

# The Dispute for the “People” and Its Songs: A Sonic Battle at the Front and Rearguard during the Spanish Civil War

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This criminal uprising of militarism, clericalism, and chaste aristocratism, against the democratic Republic, against the people, represented in its Popular Front Government, has found in Fascism’s tenets the novelty to strengthen the most lethal elements of our history, whose slow decomposition was corrupting and poisoning the people’s struggle to create a new life for Spain. They have risen against the authentic popular Spain, to destroy it or corrupt it, vilifying it with a bloody and brutalizing slavery, like that seen in the repression of Asturias; this criminal design by part of the Army, in betraying the Republic has unmasked the culpability of its intentions, aggravated by its own betrayal, in the falsehood of the patriotic ideals that it was bound to defend, sacrificing Spain’s international dignity, and bloodying and destroying the sacred soil of its history.

*Manifiesto de la Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas para la Defensa de la Cultura*  
(*La Voz*, Diario Independiente de la noche, Madrid, Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1936.  
Año XVII, num. 4.854, p. 3).

Music, especially with lyrics, has long accompanied wars, from those fought by the smallest societies to those of the most complex. One need only look at the multitude of warrior chants, marches, hymns, singsongs, airs, ditties, and jingles related to warfare that have been produced throughout time. Many of these songs share a communitarian aim: tying the soldiers’ or warriors’ social and even personal identities to that of the group or the unit, fomenting camaraderie as well as heroism and self-sacrifice. The elements most conducive to such feelings are invoked in the lyrics with references to the *patria* or homeland; groups of membership or kinship such as family, lineages, or clans; as well as the common religion, the countryside; and of course, the great modern monster, the nation.

In the Spanish Civil War, the presence of songs was habitual in the front and the rearguard, songs that boosted morale or expressed longing or other feelings, and which were performed spontaneously or in regulated moments. Each side had its own songs and refrains, some of them of popular origins, most others produced by their respective agitprop machinery. The academic world in Spain and abroad has seen the publication of fascinating compilations of poems, ditties, lyrics, and scores that were sung during the war, often accompanied by recordings. Non-academic albums and songbooks dedicated to this topic grace libraries, archives, and record stores as well as individuals’ collections. But most of these anthologies have not elaborated profound analyses on the ideological program and framework of said songs; the sociohistorical context in which they were produced and propagated; their cultural meanings; or the emotional value that they acquired and how—which is precisely what this paper intends to address.

Although the presence of diverse groups and ideologies on both sides complicated matters, the militaristic and autocratic character of the rebel faction facilitated homogenization. In the republican case, the heterogeneity of parties and militias allowed various political cultures and sensibilities to coexist, despite the intentions of some groups to generate a more unitarian

sentiment around republican values and struggles. Each side sought to legitimate itself by converging with supposedly historical processes that in their modern formulation arose in the nineteenth century, and which clearly or more covertly tried to define and appropriate the notion of the “people”, the *authentic* Spanish people, and thus present itself as the true defenders of the nation. The search, identification and appropriation of the people became the principal effort of machineries that, faced with the inevitable clash of shared historical references, put all their efforts on the alienation of the rival as an *other*. Through the instrumentalization of certain elements of folklore and the invention or recovery of “lost” traditions, a great cultural battle took place amidst the political one, in which enemy forces, invoking the notion of the people, fought to ground the legitimacy of their interests. This battle around “the popular” and its definitions is at the heart of what this paper will seek to elucidate.

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### **1. Constructing and deconstructing the concept of the people**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural-political process of nation-construction is well known. The passage from old kingdoms or colonies to modern states through revolutions, wars, or political reforms was very different for each polity, with processes that were specific to each, and with varying degrees of success. But despite the particularities of each country’s cultural and political transformations, all processes of national construction shared a common place: the *discovery* of the people as the new collective subject that embodied the spirit —the soul and the essence, hence the term *volkgeist*— of the nation. Hence, it was to be found—or invented—by the restless exponents of romanticism.

It was no easy task for the romantics. “The people” could not be a direct translation of the vulgar and stupid plebe, which did not understand the importance or the value of their own customs and oral traditions. The plebe, in fact, had to be detached from the idealized people. As a notion developed in the age of colonialism, the people had to be *exotic*, and that meant the *authentically* popular was best found in *survivals*, fossilized remains that were mistreated in their everyday use. Bourgeois romantics, enterprising men, designed these objects’ mission and their destiny. Only their cultivated spirits could truly appreciate those fossilized remains that were interspersed in the musical forms of the plebe, in their sayings and narrations, customs and beliefs. They immediately began to rescue these stammers of the national soul: its folklore.

There were sound folklorists whose interest in popular forms of culture was real, who knew how to treat the material that they gathered, but, in general, romantic folklorists spent their time amassing compilations without contextualizing their content; without any information about their creators and transmitters, taking upon themselves the responsibility of constructing a conveniently anonymous popular culture for an ideal, sanitized, happy people, who lived in communities based on harmonious relations, without internal tensions, without class struggles... A people that only existed in the historical novels of the time. The plebe was represented as a collective and picturesque caricature of the knave, encouraging another type of *costumbrista* essentialization, that placed it almost in contraposition to the profound simplicity and wisdom of the people.

The heyday of Spanish folklorism coincided with the rest of Europe and operated under shared precepts. The Hispanic folklorist movement, led by Antonio Machado y Álvarez (Demófilo), sought to recover every example of popular culture, as specified by the well-known bases of the *Sociedad El Folclore Español*. That zeal for collecting and recovering coincided with the environment of patriotic fervor that surrounded the sentimentalization of the Napoleonic Peninsular War, which was eventually renamed the War of Independence, and portrayed as a war fought by the Spanish people, and, as Liberalism would have it, the Spanish nation. Representations of the war pitted the invading French versus the Spanish people organized in guerrillas—the nation in arms—so that any references to the British forces commanded by Wellington disappeared, even though without these forces, it is quite likely that the French would have been the victors.

Nothing like a war against foreigners to boost feelings of national identity, but that does not mean that unity is assured.<sup>1</sup> Two currents of thought interpreted and defined the idea of the nation vis-à-vis the Peninsular War quite differently. Liberalism, centered on the idea of popular sovereignty, underscored the notion that the Spanish people had defeated Napoleon while struggling to defend its idiosyncrasy and a destiny of its own. The Constitution of Cadiz provided the rest of the elements necessary for this mythification of popular sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Traditionalism, for its part, less inclined to political innovations that it associated with the French and their revolution, ended up endorsing the idea of a people that was essentially traditional and genetically Catholic, which rose up to defend those tenets from Frenchification.<sup>3</sup> Representing the war as the people's defense of the Catholic religion configured the idea that the conjoining of "Spanish" and "Catholic" was a natural reality and that those who rejected it were enemies of the very root of Spain's collective identity.

