

## **“Rubén Darío, fascist? Francoist readings of *Modernismo*”**

Abstract: Este artículo rastrea la presencia del poeta nicaragüense Rubén Darío en la crítica literaria y la cinematografía española durante el periodo 1939-1944. La importancia de su poesía, su cosmopolitismo y su origen nacional y racial planteaban un desafío a la comprensión de la cultura que tenía el primer Franquismo. Tanto la crítica literaria como el cine de propaganda recurrieron a él para legitimar y sostener sus respectivos programas estético-políticos. El esfuerzo por repensar su lugar frente a la cultura española revela las facciones y las ansiedades estéticas, históricas y políticas del campo cultural peninsular de los cuarenta y subraya la importancia de Darío como significante de la modernidad en lengua española.

This article traces the presence of Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío in Spanish literary criticism and film (1939-1944). The significance of his poetry, cosmopolitanism, nationality, race and modernist aesthetics pose a challenge to an early Francoist understanding of culture. Both literary criticism and propaganda film resorted to him as a way to legitimize and advance their respective aesthetic and political agendas. The struggle to rethink his position vis-à-vis Spanish culture reveals a series of factions and anxieties--aesthetic, historical, and political in nature--pertaining to the peninsular cultural field of the 1940s. Ultimately, these positionings highlight Darío's importance as a signifier of modernity in Transatlantic Hispanic Culture.

Walter Benjamin's passage about fascism being the aestheticization of politics in "The Work of Art in its Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is well-known, and deservedly so. Take Francoism. Politics became largely (albeit not exclusively) a matter of producing its aesthetic signifiers, from invented national symbols (the yoke and the arrows, the red hats, the roman salute, etc.) to the very

tone of public discourse, which staged aggression and mythology at the expense of dialogue. Political arguments gave way to a mythology of the national-catholic. Those who dissented or who did not fit the heroic model were bound to be left off the canvas, violently if need be. But the passage from Benjamin's essay that struck me as most pressing for my task as critic was his claim that his concepts "differ from the more traditional [critical] terms in that they are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism." (2007 218). My doubt was: is it even possible to create concepts so ideologically airtight that they are immune to appropriation by misunderstandings, de- or recontextualization, fragmentation, adaptation, translation, *naïveté*, perversion, misconstruction, and irony?

The title of this article hints polemically at one such appropriation. In 1939 Spain, in the midst of a fascist-inspired reconstruction of the State after the Civil War, different factions of right-wing intellectuals struggled to rethink Rubén Darío's place in literary history. They were radical nationalists put in the intellectually self-defeating position of determining the reach and value of the man who embodied *modernismo*, with his innovative formal-technical prowess, his (French-centered) Cosmopolitanism, and his Latin American *mestizo* origin. I am going to read the apparently contradictory yet ultimately consistent takes on Darío in publications and film close to the regime as a symptom of the necessary inner anxieties of an early Francoist culture founded on "anti-intellectual intellectuals" and an "anti-modern modernism".

By this I mean that they denounced modernism and its drive to autonomize explicitly and strategically as decadence and formalism. From their point of view, there was a straight line from aestheticism to the decadentism of parliamentary and procedural democracy. In Giménez Caballero's formula, art must aspire not to autonomy but to becoming an "arte como servicio" (Wahnón 1998: 38). Their reading of national and world history, to which I will return, was a peculiar one as well: on the one hand, there is a continuous, eternal Spain (traditionalist, Christian, etc.); on the other hand, the democratic regime in opposition to which they define themselves was indeed modern. Paradoxically, the "eternal nation" that authoritarian regimes want to reconstruct is a necessarily modern construction; Francoist literature and film coped with this contradiction by resemanticizing

modernism. The most visible referent of *modernismo*, Rubén Darío, was co-opted by both literary and non-literary discourses. I will read his appropriation in the context of the groupal poetics of celebrated Francoist authors, but also over the historical reason of Francoist propaganda, and I will try to show that the enforcement of Francoist ideologemes conceals the anxiety to fill the gap left by a defeated, modern and democratic culture.

First, I will delineate the general terms in which Spanish falangist intellectuals defined their literary ideas, underlining internal debates that clarify the different political motivations behind their project. I will explain the narrative about Spanish lyric poetry pushed by authors close to *Escorial*, which assigns a new meaning to the appearance and influence of *modernismo*. I will pay special attention to Leopoldo Panero's introduction to his *Antología de poesía hispano-americana* which takes the aporias to their limits by approaching Darío as the center of a Latin American poetic project, but then inserting him into a Francoist understanding of world culture and history. Finally, I will step back from literature and provide an alternative take on Darío: Carlos Arévalo's early and rarely studied short propaganda film *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* (1939) amalgamates chaotically many of the new symbols of the state and superimposes them on Darío's "Marcha triunfal." The adaptation from poem to film takes advantage of Darío's universalist aesthetics, but it is also a paradigmatic example of the aestheticization of politics, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy revise the concept. At the same time, the non-literary approach to an emblematic figure of the literary field provides a more general cultural vantage point from where to understand how an incipient Francoist culture tried to articulate itself.

#### An *Escorial* History of Spanish poetry

When José Antonio Primo de Rivera founded Falange in 1933, he surrounded himself with intellectuals like Rafael Sánchez Mazas, Luys Santa Marina, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, or Agustín de Foxá. He had seen how the lack of support from intellectuals had undermined his father's dictatorship's legitimacy. The so-called "tertulia de la Ballena Alegre" was a strange coming together

of Catholic traditionalism, a nationalism that took its inspiration from international sources (Maurras, Barrès, Mussolini), hierarchical militarism, and avantgarde iconoclasm. As a result, Falange embraced a very aggressive rhetorical style (what Jordi Gracia, following Pinilla de las Heras calls “apodictic language”, Gracia 2004: 35-36) suggesting an antagonistic political imaginary. But at the same time, its willingness to break with parliamentary democracy and “mere parties” implied the ultimate goal of overcoming social antagonism (Carbajosa and Carbajosa 2003: 113-114). Or, in other words, Falange was a “movimiento” (as opposed to a party) in that it affirmed and exalted antagonism in order to suppress plurality (which is understood as social division).

