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**History as a Battleground': The Spanish  
Civil War, Nationalist Visual Sources, and  
the Manipulation of History for Political  
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# HISTORY AS A ‘BATTLEGROUND’:

*The Spanish Civil War, Nationalist Visual Sources, and the Manipulation of History for Political Purpose.*



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## INTRODUCTION

### *The First Casualty of War is Truth*

Habits undulating, a superfluity of nuns atop a mounted platform raise their arms in greeting to a crowd gathering on the city streets, excited spectators smiling in recognition of a joyous or special occasion. However, this scene is made disturbing for the modern viewer by the prominence of the fascist salute among those present. This contrast between a site of social celebration and a gesture representing a totalitarian ideology thus alters the image's meaning, made explicit by its caption: 'Sisters of Mercy arrive to help feed hungry residents of Madrid'.

The underlying message of this photograph – taken after the 1939 fall of the Republican capital, at the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War – is one of triumphalist elation, signifying the dominance of the Nationalist State's values: military force, extreme political views, and Christianity. These values are interlinked by the figures of the nuns, whose raised position connotes the confluence of these beliefs within the ruling Nationalist ideology and its overall hegemony. More tangibly, moreover, the nuns' mere physical presence in a formerly secular city denotes the Nationalist army's subjugation of any rival principles.

Yet this image's celebratory tone conceals the naturalisation of an extreme imbalance of political and socio-economic power, implicit in the comparison between grinning 'holy' conquerors and a 'hungry' subordinated population. Inherent within this contrast of forces, then, was a highly partisan presentation of events, designed to justify and glorify the Nationalist cause with the ultimate political goal of securing their rule. Images such as this were thus part of a wider process of symbolic power accumulation – what Bourdieu calls the capacity to

‘constitute the given’ – attempted by the Nationalist State through the use of propaganda materials.<sup>1</sup>



*Fig. 3. ‘Sisters of Mercy Arrive to Help Feed Hungry Residents of Madrid’.*

### *Propaganda and the Spanish Civil War*

Through the deployment of numerous similar images, the Nationalist regime sought to emphasise and maintain its political and ideological supremacy over its subject Spanish audience. Produced and disseminated in the form of postcards, stamps, and pamphlets, as well as adorning newspapers, official exhibitions, and public places, these images performed what Miriam Basilio cogently identifies as a dual coercive and persuasive function.<sup>2</sup> Propaganda – ‘a process of deliberate manipulation and seduction... by “emotional possession”’ – was in this

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, 1991), 163-202.

<sup>2</sup> Miriam M. Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (Farnham, 2013), 1-9, 127-217.



sense utilised as an affective manipulator and repressive tool, evoking passionate feelings regarding a mutual Spanish heritage while also intimidating dissenters into quiescent obedience.<sup>3</sup>

However, although academic research into the use of propaganda throughout the Spanish Civil War is already substantial, there is insufficient Anglophonic work available, with a particular analytical deficiency regarding the visuality of the Nationalist cause.<sup>4</sup> Francoist messages are instead typically associated with the ‘spoken or printed word’, an absence which is especially problematic when considering the importance of visual materials in influencing a largely illiterate general population.<sup>5</sup>

Such a disparity of historiographical focus – disregarding the visual sources produced outside the Republican camp – is perplexing, as both sides utilised them extensively for the purposes of state legitimisation and identity-formation by indoctrinatory mimesis.<sup>6</sup> As an instrument to present their respective ideological views – reduced to single values or simple concepts to facilitate their comprehension – these pictorial depictions were indispensable, and consequently merit greater historiographical study. This dissertation seeks to address this issue, reviewing a selection of visual sources that I argue constitute a coherent system of Nationalist propaganda.

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert Blumer, ‘The Mass, The Public and Public Opinion’ in Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (eds.), *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (New York, 1966), 45 quoted in Kevin Robins, Frank Webster, and Michael Pickering, ‘Propaganda, Information and Social Control’ in Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), *Propaganda, Persuasion and Polemic* (London, 1987), 11-17.

<sup>4</sup> Helen Graham, *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2005), 3-72.

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen M. Vernon, ‘Iconography of the Nationalist Cause’ in Noël Valis (ed.), *Teaching Representations of the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2007), 289-304; Basilio, *Visual Propaganda*, 1-9.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Desfor Edles, *Symbol and ritual in the new Spain: The transition to democracy after Franco* (Cambridge, 1998), 32 quoted in Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies* (London, 2000), 48-57; Caroline P. Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton, 1997), 126 quoted in Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, *Contemporary*, 48-57.

Through the consideration of posters, artwork (specifically that of their ‘most famous’ artist, Carlos Sáenz de Tejada), and photography, a more comprehensive evaluation of the ideological foundations of the Francoist regime – a complex entity uneasily comprising fascist, conservative, monarchist, and religious political movements – can emerge.<sup>7</sup> Understanding their beliefs in their most ‘simplistic’ form will therefore provide the contextual basis for further enriched study of both the Civil War period (1936-1939) and the subsequent dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975).<sup>8</sup>

The War’s importance as a formative event in modern Spanish history cannot be overstated; the repercussions of which are still in evidence in the officially-approved ‘*pacto del olvido*’ (pact of forgetting).<sup>9</sup> Inadvertently causing the polarisation of grassroots politics, this four-decades-long collective amnesia has only recently been challenged through acts like the controversial excavation and memorialisation of Republican mass graves.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, a corresponding reclamation of the history of the turbulent Second Republic (1931-1939) has also been taking place in academic and literary discourse.<sup>11</sup> Yet, in order to extricate an objective picture from the abundant partisan interpretations of events, an evaluation of the motivations behind the Francoist insurrection and the methods by which they maintained support for their cause is necessary. Before any detailed analysis of these visual propaganda materials can be undertaken, then, a brief synopsis of their ideological principles is required.

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<sup>7</sup> Helen M. Greeson, ‘Gendering the Republic and the Nation: Political Poster Art of the Spanish Civil War, 1935-1939’, Thesis (Atlanta, 2012), 1-150.

<sup>8</sup> Filipe Ribeiro de Menezes, *Franco and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2001), xiii-xvii, 1-37, 81-118.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley Black, *Spain since 1939* (Basingstoke, 2010), 1-12.

<sup>10</sup> Layla Renshaw, *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality, and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War* (Walnut Creek, 2011), 9-52, 89-119.

<sup>11</sup> The growing popularity of the Spanish Civil War as a literary setting is indicated by the critical acclaim attributed to Javier Cercas’ ‘true tale’ *Soldados de Salamina*. Javier Cercas, *Soldiers of Salamis*, Translated by Anne McLean (London, 2004), 1-213.