The process of idealizing the Napoleonic war culminated with the celebration of its first centenary, in 1908, a prodigal moment for the publication of texts rooted in both currents. Cities were filled with commemorative elements, popular heroes were exalted, and the songs of the conflict were collected and rememorated.<sup>4</sup> All of that contributed to generating a public memory of 1808 as something idiosyncratic of what was Spanish—something that is still true today—.

The issue of "national music" followed similar paths, with worries about the German or Italian influences that hampered the development of an authentically Spanish music, as nationalist composers sought to construct a "national opera".<sup>5</sup> Musical nationalism sought

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<sup>1</sup> Núñez Seixas, X. M. *¡Fuera el invasor!: nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la guerra civil española*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that the Constitution was a fully Liberal charter. See Álvarez Junco, J. "En torno al concepto de 'pueblo'. De las diversas encarnaciones de la colectividad como sujeto político en la cultura política española contemporánea". *Historia Contemporánea*, 28, 2004, pp. 83-94.

<sup>3</sup> Álvarez Junco, J. *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*, Madrid: Taurus, 2001. Ibid. Núñez Seixas, op.cit.

<sup>4</sup> Díaz Viana, L. *Canciones populares de la guerra civil*. Madrid: Taurus, 1984. See also Sánchez García, R. *La historia imaginada: la Guerra de la Independencia en la literatura española*. Madrid: CSIC-Doce calles, 2008; Hergueta, D. *Cantos y poesías populares de la Guerra de la Independencia*. Burgos: Imp. de Cariñena, 1908; and Olmeda, F. 1908. "Canciones populares de la Guerra de la Independencia. *La Ilustración española y americana*, 30 de agosto de 1908 (Supplement to issue num. XXXII, pp. 129-132).

<sup>5</sup> Fernández de Mata, I. "Una vez orales, hoy fuentes escritas". *Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales*, 26, 2001, pp. 153-174. Here, pp. 166-167.

inspiration in folkloric themes, producing in many cases “easy-listening” tunes for chamber music, before figures of the stature of Albéniz or Granados changed the scene.<sup>6</sup>

The turn of the century had brought the crisis of 1898. The *disaster* that the loss of Spain’s last overseas possessions entailed, led political elites to construct a new foundation for the country, one dripping with authenticity. The people *discovered* by the mid-nineteenth century folklorists —seasoned with *costumbrismo* and *casticismo*— became the axis to save the patria. The nation was to be found among a people unlike the masses that had filled bullrings and zarzuela performances while the empire was crumbling. The search gave birth to *regeneracionismo* [regeneration], *rexurdimento* [resurgence], *renaixença* [rebirth], as athenaeums, excursionist societies, new journals, etc., tinged by pessimism, turned from a search for the people to national[ist] projects—Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque...— of classification and analysis. Enter wise menfolk recognized for their knowledge of the popular and their capacity to distinguish between pure expressions and corrupted versions, and, with the expansion of the press, these erudite men’s notions will be relatively widespread and influential.

At the same time, an important part of those who could embody popular authenticity, the lower classes, was becoming proletarianized and, little by little, was assuming the condition of “slaves of want”. Worker identities forged around unions and parties that called out the class struggle at the heart of all nations. Clothes, banners, and songs came to express these new identities and became instrumental in workers’ struggles and resistance. Their meeting centers, *casas del pueblo*, athenaeums, popular universities, and union branches promoted alphabetization and class emancipation. Music was another weapon in their arsenal, as they promoted choirs and choral societies. The gaze of these organizations and the collective identities that they sought to promote was clearer than those of liberal and traditionalist paternalisms, for it acknowledged the “people’s” impoverished material conditions and looked towards improving them. The Church, on the other hand, was appalled by the growing class consciousness of those who were being displaced from rural hinterlands onto industrializing cities. Thus, following the trailblazing Leo XIII, the Spanish Church mobilized great resources and energy into attracting workers into Catholic worker circles to prevent them from falling into the clutches of socialism.

The effervescent intellectual and artistic world of the first decade of the twentieth century produced, among other movements, the vanguards. Isms would follow isms until committed art was born from the confluence with other —political— vanguards. Committed, of course, with the working people.<sup>7</sup> Such were the biographic and artistic journeys of those born at the turn of the twentieth century, those who, broadly speaking, would form the so-called Generation of the Republic. Although they would eventually end up in opposing sides of the war, in the 1920s and 1930s they met in the same *tertulias* in salons and cafes, publishing for the same journals or sharing galleries or theaters. Political proclamations from both

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<sup>6</sup> Casares Rodicio, E. – Alonso González, C. *La música española en el siglo XIX*. Gijón: Universidad de Oviedo, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Such neo-popularism left a strong legacy in Spanish culture, thanks to the genius of its cultivators, such as Federico García Lorca or Rafael Alberti, who were prodigal writers and speakers who appeared in radio shows, recitals, and conferences across the country, even in concerts. Even before the war, there were several authors who had openly embraced socialist realism, such as César M. Arconada, while others, Alberti included, would embrace the cause when the war was upon them. See Schmitt, T. “Con las guitarras abiertas. El neopopularismo como reacción y progreso en las canciones españolas de los años 30 del siglo XX”. *Anuario Musical*, Nº 66, January - December 2011, pp. 263-282.

phalangists or communists, were directed towards the workers, marked by the blue denim of their overalls. They all imbibed the dark genius of the Generation of 98 and in some cases, participated—and independently of their ideologies— in exhibitions and publications related to futurism, ultraism, surrealism, and other isms, until they encountered and embraced the masses, which some, from dirigisme, perceived as submissive and uniform plebe thirsty for order and direction, and others, from a transformist perspective, as the authentic harbingers of a new world.

## 2. Popular culture during the war: songs as weapons.

The recovery, use, and manipulation of music and popular poetry in the spaces under the political influence and military control of each of the *two Spains* during the war has not been a usual subject of study, and various questions remain unanswered. Specifically, what were the differences and coincidences in their treatment of the popular and how they used or abused it as an instrument of propaganda? Which models of “the people” were evinced in their respective approximations to folklore? What particularities were produced within the different geographic areas in relation to the politics of diffusion and repression carried out by powerholders according to specific social and identity contexts?<sup>8</sup>

The terrain of aesthetics, at least, reveals that was at least one coincidence, specifically in the attempt by the elites of both sides to appropriate and relaunch popular songs with a certain paternalist attitude. And it is this battlefield—that over the *invention of tradition* and the subsequent process of re-traditionalizing, or the dispute over styles but also the will and the representation of the people—that we will explore. Because both sides sought to reclaim for themselves the legitimate representation and interpretation of what the true Spanish people were and wanted to be. And music in general—and songs more specifically—were not a marginal matter in this war. Musical expressions supposedly embodied more than any other manifestation, a people’s soul and its true feelings regarding specific junctures, as well as its essential identification with a given idea or a leader.