Before the war, Falange’s aesthetics had been devised by this group of far-right intellectuals close to José Antonio Primo de Rivera. They ranged from catholic nationalists like Rafael Sánchez-Mazas, admirer of fascist Italy and the classical and early modern world, to eccentric avantgardistes like controversial Ernesto Giménez Caballero (“Gecé”), admirer of Hitler and theoretician of art’s subservience to the State. Spanish fascism<sup>1</sup> balanced its position between classicism and the avantgarde by adopting an über-literary language, packed with national myths, old and new. It was during the war that Dionisio Ridruejo, a young falangista, became Director of Propaganda Services, which institutionalized Falangist iconography (blue shirts, “Cara al Sol,” etc.) as the regime’s own.

After the war, in 1940, Ridruejo and Pedro Laín-Entralgo created *Escorial*. Funded by the Delegación de Prensa y Propaganda de la Falange, it was *the* literary magazine of its time, an initiative of Ramón Serrano Suñer (by then Minister of Foreign Affairs, supporter of the Axis, and Franco’s brother in law), who had two goals in mind. First, to fight the perception outside Spain that Franco was leading a barbaric political project. It had to project the sense that there was an intellectual life that was civilized (and particular to Francoism) and that business went on as usual in Spain.

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<sup>1</sup> Because characterizing Francoism as “fascist” is problematic (albeit no more problematic than emphasizing the supposed originality of “national-catholicism” or “authoritarianism”, which I would argue that strives to sanitize its image from the many features it does share with fascism), I have been careful not to abuse the adjective. However, I doubt that calling Carlos Arévalo, Sánchez Mazas and Giménez Caballero “fascists” is any stretch. For a summary of the labels and their problematics, the reader can see Bernecker (1998).

Second, it was an important tool in the actual construction of that intellectual life. Both in culture and politics, Francoism was a sometimes uneasy blend of Catholicism, authoritarianism and violence, and nationalist essentialism. Spanish intellectuals on the right and the far right engaged in a number of tactics to create, nurture, and promote their own ideal image of culture in a “pacified” Spain. These included the invisibilization of exiled, imprisoned, and dead Spanish liberal and leftist intellectuals, the invention of “new” national-traditional symbols (e.g. the Falangist yoke and arrows, inspired to Giménez Caballero by an old Isabella of Castile’s heraldic motif, Carbajosa and Carbajosa, 2003: 55), or the valorization of an exultant, impetuous tone that glorified action and violence.

This is the context in which Francoist intellectuals began thinking about art as an anti-formalist, communication-centered endeavor. In this they opposed modernism (Juan Ramón’s *poesía pura* being too formalist; Surrealism being too self-centered). Sultana Wahnón has been able to clarify the struggle for ideological hegemony within them by locating two factions, which she calls “garcilasista” model and a “romántico” or “national-catholic” model. They agreed about the idea that art is a fundamentally communicative practice and that it was to be subordinated to a hierarchically superior principle. But the “garcilasistas” contended that it was the transcendental, God-given Law of a Catholic State perfectly shaped by and identified with the will of a Soldier-Leader, while “nacional-católicos” focused on a spiritualized (albeit equally Catholic) reality that could not be translated to rational concepts yet of which poetry would convey a sense. The first group of authors would include Rafael Sánchez Mazas and Ernesto Giménez Caballero, deeply influenced by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, respectively. They espoused Garcilaso de la Vega as their literary model: he was a poet-soldier whose diction (supposedly) perfectly corresponded to the content he wanted to express, without ornate or symbolic excess. On the other hand, Leopoldo Panero or Luis Rosales would be paradigmatic of the second form of literary falangismo. For them, the model is Saint John of the Cross, whose poetry is infused with a *Garcilasian* sense of transparence and yet, it allowed for a more daring formal exploration (*ma non troppo*) and, focused on an existential sense of everyday domestic life being touched by transcendence. Rather than hierarchical submission, it was an intimate

sense of religiousness and/or spirituality that they tried to convey. Wahnón tends to trace a clear-cut line between “garcilasismo” and “modo romántico,” but reality tended to be messier, with Luis Rosales or Luis Felipe Vivanco navigating the line between the two modes. With that caveat, authors publishing in *Garcilaso* tended to fall in line with the *garcilasistas* and authors publishing with *Escorial* (despite its name), with the *románticos*. *Garcilasistas* emphasized the aesthetic connection with an Imperial, early modern Spain, and they experience the nostalgia for a heroic era of Spain. *Románticos* stylize domestic life melancholically, as a site of revelation of emotive spiritual truths. Whether due to the traumatic experiences of the Civil War, to the obvious unimportance of an impoverished, autarchic, and anti-heroic Spain in post-war Europe, to the political obsolescence of Falange after Serrano Suñer’s falling from grace in 1942, or to the defeat of the fascist Axis, the progressive transition in rhetoric toward the “romantic” mode shows conflicting fluctuating forces negotiating their ground in an uncertain political terrain.

In this context, the story of Rubén Darío’s reception among Francoist poets and critics became the story of the uneasy rewriting of his influence over Spanish poetry (and of the influence of Spanish poetry over the Latin American poet). Take Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, who had published a monographical work on Darío in 1930. His efforts to ameliorate Catalan-Spanish relations before the war had made him suspect, and he had to prove loyal to the new powers that be (Gracia, 2004: 160). In 1948, when it came to assessing modern Spanish poetry, Díaz-Plaja still acknowledged that Rubén Darío’s name “no puede faltar en la más estricta de nuestras historias literarias” (1948 5). And yet, his *Historia de la poesía lírica española* (1948) enforces a crucial distinction between *modernismo* and the so-called Generation of 98<sup>2</sup>. The distinction was a necessary step to compartmentalize and

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<sup>2</sup> A distinction emphasized by Falangist (Laín Entralgo) and Falangist-aligned (Marañón) authors and questioned by the most important Spanish theorists of modernismo and modernism, exiles Federico de Onís and Juan Ramón Jiménez. In some cases, the distinction between “formalist” modernismo and content-oriented 98 was taken beyond, into the realm of immoral or amoral modernismo (i.e. Juan Ramón Jiménez) and moral 98 (i.e. collaborationist intellectuals like Azorín or Baroja), which understandably angered J.R. Jiménez (see Gracia, 2004: 160-166). It is not accidental that Blandón reads into Nicaraguan nationalists the influence of the “espíritu anti-modernista de los letrados españoles de la así llamada Generación del 98” (Blandón 2009: 81). While a simple opposition between Generación del 98 and modernismo is easily refuted by reference to Antonio Machado or Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, the opposition has been embraced and enforced by Spanish critics themselves. Like Machado, Darío and Jiménez posed a problem to Francoist reception. Vivanco’s admiration

relativize the importance of what was perceived as the foreign, decadentist influence of *modernismo*. A truly Spanish literary tradition worried about Spain and its essences first, and only then about literary language, striving to analyze the causes and consequences of the dismantling of the Empire. Here, I do not mean to correct “ideological” bad readings, but disclose the political reason behind *Escorial*’s understanding of literature.