### *Nationalist Ideology*

In spite of the diverse (and occasionally antagonistic) nature of the groups comprising the Nationalist forces, a substantial amount of common ground existed between them in their fundamental beliefs. United primarily by a violent aversion to the Popular Front's 1936 electoral victory, the political factions subsumed under the Nationalist banner – from the fascist Falangist movement, monarchist Carlists, and the conservative *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA) – shared above all a traditional vision of society, based on allegiance to the 'twin pillars' of the Catholic Church and armed forces.<sup>12</sup>

Rejecting the Republican government's 'modernising' reforms, these right-wing groups were brought together by a 'wish to arrest the progress of history', reinstating a distinctive ancient '*Hispanidad*' (Spanishness) 'defined by prescribed racial and cultural characteristics'.<sup>13</sup> Derived from a 'selective and nationalistic reading of the country's history', the Nationalist vision of the ideal society was a romanticised return to a 'Golden Age that had never existed'.<sup>14</sup> Those periods of Spanish history most valued for their religious fervour, royal authority, and imperial strength were isolated and glorified through propaganda, placing particular emphasis on certain moments deemed formative in the creation of a distinctly 'Spanish' identity. Prominent among these were *la Reconquista* (the gradual 'Reconquest' of the land from the Muslim Moors; a religious and nationalistic crusade culminating in 1492), the Spanish empire (beginning with Columbus' 'discovery' of America that same year), and the reigns of *los Reyes Católicos* (the pious fifteenth centuries Catholic Kings).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Sheelagh M. Ellwood, *The Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 1991), 1-55.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Knight, *The Spanish Civil War: Documents and Debates* (Basingstoke, 1991), 1-131; Enrique Moreno, *Catholics and the Spanish State* (London, 1937), 5-47; Joe Labanyi (ed.), *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice* (Oxford, 2002), 1-11, 195-202.

<sup>14</sup> Ribiero de Meneses, *Franco*, 81-118.

<sup>15</sup> Sheelagh M. Ellwood, *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era: Falange Española de las Jons, 1936-76* (Basingstoke, 1987), 1-3, 7-53; Chris Bannister, 'José Antonio Primo de Rivera: Catholic Fascism' in Alejandro

These symbols of Spanish greatness were accordingly condensed into a slogan implying national solidarity, imperial grandeur, and independence from any foreign ('liberal' European or 'asiatic' Communist) interference: '*España; Una, Grande, Libre*'.<sup>16</sup> Criticisms of the Republican government were thus communicated in this fashion, the Francoists predicting the imminent apocalyptic demise of civilisation if the 'unity, totality, and hierarchy' they perceived as characteristic of traditional Spain were not preserved.<sup>17</sup> To return to such a 'natural' society, however, the Nationalists advocated a violent purging of all 'infidels' and non-conformists, necessitating a paradoxically radical level of political and socio-economic reorganisation.

Initially 'vague', by the 1937 Decree of Unification the political programme of the Nationalist forces – now labelled the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* – appeared more consistent, premised on an 'authoritarian, ultra-Catholic, and corporativist' worldview.<sup>18</sup> Yet, the crux of these beliefs was their particular reading of Spanish history, presented in a systematic and homogeneous manner by the restrictive and regulatory 'propaganda machine' of the military-controlled Francoist State.<sup>19</sup>

An already substantial authority over published information was further extended in 1938; a new Press Law placing the media 'at the service of the state' in the deliberate blurring of truth and myth.<sup>20</sup> In this respect – and to a greater extent than on the highly factional Republican side – all publications produced for and by the Nationalists should be analysed as part of an essentially coherent system of propaganda. The sources selected for this study are consequently

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Quiroga and Miguel Ángel del Arco (eds.), *Right-Wing Spain in the Civil War Era: Soldiers of God and Apostles of the Fatherland, 1914-45* (London, 2012), 91-115.

<sup>16</sup> Nationalist poet José María Pemán quoted in Ronald Fraser, *The Blood of Spain* (London, 1976), 151-63.

<sup>17</sup> Harry Browne, *Spain's Civil War* (London, 1996), 59-76.

<sup>18</sup> Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century Spain: Politics and Society in Spain, 1898-1998* (Basingstoke, 1999), 94-160.

<sup>19</sup> Renshaw, *Exhuming*, 9-52.

<sup>20</sup> Gabrielle Ashford Hodges, *Franco: A Concise Biography* (London, 2000), 91-148.

representative of the available visual propaganda created and deployed during and immediately after the Spanish Civil War.

### *Methodology*

Taking as its subject the ideological manipulation of truth through visual depiction, this dissertation's tripartite structure is premised on the methodology of semiological analysis, as developed by theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes. A critical approach based on the latter's variant of semiology – the study of the 'sign' or 'unit of meaning', consisting of the 'signified' (concept) and the 'signifier' (sound or image) attached to it – is most relevant here for its emphasis on 'myth... the second level of meaning'.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas Judith Williamson's contention that 'a sign is always thing-plus-meaning' is undeniably cogent, Barthes' identification of the ideological functions underlying 'mythologies' (wider systems of signs) enables a more credible analysis of the intentions of propaganda.<sup>22</sup> This ability to 'naturalise' historical phenomena was defined by Barthes as the 'very principle of myth'; its conversion of culturally-specific (connotive) into literal (denotive) meanings acting as an implicit extension of an ideology for a given political purpose.<sup>23</sup>

Nationalist visual propaganda's usage of signs and symbols was hence neither arbitrary nor neutral, each feature of their posters, artwork, and photography being tacitly encoded with an aspect of their belief system, as derived from a 1930s Spanish context. This dissertation's approach is consequently synchronic, and concentrates on the site of the image itself as opposed

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<sup>21</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London, 2007), 35-106.

<sup>22</sup> Judith E. Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London, 1978), 1-46; Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Translated by Annette Lavers (London, 1973), 109-59.

<sup>23</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 109-59.

to that of its production or reception. By narrowing the focus in this way, the intrinsic motivations of the Nationalist rebellion – such as the maintenance of elite power structures – can be more credibly exposed.<sup>24</sup> Through the exploration of the relationship between truth and myth as expressed within these visual sources, this dissertation aims to evaluate the means by and extent to which a selective interpretation of Spanish history was manipulated for political purpose.

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<sup>24</sup> John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, 1988), 1-102.

## PART ONE: POSTERS

### *A Propaganda Culture*

Typically defined as ‘insignificant, mediocre, and grindingly repetitive’, Nationalist propaganda posters are usually ignored in Anglophonic studies of the Spanish Civil War, academic scholarship focusing on those of Republican origin.<sup>25</sup> However, as Kathleen Vernon succinctly notes, the tendency to continually reiterate a ‘series of central myths and symbols’ in their visual materials does not preclude their utility as tools for historical analysis.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the uniformity of their content highlights the consistency of their ideological vision. Their overreliance on certain images in this respect indicates a form of forced coherence, reflecting the centralisation of their production and the initially-laboured reciprocity of the Francoist coalition’s political programme.

