can only be thought of thanks to the symbolic order (no two things, people or events are ever the same, except for the fact that we have signifiers that might unite them as similar). On the other hand, repetition is associated with the Real, it is "the return of that which remains self-identical, and that can only be object *a*" (Fink "The Real Cause…" 224).[60] This second type of repetition is triggered by "that which is excluded from the signifying chain, but around which that chain revolves" (Fink "The Real Cause…" 224-225); in this sense, the return of the object *a* refers to the return of an interruption, it refers to the insistence of the letter. In other words, the object *a* is the cause of desire, it is the

[60] In *The Lacanian Subject* Bruce Fink develops the terminological difference between object *a* and object (a). As he explains, up to the mid-1950s, the other, *a*, is the Lacanian object, which belongs to the order of the imaginary. "The foremost imaginary object is the ego" (84), and just like any other object, libido can be directed at it; therefore, "the object, as understood at this imaginary level, is one towards which libido is directed or withdrawn" (84). After the mid-1950s, especially in seminars VII, VIII, and XI, "Lacan begins to conceptualize a different kind of object: a Real object, cause of desire. From then on, Lacan devotes virtually all of his interest to the latter, but in no sense invalidates the importance of the object situated at the imaginary level" (86); this object as cause of desire is written as object (a). However, most authors choose to write object *a* when referring to the object as cause of desire. Here I choose to keep to this convention, therefore, I use the italicized *a* to refer to the Real object or object as Cause.

phantasmic object, always already lost, that inaugurates the subject of language as lack. The object *a* is the cause of the fantasy in the subject, that is, the cause of the articulation of a signifying chain that keeps coming back (repetition as difference) to the same unattainable object in search of a jouissance that will never be achieved. Thus, in Žižek's words, fantasy is

> an entity that is exceedingly traumatic: it articulates the subject's relationship towards enjoyment, towards the traumatic kernel of his being, towards something that the subject is never able to acknowledge fully, to become familiar with, to integrate into his symbolic universe. The public disclosure of this phantasmic kernel entails an unbearable shame that leads to the subject's *aphanasis*, self-obliteration. (*Metastases of Enjoyment* 178)

In *Margarita y el lobo* Lorenzo represents *automaton* in so far as he incarnates the repetition of the idea of "womanhood" supported by the regime and is thus self-obliterated, alienated in the Other. What he expects from Margarita is that she assimilates herself to a preconceived idea of "womanhood." I use the term pre-conceived to indicate that this fantasy regarding "womanhood" is not only an already-made notion that Lorenzo projects on Margarita, but a notion that he, as subject, has inhered from the Francoist Other. It is this Other that ultimately speaks through Lorenzo and, symptomatically enough, is portrayed in the film through the figure of his mother. It is, in fact, Lorenzo's mother who directs the harshest judgments against Margarita, particularly when she embarks on different intellectual endeavors. When Margarita gives a not-very-successful talk at a local cultural institution, she challenges Margarita saying "Well, what nonsense is this? One cannot go around making a fool of oneself, but instead *behave like a lady*." ["pero bueno, ¿qué sandeces son estas? Lo que no se puede andar es hacienda el ridículo, sino *portarse como una señora*"] (16.15, my emphasis). Here again, the same idea concerning "womanhood" is voiced, and again speech goes blank, in the sense that "behave like a lady" can mean anything, everything, and nothing at the same time. Discourse reveals itself stuck in the realm of fantasy, where "behave like a lady" might include different

things for different people, even within the same geographical area and social class. This vagueness is, of course, what invests this type of expression with its power: one can do everything she can to "behave like a lady" and still fail many times since, although it appears as if everyone agrees on the fact that a lady should behave like a lady, the meaning of these words is malleable and rests upon the non-explicit. It could be defined as a sort of blind spot in the configuration of the symbolic where the imaginary takes over.

Later, when Margarita decides to go back to college, Lorenzo's mother clearly expresses her disagreement: "Again in college? As if a married woman needed to learn anything there. *In my times, a man would have never allowed this*" ["¿Pero otra vez a la Universidad? Como si una mujer casada necesitara aprender allí algo. *En mis tiempos un hombre nunca hubiera consentido esto*"] (16.30, my emphasis). Here, once again, "a married woman" becomes a sort of empty signifier that seems to *obviously* preclude certain activities. However, this quote reveals something further: it pertains to the authority of the man to allow or prohibit what his wife does because his wife's conduct reflects back on him. In other words, Margarita's "womanhood" (or lack thereof) determines Lorenzo's manhood. In this sense, the film is suggesting that what is at stake in the notion of "womanhood" is the identity of the Francoist (male) subject itself.[61] And just like any other subject, the subject of Francoism is inserted in a metonymic chain of signifiers along which desire slides, "endlessly pursuing difference" (Fink "The Real cause…" 224), endlessly reliving the same configuration of desire, the same symptom. A repetition which, the movie suggests, is embodied in the fantasy of "womanhood." The film, then, explores the ideological construction of "womanhood" as a symptom of the (male) subject of Francoism.

[61] Here, I write "male" in brackets to indicate that the subject of Francoism is male, that is, constitutes a masculine relationship with the Other. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the functioning of such a masculine position *vis a-vis* the Law.

It is not by chance that Lorenzo and his family belong to the bourgeoisie and are connected to the country's traditional oligarchy; since in this intersection between gender and class the idea of "womanhood" reaches its full signification: The fantasy of "womanhood" that the regime builds is an imaginary construction whose repetition equals the reproduction of the regime itself, and thus it is most strongly enforced by those who obtain more benefits from it.[62] This idea is expressed in the movie through the figure of Lorenzo and his self-perception as a broad-minded person. As shown in the first flashback of the movie, Lorenzo and Margarita met at a student demonstration against the regime which was being brutally repressed by the Francoist police (although the film does not clarify whether Lorenzo was taking part in the demonstration or he just happened to be driving by at that precise moment). He feels attracted to Margarita because she is different from other women, possibly upper-class women who behave more traditionally. However, the film shows how, ultimately, what he desires is a traditional household and a wife who complies with his idea of "womanhood." His behavior toward Margarita is analogous to his political involvement, briefly referred to at the end of the movie, and which definitely seals Lorenzo's alliance with the status quo. An alliance that, once again, reveals itself as dependent on the fantasy of "womanhood:"

> L: I have been asked to be a representative for my province in the next elections. Besides, my father wants to launch my campaign saying that I will promote local tourism.
> M: But you didn't accept, did you?
> L: Well, I have thought that it would be really useful for the country that I, from the inside… Truly, at a position like that, a man like me [here, we hear Margarita laughing despectively] open to all kinds of ideas, but balanced and not suspicious…
> M: yeah, yeah, it's quite clear. Finally, you have defined yourself.

[62] Bartolomé, however, avoids relying on a simplistic, Manichaean portrayal, often opening crevices through which the film's own claims are challenged. For example, right after the separation, Lorenzo's mother spends a few days at her son's, and one of the maids tells the other: "poor mistress, she really is an actual lady, unlike the master's wife, who had no class at all" ["pobre señora, ella sí que es una señora de verdad, no como la mujer del señorito, que no tenía ni pizca de clase"] (13.07). In this instance, it is a member of the working class who actively defends the notion of a "true lady," alluding to the pervasiveness of Francoist ideology through the social spectrum. Bartolomé thus problematizes the nature and contradictions of ideology in its relation to class and gender.

L: Look, Margarita, stop with the nonsense. Besides, I don't know why I am explaining myself to you. What I want is for you to help me. To behave like a lady of your age and social class.

[L: En el ministerio me han pedido que me presente a las elecciones por mi provincia. Además, mi padre quiere lanzarme en una campaña diciendo que promocionaré el turismo local desde mi cargo.
M: Pero no has aceptado, ¿no?
L: Verás, he pensado que quizá sería muy útil para el país el que yo, desde dentro… Realmente, en un cargo así, un hombre como yo [here, we hear Margarita laughing despectively] abierto a todas las ideas, pero equilibrado y no sospechoso…
M: Ya, ya, si está muy claro. Por fin te has definido.
L: Mira, Margarita, déjate de tonterías. Además, no sé por qué te doy explicaciones. Yo lo que quiero es que me ayudes. Que te comportes como una señora de tu edad y de tu clase.]

The audience does not see Margarita and Lorenzo while this conversation happens; instead, a series of images are projected. First, a propaganda poster that reads "Take your vote to the court" ["lleva tu voto a las cortes,"] followed by TV footage of people voting.[63] Then, the screen shows Lorenzo at his workplace, sitting at the head of a long conference table, giving instructions to other businessmen or maybe politicians. Finally, when the audience listens to

[63] As Miguel Ángel Giménez Martínez explains, during Franco's dictatorship, the *Cortes Españolas* (Spanish Courts) were established in 1942, after the course of World War II changed and it became clear for Franco that, in order for his regime to endure, he would have to allow the establishment of institutions with a somewhat representative character, whose purpose was to, in a merely formal manner, distance the regime from a too obviously fascist filiation (72). However, the court representatives were not elected democratically; instead, each one of the regime's "families" would internally select a few representatives, while a number of them were directly chosen by Franco himself. The Cortes did not have real legislative power, since there was no real separation between the legislative and the executive power, and they simply worked as a mechanism to extend Franco's power. In this sense, "the Francoist Courts were not a parliamentary assembly, even though they fulfilled some tasks typical of such institutions. Instead, they were a representation organ of the ruling class, which neither exclusively legislated nor effectively controlled the government's actions. They were not an organ from which power emanated, and they did not constitute an independent institution, as their internal functioning depended on the Executive. The Courts of the dictatorship became a Chamber of political support for the resolution of certain matters of 'constitutional' relevance, a 'façade' that tried to pretend a representativeness they never had" (69). In 1967 a Ley Orgánica del Estado (Organic Law of the State) was approved by which the composition of the Cortes was amplified so that each "family" could include two representatives, elected by individual vote (although restricted to men who were registered as heads of families and married women) (75). This is the "elections" in which Lorenzo is going to take part in the movie. For a detailed analysis of the history, configuration, and functioning of the Francoist *Cortes*, see "Las Cortes de Franco o el parlamento imposible."

Lorenzo asking her to "behave like a woman of her age and social class," there is a transition to a scene where Margarita is acting as a "proper" wife during a hunt (although, as we find out later, she mockingly takes her "duty" a little too far, and openly flirts with the other men, which enrages Lorenzo). The way in which speech and images are intertwined in this fragment summarizes the essential imbrication between the social reproduction of Francoism and of the (male) subject it supports (and which, in turn, supports the whole system): To properly represent his role as a young technocrat, Lorenzo needs a specific kind of wife because in order to reproduce itself, Francoism is contingent on woman as object *a.*

The fantasy of "womanhood" belongs to the realm of the imaginary repetition or return with a difference: different people will do different things, but they will assume the same functions within the social structure articulated by Francoism; Lorenzo will act as his father acted before him, and Margarita is expected to perform as Lorenzo's mother did, all of them pieces with a well-defined function within the gear assembly that constitutes the Francoist dictatorship. The movie suggests that that social structure is that of a (male) subject whose sense of self-identity depends on the (female) other as Real. Within this structure, the female subject is relegated to conforming to a fantasy of "womanhood" which does not concern itself with women. As Lacan puts it, "phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary, something determinant in the function of repetition" (*Seminar XI* 60). "Womanhood" is nothing more than the articulation of a signifying chain organized around a Real that determines the repetition (reproduction) of Francoism: "woman." It is essential for the continuation of the status quo that women remain within the frame of "womanhood," since this achieves a double result: women as subjects are confined to the reproduction of the system, which ensures its continuity, and also ensures that the Francoist (male) subject be sure of its own

self-identity, of its own existence. In *Margarita y el lobo*, "womanhood" is the imaginary construction, whereas "woman" is the Real object *a* hidden beneath.

However, Bartolomé rejects the simple dichotomy of male/female. As I pointed out above, both the male and female positions within Francoism are defined and depend on an imaginary "womanhood" triggered by "woman" as object *a*. This is represented in the movie by the fact that the main bearer of the messages whose aim is to police the established social order is a woman (Lorenzo's mother). She illustrates how Bartolomé avoids a Manichaean representation and instead chooses to tackle the most paradoxical aspects of the topic she is exploring in the film. *Margarita y el lobo* makes a point of showing that it is a woman who most ardently defends this fantasy of "womanhood." In this sense, Lorenzo's mother constitutes a masculine relation with the law, thus revealing the (male) subject of Francoism as a castrated subject.[64] Thus, according to the film, in Francoism, "the sacrifice of jouissance [that] is necessitated by the Other's demand that we speak" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 100) is directly linked to sexual difference. "Woman" is object *a*, it represents the lack that is generated when the subject accesses language and it articulates repetition as a return with a difference in the form of "womanhood." Lorenzo's obsession with transforming Margarita into a "woman," "woman" being something which he cannot define, illustrates his symptomatic search for a jouissance that will forever escape him but which is necessary for him to continue existing.

Hence, opposite Lorenzo and his mother as representatives of Francoism as *automaton*, Margarita assumes a *tychic* character. Lacan defines *tuché* as "the encounter with the Real. The

[64] As Bruce Fink explains, "Lacan's notion of castration focusses essentially on the renunciation of jouissance and not on the penis, and therefore […] it applies to both men and women insofar as they alienate (in the Marxist sense of the term) a part of their jouissance. […] The sacrifice involved in castration is to hand over a certain jouissance to the Other and let it circulate in the Other, that is, let it circulate in some sense 'outside' of ourselves" (*The Lacanian Subject* 99).

Real is beyond *automaton*, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle" (Lacan *Seminar XI* 53-54). Lorenzo is a fully functioning member of the *automaton* established by the dictatorship and, as such, he is an alienated or castrated subject who, just like any subject, loves his symptom and therefore pursues his pleasure in repetition. He is "taken up into, absorbed by meaning, 'dead' meaning" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 69), specifically, the "dead meaning" of "womanhood," and endlessly trapped in a fantasy that leads him over and over again to the same unattainable object. To what extent Lorenzo is determined by the Other is made explicit in the film through his interactions with Margarita. Since early in the relationship, Lorenzo criticizes her appearance and behavior and keeps asking her to be different, to be that *Thing* that he cannot symbolize and that organizes his desire, so much so that he explicitly acknowledges that "I have never been able to understand her. There was a time when I thought I would manage to change her" ["nunca la he llegado a entender. Hubo un tiempo que creí que llegaría a cambiarla"] (27.24). Their whole romance is, indeed, the conflict between Lorenzo's fantasy and Margarita as *tuché*, as an encounter with the Real. Not so much in the sense that Margarita is a "real woman" as opposed to the ideological, idealized version of "womanhood," but in the sense that Margarita interrupts Lorenzo's fantasy by signaling, pointing to that Real beyond his fantasy: object *a*. As Bruce Fink explains,

> The real here is the level of causality, the level of that which *interrupts* the smooth functioning of *automaton*, of the automatic, lawlike, regulated stringing together of the subject's signifiers in the unconscious. […] The encounter with the real is not situated at the level of thought, but at the level at which "oracular speech" yields non-sense, that which cannot be thought. ("The Real Cause…" 225, emphasis in the original)

Margarita is a figuration of the encounter with the Real; in the movie, she acquires this quality of being impossible to think of, a sort of aura that puzzles those immersed in the

automatic repetition of traditional imaginary gender roles. Right at the beginning of the movie, as Lorenzo and his parents leave the Court House after completing the paperwork that officializes their separation, Lorenzo's father incredulously comments: "I don't understand how you let yourself be caught by *that* woman" ["no sé cómo te dejaste pescar por *esa* mujer"] (3.06, my emphasis). Later, his friend endorses this idea: "A woman *like that* was only going to be a burden; that, if she didn't manage to altogether sink your career" ["una mujer *así* solo iba a ser un lastre; eso, si no conseguía hundir tu carrera"] (18.49, my emphasis). In both cases, the demonstrative adjective and the adverb reflect the impossibility for these bourgeois men to define or describe Margarita. If at the beginning of their relationship, Lorenzo half-joked about Margarita not wanting to be a woman, now she has become a marked woman, she is "*that* woman" and "a woman *like that.*" She is the index of an unnamable something that interrupts the *automaton* because it looks back at them from the death of meaning, from a deadlock of discourse that penetrates their own speech as subjects of the Francoist Other.

As stated by Fink, it is the very impossibility of representing the Real that leads to repetition, "requiring the subject to return to that place of the lost object, the lost satisfaction. Every other satisfaction pales in comparison with the one that was lost, and the subject repetitively returns to the site of that absence in the hope of obtaining the *real Thing*, and yet forever missing it" ("The Real Cause…" 228, emphasis in the original). "Woman" is the object *a* of Francoism and this, as I indicated above, has to do not with the woman-other or other as woman, but with the Other, with the way in which the subject is constantly comparing itself to its ego ideal, that is, to what it thinks the Other wants. Such a subject is always looking for the Other's recognition and, as the movie suggests, that recognition, in Francoism, depends on women adjusting to "womanhood." "Woman" is nothing but a *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* (a

signifier) that takes "the place of a real that cannot speak for itself" ("The Real Cause…" 228).[65] Francoist ideology keeps returning here, keeps representing "womanhood" (and by extension, "manhood") in an effort to obtain jouissance and yet missing it every time. The *automaton* that is thus established is, nevertheless, interrupted by the *Real (woman)* which, being object *a*, never fits in the discourse that gave rise to it but remains outside. Margarita, as a woman capable of indexing that Real, confronts them with their lack.

So far, I have analyzed Margarita as an index of the Real or *Vorstellung* in her confrontation with other characters who are representatives of the Francoist ideology. Nevertheless, the film takes a step further when it stages the relationship between Margarita and her lover. Once again, Bartolomé does not provide all the details of the story, but the viewer is led to deduce that the young man whom Margarita meets when she enrolls in college and with whom she writes protest songs is a middle-class progressive intellectual, much more akin to Margarita's political opinions and, therefore, with a different vision regarding women. Indeed, at the beginning, Margarita's relationship with him appears to be much more harmonious than her relationship with Lorenzo; with time, however, Margarita's flashbacks show how he repeatedly interrupts her when she is working, demanding that she have sex with him. Eventually, Margarita is fed up with the situation, and the following conversation ensues:

> Margarita: Listen, that's enough, your obsession is pathological.
> Lover: It is fun to study your contradictions. You come to me, you think you are a liberated woman, and deep down you nourish a guilt complex.

[65] In "The Real Cause of Repetition," Bruce Fink identifies *Repräsentanz* with the Symbolic and *Vorstellung* with the Real: "It is the missing *Vorstellung* (missing in the symbolic, in the representational space of the dream –not something missing in the real) that leads to repetition. It thus seems to be situated at the same level as the lost object –the object that never was, as such, but which is retroactively constituted as having had to have been lost. Lacan translates Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* as representative of (the) representation or stand-in or place-holder for (the) representation. And in Seminar VII, Lacan equates *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* with the signifier. Now the signifier represents nothing in Lacan's theory […] rather, it creates *ex nihilo*. Instead of standing in for the thing it represents, in Lacan's work the signifier creates, thereby killing what it purportedly 'represents.' It stands in for or represents a real that cannot speak for itself." (227-228)

M: Look, if I am with you is not only to have sex.
Lo: But what is there better to do?
M: Well, now that you ask, I don't know! But truly, if it was only for that, I would have found someone better than you.
Lo: Your dialectics fail you.
M: Fuck off. It's just, I don't want to be a fucking machine.
Lo: You think you are very liberated because you use curse words, don't you…
M: And you, you, you… What do you think? That you have Aladdin's cock? You know what? For its worth, go fuck yourself!

[Margarita: Oye, ya está bien, lo tuyo es de psiquiatra.
Lover: Es divertido estudiar tus contradicciones. Vienes a mí, te crees una mujer libre, y en el fondo alimentas un complejo de culpa.
M: Mira, si estoy contigo no es solo para acostarme.
Lo: ¿Pero qué cosa mejor puede hacerse?
M: Pues ahora que lo dices, ¡no lo sé! Pero de verdad que si solamente fuera para eso me habría buscado otro mejor que tú.
Lo: Te falla la dialéctica.
M: Vete a la mierda. Lo único, que no quiero ser una maquinica de joder.
Lo: Te crees muy liberada por decir tacos, eh…
M: Y tú, tú, tú… ¿Qué te crees? ¿Qué tienes el canuto de Aladino? ¿Sabes lo que te digo? Que para lo que vale, ¡anda y que te den por culo!] (23.44)

In this scene, the reproaches that her lover directs at Margarita uncannily resemble those of Lorenzo. When Margarita's desires or actions do not align with theirs, both men start to ridicule her in a hurtful manner, questioning her entire being and personality: with Lorenzo, she was not a woman, for her lover, she is full of "contradictions" (just like any other person, one might add) and, according to him, deep down she feels guilty even though she pretends to be a sexually liberated woman. This psychologization of Margarita is in itself symbolically violent and is topped with references to her reasoning abilities and mocking her for using cursing words (in a previous scene, Lorenzo is shown to be put off by the fact that Margarita often curses when speaking). But above all, what is being questioned by both men is Margarita's power to decide when and with whom she has sexual intercourse. In an earlier flashback, Lorenzo dismissed

Margarita's previous sexual encounters as "not love" and demanded that she keep them to herself: "What you have done until now is not called to love. Don't remind me, don't boast. It's not that it scares me, I am a liberal man, but it is annoying to remember" ["lo que has hecho hasta ahora no se llama amar. No me lo recuerdes, no te vanaglories. No es que me asuste, soy un hombre liberal, pero es molesto recordar"] (9.30). Here again, Lorenzo reveals himself as more conservative than he thinks he is. Conversely, Margarita's lover does not seem to feel intimidated by her sexual life, but he considers it as a means for his own satisfaction, regardless of Margarita's feelings or desires at specific moments.[66]

The superposition of these scenes shows how both men react in the same way when Margarita's desire does not coincide with theirs: they immediately consider these disagreements to be indicators of flaws in her personality, rather than simply accepting her wishes as divergent from their own. Thus, the film demonstrates that both of them consider their desire to be of more importance than hers; in fact, Margarita is barely granted the right to have desires of her own, and is mostly regarded as a means to some end (however differing those ends might be according to each man's political positioning). Through the mirroring of these two men's behaviors, *Margarita y el lobo* is situating sexual difference *at the root of* ideology. This is made apparent by the fact that both of them make references to the same topics (Margarita's cursing, her sexuality, the questioning of her reasoning abilities) which proves how both of them share in the same signifying chain, at least when it comes to their relationship with "womanhood." The film

[66] In a recent interview, Cecilia Bartolomé explains how this specific dialogue between Margarita and her lover was one of the main reasons why the film was censored: among the censors, there was a Jesuits priest who was extremely offended by the way Margarita speaks to her lover. Faced with this, Cecilia Bartolomé expressed her puzzlement to the censor, arguing that, in this scene, Margarita is actually abandoning her lover (who is also a leftist) and returning to her husband (who supports the regime); and therefore both in terms of religion and politics, this scene actually "agreed" with the censorship's ideas. To this argument, the priest answered that a woman cannot speak to a man in such manner, whichever his ideology might be. In this sense, the practice of one of the main ideological apparatuses of Francoism (censorship) was actually in agreement with the film's suggestion that Franco's male supporters and dissidents were equally subjected to the fantasy of "womanhood."

thus suggests that Francoism is not inherently sexist because it is a conservative ideology, but rather that its ideology itself is built on the traumatic kernel of sexual difference. The subject of Francoism is, according to the movie, nothing but a symptom of sexual difference, and therefore, "woman" always occupies the position of object *a.*

2.2 The Gaze as Interruption

In the second section of *Seminar XI*, "Of the Gaze as *Object petit a,*" Lacan explains that, in the visual field, *tuché* or the encounter with the Real can be apprehended through the gaze: "the *object a* in the field of the visible is the gaze" (105). If, within the realm of language, the *tychic* encounter is that which interrupts the signifying chain and points to the object *a* as the excluded kernel which organizes the subject's speech, what is this gaze that signals, in the field of the visual, the encounter with the Real? At this point, it is worth remembering that object *a* does not belong to the realm of the symbolic or the imaginary, but to that of the Real.[67] In other words, the gaze is the gaze, just as language is language. And, in the same way as language, the gaze pre-exists the subject. This pre-existence of the gaze is what Lacan elaborates from his reading of Meleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*, which is the fact that, as subjects, we are "given-to-be-seen" (*Seminar XI* 74), that "we are beings who are looked at in the spectacle of the world" (75). In this sense, in the scopic field, the gaze, insofar as it is split from the eye, is what signals the emergence of the Real. The gaze is not exactly the object *a*, but it can be object

[67] In *Seminar XI*, Lacan directly correlates the real and the object *a* in the following terms: "I propose that the interest the subject takes in his own split is bound up with that which determines it –namely, a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real, whose name, in our algebra, is the object a" (83).

a when it appears as an object.[68] In the same ways in which the symptom (the errors, slips of tongue, etc.) leads toward the eluded within the symbolic, in the scopic field it is the gaze, when seen (that is, when it comes into view as an object), that guides toward that point where the subject is revealed as lacking. In *Margarita y el lobo*, the gaze surfaces as that object that points to the *a* when confronted with the eye in the interactions between the main characters.

During the first of Margarita's flashbacks, after a brusque cut from the previous scene (where we see present-time Margarita composing her song "Caperucita," "Little Red Riding Hood"), the audience sees a high-angle shot of Margarita sitting on a bed looking upward while the camera circles around her. Margarita's facial expression reflects sadness and confusion. After another abrupt cut, we see a low-angle shot of Lorenzo, looking down at Margarita and talking to her in a visibly exasperated manner while he walks around her. The audience cannot hear Lorenzo's words, instead, the song that Margarita is writing in the present plays in the background:

> Little Red Riding Hood, little Red Riding Hood
> If you fall in love, close your ears,
> Close your mouth, seal your lips
> With adhesive tape.
> little Red Riding Hood withered away
> she dissolved between the spaces,
> and in her ruin
> only one refuge
> only his arms.
>
> [Caperucita, caperucita,
> si te enamoras, cierra los oídos,
> cierra la boca, ciérrate la boca

[68] As Licitra Rosa *et. al.* explain, "unlike the voice, which through prosody, tone, and volume, finds some strips with which anchor itself imaginatively to reality, the gaze, invisible and elusive, escapes the imaginary grasp" (1). In other words, while it might be relatively easy for the subject to perceive the mediating nature of language, it is harder to identify the function of the gaze as another fundamental instance of mediation between the subject and "reality."

con esparadrapo.
Caperucita se deshacía,
se disolvía entre los espacios,
y en su perdición
solo un refugio,
solo sus brazos.] (6.10)

Beyond the obvious symbolization of power relations between both characters represented by the upper and lower position they occupy and the content of the song's lyrics, this scene sets up the lure between the eye and the gaze that will become more and more apparent as the film progresses. As a matter of fact, Lacan resorts to the exchange that happens in a romantic relationship to explain the dissonance between the eye and the gaze: "From the outset, we see, in the dialectic of the eye and the gaze, that there is no coincidence, but, on the contrary, a lure. When, in love, I solicit a look, what is profoundly unsatisfying and always missing is that *–You never look at me from the place from which I see you*. Conversely, *what I look at is never what I wish to see*" (*Seminar XI* 102-103). From the point of view of both Lorenzo and Margarita, the eye (the I) looks at the other only to encounter the screen where the image that the other is projecting appears. Of course, what each of them sees is not exactly what the other projects, and, therefore, the other does not see the I/eye from the place where it is looking at him or her. In this scene, the dialectic of the eye and the gaze is established,[69] only, it is established with a twist that anticipates the further gradual development of the gaze as object *a*. Margarita looks at Lorenzo with perplexity; it is clear that she *realizes* that she is not being seen from where she is seeing

[69] Licitra Rosa *et. al.* provide a useful clarification of this dialectic between two subjects-others: "the gaze in the field of the other is what appears to me as a stain. Now this cleft between the gaze and the eye is like a missed appointment, therefore, a real effect: What I look at is never what I want to see in the other, and of the other, because what is presented is a veil, something beyond which I ask to see. But the same cleft is found by reversing the order of this dialectic. In fact, because I have been seen from all sides since the beginning, here, in my turn, I enter the game of letting myself be looked at by showing off provocatively: I stain, stain that I show on the painting, that I am myself with my own image and this to establish again a lack of the field of the other—you do not look at me from whence I see you" (3).

him looking at her, and the audience understands that the *place* from where he is looking at her is, in fact, conservative ideology. Although, on the screen that separates the eye from the gaze, Lorenzo projects an image of liberal open-mindedness, Margarita's gaze sees him from a spot he cannot phantom. This eluded spot is, in turn, the *place* where Lorenzo emerges as a stain not only for Margarita (in so far as she cannot *really* see him) but also to himself: the actual *place* from where he is looking is blinded for him.

Barely ten minutes later another flashback presents a very similar situation. This time, the scene starts with a low-angle shot of Lorenzo, who advances toward the camera. The next shot shows Margarita reclined on the bed from a high-angle perspective, only this time she is not looking back at Lorenzo. Another cut, and again a low-angle shot of Lorenzo moving toward the camera, followed by another cut and a high-angle shot of Margarita, still not looking at him. This process is repeated several times, each time the transitions between shots are faster, Lorenzo's actions (talking and moving toward the camera) are the same, while Margarita slowly starts looking upward at him. Throughout the whole scene, Lorenzo keeps reproaching Margarita for the way she dresses and behaves:

> I tell you this for your own good, if I didn't love you, I wouldn't care. If you loved me a little you could give me that little satisfaction: dress yourself up a little, without runs in your stockings, your hair styled better. I don't know why you waste your time filling your head with books from which you don't retain one word and yet, you don't have time to fix that zip. Don't you want to lead a normal life?
>
> [Te lo digo por tu bien, si no te quisiera me daría igual. Y si tú me amaras un poco podrías darme ese pequeño gusto: ir un poco más arreglada, sin carreras en las medias, el pelo mejor peinado. Que no sé por qué pierdes el tiempo llenándote la cabeza de libros de los que no retienes ni una palabra, y sin embargo no tienes tiempo de coserte esa cremallera. ¿Es que no quieres llevar una vida normal?] (13.34)

When paying close attention to the actors' clothes, their position in the room as well as the position of the objects that form the scene's props, it turns out that this flashback is closely related to the one I have just analyzed above: Both situations seem to have happened the same day, in fact, it seems likely that this second part precedes chronologically the scene previously described. What is relevant here is that, time and again, Margarita and Lorenzo look at each other (except for the few moments in which Margarita is not actually looking at Lorenzo, but simply down, to the floor). In fact, every time they have this type of conversation or argument where Lorenzo insists that Margarita changes her appearance and behavior, fast transitions occur based on an eye-matching technique where the camera assumes the point of view of each character at a time. This rapid succession of subjective shots emphasizes to what extent the act of looking is embedded in the relationship between two subjects and how their respective identities are negotiated in the screen or image that mediates the eye and the gaze.

The Lacanian dialectics between the eye and the gaze explores how the scopic drive structures subjectivity.[70] According to Lacan, "in the scopic relation, the object on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation is the gaze." (83) In other words, in the field of vision, the gaze signals object *a*. If, within the symbolic,

[70] Lacan did not intend to talk about the gaze at all in *Seminar XI*. As he explains in the first lecture, "Excomunication," the aim of this seminar was to review the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis: "*the unconscious, repetition, the transference* and *the drive*" (12 emphasis in the original). However, after dedicating the first few lectures to establishing the difference between the Cartesian subject and the Freudian subject (that is, the subject mediated by the unconscious), as well as to explaining the mechanism that governs the unconscious so that it works as repetition or *automaton*, Lacan finds it necessary to also approach the subject from a scopic perspective. Throughout this section, Lacan continues to emphasize the distance that separates psychoanalysis from Western philosophy, specifically in relation to perception. For Lacan, the subject of Western metaphysics is born in connection with the development of geometral perspective in art (particularly, during the Italian Renaissance), that is why he uses the diagram of the cone of Renaissance to symbolize the subject of representation, a subject who believes to be situated outside of the image it looks at and, therefore, a subject who is certain of its own existence as a subject because it can oppose it to that of the objects. This is the subject of the *cogito*, of consciousness. What Lacan discovers based on Freud's findings is that the "I" and the subject do not coincide: the "I" is an imaginary function of the subject (whose origin is to be found in the development of the ideal ego during the mirror stage), while the subject is an effect of language.

fantasy (the automatic repetition of the signifying chain) depends on the excluded signifier around which the whole chain revolves; in the imaginary, fantasy depends on the gaze as object *a*. In this sense, if "womanhood" as fantasy depends on the signifier "woman" as object *a*, how does the fantasy of "womanhood" depend on the gaze? Following the same logic of the symbolic (where the signifier which signals the Real is excluded), in the realm of the imaginary, the gaze is also eluded. As Lacan explains, "in our relationship to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it –that is what we call the gaze" (73). In our relation to things, to objects, the gaze is eluded and, since the ego is the first object, it is at the mirror stage that the gaze first slips.

In the mirror stage, the infant who still has no domain over their body, anticipates their own identity as a unity by seeing the totality of their body, and of the other's body, in the mirror. From this vision, the ego can emerge as an imaginary function and become an object for the subject. "But –here is the novelty– what was I before this origin? Answer: a being looked at, looked everywhere, exposed. I am originally in the show even before I constitute the other as the object of this show" (Licitra Rosa *et. al.* 3). This is the meaning of the pre-existence of the gaze. A gaze which is eluded, missed, by the subject. An elision sealed by the geometral perspective, which developed simultaneously and symbiotically with the Cartesian subject. The gaze is eluded in the realm of the imaginary, and it is precisely this elimination of the gaze as such that allows consciousness to turn back upon itself and grasp itself "as seeing oneself seeing oneself" (74):

> of all the objects in which the subject may recognize his dependence in the register of desire, the gaze is specified as inapprehensible. That it is, more than any object, misunderstood (*méconnu*), and it is perhaps for this reason, too, that the subject manages, fortunately, to symbolize his own vanishing and punctiform bar (*trait*) in

> the illusion of the consciousness of *seeing oneself see oneself*, in which the gaze is elided. (*Seminar XI* 83)

Lorenzo offers a good example of this: as a subject (and specifically, as an upper-class male subject), he sees himself seeing himself without a doubt. This is apparent every time he insists on describing himself as other than he is: as a person open to new ideas. Together with this semblance, or mask, that Lorenzo projects on the screen that separates the eye and the gaze, the film provides an-other point of view (which Lorenzo cannot see) from which he is seen as sensitive to new ideas only as long as those new ideas don't really challenge the status quo that benefits him. Lorenzo can be so sure of himself because as a subject he identifies with his ego, he avoids the function of the gaze: he refuses to acknowledge (just like every subject does) that he is looked at by the world.

It is because it entangles the subject in the illusion of the ego that "psychoanalysis regards the consciousness as irremediably limited and institutes it as a principle, not only of idealization, but of *mécconaissance*" (*Seminar XI* 82-83). Consciousness allows the subject to misrecognize itself, it mistakes the subject for the ego and lives in the illusion of its own unity and identity every time it says "I." Within this illusion, the subject contemplates the world of objects from the geometral point, believing itself to be the master of its own gaze.[71] Inverting

[71] Lacan uses the cone of perspective developed in the Renaissance to sustain this idea: because the subject can transpose objects onto the image using the mathematical operations provided by geometry, it believes to be outside of what it sees, to have, therefore, a total domain over the represented. In his essay "The Perspectival Eye," Antoine Bousquet explains that "the advent of linear perspective during the Italian Renaissance […] participated in a dual process of rationalization of vision and mathematization of space," so that "a powerful new worldview certainly came into focus, imbuing a universal and homogenous spatial geometry with profound cultural and intellectual significance." Specifically, "perspective established a mathematical correspondence between objective physical space and subjective visual space since it assumes the latter is 'ordered a priori by an abstract, uniform system of linear coordinates' that faithfully reflects the former." Leon Battista Alberti, to whom Lacan refers briefly, was the first to formalize the rules of linear perspectival representation in his treatise *De Pictura* (1435). In it, he "explains that the eye measures distances (or 'quantity') between two points in space with the lines of sight ('visual rays') to each point 'as with a pair of compasses.' In this way, 'vision makes a triangle' in which 'the base of [this triangle] is the quantity seen and the sides are those rays which are extended from the quantity to the eye.'" (8) This triangle is

Alberti's triangle and situating the subject in opposition to what he calls the "point of light," Lacan shows how the subject is never "outside," on the contrary, it is "caught, manipulated, captured, in the field of vision" (92) (just as it is in the field of language, always already determined by the discourse of the Other), insofar as it is not the straight thread but light what gives shape to the material bodies that constitute reality, among them the subject.[72] In other words, the subject is not outside of the picture, dominating with its gaze the objects represented in it; instead, the subject becomes in turn the picture being gazed at by the world.[73]

In the case of *Margarita y el lobo*, this world to which Lorenzo is subjected to includes Margarita; in the movie, she acts as the object which signals the emergence of the gaze as object *a*, in so far as she looks at Lorenzo from where he cannot see her looking or, to put it another way, not from the place from which he wants to be seen. As Žižek suggests, "the gaze *qua* object functions like a blot that blurs the transparency of the viewed image. I can never see properly, can never include in the totality of my field of vision, the point in the other from which it gazes

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the first diagram (object-image-geometral point) which Lacan includes at the beginning of chapter 8 in *Seminar XI*. The implication of Alberti's triangle is that "realized in conformity with the established principles of linear perspective, the depicted space appears as an *immediate* extension of the viewer's own physical space. Consequently, there can be *only one* optically correct position from which to view any such representation, at the very apex of the visual pyramid [what Lacan calls the "geometral point"] being intersected by the picture plane. […] This unique viewpoint is mirrored in the picture by a center point at which the shortest and only perpendicular line of sight –the central ray of the visual pyramid Alberti dubs 'the prince of rays'– arrives on the planar section. In the paradigmatic case of central one-point perspective, the center point coincides with the image's single vanishing point towards which all the lines parallel to the viewer's line of sight converge. […] A perspectival representation thus simultaneously fixes the relative positions and proportions of objects in the depicted space and the location from which that scene is being viewed. The great stillness of Renaissance painting is also that of its viewer." To this perspectival blueprint, Lacan opposes his inverted triangle, where the subject becomes the picture due to the effects of light reflecting on the different material bodies.

[72] "The essence of the relation between appearance and being, with the philosopher, conquering the field of vision, so easily masters, lies elsewhere. It is not in the straight line, but in the point of light –the point of irradiation, the play of light, fire, the source from which reflections pour forth. Light may travel in a straight line, but it is refracted, diffused, it floods, it fills –the eye is a sort of bowl– it flows over, too, it necessitates, around the ocular bowl, a whole series of organs, mechanisms, defenses. The iris reacts not only to distance, but also to light, and it has to protect what takes place at the bottom of the bowl, which might, in certain circumstances, be damaged by it" (*Seminar XI* 94).

[73] This idea is embodied in *The ambassadors,* where, according to Lacan, Holbein includes the gaze looking back at the subject through the stain in the middle of the picture which can only be identified with a skull when the viewer moves and positions herself in a different place.

back at me" (*Looking Awry* 114). Of course, the same happens to Margarita: she is also looked at by Lorenzo from a place which she cannot see. The difference lies in the fact that Margarita does not have such a clear, fixed image of herself. She remains undefined to herself as much as for others (and thus she can act as an object *a* in a symbolic level, as explained in the previous section). That is why the place from which Lorenzo looks at her puzzles her at the beginning, and then frustrates and enrages her until she leaves him, but it never shakes the foundations of the image she has of her own identity, because she refuses to construct such a sharp definition (the political potentiality of this undefined character will be explored in the next section).