Classifying what was sung during the war is no easy matter, given the amalgam that constituted each side. The war was fought by Falangists, Carlists, *Albiñanistas*, *Japistas*, Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, Trotskyites, Nationalists... To this, one must add foreign participants: Italians, Germans, Moroccans, widely heterogeneous International brigades, Soviets, etc., each with their own political and cultural baggage, their own songs, and traditions. After a battle, a group, for instance, the Requetés or Falangist militias, would often sing to reinforce their own identity vis-à-vis the broader coalition in which they participated. In other cases, such as that of the republican popular militias, ideological odes would give way to songs that celebrated their provinces or cities of origin.<sup>9</sup>

Which is why, when we explore what was sung during the war, we must distinguish between what was the really “popular” song, which arose more or less spontaneously in the moments of calm in the trenches, or when soldiers were far from the front, from the “official” songs promoted by the propaganda apparatus of each side. Spontaneous singing was more

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<sup>8</sup> Burke, P. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> Blanco, J.A. – Fernández, M. – Martínez, J. A. “Las milicias populares republicanas de origen castellano-leonés”, in Aróstegui, J. (coord.). *Historia y memoria de la guerra civil. Encuentro en Castilla y León*. Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, vol. II, 1988, pp. 311-340.

transversal, and up to a certain point, non-ideological. It reproduced the usual process of group singing in gatherings or celebrations in wineries or bars, with lewd or sexual references, anticlerical barbs, old romances, and local evocations. This type of song, often accommodated to the present circumstances by new or altered lyrics—a process of adaptation that is habitual in folklore—was extended throughout the country on both sides of the war. Even CTV Italians sang, for example, the Carrascal o Carrasclás.<sup>10</sup>

As the *Cancionero de la Guerra Civil*<sup>11</sup> shows, many songs focused on the grim reality faced by the soldiers: the anguish of the bombs, their permanent insecurity and need for hope, etc. By boosting their morale, songs could help them win, or so they believed. They also believed that one should die for a song, for they were like banners or fists raised in defiance. The need for auditory emblems encouraged the translation into Spanish of certain compositions that enjoyed great popularity, such as “A las barricadas”—originally a Polish socialist revolutionary song called *Warszawianka* [Whirlwinds of Danger]—and the Nazi anthem “Yo tenía un camarada” [Ich hatt' einen Kameraden, I once had a comrade].

As the former examples show, what was popularly sung did not necessarily have *traditional* origins, for some popularized songs came from power/propaganda.<sup>12</sup> Mass media played a significant role in the war, as parties immediately used them as platforms to secure support as well as to bolster troop morale. Barely no newspapers in Spain escaped this wartime instrumentalization. In cities like Madrid, that meant becoming a trench war press, given the immediacy of the front. Thus, Madrid newspapers and magazines carried chronicles of life at the front, highlighting the actions of characters and circumstances that readers identified, and describing everyday anecdotes and happenings that went beyond combat, including the songs that soldiers sang. Some such songs were indeed *spontaneous*, born from popular genius, and picked up by the journalists that visited the front, but many others came from radio emissions. As they circulated in written form, their popularity would increase. As early as the summer of 1936, the *Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas para la Defensa de la Cultura* [Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals for the Defense of Culture] had launched a Theater of Art and Propaganda under the direction of María Teresa León and Rafael Alberti, who also founded the *Teatro de Guerrillas* that performed plays at the frontlines and in the streets. These agitprop activities led by prominent poets and writers was complemented by literary competitions, such as those in the journal *El Mono Azul*, which rewarded new romances and compositions submitted by loyal republicans, some of which would join the corpus of popularized war songs.

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<sup>10</sup> In the year 2000, I met an elderly Italian in Sardinia who had fought in the *Corpo di Truppe Volontarie* sent by Mussolini to assist Franco's troops. That old veteran, made merry by wine, sang several stanzas of the Carrascal for me (IFdM).

<sup>11</sup> Díaz Viana, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> “Usually, the emergence and encouragement [of popular evoking] are the responsibility of public and private instances of power—national or local—and their capacity of creating public opinion—through schools, centers of information, the Church, the press, propaganda apparatuses, controlling the means of communication, censorship, etc.—. That is to say, what we colloquially denote as “popular”, is nothing other than, in most cases, the projection of cultural values that protect the interests of political, cultural, and economic oligarchies, values that are assimilated as universal by the popular sectors thanks to their divulgement as referents of identity for the entire society. Such design of cultural references of interclass projection can be observed with particular clarity in the intellectual and propagandistic circles of autocratic regimes, of which Francoism offers a perfect example of policies and activities centered on exercising a firm ideological control over a population that was subjected to the absolute power of the dictator.” Fernández de Mata, I. “Historia y política. La memoria manipulada”. *Actas 9è Congrès d'Antropologia*. Barcelona: Institut Català d'Antropologia/Federación de Asociaciones de Antropología del Estado Español. 2002, CD.

Another important substrate for republican songs were the old popular songs that Federico García Lorca had harmonized and recorded in 1931 with La Argentinita (Encarnación López Júlvez), evidence that neo-popularist efforts of the Generation of '27 would be used in the Republicans' encounter with the people.<sup>13</sup> Those five albums, in which Lorca played the piano and La Argentinita sang and played the castanets, enjoyed great popularity, thanks in part to the radio. Many of their tunes— *Zorongo gitano*, *Sevillanas del siglo XVIII*, *Los cuatro muleros*, *Nana de Sevilla*, *Romance Pascual de los Peregrinos*, *En el Café de Chinitas*, *Las morillas de Jaén*, *Romance de los moros de Monleón*, *Las tres hojas*, *Sones de Asturias*, *Aires de Castilla* and *Anda jaleo*— provided the melodic basis and textual references for adaptations during the war. With new lyrics and sometimes new titles, Republican soldiers sang *Los cuatro generales* [*Los cuatro muleros*], *El tren blindado* [*Los contrabandistas de Ronda*], *El quinto regimiento* [*El Vito*], and many others, while both Republican and rebel soldiers sang very different lyrics to the melody of *Si me quieres escribir*. This song, in fact, was not as popular in its original version as in the new ones; the same thing can be said for *Ay Carmela*, which would become the true anthem of the people in arms.<sup>14</sup>

[Texts and illustrations of *El quinto regimiento* and *Los cuatro generales* as they were published in *Colección de canciones de lucha*, 1939].

