

*Chapter One*

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THE DESPOTIC BODY

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*Raza: Espíritu de Franco (1939–1952)*

¿Quién se ha metido en las entrañas de España como  
Franco hasta el punto de no saber ya si Franco es  
España o si España es Franco?

—Ernesto Giménez Caballero,  
in Carmen Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*

“España es un país privilegiado que puede bastarse a sí mismo. Tenemos todo lo que nos hace falta para vivir, y nuestra producción es lo suficientemente abundante para asegurar nuestra propia subsistencia. No tenemos necesidad de importar nada, y es así como nuestro nivel de vida es idéntico al que había antes de la guerra” (Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios familiares de Franco*, 230).<sup>1</sup> These words, pronounced by Francisco Franco toward the end of the Spanish Civil War, were assiduously anachronistic and deceptive. In reality the country was completely impoverished after the brutal three-year war. Besides that, the end of the Spanish Civil War on April 1, 1939, was the beginning of more than a decade-long isolation of Spain from the rest of Europe and the world (with the exception of the Axis powers). The isolation lasted until Spain’s acceptance to the UN in 1952. The isolation further impoverished the already stricken

country ideologically and culturally, as well as economically. Franco's statement marked the beginning of the winning side's attempt to rewrite history. Even though the isolation of Spain was an imposed one, it went hand in hand with autarky, Franco's ideology of isolationism. In this chapter I will discuss how the dictator is disseminated as the despotic body in political discourse, film, and literature.

The rhetoric of Franco and his government during the postwar period was focused on discrediting all "foreign" values identified with the leftist forces and on returning Spain to its "real" roots. However, the xenophobic exclamation "que sea español nuestro amigo y nuestro criado y nuestra novia, que sean españoles nuestros hijos. Que no haya sobre la bendita tierra de España otras costumbres que las nuestras" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*, 29)<sup>2</sup> embodies a very particular and exclusionary conception of "Spanish." The belief in an "authentic" Spanish character and the binary opposition Spanish/foreign encouraged further distinctions such as Catholic/pagan, Nationalist/Republican, soul/body, depth/surface, or essence/artificiality. These tropes that derive from "the confrontation of the old with the new, of tradition with progress, of conservative with liberal, of Spain with 'anti-Spain,'" as David T. Gies argues, "can be traced back to the late eighteenth century when this duality is conceptualized as 'las dos Españas'" ("Modern Spanish Culture: An Introduction," 3).<sup>3</sup> Franco used these tropes of las dos Españas, modeling them to fit his ever shifting needs that depended on both internal political struggles and the complexities of world politics, especially the events surrounding the Second World War and the cold war. Despite Franco's insistence on "authentic Spanish character," seen through his incessant claim that "nuestra revolución hizo posible la vuelta de España a su verdadero ser" (Jaime, *Franco ha dicho*, 44)<sup>4</sup> Franco was always conscious that this "authenticity" had to be continuously constructed, negotiated, and redefined depending on the political agenda of the moment.

In fact, the dominant ideology was never hegemonic; its position was always contested by conflicting political forces from within the "winning" side as well as by external threats from the remnants of the Republicans and other international forces. Inside the country the major renegotiation took place between the political factions of the Nationalist zone, within and between the Falange, the military, and the monarchists. Outside Spain, the exiles still had hopes of contesting Franco's power during the 1940s, and there were several prominent maquis operations until as late as 1948.<sup>5</sup> In foreign politics Franco needed to juggle between the Allied and Axis powers. The most problematic negotiation came with the realization that Hitler was losing the war and that Spain had to, and thanks to the cold war dynamics could, repackage its fascist past for the Allied victors.

Franco's internal and external struggle for power in the late 1930s and 1940s was inseparable from his relations with two other crucial figures from

the Spanish political milieu: Ramón Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother-in-law, nicknamed *el cuñadísimo* (the supreme brother-in-law); and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange, killed by Republicans in 1938. While he was a director of the Military Academy in Zaragoza, Franco had already met Serrano Suñer, one of the brightest young lawyers working for Abogados del Estado. Later, in February 1931, "Serrano Suñer married Doña Carmen's younger sister, Zita in Oviedo. The groom's witness was José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the dictator and future founder of the Falange, the bride's Francisco Franco. The marriage clinched the close relationship between Serrano Suñer and Franco out of which would be forged the Caudillo's National-Syndicalist State" (Preston, *Franco*, 68). The personal encounter among these three figures: El Caudillo, *el cuñadísimo*, and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, after his death known as *el ausente*, marked profoundly the political climate and Franco's political maneuvers of that period. As if Franco took literally José Antonio's ideas about family and politics while negotiating the ambiguous line between the personal and the political, "qué desaparezcan los partidos políticos. Nadie ha nacido nunca miembro de un partido político, en cambio nacemos todos miembros de una familia" (Rodríguez Puértolas, *Literatura fascista II*, 106).<sup>6</sup>

Toward the end of the civil war, Franco was still unaware of the fact that he had to make the passage from being a war general to being the head of a state, being oblivious about the need for a more complex vision for the future state should he win the war. Therefore Serrano Suñer, having "the talent and political credentials necessary to create the political machinery lacking in the Nationalist zone" (Preston, *Franco*, 254) was a crucial figure in envisioning the postwar Spanish state.<sup>7</sup> After José Antonio's murder, the *cuñadísimo* was critical in implementing the political program of *el ausente*, being a "bridge between Franco and many of the best and brightest of the Falange" (Preston, *Franco*, 254).