Through the split between the eye and the gaze that Margarita and Lorenzo's relationship illustrates, Lorenzo is revealed to not be in control of the gaze, he cannot include in the totality of his field of vision this point from whence he is looked at. The reason why the subject can never discern the place from which the other is looking at it is because the subject is not the subject of representation (as the consciousness will have it believe), but the subject of desire. The reason why Lorenzo cannot grasp the place from where Margarita looks at him is that his semblance is mediated by the unconscious, that is, by his desire as dependent on the Other.

The object of desire that Lorenzo projects on Margarita is culturally and socially determined (it responds to ideas of status linked to Francoist ideology, but also to the specific form in which Lorenzo's desire was humanized the moment he was incorporated, as alienated, to the language of the Other), but there is a gap between what he projects and Margarita. Simultaneously, the object of desire that Margarita projects on Lorenzo is also overdetermined (in her case, linked to the political opposition to the regime and its patriarchal ideology), and neither does it coincide with Lorenzo. The other cannot see the subject from where it is projecting: the other cannot know the particulars of the subject's relationship with the Other, the

particulars of its desire and the object *a* that automatizes its unconscious. As Lacan puts it, "if one does not stress the dialectic of desire one does not understand why the gaze of others should disorganize the field of perception. It is because the subject in question is not that of the reflexive consciousness, but that of desire" (*Seminar XI* 89). There is, then, a gap, a limit, between Margarita and Lorenzo (the same gap which, of course, limits any relationship between any two given subjects). This limit is captured in the film by making the gaze appear as object *a*, that is, as symbolizing the central lack of desire, in the split between Margarita and Lorenzo's eyes and gazes. When Lorenzo demands that Margarita change in order to fill that gap by becoming a closer version of his fantasy, he is revealed as lacking. "Woman" emerges as his object *a* and his attempts to change Margarita constitute proof of the eternal search for a primal, phantasmatic object that he will never attain, no matter how much Margarita had been willing to change.

Margarita refuses to completely modify her appearance or her behavior. Once married, she is not content with being a housewife and instead pursues different artistic and intellectual ventures: she takes up painting with her friend Natalia, goes back to college, and starts working as a songwriter. Thus, Margarita is never solely looking at Lorenzo, but at art, music, books, etc. This, of course, frustrates Lorenzo, insofar as it puts into question his own identity: it is not just that, as a bourgeois man who leads a traditional bourgeois life, the conduct of his wife reflects on him; the film suggests that what is really at issue here is that, within Francoist ideology, the expectation is that a husband be the only thing a wife looks at, the source of all of her worries, concerns, and joy. Therefore, it is not the gaze of Margarita that Lorenzo craves (that is, that Margarita sees him from where he sees her looking, which is in itself impossible), what he *really* craves is the gaze of the Other. Lorenzo's validation as a subject and as a member of society depends on being recognized by the Other, and such recognition is impossible if Margarita

refuses both to look at him from the place where he sees her looking and to become the fantasy that organizes his desire, so that he can see himself as the object of the Other's desire.[74]

It is in this sense that Lacan situates the gaze outside: "in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution of the subject in the visible. What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside" (*Seminar XI* 106). This outside means, for Lorenzo, both Margarita and his milieu; and the split between them reflects the split of Lorenzo himself as subject, since "from the moment that this gaze appears, the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure" (*Seminar XI* 83). The fact that he had to give up something, some form of jouissance, in order to access the Other is brought to the fore by the gaze as object *a*, in this case emerging from the objects which, as a kind of trace of her own desire, Margarita leaves behind. The products of her activities (literally, the objects that result from them or are connected to them: paintings, song lyrics, the university building), gaze back at Lorenzo in the absence of Margarita. In fact, the definitive rupture of the marriage happens when Lorenzo, angry because his wife goes about her life without him, searches her drawers and finds one of these objects, Margarita's lyrics. It is the songs, the papers scattered around on the floor, that look back at Lorenzo and precipitate their separation. Faced with this series of objects, Lorenzo becomes picture and, simultaneously, the gaze emerges and reveals him as "that point of vanishing being"

[74] Lorenzo's insecurity goes as far as to invite a friend of his, who is an art critic, to their home (without warning Margarita first). When the two men arrive at the house, Margarita is painting, and Lorenzo casually asks the art critic to assess the quality of her work. Margarita immediately intervenes and suggests going to the living room and having a drink, a suggestion that is clearly welcomed by the art critic. However, Lorenzo insists again on hearing his opinion about Margarita's pictures, the critic then says "they are very decorative." The next scene shows Margarita destroying and burning her work, swearing she will not paint ever again, and reproaching his cruel actions to Lorenzo, to which he answers: "I don't want you to waste your life, don't you understand?" ["no quiero que malgastes tu vida, ¿no lo comprendes?"] (15.00). It is only much later that we discover that this scene took place right after Margarita's best friend, with whom Margarita had taken up painting, had died in a car accident.

which is, indeed, the subject. The products of Margarita's endeavors destabilize Lorenzo's ego identity not because this identity does not conform to the Francoist ideological parameters, but because they confront him with his own lack.

By emphasizing the "outsideness" of the gaze, *Margarita y el lobo* avoids representing a sort of opposition between a male gaze of the subject versus a female object that is gazed upon.[75] What is being dealt with here is the gaze that is outside, looking at the subject of desire whose Real, unsymbolized part is "woman." The concept of "womanhood" designed by Francoism (and the cultural representations of such "womanhood," for example, in commercial cinema) is not just a reflection of the way in which men see women. What is a stake here is that each woman, as "woman," is object *a* and can evoke the gaze (the Real) turning back on the subject. Lorenzo's insistence on changing Margarita indeed has more to do with his own identity than with hers or, perhaps, with his identity as mediated by hers, his male identity as always already mediated by

[75] In the canonical text "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey connected the scopic drive with sexual difference and conceptualized the gaze as "controlled in the service of voyeurism and fetishism" (Doane 82): "The magic of the Hollywood style at its best (and of all the cinema which fell within its sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure. Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. In the highly developed Hollywood cinema it was only through these codes that the alienated subject, torn in his imaginary memory by a sense of loss, by the terror of potential lack in phantasy, came near to finding a glimpse of satisfaction: through its formal beauty and its play on his own formative obsessions. […] The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked" (Mulvey 8). This conceptualization, however, depends on understanding cinema according to the paradigm of perspectival representation (see footnote 17 above), as Mary Ann Doane noticed in her essay "Remembering Women: Psychical and Historical Constructions in Film Theory:" "It is not surprising, given the definition of the apparatus as a topography, that the duping of the spectator should be coincident with the conceptualization of that spectator as a point in space, a site. Through its reinscription of Renaissance perspective, the apparatus positions the spectator, on this side of the screen, as the mirror of the vanishing point on the other side. Both points stabilize the representational logic, producing its readability, which is coincident with the notions of unity, coherency, and mastery. […] From the point of view of psychoanalytic theory this is, of course, an ideologically complicit fiction of the 'self' –the result of a denial of the actual division, instability and precarious nature of subjectivity" (82). Joan Copjec also criticizes the way in which film theory has understood the Lacanian concept of the gaze: "film theory, which consistently confuses the gaze with a single point or eye totally outside and transcendent to the filmic space, a point from which the space is unified or mastered, chose from the beginning to understand the gaze in the precise manner against which Sartre warned. For film theory the gaze is a unifying or regulative category of my experience" (209). In *Margarita y el lobo*, on the contrary, the gaze emerges as a de-unifying agent which confronts the subject with its lack, with the emptiness to be found in the place of the Other.

the "real woman" in the framework of Francoist ideology. In this sense, the cultural representations of "womanhood" can be read as the subject's attempts to master the gaze. In the specific context of Francoist Spain, Lacan's formula "you never look at me from the place from which I see you," allows to understand the ideological representation of "womanhood" as an effort, on the part of the subject, to make itself be looked from the place in which it sees the other looking. *Margarita y el lobo* positions itself as an interruption of this impossible effort and allows for the emergence, through the gaze, of the object *a* as radically ambiguous: standing both for the signifier ("woman") and for that which is eluded, the void behind the sign.

Cecilia Bartolomé is not proposing an alternative representation of "womanhood," nor is she fabricating a "female gaze;" instead, she captures gaze as object *a*, as *tuché*. Such gaze is not that of the man looking at the woman, but that of the gaze looking at the subject of representation and exposing it as the subject of desire. It is by exposing the fantasy that articulates the subject of Francoism that *Margarita y el lobo* sheds light on the intrinsic patriarchal quality of its structure.

The deadly effects of this fantasy on women are portrayed in the film by the death of Natalia, who is the wife of one of Lorenzo's friend, Alejandro. She and Margarita quickly became friends and the four of them often hung out together. In one of the flashbacks, Margarita and Natalia are hanging out in a park when Lorenzo and Alejandro arrive, each of them having bought a car. Upon their arrival, both men start bragging about their cars, while Margarita and Natalia, clearly unimpressed, do not pay much attention. At that point, someone suggests doing a little excursion. In this scene, the exchange that does *not* happen between the two men and the two women is performed through singing: while Margarita and Natalia are requesting to go to the sea and making plans about what they'll do once there, the two men boast and compare their respective cars, and decide that they are going to race to their destination. The women are talking

to the men, and the men to the women, however, communication does not happen: Lorenzo and Alejandro are too busy looking at themselves (their own egos), representing themselves to the Other begging for recognition. During the race, Natalia and Alejandro have a car accident and Natalia dies. Natalia's death crudely represents, in what could be called an imaginary register, the fact that patriarchy, and the type of masculinity it promotes (which is, in turn, predicated on a specific idea of "womanhood") can literally be lethal for women.

This fatal aspect of patriarchy is echoed in the symbolic register in the last song performed by Margarita, once she is installed in her new apartment and getting ready to start her life alone.[76] The song she interprets is a good-bye addressed to Lorenzo, and some of its verses are key to the interpretation of Margarita as object *a*, or as the site of the gaze as object *a*:

> Thanks to you
> I became an instrument of love
> and I have known the machine
> within which you are executioner and robot
> the machine which locks those of us who still breathe
> in the dragon dungeon
>
> [gracias a ti
> me convertí en instrumento del amor
> y he conocido la máquina
> de la que eres verdugo y robot
> la máquina que a los que aun respiramos
> nos encierra en la mazmorra del dragón] (39.17)

The term "machine" recalls Lacan's *automaton*, and points to the fact that Lorenzo is a castrated subject, trapped in metonymic repetition, which turns him into a "robot," incapable of

[76] In the last scene of the film, when Margarita moves her furniture to her new apartment, she breaks up with her lover too. In the last verses of the song, she states: "Life is beautiful and I am alone, finally by myself" ["la vida es bella y estoy sola al fin sola…"] (39.17). Margarita clearly sees solitude as liberation in this scene, solitude as a claim to the possibility of building a subjectivity which, though always already mediated by the idea of "womanhood" to some extent, may connect at some point with her own desire.

breaking the signifying chain that encapsulates his desire. However, since his *automaton* is that of the fantasy that structures the hegemonic concept of "womanhood," Lorenzo becomes an "executioner" as well, in so far as he is in a subjective position that allows him to impose this fantasy on women. Margarita places herself outside such repetition: she is "alive," she "still breathes," which is why, when subjected to Lorenzo's *automaton*, she feels like she is "locked in the dragon's dungeon." Furthermore, in the last verses of the song, she bids goodbye to Lorenzo and exclaims that she can, at last, breathe. Breathing, living, are thus opposed to the automatic functioning of the oppressive machine that is the Francoist patriarchal structure. A structure which, for all intents and purposes, implies the abrogation of women, who are left with only two options: either to succumb to an already-made fantasy of "womanhood" and a lifetime of oppression, or to subordinate their desire to the regime's obscene Law, identify with it, and thus be defined by that very fantasy that nullifies their existence as subjects of their own desire.

2.3 Editing the Gaze, Creating Meaning

In *Book I* of his *Seminar*, *Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*, Lacan establishes that the position of the subject within the symbolic structures the relationship between the imaginary and the real.[77] While developing this idea, he comments in passing about what it could implicate for understanding cinema: "Isn't the camera a subjective apparatus, entirely constructed with the help of an x and a y which take up residence in the domain in which the subject inhabits, that is to say that of language?" (*Seminar I* p. 77). If, as Lacan suggests, the camera is part of the domain of language, that is, of the symbolic, then it may yield the power to

[77] "In the relation of the imaginary and the real, and in the constitution of the world such as results from it, everything depends on the position of the subject. And the position of the subject […] is essentially characterized by its place in the symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech" (Lacan *Seminar I* 80).

act in a way that structures (de-structures, re-structures) the imaginary and the real. That is precisely what *Margarita y el lobo* does.

According to Lacan, the world we inhabit is "only a humanized, symbolized world" (*Seminar I* 87), in other words, a world structured by language, but a language that exceeds itself and always points toward something else, and therefore a world which always *contains, outside* of itself, the Real.[78] In this context, it can be understood that the camera, situating itself at a certain position (like the eye in the example of the vase and the bouquet that Lacan provides in chapter 8 of *Seminar I*) can show the audience a virtual image in the place where it is not (the screen), as happens with the vase in the example used by Lacan. During the dictatorship, this was best exemplified by commercial cinema, in the sense that it offered a virtual representation of *the world as it is* (according to the hegemonic ideology), a chance for the audience to see themselves or, at least, an idealized version of what their lives should be like.[79] However, the camera can also situate itself at a sort of dead angle on purpose, and show how something that was taken to be real (since it appeared as real, like the bouquet) is actually just an image. As argued in the previous sections, this is what *Margarita y el lobo* does with the concept of "womanhood." Even

[78] When Lacan speaks of a "symbolized world" he is not conforming to the essential assumption of Idealism according to which the subject can only know the "objective" world or "reality" in so far as it is mediated by his own subjectivity. In fact, all through *Seminar XI*, he repeatedly insists that psychoanalysis is not Idealism. For example, at the beginning of chapter 5: "I wish to stress here that, at first sight, psycho-analysis seems to lead in the direction of idealism. God knows that it has been reproached enough for this –it reduces the experience, some say, that urge us to find in the hard supports of conflict, struggle, even of the exploitation of man by man, the reasons for our deficiencies– it leads to an ontology of the tendencies, which it regards as primitive, internal, already given by the condition of the subject. We have only to consider the course of this experience from its first steps to see, on the contrary, that it in no way allows us to accept some such aphorism as *life is a dream*. No praxis is more orientated towards that which, at the heart of experience, is the kernel of the real than psycho-analysis" (53). The kernel of the real, to which trauma, for example, points to, is the unsymbolized real, the "primal repression" upon which "reality" is founded. Lacan's whole development of the notion of the gaze is an attempt, in the scopic field, to explain this logic of the real by which, at the nucleus of the symbolic fiction that is reality, rests a real that remains "outside," in so far as it is not part of the symbolic and yet, it is vital for its articulation, it is its cause.

[79] Films such as *La gran familia* (Fernando Palacios, 1962), which was tremendously successful, constitute an ideological depiction of the regime's moral values regime in the form of *an ordinary family* living their *ordinary* lives.

more interestingly, the camera can play between the imaginary and the real as if recording from the opposite side of a concave mirror, and thus allow the emergence of a "real image," one that appears blurred and estranged, and which the audience sees where it is. Margarita acts as a "real image" in the film, she only appears where she is, in the screen, as a blur whose limits or borders are not clearly defined.

In *Margarita y el lobo*, the camera alternates between these three positions, and Cecilia Bartolome's editing disrupts space, time, and narrative in order to point to the Real and thus interrupt Francoist ideology. To do this, the camera lets emerge the gaze as object. In the same way in which the dissonance between Margarita and Lorenzo's eye and gaze allowed to perceive the gaze as object *a* in what could be called an imaginary level of analysis, Bartolome's editing elusively captures the gaze, which inevitably slips away the minute it comes into view. In this sense, *Margarita y el lobo* behaves toward Francoism in a manner very similar to how the experience of psychoanalysis impacts the subject: "inventing ways in which to hit the Real, upset the repetition it engenders, dialiectize the isolated Thing, and shake up the fundamental fantasy in which the subject constitutes him or herself in relation to the cause" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 92), that is, in relation to object *a*.

One of the most sophisticated moments of emergence of the gaze in the film happens during the highly charged scene in which Lorenzo criticizes Margarita's way of dressing and conducting herself. As analyzed in the previous section, this scene is divided into two different parts, the one which possibly took place before in the chronology of events situated afterwards within the final montage of the film. In this second scene, something happens that lets the gaze emerge for a fleeting moment: when the audience sees Lorenzo approach the camera from a low-angle, it is immediately assumed that the camera's view corresponds to Margarita's point of

view. However, when the camera shifts and focuses on Margarita, she is not looking back at Lorenzo. Yet, the camera still shifts between them again and *looks at* Lorenzo. If, as we know, Margarita is not looking back at him, who, then (or what) is doing the looking? The gaze is looking at him.

In chapter 8 of her volume *Imagine there's no Woman. Ethics and Sublimation*, Joan Copjec establishes a distinction between what she calls "subjective shots," which reflect the subjective point of view of one specific character, and "unattributable shots," which are "unassociated spatially with any particular character, cannot be attributed to any point of view. They seem to come from nowhere –not even, and this is an important qualification, from an omniscient observer, since *there are no objective shots in cinema*" (201, emphasis on the original). In the scene described above, if the camera hadn't shown Margarita at all, or if it had shown Margarita actively looking back at Lorenzo (which she eventually does), it would only be possible to speak of a combination of subjective shots. However, Bartolomé chooses to emphasize the fact that Margarita is *not* looking at Lorenzo, which creates the feeling that this gaze is not coming entirely from Margarita, but also from *someplace else*. In this way, she introduces here, for an extremely brief moment, an unattributable shot which, nevertheless (or, rather, precisely because of this fleeting quality) charges the scene with meaning.

The creation of meaning and objectivity through cinematic lenses is the object of reflection of Pasolini's essay "Observations on the Long Take," which Copjec takes as a starting point for her development of the Lacanian concept of the gaze. In this essay, Pasolini opposes *montage* to the long-take shot, and explicitly declares his preference for the first in so far as, according to him, *montage* allows the creation of a point-of-view structure which implies a subjectivity and thus creates an objective image. As Copject notices, to this claim underlies the

classic assumption of philosophical idealism "that the objectivity of reality is not in conflict with but dependent on the subjectivity of an 'incarnate' (Pasolini's word) subject" (200).[80] Of course, such an assumption leads to the impossibility of determining whether human beings have any access at all to "reality" as such. In Copjec's words: "How then can I lay claim to any objectivity? How can I be sure that the world I see, and thus the one I inhabit, is not *merely my own private fantasy*?" (209). These are the same questions Lacan seeks to answer with his development of the theory of the gaze as object petit *a* in *Seminar XI*.[81] Pasolini offers an excellent instance for bridging the Lacanian gaze to cinema, precisely for his commitment to the essential assumption of idealism, which leads him to posit two different and opposed ways of constructing a movie: the long-take shot, which "makes no sense, or if it does, it does so only subjectively, in an incomplete, uncertain, mysterious way" (Pasolini 4) and the *montage* which produces meaning through the coordination of different subjective shots. Copjec rejects this twofold outline; instead, she considers that "the objectivity he [Pasolini] associates with montage cannot be built up exclusively from point-of-view shots, but must include some unattributable shots as well" (202). In fact, according to Copjec, unattributable shots "are present in an unstressed form in standard filmmaking" (202). It is, however, when the filmmaker emphasizes these shots, creating a disturbance in perception, that the gaze appears. That brief moment when Lorenzo is looked at from someplace else acts as an indication "of the *gaze* of the Other, but not of the Other as such, who never appears in the flesh, as a sensible presence. In all instances, *we*

[80] "Subjectivity is thus the maximum conceivable limit of any audiovisual technique. It is impossible to perceive reality as it happens if not from a single point of view, and this point of view is always that of a perceiving subject. This subject is always incarnate, because even if, in a fiction film, we choose an ideal and therefore abstract and nonnaturalistic point of view, it becomes realistic and ultimately naturalistic as soon as we place a camera and tape recorder there: the result will be seen and heard as if by a flesh-and-blood subject (that is, one with eyes and ears)" (Pasolini 3).

[81] See footnote 24 above.

encounter the gaze rather than the Other, not as part of the Other. There is no bearer of the gaze, there is only the gaze" (216).

It is then through the position of the camera and, above all, editing that, according to Copjec, a film creates meaning. Editing functions as a kind of syntax and, in that sense, it works like a language: a determined organization of film bits and images generates sense and nuance. And just like language, it seems, film can be jammed in a kind of metonymy, "impoverished, aleatory, almost pitiful" (Pasolini 4); yet it can also cut the celluloid and assemble the bits so that different points of view are contrasted, it can even join together images whose coordination creates new meaning in a metaphorical sense. Editing, then, marks the place "left empty by the death of the father. […] It is the encounter with the gaze of the dead father that enables us to create new meanings, inasmuch as it forces a hole in the homeostatic principle of pleasure" (Copjec 221). Editing is the process through which such creation of meaning is achieved and *Margarita y el lobo* is a vivid example of a kind of editing that not only gives meaning to the images and creates new meanings through new associations, it also points toward the empty realm of the Other.

The film is structured in a quick succession of remarkably short scenes (most of them last less than a minute, and none of them exceeds three minutes) which are, in turn, divided into brief shots. Cuts between scenes and shots are brusque, and there are usually changes in place and time between one scene and the next. Throughout this frenetic sequence of shots and scenes, there are many standard unattributable shots whose presence does not imply any kind of disruption. However, there are three instances in which the editing process emphasizes these unattributable shots and brings forth the gaze. In the three cases, the emergence of the gaze is linked to an inclusion of footage that does not belong to the film itself but seems to be original

TV footage. Furthermore, in the three occurrences class antagonism is brought to the fore in connection with the empty place of the father that is summoned by the advent of the gaze as object.

The first of these moments takes place within the scene that I analyzed above. Lorenzo ends his long list of reproaches to Margarita regarding her appearance and behavior with the question "don't you want to lead a normal life?" ["¿es que no quieres llevar una vida normal?"]. When Lorenzo voices this question, Margarita looks back at him fixedly while the camera does a close-up of her face and, defiant, she retorts: "But, in this shitty world, what constitutes a normal life?" ["Pero en esta mierda de mundo, ¿qué es una vida normal?"]. Immediately after, an extremely fast chain of images interrupts the narrative. The first images represent close-ups of women's hands at what looks like some kind of factory in the first shot, then typing. These are followed by figures of women performing different types of work: a nurse at a hospital, a row of women at their typewriters, and several shots of women working at factories. Finally, the sequence is closed with a long shot showing a park where children play while their mothers watch them. These images and the way they are organized function as a sort of response to Lorenzo's question but they do not provide an answer, on the contrary, they seem to invalidate Lorenzo's question or to cancel its premise, the assumption that there is such thing as "a normal life." However, these images reflect more than the possible heterogeneity of life, the women they show are working-class women at work, and the superposition of these women over the words "normal life" points to the fact that working is a more "normal" (in the sense that a higher number of people experience it) than the bourgeois life that Lorenzo considers to be normal for a woman.

This scene is complemented with the next instance in which TV footage appears. After Margarita decides to enroll again in college and her mother-in-law expresses her disapproval, there is a jump to a bizarre musical scene where Lorenzo and Margarita, together with Lorenzo's parents, dance around the city while singing the popular Peruvian waltz "Amarraditos," popularized by Maria Dolores Pradera. The lyrics of the original song, which are kept intact except for a few verses, evoke a traditional relationship very different from that of Margarita and Lorenzo and, together with the cheerful melody, which contrasts sharply with the characters' mood, results in a highly ironical moment (García Sahagún 81).[82] Although "Amarraditos" talks about the romantic relationship of two lovers, the song is, in fact, a vindication of what could be called the "bourgeois lifestyle." This is underscored in the film through the characters' clothes and, above all, through the editing: When the men sing "I greet by touching the brim of my best hat" ["yo saludo tocando el ala de mi sombrero mejor"] the image of luxurious boats fades in and collapses with the characters; and the women's response "and I gracefully wave my handkerchief" ["y yo agito con donaire mi pañuelo"] is superposed on the image of a crowded bull ring. In both cases, the activities evoked are those proper to the bourgeoisie and recall the term "normal life" previously used by Lorenzo.

In both examples, the gaze emerges as the result of the displacement of the point of view. While the predominant point of view in the film is that of Margarita, there are moments when subjective shots can be associated with other characters, and unattributable shots normally function in an unstressed way in the film. However, here, a new point of view emerges that

[82] "The waltz refers to Pradera's famous interpretation, Pradera being an artista who has something to do with the main character's situation. In 1957, the singer separated from her husband, Fernando Fernán Gómez, Bartolomé is implicitly referring to this fact through the inclusion of this song." ["El vals nos retrae a la famosa interpretación de Pradera, artista que tiene en parte que ver con la situación de la protagonista. En 1957 la cantante se separó de su hasta entonces marido, Fernando Fernán Gómez, aludiendo Bartolomé implícitamente a este hecho a través de la inclusión de esta canción" (García Sahagún 81).

cannot be attributed to any of the characters but also does not work in a standard manner. The audience is suddenly extricated from the already disrupted narrative and placed in front of alien images which, in combination with the characters' words, bring forward meanings that are not explicit in what the characters are saying. But above all, it is not clear where these images come from, or who is looking at them. The characters are not seeing these images, and yet they are part of the film and of the meaning organically generated by it. In these scenes, an encounter with the gaze happens, an awareness of the existence of others, of some objectivity which surges through this intangible viewpoint where the gaze appears as object and which, nevertheless, cannot be grasped.

At this point, it is worth making a little detour to clarify that the gaze is *not* ideology. On the contrary, the gaze is that which interrupts or disrupts the means through which ideology is presented and forces a glimpse of an outside of it. In her appraisal of the concept of the gaze, Copjec focuses on Sartre (whose conception of the gaze was the basis of Lacan's ideas in *Seminar XI*), who develops this notion in order to prove that there is, in fact, some objectivity which can be sensed on the part of the subject. However –and Copjec emphasizes this repeatedly– Sartre "is *not* saying that the gaze of the Other is the *formal condition of the possibility of my knowledge*; the gaze is not proof of the objectivity of my *cognitive knowledge* of the world" (209 emphasis in the original). The gaze should not be understood, therefore, as some sort of culturally and/or historically determined "collective unconscious," it is not a "cultural filter" that provides a unifying framework through which the subject experiences and gives meaning to the events in its life. Conversely, Sartre's argument

> is *not* that the gaze is transcendent in the sense of being a cognitive condition of my experience […], but in the sense that *it cannot be attached to any object in my world,* despite the fact that it is met with only in the world. […] Although the gaze is not, in Sartre's view, an immanent part of my world, neither does it have an existence

> anywhere else. I stumble on it as a surplus object in the world, through what Lacan, interpreting Sartre, called a 'failed encounter.' (Copjec 210)

The real footage that pours into *Margarita y el lobo* is looked at from *some place* in our world, but such a place remains radically indeterminate. Furthermore, these images emerge in a somewhat ghostly manner, as if some kind of strabismus had momentarily taken over and was reflecting back from an-other place, but a place impossible to seize and, therefore, a place that precludes the subject from stabilizing its point of view. Whereas ideology provides the subject with certainty, with a place in the world from which to look at objects and receive narcissistic satisfaction in return, "there is no reciprocity between the observing subject and the Other of the gaze whereby each could come to recognize the other. […] The gaze looks at me, but I can never catch sight of it where it looks; for there is no 'there,' no determinate location, no place whence it looks" (Copjec 210-211). In the brief moments described above, the split between the eye and the gaze surfaces and carves a hole in the discourse of ideology.

The third instance of this type of editing condenses the two previous ones and offers an even more absurd sequence of contrast between characters' actions and external footage. At first, what looks like an unattributable shot shows Margarita and her lover in the park discussing the possibility of creating a protest song with material and ideas from everyday life. Against its expectations, the audience soon discovers that these ideas include both the discursive repository of Francoist ideology and that of the leftist opposition. Then, in a jokingly, playful manner, both of them start singing the "*Credo celtíbero*."[83] If in the first sequence the external footage did not

[83] The word "credo" (latin for "*creo*," "I believe") alludes to a catholic prayer in which the person praying states their faith in God. "Celtíbero" is the name of one of the civilizations who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula before it was made part of the Roman Empire. The regime, which was obsessed with legitimizing itself as the rightful representative of the nation's destiny, usually "hipanized" these pre-historic civilizations (as well as the Romans and the Visigoths) in an attempt to certify an eternal Spanish essence. The reference to the "celtíberos" in the title is a reference to the Spaniards which mockingly uses the same rhetorical means of the regime.

interact with the narrative and, in the second, it did so briefly and partially (the characters and the images shared the screen in a fade-in which is never brought to closure), in this third instance the alternation between the characters' singing and TV footage is constant from the beginning and, just like in the previous scenes, it happens very fast.

This song is divided into two parts. The first one is the "credo," in which the characters sing "credo…" ("I believe") and then list several things. Every time something is mentioned, a new external image appears and, between those, the characters appear again. Thus, the gaze bursts in doubly, first looking at the characters from some place and then looking at the images evoked by the song. For example, when the characters sing that they believe in "television commentaries" ["los comentarios de television"] footage of a demonstration appears, in which a banner reads "Arriba España" ("long live Spain"); when they say they believe in "freedom of speech" ["la libertad the expression"] TV footage shows a demonstration pro-Franco, and when they claim to believe "in the free Western world" ["en el mundo libre occidental"] there is an image of the statue of liberty. This going back and forth between characters and footage is not regular, though: sometimes it is the characters themselves who represent what they are singing, this happens for example when they state they believe in "equal opportunities" ["en la igualdad de oportunidad"] and Margarita is shown carrying her lover on her back while he spurs on her.

In the second part of the song, suddenly, an old woman appears as if from nowhere and asks them what kind of litany they are singing; with this, the song is transformed into a litany, again traversed by TV footage which mocks or contradicts the lyrics. What is interesting here is that, at this point, it is not clear who was watching Margarita and her lover: was it an unattributable shot or was the old woman watching them the whole time? And this feeling of confusion is accentuated when the old woman joins them and starts singing with them. If earlier

it was her watching them, who is now watching the trio? And whose eye is reflecting back these foreign images?

The whole construct reveals an-other point of view that does not seem to belong to anyone and yet can be localized in the sensible world in the form of an encounter. This encounter with the gaze, with the Real, vanishes as soon as it is perceived and thus does not allow for a cognition of the Other. (Copjec 211). The Other must remain empty and it is this emptiness that makes this encounter a failed one: at the Other place, nothing is, except for the Real which, by definition, cannot be symbolized and, therefore, cannot be known. In this sense, "the gaze stamps my perception with a seal of *objectivity*" (Copjec 212), but in this objectivity, "rather than an external confirmation of the clarity and truth of my perception, I encounter an obstacle to it. Perception stumbles" (Copjec 212). If ideology supplies a fantastic (in the sense of a fantasy) *objectivity* which filters "reality" (forecloses the Real in a specific manner) and satisfies the imaginary ego, the gaze points to an *objectivity* that is anchored in the Real and is, thus, inaccessible to cognitive knowledge. The gaze signals a radical Otherness that cannot be symbolized by consciousness and disrupts ego identity.

Margarita y el lobo does not shy away from the fierce critique of Francoist ideology that it carries out. On the contrary, its defiant tone is doubled by a meta cinematic reflection that spreads throughout the film in the form of five cuts in which Julia Peña (the actress who interprets Margarita) is shown sitting at a table and looking directly at the camera. In these scenes, Peña reads reflexive statements which serve as introductions to the actions the audience is going to see next. However, these excerpts do not express an open rejection of Francoism; instead, they just bring forth the flawed logic that lies beneath the concept of "womanhood" by

exploring its contradictions and incoherencies.[84] In these sense, Peña's declarations echo Margarita's representation in the movie: they do not prescribe alternatives to what there is, they simply bring about its faults and, with them, the impossibility of the concept to close in itself, its radical heterogeneity, which can't be reduced.

Simultaneously, in these instances, yet another layer of the gaze emerges; it is as if the split of the eye and the gaze that happens between Margarita and Lorenzo also happens between Julia Peña and the audience –an audience comprised mainly of her mostly male professors and peers at the EOC. Julia Peña's fixedly staring at the audience uses the cinematic screen to materialize the screen-image, the fantasy of "womanhood" that the audience shares, and to remark the "radically *intersubjective* status of *object a: object a* is something 'in me more than myself' that *the other* sees in me" (Žižek *Metastases* 179). With these cuts into the fictional

[84] These interventions read as follows: "Part one: What happens to us poor women is that we are not educated. We encounter the man already established and seemingly strong as a rock, and due to an unfortunate law of indeterminacy, we have weaknesses that lead us to contradictions, if not to complete foolishness. That is called love." ["Primera parte: Lo que nos ocurre a las pobres mujeres es que no estamos instruidas. Encontramos al tipo ya constituido y en apariencia fuerte como una roca y a consecuencia de una ley de indeterminación malhadada tenemos debilidades que nos llevan a contradicciones, cuando no a la perfecta imbecilidad. A eso se le llama amor"] (4.38); "part two: I don't know what to make of myself, I am only gifted for one thing: life. But it is a loss-making activity, there is no market for it. No one wants it. I don't know what to do with myself." ["segunda parte: No sé qué hacer de mí, solo estoy dotada para una cosa: la vida. Pero es una actividad deficitaria, no hay mercado para ella. Nadie la quiere. No sé qué hacer conmigo"] (13.20); "part three: Adultery, when not committed on principles or, in any case, by vocation, becomes bothersome. Especially considering the lack of quality products in the market. Unfortunately, we act, in general, driven by circumstances." ["Tercera parte: el adulterio, cuando no se comete por principios, o en todo caso por vocación, resulta molesto. Sobre todo teniendo en cuenta la falta de productos de calidad en el mercado. Desgraciadamente, actuamos, en general, llevados por las circunstancias"] (19.51); "part four: Husbands, in general, are very happy that their wives are good friends. They rejoice in our delightful chats. And by practicing our role as chatterboxes, we manage to give them a perfect recital of feminine stupidity. We talk about famous love affairs, cooking recipes, beauty, horoscopes... proving that we are women. Repulsive, but everything is in its place, and they are at peace. And that is the best path to lesbianism." ["Cuarta parte: Los maridos, por lo general, están muy contentos de que sus mujeres sean muy buenas amigas. Se regocijan con nuestras encantadoras charlas. Y a fuerza de ejercitarnos en nuestro papel de cotorras, conseguimos darles un perfecto recital de estupidez femenina. Se habla de amores célebres, recetas de cocina, belleza, horóscopos… se ve que somos mujeres. Repugnantes, pero todo está en su lugar, y ellos en paz. Y ese es el mejor camino para el lesbianismo"] (28.17); "Finally, we come across a variant with the integration of young technocrats in high positions. These well-fed, sporty-looking young men use their equally young wives to exercise that profession as old as time. They continue to produce rubbish, but they are bothered when we remind them of it." ["Quinta parte: Por último, nos encontramos una variante con la integración de los jóvenes tecnócratas en los altos puestos. Estos jóvenes bien alimentados, con aspecto deportivo, nos utilizan a sus también jóvenes esposas en ejercer ese oficio tan viejo como el tiempo. Siguen fabricando basura, pero les molesta que se lo recordemos"] (35.30).

world represented in the film, and using the same actress who plays the role of Margarita, the film sees in the audience what is in them more than themselves. And it does so by playing with the split between the eye and the gaze in conjunction with Peña's words. Her statements are ambiguous and her look is not accusatory, but it is not complaisant either; it comes from somewhere else, from a place that cannot be mapped and which obliquely insists (like the letter insists) on the relationship of the audience with the desire of the Other.

In the first section of this chapter, the totalizing character of the concept of "womanhood" has been established: "Womanhood" is part of the symbolic fiction established by Francoism whose utmost obsession is the unity and homogeneity of all things Spanish. However, in so far as Francoism is patriarchy, such unity and homogeneity are impossible; or better yet, because such unity and homogeneity are impossible, Francoism *cannot not* be a patriarchal regime. The fantasy of "womanhood" is not an idealized version of "woman," an abstraction that erases the differences between "womanhood" and the particularities of women. "Womanhood" as fantasy emerges from "woman" as object *a* and articulates the traumatic relationship of the Francoist subject with desire: the impossibility of identity. "Womanhood" is part of the regime's attempt to symbolize *the whole of Spanish reality*, to do away with difference as such.[85] After all, "fantasy is a way for the subject to answer the question of what object he is in the eyes of the Other, in the Other's desire –that is, what does the Other see in him" (Žižek, *Metastases* 177). In this sense, the notion of "womanhood" testifies to the regime's ideological efforts to deal with that traumatic kernel difference. And yet, as the film insistently shows, a totalizing closure that gets rid difference is impossible: something always remains that interrupts the apparently smooth

[85] Together with "womanhood" understood in this sense, Francoism was also oblivious to class antagonism and regional differences. The sum of all discourses of the regime can be understood as a concerted effort to eliminate any and every possible heterogeneity within "Spanishness."

functioning of ideology's *automaton*, that undefinable object *a* that is Margarita in so far as she stands for "woman."

However, *Margarita y el lobo* goes a step beyond pointing out the contradictions of the concept of "womanhood." In her critique of Francoist ideology, Cecilia Bartolomé touches on the core of the relationship between the subject and "reality:" "the fact that there is no reality without the spectre, that the circle of reality can be closed only by means of an uncanny spectral supplement" (Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology" 21). Barely noticeable at the beginning of the film and then openly in view at the end, Cecilia Bartolomé as director shows up in her own movie. Her apparition is a spectral one, she occupies a sort of non-space: she is outside the symbolic creation of the film, but at the same time she becomes part of it. Bartolomé assumes a position very similar to those of Margarita and Julia Peña: if Margarita disrupts the homogeneity of Lorenzo's world, and Julia Peña directly interpellates the audience, Cecilia Bartolomé's apparition seals the film's ideological critique: she is what Žižek calls the "real (the part of reality that remains non-symbolized) [which] returns in the guise of spectral apparitions" ("The Spectre of Ideology" 21). If Francoist ideology is founded upon the enforcement of imaginary sexual difference which develops into the notion of "womanhood" as a totalizing, homogenizing principle not of women, but of Francoist subjectivity, when Cecilia Bartolomé brings herself into her movie as a female filmmaker she acquires the quality of a spectral entity that returns from the Real that was foreclosed by the symbolic fiction devised by Francoism.