Persistent repetition of a number of signs in their posters – reinforcing the interrelated concepts of militarism, Catholic belief, national unity, and hierarchical social organisation – thus demonstrates the limited nature of their belief system. Yet, this simplistic replication of figures, icons, and symbols from the Spanish past was actually a strategic manipulation of imagery, isolated and re-contextualised to evoke an emotional response from the viewer. Portrayal of cultural artefacts and formative historical events therefore corresponded to the construction of an idealised ‘traditional’ Spain, propagandistically communicated to encourage support for the Nationalist cause. A semiological analysis of the most prominent of these signs will thereby facilitate a more thorough understanding of the mythical basis of Francoist political values.

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<sup>25</sup> Vernon, ‘Iconography’, 289-304.

<sup>26</sup> Vernon, ‘Iconography’, 289-304.

*'Soldiers to Save Civilisation'*<sup>27</sup>

Personified in the figure of the soldier, militarism is perhaps the most consistently appearing theme among the posters selected for this study. As discerned from fig. 4's illustration of an amassing army, this pictorial trend encompassed both an ideological justification of violence and a more tangible appeal for greater levels of troop enlistment. Mounted on horseback and bearing colourful banners emblematic of royal households, these figures are depicted as though



*Fig. 4. 'The Third'.*

<sup>27</sup> Oswald Spengler, a right-wing historian and polemicist favoured by the Falangist leaders, quoted in Cercas, *Soldiers*, 1-32.



classically painted. This epic quality is further enhanced by the parchment-like header, denoting the Spanish Foreign Legion but connoting a medieval proclamation of war.

By situating their armed forces within an archaic ‘historical’ style of image, this poster associated the Nationalist movement with an older ‘traditional’ setting, legitimating their cause as representative of a Spanish military heritage. Through the visual identification of such ideals with chivalrous medieval warfare, then, fig. 4 signifies the retrospective conservatism inherent in their ideology; an obsession with an antiquated heroism embodied in the soldierly persona.

An exclusively male figure – as opposed to the Republican *miliciana* – the image of the Nationalist soldier connotes a form of masculine strength and honour derived from foundational events in Spanish history. Foremost among these was the medieval *Reconquista*; a centuries-long ‘crusade’ considered in Francoist ideology as the origin of Spain’s status as an international power.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, a belief in the efficacy of military action as the solution to the country’s political and socio-economic problems became deeply embedded in the Nationalist value system. Inextricably tied to patriotic and religious sentiments, this conception of the traditional Spanish identity as grounded in conflict corresponded to the fanatical endorsement of violence on behalf of an ancient ‘eternal’ Spain.<sup>29</sup>

Through this interpretation of the Civil War as an ‘apocalyptic Manichean’ struggle between a ‘true’ and ‘anti-Spain’, the Francoist propagandists deliberately encouraged a religious-militaristic heroism, modelled on the *Reconquista*’s ‘warrior-monks’.<sup>30</sup> As such, the Nationalist soldier-figure was typically portrayed in classical and heroic style, with certain physical features accentuated by the visual techniques of perspective and juxtaposition.

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<sup>28</sup> Jonathon Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades* (London, 2009), 312-49.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Richards, ‘Doctrine and Politics in Nationalist Spain’ in Valis, *Teaching*, 88-98.

<sup>30</sup> Helen Graham, ‘The Return of Republican Memory’ in Jump, *Looking*, 13-29; Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas, *Contemporary*, 38-57.

Enlargement of the arms or neck thus denotes his muscular nature, presenting an idealised image of masculinity which connotes mythic tales of courageous quasi-Herculean exploits.

One effective example of this technique can be discerned in fig. 5's illustration of a soldier in the act of marching, the image's perspective emphasising the upper body and arm in a veneration of strength. Alongside the almost photo-realistic depiction, the intimate proximity of the body signifies the physicality of war; its immediacy and humanity. Yet, the association of a totemic male entity with *the* symbol of contemporary militarism – the rifle – connotes the primacy of the warlike mentality for the idealised man. His centre-foreground placement thus



Fig. 5. 'And we sense the dawn in the joy of our guts'.

signifies the soldier's permanent and necessary role in Spanish society, relied upon in the defence of its values and institutions. Imagining such a historic responsibility to preserve a traditional or 'perfect' Spain, the Nationalist generals justified their 1936 coup as akin to a nineteenth-century '*pronunciamiento*' (military revolt leading to dictatorship).<sup>31</sup>

Fig. 5's juxtaposition of the soldier against the backdrop of stars elaborates upon this mythic quality, moreover, connoting the heroic archetypes innate within army folklore and religious imagery. Positioning an individual warrior amongst astronomical phenomena in this sense references mystical associations of military heroism begetting immortality. Watching the distance, the soldier's armed stance at the image's centre surrounded by stars therefore contains religious connotations of a vigilant authority watching over the nation. This soldier – and by extension a wider martial culture – is deified in such imagery, equating a mythic individual 'hero' with an interventionist God. Christian morality is hence combined with a military action in the figure of the soldier-saviour; a naturalisation of ideological principles in visual propaganda for the political purpose of glorifying the active warrior.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Sacred Heart*

This relationship between heroism and religious doctrine is also expounded in fig. 6 through the concept of martyrdom. At its core an attempt to magnify troop numbers, the ardent endorsement of the Catholic ideal of sacrifice for a heavenly reward was widespread in Francoist visual propaganda. Typical of such depictions of individual martyrs, fig. 6's deceased soldier lies prone on the field of battle, the tranquillity of the scene only belied by distant barbed

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<sup>31</sup> José M. Sánchez, *The Spanish Civil War as a Religious Tragedy* (Notre Dame, 1987), xiii-xvi.

<sup>32</sup> Sid Lowe, *Catholicism, War and the Foundation of Francoism: The Juventud de Acción Popular in Spain, 1931-1939* (Eastbourne, 2010), 190-228.

wire. His relaxed pose and unbloodied appearance is significant, moreover, denoting a peaceful death but connoting the potential for a rewarded afterlife akin to the promises made to medieval crusaders.



*Fig. 6. 'Before God you shall never be an anonymous hero'.*

This allusion to the holiness of war and its participants – again connoting the crusading mythology of the *Reconquista* – is likewise indicated by the positioning of the soldier's hands; one clutching his weapon and the other resting on his chest, signifying devotion to the cause. Encircling his head, the faint outline of an aureole transfigures this unremarkable soldier into a saintly figure, his martyrdom conveying a message of an eternally triumphant piety. Here again, elements of Spanish history were signified through the deployment of signs and symbols in visual sources, particularly correlating faith and military action.