Díaz-Plaja’s narrative does not merely compartmentalize Darío’s influence. While his book is supposed to acknowledge Darío’s unparalleled modernization of style, meter, tone, and subject of poetry in Spanish, he submits Darío to two different coopting operations, that will later be reproduced (with different tone) by Luis Felipe Vivanco and Leopoldo Panero. First, both his Latin American origin and his penchant for all things French are toned down by reference to Spanish literary history (despite reference to the “exotic” pre-columbine motifs of some of his poems): Díaz-Plaja underlines Spanish novelist and critic Juan Valera in the reception of Darío’s first major work, *Azul* (1888) (1948 353), and he insists on Darío being, above all, a “espíritu hispánico” (360). Second, and inversely, Darío becomes the negative benchmark by which Spanish poets, including followers of Darío, like Juan Ramón Jiménez and Antonio Machado, are defined positively. Darío is good, but Machado and Jiménez are *really* good; the former is form, whereas the latter two are content.

Luis Felipe Vivanco, the harshest of Darío’s early Francoist critics, follows the same rationale when he chastises Darío. His is a “poderosa orquestación verbal” (9), he incorporates the “artificios de una degenerada fantasía simbolista” (12), the “voluntad de dominio y arte” (as opposed to Juan Ramón Jiménez’s Unamuno-inspired “no-luntad”, about which Vivanco is more positive) (44). Modernismo, which Vivanco identifies with Darío, is all the more present precisely through its artificialness and heavy-handed rhymes: “cuanta más artificiosidad, cuanto más ripio, más modernismo poético” (403) (We find a similar logic in Panero as we will see). Vivanco is at his most outrageous precisely when trying to detach Machado and Jiménez from Darío’s undeniable influence<sup>3</sup>.

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and Marañón’s dismissal (see previous note), illustrate the ambivalence towards the former. We will see how Machado’s mediation is crucial for Panero’s approach.

<sup>3</sup> I should acknowledge that this is otherwise a fine book and that Vivanco’s (like Rosales’ or, more spectacularly, Ridruejo’s) political positions evolved deeply and very soon into the dictatorship. This only

Late romantics like Bécquer and Rosalía, rather than Darío, were the inspirations of the young Machado and Jiménez.

Even two educated and sensitive Falangist critics fell into a proactively nationalist understanding of literature. They were also prey to the most regrettable, racist prejudices. Reminiscent of a naturalist fiction, Díaz-Plaja suggests that there was something in Darío's innate inclinations that did not do him any favors: "la carne, el alcohol y, acaso, los paraísos artificiales deprimen su poderosa fisiología" (358); "[Darío] [n]o reza porque acaso no sabe" (359). Furthermore, in one of his most outrageous statements, Vivanco claims one can see how far removed Jiménez's sincerity would be from *modernista* pretense when one compares Jiménez pseudonyms ("KQX", "El cansado de su nombre") to Rubén Darío's (b. Rubén García Sarmiento), which he makes an issue of race: "tal vez hace falta llevar en la sangre india e ingenua para hacerse de un seudónimo de naturaleza híbrida, culturalista y mal gusto" (56). According to Vivanco, Darío chose a kitsch *nom de plume* and he did so because he is a non-European trying to pass as one. He fails at it precisely because he is trying too hard.

And yet, despite its flaws, *modernismo* is at the source of Vivanco's account of Spanish modern poetry (by which he means: from Spain, in Spanish). In his account, it is a dialectical process towards the "auténtica imaginación poética, o imaginación de lo real" (12): from *modernista* fantasy, comes the imagination of the real (Unamuno, and especially Machado). That soon gives way to the autonomy of the image (Jiménez, Diego, Guillén) and the automatism of images (surrealism). The process culminates in a formula that aptly describes *Escorial* poetics, embodied by Vivanco's friends Luis Rosales, Juan and Leopoldo Panero, and, implicitly, Vivanco himself: "palabra radicalmente vital o existencial" (12) (elsewhere he coins the formula "realismo intimista trascendente" that will come to define a generation of poets, including Rosales, Panero, and himself).

Darío's poetic word is a "palabra imaginativa", capable of founding new realities. In Vivanco's definition, imagination would include thinking and dreaming, and it would be different

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comes to show the dynamism of the construction of a hegemonic literary field and its overdetermination by political considerations.

from “mere” fantasy (which flees reality instead of “founding” it). Quoting Heidegger (he does not name the exact source, which seems to be his own translation of the “The Origin of the Work of Art” lectures), he thinks that poetry can open up new worlds, revealing a special understanding of what we are like, what the world is like, how are we to interact with the world and render it available to our perception. In order to do that the poet, rather than reproduce the world, has to open himself up (the poet is for Vivanco a *him*, despite occasional reference to Rosalía de Castro; Giménez Caballero praises the “artista-macho”, Wahnón 1998: 31) to a spiritualized and emotional real which he is to feel inside and to project onto what he perceives.

Always according to Vivanco, by exploring the repressed possibilities of poetic language, Rubén Darío was doing exactly that. He was rejecting the empty rhetorics of a superficial Spanish romanticism. He coined a new musical language that responded to the underlying, transcendent real, and thus he paved the way for the right kind of poetry. The problem is, like I said, that he fills his poetry with the wrong *content* (or lack thereof): Vivanco calls it a “degenerada fantasía simbolista” (12). Vivanco traces several binaries: the artificial is contrary to the natural; the degenerate is contrary to the healthy; fantasy is contrary to reality. The seemingly aesthetic judgment belies two distinguishing features of Falangist aesthetics politics upon which Panero too is going to rely: an organicist understanding of cultural phenomena (and the assumption that certain cultural phenomena correspond to and are overdetermined by racialized cultural agents) and a kind of “turn to the real”.