Linked to this precedent, diverse songs on the Republican side reveal that metric models were very traditional and remained very close to the Spanish poetry considered “popular”, such as romances or eight-syllabled *coplas* [ballads] with assonant rhyme on even verses. However, compositions on the rebel side have varied combinations of metric arrangements— eight-syllabled verses and hendecasyllables and alexandrines— and many use consonant rhymes that are cultish or contrived.

It is not strange for popular songs to include some with known authors, in what becomes a dialogue of texts. Thus, for example, in José Herrera Petere's *Cumbres de Extremadura*, subtitled *Novela de Guerrilleros* (novel of guerrilla fighters), characters often sing *coplas* or songs that were indeed sung at the frontlines. Petere himself wrote the lyrics for *Marcha del Quinto Regimiento* —music by Hans Eisler— and some people attribute some of the *Ay, Manuela* stanzas to him. There are similar examples in narratives of the opposite ideological persuasion such as Adelardo Fernández Arias' *La Agonía de Madrid*. The application of new lyrics to hymns, including the nationalist hymn, had a history of its own.<sup>15</sup>

Even though they were not old, these productions should be regarded part of folklore. If by “folk” we mean any group that shares at least one trait —whether that be ethnicity, religion, ideology, etc.— then the production of any such group is folklore. Thus, a great many number of the songs produced and sung during the Civil War can be considered folkloric. Although certain inherited ideas about folklore seem to demand that the materials exhibit some sort of rural origin, antiquity, or pure orality, these have been aptly criticized by various scholars, for instance, Alan Dundes.<sup>16</sup> The songs analyzed for this article are part of the folklore created by

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<sup>13</sup> De la Ossa Martínez, M. A. “García Lorca, la música y las canciones populares españolas”. *Alpha* [online] num.39 Osorno, Dec. 2014, pp. 93-121.

<sup>14</sup> Díaz Viana, L. *Cancionero popular de la Guerra civil española. Textos y melodías de los dos bandos*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2007. Aquí, págs. 98-99.

<sup>15</sup> Part of that history was the failed contest launched by General Prim in 1870 to write lyrics to the Grenadier March, an effort that has been repeated by some in the present.

<sup>16</sup> Dundes, A. – Patger, C. R. *Work Hard and you Shall be Rewarded. Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975, particularly pages XIII-XIV.

groups at war, regardless of whether their origin was remote or not, written or produced orally, invented in the open country or city rearguards, penned by an author or of anonymous provenance, because they have been collectively remembered and adapted into versions or covers, acquiring a multiple transformation in time and space.

### 3. With the people, for the people: authors Eduardo de Ontañón and Antonio Machado.

[Pictures of EDUARDO ONTAÑÓN and ANTONIO MACHADO with their respective notes]

Eduardo de Ontañón (Burgos, 1904 – Madrid, 1949) belongs to that silver age of intellectuals and activists, the progeny of 98, who embraced international vanguards and isms, singing odes to the machine, pure art, and the destruction of the old world, until they finally sought to fuse together with “the people” —peasants and workers and their leaders— who struggled to bring forth a new world.<sup>17</sup> In Ontañón’s case, the popular question was not so much something he arrived at, but a constant subject of his work. This writer developed a peculiar narrative style that threaded attention to popular expressions and livelihood, from idioms to customs, to the tensions between elitist projections of the popular and the actual livelihood and aspirations of popular sectors.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Ontañón collaborated in several journals with pieces about rural life in Castile, going from early dreams of a vanguardist Castile, to a connection with the land through its peoples. His collaborations in *El Sol*, *El Heraldo de Madrid*, *Estampa* and *Oasis* were filled with descriptions of popular feasts and customs, old traditions, “parallel” times. The editorial line of some journals—such as *Estampa*—required elements of surprise and exoticism, if you will. Ontañón met those demands while exhibiting the utmost respect for the people he described, presenting them without value judgements, paternalist considerations or contempt. Thus, he would speak of the shepherds and the isolation that kept them disconnected from the profound changes that the government was launching from Madrid; or of the popular music that was being danced and played in plazas and balls—and which was not so much *jotas*, as fox-trot— speaking as an observer, and not as an erudite or a critic. He thus gave voice to what he himself liked to call “the lesser world” [*el mundo menor*].<sup>18</sup>

Ontañón did not try to speak *for* the people or shroud them in transcendence. In a sense, he avoided neopopularism’s worst tics thanks to his close and profound knowledge of the rural world and its peoples. He knew the folklorists’ trade, having accompanied his friend the musician Antonio José (Martínez Palacios) in many excursions to gather popular songs for his *Colección de cantos populares burgaleses*, a work that won the 1932 National Music Award.

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<sup>17</sup> Fernández de Mata, I. – Estébanez Gil, J. C. (eds.). *Parábola, (Burgos, 1923-1928)*. Burgos: Instituto Municipal de Cultura – Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Fernández de Mata, I. – Estébanez Gil, J. C. (eds.). *Estampa de Burgos (1928-1936)*. Burgos: Instituto Municipal de Cultura – Diputación Provincial de Burgos, 2006. See also Fernández de Mata, I. “Otros sueños de plata. Eduardo de Ontañón y la imagen etnográfica de Castilla”, in *El Tiempo y los Ritos. Sueños de Plata: Fotografía y Antropología en Castilla y León*. Zamora: Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León, 2012; and Fernández de Mata, I. *De la sombra a la luz. Eduardo de Ontañón (1904-1949)*. Burgos: Instituto Castellano y Leonés de la Lengua, 2016.



Many of the songs were indeed collected by Ontañón, as Antonio José himself acknowledged in the text.<sup>19</sup>

After the outbreak of the war, Ontañón would continue with his brand of social and ethnological journalism in the service of the Republic, converging almost naturally with the popular exaltation demanded by the threatened state. Despite paying the toll taken by propaganda and censorship that characterized the wartime press, Ontañón used his pen to describe how the lower classes experienced the fight for their city —Madrid— with close attention to the details that marked the end of a period... the lesser world from which new heroes emerged, desperately struggling to preserve the few but precious achievements obtained during the brief Second Republic, and which supposed their right to have rights, their dignity, and their faith in a different future:

Tomorrow I leave my home, I leave my town and my oxen. Hey ho! Where will you go, tell me! I am joining the Fifth Regiment.	Mañana dejo mi casa, dejo los bueyes y el pueblo. ¡Salud! ¿A dónde vas?, dime. Voy al quinto regimiento. <sup>20</sup>
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Eduardo de Ontañón probably heard this *copla* sung by people in the streets of Madrid, and he decided to record it because it reflected his own admiration for the valor and alacrity of the Fifth Regiment, which had attained a mythical status practically since the beginning of the war. The Regiment represented the epitome of the common folk's devotion to the cause of the Republic, and according to Ontañón,