Indeed, the distinctive Spanish identity was to a large extent premised for Francoists on the imposing presence of the Catholic Church in society. The Church's long-standing function in

providing education – together with their Inquisitorial role during the Catholic Reformation and royal connections to *los Reyes Católicos* – reinforced their already considerable traditional authority over the Spanish populace. As such, religious iconography was frequently embedded in Nationalist visual propaganda materials, one prominent example of which is the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Aside from its bewildering combination of monarchist and fascist insignia, fig. 7's pictorial representation of the Nationalist slogan '*España; Una, Grande, Libre*' includes at its core the emblem of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a Catholic devotional symbol. Its situation at the centre



*Fig. 7. 'I shall reign in Spain: One, Great, Free'.*

of the royal crest consequently signifies the Francoist obsession with Christianity as the crux of '*Hispanidad*'. Religion's historic unifying function here acts as the *heart* of their belief system, beyond even the submission to monarchic authority. Quiroga and Ángel del Arco are thus entirely credible in their contention that this 'sacralization of the nation' was the 'supreme political value' binding together the various Nationalist factions, symbols like the Sacred Heart embodying both a conservative view of Spanish history as holy and an ideological vision of a future society based on faith.<sup>33</sup>

Also important in this respect is fig. 7's employment of the haloed heraldic eagle of Saint John, an imperial symbol favoured by the *Reyes Católicos* for both its metonymic connotations of strength and immortality and its connection to Catholic doctrine. The confluence of symbols here therefore signifies what the Nationalists deemed the most valuable aspects of their history and, by extension, their ideal model for society based on a cohesive 'traditional' hierarchy.

### *'A Dramatic Step Backwards'*<sup>34</sup>

If the founding goal of Francoist ideology was the resurrection of a traditional Spanish identity based on a patriotic, religious, and militaristic nationalism, then the unavoidable consequence would be the dramatic transformation of society. A selective interpretation of Spanish history thereby translated to the desire for a traditional social hierarchy, unevenly distributing power within a national body unified according to an 'organic statism'.<sup>35</sup> Reconstruction of a

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<sup>33</sup> Quiroga and Ángel del Arco, *Right-Wing*, vii-xix.

<sup>34</sup> Ribiero de Meneses, *Franco*, 81-118.

<sup>35</sup> Juan J. Linz, 'Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes' in Fred J. Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 3, Macropolitical Theory (Massachusetts, 1975), 175-411 quoted in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London, 1995), 109-78.

historical '*Hispanidad*' thus necessitated the reversal of progressive changes made under the Second Republic, the most salient revision being in the social role and status of women.

Prior to the Republican government's reforms, women in Spain were among the most restricted in Europe in terms of political rights and socio-economic opportunities, expected to adhere to carefully-constructed gender 'norms'. In advocating a return to a 'traditional' model of social organisation, then, the Nationalists consciously participated in the creation of a crude binary, associating a masculine identity with notions of strength, virility, and power whilst its feminine counterpart was conceived in terms of weakness and docility. Whereas upon the former were



*Fig. 8. 'Girls of today and women of tomorrow'.*

conferred the privileges and responsibilities of the public sphere, the latter were limited to a domestic and familial domain, traditionally accepted only as ‘daughters, mothers, or members of a religious order’.<sup>36</sup> Such a totemic construction of gender was accordingly reaffirmed as a didactic message through visual propaganda.

Conspicuous by their invisibility, women were generally underrepresented in Francoist visual propaganda in favour of disproportionate quantities of masculine militarism. The prominence of the male soldier and effective absence of women hence signifies the desired visibility and functions of both genders in the Nationalists’ ideal society. Fig. 8’s depiction of two feminine figures therefore conforms to such rigid allocations of gendered social roles, denoting the physical qualities envisaged as traditionally feminine. Yet, despite the expected temporal progression from *niña* (girl) to *mujer* (woman) – established by textual (*‘hoy/mañana’*) and visual (transitioning sun) signs – both figures embody the idealised features of an allegedly ‘eternal... womanhood’.<sup>37</sup>

Based on a conservative image of femininity as representing a vague youthful attractiveness, the women in fig. 8 were similarly rendered in facial and body type. Indeed, the most noticeable difference between the two figures relates to their clothing; one individual dressed fashionably (in patterned dress, high-heeled shoes, long gloves, and styled hair) and the other wearing practical or conservative attire (an apron, clog-type footwear, and headscarf). However, both conform to an idealised feminine appearance in their rejection of masculine apparel (the trousers, shirt, and boots of soldiers).

Props accompanying the figures likewise signify specialised social roles; the fruit held by one entailing connotations a maternal or ‘homemaking’ responsibility alongside the more universal

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<sup>36</sup> Greeson, ‘Gendering’, 1-150.

<sup>37</sup> Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London, 1997), 87-98.



reference to abundance or prosperity. Fig. 8 therefore depicts the supposedly ‘natural’ position and status of women in Franco’s Spain as bound to the private or domestic sphere. This propagandistic presentation of women in this sense signifies the Nationalist fixation with womanhood’s allegedly archetypal functions – their universality emphasised by the caption, claiming ‘unity without class distinction’ – as reduced to the interlinked experiences of matrimony, housekeeping, and motherhood.

This selective interpretation of Spanish culture thus corresponded to the representation of an idealised femininity, constructed around an interlinked series of domestic tasks. Women who



*Fig. 9. 'For Mother and Son; For a Better Spain'.*

rejected this set social role – for example the Republican *milicianas* – were vilified; their behaviour deemed unnatural by contrast to the totemic image of the traditional female as mother, articulated in its simplest form in Francoist visual propaganda.

Fig. 9's illustration of a woman raising her *hijo* (son) accordingly signifies a gendered imbalance of social power and influence, the child's position above the woman denoting her lower status. Also notable is the association made between the child and a 'better Spain', connoted as ideological by the Falangist insignia on the boy's clothing. Here, then, an imagined 'pure' – as connoted by the colour white – future was premised on the maintenance of 'traditional' social roles, epitomised in the classification of woman as mother.

Embedded within this promotion of an ideal Spanish woman and child, furthermore, was a contrast against the social and moral environment of the Republican zone, implied as anarchic and miserable by the blurred and murky outlines of people at the image's edge. The clean, youthful, and stereotypically feminine figure in the foreground of fig. 9 in this respect connotes the purity of the idealised Spanish woman, who – as envisioned by Nationalist ideology and conservative Catholic belief – duly performs her traditional functions as wife and mother. The Nationalists' promotion of an idealised femininity was thus implicitly related to the preservation of (gendered) power structures; part of a larger political programme entailing the resurrection of a historic '*Hispanidad*', propagated through a coherent system of visual propaganda.