If Darío’s presence in any study of contemporary Spanish poetry is unavoidable, as presented in the introductions to the two volumes of *Antología de la poesía latinoamericana*, he is the *telos* of all Latin American poetry written before him and he is the *arkhē* of all poetry written after him. These introductions, penned by *Escorial* poet Leopoldo Panero would seem to be particular in that the dichotomies that we have seen in Díaz-Plaja and Vivanco should be inverted, or at least displaced. Darío should be “at home” among Latin American authors and, implicitly, Latin American poetry should be defined as a corpus external to Spanish poetry, and therefore, subject to relatively autonomous rules and value judgments. A Spanish nationalist understanding of poetry could have

sanitized itself from Darío's "bad cosmopolitanism" (well-documented and object of much recent attention, see Montaldo and Siskind) by localizing an (inferior) exterior, which is what Díaz-Plaja and Vivanco suggested. And yet, Panero presents us with an idiosyncratic misreading of Darío that 1) *pace* Vivanco, justifies his incorporation to the *Escorial* canon and 2) conceptualizes anew the relation between nation, continent, and poetry in Transatlantic Spanish culture, in line with the Francoist understanding of world historical events and postcolonial history.

Misreading is the main device in the incorporation of Darío to *Escorial* aesthetics.

Throughout the text, Panero deploys a skewed and strenuously selective reading. Darío's main themes would be, according to Panero, a Nicaraguan childhood and human mortality; his language, words "sweet and desperate" and "deep and transparent"; his values, those of a "Christian tragic synthesis" (vii). His Darío "nos habla un lenguaje absolutamente sencillo y único que no agota nunca su sentido ni pierde su virginidad" (xii). His main influences are not the symbolists, but Jorge Manrique (if Rubén Darío is a traditionalist poet, according to Panero, Manrique is "siempre el más moderno de nuestros poetas", viii) and Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. He is close to Verlaine but what Darío learned from Verlaine is of minor interest only, "el *esprit* y el juego sentimental" (xi). Furthermore, if Verlaine could pervert Darío's "good" inclinations towards poetry (understood as heartfelt expression of a humble self), the juxtaposition of the two reveals a different Verlaine, one that was actually "transido de humanidad y ternura en la soledad de su alma y en la jeremíaca intimidad de su verso" (xi).

In Panero's description, Darío is closer to Antonio Machado than he is to himself. Darío's best poems may come from Darío's soul (by which he means that they are formally ascetic, and their theme is existential), but they do not sound like they come from Darío: "[m]ás que su propia voz nos recuerdan quizá a la de Antonio Machado" (ix). What Darío wrote in his portrait of Antonio Machado (1977 340-341) Panero uses to describe both Darío's poetic voice (ix) and his attitude (x). Rubén Darío's "transformation" into Machado has to do with the clash between *modernista* and *national-catholic* aesthetics (in Vivanco) or, between "literatura" and "poesía" (in Panero's terms,

although it is a distinction also endorsed by Juan Ramón Jiménez, if differently qualified). Panero concludes: “Rubén era demasiado gran poeta para no insuflar a sus palabras el temblor mágico de su alma. Pero también cedió muchas veces al demonio de la literatura en verso” (xxi).

Why Machado? Antonio Machado served as a prestigious model for the *nacionalcatólicos* for a number of reasons. He was a poet that interacted with a spiritualized realm and who deploys a popular, traditional, but freer meter (his *lira asonantada*). His diction was eminently dialogical and his tone and register were subordinated to communication, inimical to unnecessary baroque turns of phrase. Finally, he made use of traditional meters like *romance*, while exploring critically the ills of the (pre-democratic) nation. A *garcilasista* who was transitioning to the “modo romántico” like Dionisio Ridruejo, was likely to find in Machado’s poetry the site from where to explore his aesthetic and political uncertainties. That is why he published in the first issue of *Escorial* his now famous introduction to Machado’s collected poems, “Antonio Machado, poeta rescatado”. Rescued? From whom? From his own political naïveté, that had him align with the Second Republic, first, and then with loyalists, before he died on his way to exile. But the operation was the same with Darío and Machado (and Rilke, Hölderlin, Unamuno, etc.). The glaring absence of ten years of Spanish culture made prioritary the reabsorption of canonical names, by any means necessary. For political reasons, Machado is depoliticized, and Rubén Darío is equated to Machado. Darío may not have cared much that he is compared to his friend Machado, but if Panero’s Darío was not Machado’s, Panero’s Machado was not Darío’s either, as he is thinking neither of the young modernista (*Soledades*) nor of the old philosophical ironist (his *personae*, Juan de Mairena, Abel Martín). Darío’s Machado might be skewed as well, but what is interesting is how diametrically opposed his reading of Machado is: “Algunos críticos han visto en él un continuador de la tradición castiza, de la tradición lírica nacional. A mí me parece, al contrario, uno de los más cosmopolitas, uno de los más generales, por lo mismo que lo considero uno de los más humanos” (1997 lxxviii) (I should acknowledge that this is a very early thesis -1906-). Darío reads Machado into cosmopolitan *modernismo*, while Panero reads Darío into (a particular version of) Machado, and away from *modernismo*.

Selective reading and identification with Machado is what allows Panero to describe Darío as a simple man, innocent, abandoned like a child (x); even better, it is what allows Panero to “sense” (viii) his “destino de hombre” behind his (fictional, rhetorical, “French”) *modernismo*. At several points, he acknowledges that he is misrepresenting Darío, that there is not a substantive connection between Manrique and Darío (ix), that his quotes are not truly representative (xi). He justifies it by claiming that his selection of texts may not be the most representative, but it discloses what is truly valuable about Darío: a private, intimate author, coherent with *Escorial* poetics. This introduction to Spanish-American poetry is partly a didactic lesson in how to read and write poetry, with essentialist asides about poetry, “genio benévolo del corazón humano en el fluir temporal de nuestra vida” (x) or “secreto diálogo entre dos almas” (xii). The style that corresponds to that understanding of poetry is one of formal asceticism and simplicity.