Everything has come from the people. It has been forming, day by day, with haphazard haste. But parades already seem to belong to a great country at arms, and military salutes —the clenched fist close to the temple that has been recently decreed— show alacrity and discipline.<sup>21</sup>

Following that line, he exalts the daring of the humble neighbors of Madrid, who go on with their daily lives despite the proximity of the front (a few streets away from their homes), despite the ravages of a war that came without warning, dropping bombs over their heads and destroying their peace of mind:

Certainty regarding victory. That is all. The certainty that the children feel as they play right here, a few meters away from the trenches. And these men and women who still put their geraniums and their caged songbirds on their balconies, here, a few steps away from the fight.<sup>22</sup>

We can see in these paragraphs how important it was to show that people could still go on with their daily lives —or try to— because that meant that such lives *would* go on. This was not just a propagandistic obsession, but a way to appease the consciences of ideologues on both sides of the battlefield, as several writings of rebel intellectuals also demonstrate. While Ontañón speaks at the beginning of the war of streets “filled with people who go about their way, with happy bars and open movie theaters”,<sup>23</sup> Victor de la Serna, on the opposite side,

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<sup>19</sup> Reedited in 1980 by Jesús Barriuso, Fernando García and Miguel Ángel Palacios in *Unión Musical*, this text has been made accessible online at <[https://cultura.burgos.es/sites/default/files/file/page/Coleccion\\_de\\_Cantos.pdf](https://cultura.burgos.es/sites/default/files/file/page/Coleccion_de_Cantos.pdf)>.

<sup>20</sup> Ontañón, E. de. *Cuartel general. La vida del general Miaja en 30 capítulos* (edited by Ignacio Fernández de Mata), Palencia: Ediciones Cálamo, 2014; here, p. 166.

<sup>21</sup> Ontañón, 2014, 164.

<sup>22</sup> Ontañón, 2014, 164.

<sup>23</sup> Ontañón, 2014, 167.

publishes an “ode to the happy rearguard” in *Revista Vértice* that justified the good times enjoyed by combatants when they were not fighting at the battlefield. However, de la Serna did not focus on the common folk, but on young gentlemen who could afford certain entertainments, for those on the rebel side,

want to find pretty girls in the rearguard, drink some cocktails and whiskeys, do some mischief if need be, and dance and make merry as well he should, praying three Hail Marys at the break of dawn, and finding himself at his post in the morn, always ready to die.<sup>24</sup>

It was up to writers like them and radio shows to keep morale high and show that people lived better —if you had survived the firing squads— in the republican *New Spain*, or under the new order that Franco’s rebel army was imposing in the areas under its control.

In the territory that, like Madrid, remained loyal to the government of the Republic, the normalization of life under the bombings also expressed another message: you will not defeat us. ¡*No pasarán!* We resist with confidence and joy, as if there was no front and no war. The common folk of Madrid could recognize and project themselves as a daring people that had already risen to the circumstances in other times. Were they not the people that had rebelled against the French occupation forces? Or the simple folk massacred in the same Montaña del Príncipe Pío where the military coup against the Republic was foiled, again, by people like them, who laid a siege around the rebels in the Cuartel de la Montaña? “Thus, almost mythically, the people of Madrid rose up from the mists of the national past, as the glorious reincarnation of itself and of the country.”<sup>25</sup>

But not all the writers and intellectuals who embraced the Republic’s side and took part in the battle for hearts and minds that ran parallel to the war, had been as interested in the common folk and their world before the war as Ontañón. In his poetry, for instance, Antonio Machado, whose father was the folklorist Demófilo, mentioned above, had shown distance and even disdain towards the real, concrete “people” he had encountered in his stay in Soria. But things changed after the outbreak of the war: the people were transfigured into the ideal dreamed of by the most optimistic Left —Aldonza was indeed Dulcinea— and it was time to align oneself with them. As Machado himself stated, reconciling his present gaze with that of his past, as well as with that of his father, the man who “imported” folklore into Spain: “...I have not yet gone beyond being a folklorist, an apprentice, in the ways of popular wisdom. Whenever you sense a sense of certainty in my words, think that I am teaching something that I believe I have learned from the people.”<sup>26</sup> In the same text in which he said this —an article published in *Hora de España*— Machado explained the special juncture in which he grasped the true character of the people, which was the same as discovering his true self:

In the first few months of the war which is today bleeding Spain, when the struggle had not yet lost its appearance as a mere civil war, I wrote those words, which sought to justify my democratic faith, my belief in the superiority of the people over the privileged classes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Serna, V. de la. “Elogio de la alegre retaguardia”, *Revista Vértice* 3, June, 1937.

<sup>25</sup> Fernández de Mata, I. “Un intelectual, un pueblo, una guerra. La defensa del Madrid republicano desde el Cuartel general”, in Eduardo Ontañón, *Cuartel general*, 2014, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Machado, A. “Sobre la defensa y la difusión de la cultura”, *Hora de España* VIII, 1937b, 11-19; here, p. 12. See also, Machado, A. “Consejos, sentencias y donaires de Juan de Mairena y de su maestro Abel Martín”, *Hora de España* I (1937a), 13-22.

<sup>27</sup> Machado, 1937b: 12.

And Machado is not mistaken when he speaks of faith, for those who, like himself, manifest themselves clearly in favor of a culture for and by the people, seem to have undergone an authentic revelation during the critical early moments of the war that radically altered their relation with “the popular”. The Machado who at the beginning had seen in the rural populace of Soria “dumbfounded bumpkins who lacked dances and songs”, hoped to become a part of the heroic people that sang its own *coplas* or took those of “learned authors” and made them their own.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of their origins—although most probable came from writers that formed a part of the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals—the lyrics of “popular songs” that Lorca had arranged and la Argentinita had interpreted before the war, were, as we have already stated, adapted to the new wartime reality, and became even more popular than they had been—if this is at all possible.<sup>29</sup> As José Carlos Mainer has pointed out,

That also spoke of the identity of the popular (freed from folklorism) and the modern, to which artists seemed unwilling to renounce, especially in moments of political acceleration.<sup>30</sup>

The Republican soldiers’ version of *Los cuatro muleros* —*Los cuatro generales*— which alluded to the four generals that had staged the coup, became extremely popular, thanks in part to its refrain “mamita mía” which clinched the most threatening verses. Like *Ay, Carmela*, it still resonates as an anthem of resistance and struggle. Ontañón had predicted that it would become a “war anthem” and, although the four generals were not hung as the lyrics said, the refrain remained.<sup>31</sup> Songs that alluded to the “director” or the brain behind them all, General Mola, who had boasted that he would soon be drinking coffee in Madrid after a swift conquest of the city, were also recorded by Ontañón:

In Madrid, Mola has  
a coffee awaiting,  
a coffee awaiting.