## PART TWO: ARTWORK

*'All Art is... Propaganda'*<sup>38</sup>

Despite the Nationalists' general renunciation of the creative individual in the production of propaganda materials – as opposed to the Republican cause, which attracted many poets, painters, and photographers – the 'distinctive' artistic contributions of Carlos Sáenz de Tejada cannot be overlooked.<sup>39</sup> Already a famous illustrator by the Civil War's commencement, Sáenz de Tejada proved beneficial to the Francoist forces, articulating their ideological principles within the world of fine art. As well as providing a number of drawings and designs for posters, his most significant impact on Nationalist propaganda was a series of prints titled the '*Canción de la Falange*' (Song of the Falange).<sup>40</sup>

Otherwise known as '*Cara al Sol*' (Face the Sun), this sequential illustration of the Falangist – and later the official state – anthem was produced and exhibited during the War, but attained greater popularity through subsequent reproduction in educational textbooks, which explicitly continued wartime attitudes and animosities as self-validating historical truths.<sup>41</sup> Analysis of Sáenz de Tejada's artistic depiction of Nationalist ideology – originating in the same selective reading of the Spanish past – is thus essential for any evaluation of their belief system; his use of icons and signs analogous to those in posters and photography thereby demonstrating the overall coherence of Nationalist visual propaganda.

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<sup>38</sup> George Orwell, *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, Vol. 2 (Harmondsworth, 1942), 152, 276 quoted in Stephen M. Hart (ed.), "*¡No Pasaran!*": *Art, Literature and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1988), 86-108.

<sup>39</sup> Vernon, 'Iconography', 289-304.

<sup>40</sup> Basilio, *Visual Propaganda*, 127-217.

<sup>41</sup> The foremost example of such official accounts can be found in Joaquín Arrarás y Carlos Sáenz de Tejada, *Historia de la cruzada Española: Vols. III-XVII* (Madrid, 1941).

*Saints and Soldiers*

Similar to other Francoist visual materials, a pronounced emphasis on militarism, Christian rhetoric, and specified gender roles can be discerned throughout the 'Cancion' series. One recurrent theme within the nine images was again the male Falangist soldier, his allegiance to the cause signified by his standardised attire; a blue shirt with the yoke-and-arrows insignia of the *Reyes Católicos* over the heart.

Spreading his arms in supplication and staring upwards in devotion, fig. 10's vision of a loyal soldier signifies the deeply entwined nature of religious faith and militaristic masculine strength in Nationalist ideology, presented against a backdrop emblematic of a fascist creed. Though unsophisticated in its association of ideology to human subject, then, this placement



*Fig. 10. 'Facing the Sun with the new shirt'.*

of an insignia denotes the adoption of a militaristic Falangist identity for the purpose of conflict.

Cliché in its emulation of older artistic traditions, fig. 10's realistic representation of individual heroism and devotional practice was evidently influenced by the paintings of el Greco and Francisco de Goya. This conscious imitation of visual cues and symbols – such as the soldier's pose and rendered clothing – from eminent Spanish artworks was a vital feature of Sáenz de Tejada's conservative style, manipulating elements of Spanish history in order to justify the Francoist rebellion as a defence of an authentic Spanish cultural heritage.<sup>42</sup> Such artwork is hence propagandistic in its underlying function of affectively persuading the viewer.

### *Unity unto Heaven*

Implicit within this promotion of one 'true' Spanish culture and history, moreover, was a criticism of Republican rule, which had allegedly condoned the emergence of political factionalism and regionalism; threatening the nation's harmonious existence. Accordingly, Nationalist propagandists (including Sáenz de Tejada) endorsed a rigid form of national unity on the grounds of ethnic, moral, and religious homogeneity. Of these, the last is perhaps the most crucial, being used as an instrument of cohesion to overcome other practical contradictions; for example, the 'historical incongruity' of Muslim Moroccan conscripts being deployed in a supposed Christian 'crusade'.<sup>43</sup> Religious identity (established by signs and symbols) was in this sense utilised in tandem with military metaphors of discipline in visual propaganda to evoke emotional reactions of solidarity and unanimity.

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<sup>42</sup> Marko Daniel, 'Spain: Culture at War' in *Art and Power: Europe under the dictators 1930-45*, Compiled and selected by Dawn Ades, Tim Benton, David Elliott, and Iain Boyd Whyte (London, 1996), 63-8.

<sup>43</sup> Brothers, *War*, 58-75.

Highlighting the confluence of these ideas succinctly in its suggestion of a military tradition of heroism and sacrifice, fig. 11's replication of a soldier in a skyward progression expands upon the aforementioned notion of martyrdom through conflict. Indeed, the arrangement of these soldiers in a formation or procession denotes both a forwards progression and a connection to a mythical or legendary past. Gradually transitioning from solid outlines – representing the tangible 'reality' of the contemporary battlefield – to more vague or indistinct individual forms enveloped in cloud thereby connotes the importance of ties to tradition for the process of identity-construction.

Similarly, the positioning of the soldiers in a pattern advancing through the clouds and into the starry sky beyond contains connotations of an ascension into a heavenly realm. In this sense,



*Fig. 11. 'I'll take my place alongside my companions who stand on guard in the heavens; with a hard countenance, they are alive in our effort'.*

such imagery cultivates the Christian belief in an afterlife as the reward for earthly sacrifice, fundamentally associating heroic military action and religious doctrine. This use of religious symbolism acts as a continuation of other trends in Nationalist visual propaganda, the coherence of their pictorial representations signifying the entrenched nature of such beliefs in their ideological canon.

Furthermore, the consistent appearance of the figures (in terms of their stances, clothing, and physical features) in fig. 11 – even during their transition into more obscure shapes – denotes an underlying homogeneity in the Nationalists' identity and purpose. Related again to the desired military traits of discipline and loyalty to the cause, the soldiers' identical quality signifies their essential unity and therefore strength. Hence, regardless of this historical unity's actual chimeric character, Sáenz de Tejada's propagandistic artwork sought to present a connection between religious harmony and military authority through the shared values of discipline, unity, and tradition.

### *Women and Warriors*

Incorporated within this political objective of instituting unity within a hierarchically-organised society was the assignment of social roles and responsibilities according to gender and class. Artwork produced by Carlos Sáenz de Tejada therefore continues this trend within Nationalist visual propaganda, rendering idealised female figures in only two of the nine images in his '*Canción...*' series, denoting the limited place for women within their ideology.

Where women are depicted – as in fig. 12 – they are situated at the periphery of the image, accompanying the soldier's actions; his central location, eliciting the attentive gazes of the female figures, connoting a masculine physical authority. Notable again in this respect is the

stereotypically 'feminine' appearance of both women, their conservative clothing and hair paralleling other propagandistic representations in the promotion of an idealised female form.

Tacitly combining the perceived archetypal social functions of women with an emphasis on the body, Sáenz de Tejada's composition divides the feminine physique into a sexualised youth and desexualised maturity. Occupying a more prominent place in the image's foreground thus connotes the former's preeminent status in the Francoist ideology, her youth and physical qualities ostensibly of greater value for the performance of the social roles of wife and mother.

The Nationalist preference for such idealised 'womanly' features is also signified by the soldier's extension of one arm around the younger women – connoting conservative notions of possession and protection inherent in presupposed gender roles – whilst neglecting her older



*Fig. 12. 'Spring will laugh again, which we await by air, land, and sea'.*



counterpart. Conceiving of women as an intrinsically weaker sex therefore entailed a restriction of social functions; presenting confinement to the domestic sphere as a safeguard against the depravity of other ('godless' Republican) men. Encompassed within this view of a totemic 'traditional' femininity as pure, fragile, and childlike, moreover, was the concurrent validation of men as its opposite (powerful, strong), and hence the male occupation of the public sphere.