Panero’s conception of aesthetics as existential dialogue is far from merely conservative a-politics or anti-politics (in that they affirm a private writerly self, which it does). The political aspect of this aesthetics is at the core of Panero’s misreading; it is what allows the *Escorial* poet to deploy a Latin American cosmopolitan poet in the mobilization of the nationalistic politics of the new Spanish State. When Panero claims that Darío’s “indian” soul has been “españolizada y espiritualizada por el amor” (xvi) he is only being consistent with the aesthetic ideology that emphasizes poetry as the intimate and existential communication of stylized sentimentality. Panero identifies this stylized sentimentality a Spanish “organic,” “authentic” form of literary expression. Darío’s poetry is “a su manera representativa, popular genuinamente hispánica, misteriosamente afín al genio de la raza” (xvi). Rendering culture a (racialized) living organism, Panero creates a narrative in which Darío’s poetic renewal is a salutary yet intrusive intervention over a “weakened” romanticism that “agota y mustia” the symbolic means of both Latin American and Spanish culture. The liberal-romantic revolution lacks “impulso espiritual suficiente para crear formas estéticas personales” (Panero 1948 v. II, 15). The paradox in the tension of the undeniable cosmopolitanism of Darío and the nationalist representativeness to which Panero adjudicates him is dismissed as idiosyncrasy (“a su manera”).

“Hispánico” does not mean here the decentering of poetry in Spanish, but its Spain-centric opposite. Darío affirms the Hispanic “de la misma o parecida manera que Kipling afirma, popularmente también, la voluntad imperial y heroica de Inglaterra” (xviii).

*Modernismo* is the *pharmakon* that reinvigorates the symbolic powers of Spanish literature, but also injects it with foreign “literatura,” an impure excess of form (Unamuno had expressed -and regretted expressing- a similar thought in the famous reference to Darío’s “Indian feathers”, (Meier 1982: 142-143). With a Machadian Darío, *modernismo* can be reabsorbed into Spanish culture, as the latter’s affirmation, rather than as the ratification of Latin American cultural self-sufficiency. Rather than a cosmopolitan turn away from a failed empire, *modernismo* is what proves that Spain is the depository of some form of cultural authority that is stubbornly antagonistic to European (modern, liberal) ideas, as proved by the supposed “weakness” of romantic literature in its soil. Of course, not every Spanish reader during the 1939-1975 period subscribed to that narrative, as not every post-1975 reader abandoned it, but this is where *modernismo* and the Generación del 98 start to be read as geographically particular responses to a Spanish transhistorical universality, to which I will go back.

In terms of the literary field, behind *Escorial*’s obsession with an affective *logos* lies the mobilization of a very catholic kind of anxiety about an embodied word (not unlike the one found in Vallejo, Bergamín, Lezama or Zambrano). But the particularity of *Escorial* is the response to a double demand to its aspiration to cultural hegemony. First, they strove to provide a substantive alternative to the perceived formalism of Juan Ramón Jiménez and the Generación del 27; they could not find their aesthetics neither on reason nor modernist aesthetics (too European), so they pushed an agenda based on feeling and religiosity. Second, they were rivaled by a different, more belligerent understanding of culture. While tensions between Franco and Falange and the defeat of the Axis in 1945 diminished the influence of *Garcilasistas*, the early post-war was an uncertain moment for the dictatorship. Its anxieties permeated the attempts to redefine literature and its relation with the State. This relation was not decided entirely within the literary field. Non-literary discourses tried to influence or implement their own take on literature’s purpose in the New Francoist Spain.

## Adaptation: Rubén Darío in propaganda film

Possibly the earliest treatment of Rubén Darío as a signifier of Franco's new State is not in the literary field. Directed in 1939 by Carlos Arévalo and produced by Juan de Orduña, *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* is a short propaganda film that uses "Marcha triunfal," by Darío as its inspiration.

¡Ya viene el cortejo!  
¡Ya viene el cortejo! Ya se oyen los claros clarines.  
La espada se anuncia con vivo reflejo;  
ya viene, oro y hierro, el cortejo de los paladines [...] (1977: 261)

The original poem praises a geopolitically nondescript victory parade, and it does so exactly the "modernista" way that Panero deplored in his introduction: a musical, opulent style, that privileges phonetics, meter, repetition, and imagery over its content. The 10-minute film that adapts the poem shows a montage of contemporary historical footage and medieval-themed fiction while Orduña reads the poem passionately. It was the last production by Cifesa, a small studio based off Sevilla that had been producing documentaries for the Francoist side throughout the war (Gubern 1986: 69). Juan de Orduña, who had performed in theaters during the war with a very different intended audience, read the poem. This kind of document allows for the juxtaposition of the scholarly and institutional conception of Darío with a private initiative within a burgeoning national (in all senses of the word) industry. *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* prefigures several important trends in post-war Spanish cinema, and it does so while adapting one of Darío's most recognizable texts, filling it with the signifiers of the new regime.

The poem is a "'triumfo' de decoración y música" (Darío 1991: 153), said Darío, emphasizing the "triumph" of the "Marcha triunfal." Its title is a nod to what Darío was trying to accomplish. "Marcha triunfal" alludes to two key metareferential ideas that would not have escaped the *modernista* reader: a march is here a parade, but also a musical composition, and a "triumph" (scare-quoted in Darío's quote) is a victory, but also a pictorial genre. In Darío's poem, militarism is a

“bibelot,” one of its motifs rather than its motivation. What the poem emphasizes is a double ekphrastic problem: the musical and the pictorial in poetry and of poetry. Lavish images and sounds, instead of any actual heroic content, drive the poem, and the epic is a product of the use of rhythm and exclamation, more than any heroic content (which appears only in fragmentary images metonymically connected to the sound of the bugle in the third stanza).

We would be hard pressed to “locate” the victorious army in history. The most tempting option, given the marble and the busts, would be the Greek-Roman world, but that interpretation would be refuted by the presence of a “cóndor.” The predominant absence of specific references to a historical place and time creates an estranging effect. The few references that do appear (Minerva, cóndor) are heterogeneous (Greece, Latin America) at best. A quick look at the less known sonnet “A Francia” (1893)--another take on a victorious army--reveals that the ambiguity about the specific victor is consistent with the (cosmo-)politics of *modernismo*.

¡Los bárbaros, Francia! ¡Los bárbaros, cara Lutecia!  
Bajo áurea rotonda reposa tu gran Paladín.  
Del ciclope al golpe ¿qué pueden las risas de Grecia?  
¿Qué pueden las Gracias, si Herakles agita su crin?