At these moments, the audience sees Bartolomé talking to the actors, moving around, giving instructions; in short, directing. Her control over the objects represented is absolute, her view is that of the totalizing master who gives meaning to what is represented on the screen. Occupying the position of perspectival eye that corresponds to the director on which the

cinematic apparatus depends, she is, in short, the one who looks. Or is she? Because the minute she is the eye that looks marks the moment when she is made a picture by the gaze, an aspect symbolized by her own apparition on the screen as an image. Thus, Bartolomé's point of view is reflected "in 'another consciousness.' Yet there is no transcendental subject to be found, no omniscient God who sees everything; this is even the ineluctable fact on which point-of-view structure […] is founded." (Copjec 216). In other words, by bringing herself into the cinematic space, Bartolomé is signaling the fact that there is no totalizing view, no subject outside the represented; by showing herself as picture (as subjected to the gaze) she renounces the imaginary function of the ego. In this sense, the gaze is

> that excess object, encountered as some disturbance within point of view, which makes visible the *emptiness* of the transcendental position, the *absence* of the transcendental subject. For, to be looked at from all sides by a nomadic gaze is to experience ourselves as visible in the world, as sunk within a perspective on which there can be another perspective, whereas to be visible to an all-seeing God would be to experience ourselves as part of some whole. (Copjec 216)

With the apparition of Bartolomé, the political potential of *Margarita y el lobo*'s critique of Francoist ideology culminates: the film consistently avoids proposing a set of alternative visions of "womanhood" or a "new" definition of woman. The film does not lecture but allows something to come forth that cannot be explicitly named, and immediately withdraws from it, leaving behind a trace that attests to the empty place of the Other. In this sense, *Margarita y el lobo* manages a "true" critique of Francoist ideology, one that does not fall back into ideology, since, as Žižek puts it, "it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from it [ideology], but this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality –the moment we yield to this temptation, we are back in ideology" ("The Spectre of Ideology" 17). Bartolomé does not spell

out the oppression of women, no one asks for rights or independence, situations and events are merely described, enacted, or ironically sung and danced, and yet the audience understands all too well. What is understood? It cannot be named, because it belongs to the Real, but it shows up in blurred images and hindered words which insistently interrupt.

Upon the encounter with the empty place of the Other, the castrated subject of Francoism is overcome with anxiety. If "the castrated subject is the subject that is represented [that is] always presenting itself to the Other, looking to win attention and recognition from the Other" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 73), it is not hard to recognize Lorenzo in this definition. And just as Margarita, Julia Peña and Cecilia Bartolomé embody different layers of interruption, Lorenzo, the potential male audience and, eventually, the regime's ideology constitute repetition. A repetition expressed in a symbolic fiction that founded "the Spanish reality" on the repression of difference. Through the figure of Margarita and its manipulation of the gaze, *Margarita y el lobo* manages to "hit the Real" and dialectizes one of Francoism's master signifiers: "Woman." In this way, the film momentarily touches the Real, it pokes the object *a* of Francoism. This means that, in *Margarita y el lobo*, the audience's object *a* is being messed with, picked up, and pointed at. And the reaction of the Francoist authorities is only fitting, it mimics the reaction of the analysand who refuses to let go of his or her symptom as if saying: "please, leave my object *a* alone!" But more importantly, when Bartolomé emerges as a specter, she does so in a new subjective position uncharted by Francoism. *Margarita y el lobo* brings something from the Real, a new position in relation to the cause. This effect on the Real opens up a path for Spanish women whose political potential lies in remaining empty, thus allowing for the possibility of a radically new meaning to be realized.

Chapter 3 *Presente profundo*, or the Francoist Experience of the Real

> En la defensa de la realización política de la mujer sustenté el criterio de ser su incorporación una de las primeras necesidades del Régimen, que si aspiraba a variar la faz de España no podría lograrlo sin destruir el divorcio ideológico que el desprecio del hombre hacia la mujer, en cuanto no fueran íntimos esparcimientos o necesidades caseras, imprimía a las relaciones de los sexos.
>
> Clara Campoamor. *El voto femenino y yo. Mi pecado mortal*

In the previous chapter, I used *Margarita y el lobo* to analyze how object *a* determines the realm of the Imaginary. Within Francoism, "woman" was revealed as a deadlock in meaning coated with a series of images and associations which in turn shaped the ideological construction of "Womanhood." Through the analysis of Elena Quiroga's last novel, *Presente profundo* (1973), this chapter pursues further understanding of object *a*, this time from the point of view of its symbolic configuration along the paths of metonymy. The unrealizable character of the jouissance promised by object *a* reveals the latter as a semblance, but a semblance which, nonetheless, seems to support the being of modern subjectivity and thus, the traditional articulation of knowledge wherein the regime's discourse resides. Ultimately, this novel provides fundamental insight into the way Francoism experienced the Real: with its obsessive control and subjugation of women and sexuality, Francoism emerges as a privileged site where the conflict between identity and difference is shown to be based on the impasse represented by the impossibility of the sexual relationship, that is, of difference within identity.

Elena Quiroga was one of the most important narrators of Francoist Spain. A fairly prolific author, she won the Nadal Prize in 1950 with her second novel, *Viento del norte* (1951),

the Premio de la Crítica Catalana in 1960, with *Tristura*, and in 1983, she became the second woman to be elected as a member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española.[86] However, "her works continue to be little-studied and are generally not well-known by the reading public" (Leggott 15). Most critics who have addressed Quiroga's work have vindicated the author because of her highly experimental and sophisticated narrative techniques and insightful development of characters' inner perceptions and motives.[87] In short, most critics advocate her inclusion in the literary canon based on the quality of her work established according to the conventions of traditional literary studies.

More interesting is Kirsten R. Barney's approach. While she agrees that "Quiroga was an innovator in her time, […] one could easily label her the most progressive Spanish writer of the 1950s" (105), she also points out the subversive character of Quiroga's narrative. According to Barney, faced with the regime's censorship, "Quiroga finds an alternate mode of expression which has been missed by critics. Hence Quiroga's warm reception at the Real Academia Española. Hence dust collects on her novels on library shelves." (113). When it comes to *Presente profundo*, Barney observes that the novel leads the reader to "become aware of how

[86] For a detailed account of her life and professional trajectory, see *Elena Quiroga* (1977) by Phillys Zatlin and "Elena Quiroga Abarca" (2016) by Patricia Arias Chachero.

[87] As early as 1959, Albert Brent claimed that Quiroga's novels "are penetrating studies of human nature in which the problems and conflicts presented are of a kind to give the reader a deepened understanding of human experience and a sense of personal enrichment" (213). Among the reasons for the lack of critical attention to Quiroga's work, Zatlin included: "The novel with which Quiroga won the Nadal Prize was considered by many to be a carryover from nineteenth-century Naturalism; the novelist thus was labeled anachronistic, and some critics failed to look at her later works carefully. In the following decade, when Quiroga published the majority of her novels, the dominant current in Spanish literature was social realism. Quiroga, however, was more interested in probing the inner world of her characters and accordingly experimented with a series of innovative narrative techniques –interior monologue, stream of consciousness, multiple perspectives, simultaneous time– which were ahead of the times for Spain and therefore neither understood nor appreciated by the general reading public or even by many literary critics" (7-8). Sarah Leggott echoes these ideas: "While some of Quiroga's works received critical acclaim and she was awarded prestigious literary prizes, her use of sophisticated and experimental narrative techniques made her works inaccessible to many postwar readers who were accustomed to social realism, and also relegated her novels to marginalization from the literary canon" (15).

socialized and how oblivious to this subtle [patriarchal] conditioning we are," (112). In other words, Barney notices the potential Quiroga's novels offer for a critique of ideology.

Structurally, *Presente profundo* is a highly experimental novel. It switches between a first-person narrator (Rubén writing his diary) and a third-person omniscient narrator (in whose writing Rubén appears as a character).[88] Events and characters are not presented in chronological order; instead, memories, speculations, feelings, and reflections belonging to the present and the past intertwine in a layered discourse.[89] Through the diary, the reader learns that Rubén is a middle-class young doctor from rural Galicia who attended medical school in Madrid. After finishing his studies, he specialized in histology and applied for a grant to continue his research in the US. While waiting for the grant, he spends a few weeks in Galicia, at his childhood home. While there, a woman from a village nearby, Daría, commits suicide by jumping off a cliff into the sea. This event triggers Rubén's memories of Blanca, a wealthy Brazilian woman with whom he had a romantic relationship seven years before, when he was a student in Madrid. As the diary shows, Rubén fell deeply in love with Blanca, and her liberal and cosmopolitan lifestyle (as opposed to the provincial close-mindedness imposed by Francoism) had a strong impact on his perception of his life and his sense of self. Soon after the end of their relationship, Blanca moved to Amsterdam, joined a hippy commune for a few months, and died of an overdose.

[88] As María del Carmen Riddel has noticed, "The voice of the omniscient narrator, who deals with Daría and the effects of her suicide on those who constituted her relational network in life, moves the story horizontally. The pattern of the novel's development is marked by the stages of death, loss, search, recovery of the body, Daría's funeral, and finally the return to the balance of the world from which she has departed. Both Blanca's and Rubén's stories arise in the mind of the latter as he narrates Daría's death. Since these stories, contained in Rubén's memory, suspend the horizontal progression of the narration, they provide depth or a vertical expansion to it" (182-183).
[89] This combination of perspectives and discourses has been connected with the works of Faulkner. For a detailed study of this aspect, see Zatlin, "Faulkner in Spain: The Case of Elena Quiroga." For a detailed study of the structural complexity of Quiroga's work, see Alford, "La perspectiva plural en dos novelas de Elena Quiroga."

3.1 The Subject of Knowledge, the Subject of Being?

At the beginning of his diary, Rubén doesn't intend to write about Blanca, rather, he sets out to write a scientific essay on suicide: "Why not write a study which could be titled: 'Analyses of the psychology of rural women in Galicia?" ["¿Por qué no hacer un estudio que podría titularse: 'Análisis de la psicología de la mujer del campo en Galicia'?"] (599). His objective is "to find the initial fact that determines the isolated small explosions, later in a chain, like a revolt against oneself, like a self-terrorism that ends in annihilation" ["hallar el hecho primero que va determinando las pequeñas explosiones aisladas, más tarde en cadena, como una sublevación contra uno mismo, como un autoterrorismo que acaba en la aniquilación"] (599). Thus, Rubén establishes a distance between himself and what is being researched; that is, he situates himself as a subject against an object. He sets out to decipher the enigma of suicide, and he does so rationally: through attentive observation and careful conversations with Daría's friends and family, he presumes to be able to discover the reasons that led her to end her life: "It will be easy to reconstruct it, not so easy, they are simple people, that is not true, they are complex people. We will have to proceed cautiously without hurting, so that they don't withdraw, nothing resembling a confessor or an inquisitor, rather an investigator" ["será fácil reconstruirla, no tan fácil, es gente sencilla, no es cierto, es gente compleja, habrá que avanzar con tiento sin herir, que no se me replieguen, nada que se parezca a un confesor o a un inquisidor, más bien un investigador"] (599). As this quote shows, Rubén's "objective" distance is, for him, a subjective distance too: he thinks of himself as different from the peasants he is investigating even though he was born and raised among them. In fact, to a great extent, his journal traces the process whereby he became separate (or came to conceive of himself as separate) from his family environment. His method must, therefore, account for the nature of his

object: “There are many ways to silence, words full of innuendos, false indications, they won’t be short of words for the incidental things, [...] but their enveloping ellipses, their twists, their sudden escapes conceal the truth, it must be extracted” [“hay muchas maneras de silenciar, palabras llenas de sobreentendidos, falsas indicaciones, no van a faltarles palabras para lo accesorio, […] pero sus envolventes elipses, sus quiebros, sus fugas repentinas encubren la verdad, hay que extraerla”] (600). For Rubén, it is his education, his rational and scientific mind trained in Madrid, that marks the difference: whereas the objectified subjects of his study are lost in the ambiguities of meaning, trapped in the realm of the signifier, he has faith that his method will allow him to find the truth that underlies language.

This dichotomous frame shapes the totality of Rubén’s writing, in which significant realities always contain their opposite: Daría represents a traditional woman while Blanca emerges as modern and liberated; Galicia incarnates old values and customs whereas Madrid appears as the site of progress. These oppositions articulate Ruben’s thoughts about the two women and himself. Ultimately, however, *Presente profundo* reveals these antagonisms as fallacious, in so far as they depend on Rubén, as the subject of knowledge, interpreting everything he hears or sees through the preconceived notion of the identity between being and thinking afforded by the discourse of traditional science.[90] This is apparent in his conversation with Soledad, Daría’s long-time friend, who recounts Daría’s life.

Soledad explains that Daría’s parents were poor, and managed to make some extra money by allowing a man from the village to have sex with Daría when she was a child. She also tells how, a few years later, Daría fell in love with Serafín and got pregnant. After she gave birth to

[90] As Alford has pointed out, Quiroga’s characters’ relationship with knowledge and truth often conceptualize the blurry limits between reality and perception. See “Elena Quiroga’s Yo Voice and the Schism between Reality and Illusion.”

their daughter, Serafín took pity on her and decided to marry her. They had been together ever since, had two children (Luisa and Eugenio) and a thriving business, a bakery. However, in the past few years, things had changed for Daría: Eugenio had married and brought home his wife to help run the family business; Serafín had started an affair with a younger woman, Celia. Soledad also recounts that Daría couldn't stand Eugenio's wife, Amelia, who insistently told Daría to rest and take care of herself: "She didn't want to take care of herself, damn it... she didn't want to be cornered, as she knew very well where it all starts... Today they take away the hens, tomorrow the vegetable garden, the day after the bread, and in the end, they leave you in a corner by the fire, as if that were enough" ["ella no quería cuidarse, contra… ella no quería que la arrinconaran, que sabía muy bien por dónde se empieza… Hoy me quitan las gallinas, mañana la huerta, el otro los panes, y a finales la dejan a una en un rincón al fuego, como si eso bastara"] (636). With this, Soledad reveals that Daría was aware that her destiny was bound to be that of many working-class women in Francoist society: no longer useful for the purposes assigned to them by the state (production and, above all, reproduction of the body politic), they are relegated to a corner, substituted by younger women who will keep going the regime's machine.[91] Daría, however, didn't accept such destiny: "She wanted to keep living fully, and not half-empty, not just for the fish bones, as we say around here" ["quería seguir viviendo entera, y no mediada, no para las raspas, como decimos por aquí"] (637).

Soledad's monologue contains many common places of the Francoist patriarchal discourse. Daría appears as a dutiful wife and mother, "everything for the husband and children, there was no other life for her than that" ["todo para el marido y para los hijos, para ella no hubo

[91] For a detailed account of the construction of gender roles in Francoism, see Helen Graham, "Gender and the State: Women in the 1940s." For a comprehensive historical analysis of the Francoist regulation of women's morality, conduct, bodies and work, see Aurora G. Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain. The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*.

más vida que esa"] (635) obediently subordinated to her husband: "She always believed that everything belonged to the husband" ["ella creyó siempre que todo era del marido"] (635). Soledad also justifies the actions of the men in Daría's life: On the one hand, she naturalizes the fact that by allowing an older man to have intercourse with his daughter, Daría's father was able to provide for his family: "It was a necessity, indeed. And Isolino let him borrow his daughter as if lending a cart or a cow with interest, what a pity of a man" ["era una necesidad, sí señor. Y el Isolino le dejó la hija como quien presta a interés el carro o la vaca, qué lástima de hombre"] (636). On the other hand, "Serafín did what any man would do, what else could he do?" ["Serafín hizo lo que haría cualquier hombre, qué iba a hacer"] (636), when he had sex with Daría before being married. Women, thus, emerge as property that can readily be exchanged for other commodities; whereas men, where sexuality is concerned, are understood as animal-like entities, incapable of controlling their sexual impulses, and therefore Serafín bears no responsibility for getting Daría pregnant before marriage, which was cause for shame and stigmatization in Francoist Spain.

The conditions of Daría's subordination to the men in her life (being conceived as a commodity, as an object of sexual satisfaction, as a worker and as a body at the service of reproduction), as well as the impact that, due to these circumstances, aging has on a woman like Daría are written in Soledad's speech.[92] However, Rubén doesn't register them and eventually

[92] Here, I understand "the written" as Lacan elaborates it in *Book XX* of his *Seminar*. For Lacan, the written is the trace that results from the difference between the signifier and the signified and allows one to read the truth of a given discourse, which differs from its meaning. However, being a trace, the written is ignored within the discourse of traditional science and philosophy in favor of the imaginary elaboration of "reality," the "scant reality on which the pleasure principle is based, which is such that everything we are allowed to approach by way of reality remains rooted in fantasy" (94-95). Reading what is written, on the other hand, allows one to identify the jouissance that is at stake in the enunciated, in short, object *a*. According to Lacan, the discourse of philosophy and traditional science since Aristotle, in other words, ontology, "is what highlighted in language the use of the copula, isolating it as a signifier" (31). Therein emerges being as master signifier, and with it a worldview predicated upon the completeness of the world which mirrors that of the body, "which implies that what is thought of is in the image of thought, in

diagnoses Daría with "evolutionary melancholy of old age" ["melancolía evolutiva de la vejez"] (647). Blind to the conditions of her structural subordination as a woman –which are written, but not signified in Soledad's account– Rubén attributes her malaise to the rapid changes and modernization of the world around her, and to the supposedly natural anxiety people feel when aging. After reaching this conclusion (by the middle of the text) Rubén stops writing about Daría and hereon only mentions her occasionally. All the reader learns about her and her family onwards is told by the third-person narrator who now and then interrupts Rubén's memories.

I will return to these third-person fragments in later subsections of this chapter. What is most relevant here is that, while Rubén conducts scientific, objective research, the novel shows what he fails to see. The results of his research are therefore tainted by the blind spot that prevents him from reading the written. Through his discourse, however, the novel skillfully demonstrates how sexual difference is a blind spot within Francoist ideology, in the sense that "this sexual relationship, insofar as it's not working out, works out anyway –thanks to a certain number of conventions, prohibitions, and inhibitions that are the effect of language and can only be taken from that fabric and register" (Lacan *Seminar XX* 33). Therefore, *Presente profundo* reveals that the Francoist articulation of a discourse on gender, sexuality, and love is nothing but an attempt to keep the Real at bay, in other words, to conceal the fact that "there isn't the slightest prediscursive reality […] Men, women and children are but signifiers" (Lacan *Seminar XX* 33), and difference (not identity and wholeness) is the foundation of being. *Presente Profundo* shows how the Francoist ideology avoided confronting the impossibility of identity by elaborating an oppressive fantasy on sexual difference.

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other words, that being thinks" (105). Ultimately, then, being is the object *a* within the discourse of traditional thought, represented in the novel by Rubén. To what extent the preservation of this state of affairs depends on obliviating the fact that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship with the Other sex is the theme of this chapter.

3.2 Object *a* is a Place

Presente profundo suggests that patriarchy works by *locating* "woman" in the *place* of object *a*. I emphasize the terms *locate* and *place* because they mark object *a* as a place, that is, as logically preexisting the (imaginary) conceptualization of gender. Ultimately, this chapter argues that sexual difference is an imaginary construction that indexes the problem of difference, which is the problem of language, of human organization, and of thought itself. The origins of the conceptualization of sexual difference can be traced back to Freud's research on female sexuality. According to him, the element that marks the difference between the two Oedipal configurations (male and female) is the phallus.[93] The Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex

[93] According to Freud, the boy's Oedipus complex constitutes the normal path to sexual maturity, whereas a woman's path is always the product of some deviation, "femaleness" is only attained through a series of detours the girl has to take in the development of her Oedipus complex. In "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions of the Sexes" (1925), Freud details how the lack of a penis determines the girl's sexual development. Despite his prowess and commitment to rigorous analysis, what's most striking in Freud's approach is how the position from which his investigation starts remains a blind spot for him, and determines his conclusions: Freud assumes as true that women in general are or behave in a certain way, and this supposedly common behavior of all women is "natural," that is, biologically determined: he identifies "character traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women –that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great necessities of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility" (193). From this starting point, all that is left to do is trace the biological reason for these "natural" character traits in women, and he finds it: the lack of a penis, whose consequence is that, after the Oedipus stage, "their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men" (193). However, a few years later, in "Feminine Sexuality" (1931), Freud acknowledges the tension between biology and concrete experiences that may happen by chance and can alter or disturb the normal development of a person. These experiences are restricted to individual cases, to the relationships between a child and their parents, Freud makes no hint toward social conventions, power relations, etc. Yet only two years later, in "Femininity" (1933) Freud refers for the first time to "social customs" (144), or "social breeding" or "social conditions" (164) as factors that might have an impact on women's psychological development, although to what extent, he says, it is impossible to determine. There is a particularly interesting and ambiguous moment, when Freud affirms that "the determinants of women's choice of an object are often *made unrecognizable* by social conditions" (156, my emphasis). There is nothing in the text that allows a clarification of what "made unrecognizable" might mean: is he simply asserting that, in certain cases, social conditions obscure a woman's choice of object; that is, prevent the analyst from seeing directly that underneath social conditions lies the normal, expectable object-choice of women? Or is he considering the possibility that social conditions might modify said object-choice and that therefore not all women make the object-choice that supposedly corresponds to women in general? The second option opens up the structural space for the Lacanian Other, and with it, the possibility not only of disengaging gender from sexuality but of understanding how thought itself, the Symbolic order, emerges from the impasse of sexuality, as this chapter shows.

allowed Lacan to develop the notion of sexual difference, which offers a blueprint of the working of difference in structural terms.

As Paola Mieli has explained, for Lacan, what the child wants is not the Mother[94] as a pure object, but the Mother's desire; this means that the Mother is a subject, a desiring subject, and therefore she lacks something (insofar as desire always presupposes the lack of what is desired): "Lacan calls the 'phallus' the signifier for this lack in the mother, in this original Other. The phallus is not a thing, not an object, not an organ; the phallus is *the signifier of the desire of the Other*" (Mieli 267). In this sense, the phallus is, for Lacan, a pure signifier, the symbol of the lack in the Other or, as Mieli puts it, the confrontation not only with loss, but with the concept of loss itself (266). What is lost is the jouissance of the Mother as a pure object that is rendered impossible by the fact that she is a (desiring) subject, that there is something, beyond herself, that regulates and determines her relationship to objects (including the child as an object). This something beyond is the Symbolic order, the Father, and its discovery by the child is the interdiction that happens with the establishment of the Name of the Father, that is, of the place of the signifier. The phallus designates the establishment of the Name of the Father and, through it, the symbolic order becomes the law that prohibits the Mother. The phallus signifies simultaneously lack and jouissance, it points to the emergence of the child as subject (as a subject mediated by the symbolic and therefore a desiring-lacking subject) and, at the same time, signals a jouissance that remains beyond, a "jouissance that is 'squeezed' out of the body" to be "refound in speech. The Other as language enjoys it in our stead" (Fink *The Lacanian Subject* 99).

[94] I use the term Mother (capitalized) to refer to the function of Mother or primal Other, the first object of the child's desire. This Mother function can however be fulfilled by any man or woman who assumes the role of caring for the child.

In his writing, Rubén spends a considerable amount of time reflecting upon his relationship with his parents, which exemplifies the Oedipal logic of separation from the Mother. Rubén grew up as a single child in a middle-class family. His father owned a pharmacy on the lower floor of the family house and spent most of his time there, while Rubén remained upstairs with his mother and suffered when he was required to spend time with his father: "I almost cried when I was told to go with him. [...] I was eager to go back to the first floor where we used to live, right above the pharmacy" ["casi lloraba cuando me decían que fuera con él. […] Yo estaba deseando volver a la primera planta en que vivíamos, justo encima de la farmacia"] (627). Mother and child, then, established a privileged relationship within the private space of the home, with the father remaining as an outsider of sorts, in his own domain: the public space. When the time comes for Rubén to choose a career path, the father insists that the umbilical cord that still connects Mother and child needs to be broken:

> They talked about me as if they were discussing an object; "We have to de-mother him. —What will he do without me? He can't manage. —You don't let him stand on his own. —It's my fault, of course." [...] It wasn't an argument that humiliated me: I was beginning to consider being something on my own, not helped by them. Almost invariably, our relationship changed, and I swung from one to the other. I sought my father's approval with my gaze when we were at the table, while inwardly disagreeing with my mother's opinion.
>
> [Hablaban de mí como si discutieran sobre un objeto; "Hay que desenmadrarle. —¿Qué va a hacer sin mí? No se vale. —No le dejas valerse. —La culpa es mía, claro." […] No era un argumento que me humillase: empezaba a plantearme el ser algo por mí mismo, no ayudado por ellos. Casi invariablemente fue variando nuestra relación y oscilé de una a otro. Buscaba el asentimiento de mi padre con la mirada cuando estábamos en la mesa y disentía íntimamente del parecer de mi madre.] (627-628)

As he starts to form a sense of his own identity, then, Rubén detaches himself from the Mother and gravitates toward the Father, getting ready to assume his place as father. However, Rubén decides against his parents' expectations: instead of continuing the family business, he

chooses to move to Madrid and study medicine. In Madrid, he will meet Enrique and Blanca and will put them in the positions of Father and Mother respectively, of the law of the symbolic and the prohibited jouissance that confronts him with his lack as a subject. How Rubén resolves (or fails to resolve) this secondary Oedipal situation is the key to understanding the phallic jouissance that articulates Francoist ideology and state practice.

Enrique, a slightly older medicine student, quickly becomes Rubén's friend and guide in the city. "The first thing that impressed me about Enrique and left a mark on me was his religious skepticism, and even in all aspects of life. (One could doubt)" ["Lo primero que me impresionó de Enrique y que hizo mella en mí fue su escepticismo religioso, e incluso en todas las materias de la vida. (Se podía dudar)"] (631). Enrique is Rubén's first contact with a scientific attitude alien to the narrow-minded, dogmatic universe of his hometown, saturated by the conventional knowledge and values imposed by the Francoist ideological state apparatuses. In substituting dogmatism for rational skepticism, he substitutes one symbolic universe for another, he establishes a new Father that demands objectivity, analysis, and a modern perspective of the world. This imperative is apparent throughout the text: "I must be objective" ["debo ser objetivo"] (626) writes Rubén; and he reproaches himself when he indulges in remembering the feelings that Blanca provoked in him: "Do not relapse. These are notes for a study, not self-psychotherapy" ["no reincidir. Estas son notas para un estudio, no autopsicoterapia"] (601). It is indeed this tension between the Father and the Mother, between "reality" and the Real of a "beyond" that escapes symbolization (Blanca's jouissance) that articulates the novel:

> (I should start in a more rigorous, more scientific way, objective, in short, only noting what is valid, but if I move among the mist, who knows what might turn out to be valid in the end? Structure, analysis, references, and all the etcetera will come later, I will organize these notes, select the content, because the content is essentially the problem, it has lived with me for too long, it has been with me everywhere for

> seven years, and at this necessary distance, I can now observe it, deduce, and go in search of the origin of the morbidity).
>
> (Debería empezar de una manera más rigurosa, más científica, objetiva en suma, anotar solamente lo válido, pero si me muevo entre la bruma ¿qué sé yo lo que puede resultarme válido al final? Estructura, análisis, referencias y todos los etcéteras vendrán más tarde, ordenaré estos apuntes, seleccionaré el contenido, porque el contenido es esencialmente este problema, ha vivido conmigo demasiado tiempo, lleva siete años conmigo a todas partes, y a esta distancia necesaria puedo ahora observarlo, deducir, ir en busca del origen del morbo) (599, in brackets in the original).

For the past seven years, then, Rubén has remained morbidly fascinated by Blanca. Since her arrival at the hospital, when Rubén morally judges her for trying to kill herself: "I found the excess of money and the fact that men moved at its incentive unfair, and that Don Manuel came on Sunday because it was you" ["me parecía injusto el exceso de dinero y que los hombres se moviesen a su estímulo, y que don Manuel acudiese en domingo porque se trataba de ti"] (607), he feels that "you responded to my internal rebellion with your sleeping mask, beyond me, one step away from nothingness" ["contestabas a mi rebeldía interna con tu máscara dormida, más allá de mí, a un paso de la nada"] (607). From this beyond, Blanca evokes for Rubén the Mother's jouissance, radically prohibited and forever lost.

As Lacan explains, if a certain jouissance is prohibited and lost, a structural gap is created by the difference between the amount of jouissance the subject demands and the amount that is actually attained (*Seminar XX* 111). Mieli calls this difference "the path of the messianic quality of desire" (270) in reference to the fact that the subject never gives up the satisfaction that it once achieved. This means that in the very logic of the symbolic order, there is a structural gap where the metonymic nature of language (or messianic nature of desire) originates. This gap is the place within the structure that originates the movement of desire, that "causes" desire; it is the place where the subject situates its object *a*: where Rubén places Blanca.

The fact that Blanca occupies the place of object *a* for Rubén is made apparent throughout the text in that he is incapable of conceptualizing her. Time and again she escapes objectification, slips away like a phantasm, impossible to grasp: "She was like a polyhedral crystal with many reflections" ["era como un cristal poliédrico de muchos reflejos"] (603). When it comes to Blanca, Rubén quickly realized that he couldn't relate to her the same way he had related to the women he had met before, the ideological coordinates of his discourse on women did not hold in her case: "I never said 'mine' when it came to you, I didn't even thought it at the moment when your surrender dazzled me, giving me that premature sensation of control: [...] You shouldn't be judged by your appearance: you ran, you flew... [...] but you didn't stop at anything or anyone, lacking constancy" ["Nunca dije 'mi' ni 'mía' tratándose de ti, ni siquiera lo pensé en el momento en que tu entrega me deslumbró, me dio aquella sensación prematura de dominio: […] No había que juzgarte por tu apariencia: corrías, volabas… […] pero no te detenías en nada ni en nadie, carente de fijeza"] (605).

This impossibility to fixate Blanca underlies the whole text, and emerges as a symptom in the shifting of pronouns: while Rubén mostly speaks of Blanca in the third person, desperately trying to elucidate every aspect of her conduct by describing and analyzing her, sometimes he speaks *to her* using the second person pronouns. By using the "you" form, Rubén calls Blanca as if interpellating her, seeking an answer she can't provide. In this sense, Rubén's position as the subject of knowledge is jeopardized as it slips into the subject of the unconscious: by using the first person, he reveals his desire as a desire to be spoken to, confirmed in his existence, restored as a subject by the Other. This Other-like quality of Blanca exposes her as object *a* insofar as she reveals the Real Cause of his desire: to be confirmed in his subjective identity. What is at stake, then, is the fact that "object *a* is no being. Object *a* is the void presupposed by a demand, and it is

only situating demand by metonymy […] that we can imagine a desire that is based on no being" (Lacan *Seminar XX* 126). Blanca is not being, but a signifier which supports Rubén's lack. The signifier Blanca shows Rubén's diary to be an effort to change his subjective position toward her: faced with Blanca as object *a*, he is revealed as the subject of lack, dependent on the Other; by turning her into an object of his knowledge through his writing, he is trying to extricate himself from the realm of the Real by holding onto his ego, thus being able to say "I am." After all, Rubén's diary is nothing but a continued "I was, I am," in which he gives himself the being that Blanca showed him he doesn't really possess.

Whatever occupies the place of object *a* "coincides with its own absence" (Žižek, *Metastases…* 181), thus object *a* is an empty signifier that conceals a void, a signifier that undergoes a secondary elaboration whose aim is to sheathe the emptiness, cover it. During and after their relationship, Rubén can't stop trying to "imagine" Blanca, to build a coherent idea of what she *is*. Yet, however much he elaborates, something of her always escapes his idea of Blanca, because he "created" her when he put her in the place of the object *a*, the Cause of desire, the lost jouissance of the Mother. Indeed, Blanca coincides with her own absence, a fact that is best exemplified in the novel by the sculpture that Edgar (one of Blanca's friends) makes of her: "A white plastered concrete structure, an immense circle poured with a round eye of emptiness in the center" ["una estructura de hormigón recebado de blanco, un inmenso círculo derramado con un ojo redondo de vacío en el centro"] (666); "that void in the center of a circular structure was dizzying, attracting" ["aquel vacío del centro en una estructura circular daba vértigo, atraía"] (682). Blanca is simultaneously the imaginary elaboration Rubén creates and an empty signifier which he placed in the site of the object *a* as an attempt to cover the void left by

castration, by the original sacrifice of part of his own jouissance he had to make in order to access the symbolic and become a subject.

3.3 Phallic Jouissance and Rational Thought

Blanca confronted Rubén with a world that was entirely alien to him. Born into a wealthy Brazilian family, she had traveled extensively and led a life of luxury unimaginable to him. Through Blanca, Rubén discovers a different way of living that includes different values, different cultural references, and a different relationship with work and human relationships. In short, he is confronted with a different ideology, and this forces him to reckon with the limitations of his own way of relating to and understanding things and people:

> After you, the vulgarity of the other women struck me, including my mother (now I can accept her reality without intimate defenses, you made me see it without words, although I'm sure you didn't intend to, and then I was offended and hurt by everything I was learning about my environment, my family, through you, as if through a cutting glass. I would separate myself from you for a brief time –a very brief time– and the return was more difficult, infinitely more humiliating. I chose to pretend because I knew I would come back).
>
> [Después de ti me chocó la vulgaridad de las otras mujeres, incluida mi madre (ahora puedo aceptar su realidad sin defensas íntimas, tú me lo hiciste ver sin palabras, aunque estoy seguro de que no te lo propusiste, entonces me ofendía y me dañaba cuanto iba aprendiendo sobre mi ambiente, sobre mi familia a través de ti, como a través de un cristal hiriente. Me apartaba de ti por breve tiempo –por brevísimo tiempo– y resultaba más difícil la vuelta, infinitamente más humillante; tomé el partido de disimular porque sabía que iba a volver).] (620)

Blanca made Rubén question everything he had known and believed up until the moment they met. This upset him and made him pull back; however, he kept going back to Blanca precisely because she never coincided with herself, because she was at the same time the signifier of jouissance and of loss. Blanca is the site where the primal repressed desire for the

Mother returns because she functions as an Other for Rubén, in the sense that she behaves in an unexpected manner, not according to the rules and conventions he knows, but according to what he perceives as her own, capricious law. In other words, she testifies for him the impossibility of the sexual relationship:[95] "What deep falls, what struggle to recover myself, sitting in the dressing room thinking: 'This needs to be clarified. A man doesn't go through this, it's something more than this,' or: 'What am I?'" ["qué hondas caídas, qué lucha por recobrarme, sentado en el vestidor pensando: 'Esto hay que aclararlo. Un hombre no pasa por esto, es algo más que esto', o: '¿Yo qué soy?'"] (621). As this quote reveals, Blanca's refusal to abide by the rules of Francoist society (and therefore by the traditional image of "womanhood") not only drives Rubén to project an idealized image of her in order to be able to endure the traumatic dimension she opens up for him but also questions his manhood, his ability to recognize himself as a man.

In causing this twofold response, *Presente profundo* thematizes the impossibility of the sexual relationship as conceptualized by Žižek under the name "love as metaphor." As he explains, the metaphor of love happens when the loved one becomes the one who loves (*Metastases…*103). Up until this point, the loved one had the status of an object, and to be loved as an object means to be loved "on account of something that is 'in him more than himself' and that he is unaware of –I can never answer the question 'What am I as an object for the other? What does the other see in me that causes his love?'" (103). To be loved as an object equals to be "surpassed" by the fantasy of the one who loves, to confront the fact that between object and

[95] As Lacan explains, in the first moment of the Oedipus complex, "the child who has made its own mother a subject on the basis of the first symbolization finds itself entirely subject to what we can call, but purely in advance, the law. […] The mother's law is, of course, the fact that the mother is a speaking being, and this suffices to justify saying 'the mother's law.' Nevertheless, this law is, if I may say so, an uncontrolled law. It consists simply in the fact, at least for the subject, that something in his desire is completely dependent upon something else that is doubtless already articulated as such and is of the order of the law, but it is a law that lies entirely within the subject that supports it, namely, within the good or bad will of the mother" (*Seminar V* 172).

subject mediates not simply the Other, but the specific relationship the subject established with the Other in the resolution of their Oedipus complex. In this sense, there is a radical asymmetry between what the subject loves in their object and what the loved one knows themself to be. The loved one is here trapped in an impossible situation: not knowing what the other seeks in them, the loved one is unable to give what they do not possess. This deadlock is only broken when the loved one becomes, in turn, a loving one, when they return love to the subject and, in doing so, they become subject themself. "And it is only by way of this reversal that a genuine love emerges: I am truly in love not when I am simply fascinated by the *agalma* in the other, but when I experience the other, the object of love, as frail and lost, as lacking 'it,' and my love none the less survives this loss" (Žižek 104). "Genuine love" does not cancel the asymmetry at all, it "assimilates" it: in becoming subject, the loved one recognizes their own lack, in a way, they reveal not having what the other is looking for and in this, the subject is simultaneously forced to recognize themself as lacking, as lacking what the other, now a subject too, cannot give, because they don't have it. Love is a relationship between subjects only insofar as both are revealed as lacking.[96]

It is this step that Rubén was unable to take. When Blanca returned his love, when she confronted him with his own lack, in other words, with the fact that what he loved in her was only his object *a*, he retreated: "She was how everyone wanted her to be, and only I didn't want her as she was, and for once, she wanted to be fully accepted. What clumsiness on my part" ["era como cada uno quería que fuese, solo yo no la quería como era, y por una vez quiso ser aceptada plenamente, qué torpeza la mía"] (688). Blanca attempted to confess her lack and still be loved. Rubén, however, unconsciously understands this lack to mirror his own, and backs away from a

[96] See Slavoj Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment: On Woman and Causality*, pp. 102-105.

subject who (just like his mother before Blanca; just like any subject) has her own relationship with the Other. Insofar as Blanca is a subject, has her own desire, her own Other, she can't cover up nicely the lack in Rubén, there is always something in her that escapes his grasp, a beyond that opens up the abyss of signification that forces him to repeatedly wonder what she wants. Rubén feels trapped by Blanca's law, immersed in "eternal afternoons, all of which seemed like Sunday afternoons, closed, boring, for hours of inactivity with music, and I couldn't get rid of that boredom, it was a glimpse of eternity" ["eternas tardes que parecían todas tardes de domingo, clausuradas, aburridas, para horas de inactividad con música, y no sabía librarme de aquel aburrimiento, era un atisbo de eternidad"] (601). A glimpse of eternity that Rubén has carried with him for seven years, unable to shake it off and above all, to explain it. His inability to explain Blanca's law, the cause of her desire, is still what fuels, seven years later, his journal.

The love relationship (whether that of a subject fascinated by the *agalma* or the "genuine love") exposes the Other, that is, the fact that every subject is constituted by its own relationship with the Other. This means that the Other mediates every relationship between two subjects or a subject with an object, thus rendering symmetry impossible.[97] Now, if love *exposes* the fact of the inevitably traumatic existence of the Other, it is because in normal, everyday life, humans do everything in our power to conceal it by means of the order of the imaginary: we provide ourselves with an ego, an object/other to sustain it, and a series of other imaginary formations that constitute cultural traits, traditions, ideas about ourselves and others, etc. whose ultimate function is to allow for exchanges that work smoothly as long as the symbolic order that underlies the whole construction remains hidden, that is, as long as language can be

[97] It is in this sense that Lacan sustains that the discursive construction of love revolves around the fact that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship (*Seminar XX* 57). In this sense, love simultaneously works and doesn't work. It works insofar as it is a way to keep pursuing jouissance metonymically, thus providing the illusion that such jouissance could eventually be attained. It doesn't work in the sense that said jouissance is, in fact, never attained.

misconstrued as transparent.[98] As Žižek explains, it is when language interferes, when it disturbs the relation between ordinary (imaginary) life and its beyond, that the Other emerges. The disturbance between the imaginary and the real is a discrepancy between action and reaction, or between cause and effect (*Metastases…* 118). In *Presente profundo*, Rubén states time and again his impossibility to understand what Blanca does and why she does it. It is in this sense that Blanca opens up the beyond the symbolic for Rubén, and thus confronts him with the Real, provoking in him the anguish that makes him leave and return repeatedly.