Additionally, this visual (re-)construction of 'traditional' gender stereotypes was fortified by fig. 12's use of props. Flowers held by the younger lady in this respect connote a confluence of ideals about femininity such as beauty, plenty, and nature, besides relating to the image's optimistic 'spring' theme, evocative of a utopian future society worth fighting for. Jewellery further cultivates this image; the cross around the younger woman's neck signifying the relationship between religious identity and a (sexual and moral) purity imagined as part of a historic '*Hispanidad*'.

Here again, Nationalist ideological principles – visible elsewhere in the child's fascist salute, monarchist flag, and soldier's shirt insignia – were contextualised within a celebration of the traditional (nuclear) family, a concept propounded in visual propaganda for its simplistic affective value to an illiterate audience. Carlos Sáenz de Tejada's deployment of icons and symbols representing ideological principles in the creation of 'epistemically defective' (deliberately untruthful) art is consequently an indication of the '*Cancion...*' series' propagandistic nature.<sup>44</sup> His purposeful association of the Francoist cause with elements of a traditional Spanish culture and history is in this sense analogous to the promotion of an ideal society founded on those values; involving a Barthesian naturalisation of power structures benefiting certain (elite male) social groups through visual propaganda.

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<sup>44</sup> Sheryl Tuttle Ross, 'Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spr., 2002), 16-30.

## PART THREE: PHOTOGRAPHY

### *The Photograph Never Lies...?*

Whilst long-running academic debates regarding the ‘indexical’ or ‘truth’ value of photography still endure, recent scholarship has effectively challenged the causative relationship between pictorial signifier and real physical object. Indeed, the contention of theorists such as John Tagg that ‘significant distortions’ exist within the ‘technical, cultural, and historical’ processes of photographic practice – thereby violating this link to the ‘pre-photographic referent’ – are certainly credible.<sup>45</sup> An image’s ‘material’ quality, combined with the ‘specific contexts... [and] forces’ at work in its purposeful creation, thus make it ‘infinitely vulnerable to... manipulation’, for instance as propaganda.<sup>46</sup>

Techniques at the site of production and development – including staging, cropping, and editing – are therefore able to fundamentally alter an image’s meaning. Such procedures, alongside the widespread use of misrepresentative provenances, were integral to photographic practice during the Civil War, conferring upon these images a propagandistic quality. Deployed extensively in newspapers, magazines, postcards, and exhibitions in a domestic and international context, photographs were crucial to the mass representation of the conflict, working to affectively persuade the viewer. Constantly necessitating authorisation from the Propaganda Ministry for their propagation, photographs generated of the War should be comprehended as ‘weapons rather than simple illustrations’, acting within a coherent system of visual propaganda.<sup>47</sup> Their depictions of individuals and events consequently remain consistent with those ideological themes and concepts articulated in the preceding pictorial materials; militaristic strength, religious doctrine, and a ‘traditional’ hierarchical social order.

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<sup>45</sup> Tagg, *Burden*, 1-102.

<sup>46</sup> Tagg, *Burden*, 1-102; Brothers, *War*, 1-35.

<sup>47</sup> Brothers, *War*, 1-35.

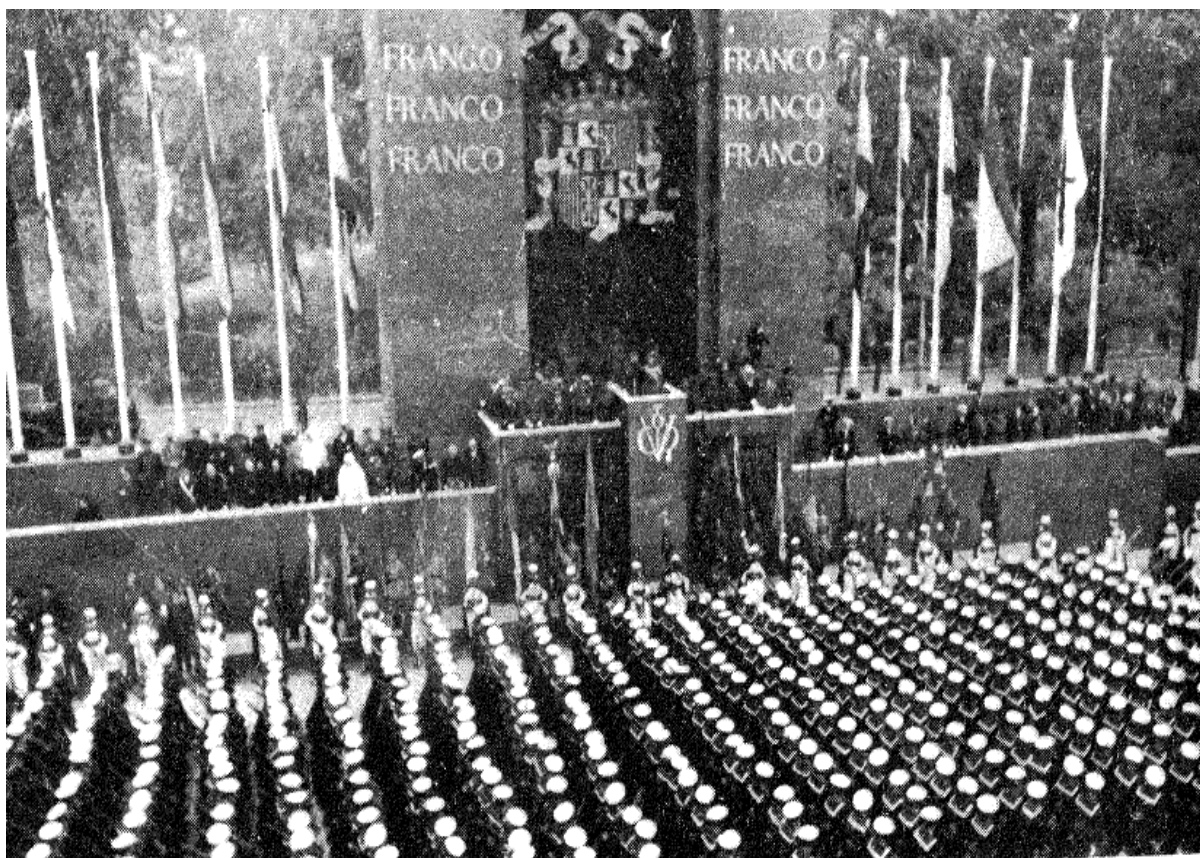
This dissertation will accordingly analyse several of these photographic sources as representations of such values.