Franco's main hindrance, this lack of vision, was ultimately also his most important asset. Being porous, he was the perfect ruler to absorb all the others' ideas and ideology. José Antonio's lack of a program was tied to the dramatization and romanticization of politics through charged concepts of life, love, and death; an example is his statement that "people say we have no program. . . . When did you ever see matters of importance, eternal matters like love, life and death, organized according to a program?"<sup>8</sup> Franco's porous and mosaic-like "program" was his "determination to allow no single group to challenge his own firm grip on power" (Boyd, "History, Politics, and Culture 1936–1975," 92).<sup>9</sup> Falangists were needed as a sheer political force that (however ambiguously) supported Franco and gave him an ideological base for his National-Syndicalist State, but at the same time had to be kept at bay because of their possible overpowering effect and their political and social radicalness

that was undesirable for Franco's project and alien to his sensibility. Franco intuitively grasped the political power of the Falange and domesticated José Antonio's vocabulary that then became one of the pillars of his postwar rhetoric. The mutation, permeation, appropriation, misappropriation, and misquoting of José Antonio was Franco's political apprenticeship in dislocating and misusing a diverse array of discourses, a trait that he continued mastering in later years. The perversity of Franco's relation to José Antonio emerged in his direct implication in José Antonio's death. According to Preston's research, Franco tried to abort José Antonio's rescue from the Alicante prison and did not acknowledge his death as late as 1938:

José Antonio Primo de Rivera was shot in Alicante prison on 20th November 1936. Franco made full use of the propaganda opportunities thereby provided, happy to exploit the eternal absence of the hero while privately rejoicing that he now could not be inconveniently present. . . . Franco used the cult of *el ausente* (the absent one) to take over Falange. All its external symbols and paraphernalia were used to mask its real ideological disarmament. (*Franco*, 196)<sup>10</sup>

Therefore *the absent one* is all too present in the Spain of the 1940s, be it in Franco's domesticated version of his radical falangist ideas or via the array of political and literary texts of the period that were impregnated with implicit and explicit allusions to his concepts of living and writing "al aire libre, bajo la noche clara, arma al brazo y en lo alto las estrellas" (Rodríguez Puértolas, *Literatura fascista II*, 106).<sup>11</sup>

Serrano Suñer, so useful in domestic politics and in bridging incommensurable gaps between the Falange and Franco, also became a problematic figure later on because he stubbornly continued to show his overt adoration of Germans even when it was clear that Spain needed to dissociate itself from past complicity with the Axis powers. The popular song from the period captures Serrano Suñer's dangerously rising power: "Miradle por donde viene/el Señor del Gran Poder/antes se llamaba Cristo/y ahora Serrano Suñer." There were "signs that he [Serrano Suñer] might be trying to turn the Falange into a fully fledged Nazi Party for his own purposes [and] . . . Franco took measures to counter the surge of Falangist power" (Preston, *Franco*, 432).

Serrano Suñer and José Antonio Primo de Rivera were also at the core of another crucial power struggle between the Army and the Falange. José Antonio was from the very beginning "wary about too great a co-operation with the Army" and feared that it would be "fashionable ideological decoration for the defense of the old order" (Preston, *Franco*, 193). This conflict between the army and Falange intuited by José Antonio in the 30s culminated on August 15, 1942, in the Basílica de Begonia scandal. As a result, the head of the army, General Varela, resigned after Franco did not give in to his demands, and Serrano

Suñer was dismissed in September 1942 from his post as foreign minister: “The press maintained a deathly silence but Franco’s anxiety about the eruption of hostility between the Army and the Falange spilled over into a series of speeches. . . . The most revealing remarks were made on the 24th of August in La Coruña at a mass gathering where Franco praised the military spirit of the Falange and the Falangist virtue of the Army” (Preston, *Franco*, 467).

By appealing to “the military spirit of the Falange” and “the Falangist virtue of the Army” Franco’s leadership position was finally in the process of being consolidated. While Franco was consolidating power inside the country, he still had to juggle several outside factors, especially when he dismissed Serrano Suñer from his post. In 1943 he was still convinced that he had the power to play off the Allies against the Axis. Franco approved sale of Spain’s biggest wolfram to the Third Reich, but the Allies retaliated with an oil embargo that pushed “the poverty-stricken Spanish economy further back towards the Middle Ages” (Preston, *Franco*, 511). Then, beginning in December 1944, his rhetoric changed as he tried to cater to the Allies. He began the “building-up of anti-Bolshevik rhetoric” (Preston, *Franco*, 524) and counted on cold war power dynamics for his own benefit.

Franco even tried to deny that Spain had been allied to Germany or Italy once he realized that the Axis was definitely losing by claiming that “it is true that when Germany seemed to be winning the war, some members of the Falange tried to identify Spain with Germany and Italy, but I immediately dismissed all persons so inclined” (Preston, *Franco*, 537). These political manipulations were also imprinted on the body of the 40s, when in 1945 the previously obligatory Fascist salute was prohibited.

Despite Franco’s attempts to reconstruct the recent past and to obliterate Spain’s support of the Axis powers, Spain was excluded from the United Nations “on the grounds of the origins, nature, record and Axis links of the Franco regime” (Preston, *Franco*, 540). Franco was left without solutions other than to embrace economic self-sufficiency once he had “convinced himself that he and Spain were under deadly siege” (Preston, *Franco*, 535):

Franco himself virtually guaranteed the post-war economic difficulties of his regime by opting for autarky. . . . Franco’s economic naivety was striking. . . . He completed his own intensely simplistic ten-year plan for reviving Spain’s economic fortunes. Entitled “Foundations and Directives of a Plan for the Reorganization of our economy in Harmony with our National Reconstruction.”. . . The suffering which the Spanish people had to undergo throughout the years of hunger in the 1940s, in large part as a result of the economic decisions taken by the Caudillo, is incalculable. (Preston, *Franco*, 344)

Franco’s naiveté, ignorance, and stubbornness was mirrored by his followers and the nation as a whole. The perception that the west “betrayed” Spain

led to the anti-United Nations demonstration at Plaza de Oriente in Madrid. After Spain's exclusion from the United Nations, on December 9, 1946, Spaniards chanted "Ellos tienen ONU, nosotros dos."<sup>12</sup> Spaniards were ready to embrace the chimerical ideas of self-sufficiency.