Ultimately, in his reenactment of the Oedipal situation with Blanca, Rubén faces once again the threat of castration. In the Lacanian theory, the crux of the Oedipus complex is that it conceptualizes the subject's access to language, to the symbolic order. The logic of castration is the fact that, to access the universal (the order of language that allows communication with others), the subject has to give up part of its jouissance. The gap that is established through this operation is what Lacan calls the Cause of desire, and object *a* is the fantasy projection that allows the subject to cover up said gap (it is in this sense that object *a* is the Cause of desire). As stated above, however, object *a is* not, "it is only constituted as lost after the fact, in that the subject is unable to find it anywhere other than in fantasy or dream life" (Fink 94). This after-the-fact, phantasmatic quality of the object *a* leads to the Real abyss. The Lacanian Real is not substance, a material chaos preceding language which comes and organizes it into what we call "reality." Indeed, "reality" is an effect of the symbolic, an imaginary effect. The Real is another effect of the symbolic; in other words, there is no Real without the symbolic order. The real is

[98] Žižek provides an example of the "imaginary effect" of the symbolic order: "Let us recall the uncanniness, even disgust, we experience when we endeavor to imagine what goes on just under the surface of a beautiful naked body –muscles, organs, veins… In short, relating to the body implies suspending what goes on beneath the surface. This suspension is an effect of the symbolic order; it can occur only in so far as our bodily reality is structured by language. In the symbolic order, even when we are undressed, we are not really naked, since skin itself functions as the 'dress of the flesh'. This suspension excludes the Real of the life-substance, its palpitation: one of the definitions of the Lacanian Real is that it is the flayed body, the palpitation of the raw, skinless red flesh" (116).

the Mother, or jouissance, or the Cause, because the subject imagines it as a phantasmic stage of plenitude prior to castration only after castration has occurred, only after access to the symbolic order has allowed the subject to emerge, but always already as lacking.

The inevitability of castration results in a twofold jouissance: phallic jouissance and feminine jouissance (this opposition between phallic and feminine has nothing to do with men and women: a man is capable of both phallic and feminine jouissance, and so is a woman). "Lacan calls 'phallic jouissance' the limited satisfaction that can be achieved, that is allowed by the symbolic order, by the interdiction of the primordial object […] a jouissance that is 'never it' (*ça n'est pas ça*), a jouissance that as it occurs evokes what is missing" (Mieli 270). Phallic jouissance is, therefore, a jouissance that can be spoken, it is the jouissance sanctioned by the symbolic, it is the limited jouissance that can be experienced after the Father's interdiction and it always brings about the discrepancy between the partial satisfaction that is achieved and the fulfillment that the subject seeks (Mieli 276-277). "Feminine jouissance" is not a complement to the phallic one. On the contrary, "feminine jouissance" "is the jouissance of the Real of the body supplementing phallic jouissance: a 'surplus' and not a complement, pointing beyond the phallus. Existing and escaping from symbolization, feminine jouissance expresses the limit of language and its beyond" (Mieli 277).

In *Presente profundo*, Rubén represents phallic jouissance, while Blanca is shown to be capable of feminine jouissance. According to Rubén, Blanca "had taken refuge in bodily expression —dance, love— and in experiencing delirious music when she was with others, or obsessive [music] when she was by herself, so close to hypnosis. Later, through these paths of alienation, she would access drugs, seeking a way to escape from herself [...] to break free from her own constraints" ["se había refugiado en la expresión corporal —danza, amor— y en la

música delirante en común, o en la obsesiva a solas, tan próximas a la hipnosis, más tarde accedería a la droga a través de estas vías de alienamiento, buscando el entresijo de la salida de sí misma […] por escapar de sus propias ataduras"] (641-642). Thus, according to Rubén's impressions, Blanca gives herself to a jouissance of the body, a jouissance that cannot be expressed in words or explained as the result of some specific cause. In fact, Blanca refuses to be questioned about her motives or the reasons that lead her to behave as she does:

> Her mother had forced her to undergo psychoanalysis... She couldn't withstand it. She told me with a smile that she loathed the striptease; she wasn't good at removing veils [...] It was dreadful, a race among mirrors, fleeing from herself. I noticed that she had truly been hurt, *if you wanted to engage in a serious, probing conversation with her, or inquire about the reason behind an unexpected reaction, she would withdraw and her pupils would dilate fearfully, and she would slip away.*
>
> [Su madre la había forzado a psicoanalizarse […] No pudo resistirlo. Me dijo sonriendo que aborrecía el *striptease*, no servía para quitarse velos. […] fue un espanto, una carrera entre espejos huyendo de sí misma; observé que auténticamente la habían lastimado, *si querías abordar con ella una conversación seria, indagadora, o el deseo de saber el porqué de una reacción inesperada, se replegaba y se le agrandaban medrosamente las pupilas, se escabullía.*] (641, my emphasis).

In this quotation, a fundamental passage occurs from desire to thought: Rubén's desire for Blanca seamlessly becomes a need to explain her. The subject's primal loss is the key to unraveling this connection between desire and thought, insofar as the trauma the subject experiences is not to have lost the Mother, but the impossibility of the ideal plenitude it never actually had because when it "had" it, the subject couldn't know it was enjoying it since it wasn't still a subject; and after it becomes a subject, that jouissance is foreclosed.[99] What Francoism

[99] This is the same logic Freud developed in *Civilization and its Discontents*, and that occupies chapter 1 of this dissertation. *Volverás a Región* shows how Francoism is a radical effort to hide this trauma, to conceal the fact that being part of a group necessarily implies restrictions to each individual's desire. Chapter 1 also argues that such an effort can only be authoritarian: the emphasis Francoism placed in the ideological constructions of national identity wasn't only a matter of restricting what individual citizens could or could not do, not even what they could or could not think, but what they *had to* desire.

understands (albeit without realizing that it understands) is that the symbolic order and desire aren't without each other, they are two sides of the same coin; hence the regime's careful construction and imposition of its ideology in every order of life, especially in the years immediately after the war. If the symbolic which articulates the universal determines individual desire, then the dimension of the individual and that of collectivity are, strictly speaking, the same: "Through his myth of the murder of the primordial father Freud shows how the relation between law and desire sets up the interdiction (and consequently loss or sacrifice) as the *condition* for symbolization, for civilization" (Mieli 269). As Mieli suggests, symbolization *is* civilization, not only in that it establishes moral law but also in that it means the birth of neutral thought (270). Lacan's step forward from this Freudian insight is his development of the notion of sexual difference, which articulates the "'materialist' genesis of Sense" (Žižek *Metastases…* 126). In other words, Lacan addresses the question "how can the immixtures of bodies give rise to 'neutral' thought –to the symbolic field that is 'free' in the precise sense of not being bound by the economy of bodily drives, of not functioning as a prolongation of the drive's striving for satisfaction?" (Žižek *Metastases…* 126).

As Paola Mieli explains, when a child discovers sexual difference, they confront a difficulty of thought, and their sexual theories "emerge as a response to something *unthinkable* about sexual difference" (271): the fact that some people have a penis, while others don't. In the context of the Oedipus Complex, the desire to know, to understand sexual difference, refers to the Mother's desire: "insofar as the child acknowledges that he/she is not the phallus, is not the signifier of the mother's desire, a privileged dual relation is broken and the question of knowing *how* to fulfill the mother's desire remains open" (Mieli 272). This question of *how* allows the Name-of-the-Father to set in, that is, installs a third, mediating instance between child and

Mother, between the subject and an object that turns out to be a subject. This *how* is represented by the phallus (since the penis is what is at stake), but in becoming the representative of the *how* to satisfy the Mother, that is, of *what* it is that the Mother wants, the phallus becomes the empty signifier, it represents the fact that the signified (the *what* of the Mother) exists. The phallus is, then, the signifier of castration and, as Žižek puts it "far from acting as the potent organ-symbol of sexuality *qua* universal creative power, it is the *signifier and/or organ of the very desexualization*, of the 'impossible' passage of 'body' into symbolic 'thought,' the signifier that sustains the neutral surface of 'asexual' sense" (*Metastases…* 128, emphasis in the original). Hence the phallus becomes the transcendental signifier, transcendental in that it is not a substance; in fact, it is "the semblance *par excellence*" (Žižek *Metastases…* 130), it is the non-sense that regulates sense, if we understand "sense" as the metonymic series along which meaning is created. "What the phallus 'causes' is the gap that separates the surface event from bodily density: it is the 'pseudo-cause' that sustains the autonomy of the field of Sense with regard to its true, effective, bodily cause" (Žižek *Metastases…* 130) and thus initiates language for the subject and the subject of language: the castrated subject.

In this sense, "thought 'inherits' its messianic quality from desire and its search for solutions, for answers, will move toward refinding a mythical lost completeness" (Mieli 271). Thought begins with repression, with the impossibility of fulfilling the Mother's desire (be the phallus) because there is something else that catches her attention, a Father who not only regulates her desire but also prohibits the child from wanting her (incest prohibition): "from the moment he begins to speak, from that exact moment onward and not before, I can understand that there is repression" (Lacan *Seminar XX* 56). The impasse here is that the subject is told not to desire the thing (the Mother) it has already desired. Here repression sets in: the child represses

having desired the Mother and as a result object *a* emerges as the illusion of an ideal stage when the subject was complete. In this sense, thought is a "surrogate of desire" (Mieli 271), and its fundamental trait is to "'create order,' to create coherent relationships between things, to such a degree that thought, as Freud puts it, doesn't hesitate to produce a false coherence for its own sake" (Mieli 270). Just like desire doesn't give up a satisfaction it once enjoyed, thought keeps chasing after the ultimate explanation. For insofar as conscious thought is the result of repression, rational explanations function both as a relief from an emotional conflict and as its concealment (Mieli 270-271).[100] That is why, confronted with the Real of feminine/maternal jouissance, Rubén responds with an effort of rationalization. He questions Blanca about her motives, searches for the "whys" of her reactions, but is incapable of establishing the coherence he so desperately needs. An impossible coherence not because Blanca is somehow defective, but because she is a subject: her motives, her Cause, is unknown for her too (just as it is for any other subject).

It is without a doubt symptomatic that Rubén situates Blanca in the realm of the imaginary, of images and the most immediate materiality, to some extent alien to the symbolic order: "She found herself in plastic expression, in images, in the knowable of things, in references, not in words. That's why she wasn't a talkative woman and expressed herself through signs external to her, which is why she also told me that psychoanalysis had been an unspeakable horror for her" ["se hallaba en la expresión plástica, en las imágenes, en lo cognoscible de las

[100] In this sense, it is not surprising that obsessive rationalization is one of the key symptoms of neurosis; undoubtedly, Rubén's diary can be understood as neurotic discourse. In his work, Freud consistently insists on the need to listen to the patient's words and take them seriously, even if they refer to events that the analyst knows to be false or to have never happened. This is because Freud finds "the truth" in his patients' speech, not in the sense of some true state of things in the outside reality, but the truth of the unconscious: repression. (See "Mourning and Melancholia"). When Lacan assert the need to pay attention to the patient's rational discourse it is because the task of concealment leaves traces behind, and these traces of repression, these symptoms, are the key to the analytic treatment. (See "Beyond the reality principle")

cosas, en las referencias, no en las palabras. Por eso no era mujer habladora y se expresaba a través de signos externos a ella, por eso también me dijo que el psicoanálisis había sido para ella un horror indecible"] (641). Of course, this supposed connection between Blanca and images or things is ultimately Rubén's way of attributing to some essential particularity of Blanca his own lack of understanding. And for Blanca's alleged failure to justify her reactions, he finds another cause: psychoanalysis. In other words, he finds reasons in Blanca for the fact that *he* doesn't understand, instead of questioning the axioms of his thought or the validity of his "method." Ultimately, Rubén's impossibility to explain Blanca reveals that "the incommensurability between cause and effect […] results from the anamorphic perspective of the subject" (Žižek *Metastases…* 118). This "anamorphic perspective" was the theme of chapter 2 in this dissertation, and is also thematized in the conceptualization of love as metaphor as I explained it above. At its core is the fact that the subject never *sees* the other's Other, never *sees* the place from which the other looks. As a result, the subject's reaction to what the other does, in this case, Rubén's reaction to what Blanca does, is never really a direct effect of such cause, but an effect of his misperception of Blanca.

Therefore, the irrationality or inexplicability of Blanca has nothing to do with Blanca herself, but it is a creation based on the inevitably anamorphic perspective of any subject: no one ever reacts expectedly insofar as each subject has its own Other, that is, its unconscious motivations which divert, interfere, between what one does as cause and how the other responds. In this sense, the novel suggests that situating "woman" as that which ruptures the rational Causal chain is the mark *par excellence* of a patriarchal system. Patriarchy conceives "woman" as object. Not just in the common, everyday sense of objectifying her, but in the sense of subjecting her to symbolic laws (that no one, man or woman, completely follows insofar as the

unconscious is there) just as an object is subjected to the laws of physics, for example. To consider "woman" as object is to deny her an unconscious, a particular relationship with the Other, which is what marks a subject as such.

In the last instance, the difference between Rubén and Blanca is that she is capable of feminine jouissance, of jouissance beyond symbolization which, therefore, accepts incoherence and incompleteness, that is, renounces the narcissistic satisfaction of phallic jouissance. Unsurprisingly, for Rubén, the "irrational" way in which Blanca relates to her own desires and reactions extends also to her relation with knowledge:

> Blanca also read psychology books, the latest books being talked about, but did she really read them? She immersed herself in them without paying attention to anything else, with background music playing, she would get tired quickly, rarely finishing them, or she would skim through the pages quickly, only looking for what attracted her; other times, she would pick them up and leave them for several days without ever finishing them, although later she would talk about them with Edgar or Pablo, *I rarely intervened because she told me that my common sense was disappointing.*
>
> También leía Blanca libros de psicología, los últimos libros de que se hablaba, pero ¿los leía? Se entregaba a ellos sin atender a nada más, con la música de fondo, se cansaba pronto, rara vez los terminaba, o los cogía y pasaba rápidamente las páginas buscando solamente lo que la atraía; otras veces los tomaba y los dejaba durante varios días sin terminarlos jamás, aunque después hablaba sobre ellos con Edgar o con Pablo, *yo intervenía rara vez porque me dijo que mi sentido común era decepcionante*. (641, my emphasis).

For Rubén, Blanca's access to knowledge is completely non-systematic and therefore flawed, whereas for her his "common sense" is limiting, frustrating, disappointingly rational. Rubén cannot deal with Blanca's inconsistencies because he has put her in the place of object *a*: he wants her as a "pure" object, not pierced by the unconscious, an object to fulfill his own lack.

As part of the reenactment of the Oedipal situation that the text presents, and in the face of the impossibility of Blanca being just an object, Rubén appeals to the Father/Enrique: "I'm not

going to exaggerate it either: Blanca was, as I later discussed with Enrique, a being with defective affectivity, depressed" ["Tampoco voy a engrandecerlo: Blanca era, como lo hablé más tarde con Enrique, un ser con la afectividad defectuosa, deprimida"] (642). When Rubén feels questioned in his own sense of self by Blanca's mystery, by her refusal to be a mere object and sustain his imaginary ego, Rubén turns to Enrique for an explanation: "'Why me? —I asked Enrique—. Y can't understand it' […] Enrique thought: repressed maternal instinct which led her to initiate me into a different world" ["'¿Por qué yo? —le pregunté a Enrique—. No me lo explico.' […] Enrique pensaba: instinto maternal sofocado que la llevó a iniciarme en un mundo distinto."] (646). And it is also Enrique who ensures the definite separation of the lovers: after Blanca breaks up with Rubén, Enrique keeps visiting her for a while, "above all, he wanted to make sure she wouldn't call me again" ["sobre todo, quería asegurarse de que no me llamaría de nuevo."] (632).

Rubén, then, escapes the incomprehensible jouissance through Enrique, who incarnates a new Father, the law of scientific discourse. And yet, it is precisely the Father, the dawn of the symbolic, what renders the Mother's jouissance a mystery, an unknowable Real. The law that interdicts the Mother is the necessary condition for the existence of desire and thus, it is what sustains the gap that separates the subject from jouissance. The Mother becomes the after-the-fact mythical origin of the subject and, insofar as it can't be symbolized, it is radically unknown and provokes fear. The anxiety Rubén feels is the horror of the Mother's jouissance. The proximity of the original Other is "threatening insofar as the distance from it is what allows the subject's desire –and thus the subject's very being– to exist" (Mieli 273). Therefore, the subject fears the "unknown and unknowable," "the limit of symbolization" and this "impossibility of knowledge is shaped into an imaginary absence that *translates* the encounter with a limit of

symbolization into a threat to the body, into the fear of a real injury or loss" (Mieli 273, emphasis in the original); in other words, into the fear of castration. The "imaginary absence" is the phallus as "semblance *par excellence*" in Žižek's words, in that which emerges in the place of a lack, establishing a "safety distance" between the subject and the Real, between the subject and that which is impossible to think. In this sense, the "phallic form" "rescues the subject from the Real of the unthinkable jouissance" (Mieli 273); however, it also limits the subject's jouissance to a phallic jouissance, to a jouissance that always evokes the loss and the unknown of the beyond. Yet again, phallic jouissance is, after all, jouissance. It allows the subject to enjoy the false promise of subjective certainty, to posit itself as the clearly delimited, rationally explainable, logically reacting, complete unity of the ego.

3.4 "Woman" as the Limit of Thought

Rubén's entire journal can be read as the pursuit of phallic jouissance, of a definite separation from Blanca's Real by explaining her, reducing her to a "normal" chain of causes and effects, thus doing away with the mystery she represented. External explanations for her entire being pop up constantly through the text: her periods of sadness were "merely quickness of reflexes of a hypersensitive being" ["meramente prontitud de reflejos de un ser hipersensible"] (601), or regarding her conduct, "perhaps the excess of money and her environment made her a separate being, segregated from authentic humanity" ["quizá el excesivo dinero y su ambiente hicieron de ella un ser aparte, segregado de la auténtica humanidad"] (602). These attempts to explain Blanca, framed within phallic jouissance, are also an attempt to situate her clearly within the rational, causal history in which Rubén is narrating himself: "You had discovered my withdrawn intimacy, by your side, I undressed myself of prejudices, and in the densest silence,

you had taught me compassion" ["habías descubierto mi retraída intimidad, a tu lado me desvestí de prejuicios, y en silencio densísimo me habías enseñado la piedad"] (608). Through this reappraisal of Blanca, "pages and pages are piling up, what once meant so much to me is only this pile of written words, in a definitive way, it drifts away, drifts away, and at the same time, it becomes objectified" ["cuartillas y cuartillas se van amontonando, lo que tanto supuso para mí es solamente este montón caligrafiado, de una manera definitiva se aleja, se aleja, y al propio tiempo se cosifica"] (664). From object *a*, Blanca is becoming a mere object, "she drifts away completely, without pain, as if I were looking at her through a meticulous lens" ["se aleja totalmente, sin dolor, como si la estuviera enfocando a través de una lente minuciosa"] (664). In a way, Rubén restores the symbolic by writing his journal, he turns his back to the horrifying Real jouissance that threatened to swallow him and seals his alliance with the law of the Father. An alliance that is symbolized by the specialty he eventually chooses as a doctor: after considering psychiatry, he finally opts for histology because "I was fed up with the problems of the ego, I wanted a more immediate human reality —closer than the "I"?— more objective, stripped of theatricality and confusing boundaries" ["estaba harto de problemas del ego, quería una realidad humana más próxima —¿más próxima que el yo? —, más objetiva, desnuda de teatralidades y de confusos límites"] (648-649). Scaping the Real, Rubén finds reassurance in the pleasure of classifying, defining, measuring organic tissue as opposed to the ambivalence of human desire.[101] As explained in the previous sections, his approach to Daría's and Blanca's

[101] As Lacan points out, the discourse of traditional science, Rubén's discourse, is based upon taking the body as an enclosed unity which in turn supports the ego as being. In this sense, it is oblivious to the fact that "being is merely presumed in certain words –'individual,' for instance, and 'substance'" (118). "And people are reassured thinking that the body thinks in the same way. […] When it is assumed to think secretly, there are secretions. When it is assumed to think concretely, there are concretions. When it is assumed to think information, there are hormones. And still further, it gives itself over to DNA" (110). In other words, within traditional science, knowledge of the body itself is mediated by metaphors, by the order or the signifier functioning independently of the signified.

suicide follows the same attempts at dividing, clarifying, and looking for causes; however, that methodology proves to be a mirage:

> In fact, I still think that money and easy access to a life without obstacles, with no other problems than its own contingencies, were at the root of her pain. Although probably, I am seeing it with great clarity now, even without money, Blanca would have traveled the world with hippie groups and still would have laid down in a sleeping bag on the ground, with that exasperation or that indifference, depending on the moment.
>
> De hecho, sigo pensando que el dinero y el acceso fácil a través de él a una vida sin trabas, sin más problemas que los de su propia contingencia, estaban en la raíz de su daño; aunque probablemente, ahora lo estoy viendo con enorme clarividencia, Blanca sin dinero hubiese marchado a recorrer el mundo con las bandas de *hippies* e igualmente se hubiese tendido en un saco de dormir sobre el suelo, con aquella exasperación, o aquella desgana, según. (602)

Wealth doesn't fully explain Blanca, there is something else in her that defies rationalization, no speculation is entirely satisfactory. At a certain point, Blanca is unknowable; and when that limit of thought is reached, Rubén invariably attributes it to Blanca being a woman. About her way of reading (or not reading according to Rubén), he ventures: "She must have been femininely looking for sensations" ["debía de buscar femeninamente sensaciones"] (605). Later on, again in connection with knowledge, "I don't know how she could understand them [the books] with that way of quickly reading over the pages as if literally walking fast over them, yet she gave the impression of being well-informed. Perhaps her feminine mental structure also played a role" ["no sé cómo podía conocerlos [los libros] con aquella manera de leer por encima como si literalmente anduviera a paso veloz sobre las páginas, sin embargo daba la sensación de enterada. Quizá influyera también su estructura mental femenina"] (641). In both cases, "femininely" and "feminine mental structure" are meaningless, they function as empty signifiers, signaling a deadlock in meaning, a point beyond which the symbolic can't reach. After

all, as Paola Mieli puts it, femininity is the term used by the subject of desire to name the object when the object cannot be named because it is lacking (274). Femininity, in fact, has nothing to do with the feminine or with women, on the contrary, it names the limit of thought inherent in the symbolic system itself, insofar as it is a system whose existence is predicated upon a pure semblance, an empty signifier (the phallus) that names the impossible phantasmatic jouissance and therefore names what cannot be thought. In this sense, "woman" is one of the names-of-the-father, one of the markers of the limit of what can be thought (Žižek, "Woman is one of the names-of-the-father…").

The fact that, in the Lacanian conceptualization of sexual difference, femininity is associated with lack doesn't mean that women are lacking or that something is missing in them, lack is simply "the necessary correlative of the very nature of desire, which in order to exist, presupposes a missing object" (Mieli 274).[102] This is why "feminine" jouissance can be experienced by men or women: feminine jouissance has nothing to do with some essential quality of women, but with the assumption of one's own lack. Therefore, "in representing the law of desire, femininity points to the illusory quality of any position –let's call it "phallic" – that presents itself as whole, as whole without loss." (Mieli 274) This is at the core of Rubén and Blanca's relationship: Blanca repeatedly shows the illusory character of Rubén's position, the fallacy of a structure of thought capable of fully explaining everything, including human behavior and feelings.

[102] Paola Mieli offers here an important clarification: "If in common parlance the word *lacking* acquires a negative connotation –with all the debasement and misrepresentation that traditionally accompanies its connection with the notion of femininity– this very fact reveals the symptomatic quality of the prejudice that it stages. This prejudice, however, is structurally rooted in thought's messianic quality. Why, in fact, would lack have inevitable negative connotations, if it weren't for the illusion of an existing wholeness?" (274)

The limits of Rubén's thought are made apparent in the last fragments of the novel, which develop his relationship with Marta, a medicine student in Rubén's class. Rubén met Marta some months after Blanca's death. She soon started hanging out with Rubén and Enrique and eventually began a romantic relationship with the latter. For Rubén, Marta represents a sort of antidote to Blanca, in his journal he says about her: "all simple, very clear, very concrete" ["todo sencillo, muy claro, muy concreto"] (686), and also "she was so clear, like a diamond. It brought comfort" ["tan clara, diamantina. Confortaba"] (688). What Rubén finds reassuring about Marta is that she is supposedly transparent, simple, and concrete. Yet the novel shows that Rubén "doesn't understand" Marta either, the only difference is that Marta doesn't constitute Rubén's object *a*. Thus, insofar as Rubén doesn't expect Marta to fill his own lack, he isn't bothered by her inconsistencies, that is, her being a subject doesn't question his phallic position.

Specifically, Rubén cannot understand how Marta relates to Enrique and the nature of Marta and Enrique's relationship as a whole. This is because their relationship is what Žižek calls "true love," a relationship between two subjects. Enrique is shown to be capable of assuming his own lack in his relationship with Marta, that is, he assumes a feminine position: "My love for Marta is a form of love, a different one, there are as many as there are people, as situations. But, well, the one you are thinking of... perhaps the woman I could love in that way, I wouldn't marry her" ["lo mío por Marta es una forma de amor, una distinta, hay tantas como personas, como situaciones. Pero, en fin, aquel en que tú piensas… quizá la mujer a quien pudiese amar de ese modo, no me casaría con ella"] (653). In other words, Enrique wouldn't marry a woman who occupied the place of his object *a*. With this attitude, he embodies the horror caused by the proximity of the Real. Instead, he and Marta have created a bond which is "immense affection, understanding, camaraderie, ease of dialogue, common destinies"

["inmenso cariño, comprensión, camaradería, facilidad de diálogo, destinos comunes"] (653). Rubén, for his part, can't see such a bond as love: "I asked Enrique: 'is that love?'" ["pregunté a Enrique: '¿eso es amor?'"] (653). For Rubén, love is the search for radical completeness: He cannot phantom that a love relationship may work while its members' desires diverge:

> Marta treats Enrique's mother with a touch of condescension, and I notice that it bothers him like a squeaking hinge. I've warned her about it: "It may be so, but I don't want affectations, nor stop being myself. —Not even for him? —Not even for him. Why? He wouldn't love me, but an image of me, and that would be a bad start.— For his mother, there is no one else but him. —I know." And: "Leave it, Rubén. We are fine as we are."
>
> Marta trata con un matiz de condescendencia a la madre de Enrique, y yo noto en él que es como un gozne que chirriara, le molesta. Se lo he advertido a ella: "Puede ser, pero no quiero afectaciones, ni dejar de ser yo misma. —¿Ni por él? —Ni por él. ¿Por qué? No me querría a mí, sino a una imagen de mí, sería un mal principio. —Para su madre no hay más que él. —Lo sé." Y: "Déjalo, Rubén. Estamos bien como estamos." (653).

To Rubén's puzzlement, Marta insists: "He is not going to change his life, and I am not going to change mine. It's not that living separately we are doing something special, we do our own thing, our own life. You wouldn't understand, don't protest, you wouldn't understand" ["Él no va a cambiar su vida ni yo la mía, no se trata de que viviendo separados hagamos algo en especial, hacemos lo nuestro, nuestra vida. Tú no lo entenderías, no protestes, no lo entenderías."] To these words, Rubén retorts: "'Then, why are you a little sad at times?' She released her hands and clasped them together, blushing vividly, she turned her head as if an inappropriate door had been opened. Then, she said softly: 'Because I am a woman'" ["'Entonces, ¿por qué estás un sí es no es triste a ratos?.' Soltó las manos y las entrelazó, se sonrojó vivamente, volvió la cabeza como si se hubiese abierto una puerta indebida. Después dijo quedamente: 'Porque soy mujer'"] (691). Being a woman, however, doesn't mean the same

for Rubén and Marta. She doesn't say "I am a woman" as if it were an unsurmountable flaw, a point where something doesn't work as it should, or an unsolvable enigma. On the contrary, in being a woman she is naming a place she can't explain in words, she cannot symbolize, and therefore, Rubén cannot follow her there. But also, Marta's words are particularly enlightening in that they show the position of "woman" not as that of a somehow privileged, absolutely satisfactory fulfillment (as explained above, feminine jouissance is not the complement of phallic jouissance, a sort of mythical jouissance of completeness), but as the decision to accept the messianic character of desire, the fact that no situation will ever result in a permanent state of absolute happiness.[103] This attitude in Marta extends beyond personal relationships, to the way she understands people in general:

> I love this man that we are, the one of this very moment with his tomorrow hammered into him or not, my same humanity, that of this instant, the chillingly weak man, increasingly weak and bewildered the higher he climbs; I love the demythified man, the needy one, with all that which people stupidly call "the bad part" to understand themselves. — "Because you are a woman, you just said so" —Maybe, but Enrique also fully embraces his moment.
>
> [Yo quiero a este hombre que somos, el de ahora mismo con su mañana o no hincado en él, mi misma humanidad, la de este instante, el hombre escalofriantemente débil, cada vez más débil y desconcertado cuanto más arriba sube; quiero al hombre desmitificado, necesitado, con todo eso que la gente llama estúpidamente para entenderse "la parte mala." —Porque eres mujer, acabas de decirlo. —Puede ser, no te digo que no, pero también Enrique asume su momento por entero.] (692)

[103] In her paper "Writing against the Current: The Novels of Elena Quiroga," Zatlin observes a parallel between Marta and Soledad: "Indeed the characters who appear to be most content with their lot in life are two women, one a friend of Daría and the other of Rubén, who have learned to be self-sufficient" (55). While it is true that both women refuse to depend on a man to live their lives, their situation is quite different. As Riddel observes, "although Soledad perceives her isolation as preferible to her friend's Destiny, this isolation is not be understood in the novel as a satisfactory life alternative" (191). As happens with Daría and Blanca, the difference between Soledad and Marta is a class difference. Marta, a middle-class woman in the late 60s-70s, had the chance to attend university, be financially independent, and establish a relationship with Enrique which, although not perfect, seems to make her happy. Conversely, working-class Soledad renounced altogether to a romantic life with a man. In the diary, almost nothing is told about Soledad, we don't know anything about her financial situation, or her sexual orientation, but it is made clear that to remain outside the control of a man, she also had to renounce a number of satisfactions.

In other words, Marta (and Enrique) accepts not only what "doesn't work" but more importantly, the fact that what doesn't work is part of life itself. They are both capable of accepting the limit of thought. Nevertheless, this acceptance doesn't imply a radical departure from the symbolic or from any theory or system of thought (both Marta and Enrique are doctors), but rather "the assumption of the provisory, partial character of every system of thought as well as the abandonment of the illusion of finding a final, or exhaustive, vision of the world" (Mieli 275). This attitude gives Marta a vantage over Rubén: While he can't understand their acceptance of not having a perfect reason or explanation for everything, Marta can see Rubén at the place where he doesn't see himself, she sees whence he speaks. She realizes that Rubén needs the reassurance of the idea that something will give him a sense of wholeness. First, Blanca seemed to be the key to attaining this satisfaction, but being with Blanca constantly reminded him of a beyond whose horrifying nature he could not stand. After Blanca, Marta notices that the place of that promise of fulfillment resides in his work: "You might get married someday [...] It will depend on how much you've replaced it, if your life is full, and I know that research can fill it" ["Tú quizá algún día te cases […] dependerá de hasta qué punto lo has sustituido, si está tu vida llena, y sé que la investigación puede llenarla"] (690). What Marta points out is the fact that Rubén has made his research his new object *a*, he has sublimated it in the Lacanian sense of "shifting the libido from the void of the 'unserviceable' Thing to some concrete, material object of need that assumes a sublime quality the moment it occupies the place of the Thing" (Žižek *Metastases…* 96). Ultimately, Rubén is always situated on the side of the symbolic, restricted to the phallic jouissance it provides and allows.

There is a moment in the novel, though, when Rubén is on the verge of acknowledging the limitation of his symbolic position regarding jouissance. This happens when he is confronted

with how Theo, Blanca's lover in The Netherlands, relates to Blanca through his songs. In them, Rubén identifies "a vast and corrosive sadness, I recognized it immediately, Blanca's sadness. But Theo had assimilated it, it was himself, there was vitality in his sadness" ["una tristeza vasta y corrosiva, la reconocí en el acto, la tristeza de Blanca. Pero Theo se la había asimilado, era él mismo, había vitalidad en su tristeza"] (673). Later on in his diary, Rubén reflects on how sometimes, after someone's death, "someone in particular, or several people, take on the deceased, who comes powerfully back to life in others" ["alguien en particular, o varios, asumen al muerto. Vuelve poderosamente a la vida en los demás"] (680) and this thought leads him to wonder "who took on Blanca, Theo?" ["¿quién asumió a Blanca, Theo?"](680), being forced to conclude: "If so, he was the most worthy of being her companion [...] not me, who is tearing myself away from her in jerks, like someone pulling out clots from within, although I've already said that she and my memory, the memory of me, are inseparable, even though I have less and less awareness of it" ["Si ha sido así fue el más digno de ser su compañero […] no yo que me estoy desprendiendo de ella a tirones como quien se arranca cuajarones de dentro, aunque ya he dicho que ella y mi memoria, la memoria de mí, somos indivisibles, si bien cada vez tenga menos conciencia de ello"] (680).

In other words, the only way Rubén can relate to Blanca is by turning her into an object and inserting her in his history, in the causal narration where he objectifies his ego and achieves subjective certainty. Yet he intuitively perceives that in assimilating her as a subject, Theo somehow understood Blanca better than him, that he was worthy of being her partner. Theo represents a feminine position insofar as assuming one's own femininity allows one to defy any imaginary discourse of wholeness which negates the Real and sustains the phallic illusion of avoiding symbolic castration (Mieli 276). Femininity, in this sense, means renouncing

wholeness; in other words, it means accepting that "a part of oneself can be experienced as escaping symbolization" (Mieli 276); some jouissance can come "from outside" of the symbolic, from an unnamable beyond:

> Green meadows in space
> their fields continue within me
> through me, it seeks a warm place
> to fertilize your seed of grass. [...]
> Under the grass, we will spread out
> Cosmic rain will enter us
> We will become cosmos, stars, and universe
> Iron, fire, hydrogen, matter, and non-matter.
>
> Verdes praderas en el espacio
> continúan sus campos en mis adentros
> a través de mí busca un lugar cálido
> en donde fecundar tu simiente de hierba. […]
> Bajo la hierba nos extenderemos
> Entrará en nosotros la lluvia cósmica
> Seremos cosmos, estrellas y universo
> Hierro, fuego, hidrógeno, materia y no materia. (672)

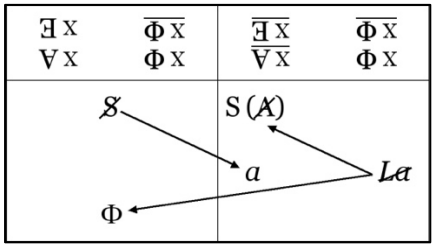
Theo's verses revolve around an image of transcendence, of transcending the sphere of meaning as well as that of substance. Materiality and sense are fused in a continuity that precludes the demarcation of an interiority and an exteriority; the song thus reveals that jouissance can only be experienced from a position of non-wholeness. In this sense "femininity shares in and animates the project of the poet, this 'bearer' of the historical truth, as Freud terms him, when in challenging the limit of language, he evokes through language what cannot be said" (Mieli 277). Even Rubén is able, for a brief moment, to experience his non-wholeness while listening to Theo's voice: "I can't explain myself while we listened, focused on the recorder" ["no puedo explicarme a mí mismo mientras escuchábamos, fijos en el magnetófono"] (672), he admits, enmeshed in an affect, both pleasurable and painful, of coming closer to Blanca

than he has ever been, precisely through the mediation of a poetic discourse that gives up any claim of objectivity or coherence, any goal of providing a definite answer to the question posed by subjectivity.

3.5 The Phallic Jouissance of Francoism

If something like feminine jouissance, a jouissance that doesn't pursue wholeness, is possible, it is because the structure of the symbolic itself contains a gap. Lacan's formulas of sexuation (see table below), which he uses to develop the concept of sexual difference, constitute a formalization of what that structural gap of the symbolic means and how the subject relates to it:[104]

Man Woman



In light of this schema, Rubén is situated as $<>*a*, as a barred subject (subjected to castration) who tries to re-find his mythical completeness through the object *a* that he himself creates through sublimation by assigning a certain person (Blanca) or object (research) the status of Thing. That is why, as Marta guesses, Rubén will only be able to be with "a woman whose life

[104] In the table, the left side corresponds to the masculine structure of desire and the right side to the feminine structure of desire. The lower level indicates the possibilities for the subject's relationship with the Other and therefore the type of love relationship it can form with another subject; the upper level symbolizes the structure that sustains the imaginary logic of the subject of castration, which is the logic of the Universal founded upon an Exception (on the upper left side) and its necessary supplement, the not-all that escapes phallic law (on the upper right side).

is being your refuge [...] a silly girl who falls in love with you. A silly girl [...] because you are an absorbing and disillusioned man, and I feel that you will give little in return, you will let yourself be loved, which is as good as not knowing how to love at all" ["una mujer que cifre su vida en ser tu reposo […] que la muy borrica se enamore de ti. La muy borrica… porque tú eres un hombre absorbente y desengañado, y se me hace que darás poco a cambio, te dejarás querer, que es tanto como no saber amar en absoluto"] (690). Rubén will be incapable of loving another woman as he loved Blanca, as object *a*, since that place is occupied with the sublime Thing that his research has become; he will also be unable to love someone as Marta and Enrique love each other, as subjects. His partner can therefore only be someone who in turn places Rubén as object *a*. Enrique, on the contrary, is capable of establishing a relationship not with *a*, but with S(~~A~~) and therefore acknowledge his own lack; in this sense, his structure of desire can be situated in the column Woman: it is defined in relation to the phallus ~~*La*~~<>Ø, but is also capable of Other (feminine) jouissance: ~~*La*~~<>S(~~A~~). This same structure applies to Blanca, but not to other women, such as Daría or Rubén's mother, who are limited to ~~*La*~~<> Ø, and embody the fact that "a woman generally gains access to the signifier of desire in our culture via a man or a 'masculine instance,' that is, someone who comes under the psychoanalytic category 'Men'" (Fink 113), of course, this someone might be a man or a woman.

With the terms "masculine"/"feminine" Lacan does not refer to men and women or any kind of positive attributes, but to two different structures of the relationship between the subject and the Other: "Sexual difference is not a discursive, symbolic construction; instead, it emerges at the very point where symbolization fails: we are sexed beings because symbolization always comes up against its own inherent impossibility" (Žižek *Metastases…* 160), against its structural gap. These two structures of subjectivity are not, therefore, complementary, there is no

continuity between them, no closure of a whole structure. The upper level of the schema of sexuation symbolizes this radical non-complementarity between the masculine and the feminine structures.