En Madrid tiene Mola  
café servido  
café servido.<sup>32</sup>

Not all the writers or ideologues that joined the “popular cause” of a Republic that seemed to be painfully transitioning from bourgeois democracy to revolution arrived at their commitment from an early interest in folklorism, like Ontañón or Machado. Miguel Hernández, as well as Herrera Petere, Max Aub, and José Bergamín, among others, had evidenced their commitment from very early on. Hernández, whose choice was influenced by his origins and his class consciousness, waited for all of them in the heat of battle. He had no doubts about who the people were or where he should be in relation to them —because he himself belonged to them—. As a result, Hernández called a spade a spade, without contemplations,

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<sup>28</sup> Machado, [1912] 1969: 78

<sup>29</sup> Díaz Viana, 2007: 79-83.

<sup>30</sup> Mainer, J.C. *Años de vísperas. La vida de la cultura en España (1931-1939)*. Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, 2006. Here, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Fernández de Mata, 2014: 33.

<sup>32</sup> Ontañón 2014: 102. Decades later, Moncho Alpuente reported Mola’s boast, and added that some Madrid cafes had initially reserved a small table for the General, to the general amusement of the city’s residents. Forty days after Mola’s declaration, one of the songs heard in the city claimed, “The coffee got cold and Mola did not come” (“El café se le enfrió y en Madrid no entró”). Alpuente, M. “El café de Mola”. *El País*, 17 November 1996.

identifying the enemies of the people without poetic refinement: “Mussolini and Hitler, the two big faggots”.<sup>33</sup>

However, Machado’s renewed democratic faith in the people did not extend to seeing them as creators of culture. He still believed that it was necessary to help them appreciate and appropriate the cultural expressions created by others: “Defending and spreading culture is one and the same thing: increasing the human paragon of a vigilant conscience in the world. How? By awakening those who sleep.”<sup>34</sup>

As Mainer has pointed out, “not even Machado’s sincere acceptance of the Republic is free from populist idealization and pedagogical echoes”.<sup>35</sup> From Machado’s perspective, as well as from that of many other Republican intellectuals and artists, the people are regarded first with misgivings, then with idealism and utopian imaginings, and finally, encountered as heroic, brimming with patriotism and courage. In this last conception, “the people” are reminiscent of “the good savage”, or, as we have pointed out elsewhere, “the inner savage”.<sup>36</sup> A poor people, tied to the land, happy in their own way, archaic and even ancestral, but willing to be at the vanguard of necessary revolutions—even as cannon fodder—and with a natural inclination towards beauty despite their illiteracy and ignorance, evidenced in their capacity to speak and reveal all kinds of truths, even aesthetic truths. This echoed indeed that “good savage” that eighteenth century philosophers and romantic travelers, followed by the first colonial ethnographers, found, according to their desires across the world, as a sort of “contemporary primitive man” in a state of innocence. So authentic, simple, pure, and happy was he, that “civilizing” him seemed intellectually and morally debatable. The same happened to the simple people of the twentieth century, who should be instructed, but without endangering their authenticity, purity, and ingenious common sense.

Ernesto Giménez Caballero was also not divested from this attitude of discovery and reencounter of a primordial people in whose spiritual viscera committed intellectuals had to delve in, to awaken it onto its destiny—a destiny very different from that which his rivals on the Republic claimed. Thus, he described in 1932 his fascist desire:

My mission is so simple and joyous that I seem to be reborn into the pure life of a child who looks earnestly into the loyal eyes of his mother, of his people. I seem [...] to have returned to the simplest text of the Hispanic soul: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” Spanish genius.<sup>37</sup>

The “inner savage” that both republicans and fascists sought to awaken, held the essence of the *patria* inside, and since this was unbeknownst to him, it was up to the intellectuals and artists—heirs, in that sense of the Romantic writers—to bring that treasure out, to show the people who they were meant to be. The “people” thus constructed on both fronts by an intellectual elite not free of “class superiority”, embodied the bravery and patriotism that the elites seemed to lack, as many instances throughout the war revealed. Ontañón addressed this directly in his descriptions of what was happening in the Spanish capital, when the government fled towards Valencia, along with the newspaper editors, including his own, while the common

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<sup>33</sup> Hernández, M. *Obras completas*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1960.

<sup>34</sup> Machado, 1937b: 17.

<sup>35</sup> Mainer, 2006, 140.

<sup>36</sup> Díaz Viana, L. “Prólogo”, in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Retóricas de la antropología*, Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1991, pp. 9-19.

<sup>37</sup> Giménez Caballero, [1932] 1971: 80.

people “marched to the nearby trenches, where they would have to wait for a comrade to fall, to have a gun with which to defend Madrid.”<sup>38</sup>

The same people that republican intellectuals frequently hoped to redeem from their lack of culture, would paradoxically be at the forefront of culture in its broadest and most revolutionary sense, in moments of crisis and tragedy. The ideologues of the sedition did not experience this paradox during the early moments of the war: for them, the people were to remain in their beatific ignorance. On one side, writers and artists sought to awaken the sleeping people —as Machado’s previously cited sentence reveals— but on the other side, in the so-called “national zones”, such an awakening was feared. In the “red zone”, talk centered on the “barbaric fascism” of the enemy, which did not, of course, include the Spanish people. The Spanish people were all on the side of the Republic. Those who charged Carabanchel in a practically overpowered capital, was “the Moorish cavalry”, and they were repelled by the people of Madrid.<sup>39</sup>

The parallelism established between the assault on the Cuartel de la Montaña and the assault of the rebel troops at the very doors of Madrid was clear: these moors were like the Mamelukes of the French army that the masses of Madrid dismounted from their horses in the early moments of the Napoleonic invasion. They were foreign invaders commanded by treacherous generals, and their defeat was immortalized in supposedly popular *coplas*, which eventually did become popular, not only because of their diffusion but because the writers who had probably composed them had done so following the lessons of “literary populism” taught by Machado and Lorca, and adapted popular forms and melodies:

Bridge of the Frenchmen	Puente de los franceses,
No one will cross you	nadie te pasa,
Because the militias	porque los milicianos
Mother mine,	¡mamita mía!
Will always guard you	qué bien te guardan <sup>40</sup> .

#### **4. Our people versus the foreign enemy: good inner savages and foreign barbarians.**

As we stated earlier, during the struggle itself, both sides denied that there was a civil war, presenting the conflict as a Manichaeian clash between a morally upright “us” and an evil, foreign other. The invocation of “holy war” contained in the Francoist expression of the Crusade, was opposed by the expression popularized among the International Brigades regarding the Spanish Republic’s defense, “The Good Fight”. The two sides regarded and represented the fight as a liberation war.