En locas faunalias no sientes el viento que arrecia,  
el viento que arrecia del lado del férreo Berlín,  
y allí bajo el templo que tu alma pagana desprecia,  
tu vate hecho polvo no puede sonar su clarín.

Suspende, Bizancio, tu fiesta mortal y divina,  
¡oh, Roma, suspende la fiesta divina y mortal!  
Hay algo que viene como una invasión aquilina

que aguarda temblando la curva del Arco Triunfal.  
¡Tannhäuser! Resuena la marcha marcial y argentina,  
y vese a lo lejos la gloria de un casco imperial.  
(314)

What is interesting about this sonnet is that there is a moral evaluation of the armies that inverts the valorization of empty military heroism of “Marcha triunfal,” in which the victor was praised for no other reason than being victorious. As in “Marcha triunfal,” an original rhythmic pattern (6 + 9 syllables) describes the apotheosis of an army. But in this case, Darío’s sympathies are

with the defeated (France), who has fallen under the Barbarians (an adjective that Darío tends to use critically), attacked by Germany (in the Franco-Prussian wars?). Liberating culture (Greece, Graces, baccanals -possibly a reference to Mallarmé's "faune"-, Rome) is powerless ("¿qué pueden?") against military force (Barbarians, animalistic Hercules, iron Berlin, martial hymns, silver, imperial helmet). This is an ominous march coming from afar, distinct from the bugles in "Marcha triunfal" that sound joyfully here and now. What he chooses to exalt by means of France is the locale of the non-localist, a nation that represents for Darío an anti-nationalist cultural project. The situation will repeat itself when pushed by the Great War, when Darío will side with Paris, France, as representatives of a universalist Culture.

However, it is precisely its geopolitical ambiguity that renders the poem easy prey for Arévalo's nationalist "idyllium." He only needs to provide the images that, sometimes literally, respond to the words with Spanish chauvinistic signifiers. The empty flag in Darío's poem becomes, by the nature of images, a very particular one: Spain's red and yellow flag, adorned with Falange's yoke and arrows. The film prefaces the poem with a long series of signifiers of the nation and its history--that is to say, Francoist historical fantasies. More than half the film is the montage of images that advance the Francoist privileged understanding of Spanish history: Franco's victory parade, idyllic views of the countryside, religious and bellic imagery, and fictionalized renditions of wars past and present. The images tell us a specific and simple story: there was an idyllic pre-modern lifestyle, defined by beautiful women in domestic places. Also 1939 is a happy moment, but current happiness is due to the victory of Franco whose the "desfile de la Victoria" is the continuation and ultimate historical triumph of the soldiers from the past.

Contrary to the poem, the film espouses an unambiguous nationalist thesis: by means of montage, it claims that there is an analogy (if not continuity) between the Reconquista and Franco's "crusade." Francoism was the first Spanish government that used film to legitimate itself through fiction (González González 2009: 19). It could count on the unconditional collaboration of the film industry, due to fear of reprisal and censorship, but also of rewards such as the licensing for the

distribution of a few foreign films. Films like *Alba de América* (directed by the same Juan de Orduña that reads “Marcha triunfal” in *¡Ya viene el cortejo!*) and *Raza* (directed by J. Sáenz de Heredia from a novel written by Franco under pseudonym) advanced and popularized the new official historical narrative: there was a true Spanish tradition sometimes interrupted (an always already Falangist Spain, Carbajosa and Carbajosa: 54). It went from the Reconquista, to the colonial expansion (with Rubén Darío as the “poeta de la raza”), to the counter-reformist wars, to the war of Independence, to Franco (González González 32). With the tension between political unity and fragmentation, between Catholic faith and its various enemies and heresies, and between tradition and several representatives of modernity as its leading thread, Spanish history is not thought to lead to the Spanish Civil War; the Spanish Civil War embodies Spanish history. This narrative is reiterated in historical fictions like *Alba de América* or *Locura de amor* (also by Orduña), but also in the first filmic narratives of the Spanish Civil War, like *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* or *Raza*.

*¡Ya viene el cortejo!* film emphasizes the nationalist dialogue between past and present in several ways, which places it somewhere between the “cine de Cruzada” and the “cine militarista” (Gubern 1986: 82). Different epochs and nations in a montage that suggests analogies: modern horse riding soldiers follow, appear after ancient knights; modern Francoist banners, after the medieval; bombs and guns, after swordfights, etc. Often, a shot slowly fades into the next one, as in the sequence that immediately precedes the beginning of the poem: a shot of the flag with the eagle of John the Evangelist (popularly known as the “aguilucho”) fades into one of the clear sky, etc., until it fades into a crowd giving the (fascist) Roman salute in the parade of the (Franco’s) Victory Day. Sometimes, two shots linger together, suggesting the identity of two superimposed images, as in the final sequence, in which a portrait of Franco is superimposed successively on the following images: waving flags, war planes forming over a church, soldiers parading, cars parading, tanks parading, a second plane formation. We can find the same tropes in another, well-known film, *Raza* (1941). *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* is thematically and cinematographically a rehearsal of the ending of Franco-penned

war melodrama<sup>4</sup>, that also showcases the victorious Francoist parade superimposed to *almogávares* (Pavlović 2003: 24) (if anything, *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* emphasizes the Francoist historical narrative, whereas *Raza* emphasizes the private melodrama of the Churruca family).

I do not believe that this is to be understood to be a simple “repetition” of history, nor as the consistent application of the same set of (e.g. Catholic) principles. Early into the film, we see an implicit transhistorical dialogue: a shot of a medieval soldier playing the bugle fades into a national soldier playing his. The continuity between the two armies is a specific one: the first trumpet faces right; the second, left. There is a back and forth between two historical epochs that I think is best described by what Heidegger calls a “reciprocal rejoinder”: the appropriation of a historical event whose meaning is yet to be fully developed.