Embracing the isolation of Spain was easy because, in Franco's own words, it was God's chosen country: "¡Qué hermoso es ser español! Por eso nos dice el Padre Esteban que España es la Nación más amada de Dios. Podrá el extranjero difamarnos, pero no puede robarnos gloria."<sup>13</sup> This affect of "god chosen" isolation promulgated by Franco to justify autarky permeated every pore of the society, be it political texts, film scripts, or elementary school readers:

Nos pasa a los españoles como a nuestras flores y frutas. Las otras de Europa—las rosas de Holanda o las peras de Francia—tienen quizá más lúcida apariencia en los escaparates del mundo, donde se enseñan envueltas en papel de seda o con lazos de colores. Pero son sosas y sin olor. En cambio, con menos apariencia son más verdad, más honradas, más sabrosas y fragrantas las peras de Galicia, las naranjas de Valencia o las rosas y claveles de Sevilla. (Sopeña Monsalve, *El florido pensil: Memoria de la escuela nacional-católica*, 210)<sup>14</sup>

There was a conscious attempt to root the formation of this new forcefully homogeneous nation in a glorious and imaginary past. Since there was no possibility of territorial greatness and expansion (Spanish reality was economic misery at home and ostracism abroad), Franco's political mission was spiritual rather than territorial. Franco was focused on the exaltation of spiritual greatness and superiority, trying to achieve hegemony and national unity through the patrimony that seemed to have belonged to everybody and to have transcended the boundaries of region, language, and class. In his discussion of traditional history in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Michel Foucault criticizes "historical tradition (theological or rational) that aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or a natural process" (88). The attempt to absorb the singularity of the event into a continuity is constant in all the narratives of postwar Spain. Certain ambiguous and unwanted points of Spanish history are erased, while others are violently connected in order to construct a comprehensive view of history as a continuous development. Spanish postwar history is what Nietzsche labels "monumental history": one that regards the past as an immutable and sacred object of knowledge. Its motto is "Let the dead bury the living" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 72). Such traditional historical analysis only "contemplates distances and heights: the noblest periods, the highest forms, the most abstract ideas" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 89).

Monumental history was most visible in the twenty-year construction of the Valle de los Caídos, which began on April 2, 1940. Commemorating the Nationalist victory, the immense monument was superimposed onto the exposed and damaged Republican body: "The dimension of our Crusade, the heroic sacrifices involved in victory . . . cannot be commemorated by simple monuments . . . the stones to be erected must have the grandeur of the monuments of old, which defy time and forgetfulness" (Preston, *Franco*, 351).<sup>15</sup> This strong redemptive and religious dimension of the project is best seen through the "erection of the immense cross which towered five hundred feet above it. The arms of the cross were the width of two saloon cars. It cost Spain as much as had Philip II's Escorial in a more prosperous era" (Preston, *Franco*, 352). The Valle de los Caídos was a quintessential postwar ideological project with its nostalgic, oppressive, and dangerous romanticization of the national essence where "Muguruza's task was to produce a monument that would link Franco's era to that of the Catholic Kings, to Charles V and to Philip II" (Preston, *Franco*, 352).

Geographical appropriations and misuses were as important as historical ones. Franco picked up from Spanish nationalist historiography "the idea of Castile's centrality to the shaping of the Spanish nation" (Fox, "Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity," 29).<sup>16</sup> Fox shows how this idea of Castile permeates so much writing from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "affirming the historical originality of Castile as the unifying force of the peninsula and the creator of its culture" (32). This ideological, Castillian-centered view of Spanish history was reinforced in Franco's case by his Toledo years spent absorbing this association of Spain and Castile as well as of Spain and imperial greatness: "A growing obsession with the greatness of imperial Spain made him receptive to Toledo as a symbol of that greatness. His later identification with the figure of El Cid may also have had its origins in his adolescent ramblings around the historic streets of the town" (Preston, *Franco*, 9).

Franco's constant ideological rewriting of history consisted of two equally disturbing parts; on the one hand, there was an attempt to construct a glorious past through the exclusion of unwanted historical events, and on the other hand, there was the inclusion of absurd and anachronistic historical events (such as the siege of Numantia<sup>17</sup>) in order to construct an illusory idea of Spanish origin and essence, by exerting violence on the meaning of "Spanish" and imposing domination hidden behind what appears as historical objectivity and "disinterestedness." The conception of this traditional, Francoist history depends on false notions of origin and essence. It only allows a very narrow and restricted definition of Spanishness, and it conceptualizes history as essential rather than "accidental." The concepts of origin and descent, as used by Franco, transmit a belief in descent as "category

resemblance that pretends to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 81).

Franco simulated a traditional genealogist, aggressively promoting "traditional and essential" Spanish values. Perversely enough, Franco often paradoxically occupied the place of the Foucaultian genealogist: "a genealogist that refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics . . . he finds that there is something altogether different behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 78). Even though he was effective in employing characteristics of a Spanish "collective psyche" and "national essence" so overwhelmingly theorized in the early part of the century for his scheme of nation building, there was still certain schizophrenia to Franco's national project arising from its arbitrary character. The arbitrariness of the national project is especially seen through Franco's sporadic identification with certain historical figures. Some figures were dearer to Franco than others, and similar to his slippery political negotiations, the arbitrary character of his ideological use of historical/political figures ultimately created a rupture in the attempted coherence of national unity. As we have already seen, certain historical events and periods were completely silenced, while others, like the Reconquista (led by the medieval hero El Cid) and the unification of Spain under the Catholic Kings, were overemphasized.

On May 18, 1939, Franco, Caudillo de España, made his entry into Madrid, down the Avenida del Generalísimo Franco<sup>18</sup> saturated by the red and yellow nationalist colors. His entry into Madrid (following a ritual observed by Alfonso VI in the Middle Ages) illustrates well the failure of his national project due to its excessiveness:

In khaki military uniform but wearing the blue shirt of the Falange and the red beret of the Carlists, Franco presided. Behind the band of the Carabinieri, a battalion of Italian black-shirted *Arditi* marched with their daggers raised in Roman salute. . . . Therefore, for five hours, Falangists, Carlist *Requetés* carrying huge crucifixes, regular Spanish troops, Foreign Legionaries and Moorish mercenaries filed the rain-swept streets bearing the bullet-riddled flags of the Civil War. . . . Next day guns thundered as the Caudillo arrived to attend the solemn *Te Deum* service held at the royal basilica of Santa Barbara to give thanks for his victory. The choir from the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos greeted him with a tenth-century Mozarabic chant written for the reception of princes. Surrounded by the glorious military relics of Spain's crusading past, including the battle flag of Las Navas de Tolosa, the great victory over the Moors in 1212, the standard used by Don Juan de Austria at the Battle of Lepanto in 1517, and the Señera of Valencia, Franco presented his 'sword of victory' to Cardenal Gomá, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of all Spain, who



solemnly blessed him. The sword was then laid on the High Altar before the great crucifix of the Christ of Lepanto which had been especially brought from Barcelona. (Preston, *Franco*, 330)

This dangerous and nostalgic romanticizing of the national essence proliferates to the point of losing the meaning. Franco's despotic body materialized simultaneously as Alfonso VI, El Cid, Don Juan de Austria, a military man, a Carlist, and a Falangist, while being sustained by the battle flag of Las Navas de Tolosa, tenth-century Mozarabic chants, the *Señera* of Valencia, and the great crucifix of the Christ of Lepanto. In these materializations the body of the leader "undergoes a process of infinitization, as if stricken by a compulsion to become coextensive with quasi-corporeal space. . . . Its surfaces stretch forever. . . . Its heights are higher, its permutations more numerous. It can see itself as 'one' would see it, occupying every pronoun position simultaneously. It can stand on every pedestal and don every flag" (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 138).