“For Spain’s salvation”, was General Emilio Mola’s opening line in the declaration that announced the state of war.<sup>41</sup> The Spanish Civil War thus began with the appropriation of the nation by the seditious fraction of the army and its accomplices. The propaganda of the rebels immediately sought to legitimize its actions and its interests using Catholic messages of redemption that identified the sedition with the mythical Reconquest of the Middle Ages: the union of a people with their God, who defended their faith against the Saracen enemy. The rebels also recalled the War of Independence against the French which, for the most

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<sup>38</sup> Ontañón, 2014: 126.

<sup>39</sup> Ontañón, 2014: 124.

<sup>40</sup> Ontañón, 2014: 103.

<sup>41</sup> July 19, 1936.

conservatives among the Spanish of the period, was indeed a war to save the national religion. The participation of Carlists represented the entire nineteenth century as a struggle against liberalism and secularization. Francoist panegyrists soon compared the medieval infidel to the Reds that must be equally expelled to preserve Spain. All other historical images in which the Christian faith—absolutist for the most part—was put to good use. A tapestry of manipulative but efficacious comparisons that constructed Rojos as atheists, Russian or pro-Russian, and foreign. The vulnerability and helplessness of the Republic, betrayed by a great part of its armed forces, with military aid provided by Germany and Italy, while France, the United Kingdom and most other countries turned a blind eye, meant that the assistance of the USSR was accepted, strings and all, and the rebels could easily underline the foreign elements that led the other side.

[The publication of *Canciones de las Brigadas Internacionales* (Barcelona, 1938), shows the internationalization of the conflict in compositions such as that of *La joven guardia*]

The republican side also turned to the past as a source of legitimacy by presenting the enemy as foreign. Although some republican intellectuals also appealed to the Middle Ages —reviving the romances and chronicles of medieval heroes<sup>42</sup>— the most attractive historical process was the War of Independence against the French. Representing the militias and the popular army as the incarnation of the liberal myth of the people in arms was almost too easy: the popular historical memory of that war was alive and well, thanks in great part to Goya's art, and the presence in Franco's army of North African, Italian, and German troops immediately brought back the events of 1808-1814. The use of epithets such as Nazis, fascists, moors, etc., reinforced the distancing of the republican people of Spain from the "other". At work was the construction of this "otherness", necessary in every war, and which necessitates the absolute depersonalization and estrangement of the enemy from human personhood.<sup>43</sup>

The Dos de Mayo uprising had been commemorated and celebrated in Spanish political memory with civic ceremonies and in literature —Benito Pérez Galdós, Mesonero Romanos—practically since the end of the war against the French. School texts, street names, monuments, had kept it alive in public memory, and represented the "Spanish people" as unequivocal heroes. This was the tapestry that the battles of the present were threaded into. Without a doubt, Republican Spain, heir of the Liberal and secularist impulses initiated in the nineteenth century, turned the Napoleonic war into the great national myth.

On the rebel side, propaganda and journals such as *Vértice* were filled with testimonies meant to win people to their cause, with references to joyous masses that were thankful for their "liberation" and a public that was pleased with what it saw and heard:

From the balconies of the Cathedral, the Women's Section of Falange attends a popular festival celebrated for the benefit of Auxilio Social [Social Aid]. The public at a

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<sup>42</sup> An example of this is María Teresa León's *La Crónica General*, which imitated medieval chronicles (and in which Eduardo de Ontañón participated); another is the romancero of the Civil War which Rafael Alberti would publish while in Argentina, using the romances that had appeared in the journals associated with the Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas. See León, M. T. *Crónica general de la guerra civil*, I. Madrid: Ediciones de la Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas, 1937; and Alberti, R. *Romancero general de la guerra española*. Buenos Aires: Patronato Hispano Argentino de Cultura, 1944.

<sup>43</sup> Fernández de Mata, I. *Lloros vueltos puños. El conflicto de los 'desaparecidos' y vencidos de la Guerra Civil española*. Granada: Comares, 2016.

football game listens, upright and with their arm raised high, to the solemn cadence of our anthem.<sup>44</sup>

The staging of such celebratory acts of the liberated masses was not casual or spontaneous. In the projected take of Madrid, Edgar Neville, a filmmaker who supported the Francoist sedition, had offered Dionisio Ridruejo, who led the propaganda apparatus, a plan to represent “the happiness of the people upon their liberation”, which would include the orchestration of masses that accompanied the “awaited” entry of the Francoist army into the city with “dances, verbenas, music, streamers, flags, hurdy-gurdies, free feasts, etc.”<sup>45</sup> The event should be dealt with as one manages the extras in a movie, the people “neutralized” through a caricature of their supposed merriment.

The *red barbarians* were foreign, unrecognizable in their objectives and desires, so Sovietized that they sung Russian revolutionary songs—and they were thus, entirely contemptible, not a people but a mob, a vulgar plebe, a rabble that formed hordes instead of armies. That riffraff had had the temerity to create songs —unequivocally popular songs— that threatened the members of the sacrosanct Catholic clergy, to the tune of the despicable “Himno de Riego”:

If the priests and the nuns had an inkling  
Of the beating that awaits them  
They would sing in their choir, together,  
Liberty! Liberty! Liberty!

Si los curas y monjas supieran  
la paliza que les van a dar,  
subirían al coro cantando  
¡libertad, libertad, libertad!<sup>46</sup>

The imagery of the Right will transform “the people”, a resentful, untrustworthy, and dangerous rabble that if granted any leeway could attack private property, burn convents, kill priests and rape nuns, into an operetta cast, or, more precisely, the cast of a zarzuela, always singing and carousing, delighted with its quaint self. But this does not mean that there were no popular songs on the seditious side, or that these were not important in the already mentioned neopopularist movement.<sup>47</sup>

##### **5. Concluding remarks: the domesticated people versus the people as humanity’s hope.**

Those who worked in the propaganda apparatus of the two sides in the Spanish Civil War were well aware of the importance of defining the limits and the content of “the people” that they meant to win over to their side, appropriating them, so to speak. Dionisio Ridruejo, the director of propaganda of the rebel faction who worked at the Francoist Ministry of the Interior during the war, applied his poet’s sensibility to this phenomenon, and described how in that period people sang a lot, both ordinary and vulgar tunes as well as polished and more artistic songs. Old tunes were recycled with “materials gathered from the moment, in trenches or cafes”, so that nearly forgotten songs would become popular again. But, as the same author explained, this popularized song was “sometimes refined, with erudite scruples, in the dinners and *tertulias* of the learned.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Vértice* 1, April 1937.