As Bruce Fink explains, the upper left side means that "the whole of man falls under the phallic function" (109), that is, a person with a masculine structure of desire is completely determined by symbolic castration. Now, "man can be considered as a whole because there is something that delimits him" (109), some subject exists who is completely outside of the phallic function, thus setting the limits of what, in the imaginary order, is called man. In other words, the existence of man necessarily implies the existence of the father, specifically, the primal Father: "While all men are marked by symbolic castration, there nonetheless exists or persists one man to whom the phallic function does not apply, one man who was never put in his place by succumbing to symbolic castration. He is no subject to the law: *he is his own law*" (Fink 110, emphasis on the original). This Father only exists in the symbolic, in logical terms, but has no existence in "reality;" insofar as the phallic function is not merely negated, but foreclosed in his case, he ex-sists: "as it is only that which is *not foreclosed* from the symbolic order that can be said to exist, existence going hand in hand with language, the primal father –implying such a foreclosure– must ex-sist, standing outside of symbolic castration" (Fink 110, emphasis on the original).

Conversely, the upper right box in the schema above shows that not all of a person who has a feminine structure of desire is defined by the phallic function, although some part of a woman is always determined by it (if the phallic function is totally inoperative in a subject, then that subject will be a psychotic). When explaining the feminine structure, Fink makes two important clarifications: First, he emphasizes the fact that Lacan is not saying that every woman

is, at least in part, not determined by the signifier, "he leaves it as a possibility, not a necessity; but that possibility is nevertheless decisive in the determination of sexual structure" (112). Here lies the structural difference between Blanca and Daría: While the former indeed seems to escape the law of the signifier, the latter does not; in fact, it is when she can no longer define herself under that law (when she is substituted as a wife and as a mother) that she kills herself. Second, Fink specifies that "Lacan never claims that the feminine instance posited to go beyond the phallus *exists*: he maintains its radical alterity in relation to logos, to the symbolic order" (113), in this sense, just like the primordial Father, this realm beyond the phallus where some part of the jouissance that can be experienced by a woman ex-sists. This ex-sistence is thematized in *Presente profundo* by the fact that Rubén cannot phantom the source or the functioning of Blanca's pleasure, nor her relationship to knowledge, which the novel reveals to be one and the same thing: Blanca's enjoyment reaches beyond the realm of the phallus, beyond causality, beyond Rubén's need for a closed, seamless functioning of the symbolic.

Before elaborating the insights that the schema of sexuation affords in understanding *Presente profundo* and Francoism itself, it is worth paying attention to two questions that arise regarding the Lacanian model of sexual difference: if we accept that "masculine" and "feminine" merely refer to two different (not complementary) structures of subjectivity (two different forms of the relationship with the Other), then (1) why are there only two structures? And (2) Why are these two exclusively logic structures related to men and women, that is, why are they called "masculine" and "feminine"? In other words, what is the link between the logic malfunction of the symbolic, whose result is the barred or castrated subject, and the imaginary construction of two (and only two) different genders?

According to Žižek, the answer to the second question is: "There is no link. What we experience as 'sexuality' is precisely the effect of the contingent act of 'grafting' the fundamental deadlock of symbolization on to the biological opposition male and female" (*Metastases…* 155). What Lacan does is clarify the fact that this "illicit" connection happens, and shows how it happens: "This 'graft' is radically contingent in the sense that it hinges on the homology between the penis in the male and the fact that in the 'masculine' formulas we are dealing with the exception that grounds universality: the short circuit between the two changes the penis into a material support of the phallic signifier of symbolic castration" (Žižek *Metastases…* 155). The parallel between the order or language and that of sexuality is clear: the phallus is the site where the emergence of neutral meaning or thought is made possible, it is the point where signifier and signified are born as two completely different (not complementary) orders: "What the phallus 'causes' is the gap that separates the surface event from bodily density: it is the 'pseudo-cause' that sustains the autonomy of the field of Sense with regard to its true, effective, bodily cause" (Žižek *Metastases…* 130). Likewise, the symbolic construction of gender as sense depends on an "pseudo-cause," "woman" as object *a*, to sustain its autonomy. In both cases, what is really at stake is the protection of subjective certainty, that is, of being. This should not be understood, however, as a justification or naturalization of the duality of gender: in the Lacanian system, the structure of the symbolic isn't dual because some people have a penis and others don't; on the contrary, the impasse of sexuality that results in the emergence of thought "retroactively" posits the presence or absence of the penis as the mark where the symbolic is sustained: "The phallus –as analysis takes it up as the pivotal or extreme point of what is enunciated as the cause of desire –analytic experience stops not writing it. It is in this "stops not being written" that resides the apex of what I have called contingency" (Lacan

Seminar XX 94). In other words, the two genders are a result of the structure of the symbolic order, and the structure of the symbolic order is the result of a specific material difference that was given special meaning because of the symbolic itself. This association is contingent, it could have been different.[105]

In the end, sexual difference is the primary site where the flawed functioning of the symbolic order can be apprehended. The masculine side of the formulas of sexuation reveals the logical inconsistency of the realm of the symbolic, its inherently paradoxical nature: the fact that "the phallic function acts as its own self-limitation, that it posits its own exception" (Žižek, "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…") in the ex-sistence of the Father, of one that is completely outside, an Exception upon which the Universal is founded. In this sense, if the symbolic constitutes itself on the bases of a traumatic, non-symbolizable exception, then "the symbolic gesture par excellence is the drawing of a line of separation between symbolic and real" (Žižek, "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…"). What is Rubén's attitude if not an effort to demarcate the limits of the symbolic (to gain knowledge about Blanca and Daría based on what he considers to be rational causality) thereby keeping the Real at bay? An effort which necessarily fails, since the Real is not external to the symbolic, "the real is the symbolic itself qua "not-all", i.e., insofar as it lacks the constitutive exception" (Žižek, "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…"). It is in this sense that Žižek sustains that "woman" is one of the names-of-the-father, not the Name-of-the-Father, but one of the names for this necessary Exception exempted from the Law, whose function is to "fill out the vicious cycle of the

[105] The fact that this association could have been different also suggests that it can change. A reconfiguration of the symbolic has the potential to affect and be affected by a reimagining of the dual schema of gender. Although pursuing this line of thought goes well beyond the scope of this chapter, some questions that could be posed include: What type of relationship with the Other is established by a non-binary subject? Is it possible that a third column is possible in the formulas of sexuation, given that the two known structures are not complementary parts of a whole?

symbolic order, the void of its origins" ("Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…"). It is where the symbolic fails, where it encounters a limit of knowledge, that something comes up to fill that structural gap.

The filler of the gap in the symbolic pertains to the order of the imaginary.[106] When Blanca refuses to comply with the Francoist construction of "womanhood" designated to fill that void, she confronts Rubén with the not-all of the symbolic. The novel shows how "woman" (as well as other terms such as "female" or "feminine") belongs to the realm of fantasy, and the notions, images, and traits that adhere to it shape "womanhood." Through the dynamic between Blanca and Rubén, *Presente profundo* shows how "woman" works as the phallus, as one of the names-of-the-father: an empty, fixed signifier whose precarious existence only upholds the system provided nobody pokes it. The novel thus manages a radical critique of the regime's ideology: it not only shows how "woman" acts as a filler for the gap in the symbolic, but above all, it renders visible the lack in positive knowledge that articulates Francoism.[107]

If Rubén and Blanca's relationship allows to identify "woman" as a gap filler in the Francoist symbolic, the interactions between characters (including Rubén) in Rubén's hometown

[106] Neither Žižek nor Fink make that distinction clear; as a result, even though both claim to be operating at a symbolic level of analysis, their texts often slip into the imaginary. When analyzing the functioning of the symbolic on the bases of sexual difference, at times they say "woman" without it being clear whether it means the "imaginary woman" as filler or the feminine structure of desire, or even women in general. Fink does refer to the fact that sexual identity is constituted on an imaginary and on a symbolic level. At the imaginary level, sexual identity is the result of a series of identifications that make up the ego; this constitutes a rigid level which often comes into conflict with the symbolic level, that is, with the specific way in which the subject relates to the Other, and which can result in a phallic (or masculine) structure or a feminine structure (116). However, in the same page, he asserts that "socially speaking, Lacan's assertion that there is no signifier of/for "woman" is, no doubt, related to the fact that *a woman's position in our culture* is either automatically defined by the man she adopts as partner or is defined only with great difficulty. In other words, the search for another way of defining herself is long and fraught with obstacles." (Fink 116, my emphasis). In this quotation, Fink is suddenly referring to actual women, female human beings, without specifying if this situation he describes applies the same way to a woman with a feminine structure of desire and to one with a masculine structure of desire; in fact, he is inadvertently linking woman with feminine structure.

[107] Here, I understand critique of ideology and its function as Žižek explains it in "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…": "the first operation of the critique of ideology is therefore to recognize in the fascinating presence of […] the filler of the gaps in the structure of our knowledge, i.e., the element in the guise of which the lack in our positive knowledge acquires positive presence."

illustrate how, within Francoist conventional wisdom, "woman" marks the limits of positive knowledge and reveals Francoist ideology to be dependent on blind acceptance and total subordination. Indeed, Daría's husband, Serafín, and son, Eugenio, constantly refer to women as beyond their understanding: "You know, women…" ["ya sabe, las mujeres…"] (676) or "I can't understand her, whoever understands them…" ["no la entiendo, quien las entienda…"] (679) repeats Eugenio, whenever he feels puzzled by his wife's behavior. Besides, the imaginary traits that constitute "womanhood" are discursively linked with the signifier "woman" in a way that perpetuates traditional power relations. Serafín, for example, insists that women like to talk and make a constant fuss about everything, yet his authority as a man will prevail: "They don't want another woman, it's their thing, let them stir up trouble, I can stop them with a single swipe whenever I want" ["no quieren a otra mujer, cosas de ellas, dejarlas alborotar que luego las paro yo de un manotazo en cuanto quiera."] (661). Eugenio's relationship with his wife, Amelia, also reproduces rigid gender stereotypes: the fact that they cannot have children is undoubtedly Amelia's fault: "It's their thing, children" ["es cosa de ellas los hijos"] he exclaims when Rubén inquiries about the issue. Every aspect of any woman's behavior, especially when it doesn't conform to what the man expects, is categorized as properly feminine, as the way women supposedly are; whatever a woman does is always the direct result of her being a woman because anything a woman does is always retroactively placed into one or another trait of "womanhood." Of course, these traits are never explained further than "women's stuff" which brings us back to the symbolic deadlock: What a woman does is beyond rational causality, and therefore it can only be "un-explained" by the fact that she is a woman.

This logic is shown in the novel through Amelia. After Daría's death, she reproaches Eugenio for having allowed an autopsy to be performed, given that the cause of her death was

obvious. Eugenio justifies himself by saying: "It is the law" ["es la ley"] (679). Faced with this answer, Amelia: "told me that men really use the law as a cover-up. And that neither my father nor I were real men. I gave her a slap, damn it, she was really trying my patience" ["me dijo que menuda tapadera nos buscábamos los hombres con lo de la ley. Y que no éramos hombres ni mi padre ni yo, le di un guantazo, leñe, que come la paciencia"] (679). Amelia brings to the fore the inconsistency of the Other because she points out that there is no actual explanation to her question, Eugenio cannot come up with a reason that explains the need for an autopsy; when he says "it is the law" he is basically acknowledging that he gives up knowing the actual reason and submits himself to the command for the command itself. In this sense, Amelia acts as the "not-all" of the feminine position, "she sees through the fascinating presence of the Phallus, […] she is able to discern in it the filler of the inconsistency of the Other. Yet another way to put it would be to say that the passage from S(A) to the Ø is the passage from impossibility to prohibition" (Žižek, "Woman as One of the Names-of-the-Father…"). The passage from the impossible to think to the prohibition to question it is embodied by Eugenio's violent response: unable to provide a satisfactory answer to a perfectly valid question, he hits Amelia. Eugenio establishes a distance between himself and the law, while Amelia takes the law seriously and thus undermines it. By being loyal to the law she runs into the structural gap, and when she points out that the law is just a smokescreen men provide themselves with, she is shedding light on the fact that the masculine position relies on that distance that safely allows it to believe in the illusion of being cast by its own imaginary ego.

The fact that Amelia is able to index the paradox of the symbolic order, however, doesn't mean that she has access to the Other jouissance that is always a possibility in the feminine structure. Here again the imaginary and the symbolic intersect in the novel, since that access to

the Other jouissance is shown to be dependent on the reality and materiality of class relations. Indeed, Blanca is capable of feminine jouissance because she has money: money to purchase the means to attain pleasure (books, drugs, etc.) and money to be independent of men, that is, to not be limited to performing reproductive work. Blanca lives her own life apart from her husband and son and can pay for somebody else to do housework in her stead. Those possibilities are ruled out for working-class women like Daría or Amelia, whose lives consist of assuming the double burden of working for the family business and housework at home. Furthermore, in both cases it is unpaid labor since the family business is understood to bring money to the family as a unit and is administrated by the father, therefore they don't even have access to something like their own wages. In consequence, the attempt to define herself other than through a man is notably easier for Blanca than for Daría or Amelia, since, as Fink puts it, "the Western societal Other never views such attempts very favorably," and "while the relation to S(Ⱥ) may be established by encounter, that encounter can be facilitated or thwarted by the culture and subculture(s) in which *a woman finds herself*" (Fink 116). *Presente profundo* is also bringing attention to the fact that such an encounter is harder for a working-class woman than it is for a bourgeois woman.

Through this class contrast, the novel exposes how the authoritarian repetition that characterizes Francoism affects women. Eugenio tells Rubén that Amelia and Daría never got along, mostly because Daría felt threatened by Amelia in whom she perspicaciously foresaw her replacement. To Eugenio's surprise, after Daría's death, Amelia becomes Daria's main advocate, literally taking her place, to the point that they even look alike physically: "She even resembles her... she does things just like her all of a sudden" ["si hasta se le parece… hace las cosas mismo como ella de la noche a la mañana"] (675-676); "if she were her daughter, she wouldn't resemble

her more" ["si fuera hija suya no iba a parecérsele más"] (655-656). The resemblance in appearance and conduct symbolizes the inevitable destiny of women as housewives (and workers) in Francoist Spain, a role that pervades every aspect of working-class women's lives, including their subjective experience of their own identity.[108] From being talkative and expressing her discontent: "Who would have told me just a few days ago, you know, she used to always come after me with comparisons, and in my hometown this, and in my house that, and my mother here, and my friends there…" ["quién me lo iba a decir hace solo unos días, oiga, antes andaba siempre tras de mí con las comparaciones y en mi pueblo esto y en mi casa lo otro, y mi madre aquí y mis amigas allá…"] (676), after she becomes the main housewife of the family, Amelia "doesn't use perfume anymore […] between the kitchen and the vegetable garden she no longer thinks about that stuff" ["ahora ni se pone las colonias […] entre la cocina y el campo ya no piensa en esas cosas"] (676). Besides, Eugenio recounts that she doesn't go to the village anymore (to a certain extent due to the comments made by other women about the fact that she doesn't have children) and she also gave up singing in church. Amelia seems to have given up even her capacity to express herself and has become a sort of empty shell that performs a specific function: that of reproductive work.

However, even this function is truncated for Amelia, because she can't have children. This offers another instance of how the imaginary affects the subjective structure of desire. In "Wages against Housework," Silvia Federici established the junction between the logic of capitalism (that gives shape to what Fink calls the Western societal Other) and the imaginary construction of woman as gender, when she explained how housework "has been imposed on

[108] As Helen Graham has explained, through the Sección Femenina, the regime tried to prevent working-class women's access to the job market. However, with levels of poverty skyrocketing during the post-war years, most working-class women combined housework with some form of often informal and badly-paid labor. (See "Gender and the State: Women in the 1940s").

women but also transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character" (12). An integral part of this natural attribute of women as house workers and caretakers is the bearing of children, and not being able to do so (the possibility of the husband being the infertile one is not even an option) is cause for social stigmatization. Therefore, the imaginary traits of "womanhood" effectively hinder Amelia's possibilities of jouissance, that is, they determine Amelia's relationship with the Other.

Amelia's structure of desire is feminine but is restricted to ~~*La*~~<> Ø, whereas Eugenio illustrates the masculine position with regards to the Other, which consists of hiding the deadlock of the symbolic, that is, avoiding the fact that the symbolic establishes its own exception, that its structure coincides with its failure, that it posits its own limitation. "Woman," just like the primordial Father, is a signifier that comes in the place of the gap and, therefore, "the position of Woman as exception is a masculine fantasy par excellence" (Žižek, "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father…"), a fantasy retroactively posed in order to avoid an encounter with the inconsistency of the Other. As the novel repeatedly shows, that exception, "woman" as mystery or enigma, always runs into the same deadlock: Being unexplainable becomes not just a quality of something specific any subject might do at some point, but the essence that defines women's nature and therefore, "woman" (not being subjected to the law that establishes causality) can be posited as a flawed, irredeemable exception (women are simply that way, there is nothing to understand). This allows the law to keep working (albeit always metonymically pursuing the unattainable object *a*) under the illusion of Causality, and the castrated subject to keep thinking itself as rational, that is, to keep acting as if it wasn't traversed by an unconscious which always knows more than the subject itself. *Presente profundo* shows how "woman" as a gap filler

facilitates the phallic jouissance of Francoism, it allows the subject to see itself transparently, to avoid confronting the difference within. In Francoist ideology, anything a man does is rational, because he is a man; in other words, if a man does it, it has to be rational. Conversely, if a woman does it, it is irrational. That way, Francoism lives in a mirage of homogeneity and coherence (on the condition that "woman" continues to be something outside the law, an exception that upholds the Universal).

Faced with the impossibility of its own identity, the subject provides itself with imaginary identifications (first and foremost the ego) in order to escape uncertainty. This is what Rubén, Eugenio or Serafín do in the novel. Through their efforts to protect their ego, the novel suggests that subjectivity is a question, not a substance or a trait. The subject only is insofar as it wonders what object it is for the Other, what the Other desires. That is why there is no subject without object *a*, without some phantasmic illusion placed in the place of its own lack. The successive symbolic identifications the I (the ego) acquires are nothing but fillers of the void that is the subject, ultimately none of them can be identified with the subject itself. "Woman" as one of the names-of-the-father confronts the subject (male or female) with its lack and therefrom comes the need to force the imaginary construction of "womanhood" on females: through the "illicit," contingent establishment of sexual difference, a subjective certainty is achieved, which depends on ensuring that "woman" remains a mystery, an exceptional object, and doesn't become a subject capable of reminding us that the subject is a void, its identity an illusion.

3.6 Francoism as a Response to Castration Anxiety

Although in different ways, Amelia and Blanca illustrate how the anxiety "woman" provokes (or has the potential to provoke) is castration anxiety, insofar as "woman" actually

reveals the structure of subjectivity itself to be predicated on the fact that "not-all of the subject is determined by the causal chain" (Žižek *Metastases…* 122). The subject is always already the subject of the unconscious, it is the result of a repressed desire for the Mother, trapped in an eternal pursuit of a mythical completeness. Hence, "woman, not man, is the subject *par excellence*" given that "the subject 'is' this very gap that separates the cause from its effect; it emerges precisely in so far as the relationship between cause and effect becomes 'unaccountable'" (Žižek *Metastases…* 122). The subject can only access universality, the realm of the Other and of communication with others, insofar as its own identity is disrupted, marked by a constitutive lack. The masculine structure of desire consists of avoiding castration anxiety, that is, keeping the Real separate, exerting a cut in the real in order to establish a symbolic order and, simultaneously, hiding the fact that a cut had to be made.

Exposing the reactions that (male and female) characters have toward "woman," *Presente profundo* unveils the way in which the regime experienced the Real. This is best achieved by the contrast between the first-person narrative of Rubén and the fragments enunciated by an omniscient narrator. Rubén is so caught up in the masculine position, that the patriarchally determined reality of women is a blind spot in his discourse (even when it seems obvious, as was the case in his conversation with Soledad, analyzed in the first subsection of this chapter). Conversely, the third-person narrator registers the details that articulate sexual difference. For instance, when Rubén visits Serafín, Luisa, and Amelia, Serafín keeps talking about the family business and the difficulties *he* is facing, and the third person narrator observes "Serafín doesn't use the word us" ["Serafín no usa el nos"] (657) and later on "he has one hand in the pocket of his pants, and from time to time, he adjusts his private parts" ["tiene una mano en el bolsillo de

su pantalón y de cuando en cuando se acomoda sus partes"] (658).[109] None of this could have been noticed by Rubén who, as different as he feels from the men in his hometown, faithfully reproduces their patriarchal ideas.

In this sense, *Presente profundo* brings to fruition its political intervention. Published in 1973, the background of Rubén's reflections are the political, social and cultural changes of late Francoism. As a young man from a small town who had been educated in line with Francoist traditional values only to later substitute them for a more modern conception of the world, Rubén embodies a complex generational change that echoes the country's imminent transition to democracy. Yet, knowing themselves different from their parents and willing to question the long-standing dogmas of the regime through science and a rational attitude, Enrique and Rubén are careful not to upset the older generation: "We felt that our elders were not prepared for change, and that a deeply rooted conservative, individualistic morality still subsisted in them. We respected them even if we didn't share the same thoughts, but we tried to spare them from traumas as much as possible" ["nos parecía que nuestros mayores no tenían preparación para el cambio, y que subsistía en ellos muy arraigada una suerte de moralidad conservadora, individualista. Les respetábamos aunque no pensásemos lo mismo, pero procurábamos evitarles traumas hasta donde era posible"] (631). In a general sense, this quotation captures the spirit of the transition to democracy in Spain which, to a high degree, maintained the deeply rooted structure of the Francoist state, and that included the positing of "woman" as Exception.

[109] Significantly enough, Serafín, whose business is thrilling and has subsequently improved his social status, complaints about the new demands regarding working conditions and wages the workers are starting to make (which are consistent with the historical period of political instability and social unrest of late Francoism) and accuses them of "they are all little ladies" ["son todos señoritas"] (657). The identification between modernization and feminization is not new and, in the context of Francoist Spain, it symptomatically points toward the fact that anything that disturbs the law automatically acquires feminine qualities. This in turn resonates with *Volverás a Región* where it is Marré, a woman, who alters the stability instituted by Numa's law.

Indeed, Rubén's attitude toward women is consistently conservative, not only because he feels questioned "as a man" by Blanca, but in the abundance of naturalized sexist comments that spread out in the text, like when he casually explains that his father "he has led her with a firm hand" ["la ha llevado con mano firme"] (655) referring to his mother. When he thinks about Marta, he makes condescending comments: "she tried to have us treat her like another boy" ["intentaba que la tratáramos como a otro chico"] (652) or "she had set out to realize her own life" ["se había propuesto realizar su propia vida"] (653). Even in his conversations with her, he cannot see Marta orienting her life toward anything except a man: "I want to be worthy, simply worthy of my human destiny. —Enrique? —Not just Enrique." ["quiero ser digna, simplemente digna de mi destino humano. —¿Enrique? —No solo Enrique"] (689). Above all, Rubén and Enrique's attitude toward women in general, their way of talking about them and analyzing them reproduces the same prejudices Rubén finds in the peasants in his hometown, from whom he considers to be so distant.[110] This is shown in the text whenever Rubén talks to Serafín or Eugenio. Serafín suffers from prostate issues and refuses to go to the doctor because he is scared of becoming impotent as a result of the procedure and Rubén emerges as the voice of reason and science when he clarifies that nothing of the sort will happen. Similarly, when Eugenio admits that sometimes he blames Amelia for not being able to have children, Rubén thinks:

> It's useless to intervene. If I were to prescribe a specific treatment, he would appreciate it and take good note, but getting involved in behaviors... […] He's a straightforward man, a simple nature, but with a constant of a misunderstood or half-understood virility: either you are a man or you are not, no middle ground, no

[110] This may sound somewhat contradictory in the case of Enrique, whom I characterized as having a "feminine" structure of desire. However, there is no contradiction: Enrique's ego is the result of his identification with the father, with the idea of "manhood;" whereas when it comes to his desire, he is capable of feminine jouissance (of assuming the radical incompleteness of the self). Therefore, at an imaginary level, Enrique identifies with "manhood," and "womanhood" is its imaginary opposite. Whereas at a symbolic level, Enrique is able to establish a relationship with Marta where both of them act as subjects. The conflicts such subjective configuration might bring to him remain unknown to the reader, whose only insight into Enrique's life is mediated by Rubén's narrative. Conversely, Rubén is both imaginarily and symbolically a man.

> nuances, and for him, that concept is primarily linked to sex and the authority derived from sex.
>
> [Es inútil intervenir. Si recetara un especifico me lo agradecería y tomaría buena nota, pero meterme en las conductas… […] Es un hombre elemental, una naturaleza simple, pero con la constante de una virilidad mal entendida o entendida a medias: o se es hombre o no se es, sin términos medios, sin matices, y en él ese concepto va unido primariamente al sexo y al mando derivado del sexo.] (679-680)

The quotation belongs to a fragment that is told by the third person narrator, where Rubén's thoughts are reproduced using free indirect speech. Through this complex layering of voices, the novel casts the Gaze upon Rubén: what he fails to see is the similarity between Eugenio and himself. Rubén may have scientific knowledge that distances him from traditional superstitions and old tales about each gender and sexuality, but he still based his manhood on the power relation he established with Blanca. Later, he reflects:

> During the return trip from La Guardia, I got the feeling from his enveloping questions that he wanted to find out if I thought Amelia suffers from a mental imbalance. She does suffer from an imbalance, not of mental origin but emotional. I didn't tell him; he wouldn't understand, or he would be offended. For them, that doesn't count as harm.
>
> [Me dio la sensación durante el regreso de La Guardia, por sus preguntas envolventes, que quería indagar si yo pensaba que Amelia sufre un desequilibrio mental. Sufre un desequilibrio no de origen mental sino afectivo, no se lo dije, no lo entendería, o se ofendería, para ellos eso no cuenta como daño.] (680)

Rubén is able to identify Eugenio's shortcomings when it comes to understanding the human body or even the role of affects in subjective interaction. However, he remains unaware of what Eugenio's attitude means: Eugenio is attempting to circumscribe Amelia's incomprehensible behavior to some malfunctioning on her part that is ultimately the malfunctioning of "woman," as opposed to a consequence of their subjective dynamic. This attitude is exactly the same as Rubén has deployed throughout his journal. Even if his methods

are the product of "reason," his ultimate goal was to condense upon Blanca everything he didn't understand or didn't work in their relationship instead of questioning his own actions and behavior and, above all, the premises upon which said behavior was founded. And just like Eugenio, when talking about women, Rubén and Enrique find in "femininity" the accepted limit of theory: "In women's memory, much of what we consider decisive for them leaves no trace" ["en la memoria de las mujeres mucho de lo que se nos antoja decisivo para ellas, no deja rastro"] (644), which is tantamount to saying: we simply cannot understand them *because* they are a mystery.

In fact, the novel suggests that the identification of "woman" with the inexplicable contributes to Daría's death. The first fragment of the novel, narrated in the third person, presents the last few hours of Daría's life, and follows her until she jumps into the sea. The omniscient narrator points out that Daría "has been carrying her sadness around for several days, just a little whisper inside, and the others don't notice, they don't even look at her" ["lleva varios días con su tiento a cuestas, apenas un soplillo en alguna parte de dentro, y los demás ni se dan cuenta, ni la miran"] (593). As she feels waves of depression coming to her, her own family fails to notice anything (although Eugenio later admits that she seemed quieter lately, but nobody thought much about it or asked her about it). As long as she keeps fulfilling her duties, performing her work and housework, no one worries about her, and her behavior and demeanor are of no consequence, for she is a woman, impossible to understand by definition.

The dependency of women's oppression upon the symbolic order is captured by the images of repetition that open and close the text. In the first fragment, Daría is presented to the reader at work: "She splashes the pure wheat flour and then piles it up, gathers it, and makes a round hole inside. She does everything in a round shape, not knowing that she's doing it in a

round shape" ["salpica la harina-pura-trigo y después la amontona, la ajunta y hace un hoyo redondo dentro, hace las cosas todas en redondo, no sabe que las hace en redondo"] (594), just like "the wheels of the mills turn without knowing that they are turning, but the man Serafín thinks about tomorrow, about the future, about leaving, and about many other things, and if they were only things... (And Celia)" ["las ruedas de los molinos dan vueltas sin saber que son vueltas, pero el hombre Serafín piensa en día de mañana, en futuro, en echarse por fuera, y en que día sea ella y muchas otras cosas, y si fueran solo cosas… (Y Celia)"] (595). The contrast is evident between Daría, who is condemned to the eternal repetition of reproductive work, and her husband, who makes plans and finds a younger lover, a replacement for the functions Daría performs. The seamless repetitiveness of Daría's life is echoed at the end of the novel. In the last pages, Eugenio arrives home, to the same kitchen where Daría used to make bread, and where Amelia is working now. He complaints about the Winter being early that year: "'Winter is coming early this year, what a day. —It's time, it's time. —But it's already night.' The kitchen window is narrow and short, divided into small square glass panes. Amelia looks. She says: 'It is still night'" ["'*Ven o inverno cedo iste ano, qué día. —É o seu, é o seu tempo. —Pero si é casi noite hastra agora'.* La ventana de la cocina es estrecha y corta, cuadriculada de cristales. Amelia mira. Dice: '*Aínda é noite*"] (703).While for Eugenio it is *already* nighttime, for Amelia it *still* is. The light of a new day doesn't come to Amelia's life, trapped in being "woman," in fulfilling her reproductive duty and having any sign of her subjectivity misinterpreted as a side effect of being a woman, unexplainable, flawed, and beyond reasonable causality. And she, too "sprinkles the flour over the dough as if it were snowing and then gathers it, gathers it in a round shape, does everything in a round shape, not knowing that she's doing it in a round shape [...] and the counter edge which used to be Daría's now belongs to her" ["salpica la harina sobre la

masa como si la nevara y luego la ajunta, la recoge en redondo, hace las cosas todas en redondo, no sabe que las hace en redondo […] y el borde de ella que es ahora el de Daría"] (703).

The image of repetitiveness condenses how *Presente profundo* works simultaneously at the level of the imaginary and the symbolic and brings forth the Real experience of Francoism, that is, how Francoism deals with castration anxiety. In the way it symbolically articulates relationships between characters, the novel shows Francoist ideology as a masculine position toward desire, that is, as an obsessive attempt to fill the gap of the symbolic structure so that it conforms to its idea of identity (of being) by situating "woman" as the Exception upon which the whole system is founded. The novel also shows that the fact that the symbolic gap is filled gives body to the imaginary construction of gender and gender roles in Francoist Spain whereby women are materially oppressed. In other words, the novel provides insight into the mechanisms that give rise to a specific form of oppression, but it also sheds light upon the reality of said oppressive situation. The novel seems to *know* that in figuring oppression (at the imaginary level), it can contribute to the emergence of a political articulation of resistance. At the same time, it suggests that to measure and describe an oppressive situation without bringing forth the symbolic mechanisms that articulate it runs the risk of falling into the illusion that the problem can be resolved if only the rational solution is found, that is, it runs the risk of forgetting that the structural gap will still be there and therefore no imaginary fix will do away with the problem.

Ultimately, echoing Clara Campoamor's quotation, the novel argues that the amount of modernization or democratization the country achieves matters very little if transformations only happen at an imaginary level. What is really at stake is the choice between filling the gap in the symbolic with some master signifier or other, once again assuming a masculine position and

trying to bring closure to a system whose nature lies precisely in being split and non-whole, or femininely leaving that gap “open” to newer, non-definitive subjectivizations of the Real.

Chapter 4 Don Julián, or the Vindication of Difference

los fríos monumentos
de vuestros respetables ascendientes,
por vuestra infamia hollados con desprecio
serán del Africano, y levantando
sus pavorosas sombras el lamento
de la venganza, acompañando el grito
de la desolación sus tristes ecos,
maldecirán el detestable nombre
de la odiosa Florinda; y repitiendo
su imprecación el orbe horrorizado
será eterna en los siglos venideros.
María Rosa Gálvez. *Florinda, tragedia en tres actos*

Don Julián, by Juan Goytisolo, was published in 1970, with the title *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (*Vindication of Count Julian*).[111] It is the second installment of what is usually called Álvaro Mendiola's trilogy, formed by the novels *Señas de identidad* (*Marks of Identity* 1966), *Don Julián* (1970), and *Juan sin tierra* (*Juan the Landless* 1976). It is a highly experimental novel, which uses stream of consciousness to narrate one day in the life of an anonymous Spanish exile in Tangier (through veiled references in the text, it is possible to identify this character with Álvaro Mendiola, the protagonist of *Señas de identidad*). *Don Julián* is divided into four chapters. The first introduces the main character, who wanders through Tangier's intricate and labyrinth-like streets under the overwhelming and oppressive presence of

[111] In the 2000 revised edition, the novel's title was changed to *Don Julián*. According to Linda Gould Levine, this change was motivated by Goytisolo's desire to simplify the title, and also because he no longer believed he had anything to vindicate (see her introduction to the 2004 edition, included in the 2009 edition published by Catedra. All quotations from the novel belong to this edition, I indicate page numbers in brackets. All translations are mine).

Spain on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar. In the second chapter, he and his lover, Tariq, sit at a café where they smoke hashish and drink tea while the television informs about massive participation in the national referendum of 1966 in Spain.[112] Faced with this news and intoxicated, Álvaro starts fantasizing about becoming the legendary Count Don Julián, and leading a new North African invasion of the Iberian peninsula, destroying all the myths and symbols which, according to the Francoist hegemonic discourse, constitute the essence of the Spanish identity.[113] This fantasy forms chapter 3 of the novel. Finally, in chapter four, Álvaro-Julián rapes and tortures Alvarito, the child version of Álvaro Mendiola himself, until Alvarito is forced to commit suicide and is reborn as Muslim; this scene constitutes the climax of the two complex fantasies deployed in chapters 3 and 4. Finally, in the last few pages of the novel, the effects of hashish withering away, Álvaro walks back home knowing that the next day will be exactly the same, that nothing has changed.

The referendum of 1966 is the historical event that triggers Álvaro's fantasies. This event also links *Don Julián* with the preceding volume of the trilogy. Here I will refer briefly to the last pages of *Señas de identidad*, since they provide vital context to understand the kind of fantasy work *Don Julián* works through.

Present time in *Señas de identidad* constitutes one weekend during which Álvaro Mendiola visits Barcelona to be at the funeral of a progressive professor whose classes he used to attend in college. Through conversations and memories, the reader learns that Álvaro belongs to a formerly affluent Catalan bourgeois family, and was educated according to the traditional

[112] The 1966 Spanish Organic Law Referendum was held on November 14. It concerned the New Organic Law, which was approved by over 98% of votes on a turnout of around 88%.
[113] The legend of Don Julián is one of the foundational myths of the Spanish identity. According to medieval literature and historiography, Don Julián was a Visigoth noble, governor of Tangier and Ceuta, whose daughter, Cava, was raped by the Visigoth king Rodrigo. According to the legend, as an act of revenge, Julián facilitated the entry of the Berbers from North Africa into the Iberian Peninsula, thus inaugurating the period of Muslim hegemony.

values of National-Catholicism. In college, he developed a critical attitude toward the regime, which forced him to leave Spain; he currently lives in Paris, where he tries to gather the support of French intellectuals for the Spanish cause (only to discover that their interest is only circumstantial and nothing more than a pose and that they easily forget about Spain once a new, trendier cause comes along).

Señas de identidad follows two fundamental threads: on the one hand, Álvaro critically examines his childhood and his family with feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and rejection, vindicating his own path in life which "separates me from you and brings me closer to the pariahs / to the wicked" ["me separa de vosotros y me acerca a los parias / a los malditos" (*SDI* 446)];[114] on the other hand, he starts to question the usefulness of his endeavors. The novel ends with Álvaro visiting Montjuic, one of the main sightseeing attractions in Barcelona, which is crowded by tourists, due to the new economic policies of the "developmentalism" period. In Montjuic, he reads a pamphlet that erases the recent history of torture and executions perpetrated in the castle at the end and after the Civil War, and realizes that the regime has succeeded in re-writing the country's history. However, what bothers and frustrates him the most is that his fellow citizens have resigned, they have simply accepted the dictatorship and moved on with their lives. That is when he makes the decision to leave not only Spain, but Europe, and live in exile in Tangier:

> it's better to live among foreigners who speak a foreign language than among compatriots who daily prostitute their own / humiliate their foreheads / what choice do we have they say / faced with the brutal order that denies them and strips them of their precious and irreplaceable singularity.

[114] Juan Goytisolo, *Señas de identidad*, Barcelona: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2008. All quotes from *Señas de identidad* belong to this edition. I use slash (/) to indicate that a line in the original text is cut short. I follow the same method when quoting from *Don Julián.*

> [mejor vivir entre extranjeros que se expresan en idioma extraño para ti que en medio de paisanos que diariamente prostituyen el propio / humillan la frente / qué remedio cabe dicen / ante el orden brutal que les niega y de su preciosa e irreemplazable singularidad les despoja.]

In *Señas de identidad*, then, it is the Spaniards' acquiescence to Franco's rule that leads Álvaro to exile in Tangier. By 1966, however, the general passivity Álvaro perceives in his compatriots has turned into something different: open, active support for Franco and the regime. The truth is that the new law sanctioned by the referendum didn't translate as any substantial changes, it superficially modified the structure of the government and slightly limited Franco's power. Since the new law signified no actual political transformation, for Álvaro, the large number of voters and the overwhelming victory of the "yes" meant a resounding endorsement of Franco by the majority of the population. Thus, if in *Señas de identidad*, he felt frustrated by his fellow citizens' resignation, in *Don Julián* he feels utterly defeated by their open support of the dictatorship.

This shift has a strong impact on Álvaro: although in *Señas de identidad* he questioned whether his endeavors could help overthrow the regime, the need to oust Franco was never in question. Whereas now, seeing the support Franco obtained in the referendum makes Álvaro realize that this is no longer true: there is no longer a Spain to save, his fellow Spaniards do not wish to be "liberated." Álvaro interprets this attitude of his fellow citizens as proof of how successfully the regime has managed to impose and naturalize its ideology. It is this realization that triggers the fantasy of becoming don Julián and invading the peninsula, destroying the cornerstones of the traditional hegemonic discourse on national identity, of which Francoism is the last iteration.

4.1 *Don Julián* and its Critics. The Question of Ideology

The content of the fantasies in *Don Julián* has been highly controversial. Julián's attack against Spain constitutes an act of violence that includes the rape of women, the destruction of land and churches, an exoticizing and Orientalizing portray of Arab-Muslim men,[115] a projection of stereotypes about male homosexuality and, eventually, even the "pederasty" relationship between Julián and Alvarito. As a result, *Don Julián* has inspired numerous interpretations (which ultimately constitute different ways in which critics position themselves regarding the literary phenomenon and its political potential).