This process of infinitization and permutation of the Caudillo seen in his entry into Madrid marked the decade of the 40s, characterized by the "irruption of the State and the effacement of its subjects," as well as the totalitarian phenomenon of blurring the boundaries between leader, country, and people (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 9). Franco's body materializes in every-body, "si queremos ser dignos de esa redención y honrar a quien nos ha redimido, todos los españoles debemos hacer tres cosas: pensar como Franco, sentir como Franco y hablar como Franco, que hablando, naturalmente, en el idioma nacional ha impuesto la victoria" (Martínez, *La vida cotidiana en la España de los 40*, 28).<sup>19</sup> As Giménez Caballero tellingly suggests, "¿quién se ha metido en las entrañas de España como Franco hasta el punto de no saber ya si Franco es España o si España es Franco?" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*, 19). Inseparable from Spain, Franco illustrates the phenomenon of "melding image and body in a space where they cannot be separated." Thus, Franco's body is a body without an image:

The difference of the body of the leader to itself is palpable. Anyone who has had a close encounter with a chief of State will attest to the profound impression of emptiness accompanying the presence of preeminent flesh. . . . The emptiness is the perception of the distinction between the virtuality of the body without an image and the actuality of its embodiments. The potential enveloped in the body without an image belongs to no actual body or image, even the leader's. It is enacted in the passage from one body or image to the next. (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 141)

Franco himself already captured this notion of "body without an image," when he defined dictator as "un producto atmosférico sin autor definido"

(Fernández, *Los enigmas del Caudillo: Perfiles desconocidos de un dictador temeroso e implacable*, 32).<sup>20</sup>

Franco's images multiplied in the 40s. The new coinage was minted on July 27, 1948, with the inscription: "Caudillo de España por la gracia de Dios." He was also proclaimed "the first worker of Spain" in "a staged rally of 'workers' in the Plaza de Oriente" (Preston, *Franco*, 560). On June 20, 1949, Franco was named Periodista de honor. Consciousness of this proliferation is seen from a telling prohibition that allowed only the display of images with *máximo honor*, "se advertía que la imagen del Caudillo podía ponerse en los escaparates pero con el máximo honor y sin mezclarlo, en manera alguna, con objetos industriales para su venta" (Martínez, *La vida cotidiana*, 7).

This overwhelming presence of the Caudillo was simultaneously and paradoxically marked by his absence. Giménez Caballero wrote that Franco was a mysterious man who "nadie conoce bien de cerca-pero que todo un pueblo presiente" (Martínez, *La vida cotidiana*, 20). The monarchist aviator Juan Antonio Ansaldo wrote that "Franco is a man who says things and unsays them, who draws near and slips away, he vanishes and trickles away; always vague and never clear or categoric" (Preston, *Franco*, xix). This absence was sometimes quite literal, especially since "at innumerable moments of crisis throughout his years in power, Franco was simply absent, usually uncontactable while hunting in some remote sierra" (Preston, *Franco*, xviii). Deeply entrenched in the "entrails of Spain" and at the same time proliferating uncontrollably, Franco's body is "trapped in a dialectic of immanence and transcendence that have no synthesis" (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 8).

Being often described as "defensor de la cultura clásica" and "Caudillo de la Cultura," (Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 610) Franco's presence was overwhelmingly felt in the field of cultural production. Franco's interest in cinema, painting, architecture, and the arts is marked by continual activity in these matters. He incessantly wrote, scripted, acted, filmed, argued, and attacked in the press, thereby embodying the notion of "culture as a form of struggle" (Graham and Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies*, vii).<sup>21</sup>

His love for cinema predates the scripting of his famous film *Raza*. "He became a member of the *tertulia* of the politician and writer Natalio Rivas" (Preston, *Franco*, 52) while living in Madrid in 1926, and at Rivas' invitation he appeared in *La Malcasada* together with Millán Astray. He also loved to emphasize that his real passion was painting. This passion was shared with Carrero Blanco and his artistic sensibility with Doña Carmen, who "listed her greatest love as music and her greatest dislike as 'the Moors'" (Preston, *Franco*, 58). Millán Astray also emphasized that "architecture was Franco's secret vocation, having designed various buildings for the Legion" (Preston, *Franco*, 352). It was thus not surprising that the construction of the Valle de los Caídos was Franco's foremost obsession for almost two decades.

Franco, the “Periodista de honor,” spent quite a lot of time writing. One of the most interesting characteristics about Franco’s early journalistic pieces is its self-referentiality, especially noticeable in his creation of the pseudojournalistic character of Jakim Boor. Writing in *Arriba* he published several articles ranting against masonry (la masonería):

Franco indulged his vanity to the extent of writing about himself in the third person underlining the worldwide Masonic hatred of “our Caudillo” and the fact that people of Spain were “with Franco to the death.” To strengthen his cover, it was announced in the press that Franco had received “Jakim Boor” in an audience. The articles were collected as a book in 1952 and, for the rest of his life, Franco remained convinced that all the copies had been bought up by freemasons to prevent it being read. (Preston, *Franco*, 564)

He used a vast range of pseudonyms, each of them connected in some way to his longing for imperial greatness, some megalomaniac project he was captivated with, or his conflictive responses to various political and historical forces he was confronting at the time. Besides Jakim Boor, a pseudonym created for “fighting” masonry, he was at times Juan de la Cosa (a navigator who guided Columbus in his “discovery” of America), Hispanicus, Ginés de Buitrago (a pseudonym that was also used by Carrero Blanco), Macaulay (one he used to attack Britain), and so on (Fernández, *Los enigmas del Caudillo*, 20). His pen names proliferated as fast as his most current obsessions. His obsession with writing was also stunning, keeping in mind his poor writing skills and inability to conceptualize the complexities of the subjects that he wrote about:

La escritura del general contenía faltas de ortografía-expiando por espiando, caterba por caterva, Godet por Goded-, de semántica y de sintaxis. Su tosca traducción de los nombres alemanes-“Furer,” “Frankfor,” “Guering”-acompañá críticas generalizadas y recetas políticas y económicas de gran simpleza como “presupuesto nivelado,” “estabilización del cambio de la peseta” que ponen de relieve su gran intuición por primaria que ésta fuese. (Fernández, *Los enigmas del Caudillo*, 23)

His “success” as a journalist and a man of letters was due to the impoverishment and isolation of the literary scene in postwar Spain. This impoverishment was quite literal since “a causa de las penurias económicas las plumas estilográficas se compraban a plazos que se extendían hasta seis meses” (Pope, *Novela de emergencia: España 1939–1954*, 108).<sup>22</sup> But it was above all ideological; just a couple of weeks after the official end of the civil war, on April 30, 1939, the student Falangist organization (el SEU) organized a public burning of “harmful” books:

Han hablado con palabras de domingo los camaradas del SEU: Con esta quema de libros contribuimos al edificio de la España: Una, Grande y Libre. Condenamos al fuego a los libros separatistas, liberales, marxistas; a los de la leyenda negra; a los de romanticismo enfermizo, a los pesimistas, a los de modernismo extravagante, a los cursis, a los cobardes, a los pseudocientíficos, a los textos malos, a los periódicos chabacanos. (Rodríguez-Puertolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 52)<sup>23</sup>

In this climate of isolation the rising generation of Spanish writers was cut off from both their immediate literary tradition and contemporary European writing. This situation was also complemented by profound antiintellectualism. Intellectuals were often described as “gente que ha fracasado en la vida; literatos sin lectores, filósofos sin discípulos, arquitectos sin obras, sin medio de vida y movidos por un rencor” (Rodríguez-Puertolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 51). Franco himself gave voice to this repudiation of the intellect; in a telling scene from *Raza*, one of the brothers attacks his best friend for his neglect of the art of “reading old Spanish stones.”<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most telling moment that shows this profound antiintellectualism occurred on October 12, 1936, in Salamanca, during the celebration of el Día de la Raza, the anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s “discovery” of America.

A series of speeches stressed the importance of Spain’s imperialist past and future. Francisco Maldonado de Guevara described the Civil War in terms of the struggle of Spain, traditional values and eternal values against the anti-Spain of the reds and the Basques and Catalans. . . . [W]hen Unamuno spoke, it was to counter the frenzied glorification of the war and the repression. He said that the civil war was an uncivil war, that to win was not the same as convince (vencer no es convencer). . . . Unamuno pointed out the necrophiliac inanity of the slogan “Long live death.” Millán Astray shouted “Death to intellectuals” to which Unamuno replied that they were in the temple of intelligence and that such words were a profanity. With shouting and booing rising to a crescendo and Unamuno being threatened by Millán Astray’s armed bodyguards, Doña Carmen intervened. With great presence of mind and no little courage, she took the venerable philosopher by the arm, led him out and took him home in her official car. Such was the ambience of fear in Salamanca at the time that Unamuno was shunned by his acquaintances and removed at the behest of his colleagues from his position in the University. Under virtual house arrest, Unamuno died at the end of December 1936 appalled at the repression, the “collective madness” and the moral suicide of Spain. Nevertheless, he was hailed at his funeral as a Falangist hero. (Preston, *Franco*, 192)

This event, enacted by important figures of the times—Millán Astray (Franco’s mentor in his formative period during the Legion years), Doña Car-

men, and Miguel de Unamuno—summarizes crucial, constitutive elements of Franco's future state. It commemorates the Day of the Race (race and its simplifications being a crucial concept in Francoist ideological apparatus). It suppresses plural elements (Basques and Catalans), introduces fear (Unamuno being shunned by his acquaintances), and proposes death to intellectuals, but simultaneously appropriates intellectual figures (Unamuno hailed as a Falangist hero).

In this climate of fear, isolation, and oppression, the intellectual is replaced by the warrior/writer, who becomes an incisive figure for understanding the decade. Franco himself was exalted by critics of the period precisely because he “reunía en su persona los atributos de tres grandes figuras de la literatura española: la espada del Cid, la vara del alcalde de Zalamea y la lanza de Don Quijote” (Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 612). From the very beginning defined by his African, imperial, military mission, Franco repeated frequently that “esa regeneración de España por la espada, sería sólo un primer paso para españolizar el mundo” (Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios*, 50). Franco's despotic body was “best defined as privileging of maleness in collective symbolization and the preeminence of the masculine voice in collective ideation” (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 137), marking the period with its notions of masculinity and its bellicose spirit and history.

The warrior/writer exalted themes of patriotism, strength, discipline, honor, virility, courage, heroism, Falangist militarism, and nationalism. A literary scene saturated by military, patriotic discourses reinforced the cultural isolation of Spain, setting the ideological tone of the new state. Thus the figure of *hombres mitad monjes y mitad soldados*, noble warriors embodying an exaltation of militarist expansion, emerges in its full force:

En España encontráis hoy un oasis de paz y cristiandad gracias al esfuerzo de sus hijos. Hubo un tiempo de una Iglesia militante en España, con aquellos hombres mitad monjes y mitad soldados, combatientes y defensores de la fe: aquello se fue esfumando con el paso de los siglos; pero llegó un momento de nuestra Patria en que la masonería y las fuerzas del mal sumieron a la nación en el estado más catastrófico que pueda imaginarse. Y entonces, gracias a Dios, resurgieron aquellos hombres que, con el brío y el espíritu de monje-soldado, tomaron parte en nuestra Cruzada, y gracias a sus sacrificios, en esta hora tan difícil del mundo, España se encuentra tranquila, con fe y fortaleza para defenderse de todo cuanto venga. (Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios*, 218)

Franco personified better than anyone else this ideal. He was almost never seen in public without his uniform. He was above all a military man and only after that a family man, and he never ceased to emphasize that his utmost

duty was to serve his country first. He made sure that it was well known that he “aplazó por dos veces su boda requerido por exigencias del servicio a la Patria” while his wife was “muy mujer por su actitud pasiva y el espíritu de sacrificio; Franco fue su primer novio y también el único” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*, 27).