<sup>45</sup> Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica. Ridruejo, 5. Expediente 5 num. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Díaz Viana, 2007: 53.

<sup>47</sup> Díaz Viana, 2007:283.

<sup>48</sup> Ridruejo, D. *Casi unas memorias*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1975. Here, p. 142.

[Early on, the Ediciones de la Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular published a volumen of hymns and anthems *Himnos y canciones* (Madrid, 1942) with alternative lyrics penned by Pemán y Marquina for the National Anthem *Himno Nacional*, along with classic military compositions and others such as *Canto de la División Azul* and *Giovinezza, giovinezza*, the official Fascist hymn]

After its defeat of the Republic and during the construction of Francoist society, the idea of the people that the Spanish right-wing preferred came from folkloric Andalusian songs, so that the popular was reduced to a hyperbolic and specious *andalucismo*. This tendency, which was present even before the war, would culminate in the generation of a Spanish song (*canCIÓN española*) in which, paradoxically, the people would perform itself. The people performing its peoplehood would be like the native Americans who perform their indigeneity in their reservations because they are not allowed to act any other way, and nothing is expected from them but pow wows and pipe-smoking. The Spanish people of Francoist Spain did not threaten the gentlemen who heard and saw them performing *la canCIÓN española* the proper way: composed by others, and clearly evincing a speech, dress, and customs that identified them as “the people”, for what made them the people was precisely their absolute distance from the cultural expressions and social milieu of the upper classes. They were represented in a caricaturized version in the simplistic plays of the Alvarez Quintero brothers, or in a more realistic, but equally simplified image, in the journeymen and workers of Francoist films who, lacking all aspirations of social justice or dignity, stood attentively before the master —while he remained seated— holding on to their caps or berets and hanging their heads.

However, this does not mean that the popular classes across the country did not end up identifying somehow with this image of themselves, using it to find a shared space in which the poor and the oppressed came together. This masquerade was a sort of “survival through the popular culture of that time”, using Stephanie Sieburth’s words, but it was a strategy that tended to encourage resignation rather than dissent.<sup>49</sup>

Spain under Franco was “one, great, and free”, which meant that the people of Spain, must also be one, with regional variations adding color and interest without detracting from that unity. Thus, the Women’s Section’s Choirs and Dances were always present on October 12<sup>th</sup>, in the celebrations of the “Día de la Raza” (renamed in 1958 “*Día de la Hispanidad*”), as well as in other national holidays and celebrations, including the “labor-union demonstrations” held on May 1<sup>st</sup> to neutralize the formerly combative character of that date and its ties to the labor movement. Workers in Francoist Spain, integrated in the Vertical Syndicate, the only legal trade union in the country until 1975, performed gymnastic and folkloric pirouettes before — and to honor— the dictator in national parades.

The diversity of the bas-relief mosaic that formed the oneness of the imperial, indivisible, and independent Spain of the first Francoism would prove long-lasting thanks to the promotion and popularization of a variegated folklore, despite its decontextualization and its lack of identity ties. As has been analyzed elsewhere, the songs, dances, and melodies believed to be “traditional” across the diverse territories of the country —the famous “regional dances”— constituted a way through which local elites in Spain consolidated their influence while appealing to “contribute” to the construction of a “Spanish national identity”<sup>50</sup>. In any

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<sup>49</sup> Sieburth, S. *Coplas para sobrevivir*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2016. Here, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> Pitarch Alfonso, C. A. “La Fiesta de las Regiones” —Asturias, Andalucía, Valencia y Aragón—: Cuadros de cantos y bailes populares y construcción nacional española (1916-1936)”, in Pilar Ramos (coord.),



case, this folklore was perpetuated through festivals organized by the Women's Section's Choirs and Dances as well as choral societies organized by Catholic circles, local *peñas*, etc., where the most typical songs of the different regions of Spain were sung. The popularity of such folklore went well beyond the 1970s, as various groups and artists continued singing and performing "folk songs", keeping all that "ethnic repertoire" formed by popular compositions that came from any region and period.

[The Frente de Juventudes' *Cancionero Juvenil* of 1947 is a good example of the regionalist folklorism integrated in the nation that the regime encouraged]

It might seem that few things have changed since, for the constructs and appropriations of "the people" that we have analyzed and elaborated in this paper, continue to guide the Spanish left and right. Today, there are "guardians of tradition" who insist on reproducing the most rancid expressions of "the popular" that place the people in an eternal state of social, economic, and political disadvantage vis-à-vis the elites and contemporary modes of well-being. But there are also vibrant and innovative popular expressions, which challenge the inherited, hegemonic definition, addressed by Antonio Gramsci<sup>51</sup>, and which evince the inexorable process of how human culture is created and perpetuated.

In a terrible period of uncertainty, Ontañón lucidly noted how

Traditionalist defenders —they say it— of the tyrannies of the Middle Ages, the Catholic Kings, the legends of saints and slayers. They have remained there and hope to revive them. Of course. That is not what Madrid is. Madrid is the opposite of that, Madrid is the popular. The open, the fullness of our History. The elaboration of tradition, because tradition is not something stagnant, like a painting in a museum, but the joyous eyes of the man of today who regards it with intelligence. And he adapts them and takes pleasure himself in them [...] The upright and the popular. The high and the low. The ancient and the modern. That is Madrid. The human, let's say it once and for all<sup>52</sup>.

And this same conviction would be expressed —in much more elevated and refined terms— by some of the brightest intellectuals who wrote in the journal *Hora de España*. Thus, María Zambrano defined the vague, but firm will of progress that the indomitable people embodied in their resistance:

All we have left is the maiden in *alpargatas* and a calico skirt, and the wee soldier who quietly endures thirst and hunger without any glory (...) All we have left is the people, the incorruptible will of the people that the anarchy of the Spanish state has, during centuries, been unable to pervert.<sup>53</sup>

For the intellectuals disappointed with the madness of a world that collapsed around them amidst utopian dreams turned into nightmares, the only hope that was left for humanity, solidarity, and progress, was indeed, the people.

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Discursos y prácticas musicales nacionalistas (1900-1970), Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, 2012, p. 195-228. Here, p. 195.

<sup>51</sup> Gramsci, A. *Antología (Selección, traducción y notas de Manuel Sacristán)*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1988. Here, p. 489.

<sup>52</sup> Ontañón, 2014: 199.

<sup>53</sup> María Zambrano, "La reforma del entendimiento español", *Hora de España* 9, September 1937.

[In the *Colección de Canciones de lucha* there is a section entitled, “Himnos del proletariado en su lucha por la libertad”, and *La internacional* is its first composition, reflecting that idea of universal liberation of humanity that the people’s revolution would bring about]