In the 1970s, studies mostly focused on the novel's metaliterary and self-referential nature, emphasizing its role in deconstructing the values and myths of Francoism.[116] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, interpretations emerged that delved into the more problematic aspects.[117] The most common criticism consists of what could be called a "deconstruction of the

[115] I use the term "Arab-Muslim" in order to convey both ethnicity and religion, since both are at the root of the peninsular conceptualization of identity. I will further elaborate this point in the fourth subsection of this chapter.
[116] Among these: "Don Julián o la 'destrucción' de España," by José Corrales Egea; *Juan Goytisolo. Alienación y agresión en señas de identidad y Reivindicación del donde don Julián*, by José Ortega; *La novela de Juan Goytisolo*, by Gonzalo Navajas; "Construcción poética de la destrucción. Recursos de organización del relato en *Reivindicación del conde don Julián*" by José Manuel Martín (1986). For some critics, this destruction also contains a construction of something new and/or fulfils a process of liberation: "Desmitificación de la España sagrada," by Linda Gould Levine; "La autodestrucción creative en *Reivindicación del conde don Julián*" by Robert C. Spires; *Trilogy of Treason. An Intertextual Study of Juan Goytisolo* by Michael Ugarte.
[117] Some of these even go as far as to morally judge the novel, the characters of even Goytisolo himself. For example for Jo Labanyi, "the lack of causal clauses prevents causal analysis, refusing the reader any insight into the historical factors which produced Francoism" (212); the question here being why should this (or any other novel for that matter) have to provide such an explanation (or what that would look like in a work of fiction). Bradley Epps reproaches the novel for carrying out a rebellion in the name of Julián, instead of in the name of Cava; according to him, this reproduces patriarchal forms of domination: "in fact, for Cava to publicize her outrage *in her own terms* would be to usurp Julián's power, to *play* the manly part, to undertake a radical rebellion that Goytisolo writes in the name of Julián" (48). It is easy to imagine, however, that if Goytisolo had indeed voiced Cava's rebellion, criticism would have ensued against a male author usurping the silenced voice of women. Claudia Schaefer-Rodríguez starts from the premise that the novel should somehow "benefit Arab people" (69) (here one wonders who decides what it is that a novel *should do* and what exactly would mean, for a novel, to "benefit the Arab people," or any people). She reproaches Goytisolo for "not promoting an understanding of modern man, neither Arabic nor Spanish" (69) and claims that "the reader has to wonder how to reconcile these 'Arabs' with a changing real world (and if this is still possible) and if *RCDJ* proposes a concrete constructive alternative or perpetuates the rigid social divisions of 'third world' ideology" (70). Once again, the question arises as to why should any novel do these things in particular.

deconstruction" to which the novel subjects the Francoist discourse by which oftentimes the scholar reveals themselves to be cleverer than Goytisolo; the final message being something like "Goytisolo thought he was very radical, *but in reality*, his thinking turns out to be conservative in one way or another."[118] Since the beginning of the 21th century, Goytisolo's work has received less and less critical attention.[119]

Regarding all this, and as a response to this type of criticism, in this chapter I argue that *Don Julián* carries out a critique of the regime's ideology. By this, I don't mean simply that the novel deconstructs, questions, challenges the regime's ideas, or that it shows them to be the product of a specific narrative. Undoubtedly, *Don Julián* does do all of that, but it does so in a specific way. First, by working at the level of the imaginary, that is, at the level of fantasy; and, more importantly, by embodying in itself the "negative version" of the regime's fantasies. As in the negative of a photograph, *Don Julián* gives shape (shape, not "positive" content) to what is foreclosed from the regime's discourse and, precisely insofar as it is foreclosed, determines it. Of

[118] According to Stephanie Sieburth and Bradley Epps, the transgression of Francoist discourse contains a misogynistic element that perpetuates the oppression of women; Epps and Paul Julian Smith consider that what may appear as an affirmation of homosexuality reproduces, nevertheless, the prejudices and stereotypes of reactionary homophobic discourse. For Jo Labanyi, the novel simply substitutes Francoist myths for new myths, perpetuating the binary logic of Francoism and closing the text to dissent toward Goytisolo's ideas. Finally William Viestenz reckons that the novel implicitly reproduces the regime's theory of sovereignty. This deconstructive criticism, however, sometimes tends to trivialize the violence of the dictatorship: Both Labanyi and Epps claim that *Don Julián* reproduces fascist logics: "Goytisolo's de-contextualized appropriation of texts echoes the Nationalists' appropriation of Spain's literary heritage for their own purposes" (Labanyi 210-211); "The text *defends itself* by casting anything but submission to its logic as complicit with fascism: to resist *Conde Julián* is to resist freedom. Ironically, or perhaps all too logically, the text replicates the very ideology that it purports to subvert" (Epps 42). Suggesting that the novel's appropriation of canonical texts of the Francoist cultural discourse is equivalent to the ideological rewriting of Spain's history performed by the regime, or that resisting Julián's invasion is equivalent to resisting the dictatorship constitutes, in my opinion, an extreme banalization of the dictatorship's cultural and physical violence. Especially if we consider that, as these critics' works prove, Goytisolo's novel can be criticized as much as one wants, without any consequences for those doing the criticism (except, perhaps, being included in a later novel, *Carajicomedia*, as laughable characters); whereas open criticism and resistance to the Francoist regime could and often did result in exile (as was Goytisolo's case), imprisonment, torture and, in some cases, even death.

[119] The works of Cristina Moreiras-Menor, *Cultura herida* (2002), Hedy Habra, "Fragmentación proteica y specular en la *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* de Juan Goytisolo" (2005) and Ellen Mayock, "Alienation, Anarchy and Masculinity in Juan Goytisolo's Count Julián" (2012) are among the very few works addressing this novel since the early 2000s.

course, the Francoist ideology is not a particular, isolated occurrence, it participates in other discourses too, and its main frame is that of Christianity. Thus, in confronting the regime with its own ideology, the novel also confronts us, readers, with ours. Ultimately, what makes *Don Julián* "uncomfortable" for many is not the fact that it "illuminates some repressed," but that it points to the unconscious as the radical difference within the self, that it, confronts us with the fact that what constitutes us (individually as well as collectively) is a negative form of knowledge, "*a not knowing that we know* (… that we don't know)" (Zupančič 16).

4.2 Fantasy and Difference

At a "superficial level," what causes rejection in the novel are the fantasy images of Julián's subversion. Given the cruelty and violence of said fantasies, it is no wonder that they have been met with resistance by critics and readers alike. What is it exactly that provokes such resistance? Freud's brief essay, "Creative Writers and Daydream," provides useful means to answer this question. According to Freud, creative writing derives directly from the fantasies adults have when daydreaming. He concedes that this assertion can seem contradictory, since adult fantasy is rarely shared with others, "as a rule, [a person] would rather admit to his wrongdoings than disclose his fantasies" (27). Furthermore, Freud adds, no one desires to know about someone else's fantasies; it would lead, at the very least, to great discomfort.

> However, when the creative writer plays games for us or tells us what we are inclined to explain as his personal daydreams, we feel a great deal of pleasure […]. How the writer achieves this is his most intimate secret; the true *ars poetica* lies in the technique by which he overcomes our repulsion […]. We can make a guess at two of the means used by this technique: the writer tones down the character of the egoistic daydream by modifying and disguising it, and bribes us with the purely formal –that is aesthetic– bonus of pleasure that he offers us in the way he presents his fantasies. (33)

Therefore, Freud explains this apparent contradiction by resorting to the work with language, to the form that mediation takes, which allows the author of fiction to eliminate the most intimate component and convey ideas, feelings, or actions in a way that distances the author from them; that is, in a way that does not reveal what could be understood as the author's most intimate fantasies. Of course, Freud's argument that works of fiction are the author's innermost fantasies "disguised" through an artistic use of language is debatable. What interests me here is the concept of fantasy developed by Freud in this brief paper, since it provides insight into the connection between individual fantasy and Lacan's notion of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other.

Based on the coordinates offered by Freud, then, it is easier to locate the complexity of *Don Julián*: The reason why the novel can be "uncomfortable" to read is that it presents itself as the opposite of the situation described by Freud. *Don Julián* seems to narrate Álvaro Mendiola's most intimate fantasies just as he thinks them, that is, *as if* the literary text wasn't subjecting them to any filter (after all, what we read is Álvaro's stream of consciousness, the novel acts *as if* he were thinking those fantasies only "for himself"). Add the undeniably autobiographical dimension of the novel,[120] and the result is an almost impossible combination: reading *Don Julián* often resembles what it would be like to listen to someone confessing their most secret and perverse fantasies. To make matters worse, Goytisolo's prose avoids a linear, monologic, "rational" narration; therefore, instead of "bribing us with an aesthetic bonus of pleasure," the novel is obscure and extremely difficult.

[120] It is enough to read the author's memories, *Coto vedado* and *En los reinos de Taifas*, to notice the strong parallelisms between Álvaro Mendiola y Juan Goytisolo. For a detailed account of the authobiographical aspects of the Álvaro Mendiola's trilogy, see Fernández (1991), Six (1991) y Moreiras-Menor (1991 y 1996).

The fabric of fantasies that the novel weaves culminates with the transgression of the prohibition of incest; that is, the fantasy of the ultimate realization of sovereign desire.[121] For Álvaro, that act of subjective sovereignty materializes precisely in the act of revealing his private fantasies (including incest) unapologetically and without any sense of guilt. As Freud explains, the guilt an individual feels regarding their fantasies is nothing but the guilt felt in front of their superego: the fantasies of adulthood are largely constituted by desires that go against social and moral conventions; in other words, desires that must be hidden from others (27). To the extent that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, the members of a certain community share similar superego mandates and prohibitions. *Don Julián* reproduces the stream of consciousness of Álvaro as he tries to free himself from submission to the Father, and this means renouncing recognition from the others in his community (a recognition that comes from sharing the same moral values and conventions or, in Althusserian terms, a recognition that comes from repeating the ideological rituals and practices learned through mediation of Ideological State Apparatuses). By freely sharing his fantasies, that is, openly expressing desires that contravene the social and moral mandates of the group to which he belongs (Francoist Spain) he becomes abject for the others, liable to be judged by them (in this sense, maybe the repulsion the novel provokes among some critics actually testifies to its success).

[121] In his stroll through the streets of Tangiers, Álvaro Mendiola is accosted several times by Álvaro Peranzules, a Spanish lawyer who supports the regime and represents the ideal subject of Francoism. This character functions as a sort of mirror image of Álvaro Mendiola: Álvaro Peranzules is what Álvaro Mendiola should have become, it is what his father, a conservative bourgeois man, would have wanted and expected him to be. In fact, the obedient, pious Alvarito is the child version of both Álvaros, whose mother is Isabella I of Castile (who married king Ferdinand the II of Aragon, thus uniting almost the whole Iberian peninsula under one crown. The Francoist cultural discourse made Isabella one of the cornerstone foundational myths of Spanish identity). In the novel, Álvaro Peranzules' daughter is also Isabella I of Castile; the succession of Álvaros and Isabellas thus points to the reproduction of the Francoist order. During his invasion of the peninsula, Julián-Álvaro has sexual intercourse with Peranzules' daughter, thus with his own mother.

Ultimately, Álvaro is trying to liberate himself from subjection to the Father's Law, to the law of Francoism.[122] A law that, for Álvaro, materializes in the network of discourses formed by historiography, the history of literature, religion, and the more contemporary rhetoric of "developmentalism," all of them imposed on the Spanish population by Ideological State Apparatuses such as the education system, the church, and the mass media. In his fantasy, Álvaro blasts all the discourses and institutions that build the symbolic fiction that ideologically articulates his contemporary Spanish "reality." This is the first sense in which it could be said that the novel performs a critique of the Francoist ideology, and it is precisely from this perspective that *Don Julián* has received the harshest criticism: indeed, when scholars accuse Goytisolo of reproducing the logic or stereotypes of Francoism, they are pointing out that he is not "outside of" ideology, that some part of his discourse still belongs to the same ideology he claims to destroy. However, as Žižek shows (and the novel corroborates), stating that there is such a locus outside of ideology also constitutes ideology ("The Specter of Ideology" 20).

In this sense, the first operation the novel performs in order to critically address the regime's ideology consists of acknowledging the subject's debt with the symbolic order, that is, the fact that the only tool Alvaro has at his disposal to fight the regime's discourse is the same language the regime uses.[123] This act of acknowledgment works in the novel at two levels: at the

[122] On the positioning of Franco at the site of the Father, see Cristina Moreiras, "Juan Goytisolo, F.F.B. y la Fundación fantasmal del Proyecto autobiofráfico español."

[123] Goytisolo explicitly pointed toward the need to critically assess the regime's discourse: "The language created and used by the Regime during its twenty-five years of governance has not been subjected, so far, to any serious analysis by the Spanish left. However, the criticism and denunciation of the semantic edifice on which it relies would entail the criticism and denunciation of the very foundations of its existence […]. Instead of initiating a critique of its values based on words, we fall into an easy rhetoric –symmetrical and complementary to what we denounce. A futile effort: sooner or later, experience will compel us to recognize that the negation of an intellectually oppressive system necessarily begins with the negation of its semantic structure" (*El furgón de cola*, 19). He was mindful as well of the fact that any confrontation with the regime's discourse was limited by the fact that language, in Spain, was "occupied" by the regime: "Our Spanish language, that language we use every day, is constantly being mutilated by the Fascistic mind. And his mind controls the Government. This all-powerful force, by exercising covert violence on the virtual significance of words and meanings, mutilates the possibilities of

symbolic level, it reproduces and parodies the canonical literary, historiographical, and religious texts which built a specific narration of "the Spanish identity," (and were assimilated by young Alvarito). At an imaginary level, it invokes the image of the umbilical cord which still links Álvaro to what he most fiercely claims to reject:

> The sea turned into a lake, you connected to the other shore like the fetus to the bloody womb of the mother, umbilical cord between the two like a long and undulating serpentine : anxiety invades you : cold sweat, palpitations, heart flutters : trapped, encapsulated, digested.
>
> [el mar convertido en lago, unido tú a la otra orilla como el feto al útero sangriento de la madre, cordón umbilical entre los dos como una larga y ondulante serpentina : la angustia te invade : sudor frío, palpitaciones, aleteos del corazón : preso, capsulado, digerido.] (119)

Don Julián, then, doesn't situate itself "outside of ideology," at some exempted, privileged locus from which the questioning of ideology happens; instead, it acknowledges the impossibility of freeing oneself from the discourse of the Other as law. The image of Spain as an inescapable, oppressive mother, from whom Álvaro cannot separate himself, is repeated several times. And yet, even though it overwhelms him with anxiety, he cannot stop thinking about Spain obsessively, just as Francoism does. Even when he is parodying the grandiose rhetoric of the media, or squashing dead insects between the pages of the masterpieces of Spanish Literature, he knows himself "trapped, encapsulated, digested" by the hold that those discourses have over him.

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expression […]. The attitude of a writer […] must be that of […] resistance and revolt through a process of rupture with the clichés and stereotypes of language. A constant battle against the myths and mental prisons to which the writer sometimes unconsciously falls victim. This is very similar to guerrilla fighting in an occupied country" ("Writing in an Occupied Language" 48, quoted in Herzberger, *Narrating the Past*, 137-138). In this sense, Goytisolo considered that "in today's capitalist world there are no virulent or audacious topics; language and only language can be subversive […] That was the goal that guided the realization of my first two adult novels, *Señas de identidad* and, above all, *Reivindicación del conde don Julián*. I haven't given up the commitment I sought in my youth novels. I have simply translated it to a new level. Our obsolete Castilian language demands […] the use of dynamite or a purgative. Our attitude must be deliberately sacrilegious" (*Disidencias* 167-168).

That is why Julián's attack cannot stop with the destruction of Spain but has to carry out the obliteration of Alvarito, the child Álvaro once was, and whose values, beliefs, behaviors, and repressions obey the superego's mandate from which the adult wants to free himself. For this reason, when it comes to Alvarito, death is not enough, it has to be preceded by the absolute perversion of each and every value that he embodies: "No / that's not enough / death is not sufficient / its destruction must be accompanied by the most subtle tortures" ["No / no es así / la muerte no basta / su destrucción debe ir acompañada de las más sutiles torturas"] (302), the narrator declares, after having killed his child version for the first time. From then on, his annihilation is a journey that transgresses all the moral codes of the regime, a desecration of everything sacred: Julián rapes the child, forces him to steal money from his mother and accuse the old maid when discovered, infects the child with syphilis and, finally, demands that he brings his own mother to Julián. Faced with this last request, Alvarito kills himself.[124]

After committing suicide, this final fantasy climaxes when the child "resurrects and […] dressed in a white djellaba, adorned with a snowy turban, he invokes the name of Allah in pure Arabic, expressing his desire to become a Muslim" ["resucita y […] vestido con blanca chilaba, ceñido de níveo turbante invoca en árabe puro el nombre de Alá, manifiesta su deseo de ser musulmán"] (326). However, the novel doesn't end with this celebratory fantasy of the infant reborn; on the contrary, it ends with the adult's dispirited return home "just like yesterday, just like tomorrow, just like every day" ["como ayer, como mañana, como todos los días"] (327).

[124] According to Stephanie Sieburth, the fact that Alvarito chooses to end his own life instead of bringing his mother to Julián proves that his suicide "is not, in fact, about liberating the narrator from his bourgeois complexes or his Spanish upbringing. It is nothing other than self-sacrifice for the sake of saving the mother's purity" (175). This ambiguity regarding the mother/Spain is recurrent throughout the novel and, in my opinion, reveals the tension between the hatred Álvaro feels toward Spaniards for supporting the regime and his awareness that the "enemy" is not the actual people, but the regime's dexterity in imposing and naturalizing its ideology. In this sense, the novel avoids assuming a non-problematic, clear-cut, higher moral ground regarding Francoism; instead, it suggests that avoiding ambiguities is a symptom of the fact that there is something, some real, we'd rather keep at bay.

With this, *Don Julián* acknowledges the fact that even if the subject managed to separate itself from the law, the alternative would be to subject itself to a different law. For Álvaro, crestfallen after hearing about the referendum, the law he has found in Tangier seems better than the Spanish law, but it is still a law nonetheless.

Being aware that liberation from the Father's law is ultimately impossible, *Don Julián*'s aesthetic proposal consists of leaving empty the place from which ideology is questioned.[125] By carefully working at the level of the signifier, the novel attacks the Francoist version of Spanish history and identity without giving shape to an alternative: By establishing metaphoric connections between terms that the hegemonic discourse links metonymically, it reveals its inconsistency. For example, Álvaro Peranzules, supreme image of the good Francoist subject, blends in his speech "the Spanishness of Seneca : the quixotism of the Cid : the Senecaism of Manolete" ["españolismo de Séneca : quijotismo del Cid : senequismo de Manolete"] (259). The Francoist notion of an eternal, essential Spanish identity is symbolically constructed through a narration that seamlessly links Seneca, El Cid, and Manolete, all of whom, somehow, express the essence of "Spanishness" according to history textbooks and the media. When the novel situates these names together, leaving out all the missing links in its own metonymic chain, it brings forth the stupidity of calling "Spanish" a philosopher from the first century, a medieval knight from the 11th century (who, incidentally, was a mercenary who fought for both the Muslim kingdoms and the Christian kingdoms of the peninsula) and a contemporary bullfighter.

Don Julián does not provide a "rational narration" to substitute the ones it explodes. It is not a question of contesting the "official version" of the Spanish history by elaborating yet

[125] In this sense, the novel agrees with Žižek's notion that "it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from [ideology], but this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality –the moment we yield to this temptation, we are back in ideology" ("The Specter of Ideology" 17).

another symbolic fiction (where, for example, the presence of the Muslim heritage was vindicated), but an effort to challenge ideological notions such as narration, history, or identity. In this sense, the emptiness achieved in the novel starts with the figure of the narrator itself; in fact, it is hard to even speak of a narrator at all in *Don Julián*. At a symbolic level, except for a few times in the first few pages, the first person is never used; instead, the narrative voice addresses a "you" who is simultaneously Álvaro, Julián, and Alvarito. At an imaginary level, Álvaro Peranzules is a version of Álvaro: they are not the same person, but they are not separate entities either. In short, there isn't in the novel an ego, an "I" which clearly functions as the imaginary place whence the enunciated comes. Conversely, an intangible, split subjectivity emerges which instantly dissolves again among the discourses it parodies, attesting, through this act of parody, how those discourses are still part of that same subjectivity. Ultimately, through this presence-absence, the novel points to the difference within the Francoist symbolic system, and shows its lack of identity with itself.

This unstable site of enunciation articulated in the novel functions as the Lacanian Real, insofar as it brings forth the failure of the Francoist symbolic fiction of the Spanish "reality." By breaking the Francoist signifier chain, the novel reveals the key notions of the hegemonic discourse as "floating" signifiers; from this, it follows that they can be arranged in a variety of ways. Thus *Don Julián* makes it explicit that "reality" never presents itself unmediated, that it is always already symbolized, organized, and constituted through symbolic mechanisms, and that those mechanisms are controlled by those in power. In this sense, as David K. Herzberger noticed, "the destructive energy unleashed in Goytisolo's novels begins and ends with words […] because he perceives discourse as a locus of power" (138-13). Power is needed to impose *a* "reality," because the symbolic fiction that structures it never closes in itself; in other words, "if

(what we experience as) 'reality' is to emerge, something has to be foreclosed from it –that is to say, 'reality,' like truth, is by definition never 'whole.'" (Žižek "The Specter of Ideology" 21).

With its work at the level of the signifier, the novel points to the fact that "society is 'held together' by the very antagonism, splitting, that forever prevents its enclosure in a harmonious, rational Whole" (Žižek "The Specter of Ideology" 22), that is, "society" is what emerges of a symbolic fiction whose ultimate goal is to integrate the Real. *Don Julián* suggests that that symbolic fiction crystalizes in ideological fantasies (like the fantasy that, somehow, something like a Spanish essence has been present in the Iberian peninsula since before Spain itself existed), and the only way to destroy them is to dismantle language itself. [126]

But it doesn't stop there: the novel doesn't merely thematize and disrupt the regime's "positive" ideological fantasies, but it also incarnates its "negative" ideological fantasies, that is, embodies the regime's utmost fears. The main "positive" ideological fantasy the novel disrupts is that of "*el caballero cristiano*" or "Christian knight" as the archetype Spanish subject, represented by Álvaro Peranzules; its "negative" being the Arab-Muslim other, on whom the hegemonic tradition has projected all the attributes that each specific historical period as deemed "negative." [127] In doing so, the novel shows how Francoism postulates the "Christian knight" and

[126] I borrow the concept of "ideological fantasies" from Julia Hell's *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany*. In this study, Hell works with "texts that narrate the work of the unconscious and its fantasies in ideology" thus conceptualizing ideology "as a bridge between the level of the social and the level of the individual" (19). In previous chapters, I have indicated how Lacan's conceptualization of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other reveals the identity between the individual and the collective. Said identity is predicated upon the formation of fantasies whose power goes beyond the order of the strictly symbolic (ideas, keywords, etc.). Indeed, as Hell notices, for any hegemonic ideological formation to be successful it needs to articulate unconscious fantasies. In Lacanian terms, we could define "ideological fantasy" as a condensation of signifiers that results in images that are naturalized. As explained in previous chapters, "womanhood" is one of those fantasies.

[127] In fact, chapters 3 and 4 (corresponding to the fantasy of Julián destroying Spain and Alvarito) are preceded by epigraphs from historiographical and literary sources describing precisely that fantasy: Alfonso X of Castile's *Crónica general* (General chronicle), from the 13th century; the *Corona gótica, castellana y austríaca*, by Diego Saavedra Fajardo, published in 1947; the anonymous *Romances del Rey Rodrigo*, from the 15th century and José de Espronceda's 19th century epic poem *El Pelayo*. These epigraphs trace the successive conceptualizations of the Muslim-Arab other in Spanish cultural discourses since the Middle Ages.

the Arab-Muslim other as two opposed positive entities, thus reducing difference to a complementary polarity of opposites which is, in fact, a basic ideological operation (Žižek "The Specter of Ideology" 23). However, in his fantasy of destruction, Álvaro-Julián shows the integral part that the Muslim-Arab language, science, and culture play in the configuration of the "Spanish identity," that is, shows that identity to be non-identical, traversed by the Other.[128] And by activating the legend of Don Julián, it traces back this difference within to the impossibility of the sexual relationship. Thus, the novel sheds light on the ideological links between racism, nationalism, and the sexual in Francoism, which I will explore in the next sections.

4.3 "The Christian Knight:" The Ideal Subject of Francoism

The first fantasy mobilized in *Don Julián* is the ideal subject of Francoism: "*el caballero Cristiano*" or "Christian knight." The "Christian knight" was the Castilian version of the medieval ideal of "*miles christianus*," whose attributes (Catholic values, exaltation of the fatherland and willingness to sacrifice for it, mystification of war and violence) were taken up by the Falange's rhetoric (Goytisolo *España y los españoles* 50-51). This ideal is constantly mocked in the novel:

> The carpeto conceives History as a slow process of self-purification, as a continuous ascetic exercise of improvement : deep within the Iberian soul, there is an

[128] Here, and everywhere in this chapter, I use "other" to refer to the imaginary other: what I am calling "the Arab-Muslim other" is an image, an ideological fantasy of otherness created by the traditional hegemonic discourse (the symbolic "big Other") and in opposition to which the Spanish identity (which is another ideological fantasy) is defined. I use "Other" to refer to the Real Other, to radical Otherness insofar as no symmetrical dialogue can be established with it since it constitutes a totally different relationship with the symbolic Other. The One and the Real Other are not complementary, they do not constitute a whole, their relationship is supplementary. Complementarity is only established at the imaginary level: ideology creates two opposite, complementary fantasies (the Arab-Muslim other and the Christian knight self) as if they were two entities forming a whole. However, at the symbolic level, this complementarity doesn't hold: the self is other traversed, constituted by the Other. *Don Julián* can be understood as an effort to displace the focus from the imaginary towards the symbolic and the Real that lies in its structural lack of closure.

> indestructible residue of stoicism that, intimately linked to Christianity, has taught the people of the Meseta to endure and bear.
>
> [el carpeto concibe la Historia como un lento proceso de auto-depuración, como un continuo ejercicio ascético de perfeccionamiento : en el fondo del alma ibera hay un residuo indestructible de estoicismo que, hermanado íntimamente con el cristianismo, ha enseñado a los hombres de la Meseta a sufrir y aguantar.] (212-213)

In fragments like this, the novel brings forth one of the fundamental ideas within the discourses that served to legitimize the dictatorship. According to it, the economic measures, understood as "material progress," and political-cultural liberalism of the Second Republic had severed the Spanish people's connection with their true essence. Because of this, the Francoist side (who, incidentally, called themselves "the national side") "had to" start a "crusade of liberation" ("*cruzada de liberación*") that would provide the necessary conditions for Spaniards to recover their authentic essence.[129] Thus, the hegemonic discourse of the post-war period turned resignation and submission into supposedly Christian virtues: austerity and stoicism, which, in turn, were used to provide a foundation for the notion of an indisputable national essence.[130]

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[129] In *A Time of Silence. Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1954*, Michael Richards argues, in this regard, that the period of "autarchy" wasn't just an economic strategy, but also an ideological construct whose goal was to facilitate the purge of the Spanish society after the war, and consolidate the power of the traditional elites. To achieve this, since the beginning of the Civil War, the Francoist side brought back the idea of the "degeneration of the European race" (popularized by turn-of-the-century intellectuals such as Spengler). Its Spanish version, elaborated by the so-called "generation of 98" (whose ideas and literary style are systematically mocked in *Don Julián*), saw the loss of the last Spanish colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) as the unmistakable symptom of the deterioration of the Spanish race. According to the Francoist propaganda, the liberalism of the Second Republic had led to an economic, moral, and military decline, as well as to licentious customs; it was the lack of austerity in this decadent way of life that had sickened the country, which could only be healed through strict hierarchical authority. Since the country was "sick," it was necessary to subject it to physical and psychological quarantine; the vocabulary of medicine was used to reinforce the notion of the need for isolation from the external and perverse world of materialism and progress, identified with the European democracies. Isolation was a necessary purifying sacrifice to reconquer the Spanish essence, which could only be achieved by practicing austerity, stoicism, obedience to authority, and a return to Christian values. See Richards, especially pages 7-25.

[130] As Richards suggests, autarky served to separate the idea of economic "progress" from social "progress," so that when modernization eventually arrived in the country, there would already be a repository of a work ethic that

In the novel, the "Christian knight" is represented by Álvaro Peranzules, the lawyer who Álvaro Mendiola runs into several times. As I indicated in the previous sections, Peranzules functions as Mendiola's opposite: he spends his days in Tangier in the company of other Spaniards and he wholeheartedly believes and repeats the common places of the regime's ideology imitating its grandiloquent rhetoric. Through this character, *Don Julián* points out the connection between ideology and subjective certainty; that is, over the fact that "the bases by which the One may have been introduced into the world [is the functioning of] the signifier as such" (Lacan *Seminar XX* 50). The novel uses the figure of Álvaro Peranzules to show that discourse creates the "reality" where the subject of ideology can emerge; it is within ideology that the subject can contemplate his ego and be reassured of its own existence.[131]

In chapter 3 of the novel, as part of his fantasy of destruction, Álvaro-Julián fantasizes about a version of Álvaro Peranzules which mockingly emphasizes his attributes of "Christian knight." Shielded behind the walls of a Castilian town,[132] Álvaro Peranzules is a "man of firm principles and solid coal-seller faith, aware of bearing on his shoulders the weight of a millenary tradition and, between his hands, the torch of an imperishable spiritual message" ["hombre de

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allowed for a change in the base (the incorporation into capitalism) without it implying a change in the relations of production. In other words, the traditional elites, strengthened during the early years of the dictatorship, did not have to relinquish control of the means of production when the "developmentalism" period started (Richards 24). The novel repeatedly emphasizes the contradictions between the Francoist discourse of the 40s and 50s and the regime's policies of the 60s, which included material development (against the supposedly superior spirituality of the Hispanic peoples) and a relative cultural opening which indeed meant the end of the period of isolation: "The Carpetos endure empty and useless : swordsmen without a sword, waving their arms and words with the same vehemence as one who crosses his steel with an adversary who no longer exists" ["los carpetos se sobreviven vacuos e inútiles : esgrimidores sin espada, agitan sus brazos y sus palabras con la misma vehemencia de quien cruza su acero con el de un adversario ya inexistente"] (243).

[131] To the extent that it gives it a world to inhabit, however, language separates the subject from what remains foreclosed, which only returns in the form of a spectral supplement that indexes the Real. The narrative voice of Álvaro Mendiola functions in the novel as such spectral supplement with regards to Álvaro Peranzules and the regime's construction of "reality."

[132] In their search of the true Spanish essence, the turn-of-the-century intellectuals of the "Generation of 98", elevated one particular region, Castile, to the universal sign of "Spanishness," in accordance with a political project which favored a conservative, homogeneous vision of Spain and a centralized administration, instead of a federation of Iberian regions or states (as imagined by intellectuals from the peripheral nationalities, such as Pi y Margall, during the 19th century).

principios firmes y sólida fe de carbonero, consciente de mantener sobre los hombros el peso de una tradición milenaria y, entre las manos, la antorcha de un imperecedero mensaje espiritual"] (270), who embodies the "impermeable and hermetic figure, sublime and exalted condensation of the genius and figure of the race" ["figura impermeable y hermética, condensación sublimada y excelsa del genio y figura de la raza"] (257).[133] In the novel, the term "figure" is repeatedly connected to "mask," "cuirass" or "shell." However, this doesn't mean that ideology is conceived as some "external" discourse imposed on an underlying "true reality;" quite the opposite, it is used to denote the fact that language, which is always already ideological, in fact creates "reality." That is why, as Álvaro Peranzules talks (reproduces the regime's discourse), "the mask grows and transforms into an immense hideous mask that articulates talismanic names without losing one bit of its rigidity" ["la máscara crece y se transforma en un desmesurado mascarón que articula talismánicos nombres sin perder un ápice de su rigidez"] (271), until it "is immobilized, transformed into the pedestal of its own statue, the statue of its own pedestal, pure essence, genius with figure, grandiose figurehead" ["se inmoviliza, convertido en pedestal de su propia estatua, estatua de su propio pedestal, esencia pura, genio con figura, Figurón genial"] (271).

According to the novel, then, language creates the illusion of identity: it is by repeating the Francoist discourse without questioning it that Álvaro Peranzules objectifies his own ego and contemplates himself as a closed totality. Like him, those who accept Franco's rule, "advance through life with a fixed, straight, and clear course, supported by peaceful certainty and security, with unshakable and serene spirit" ["avanzan por la vida con rumbo fijo, recto y claro, sostenidos por tranquila certidumbre y seguridad, por ánimo impávido y sereno"] (183) and therefore have

[133] "Genio y figura hasta la sepultura," literally, "genius and figure until the grave" or to take one's genius and figure to the grave, is a popular saying in Spain used to refer to people who refuse to change.

the strength, in Álvaro Peranzules' words, "to look forward and upward : to conceive life as service : to obey promptly and joyfully everything they command us" ["mirar hacia delante y hacia arriba : concebir la vida como servicio : obedecer prontamente y con alegría todo lo que nos manden"] (183). The Francoist subject, then, willingly and happily obeys the regime's rule, that is, willingly practices the rituals of ideological recognition which guarantee for Spaniards that they "are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (Althusser 130). In other words, the subject of ideology gets something out of ideology itself: it obtains the phallic jouissance afforded by the symbolic, in this case, by the Francoist law. However, the novel also suggests that with such subjective certainty also comes the immobilization of the subject, a lack of freedom that turns it into a statue.[134]

The "mask" or "shell" that constitutes the "Christian knight" thus works just like the concept of "womanhood" (that is, just like any other imaginary ideological construction): constituted by discourse, it is expressed in a number of traits associated with it (stoicism, Catholicism, moral values, austerity, obedience) which point toward and take for granted an essential, unknowable kernel of Spanish essence. In this sense, "Spanish identity" works as a

[134] The idea of a dead, fossilized language that prevents any imaginative, novel, or original use is recurrent in the novel. The stilted grandiloquence of the Francoist cultural discourse resides in the repetitive and monotonous use of exhausted linguistic formulas that imitate the style of the Generation of 98. Thus, in *Don Julián*, the hegemonic discourse is the epitome of a discourse deliberately anchored in metonymy, reluctant to allow even the slightest hint of novelty or difference to emerge under the weight of tradition (which is nothing but repetition according to *Don Julián*): "Words, empty molds, resonant and hollow vessels [...] the light that surrounds you does not exist : the star that emitted it died ten thousand years ago : your death certificate must be issued : the servility and docility you display confirm the thesis of your infamy" ["palabras, moldes vacíos, recipientes sonoros y huecos […] la luz que os aureola no existe : el astro que la emitía murió hace diez mil años : hay que extender vuestro certificado de defunción : el servilismo y docilidad de que dais muestra acreditan la tesis de vuestra infamia"] (254). In this sense, the betrayal imagined by Álvaro, his expedition leading an Arab army to annihilate Spain has its correlate in the purely linguistic aspect of the text: "with the miraculous verses of the Poet subtly inciting you to treason : embracing the word, breaking the root, forcing the syntax, violating everything" ["con los versos mirí ficos del Poeta incitándote sutilmente a la traición : ciñendo la palabra, quebrando la raíz, forzando la sintaxis, violentándolo todo"] (188). Writing is neither a merely iconoclastic exercise nor a simple inversion of values, it is the anguished cry of a subject who knows itself to be the slave of a language that precedes him and speaks through him without his consent, a language which "turns us, against our will, into representatives of something that gives us a label and builds a mask for us" ["que nos convierte, sin quererlo, en portavoces de algo que nos da una etiqueta y nos fabrica una máscara"] (234).

master signifier, insofar as its "signified is an enigma for the members [of the community] themselves –nobody really knows what it means, but each of them somehow presupposes that others know it, that it has to mean 'the real thing'" (Žižek, "The Real of Sexual Difference" 58). This functioning of the master signifier isn't, of course, exclusive to Franco's Spain; indeed, "identity" or "nation" as signifiers usually work similarly in other Western nation-states. The novel emphasizes the Francoist conceptualization of the nation as how the regime articulated a sacred image of national identity within the context of National-Catholism (Viestenz 4), illustrated by the description of Franco's ascension to power (here, Franco is mockingly identified with the philosopher Seneca):

> the evolutionary and patient method of influencing reality is repugnant to your Seneca, who right now and without delay, solely by the power of his will and authority wants the evil to disappear and everything to submit to the forceful formula of his words : matter, body, the bodies are or must be under the command of the spirit : if they refuse to obey it is necessary to force them through violence, penance or punishment.
>
> [el método evolutivo y paciente de influir sobre la realidad repugna a vuestro Séneca, que quiere ahora mismo y sin más tardar, por el solo imperio de su voluntad y poder, que el mal desaparezca y todo se sujete a la fórmula contundente de sus palabras : la materia, el cuerpo, lo cuerpos están o deben estar a las órdenes del espíritu : si se niegan a obedecer a éste es preciso obligarles por la violencia, la penitencia o el castigo] (220)

As shown in the introduction, Franco "conceptualized his right to sovereignty around a political theology" (Viestenz 3), where the hegemonic discourse functioned as a dogma that was to be obeyed without ever being questioned. By instituting national essence as obvious and eternal, any possible negotiation or discussion about it is precluded, and any disagreement regarding national identity quickly becomes a violent conflict (Viestenz 5). The passage quoted suggests that the Second Republic, with its political and cultural openness and, above all, its

declaration of religious freedom, constituted a fundamental disagreement, an alternative, radically Other state project that the traditional oligarchy could not tolerate. Thus, after the victory of the Popular Front in the 1936 elections, the conservative classes abandoned the "evolutionary and patient method of influencing reality" (meaning parliamentary dialogue and democratic decision-making) and opted for the coup that led to the Civil War.

After the war, the regime directed the bulk of its efforts toward its ideological legitimization and continuity; according to the novel, its success was made apparent after the 1966 referendum: "I vote for Seneca because he embodies our purest essences and fully meets the needs of the perennial coordinates of our history" ["voto a Séneca porque él encarna nuestras más puras esencias y responde cabalmente a las coordenadas perennes de nuestra historia"] (224) claims one citizen when interviewed for the television program that Álvaro watches at the café. This identification of Franco himself with the ultimate expression of "Spanishness" touches upon one of the key points in the establishment of the regime: the fact that the winners of the Civil War were a series of more or less disparate groups whose balance depended almost exclusively on the dictator. As Tatjiana Gajic argues, this points to a profound paradox:

> In order to last, the regime had to establish political, legal, and economic principles that would give it stability, and yet the very task of defining those principles brought to the fore –and even exacerbated– differences and disagreements between factions, thereby making the process of the regime's consolidation open ended at best and interminable at worst. (6-7)

By showing how the ideological fantasy of the "Christian knight" depends on its opposite, the Arab-Muslim other (I will explore the ideological fantasy of this other in the next section), *Don Julián* shows how the regime's own "identity" depended on keeping alive the alliance of the different factions against one common enemy, the "anti-Spain," far more than it depended on any positive content, that is, on any institutional definition of Francoism as a

political entity. In this sense, the regime relied heavily on its Ideological Apparatuses to identify any elements that, refusing to submit to the regime's law, automatically became anti-Spanish; as well as on its repressive State Apparatuses, whose task was to eliminate those anti-Spanish elements (meanwhile, the regime's ideology kept intact the phantasmic threat of the anti-Spain, which could never be totally eliminated, since it was vital for the regime's *raison d'être* in the first place). In other words, the novel shows how, in the absence of a legal and institutional corpus that could sustain it, the regime depended on identifying itself with what its own ideology considered to be "naturally Spanish." And since the regime was Franco, Franco was Spain.[135]

As Tatjiana Gajic points out, the consolidation of the regime became an endless process, as it depended exclusively on Franco himself, who "in the international apotheosis of his triumph, implies that if one distant day he were to be absent, Senecanism, his Work, must continue" ["en la apoteosis internacional de su triunfo, da a entender que, si un día lejano falta, el senequismo, su Obra, debe continuar"] (222). The novel suggests, then, that the continuity of the regime depends on Franco, and he, in turn, depends on becoming the epitome of all things Spanish, where "Spanish" is an indefinable sacred core expressed in the ideal of the Christian knight, that is, on an ideal Christian (not Muslim) man (not woman).