Franco significantly appropriated this concept of *hombres mitad monjes y mitad soldados* from José Antonio. The trope was also already embodied by Giménez Caballero, during his “performance” in the Salamanca cathedral, where he “subió al púlpito, en tinieblas, vestido con un capote militar provisto de capucha, que se caló como si fuera un monje, para imprecicar a Madrid” (Ridruejo, *Casi unas memorias*, 157).<sup>25</sup> Franco goes further, tying this concept of *mitad monje, mitad soldado* to the Almorávides.<sup>26</sup> The exaltation of austerity and bellicose spirit that the Almorávides embody often lead Franco to talk incessantly about these “elected warriors”: “cuando en España surge un voluntario para el sacrificio, un héroe para la batalla o un visionario para la aventura, hay siempre en él un almorávid.”<sup>27</sup>

All of these ideas, characterizing the 1940s, had already emerged in the *Diario de una bandera*, Franco’s personal diary of the days in the Spanish Foreign Legion in Morocco.<sup>28</sup> *Diario de una bandera* was above all imprinted by Millán Astray’s influence—thirteen years older than Franco—and his glorification and romanticization of discipline, hardship, violence, sacrifice, and death. Its presumptuous title alludes to and suggests Franco slowly merging with the nation. In this diary of the flag “body, family, and country share a common substance that unites them but at the same time seems to exist on a higher plane than they” (Massumi and Dean, *First & Last Emperors*, 90). This incipient fusion is also seen through Franco’s proliferating copies of it later on, “suggesting an awareness of the value of a public presence in the longed-for transition from hero to general” (Preston, *Franco*, 34).

Two episodes from *Diario de una bandera* especially call attention and show Franco’s contradictory and complex nature. The first is about a young officer in Morocco meeting his long lost father.<sup>29</sup> “A young officer in Morocco is crossing the street when a grizzled veteran soldier salutes him. The officer goes to return the salute, their eyes meet, they look at each other and embrace in tears. It is the officer’s long-lost father” (Preston, *Franco*, 5). Eyes that meet, the apocryphal story of the long-lost father, and two men embracing in tears are all sites of emotional signification. A soldier is caught in the moment of vulnerability; the effect of the story combines melodramatic materialization of sentiment colored by a trace of hysteria. The hysteria of the masculine subjects in the legion is noticed by Preston when he emphasized that “in his speech of welcome to the first recruits, a hysterical Millán told them that, as thieves and murderers, their lives had been at an end before joining the Legion. Inspired by a frenzied and contagious fervor,

he offered them a new life but the price to be paid would be their deaths. He called them “los novios de la muerte” (Preston, *Franco*, 28).

In the second story a young legionary ruthlessly killing Moors replaces the one that was so exposed and vulnerable in his father’s embrace:

Pocos momentos después, llegan a la posición las otras unidades; el pequeño Charlot, cornetín de órdenes, trae una oreja de moro, ‘Lo he matado yo’, dice enseñándola a los compañeros. Al pasar el barranco vio un moro escondido entre las peñas y encarándole la carabina, le subió al camino junto a las tropas; el moro le suplicaba: ‘¡Paisa no matar, paisa no matar!’-¿No matar?, ¡Eh!, marchar a sentar en esta piedra, y apuntándole descarga sobre él su carabina y le corta la oreja que sube como trofeo. No es ésta la primera hazaña del joven legionario. (Franco, *Diario de una bandera*, 613)

Young Charlot triumphantly cuts off the Moor’s ear after discharging an entire clip of his rifle into his body. The severed ear recalls a common practice of the Spanish Foreign Legion appropriating parts of the enemies’ body during the Moroccan years. This story has a historical reference, most likely referring to the 1921 massacre of Spanish soldiers at Dar Drius, where Franco deciding to take revenge returned “the next morning with his volunteers carrying as trophies the bloody heads of twelve *harqueños* (tribesmen).” Severed and displayed bloody heads, ears, and other cut up pieces of body—the ruthlessness of the second story matches in its intensity the naked emotions of the first one. *Los novios de la muerte* oscillate between aggression and vulnerability. Masculinity dissolves, be it through tears and embraces or through killing the other that Theweleit reads in terms of “the externalization of the fear of ego-dissolution.”

These two episodes from *Diario de una bandera* uncannily reveal Franco’s contradictory nature: on the one hand his well known cruelty and on the other his somewhat less mentioned insecurity (inferiority complex, traumatized, childish personality); his propensity for both killing and weeping (bursting uncontrollably into tears). This contradiction crystallizes in the Duquesa de la Victoria’s visit to Morocco in 1922. As a tribute from the Legion she was given “a basket of roses in the center of which lay two severed Moorish heads” (Preston, *Franco*, 29). Two severed Moorish heads arranged together with roses once again embodies Franco’s own perplexing sensibility: aesthetics and death; beauty and blood; love for painting (*naturaleza muerta*) and killing.

Franco himself and those who surrounded him were always emphasizing his intense link with military identity and the war. He explained his departure from Morocco thus: “There’s no shooting. This war has become a job like any other. . . . Now all we do is vegetate” (Preston, *Franco*, 37). Franco’s military identity, in one form or another, lasted until his death. In the memoirs written by Vicente Pozuelo Escudero, Franco’s doctor who took care of him for

the last 476 days of his life, we read that he succeeded in curing Franco's depression by playing him military band songs from his active martial era. Franco's moribund body only functions by simulating long gone military times and marching to his favorite Civil War tunes:

Sus ojos se hicieron más brillantes; apretó los labios, levantó la barbilla; estiró los hombros. Me pareció que se ponía marcial. Su cara se alegró. Se había producido el milagro . . . se trataba, sobre todo, de preguntarle cosas, de hacerle contar algo que le volviera a sus grandes, a sus primeros tiempos militares. (Pozuelo Escudero, *Los últimos 476 días de Franco*, 39)<sup>30</sup>

Dependence on war, its glorification, and desire for its perpetuation was still strongly felt during the Second World War, as well as in its aftermath. The very first NO-DO<sup>31</sup> from January 4, 1943 characterizes the war as beautifully impressive spectacle:

El arte de la guerra presenta a veces espectáculos tan bellamente impresionantes como éste. Un destacamento de esquiadores se desliza por las heladas cortaduras de Dombay-Ulgen. . . . Un grupo de choque soviético se aproxima cautelosamente al amparo de las montañas. . . . Los cazadores alpinos se lanzan vertiginosamente a ocupar sus posiciones: es el maravilloso deporte de la muerte. (Rodríguez Martínez, *NO-DO, catecismo social de una época*, 178)<sup>32</sup>

It was also envisioned as an element of progress: “la guerra es un elemento de progreso. ¡Es absolutamente necesaria! Los hombres necesitan la guerra. La guerra es absolutamente precisa e inevitable. La siente el hombre con un imperio intuitivo, ancestral, y será en el porvenir lo que fue en el pasado . . . ¿Los pueblos sin guerra?” (Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 38). Finally there is a desire for its infinite perpetuation: “¿por qué las guerras finalizan tan bobamente en la paz y no concluyen iniciando otra guerra? Las guerras piden, deberían pedir siempre más guerra” (Castillo-Puche, *El vengador*, 14).<sup>33</sup>

The three instances cited above—the dying body revived by war, the man that thrives on war, and the war that should always ask for more war—capture and articulate the Spanish “essence” in the 40s, the national body as a fighting machine. The despotic military body, the soldier, the writer, and the nation are arrested in a perpetual space of war, producing texts saturated by indistinguishable affects of pleasure, killing, death, dread, and horror.

This obsession with war was brilliantly captured in Ricardo Fernández de la Reguera's novel *Cuerpo a tierra*<sup>34</sup> about fighting a perpetual war without any enemy. All of the above war obsessions culminated in a paradoxical definition of peace given by Radio Nacional, emphasizing that peace is not “un reposo cómodo y cobarde ante la Historia. La sangre de los que cayeron por la Patria



no consiente el olvido, la esterilidad ni la traición. Españoles, alerta. España sigue en pie de guerra contra todo enemigo del interior o del exterior” (Martínez, *La vida cotidiana*, 5).

## CINEMA

Several films made in the 1940s could be classified as “patriotic war films” and were used as an ideological vehicle of the newly established regime. Two other genres heavily invested in the formation of the new state were, for example, *el cine de misionarios y los musicales folclóricos*.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the film production of the 1940s was diverse and is not reducible solely to the “patriotic war film.” In this chapter, however, I am interested in how this particular genre merged with Franco’s despotic body and the national body as fighting machine.<sup>36</sup>

“Patriotic war films,” such as Luis Peña’s *Harka* (1940), José Luis Sáenz de Heredia’s *Raza* (1941), and Juan de Orduña’s *A mí la legión* (1942), and Franco’s own ideological agenda were interlinked through a shared conception of history, war, and military duty; in the film circles in the 1940s it was repeatedly exclaimed “We must have a cinema of cavaliers and noblemen. El Cid must be a worthier figure in Spain than Don Juan” (Molina-Foix, *New Cinema in Spain*, 2).<sup>37</sup> *Harka*, *Raza*, and *A mí la legión* can be read as one (dis)continuous narrative demonstrating Benedict Anderson’s claim that “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (*Imagined Communities*, 6).<sup>38</sup>

*Raza*, *Harka*, and *A mí la legión*, saturated with clichés of the “glorious” Spanish past and characterized by a solemn and exaggerated tone, are the cinema of heroes and ideals, patriotic and military actions, and distorted historical views. The “official” history depicted on the screen legitimized the establishment of the new state. Its vision of history was presented by selected flashbacks and the historical “continuum” expressed by the repetition of selected details. Hence, it was always extracted and isolated from its real historical context. It served to summarize the past, to unite it, and to affirm it by freezing history into a permanent and static form. Such films served as a continuous narrative of national progress, with its emphasis on national destiny, power, conquest, sacrifice, hero worship, and exaltation of militarism. These films, set in their own glorious and imaginary past, and dissociated from their real cultural and social milieu, concealed all the pressing issues of the postwar, such as hunger, poverty,<sup>39</sup> domestic relations, and social and class conflicts. Martín Gaité comments that the younger generation avoided them because “los jóvenes de postguerra sabíamos muy bien que una película española o nos iba a contar una historia heroica de las que venían en los libros de texto o nos iba a enlazar las delicias de un amor sacrificado y decente” (*Usos amorosos*, 33).

The patriotic films from the 1940s blur the boundaries between aesthetics and ethics, conceptualizing aesthetics in terms of moral issues: “casi todo lo que se escribía en la prensa por los años cuarenta, tratara de cine, de modas o de decoración de interiores, tenía tono de sermón” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*, 31). Actors were also part of this fight for “moral” cinema since “los actores españoles manifestaban una manera de ser nacional obsesionada por la transcendencia” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos*, 32).

All of these ideas were theoretically debated in *Primer Plano*, an influential film journal favored by the regime. José López Rubio, an actor interviewed by Fernando Castán Palomar in *Primer Plano*, summarizes the importance of this “heroic genre”:

Yo creo que hay que ir al género heroico, la historia y la aventura. No la aventura estúpida, sino la que es capaz de despertar optimismo en la juventud. . . . Por eso lo interesante para la producción española es dar con el propio espíritu nacional. Para esto la base histórica es ineludible. ¿No se escribieron los dramas de capa y espada para exaltar el sentimiento caballeresco? Pues haga el cine ahora la exaltación de estas virtudes de la raza, felizmente avivadas. . . . Es obligación que no queda reducida para el área peninsular.<sup>40</sup>

*Raza* was acclaimed as both the prototype and the culmination of this heroic genre. As the regime critic Fernando Méndez-Leite observed, “*Raza* acertó ya en su título para lograr llegar al límite de cuanto puede exigirse a un film de su género” (Méndez-Leite 424).<sup>41</sup> Even though it was well known that Franco himself wrote it under the pseudonym Jaime de Andrade, critics praised the modesty of the author, who did not reveal his real name: “seudónimo que encubre la modestia y, al par, interesante personalidad de un gran patriota” (Méndez-Leite, *Historia del cine español*, 424).