[...] repetition makes a reciprocative rejoinder to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. But when such a rejoinder is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made in a *moment of vision*; and as such it is at the same time a *disavowal* of that which in the "today", is working itself out as the 'past'. Repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past, nor does it aim at progress. (Heidegger, 1985: 438)

Briefly, for the *Dasein*, it *suddenly* becomes *evident* (a “moment of vision”) that we could rescue some practices of a historical model, which may now be forgotten or, worse, fossilized and reduced to their “pastness.” He or she may “resolve” (and this resolution reshapes their whole identity) to repeat it in order to underline some unspoken background practices of their culture. The relation between *Dasein* and the historical model is multifold: the former feels the “call” of the latter’s example, and they feel compelled to “respond.” It is a transhistorical conversation where the *Dasein* does not just repeat a hero of the past or impersonate them, but live up to their example, conferring life on it. It is not past anymore, but living again, its pastness being erased.

Albeit less sophisticated than Heidegger, this is the libidino-political fantasy of Francoist history. Its obsession with erasing and externalizing social divisions may reduce the level to which the “conversation” may become “discussion” and even deconstruction (*destruktio*n, *abbau*), but that should not lead us to think that it pursues a mere return to Imperial Spain. Instead, its goal is the

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<sup>4</sup> While Saenz de Heredia ended up adapting Franco’s novel, Carlos Arévalo, director of *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* was one of three finalists invited to write a script based on the novel.

cancellation of its pastness as such: not a return of the past (or to the past?), but a turn of the present to what they think to be existentially contemporary in historical past. Francoist mythical history pursues the cancellation of the pastness of Imperial Spain, which it imagines to be a particular set of marginalized practices. In a trope that is in some cases heavily indebted to Ortega y Gasset, Falangist intellectuals identified the essence of Spain throughout history with (social, regional, political, religious, etc.) unity under a military expansionist project. The team responsible for *¡Ya viene el cortejo!* was also responsible for much of the cinematographic retelling of Spanish history. Carlos Arévalo directed films on Spanish colonial presence in wars (*¡Harka!*, *Su última noche*). But it is Juan de Orduña who stood out in this area: he went on to direct films about the beginning of the Habsburg rule in Spain (*Locura de amor*), the Napoleonic Occupation (*Agustina de Aragón*), and Imperial Spain in *Alba de América*, one of the most popular historical films during the early years of franquismo (which meant, one of the most popular films in general; the historical and the literary references of many films of these years had ideological sources, but also commercial incentives. González González, 2009: 51). These films tend to introduce thinly veiled allusions to the new political status quo by reference to some of its ideological tenets (see for instance González González 129).

This historical narrative--from which the present feeds and redefines a contradictory “eternal history”--became institutional through education and high and low culture. Let me reiterate my main point: these films and literary histories are the product of what I called anti-intellectual intellectuals and anti-modern modernists who try to forge a new Spanish culture to fill the absence of Lorca, Picasso, Buñuel, Ortega y Gasset (if momentarily). However, their ideological contradictions did not allow them to pass the new culture off as “new”, for they had to claim the authority of a “true” tradition (if they were to live up to their anti-modern creed). As an added difficulty, they had to compete with rivaling theories of what that narrative actually meant aesthetically.

That is why Leopoldo Panero and Luis Felipe Vivanco feel the compulsive need to define what poetry *really* is, what Darío *really* was (even if they did not always agree whether Darío *really* was a poet, or just a *literato*). While the short film is closer to the aesthetics of what Wahnón calls

Garcilasismo, there is a similar compulsive need to fill the adaptation of “Marcha triunfal” with national signifiers. The poem teaches spectators what Spain *really* is and, as a result, what they are (a strong didactic component was a frequent feature of early Francoist films, Pavlović 28). This is especially true for women, and this is where the film most clearly adds material to the original poem.

The only reference to actual women in “Marcha triunfal” are the lines:

Las bellas mujeres aprestan coronas de flores  
y bajo los pórticos vense sus rostros de rosa;  
y la más hermosa  
sonríe al más fiero de los vencedores.  
(1977: 262)

They appear in a passage in which civilians witness the parading *cortejo*. Predictably, the film endorses the same traditionalistic, clear-cut assignment of gender roles to men and women. Men are serious soldiers (and poet-soldiers, like Garcilaso), women are beautiful and smile easily. As the poem reads “la más bella”, a very close shot of a beautiful blonde woman turns to her right and smiles. Then, a very Stoic sweaty, hardened soldier, turns to his left, as if looking at the woman from the previous shot (while underlining the separation of the genders).

And yet, the poem goes beyond the illustration of the poem and enlists the bodies of women to tell a story about the nation. While we see only the face of one man other than Franco, the aforementioned unknown soldier, the first idyllic scenes showcase as many as seventeen women. Kathleen Vernon rightfully asks “what are these women doing in the film?” (274). But they stand in stark contrast to men, even formally. Men are undefined: shadows in the horizon, blurry silhouettes in the battle, implied corpses buried in a field filled with rudimentary crosses. Women, on the other hand, possess (*are*) faces and bodies over which Spanish autonomies are all represented through clothing, as the particular textile accident of the same essential substance: *la española*, a beautiful and subservient presence in the domestic sphere. These traditional, early modern women seem to have no other occupation than grooming themselves while waiting for the returning soldiers (they do acknowledge an out-of-frame -or absent- gaze, Vernon 274): the same mirror deflects for us the gaze of each one of them as they care for their hair (and eerily smile to themselves). They dress with the

painstakingly detailed folkloric clothing of all the regions of Spain. The gaze over women's bodies is intimately bound to the aesthetics of Francoism: the display of regional attires prefigures the work of the Sección Femenina, that would promote the performance of traditionalist womanhood in its "Coros y danzas"<sup>5</sup>.

Neither the soldier nor the girl are characters here; they are types. They flesh out the rationale of what we can call a "Francoist myth" (following Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy). Spaniards were supposed to learn what it meant to be Spanish by reference to the myth and by identifying mimetically with it. Spanishness would be too abstract a concept (maybe too discursively rational); a defined, specific character, too singular a presence to perfectly represent the idea and nothing else. The type is "the realization of the singular identity conveyed by the [fascist] dream. It is both the model of identity and its present, effective, formed reality" (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990: 306). We can differentiate two functions, both of which are served by the kind of deindividualized depictions of soldiers and women that we see in the film. On the one hand, it is a descriptive device: it is easier to imply that the actors represent a Spanish substance if its accidents are minimal. But, on the other hand, there is a prescriptive component to the type: by providing one with which to identify, the type provides the normalizing model that is to be embodied by the good citizen. In art, this meant the abandonment of modernism (abstract) and romanticism (individual). Wahnón talks about "lo típico," a mimesis in which the particular was sacrificed to the general (64).