Ultimately, the novel exposes the process through which the regime rehashed the traditional discourses on the Spanish identity and combined them with the fascism of Falange to construct the boundaries of what it meant to be Spanish. These boundaries did not take the form

[135] As explained in the introduction, this identification also allowed the regime to overcome the contradictions which it incurred in the 1960s, and which the novel highlights: the fact that, after the years of discourse against liberalism and the harmful influences of the so-called materialistic outside world, the regime switched to economic policies which brought a relative opening and modernization of the country. The identification of Franco and, by metonymic extension, the regime, with Spain itself is what allowed for "spectacular transformations, yes, but which do not alter in the least the perennial essences of our soul" ["transformaciones espectaculares, sí, pero que no alteran en absoluto las esencias perennes de nuestra alma"] (194). That is, no transformation operated under Francoism can be said to contravene the authentic Spanish essence, since Francoism equals Spain.

of a constitutional text but depended on the consecration of several ideological fantasies, such as that of the Christian knight, which constituted the expression of a sacred and therefore mysterious and hidden essence. Thus, the hegemonic discourse shaped the inside/outside boundaries of what it deemed to be the "Spanish identity."

And yet, the Francoist ideology itself conceptualized the impossibility of such a clear-cut definition of identity. This impossibility is illustrated in the novel through the first one of Álvaro's fantasies, which happens in chapter two. In it, Álvaro's child version (bourgeois, deeply Catholic Alvarito, living in Barcelona in the 1940s) listens to fragments of a conversation between two house servants. This conversation is gossip about the relationship between a female neighbor and the security guard of a nearby construction site who, after their breakup, urinated on the woman's son, "a little one, with a big head like this / abnormal? / yes, he doesn't speak or anything" ["uno pequeño, con una cabezota así / anormal? / sí, no habla ni nada"] (199). The whole conversation is riddled with taboos, implications, and moral judgment, thus reflecting the repression exerted over anything concerning sexuality during the post-war period. In this repressive atmosphere, the novel suggests, the emergence of mystifications and irrational fears about sexuality is inevitable, for example, the servants claim that the guard "hypnotizes" women (199). In this context, the fascination felt by the child is not surprising, as he feels both attraction and repulsion toward the mysterious figure of the guard.

Eventually (still within the fantasy) Alvarito gives into his morbid curiosity and approaches the guard's cabin, where he witnesses him and a woman engaged in intercourse. This scene reminds him of the conversation he heard about the guard urinating on the woman's son and, sexually aroused, Alvarito urinates there, right next to the guard's cabin. The security guard and his lover discover him, and the woman scolds him:

> Did you see the bug? / No, I swear I didn't / Liar / I didn't see anything / You wanted to see where it hides, didn't you? / No, no / Do you know where the cave is? / No! / Here! / Grabbing him by the head with one hand and lifting his skirt with the other : forced (him?) to penetrate into the Virgilian den"
>
> ["viste el bicho? / no, le juro que no / embustero / no vi nada / querías ver dónde se mete, verdad? / no, no / sabes dónde está la gruta? / no! / acá! / agarrándole de la cabeza con una mano y levantándose la falta con la otra : obligado (él?) a penetrar en el virgiliano antro."] (203)

The "Virgilian den" refers to the woman's sexual and reproductive organs, which are described in great detail through a fragment from a popular medical encyclopedia, and this scene culminates with Alvarito "drowning, drowning" ["ahogándose, ahogándose"] (203). Álvaro's homosexuality is subtly insinuated in this passage, which shows his interest not in the woman, but in the guard.[136] Here also emerges the connection between desire and scatological aspects, such as urine, which is another main leitmotif. In this sense, the portrayal of homosexuality aligns with Goytisolo's literary model, Jean Genet, and displays "a new vision of political action and commitment that is related to the acceptance of desire" (Mira 400): the narrator seems to not hide from his sexual fantasies, openly expressing his thoughts and feelings as he experiences them, free from any form of moral censorship.[137]

After having been caught by the couple, the fantasy continues with Alvarito running away and seeking refuge inside a church. The church scene draws on a fragment from the book *Energía y pureza* ("Energy and Purity") by Hungarian Bishop Tihamer Toth, a common reading in religious schools of the time (Levine 209). The sermon Alvarito hears in church thematizes the connection between (outside) temptation and the feminine through several analogies, such as the

[136] As Hedy Habra has noticed, this image of the return to the maternal uterus is one of the leitmotifs of the novel. The repugnance that Alvarito feels towards the female sexual and reproductive organs can be understood as a metaphor of the aversion he feels toward Spain, the mother or stepmother.
[137] The epigraph that introduces the first chapter of the novel is a quote from Jean Genet's *Journal du voleur.*

myth of Pandora (205) or the presence of a picture that shows a knight who, seduced by a lascivious lady, inadvertently rides toward his death (207). The sermon also condenses the Catholic conceptualization of inner/outer temptation, sin, guilt, and punishment:

> The unfortunate young man succumbed to the sirens' songs : he got himself into the swamp : the pleasure barely lasted half a minute : but it opened the first breach in the fortress of his purity and through that breach, little by little, all the energy, all the vigor of his body, all the strength of his soul will slip away : his resolute will rapidly turns into ruin : he applies his lips to the edge of the cup to drink the nectar and does not notice the poison at the bottom […] courage, magnanimity, love for the fatherland, filial piety, noble pride, chivalry, heroism, all give way to indolence and dissipation.
>
> [el desgraciado joven sucumbió a los cantos de sirena : él mismo se metió en el pantano : el placer apenas duró medio minuto : pero se abrió la primera brecha en el baluarte de su pureza y por esa brecha escurrirá poco a poco toda la energía, todo el vigor del cuerpo, todo el empuje de su alma : la acérrima voluntad deviene rápidamente una ruina : aplica el labio al borde de la copa para libar el néctar y no advierte el veneno que hay en el fondo : […] valentía, magnanimidad, amor patrio, piedad filial, orgullo noble, caballerosidad, heroísmo ceden el paso a la indolencia y la disipación] (205)

This passage exposes the functioning of sin within the Catholic doctrine: every individual already carries within them the inclination to sin, and it is crucial not to yield even a bit, as the slightest indulgence will lead to a spiral of corruption that results in absolute ruin. The responsibility for committing the sinful act lies within each individual, endowed with judgment to distinguish what is moral and good (which Francoism identifies with the spiritual) from what is immoral and perverse (linked to the body and, by extension, to sexuality and thus to women). If, according to this doctrine, every soul contains a dark kernel which, if fed even once, will grow unstoppably until it consumes the individual's own life, then, according to the sermon Alvarito listens to in church, the only alternative left for a subject thus trapped in the ambiguity of sin is to be constantly vigilant, always defending oneself from a temptation which is

simultaneously external and internal. In other words, the novel suggests that, according to the regime, the only "solution" to the ambiguity of sin is a constant avoidance of external temptation (women) and unremitting repression of "internal temptation" or sexual drives.

Indeed, the regime's conceptualization of its political mission hinges upon this symptomatic insistence (which reveals the ultimate impossibility) on establishing the limits between the (Spanish) inside and the (anti-Spanish) outside and protecting the former from the latter. Thus, for example, in his inauguration speech for *El Valle de los Caídos*, Franco conceptualized the Civil War as the instrument that allowed the return to the origin, the recovery of the lost paradise, where the nation is one with itself: "The main virtue of our Crusade of Liberation was having restored us to our true selves, Spain has found itself again." However, this unity is constantly under threat (a threat needed for the endurance of the regime): "The anti-Spain was defeated and overcome, but it is not dead. Periodically, we see it raise its head abroad and, in its arrogance and blindness, try to poison and rekindle the innate curiosity and thirst for novelty of the youth." Therefore, the "anti-Spanish" element resides outside, but at the same time, it somehow feeds itself on the "curiosity and thirst for novelty" of the Spanish youth. Additionally, according to Franco,

> the tendency to make great efforts and later fall into laxity and overconfidence is a flaw in our [Spanish] character. Nowadays, there is no room for rest. This is not an era in which spirits can be demobilized after the battle, as the enemy does not rest and spends immense sums of money to undermine and destroy our objectives. It becomes necessary the tension of a political Movement, one that, built on the proclaimed principles that unite us, keeps the sacred fire of its defenses burning.

Interestingly, it is the Spanish character itself that succumbs to laxity and seemingly puts itself at risk of becoming anti-Spanish. Therefore, the regime is necessary to keep up the defenses that protect the Spanish character not so much from the external anti-Spain but from the

fact that the essence of the Spanish character seems to lie in the fact that it tends to fall into sin, to be naturally curious and drawn toward the anti-Spain. Paradoxically, then, the regime's mission is to protect the Spanish essence from… itself.

The physical repression of the temptation "outside" is achieved through the Repressive State Apparatuses, while the repression of the temptation "inside" is contingent upon the ideological fantasies shaped and imposed through the Ideological State Apparatuses. However, *Don Julián* ultimately shows the futility of this plan, insofar as it reveals that the hegemonic discourse does not really work. The boundaries between inside/outside, Spanish/anti-Spanish, are never quite clear: temptation is always present and, even though the regime does everything in its power to place that temptation outside, the Christian logic that underlies its discourse contradictorily claims that this temptation always depends on an internal impulse, making every subject inherently a sinner.

Álvaro thus becomes the worst type of threat to the regime, not because he sins (actually, Álvaro does nothing, he merely fantasizes) but because he brings forth the inconsistency of the hegemonic discourse. In his work at the imaginary and symbolic levels, *Don Julián* shows that said discourse doesn't work, and that it is impossible to neatly establish the limits of "Spanishness." As the novel shows, together with the sexual, ethnicity/religion is one of the aspects of traditional hegemonic discourse where those limits become most blurry. That is why Álvaro chooses to identify with the Arab-Muslim other: he joyfully embraces everything that the traditional hegemonic discourse (including Francoism) fears and condemns, condemns out of fear. The novel exposes where such fear has been historically projected: the Arab-Muslim other.

4.4 The Arab-Muslim Other

Don Julián needs to be understood in the context of the 1950s controversy regarding the presence and influence of the Arab-Muslim heritage in Spain. This controversy started in 1948, when Américo Castro published *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos* (translated into English as *The Spaniards: an Introduction to Their History*). In this book, he coined the term "*convivencia*" (which could be translated as "coexistence") referring to the supposed harmony between the three religions during the Middle Ages. In his study, Castro showed the Jewish and Muslim weight in Castilian culture and theorized that a "morada vital" ("vital dwelling") had resulted from the fusion of those three components which informed and determined later history in the Iberian peninsula. The idea that the Muslims and Jews had played a vital role in the configuration of the Spanish identity was highly controversial and was contested by Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz in his book *España: un enigma histórico* (1956, translated into English as *Spain, a Historical Enigma*). In this book, he claimed that the *homo hispanicus* (a notion mocked repetitively throughout the novel) had been formed way before the arrival of the Muslims to the peninsula and that their presence hadn't constituted a strong influence in the Castilian culture.[138]

This controversy shows the importance of the Arab-Muslim other in the ideological configuration of "the Spanish identity" since the Middle Ages. However, it was in the 18th century that the Arab-Muslim became a simultaneously internal and external component of that identity. As Susan Martin-Márquez explains, the discovery, in the 18th century, of medieval Islamic constructions such as the Alhambra led to the blossoming of Arabic studies; and

[138] For a detailed account of this controversy, see Kenneth B. Wolf, "Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A brief History of an Idea" and Ryan Szpiech, "The Convivencia Wars: Decoding Historiography's Polemic with Philology."

historians and philologists started to research Al-Andalus. Because of this, in the country's cultural imaginary, "the Spanish national identity" became "both orientalized and orientalizing; thus Spain positioned itself "on both 'sides' of Orientalism –as simultaneously 'self' and 'other'" (9). This ambiguity crystallized into what she calls "racial panic" (39) when the emergence of "scientific racism" in 19th-century Europe transformed the previously positive perception of Spain's alleged exoticism and mixed-race heritage into a potentially dangerous racial degeneration. From that point on, strategies were sought to discredit negative associations with racial otherness: thus, the idea was spread that the Muslim "invaders" had been few and that a significant part of the peninsular population had never racially mixed with them.

During the 19th century, the so-called "War of Africa" (1859-1860), inaugurated the uninterrupted military presence of Spain in Northern Africa until 1956, which led to continuous renegotiations and re-conceptualizations of identity and otherness. With the establishment of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco in 1912, the government created the Army of África (*ejército de África*), led by a series of officers who came to be known as "Africanists;" most of the leaders of the 1936 coup that started the Spanish Civil War, including Franco, belonged to this group. This is particularly relevant because the racist mind frame of Spain's imperialist endeavor in North Africa was, in quite literal terms, redirected toward the Second Republic in the 1930s. The "Africanist" military leaders revived the Generation of 98's notion of the "degeneracy of the Spanish race" projecting it onto the Peninsula; for them, the "Spanish race" had gone into decline under Republican rule. Indeed, in 1938, during the Civil War, officer Juan Yagüe even stated that the "wild Reds" had to be civilized just like the Moors had been (Martin-Márquez 202).[139]

[139] Yagüe's words uncannily recall Aimé Césaire's idea that fascism is the boomerang effect of colonialism: for Césaire, Hitler's Nazism consisted in that "he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa" (36). Indeed, the military strategies and sadistic practices of the army of Africa were key for Franco's victory.

Therefore, when it comes to the hegemonic conceptualization of "the Spanish identity," the Arab-Muslim other has historically occupied a sort of extimate space, simultaneously "inside" and "outside," rendering the boundaries of "Spanishness" extremely precarious. Surely, despite the hegemonic ideology's repeated efforts to delimit it as "other," the Arab-Muslim presence and/or heritage keeps coming back as (at least part of) the "self." In this sense, the obsessive reconceptualization of the Arab-Muslim as other is a symptom that reveals the fact that, in reality, it is not as "other" as the hegemonic ideology claims. *Don Julián* carries out a systematic effort to illustrate this. For example, in the third chapter, as part of his attack, Julián encourages his troops to "rescue your lexicon : dismantle the old linguistic fortress : take possession of what rightfully belongs to you" ["rescatar vuestro léxico : desguarnecer el viejo alcázar lingüístico : adueñarse de aquello que en puridad os pertenece"] (289); that is, to reclaim the Arabic lexicon of the Spanish language. This exhortation is followed by a long list of Spanish words which come from Arabic in different fields and areas of knowledge, but more than that, it shows to what extent "reality" would collapse by the extirpation of what constitutes not simply "words" but "reality" itself and the way it works. Thus, for example, to reclaim the Arabic-originated vocabulary of the Spanish language would entail provoking "financial catastrophes and stock market disasters, by abruptly eliminating fees and tariffs, the unexpected and radical abrogation of all customs barriers" ["catástrofes financieras y desastres bursátiles mediante la brusca supresión de aranceles y tarifas, la abrogación inesperada y radical de todas las barreras de aduana"] (291). This image is particularly powerful insofar as one of the key aspects of the hegemonic discourse on identity was its obsession with the purity of the Spanish language.[140]

[140] Around the turn of the century, the intellectuals of the so-called Generation of '98 sought to displace the issue of race (which was deeply ambiguous for Spain) toward the concept of "*Hispanidad*" or "Hispanicity," which emphasized the supposed "brotherhood" between Spain and its former colonies based on a shared language and

The novel, thus, presents the Arab-Muslim (and Álvaro as proxy) as that which is both "self" and "other" and thus reveals the boundaries of "the Spanish identity" as extremely precarious. In this sense, it could be said that Álvaro Mendiola is to the regime what the Arab-Muslim other is to traditional hegemonic discourse: abject. According to Julia Kristeva, the abject is that which disturbs system, identity, and order; the abject is what causes abjection, it is "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior" (Kristeva 4). In other words, abject is what brings forth the ambiguities inherent to the symbolic order. In this sense, the novel doesn't "represent" the Arab-Muslim as an alternative version or "the historical truth" of Spain's national identity, but as the site where the hegemonic discourse consistently stumbles: the Arab-Muslim other is one of the key elements that prevents the symbolic fiction of "Spanish identity" from attaining closure.

Álvaro-Julián's betrayal is, in fact, nothing original, and that is what makes it all the more powerful: the novel reflects back the regime's deepest fears, embodying what the traditional hegemonic discourse (which includes Francoism) has sanctioned as that which can destroy it: the Arab-Muslim other. After all, as Kristeva points out, "the potency for pollution is not an inherent one; it is proportional to the potency of the prohibition that founds it" (69). This is illustrated by one of the motifs repeated in the novel: polluted blood. In the first chapter, at the dispensary

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religion. This nostalgic-imperialistic notion of language is also mocked in the novel: "the carpetos proudly reclaim their ownership over the language / it's ours, ours, ours, they say" ["los carpetos reivindican con orgullo sus derechos de propiedad sobre el lenguaje / es nuestro, nuestro, nuestro, dicen"] (285); "we carried it to the other side of the Atlantic with morals and laws, the sheaf and the plow, religion, justice / to eighteen nations that today speak and think, pray, sing, write like us" ["nosotros lo llevamos a la otra orilla del Atlántico con la moral y las leyes, la espiga y el arado, la religión, la justicia / a dieciocho naciones que hoy hablan y piensan, rezan, cantan escriben como nosotros"] (286). The novel suggests that this vision of language as an essential element of identity is an imperialist and racist strategy, and stages a response within its pages when three anonymous voices (each representing the speech of a different American region: Río de la Plata, the Caribbean, and Mexico) assert ownership of the Spanish language without mediation from the former metropolis. These fragments were provided to Goytisolo by Julio Cortázar, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Carlos Fuentes.

where Álvaro receives treatment for syphilis, he reads a sign encouraging people to donate blood ("donez votre sang, sauvez une vie"). Later, at the beginning of his fantasy of destruction, this idea returns and triggers a fantasy where Álvaro imagines himself in Spain, donating his blood contaminated "not with spirochete, but with rabies" ["espiroquete no, virus de rabia"] (231). This abject, corrupted blood acquires a twofold symbolic character. On the one hand, it reinforces the abject nature of the protagonist from the regime's puritanical perspective due to his illness (syphilis) being associated with free (homo)sexual practices. On the other hand, the image of corrupted blood recalls the medieval notion of "*pureza de sangre*" (literally, "cleanliness of blood") which suffered different re-conceptualizations over the centuries (like, for example, the notion of ethnic identity giving way to that of linguistic identity by the end of the 19th century) and emphasizes that, at the core of the regime's obsession with national identity, lies an exclusionary racial and religious violence.[141]

In *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva identifies certain bodily fluids (feces, vomit, the corpse) with the abject insofar as they obfuscate the "proper" limits of (bodily) identity. Thus, for example, the nausea that makes the infant reject the food offered by the parents is a sign of desire, an instance in which the child separates themselves, becomes "I" before having entered the symbolic and, therefore, before having an "object" to uphold that "I:"

[141] "Beginning in the late fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth, as a result of pogroms tens if not hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced or chose to adopt Catholicism […]. In 1478, the Spanish Inquisition was created to scrutinize the populations' adherence to Catholic doctrine, and attention was initially directed toward *conversos*, or Jewish converts, in particular. 'Old Christians' resented the accession of 'New Christians' to greater professional opportunities, and suspected the conversos of hidden heterodox beliefs and behaviors, even when they showed all outward signs of orthodoxy. Given the lack of clear external indicators of difference, an internal difference thus had to be posited: blood. Beginning in the city of Toledo in 1449, 'blood purity' norms prohibited people of Jewish descent from practicing certain elite professions or holding public office. […] Over the course of the sixteenth century, Moriscos (Muslims who had remained in Spain after 1492 and who by 1526 would be forced to convert as well) also came to be portrayed as irremediably different from 'true' Spaniards. […] As in the case of the *conversos*, once purportedly heterodox behaviors were driven underground and became increasingly difficult to police, preoccupation with cultural difference shifted toward fear of biological difference. Moriscos were animalized and considered carriers of disease, and their presence was ultimately deemed a threat not only to the Catholic faith but also to Spanish blood" (Martin-Márquez 13-14).

"since food is not an 'other' for 'me,' who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" (3, emphasis in the original).[142] The abject is, then, both the element that recalls such moment of hazy boundaries, and the "subject" that incarnates at that moment when "'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death" (Kristeva 3). This is the moment that opens up that fissure in the real which will be precariously covered by object *a*. At that moment, the subject is at its most vulnerable, it *already* is somehow, but it *still* isn't: it lacks its ego function insofar as it lacks an other/object that could sustain it, since ego and object depend on the name-of-the-Father having been instituted for the subject. It is in this twofold sense that Álvaro is abject: renouncing the law of the Father, he regresses to a stage of precarious subjectivity and, through his fantasies, he becomes an abject element that blurs the boundaries of "the Spanish identity": He is simultaneously inside (he is a man, he is Spanish) and outside (he lives in exile, he is homosexual); and he willingly locates himself within the excluded, expelled from the Father's law: the disavowed Arab-Muslim other which nevertheless keeps coming back.

Ultimately, the novel brings attention to the fact that, at the center of the Spanish national identity, there is always the Arab-Muslim other who, in turn, has been subjected to different conceptualizations over the centuries. In fact, according to Goytisolo, the Arab-Muslim other has been historically articulated in the guise of a mirror where the hegemonic traditional discourse has systematically situated everything it censors and represses.[143] In this sense, for Goytisolo,

[142] Kristeva's concept of abjection is therefore to be located in what Lacan calls the first moment of the Oedipus complex. At this stage, the infant is already caught in a symbolization with regard to the Mother's incomprehensible law but still hasn't accessed the symbolic itself, thus he cannot signify the Mother's desire through the signifier (See "The Logic of Castration" in *Seminar V*).

[143] "From the earliest babblings of our language, the Muslim is always the mirror in which we somehow see ourselves reflected, the external image of ourselves that questions or unsettles us [...] our negative: a projection of all that we censor within ourselves, and therefore an object of hatred and envy. Sometimes, the romantic and attractive image of an impossible ideal as well." (Goytisolo *Crónicas sarracinas* 8).

Don Julián constitutes a sort of "national psychoanalysis through reading the collective traditional discourse about Islam in our literature and history" (*Crónicas sarracinas* 32-33). The novel is, then, an instance where the hegemonic tradition is forced to confront what it has repressed and projected onto an (external) other since the Middle Ages:

> For the "old Christians" it was, above all, a matter of asserting their fortitude and purity through behavior that left no opening for the onslaught of others' opinions: "the only thing that troubled the Spaniard was the suspicion that, at the core or root of himself, foreign elements [Islamic or Jewish] capable of altering their integrity could be inferred." (Goytisolo *España y los españoles* 29-30)

The quote in this fragment belongs to Américo Castro, and perfectly captures the fear of finding the other within the self, in other words, the fear of difference. What is at stake is the question of boundaries, of individual and national unity and homogeneity, always already threatened by a corrupting "outside" which, in the last instance (and following the Christian logic analyzed in the previous section), always turns out to be somehow "inside." Thus, within the context of Francoism, this Christian logic applies to both sexual desire (as shown in the previous section) and ethnicity; therefore, it is not surprising that both aspects converge in the successive conceptualizations of the Arab-Muslim other.[144] According to Goytisolo, this identification can be traced in the development of medieval and early modern peninsular literatures:

> Whereas in the Middle Ages, Arab-Andalusian and, influenced by it, Castilian erotic literature reached a high level of artistic expression (suffice it to mention authors such as Ibn Hazm of Cordoba and the Archpriest of Hita), from the time of the Catholic Monarchs on, sex became an object of revulsion and hatred for Spanish writers. Sensuality is the worst enemy. [...] And when the Moriscos are definitively expelled from the kingdom, Aznar de Cardona justifies the catastrophic royal decree by arguing that they are "clumsy," "brutes," "fond of bestial diversions,"

[144] If during the Early Modern period, the production of race was developed in connection to culture and "biology," and "associated with the transmission of certain traits through various forms of contamination as well as through sexual reproduction" (Martin-Márquez 14), during the 18th and 19th centuries emerged "orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and/or Muslims as indolent, predisposed to the indulgence of sensual pleasures and horrifyingly bloodthirsty" (Martin-Márquez 22). In both cases, the sexual, either as procreation or as desire, is linked to the ideological delimitation of the other.

> "effeminate," and "completely devoted to the vice of the flesh." (*España y los españoles* 51)

The Arab-Muslim condenses, then, within the hegemonic Spanish tradition, the problem of heterogeneity in different modes: politically, insofar as to accept the centuries of Islamic hegemony as part of Spain's history means accepting the "other" as constitutive of the "One;" racially, since religious differences soon became racialized and "biological" and cultural traits were used to create derogatory racial stereotypes (that is, stereotypes supposedly based on "biological" differences); and subjectively, inasmuch as that racial and political other incorporates what is repressed sexually: desire, sexual freedom, homosexuality. These three aspects are actualized in *Don Julián* where all of Álvaro's fantasies include a strong sexual component.

In fact, as Goytisolo points out, "the greatest historical tragedy of the Peninsula [...] was attributed *ab initio* by our chroniclers and poets to a sexual offense," and resulted in a mass of texts that "interpret the downfall of the Visigoth monarchy through a hostile and condemnatory reference to sexuality" (*Crónicas sarracinas* 33). After all, according to the legend, it was king Rodrigo's lust that ultimately provoked the Berbers' invasion. In this sense, in chapter four, the perversion and murder of Alvarito echoes an aspect that Goytisolo considered to be of particular interest in the construction of the legend as a foundational myth of "Spanish identity:" the inclusion, from the *Chronicle of Alfonso X* (1344) on, of the punishment to which king Rodrigo was subjected and the introduction of the snake, which takes the shape of "temptation transformed into a celestial sanction for the act of lust" (*Crónicas sarracinas 35*). With the introduction of the serpent and the idea of temptation, the legend is definitely turned into a variation of the theme of lost paradise, and guilt and punishment ensue: "in order to cleanse his guilt, king Rodrigo is condemned by his confessor to lock himself in a cave with a snake that

will devour him 'starting from where he had sinned the most,'"[145] that is, the snake would devour king Rodrigo starting with his penis. According to Goytisolo,

> It is not necessary, of course, to have read Freud to perceive in the mental scene of the Hispanic subconscious the sexual connotations of the terms "cave" (vagina) and "serpent" (phallus), as well as their displacements and transformations (censorships). Beyond the punishment of the king proper, the enduring consequences for Spain – guilty, let us not forget, as emphasized in the 9th-century *Chronicon*, of "living in lust" just like the monarch– also stage the phantom of a cruel and lascivious Moorish invader: an image of that which is repudiated yet simultaneously fascinating. From Alfonso X's *First General Chronicle*, […] poems, novels, chronicles, dramas, each relying on and feeding off the others, have persisted in this characterization of the fierce and lustful Moor, an involuntary instrument of divine wrath. Although the literary elaboration of the myth ceases in the 19th century [...] its mental framework does not entirely leave the Spanish subconscious, as evidenced by its abrupt resurgence in 1936 to justify the "African punishment" imposed on a Republic guilty of all libertinism and crimes.[146] (*Crónicas sarracinas* 36)

Don Julián constitutes a new re-writing of the legend, which inscribes itself in the same tradition it contests. Goytisolo's version gets rid of guilt, and temptation is celebrated, thus cancelling sin itself. This praising of the abject brings forth the fragility of the Francoist law, expressed in the constant need for vigilance and repression against temptation. The debility of the hegemonic discourse is also displayed formally: the novel introduces fragments from the consecrated texts of the literary and historiographical traditions (both as epigraphs preceding each chapter and directly as part of the text itself), mocks them and deconstructs them, thus using

[145] In the original, Goytisolo reproduces literally the medieval text of the *Chronicle*, which reads "por do más pecado avía" (35).

[146] For a detailed account of the successive literary renditions of the legend of don Julián between the 10th and the 18th centuries, see Helena Establier, "'Florinda perdió su flor.' La leyenda de La Cava, el teatro neoclásico español y la tragedia de María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera." In "La imagen del 'moro' en la formulación e instrumentalización del africanismo franquista," Rocío Velasco Castro traces the "construction, deconstruction and re-elaboration" (206) of the image of the "moor" from the 19th century until the Independence of Morocco in 1956. Specifically, during the war, the Francoist side created the image of the "Moor-brother" to legitimize using Moroccan soldiers in the war. During the conflict, on the peninsula, the image of the savage, bloodthirsty, and lustful "Moor" was circulated by both sides: the rebels fueled this image to increase fear among the Republicans, and the Republicans used it to emphasize the barbarity of the rebels.

the word of the law to wreak havoc on the law itself. Thus, the novel suggests that just as vigilance and repression need to be constantly enforced in order to avoid temptation, the hegemonic discourse needs to be repeated and incessantly performed through the Ideological State Apparatuses in order to prevent the foreclosed from coming back in the guise of a specter, which is what happens in the novel.

It is in this sense that, as I pointed out before, *Don Julián* does not represent a political dissent articulated as an alternative, which would mean validating the tools at its disposal (the language of the regime), but rather produces a jammed discourse that seeks to create new meanings by putting forward new symbolic displacements not "occupied" by the ideological constructs of Francoism. By blurring the limits between the canonical texts and the text of the novel, and by mocking, parodying, and ultimately desecrating those canonical texts, the novel itself becomes abject. Through this operation, the novel exposes the inherently violent negative act that underlies every symbolic, insofar as it is this founding violence that creates the abject (since language is nothing but a system of exclusions and hierarchies). In this sense, if "the violent act that founds exclusions and subjugations has no other root than the desire to erect boundaries where unbearable difference becomes visible" (Moreiras, "The Space of Horror"), the novel presents itself as an act of symbolic violence aimed at making visible not only imaginary differences (experiences of sexuality not sanctioned by the regime, the Muslim and Jewish component, silenced traditions that do not fit the image of Spain that the dictatorship requires, etc.) but difference itself. And difference, as the legend of don Julián shows, is always, in the last analysis, built upon the impossibility of the sexual relationship, insofar as sexual difference is "ultimately a kind of zero-institution of the social split of humankind, the naturalized, minimal zero-difference, a split that, prior to signaling any determinate social

difference, signals this difference as such" (Žižek "The Real of Sexual Difference" 63).[147] Thus, the struggle for hegemony is nothing but a battle for "how this zero-difference is overdetermined by other particular social differences" (63); in other words, the medieval "ethnicization" of the religious, or the more contemporary "racialization" of national identity, are ways of overdetermining the "zero-difference" that constitutes the sexual.

4.5 The Racial, the National, the Sexual

In his essay "Racism and Nationalism," Étienne Balibar argues that racist thought depends on the notion of "human nature"[148] which, insofar as it presents itself as obvious and self-evident, reveals itself to be ideological (Althusser 129) or, as Balibar puts it, mediated: "in particular, it necessarily has built into it sexual schemes both on the 'effect' side ('racial characteristics,' whether psychological or somatic, are always metaphors of the difference between the sexes) and on the 'cause' side (interbreeding, heredity)" (56). In other words, racism (as well as nationalism) is a way of translating into an imaginary opposition (self vs. other, inside vs. outside) the Real of antagonism, a structural difference, which, due to the nature of the

[147] In "The Real of Sexual Difference," Žižek resorts to Lévi-Strauss' work with the Winnebago in *Structural Anthropology* to explain the Lacanian concept of sexual difference. For Žižek, the two different layouts of the village's houses drawn by the two social subgroups are the result of an internal antagonism, "an imbalance in social relations that prevented the community from stabilizing in a harmonious whole" (62); yet, the two subgroups constitute one and the same tribe: "How is that possible, if none of the tribe's symbolic articulations –none of its social institutions– are neutral, but are instead overdetermined by the fundamental and constitutive antagonistic split? It is possible through what Lévi-Strauss ingeniously calls the "zero-institution" –a kind of institutional counterpart to "mana," the empty signifier with no determinate meaning, since it signifies only the presence of meaning as such, in opposition to its absence. This zero-institution has no positive, determinate function –its only function is the purely negative one of signaling the presence and actuality of social institution as such in opposition to is absence" (62).

[148] According to Balibar, one of the fundamental operations of racist theory is *classification*, that is, "the reflection within the human species of the difference that constitutes it, the search for criteria by which men can be said to be men. […] Classification and hierarchy are operations of naturalization *par excellence* or, more accurately, of projection of historical and social differences into the realm of an imaginary nature." (56) The result is the notion of "human nature" which appears as self-evident.

functioning of the signifier itself, can never be fully symbolized. In this sense, the novel suggests that the subsequent discursive (des)figurations of the Arab-Muslim other by the Spanish hegemonic discourse is an endeavor "to cope with this traumatic antagonism, to heal its wound via the imposition of a balanced symbolic structure" (Žižek "The Real of Sexual Difference" 62) (of course, a symbolic structure can only appear as balanced thanks to the imaginary, the fantasy that comes to conceal "imbalance"). This ideological endeavor materializes in the conceptualization of a complementarity of opposites, the "Christian knight" vs. "the Arab-Muslim Other" which ultimately refers to the traumatic core of any symbolic organization: difference.

As Balibar explains, the "human nature" which lies at the basis of the racial constructs (which are always superimposed over the difference between the sexes, that is, racism is a way of overdetermining the zero-difference)[149] is opposed to the "animal," hence the "bestialization" of individuals or racialized groups (57). Thus, the formulation of racism always carries the threat of regression, a relapse into the animal (57), which can happen through contagion with the racialized "other." That's why, when racist theory replaces the signifier "culture" with that of "race," "it has always to attach this to a 'heritage,' an 'ancestry,' a 'rootedness,' all signifiers of the imaginary face-to-face relation between man and his origins" (57). In the novel, the Séneca-Franco-Álvaro Peranzules chain illustrates the use of national history to legitimize the regime, but it also points to the fact that this legitimization is rooted in racism; it cannot, in fact, be

[149] "The 'biologicism' of the racial theories […] is not a valorization of life as such, still less an application of biology; rather it is a vitalized metaphor of certain sexualized social values: energy, decisiveness, initiative and generally all the virile representations of domination or, conversely, passivity, sensuality, femininity, or again, solidarity, *esprit de corps* and generally all the representations of the 'organic' unity of society along the lines of an endogamous 'family.' This vitalist metaphor is associated with a hermeneutics which makes somatic traits into symptoms of the psychological or cultural 'character'" (Balibar 58). *Don Julián* emphasizes this logic in the successive conceptualizations and stereotypes about the Arab-Muslim other with the Spanish historiographical and literary traditions.

dissociated from it: The cultural history that establishes a Spanish continuity (Iberian, Roman, Visigoth, and Castilian) that excludes the Muslim and Jewish from the supposed "national essence" connects the "pure origin" of the race with the national project of Francoism.[150]

However, the "human historicity" established by racial theories is, according to Balibar, predicated upon a *stasis*: humanity is constantly overcoming its animality, and therefore is at constant risk of falling back into it (57). In this sense, racial theories acquire a sense of transcendence, they contain "an idealization of the species" which "necessarily culminates in the description and valorization of a certain type of man, demonstrating the human ideal, both in terms of body and mind" (58). Indeed, in the hegemonic discourse that connects the origin (Seneca) to the present (Franco) and the future (Álvaro Peranzules and all successive "don Álvaros" created through the Francoist ideology), a specific ideal of masculinity emerges, which is mocked and ridiculed in the text.

The novel suggests that, in the traditional hegemonic discourse of Spain, this ideal type of man, that is, the ideal of the Spanish masculine identity, has always been defined in opposition to the Arab-Muslim other, paying particular attention to the negotiation of said identity as it relates

[150] Goytisolo was very critical of this ideological narrative: "Until very recently, the majority of our historians considered the Iberian Peninsula as an abstract space inhabited, from its most remote origins, by peoples who, miraculously, two thousand years before the historical existence of Spain, were already "Spanish:" Tartessians, Iberians, Celts, Celtiberians. When Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans arrived in the peninsula, they encountered the stubborn resistance of the locals (Sagunto, Numancia) before becoming "Spanish" themselves: thus, according to Menéndez Pidal, Seneca and Martial were Spanish writers, and Ortega y Gasset speaks of the 'Sevillian' Emperor Trajan. Based on this narrative, Spain has received, like the course of a river, the contributions of different human currents that, century after century, have swelled and enriched its primitive flow, from the Phoenicians to the Visigoths. When the latter succumbed to African invaders, the destruction of their kingdom was already the destruction of Spain. Consequently, the Reconquista initiated in the 8th century in the Asturian mountains is, *ab ovo*, Spain's resistance. Curiously, this absurd fiction has obtained unanimous acceptance among Spaniards for centuries. For them, there is no doubt that Sagunto and Numancia are their heroic feats (a clear precedent of national resistance to Napoleon, they'll say), just as Seneca was 'Andalusian' and Martial was 'Aragonese,' as if the current profile of the Spanish people were not a result of civilization and culture, but rather a preexisting 'essence' that had marked successive inhabitants, our compatriots, already five hundred years before the birth of Christ" (Goytisolo *España y los españoles* 21-22). This narrative was present in history and literature textbooks, as well as in the regime's cultural discourse produced in the arts and the media. In this narrative, Francoism itself always appears as the logical continuation of this "essence."

to (homo)sexuality.[151] In turn, the Arab-Muslim other has been characterized in different, often contradictory ways depending on historical circumstances. Thus, for example, during the 19th-century military campaigns in North Africa, Arab-Muslim men were associated with homosexual practices (a stereotype originating in the Middle Ages); however, once the Protectorate was established, although North Africans continued to be depicted as sexually exuberant, the emphasis on homosexual practices diminished, as Spanish soldiers now lived alongside Moroccans (Martin-Márquez 184). Later, during the Civil War, the insurgent side bribed or conscripted Moroccan men to fight for them. In the context of the war, these North African soldiers were still depicted as barbaric and sexually thirsty, but now, this sexuality was considered as a positive, virile trait: general Queipo del Llano even asserted that "Moroccan soldiers would serve as a model of virility for the effeminate 'reds' of Spain: 'Our valiant legionnaires and Regulares have shown the reds what it is to be a man. While passing through, they have also [shown] the reds' women, who now, finally, have experienced real men, not castrated militia men'" (Martin-Márquez 203-204).[152]

Queipo del Llano's words resonate as one of the leitmotifs of the novel; as usual, however, the moral values conventionally attached to it are turned upside down. Within Álvaro-

[151] For a detailed account of the tensions and negotiations of masculinity and homosexuality, see Susan Martin-Márquez, *Dissorientations…*, especially chapter 4, "The masculine role in the Spanish-Moroccan Theater of War" (161-219).

[152] After the war, "the homoeroticism that had been so intimately linked to acts of brutality would now be stripped of its openly violent valence, as a less discomfiting discourse of brotherly love moved to center stage. Eventually, however, most signs of 'dissident' sexuality would also disappear, as the Franco regime shifted away from fascism and toward National Catholicism, and labored to institute a rigorously heterosexist and patriarchal state" (Martin-Márquez 206). The Francoist authorities also made a significant effort to encourage the return of the Moroccan soldiers to Morocco and also did everything in their power to prevent interracial relationships. They were particularly keen on avoiding marriages between Spanish women and Moroccan men, since these resulted in an ambiguous national status for women (per the regime's law, women assumed their husband's nationality) and the ambiguous ethnic status of their children (For detailed information on these topics, see Rocío Velasco de Castro, "La imagen del 'moro' en la formulación e instrumentalización del africanismo franquista;" Stephanie Wright, "Glorious brothers, Unsuitable Lovers: Moroccan Veterans, Spanish Women and the Mechanisms of Francoist Paternalism" and Eloy Martínez Corrales, *La imagen del magrebí en España: Una perspectiva histórica, siglos XVI-XX*.)