### *Columns and Power*

Foremost among these areas of photographic focus was again an emphasis on militarism, exemplified in an obsessive documentation of columns, both architectural and anthropological. Arranged in formation and advancing towards an unseen objective, marching soldiers were consistently represented in photographs to signify a common sense of discipline and order. Fig. 13, taken during the end-of-war Francoist victory parade, is one such example; its subjects synchronised in their movements and identical in their appearance to signify the soldierly values of loyalty, obedience, and regimentation. Homogeneous in form and composition, the column's alignment therefore connotes an essential uniformity of identity and purpose within the Nationalist armed forces, diminishing each soldier to a dehumanised component of a larger, stronger entity. Yet, although this reduction of the individual to a standardised tool of war was a typical feature of fascist militarism, in Francoist ideology it also alludes to the goal of a hierarchically-organised society.

By positioning these soldiers below an imposing stone podium for the state's political leadership, fig. 13 signifies the importance of hierarchy to the Francoist ideology. Pyramidal in design, the depicted structure's tiers denote the stratified nature of traditional Spanish society, ascending from an orderly mass to a single authoritative leader. Likely circulated as a celebratory postcard or newspaper image, fig. 13's photograph appears propagandistic in its commemoration of the Nationalist conquest and veneration of its supreme '*Jefe*' (Chief), whose name was liberally inscribed upon the structure's columns in an explicit association with power.

Accumulated on and around the platform, royal symbols and provincial flags denote the patriotic zeal of the movement, conferring an impression of monarchic grandeur derived from the ostentatious stately events of *los Reyes Católicos*. Fig. 13's encapsulation of the victory parade thus signifies the faction's ideological association of military discipline, elite-held power, and a cohesive hierarchical social order, drawn from a selective interpretation of Spanish history. By presenting this arrangement of columns – both human and architectural – as a signifier for such values, therefore, this photograph works to naturalise these connotations to the viewer. In this sense, this image's use of signs corresponds to Barthes' system of myth; the propagandistic implementation of ideological belief to achieve a political purpose of state legitimisation through the assertion of power.<sup>48</sup>



*Fig. 13. 'The name of the Chief. Twice. The triple repetition of the binary rhythm Fran-co in the first Victory Parade in Madrid'.*

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<sup>48</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 109-59.

*Creating a Caudillo*

Equating the country's monarchical past with an status of power and prosperity, the Francoist belief system entailed the near deification of a singular eminent personage; the short, portly figure of General Franco. His royal ambitions are evident in fig. 14's photographic depiction, intentionally resembling classical 'regal' portraiture.<sup>49</sup> Rendered as an almost full-size body and wearing a stately fur-collared coat over a military uniform, Franco's image was extensively circulated – as postcards, stamps, collectable prints, posters, and stencils displayed on public walls – to foster public support for his regime. Indeed, similar to the monarchic kingdoms of *los Reyes Católicos*, the Francoist State was to a large extent considered inseparable from his personal authority. Exuding confidence and composure, his direct gaze in fig. 14 signifies an immediacy to the viewer; a quality accentuated by the photographic medium's indexicality.

Yet the mass propagation of such two-dimensional portraits during and after the War acted as an effective propaganda tool, extending Franco's presence into citizens' homes in a conscious emulation of Catholic saintly icons. These likenesses thus connoted the Nationalist values of individual leadership, monarchic tradition, and religious belief, popularising the *Generalísimo's* image as an affective devotional object eliciting 'haptic engagement' from the possessor as a symbol of authority.<sup>50</sup> Fig. 14's photographic representation of Franco was therefore propagandistic in its intentional promotion of a material artefact as an object of emotional attachment and veneration; naturalising an imbalance of social power for the purpose of state legitimation.

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<sup>49</sup> Curtis Wasson, 'Photography and the Spanish Civil War' in Valis, *Teaching*, 317-27.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 41 (2012), 221-34.

Convenient due to its mass reproducibility, photography's tacit conveyance of Nationalist values was nonetheless an integral part of the state's visual propaganda campaign. Idolisation of one great individual through the systematic deployment of images in this sense signifies the limited nature of their ideology, over-reliant on icons and symbols derived from the Spanish past. Fig. 14's portrait of the *Caudillo* (a grandiose title similar to *Führer* or *Duce*) was established within this trend, the confluence of military (medal, uniform) and regal (gloves, cane, cloak) props connoting the 'medieval warrior chieftains' of the *Reconquista*.<sup>51</sup> Through this visual association of their cause (epitomised by its leader) with the heroic figures of



*Fig. 14. 'The Supreme General Franco'.*

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<sup>51</sup> Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century*, 94-160.

Spanish history, Nationalist propaganda converted myth into truth, propagating their ideological values of 'unity, totality, and hierarchy' to legitimate the Francoist State and consolidate a distinctive '*Hispanidad*'.

*'Swords and Cassocks'*<sup>52</sup>

Aside from submission to an authoritarian ruler, the (alleged) social cohesion of traditional Spain was believed by Francoists to have arisen from a collective piety. To restore the nation's assumed historic unity, then, a resurgence of Catholic religious practice was deemed necessary. Vehemently rejecting the Republic's secularism, the Catholic Church endorsed the Francoist regime, condoning their use of violence against non-believers in a 'holy war, a crusade of civilisation'.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, an abundance of religious motifs and icons permeated their photographic propaganda, validating the Nationalists as the true representatives of a Spanish spirituality. Soldiers were therefore frequently depicted in acts of pious devotion, perhaps the most common of which was the *misa de campaña* (campaign mass), shown in fig. 15. An absurd confluence of militarism and religion, the image's juxtaposition of priest and tank connotes the engrained relationship between the historic 'two pillars' of Spanish society.

Kneeling before the vehicle, the soldier's lower position signifies the subordinate status of the individual citizen to Nationalist principles, connoting supplication to both God and military technology. Yet, the presence of another person at the image's periphery belies any potential privacy of the scene, presenting it instead as a spectacle, shared and participated in by the camera and viewer. Evoking a mood of inclusive ritual, photographs of the *misa de campaña*

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<sup>52</sup> The two central features of Nationalist ideology according to the last Republican president. Manuel Azaña, *Memorias Políticas y de Guerra* (Barcelona, 1978), 2 quoted in Romero Salvadó, 'Killing', 45-64.

<sup>53</sup> General Franco quoted in Browne, *Spain's*, 59-76.

were encouraged for their performance value, the sense of continuity representing the Francoist regime as the permanent custodians of traditional cultural practice.



*Fig. 15. [Military] campaign mass at the front.*

Indeed, both this mass performative quality and the suggestion of enduring customs or folkloric conventions were important aspects of Nationalist visual propaganda, situating their cause as representative of a historic *'Hispanidad'*. Fig. 16 again emphasises the significance of this military-religious association, photographing a moment wherein religious devotion and militaristic power converge. This communal enactment of a 'special mass' by Francoist officers prior to battle connotes the ideological values of discipline, unity, and obedience to authority conveyed as prerequisites for military victory.