The film reverses its earlier gesture: it exploited Darío's historical and geographical ambiguity by locating it temporally and nationally, and yet, now it seems to embrace the poem's pre-individuated soldier, whether historical or present. Only one soldier is individuated: Franco, "el héroe que guía su grupo de jóvenes fieros" (Darío 1977: 262). He makes a brief, awkward appearance during that line, towards the end of the film. It is footage from the "Desfile," and he does not seem to care too much about the camera. At the end of the shot, he turns to his left, and the same sweaty

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<sup>5</sup> The fact that Juan de Orduña was a closeted gay man with dubious political allegiances in his past, who became known as a "women's director" and who was eager to please the new authorities to the point of claiming authorship over Arévalo's hagiographic short film, adds more layers to the gender politics of the film (Ríos Carratalá 304, Vernon 274)

soldier that looked at the beautiful girl, now looks to the front, back at him. The camera is at a much lower position having us look up to a heroic soldier who looks up to his (by all accounts, short) leader. But Franco is not just a Spaniard. By means of a privileged position of the army in the historical narrative set forth by the film, Franco is the embodiment of the nation (in Tranche and Sánchez-Biosca's analysis of the film, in him past and present are fused together and transcended, 2011: 391). The film gets this point across at the very end, in a shot in which Franco's portrait is superimposed to military personnel and vehicles, waving flags, medieval lancers, and the sky. As the coda of the film, precisely when the poem ends, the film deploys the army (planes, tanks) as a sort of vanishing mediator and Franco becomes the nation: the flag and the dictator are one while we hear the "Marcha real" anthem, restored by the regime.

#### Conclusion: spectres of modernity

The Francoist historical fiction that frames the type (the rough soldier, the lovely woman, the fearless leader) legitimizes it by reference to tradition. It also rewrites the past by turning into a type that the present nation identifies with. Francoist obsession with the past is not anti-modern, but a specific kind of modernity that Jameson calls "typological" (20-21; see also Jauss 336): the present identifies with the past and, in this case, it supplements it too. The Heideggerian reciprocal rejoinder is a variation of this modern anti-modern ideology. Francoism understands itself to be in a privileged dialogue with absolutist Spain and to complete the unfulfilled potentialities of the latter. It is an imaginary dialogue between two different temporalities, but it is not the only one in the film.

Madrid itself is the signifier of two different political regimes. After forty years of dictatorship, and forty years of a parliamentary democracy that is problematically ambiguous towards its past, it is easy to forget that by 1939, if barely, Madrid was still resisting. This is not to say that I find a portrayal of such resistance in the film. And yet, the appearance of Madrid coincides precisely with the entrance of the film into the contemporary and with the beginning of the poem. While

historical reference in Darío is vague and heterogeneous, the film is pointing at a particular day and a particular place as the embodiment of the poem's lines. The film poses a suspended temporality in which Franco's "Crusade" is how the present responded to a carefully curated archive of the past. But the film cannot erase a modernist temporality in which the present is a radical break with the immediate past: Franco's Crusade is also a modern break with the Second Republic--an uneasy negotiation between these two temporalities (typological and modernist) is part of the specificity of Francoism. The apparent victory with victors but without losers is a *post facto* narrative: Madrid, metonymy of a defeated Republic, would be an unmistakable presence in 1939. More precisely, we are seeing the Avenida del Generalísimo, renamed in honor of Franco less than one month before the Desfile de la Victoria. Other streets reverted to their pre-1931 names. By performing a nazi-inspired ritual that tied the Madrid of Franco to that of Alfonso XIII, the Desfile de la Victoria was a demonstration that there was a new hegemonic power in the realm of war, but also in the political imagination of the city.

As I suggested at the beginning of the article, it is hard, if not impossible to escape appropriation. In 2010, when Spain was about to play the final of the FIFA World Cup, Luis M. Anson, member of the RAE, could write that: "Rubén Darío dedicaría hoy su marcha triunfal a los héroes balompédicos que luchan en la tierra de Chaka y Cetiwayo. A todos ellos les saludarían, con voces de bronce, las trompas de guerra que tocan la marcha triunfal" (web). Even if we leave aside the issue of the continuity of imperialist nostalgia in post-Francoist Spain ("De las cinco grandes naciones europeas que construyeron imperios colosales cuatro han ganado el mundial de fútbol: Roma, Inglaterra, Alemania y Francia. Sólo España se ha quedado a las puertas, por lo menos hasta ahora" web), it is remarkable that, to this day, Rubén Darío is so ingrained in it as a signifier of global modernity that his name arises in moments and spaces in which modernity itself is at stake, no matter how absurd.

In this article, I have tried to show how literary and non-literary discourses worked through the specters their past and the inner aporias of their ideological conditions of possibility by deploying

Darío as signifier. While rivalling projects, juxtaposition of two Daríos, that of the *Escorial* group and that of Arévalo and Orduña, allow us to delineate the basic coordinates of Francoist literary and historical thinking, they also undermine the idea that it was a tersely unified front. The latter, homogeneous image of Francoism was an image of itself that it would have enjoyed greatly (and would have identified with Spain).

When Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy pick up Benjamin's phrase, they point out that the aestheticization of politics is not simply a perversion of the political, but "a fusion of politics and art, the production of the political as work of art. [...] the construction, the formation, and the production of the German [or Spanish] people in, through, and as a work of art." (303). Concepts can be appropriated because they have a life of their own, but they bear the traces of such an appropriation. These concepts reflect more than a supposed original authorial intention, horizon of expectations, or contextual framework (which is not nothing). The specific rhetorics of an appropriation can disclose the tensions and aporias of the ideological system that demands it. By juxtaposing Arévalo and Orduña's Darío, his song of war, to Diaz-Plaja and Vivanco's decadent aesthete, and to Panero's admirable ascetic, we can easily see an underlying and consistent effort of fictionalizing the State, of aestheticizing the political. The constant efforts to repress and compartmentalize the modern of *modernismo* allows us to see the production of a fascist Spanish people for what it was: the delirious fantasy of internal homogeneity and the silencing of a repressed modernity.

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