Julián's fantasy of destruction, Spanish women (condemned to sexual repression by Francoism) are shown to possess sexual desire, and the invasion commanded by Julián is a liberation for "women of all kinds who, rejecting the fop concept, invoke in dreams the Arabian serpent and its slow, abundant feast" ["mujeres de toda laya que, rehusando el lechuguino concepto, invocan en sueños la arábiga sierpe y su lento, caudaloso festín"] (147).[153] In other words, if the regime's cultural discourse opposed the virility of Moroccan soldiers to the "effeminate 'reds,'" *Don Julián* in turn opposes it to the puritan, repressed sexuality of Spanish men; women, in turn, are not "shown" what a man means, but demand and enjoy their sexuality outside of the regime's puritanism. Álvaro's imagined destruction is therefore linked with a potent, hedonistic, incommensurate sexuality that only obeys the imperatives of immediate pleasure and disregards any moral code:

> The betrayal will be accomplished : your serpent steadfastly guards the age-old revenge : breath of austere Castile, land of stern, solemn, and composed men! : simple and chaste loves affairs, couples bound in tedious and dull procreation! : the castrating pruning has been complete and your fury disdains the limits : the passive harem will welcome the asp with jubilation, the robust serpent will supplant its meager and fop concept : flying serpents escort the path of all who wear the Libyan turban : the voices already sound : listen to them : in the ungrateful plot, executioner of the free, intelligence and sexuality will flourish.
>
> [la traición se realizará : tu sierpe guarda tenaz el secular desquite : hálito de la austera Castilla, tierra de hombres adustos, graves y sosegados! : amores sencillos y castos, parejas vinculadas en procreación tediosa e insulsa! : la poda castratriz ha sido completa y tu furor desdeña los límites : el pasivo serrallo acogerá con júbilo el áspid, la robusta culebra suplantará su concepto mísero y lechuguino : sierpes volantes escoltan la andadura de cuantos ciñen líbico turbante : las voces suenan ya : escúchalas : en el solar ingrato, verdugo de los libres, inteligencia y sexo florecerán.] (227-228)

[153] As pointed out earlier, the sexual connotations of the serpent are not a product of Goytisolo's imagination, but a response to the hegemonic figuration of the Arab-Muslim other since the Middle Ages. Specifically, the quote by Saavedra Fajardo that precedes chapter 3 (containing Álvaro's fantasy of destruction) reads: "Africa, which threw its serpents over Spain, inundating it with new floods of people" ["África, la cual soltó luego por España sus sierpes, inundándola con nuevos diluvios de gente"] (230)

The opposition between the "robust serpent" of Álvaro-Julián's Arab-Muslim troops and the "fop concept" of the "stern, solemn and composed men" of Castile (both the serpent and the concept symbolizing the penis) links sexual repression with political and cultural *stasis*. In this sense, the novel points toward the staunch anti-intellectualism of the regime (also inherited from historical hegemonic discourse), and exposes the ideological connection between racism, sexuality, and nationalism within the Francoist discourse.

As explained above, the Spanish national identity was said to be "natural," "essential," "self-evident," and therefore undeniable and unquestionable. In addition, insofar as Francoism presented itself as a theocracy, this essential core of the nation became sacred, hence enigmatic, unknowable. This dogmatic conceptualization of identity (which affords phallic jouissance and with it, subjective certainty) precludes any debate; after all, how to establish a dialogue about something that appears as given, obvious, and certain? How to negotiate something which, due to its sacred nature, can't even be said?[154] The fact that thanks to Álvaro-Julián's invasion, "intelligence and sexuality will flourish" links critical thought with a less repressed experience of sexuality. With this, the novel is signaling an analogy between the notion of the nation and that of the racialized other: both of them have been "imagined" in order to conceal the zero-difference, the structural antagonism we call sexuality.

[154] For the regime, the sole idea that "the Spanish" could be thought or discussed constitutes a sacrilege, to the extent that "impinging upon national unity in any way was not just a crime –it was a 'pecado contra la Patria,' [sin against the Fatherland] as Franco explained to the Consejo Nacional del Movimiento in 1941" (Viestenz 5). This is why, in the novel, the Spaniards are characterized as a "race of garbanzo eaters, lumpy and stony, drowsy, lethargic, […] hostile to progress and technology, hammer of heretics, long live the chains, the eternal crusaders" ["raza comedora de garbanzos, apelmazados y pétreos, somnolientos, amodorrados, […] hostiles al progreso y a la técnica, martillo de herejes, vivan las caenas, los eternos cruzados"] (242). This quote provides an excellent example of the novel's metaphorical concentration, simultaneously alluding to various themes from different eras and contexts: "the vision of Spain as the 'hammer of heretics' by Menéndez Pelayo [...]; the cry of the people of Madrid, 'long live the chains,' proclaimed during the restoration of absolutism by Fernando VII; the Spaniards' mistrust of progress and technology; and the popularity of the garbanzo, immortalized in José Joaquín de Mora's 'Oda andaluza' (Andalusian Ode)" (Levine 242).

Critical thought and a "freer" sexuality are thus, in the novel, two sides of the same coin. This is why the destructive potency of the serpent is connected with homosexuality (that is, with a non-normative form of sexuality) and with the destruction of the laws (syntax, grammar, etc.) of the hegemonic discourse (that is, with intellectual work), which the novel equals to the destruction of the discourse of the law itself:

> Anarchic and barbaric prose, far from your groomed style, from your anemic, sleek writing! : and, carving your way through the swamp, you will inaugurate paths and shortcuts, invent trails and footpaths, in abrupt rupture with official syntax and its sequel of dogmas and prohibitions : heretic, schismatic, renegade, apostate : violating edicts and norms, tasting the forbidden delicious fruit : robust and rugged jungle of Tariq, black dense beard, radiant, dazzling smile!
>
> [prosa anárquica y bárbara, lejos de vuestro estilo peinado, de vuestra anémica, relamida escritura! : y, abriéndote paso entre la manigua, inaugurarás caminos y atajos, inventarás senderos y trochas, en abrupta ruptura con la oficial sintaxis y su secuela de dogmas y entredichos : hereje, cismático, renegado, apóstata : violando edictos y normas, probando el sabroso fruto prohibido : recia y rugosa selva de Tariq, negra barba cerrada, fúlgida, deslumbrante sonrisa!] (250-251)

If, as explained in the previous section, the masculine ideal of Francoism depends on the phallic repetition of the regime's hegemonic discourse, Álvaro proposes an Other jouissance, a jouissance of the word. If the regime's phallic jouissance affords the subjective certainty that comes with said repetition, Álvaro's Other jouissance means giving up such certainty, illustrated through the impossibility of grasping the limits of the narrative voice itself. Simultaneously, the novel's fragmented, heretic prose challenges narrative conventions; in so doing, it reveals the incoherence and repressed truths of the regime's ideology. Ultimately, the novel exposes that the ideological insistence on the homogeneity and eternity of the Spanish identity, the sacred, enigmatic core of the Spanish nation, is a form of sublimation, a response to the impossibility of the sexual relationship:

> an unmistakable Spanish woman who advances elastically and agilely, as if propelled by the admiration she arouses : masculine eyes fixed upon her : in the abrupt and candid insurgence of the breasts, in the well-guarded treasure : theological bastion, sacred grotto : tough and impregnable : pretext for literary jousts, Pemanian games : elaborate hyperboles where once again manifests the natural wit of a uniquely gifted people for the flirtatious compliment, the conceptual flattery : the pinnacle expression of a rhetoric of the most ancient national lineage [...] imaginary speleologists of the crypt, of the hidden cavities : [...] until they vanish from sight and suddenly annul the distant unfulfilled dreams, the never-satisfied hopes of the rough and brave carpetos
>
> [una inconfundible española que avanza elástica y ágil, como impulsada por la admiración que suscita : los masculinos ojos fijos en ella : en la brusca y candorosa insurgencia de los pechos, en el bien guardado tesoro : teológico bastión, gruta sagrada : tenaz e inexpugnable : pretexto de literarias justas, de pemanianos juegos : rebuscadas hipérboles en donde se manifiesta una vez más el natural ingenio de un pueblo singularmente dotado para el culto requiebro, el conceptual piropo : expresión cumbre de una retórica de la más rancia estirpe nacional […] imaginarios espeleólogos de la cripta, de las cavidades recónditas : […] hasta perderse de vista y anular de golpe los remotos sueños incumplidos, las jamás satisfechas esperanzas de los broncos y bizarros carpetos] (133)

In this passage, the supposedly virile masculinity of the Spanish man as expressed in the hegemonic ideology (always defined in opposition to the imaginary Arab-Muslim man) is undermined by contrasting it with another aspect of the same ideology: the puritanism of the Christian doxa. The "essential" virile masculinity of the Spanish man appears to be "neutralized" by religion, specifically, Catholicism's puritanical views of the sexual. The result of this contradiction within ideology, according to the novel, is the overdevelopment of the "*piropo*" or flirtatious compliment: Men are (sarcastically) said to be capable of inventing sophisticated, poetic "*piropos*," which come to substitute the actual sexual encounter.

In fact, the satisfaction obtained through the "*piropo*" is similar to the satisfaction that Álvaro Peranzules derived from repeating the regime's cultural discourse: it is phallic jouissance and, therefore, constitutes sexual satisfaction. As Alenka Zupančič explains, the satisfaction

obtained through sublimation *is* sexual satisfaction, it is the satisfaction of the drive, without repression:

> We usually tend to think of sublimation in terms of a substitute satisfaction: instead of "fucking," I engage in talking (writing, painting, praying…) – this way I get another kind of satisfaction to replace the "missing" one. […] The point that Lacanian psychoanalysis makes, however, is more paradoxical: the activity is different, yet the satisfaction is exactly the same. In other words, the point is not to explain the satisfaction in talking by referring to its "sexual origin." The point is that the satisfaction in talking is *itself* "sexual." (1)

It is this starting point that leads Zupančič to the necessity of questioning the "very *nature* and status of sexuality" (1) since (as seen in chapter three of this dissertation) the Freudian discovery lies in understanding the sexual as the realm in which a fundamental gap in the symbolic order is registered. And as the Lacanian pursuit of this problem shows, it is not that sexuality is one aspect (among others) where that gap appears: sexuality *is* the gap in the symbolic, the zero-difference of what we call "human being," and all the narratives (of sexual difference and gender roles, but also political, identity, economic narratives) that human beings build for ourselves are responses to that gap, ways of keeping it, and the anxiety that comes with it, at bay. In this sense, *Don Julián* shows the hegemonic narration of the Spanish national identity to be an instance of that type of narration.

4.6 The Nation as Sublimation

If the structure of language provides the notion of the "One" for the subject, it is also the functioning of the signifier that renders it unattainable: the closure of the symbolic is impossible, something is always already foreclosed, and this constitutive "disagreement" called sexuality is the "beginning" of the subject. As Alenka Zupančič puts it in her book *What is Sex?*, even in the

absence of external obstacles, complete sexual satisfaction is impossible (7-8). In other words, the sexual is "a factor of radical disorientation, a factor that keeps bringing into question all our representations of the entity called 'human being'" (7). In this sense, "it is as if sexual meaning, so generously produced by the unconscious, were here to mask the reality of a more fundamental negativity at work in sexuality, to separate us from it by a screen that derives its efficacy from the fact that it is itself a means of satisfaction" (8). Ultimately, Zupančič uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to address the core difficulty of the sexual: the difficulty of "locating *it* in *one place*," either "inside" or "outside." I emphasize *it* and *one place* because those are the two presuppositions that Zupančič's text disentangles: on the one hand, *it* (sexuality) is not "something," an element, but "pertains to the very being-there of the unconscious, in its very ontological uncertainty" (12). On the other hand, and as a result, an effort emerges to define *it*, delimit *it*, capture *it* (and thus do away with the constitutive negativity it represents). Ultimately, this effort takes the form of an attempt to *locate* the sexual either in the corporal (partial drives) or in the symbolic (the symbolically constructed idea of a "natural," instinctual sexuality guided by reproductive needs); that is, to separate the jouissance of the body (inside) from the symbolic Other (outside).

Zupančič argues that this attempt at defining sexuality usually takes the shape of a temporal narrative according to which "genital sexual organization" actually consists of a "retroactive" unification of an "originally heterogeneous, dispersed, always-already *compound* sexual drive, composed of different partial drives, such as looking, touching, sucking and so on" (9). This means that "genital sexual organization" is somehow not "natural," in the sense of being a symbolic construction (imposed on the body from the "outside") and is also never complete, in the sense that such unification is never fully realized. In this sense, "one could even

say that human sexuality is 'sexual' (and not simply 'reproductive') precisely insofar as the unification at stake, the tying of all the drives to one single purpose, never really works, but allows for different partial drives to constitute their circular, self-perpetuating activity" (10). Thus, the logic followed by the narrative attempt at defining sexuality is self-defeating. This is because, as Zupančič points out, "something crucial is missing in this account [which] concerns precisely the *point of encounter* between the enjoyment involved in the drives […] and sexuality;" (10) that is, between bodily pleasure and the "other satisfaction," the surplus pleasure that is produced in the process of satisfaction of vital needs.

The Freudian discovery of the unconscious as developed by Lacan is what allows for an understanding of this impasse in sexuality: the inseparability between the body and the Other, the impossibility of situating sexuality, *as if it were "something"* in either one or the other, that is, either exclusively inside or exclusively outside. Thus, according to Zupančič, what makes the pleasure experienced "internally" in the body "sexual" is the encounter with the unconscious: "The child's universe [is] constantly intruded upon by 'enigmatic signifiers,' that is, by the unconscious and sexually charged messages of adults" (10). However, this invasion of cryptic messages "is not an encounter with an additional ('adult') surplus knowledge (incomprehensible to children and hence 'enigmatic'), but with a *minus*, with something that first comes to them only as missing from its place in the Other" (11). This is what Lacan means when he states that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other. The unconscious is the discourse of the Other insofar as it arrives at the subject "from the outside," and always already as the result of repression, insofar as repression is "*the signifying form* pertaining to discursivity as such" (11). The subject is thus what emerges when bodily jouissance is connected with the order of the signifier, which is always structurally defective, lacking, something is foreclosed from it. In this

sense, "something concerning sexuality is […] unconscious even when it first occurs, and not simply due to a subsequent repression. There is something about sexuality that appears only as repressed, something that registers in reality only in the form of repression" (11). As explained in the previous chapter, when this constitutive repression is overlapped with the body two different (not complementary) forms of relationship with the Other emerge, which Lacan calls masculine and feminine. As Zupančič shows, what lies at the core of those two configurations of desire is the ontological negativity at the heart of each, at the heart of the subject itself. And the subject, as well as its discourse (that is, its social bonds) is nothing but an effect of the signifier, a result of the attempt to abolish its constitutive negativity.

The logical conclusion of all this is that the "cultural" control and regulation of sexuality "should not be taken as self-explanatory, that is, as explained by the 'traditional' cultural ban on sexuality, but rather the other way around: this ban should be explained by an ontological lapse involved in the sexual as sexual" (Zupančič 23). In other words, the order of the symbolic (civilization itself) is not simply an inexplicable attempt to cover up sexuality, it is rather a substitute for what is lacking in the sexual, in the subject itself and in all things pertaining to it. And "that in the sexual which is not is the relation: *there is no sexual relation*" (23). The passage about the "*piropo*" quoted in the previous section illustrates this lack of sexual relation: in substituting actual intercourse for the rhetoric enjoyment of elaborated flirtatious comments, the hegemonic ideology (embedded into the traditional Christian doxa) realizes the disavowal of (the unconscious knowledge of) the impossibility of the sexual relation.[155] As if, by precluding

[155] As Zupančič explains, what is forbidden in Christian ideology is not enjoyment itself, but the ontological negativity of sexuality. She provides an illuminating reading of the somewhat obscure passages on Christian imagery in Lacan's *Seminar XX*: according to her, said imagery frequently reproduces the enjoyment of partial objects, while simultaneously banning sexual intercourse: "even the 'purest' sort of procreative sexual copulation is connected with sin. Or, as Saint Augustine has famously pointed out: sexuality is not the original sin (the latter refers to the original pair's disobedience when eating from the tree of knowledge), but the *punishment* for it, and the locus of its perpetuation –it is a subsequent addition to the original creation" (13).

intercourse, the ontological negativity of the sexual was neutralized, in the sense of there being no need to "know" about it.

Thus, this passage shows that what religion prohibits is not enjoyment itself: what happens in sublimation is sexual satisfaction too, men derive sexual satisfaction through their comments toward women. What is prohibited in religion is the link between bodily enjoyment and the sexual; in other words, religion "wants" civilization, symbolically constructed relations, but without sex: a sexless Other. Francoism's aim was identical: the ultimate goal of the regime's ideology was to abolish the non-relation and to replace it with Relation; an operation which is "the trade-mark of all social repression" insofar as "the most oppressive societies have always been those which axiomatically proclaimed (enforced) the existence of the sexual relation: a "harmonious" relation presupposes an exact definition of essences (involved in this relation) and of roles pertaining to them" (Zupančič 25). The primary example of this enforced "harmonious relation" is the symbolically constructed idea of sexual difference (which defines the essences involved in the fantasy of the sexual relation) and the oppression of women that comes with it (for this harmony to last, women should be so and so).

However, this logic does not pertain exclusively to the realm of love relations. On the contrary, the sexual is the zero-institution of difference, of the ontological negativity at work in the constitution of the subject itself and therefore of "civilization." The sexual, then, names that which does not work within the symbolic, the sexual names the non-relation, and "since it is one with the discursive order, the non-relation is at work in all forms of social bond. […] The social relations of power –domination, exploitation, discrimination– are first and foremost *forms of exploitation of the non-relation*" (Zupančič 30).

This connection between politics and sexuality is what lies at the core of *Don Julián*, and it is partly responsible for the negative reactions the novel aroused; after all, it makes visible the non-relation, it confronts us with the (unconscious) knowledge of the fact that we lack a signifier for the sexual relation, that is, that "reality" is not a closed totality. In the novel, the bond between the sexual and the political is best illustrated by the recurrent image that symbolizes the sacred, hidden core of the Spanish national essence: the female sexual organs. This image, insinuated in the passage about the "*piropo*," is fully realized when, during his invasion of Spain, Álvaro-Julián has intercourse[156] with Álvaro Peranzules' daughter, Isabella I of Castile,[157] whose "thighs converge towards the glimpsed treasure like two imperious traffic signs : one-way direction, the law of the funnel that the Hispanic flock obeys and only the traitor scorns!" ["muslos que convergen hacia el entrevisto tesoro como dos imperiosas señales de tráfico : dirección única, ley del embudo que la hispánica grey acata y sólo el traidor desdeña!"] (260). The traitor who scorns "the treasure" is Álvaro, the homosexual man who, through his rejection of heteronormative sexuality, becomes a traitor to the fatherland. Obviously, the Francoist discourse doesn't define homosexuality itself as a political betrayal, but in bringing forth this ideological (hidden) link, the novel shows the overlapping between the sexual and the political, insofar as both sex and politics refer to "what can be articulated around some fundamental social antagonism(s)" (Zupančič 21). In this sense, it is not that the political functions (in Francoism or elsewhere) as some sort of secondary projection of the sexual, it is not about finding the "sexual

[156] Scholarship often considers this sexual encounter as a rape; however, I can't find anything in the text itself that supports that interpretation.

[157] As indicated in the first section of this chapter, both Álvaro Peranzules' daughter and Alvarito's mother are identified with Isabella, which tinges this passage with Oedipal connotations. At the beginning of the passage, Isabella is praying, and the prayer rapidly becomes a source of sexual excitation: while praying, she takes off her clothes and in an ecstasy of pleasure, her words recall the verses of Saint Teresa. This is another instance in which the novel shows how sublimation affords sexual pleasure. Indeed, in *Seminar XX*, Lacan uses mystic poetry as an example of the Other jouissance.

origin" of the Francoist political ideology and practice (for example, "blaming" sexual repression for the regime's oppressive politics). What the novel shows is that the political is a sublimation of a constitutive ontological negativity named sexuality (indeed, the cultural discourses on sexuality itself are a sublimation of the sexual): "What relates sexuality to politics is that they are not simple ontological categories but essentially imply, depend on something which is not of the order of being, and which Lacan refers to as *the Real*. The Real is precisely not being, but its inherent impasse" (Zupančič 22).

When Julián and Isabel engage in intercourse, the scene transforms into a visit to the Caves of Hercules, where the guide invites visitors to "an unforgettable, instructive journey through the depths, corners, and hiding places of the Theological Bastion : through the interior of the sancta sanctorum designated by you before the tourist invasion, the development and silver anniversary of the Ubiquitous, as the Remote, Fantastic, Never Explored by Any Traveler Sacred Grotto" ["una inolvidable, instructiva excursión por las honduras, recovecos y escondrijos del Bastión Teológico : por el interior del sancta sanctorum designado por vosotros antes de la invasión turística, el desarrollo y las bodas de plata del Ubicuo, como la Remota, Fantástica, jamás Explorada por Viajero Alguno Gruta Sagrada"] (262).[158] At the end of the journey, the

[158] Here reemerges the novel's critical stance regarding the contradictions between the regime's discourse of the 40s and 50s and its contradictory shift in the 60s: the tightly guarded "Theological Bastion" of Spanish identity is now freely offered to the enjoyment of tourists; with this, the novel recalls the slogan "Spain is different," used at the time to attract European tourism by presenting the country's backwardness as its major appeal, since Spain supposedly offered folklore and traditions still untainted by modernization: "one of the most typical and astonishing historical curiosities of our privileged peninsular landscape / its metaphysical implications / its moral configuration / its rich and dense spirituality" ["una de las curiosidades históricas más típicas y pasmosas de nuestro privilegiado paisaje peninsular / sus implicaciones metafísicas / su configuración moral / su espiritualidad rica y densa"] (262-263). The female body of the homeland is also identified with the Alcázar of Toledo, which "has known how to resist with tenacity and cool-headedness the assaults and attacks of the most powerful enemy […] today / by the grace of our prudent adaptation to the tourist demands of the moment / suitably provided with the necessary exemptions and (papal) bulls / we take pleasure in revealing to you the fabulous secret zealously guarded for centuries" ["ha sabido resistir con tenacidad y sangre fría los asaltos y embates del enemigo más poderoso […] hoy / por obra y gracia de nuestra prudente adaptación a las exigencias turísticas del momento / convenientemente provistos de las necesarias dispensas y bulas /nos complacemos en desvelar a ustedes el fabuloso secreto

tourists arrive at "the paradise promised to the chosen minority of the abstinent and the chaste, and you discover with luxuriant amazement and sudden disbelief that it is, indeed, there, unmistakably, my God, who would have thought, the Cunt" ["paraíso, al fin, prometido a la minoría escogida de los continentes y de los castos y descubres con frondoso asombro e incredulidad abrupta que se trata, sí, se ve ya, es él, no cabe la menor duda, dios mío, quién lo hubiera dicho, del Coño"] (267). In other words, inside the sacred cave, there is nothing but the cave itself, "there is nothing there but a central emptiness or lack and is therefore the very root of desire" (Viestenz 80). *Don Julián* thus points to the opacity of the sexual organ as the empty signifier whose mission is to cover up the non-relation.

As Zupančič explains, "the non-relation is not the opposite of the relationship, it is *the inherent (il)logic (a fundamental "antagonism") of the relationships* that are possible and existing" (24), that is, the non-relation is not pure absence, but a gap (in the symbolic) that determines what is. Therefore, Zupančič's argument suggests that the symbolic order, discourse, is to be understood as determined by an element that is not (but still is vital for the signifier to signify), that is, by the foreclosed signifier that allows the Name-of-the-Father to set in. As explained in previous chapters, what comes in the place of that missing link in the signifying chain is object *a*. In this sense, object *a* is "the impossible substance of enjoyment […]. It is the objective counterpart of the non-relation (we could say that it is non-relation as object)" (24). What is, in *Don Julián*, this "non-relation as object" if not the nation, Spain itself?

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celosamente guardado durante siglos"] (263). The new Developmentalism policies thus consist of selling the sacred national essence (the caves ready to be explored by the tourists which in turn refer to the female sexual organs) which, according to the regime's discourse of the 40s and 50s, had to be protected from the dangerous influences of Protestant Europe's alleged materialism. The quote parodies and ridicules the regime's Developmentalism discourse, which presented its new policies as the result of its capacity to "adapt" (by way of the "necessary exemptions and papal bulls") to the new demands of global economy (when in reality they were the result of the regime's poor economic management and international pressures).

Playing with the metaphors deployed in Alfonso X's *General chronicle*'s account of the legend of Don Julián (where King Rodrigo is sentenced to die in a cave eaten by a snake), the novel suggests that hegemonic ideology situates the sacred essence of "Spanishness," (which, insofar as it is sacred, always remains unexplored and inaccessible) in the Theological Bastion, the cave, the female sexual organs. And it is precisely insofar as it is not "something," that that sacred unknown determines the nature of "Spanishness." The novel suggests that the signifier "nation" or even "Spain" works just like the signifier "woman" within the Francoist discourse: the symbolic construction of the national essence is nothing but the sublimated counterpart of the impossibility of the sexual relation. Thus, "nation" or "Spain" are names for the non-relationship, for the fundamental antagonism that determines the regime's discourse in its entirety, and so that determines what is, "reality."

In this sense, *Don Julián*'s critique of the regime's ideology sheds light on its point of fissure, on the radical antagonism where the Real emerges. It is a twofold point, what could be called a redoubling of the repressive work, sexual and political: "woman" and "nation," the overlapping names of the phantasmatic object *a* whose aim is to abolish the non-relation. Nowhere is this made clearer than in the foundational myth of the Spanish identity: the legend of Don Julián, which serves as the point of articulation of the novel.

As explained above, the legend of Don Julián is one of the fundamental foundational myths of the Spanish identity. According to the historiographical and literary sources that have written and rewritten this story over the centuries, count Julián's daughter was raped by the Visigoth king Rodrigo. As an act of revenge, Julián allowed Berber troops from North Africa to enter the Iberian peninsula, thus inaugurating the period of Islamic hegemony. In reality, though,

the Berbers' entrance into the peninsula was triggered by internal tensions within the Visigoth aristocracy.[159]

In *Trilogy of Treason: An Intertextual Study of Juan Goytisolo*, Michael Ugarte argues that Goytisolo chose the figure of Julián not only for its significance in Spanish history but also for its historical vagueness, given that little is known with certainty about him and most of the documentation comes from literary sources. In this sense, Ugarte contends, the novel's "object of commentary are the written versions of that history" (74). Indeed, discourse is the subject of this novel, which constitutes a constant reflection on its own writing as well as the writings that precede it, especially literary and historiographical ones.[160] Thus, by taking the historical figure of Don Julián as its anchor point, the novel refers to a topic always already used ideologically in (historiographic or literary) narratives which have, over the centuries, established the legend of don Julián as one of the core ideological fantasies of the traditional hegemonic discourse on "Spanish identity."

This collection of texts could be considered as what Zupančič has called "narratives of the Relation," defined as narratives that "are actually in the service of the most vicious (social

[159] After the death of King Witiza in the year 710, the Visigoth aristocracy split between supporters of the king's lineage and those who wished to transfer the monarchy to another candidate, Rodrigo, who ultimately seized power. In this state of internal tension, some Visigoth nobles allied with the Berbers from North Africa in order to reclaim the throne for Witiza's heirs. In this context of internal conflict began the legendary constructions of this historical event. From each side emerged a different version of the decline of the Visigoth monarchy, which ultimately crystallized in Pedro del Corral's *Crónica sarracina* (1430). Written in the years leading up to the unification of the Christian kingdoms by the Catholic monarchs, the *Crónica sarracina* carried out the fundamental ideological operation of whitewashing the internal Visigoth conflicts, absolve the king, and shift the blame to Julián's daughter, Cava. Insofar as it constituted the ideological legitimization of the Catholic monarchs, the *Crónica sarracina* became the cornerstone text for the legend of don Julián: subsequent historiographical and literary versions followed the line of development established by it. For more on this topic, see, Helena Establier "'Florinda perdió su flor.' La leyenda de La Cava, el teatro neoclásico español y la tragedia de María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera."

[160] According to Goytisolo in an interview with Julio Ortega published in *Disidencias*: "[The novel's] very subject, at a purely verbal level, is the Spanish literary discourse, from its origin to the present day. To reclaim the betrayal of Don Julián is to challenge several centuries of hostile history through a vandalic assault on the written word of our chroniclers, poets, and narrators. […] My approach allows me to engage in an intertextual dialogue with authors I admire or to parody and infect the style of those I find less respectable" (293).

and economic) *exploitation of the non-relation*" (30).[161] Faced with this monolithic narrative, Goytisolo "'kills' the historical discourse –neutral, impersonal, and distant– and puts writing in its place or, to put it another way, a discourse that, insofar as it is written and unwritten, cannot properly be established as such" (Moreiras "Ficción y autobiografía" 71). In this sense, the novel reproduces the hegemonic discourse (from which it neither can nor wants to separate itself) in order to bring forth what that same discourse doesn't know that it knows. What said discourse (unconsciously) knows is the radical antagonism that underlies the ideological fantasy provided by the legend.

In the successive literary versions of the legend of Don Julián since the 16th century, Cava always appears as guilty of the tragic loss of Spain. This blaming of Cava serves two ideological functions. On the one hand, it is her, and not the internal division of the Visigoths, who motivates the Berber invasion of the peninsula; on the other hand, Rodrigo is exonerated since it is Cava who seduces him (either because of her innocence or purposefully, depending on the version). Through this twofold ideological operation, Cava becomes the cause of the tragedy of the loss of Spain to the "Moors." In this sense, Cava functions as the external element that allows to establish a boundary between a Christian-Spanish "inside" and a Muslim-Arab "outside," that is, she ("woman") functions as the Exception that founds the Universal of "Spanishness." Thus, through the figure of Cava, the successive reformulations of the legend mask the political antagonism, which is displaced to an exteriority ("woman") which, in turn, leaves the Visigoth

[161] These narratives of the Relation follow a logic that consists on "the exploitation and segregation of people by presenting a given form or social antagonism (non-relation) as the ultimate Relation, supposedly protecting us from the utter Chaos of the non-relation. In this way, social injustice directly translates into a higher Justice. At work here is not a crazy attempt to abolish the non-relation as the fundamental negativity, but *disavowing* it while at the same time *appropriating* it as the generic (and productive) point of social power" (31). It is not hard to identify Francoism with this narratives, insofar as it ideologically constructed the Spanish identity in order to legitimize Franco's right to power and deemed him the only one capable of guaranteeing the protection of the Spanish essence against the chaos represented by the Second Republic and the unions and workers associations of the 1930s.

unity and harmony intact. In fact, it is made clear in the legend that Julián just wished to obtain personal revenge, but never actually intended for Spain to be lost to the Arab-Muslim invader (Establier); in other words, the political consequence (the "loss of Spain") is the result of a problem that originates in the realm of sexuality (Cava's rape). In this sense, it could be said that Cava is the Cause of "Spain," insofar as this displacement shows that the traditional hegemonic discourse inaugurated with the Catholic Monarchs (and which meant the definite triumph of one of the two contending versions during the Middle Ages) needs the fantasy of a homogeneous, unified Christian Visigoth kingdom, and it also shows how this Universal could only be upheld through the "externalization" of the political conflict.

Thus Cava emerges, just like Eve, as the cause of the tragedy, guilty of the loss of the paradise, that is, of the supposedly cultural, racial, and religious homogeneity prior to the arrival of Islam. In fact, Goytisolo considered this legend as "a variant of the fable of original sin and the lost paradise, in which, instead of an apple, the lure of the Devil is the beauty of a maiden, and the role of Adam corresponds to the last Visigoth king: because of him, the Spaniards forever lost their innocence, and in their eyes, the invading Moors symbolized evil, punishment, and retribution" (*Crónicas sarracinas*, 35). If, as Zupančič suggests, sexuality is not the sin but the punishment, it is not hard to see the ideological role of the Arab-Muslim other in the legend: it allows for sexuality to be situated there, outside. This operation is nothing but an attempt to remove sex from the Other, to produce what Zupančič calls "a sexless Other," ("pure" Relation, a Spanish Universal with no constitutive antagonism, without ontological negativity) "ready to form spiritual bonds" (29), that is, an Other with whom the Relation is not contaminated, made ultimately impossible, by the presence of the sexual. In this sense, the legend shows to what extent sexuality is the zero-institution of ideology, it is the name for the constitutive ontological

negativity in itself. The novel points out that the legend reveals political conflict to be sexual conflict, this is why its alleged solution implies extirpating the sexual, leaving it outside (on the Arab-Muslim other), thus liberating the symbolic that constitutes our Universal (our symbolic Other) from sex.

In his version of the legend, *Don Julián* dispenses with both Rodrigo and Cava, who are only mentioned once, and only to be excluded from the new Julianesque betrayal looming over Spain: "no one distrusts you, and your plan matures harmoniously : reliving the memory of your humiliations and grievances, accumulating your hatred drop by drop : without Rodrigo, without Frandina, without Cava : new Count Don Julián, forging dark betrayals" ["nadie desconfía de ti y tu plan armoniosamente madura : reviviendo el recuerdo de tus humillaciones y agravios, acumulando gota a gota tu odio : sin Rodrigo, ni Frandina, ni Cava : nuevo conde don Julián, fraguando sombrías traiciones"] (123). By eliminating Rodrigo and Cava, the novel does away with the displacement of political antagonism to a Cause, that is, to a (negative) Exception which in fact founds and upholds the fantasy of an unproblematic realm of Spanishness –a fantasy that was reinforced by the propaganda around the celebrations of the "25 years of peace," whereby Franco appeared as the exceptional leader capable of maintaining peace, that is, a political space free of conflict. Within Álvaro's fantasy, Julián betrays Spain "for the simple, and sufficient, pleasure of betrayal" ["por el simple, y suficiente, placer de la traición"] (234). The sexual connotations of Álvaro-Julián's invasion, therefore, touch upon the problematic core of the regime's ideology: the fact that the problematic aspect is the sexual. In the hegemonic discourse, what returns again and again with the Arab-Muslim other (the racial, religious, and political threat that this discourse projects on this other) is, in the last analysis, the sexual threat, the menace of the Real, difference, being made "known."

Don Julián is an extremely complicated novel, full of cultural and historical references and intertextual games. It is an abject text that takes pleasure in ambiguity, in refusing to let a "stable" narrative emerge: in it, the primacy of the signified is defeated, and the supplemental, excessive, neither here nor there jouissance of the signifier, of the Other, imposes itself. It is not mere iconoclasm, no childish reveling in simulated chaos; on the contrary, insofar as it achieves jouissance of the Other, it exudes the anguish that comes with confronting the Real. In this sense, *Don Julián* carries out, to its ultimate consequences, a radical critique of ideology, because it acknowledges that such a critique is not without charge. Its cost: the recognition of the Unconscious, that is, a radical renunciation of subjective certainty. It means admitting that "reality" is nothing but a symbolic fiction precariously established on the basis of a fundamental antagonism, an ontological negativity, which nevertheless determines it. In short, a radical critique of ideology consists of admitting that, where it matters, "reality" can't be "rescued" or "set straight," that "anOther reality" could only emerge through an unrealizable descent into the abyss of non-sense whose result is impossible to imagine beforehand. In these circumstances, the novel figures out a way to "do something:" it mobilizes the signifier in a way that "hits" the Real. Its success can only be measured in the censorship to which it was (and still is) subjected.

Conclusion

The Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship are contemporary to current Spanish politics. Every political debate between the right and the left is always already rooted in both historical events and, whatever the topic, explicit references to the past rapidly arise. For the conservative groups, left-wing parties and organizations represent, first and foremost, a threat to the unity of Spain; whereas the mainstream left vindicates the Second Republic. In the last few years, in the context of the global emergence of far-right groups across Western politics, the far-right political party Vox openly shows its links with Francoism, uncannily reproducing the cornerstones of its ideology.

Leftist media in Spain often refers to the Francoist dictatorship as fascist. In my view, this is a political strategy rooted in the way the dictatorship ended (with Franco's death) and in the characteristics of Spain's transition to democracy. Although the hegemonic discourse considers it to have been an exemplary process, it was based on the so-called "Pact of Forgetting" (*Pacto del Olvido*, also called *Pacto de Silencio* or Pact of Silence) and on the Amnesty Law of 1977 which led to the liberation of all political prisoners, but also prevented the human rights violations of the dictatorship from being investigated, and their perpetrators from being tried. Many government and public institutions in Spain are still based on their Francoist predecessors, and the traditional oligarchies who supported the coup in 1936 and accumulated wealth during the dictatorship are still the main actors of Spanish economy.

The endurance of Francoist institutions and doxa, and the lack of a public process of trial and condemnation of the regime as a whole and of its leaders in particular, have made it possible for Francoism not to be regarded, by popular common sense, as a particularly negative period within Spanish history. In fact, for the mainstream hegemonic discourse, the scarcity of the 1940s and 1950s was a product of the war (not of the regime's economic policies) which Franco managed to reverse in the 1960s, improving the material conditions of the Spaniards' lives through the so-called "Spanish miracle" (*"milagro español"*). In other words, popular common sense does not identify Francoism as problematic and, within this context, those who want to emphasize its violent and repressive character resort to the label "fascism" to convey such character.

This dissertation is an attempt to participate and carry forward this ever-lasting conversation about the Francoist dictatorship. I have sought to provide a fresh perspective, that allows to a better understanding not only of Francoism, but also of the current impulses that represent its same logic. In these pages Francoism emerges, above all, as an effort to negate difference, to attain transparent Oneness. Therefore, I consider that Francoism, as law, constitutes seamless repetition of its supposedly harmonious order, pure death drive. Its ultimate goal, as that of its inheritors, is to halt desire and cancel dissensus. It is a living death insofar as, as psychoanalysis shows, it is precisely desire, difference, what humanizes the human animal.

Thus, this whole dissertation strives to understand the concept of difference, its functioning within Western subjectivity. How that logic translated into the Francoist regime is the topic of chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 have attempted to shed light on the fact that, within Western *logos*, the sexual (its impossibility) is the mark of structural difference, and the Francoist imaginary elaboration of gender roles and sexual differences is an attempt to keep at

bay the anxiety that such impossibility contains. Lastly, chapter 4 shows how structural (sexual) difference is projected to other realms, particularly race and religion, in successive attempts to conceal the structural impossibility of identity, which returns time and again as a Real specter in different realms.

I hope this conceptualization of difference (which I have based on a specific political formation, Francoism) will in turn open up new paths for thinking our being in the world and imagining new alternatives. In this sense, two projects emerge from this dissertation. The first is the exploration of the conceptualization of the notion of race in the Hispanic world in the wake of modernity tracing the discourses that constructed the concept of a cultural "Hispanidad," while concealing the signifier "race" as a mark of difference. Secondly, this dissertation leads to a critical consideration of contemporary political debates in Spain, including those about migration, regionalisms, feminisms and queer sexualities, as well as forms of political militancy, with the aim of contributing to thinking of how to articulate a politics that accounts for difference.

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