Neatly arranged in columns, the kneeling soldiers are the focus this photograph; the unanimity expressed in their collective submissive devotion to the cause identified as a crucial source of strength. Conflating military power with an active religious character, such propaganda



photography thus signifies the coherence of Nationalist ideology, portraying the enduring nature of traditional practices among the armed forces as a Barthesian naturalisation of such relationships. Visual representations of this kind therefore validated their selective interpretation of Spanish history, encouraging behavioural mimesis of the images' subjects and hence advancing the political goal of state legitimation by the interlinked affective processes of persuasion and coercion.



*Fig. 16. 'Officers from the [military] school of Burgos had an obligation to promote the Generalísimo and attend a special mass before leaving to the front'.*

### *Costumes and Photographic Performances*

Similarly, those few photographs produced depicting women implicitly contained a didactic construction of identity in order to maintain existing gendered power structures. Wearing traditional dress in front of the monarchist bicolour flag, the figures in fig. 17 therefore promote

an idealised image of Spanish women. Posed for the camera in an exhibitionist manner, these figures emphasise the celebratory end-of-war theme by displaying certain items of clothing drawn from Spanish culture.

Aside from their generally affluent appearance, the most prominent aspects of their stereotypical 'feminine' outfits are the *mantilla* (veil) and *peineta* (high comb), typically worn together at formal civic or religious occasions such as at bullfights and Easter mass. Originating in the sixteenth century but popularised through royal endorsement, these accessories constitute an exclusively female costume suitable for festive situations. Fig. 17's subjects are hence actively engaged in the performance of an idealised femininity derived from an interpretation of history; their adherence to archaic styles of dress signifying their dedication to the traditional society advocated by the Francoist regime. Flanked by two uniformed men and set against the royalist flag – officially adopted by the Nationalists in 1936 – this image denotes the relationship between ideological values and everyday rituals, connoting the unity and coherence of the movement.

Likewise, the presence of these costumed women enhances the triumphalist sentiment of the photograph, conferring upon the event a sense of dignified festivity. Conforming to an idealised perception of women as modest, virtuous, and youthfully attractive, fig. 17's representation signifies both a celebration of Francoist military success and an ideological projection of femininity. Moreover, the arrangement of women in a group connotes their historic lack of individual freedom, being considered weak and therefore vulnerable if they did not remain together when venturing outside the home.

Thus, the special or festive status of this pictured occasion also denotes its exceptionality; the model female figure being otherwise confined to the domestic sphere according to traditional social 'norms'. Consequently, the performative nature of this photograph incorporates an

idealised conception of femininity (in appearance and demeanour) and its associated social roles and functions, evoking a connection to traditional customs and practices through visual connotations of Spanish history.



*Fig. 17. 'Women with comb and veil celebrate the entrance of the Nationalists in Madrid'.*

Utilising specific signs and symbols, Nationalist propaganda photography sought to identify their cause as representative of an ancient and culturally-distinctive *'Hispanidad'*. Their propagandistic naturalisation of such associations therefore entailed the didactic reinforcement of certain cultural traits and values by mimesis, with the express political objective of (re)constructing a historic Spanish identity. Photographic depictions were in this sense consistent with other forms of visual propaganda in their ideological manipulation of a shared national history for the political purposes of state legitimation and identity formation.

## CONCLUSIONS

*'He who controls the past... controls the future.'*

As a volunteer in the Republican militias, George Orwell's first-hand experience of propaganda and polemic in the Spanish Civil War has been well documented. Yet, the above statement – drawn from his seminal work *1984* – does still illustrate a valuable point about the pervasive use of history for the purpose of order and control.<sup>54</sup> The Francoist State was in this respect analogous to other autocratic regimes in its deployment of persuasive visual materials to consolidate and maintain its authority. What differentiated the Nationalists, however, was their use of tradition – evoking and extolling a militaristic, imperialist, and religious national past – in the propagandistic promotion of a utopian future society. And, perhaps uniquely among the twentieth-century fascist regimes, the Francoist State managed to collaborate effectively with the Catholic Church to achieve such a concerted and coherent manipulation of Spanish history. Engaging in a Barthesian naturalisation of ideological myth into self-validating truth, 'history was rewritten' by the Nationalists through the consistent propagation of signs and symbols.<sup>55</sup> Simplified for a mostly illiterate audience, an array of posters, artworks, and photographs acted in a 'mutually reinforcing' system of visual propaganda, reiterating a didactic message of 'unity, totality, and hierarchy'.<sup>56</sup> This convergence of principles is best demonstrated, moreover, by a return to fig. 3's depiction of saluting nuns.

Bizarre in its subject matter, this photograph emphasises the essential coherence of the Nationalist belief system through its combined focus on radical politics, military force, specific gender roles, and Christian faith. Embedded in its celebratory tone, furthermore, is the

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<sup>54</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (London, 1948), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth-Century*, 94-160.

<sup>56</sup> Basilio, *Visual Propaganda*, 127-217.

establishment of ‘social difference’, asserting an imbalance of power between the War’s devout victors and ‘hungry’ vanquished population.<sup>57</sup> By venerating the (traditional) former and denigrating the (modern) latter, this image is therefore characteristic of Nationalist visual propaganda in its naturalisation of unequal power structures through connotations of a romanticised Spanish past.

Hence, in attempting to rectify the aforementioned paucity of Anglophonic research, I have argued in this dissertation for the essential coherence of Francoist visual propaganda. Its simplicity and consistency of delivery in an increasingly visual culture thus resulted in its establishment as the ‘dominant representation of the past’.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, achieving such an effective manipulation of Spanish tradition required more than simple coercion; it also necessitated persuasion. Indeed, propaganda’s true value lies in its affective nature, the mimetic transmission of codes requiring the participation of the viewer in the act of interpretation. Further research would in this sense benefit from the inclusion of audience reception data – despite issues of unavailability and imprecision – in order to construct an accurate picture of such propaganda’s efficacy.

Though it may be implausible to suggest (as Orwell did) that Nationalist propaganda constituted merely a ‘pyramid of lies’, Helen Graham’s contention that history acted as a ‘battleground’ – a site of conflict over meaning – is decidedly credible.<sup>59</sup> Thus, as a facilitator for the interpretation and manipulation of the past for political purpose, the power of visual propaganda is both under-acknowledged and worthy of significantly greater historical study.

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<sup>57</sup> Gordon Fyfe and John Law (eds.), *Picturing Power: Visual Depiction and Social Relations* (London, 1988), 1-14.

<sup>58</sup> Renshaw, *Exhuming*, 9-52.

<sup>59</sup> George Orwell, ‘Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War’, *New Road* (London, 1943).

[http://orwell.ru/library/essays/Spanish\\_War/english/esw\\_1](http://orwell.ru/library/essays/Spanish_War/english/esw_1) [Accessed 11/12/2015]; Graham, *Spanish*, 3-72.

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