*Raza* was filmed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, a director closely linked to the regime<sup>42</sup> and a cousin of civil war martyr (founder of the Falange) José Antonio Primo de Rivera. If Franco was known as the “defensor de la cultura clásica,” José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, director of *Raza*, was described by Adriano del Valle as “un nuevo Pygmalión”:

Ya conocéis la fábula antigua de Galatea y Pygmalión. Pygmalión, escultor de los mejores mármoles pentélicos, modeló Galetea. La mayor gloria del escultor Pygmalión no fue la de modelar un busto. Fue la de modelar un alma. . . . Y he aquí un nuevo Pygmalión-José Luis Sáenz de Heredia-y una nueva Galetea de celuloide: la Cinematografía española. Ahora encontró nuestro cine su voz entrañable y su alma nacional. Nuestros mejores realizadores serán aquellos que doten de un alma genuinamente española a nuestro cine. Si el cine es el lenguaje universal por excelencia, el esperanto de los ojos, démosle, desde España, alma de largo metraje a nuestro ser español, a

nuestra verdad frente al mundo, a nuestras pasiones humanas y a nuestra espiritualidad firmemente católica. Y porque nuestra Galatea de celuloide, esto es, nuestra Cinematografía, encontró en José Luis Sáenz de Heredia su Pygmalión, nos reunimos esta noche quienes tuvimos fe en que el milagro llegaría. (Guarner, *30 años de cine en español*, 21)<sup>43</sup>

Franco praising Sáenz de Heredia, and Sáenz de Heredia stating that “Franco es el mejor actor que he dirigido” (Rodríguez-Puértolas, *Literatura fascista española I*, 611) returned the “lost, authentic” soul to Spanish culture, literature, and cinema in a collaborative effort where Pygmalión met the “defensor de cultura clásica.”

*Raza* was first screened on January 5, 1942, in the Palacio de la Música de Madrid. Several ministers and high government officials were present, among others Ramón Serrano Suñer. Franco did not come to the opening, but he saw it in El Pardo, rumors being that “se le saltaron las lágrimas pero tan sólo comentó: ‘Sáenz de Heredia, usted ha cumplido’” (Fernández, *Los enigmas del Caudillo*, 252). *Raza* was dedicated “To the youth of Spain, whose blood paved the way for our rebirth.” The dedication itself bears the mark of Franco’s persistent appropriation of José Antonio. However, while rebirth for José Antonio meant a “return to barbarian virility,” for Franco it meant a “return to purity in the sense of Puritanism” (Labanyi, *Myth and History*, 37).

*Raza* tells the story of Captain Pedro Churruca, his wife Isabel de Andrade and their four children (José, Pedro, Jaime, and Isabel). Captain Churruca has a distinguished military ancestry, including one Admiral Damián Churruca who died in the battle of Trafalgar. Despite his dedication to family, his sense of duty comes first. In this spirit, and soon after the beginning of the film, the Captain is summoned to battle and dies defending Cuba, one of the last Spanish colonies, in 1898.

After his death, the narrative cuts to the mid-1930s when the children of Captain Churruca have grown up. José (played by Alfredo Mayo) follows in his father’s footsteps as he joins the military; Isabel marries José’s best friend; Jaime heeds a religious calling; and Pedro, the black sheep of the family, becomes an atheist deputy and aligns himself with the Republican forces. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, José joins the Nationalist troops, but is captured and imprisoned by the Republicans and condemned to death. He dies by firing squad, but when his girlfriend Marisol reports to collect his remains, he is miraculously resurrected. His brother Padre Jaime is not so lucky. Republican forces savagely murder him alongside his spiritual brethren from the convent. After a long collaboration with the Republican side, Pedro, the treacherous black sheep brother, undergoes a change of heart and decides to give his troops’ secret attack plans to the Nationalists. The Republican army puts *him* to death but his political conversion compensates for his tragic end.

The film closes with José marching among the Nationalist troops, commemorating their ultimate victory in the Civil War, while Marisol, his sister, and his nephew proudly watch from the cheering crowds.

The family of Captain Pedro Churruca is everything that Franco's family was not, but that he wanted it to be. It is difficult not to recognize Franco's mother in the virginal, sacrificial Isabel de Andrade, Franco's problematic brothers in Churruca's brothers, and above all Captain Pedro Churruca as Franco's own father. Whether he was replaying patricidal fantasies (Captain Churruca's death in military combat) or constructing imaginary and melodramatic reunions (*Diario de una bandera*), Franco's texts were filled with tensions arising from this compulsive focus on the father figure.

Franco hid and embellished his father's not exactly "exemplary" life; he was a drinker and a gambler who had abandoned his family to live with his common-law wife and illegitimate son and who "en los últimos tiempos vivía ebrio e insultaba a su hijo, ya Jefe del Estado" (Fernández, *Los enigmas del Caudillo*, 248). With the exorbitant military funeral lavished on his natural father, who conveniently died in the 1940s, Franco succeeded in interpolating his recalcitrant parent into the script's imaginary, perfect family,<sup>44</sup> thus matching patriotic fanaticism with the intensity of the family trauma. According to Marsha Kinder, "this version of the Oedipal narrative denies all erotic rivalries, for sexuality is totally repressed, its energies displaced to a patriotic fanaticism" (*Blood Cinema: Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 200).<sup>45</sup> Ambiguous boundaries between the family unit and the nation are intentionally played out both on the screen and in Franco's personal life. *Raza* is more than just an apocryphal, fictional autobiography; text (film) and life are so closely merged as to make it impossible to distinguish between reality and fiction. Franco is simultaneously erasing and rewriting Spanish history, while obsessively recounting his own family story.

Sáenz Heredia employs historical narrative, war, melodrama, and romance to magnify and juxtapose struggles and tensions in the personal and the public spheres (individual, family, nation). Melodramatic conventions complement well this particular moment in Spanish history marked by a threatening and unstable social environment and ideological crisis since they operate on the principle of dichotomizing the world and stressing the division between the two Spains. Family members are divided along political lines to the point where familial and national boundaries blur completely. There is a thorough imbrication of nation, family, and individual in these times of reconfiguring the nation. External conflict (war) is replaying itself within the borders of the family itself; then in turn the family crisis serves to point out the crisis in the existing broader social structure.

José and Pedro, each embodying one of the two Spains, are central to the film. Their ideological rift is highlighted by a detailed description of their