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Bigas Luna and the Being of Spain: A Reading of "Jamón, Jamón" (1992)

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BIGAS LUNA AND THE BEING OF SPAIN: A READING OF *JAMÓN, JAMÓN* (1992)

by

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ABSTRACT

BIGAS LUNA AND THE BEING OF SPAIN: A READING OF *JAMÓN, JAMÓN* (1992)

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This thesis aims at seeing Bigas Luna's *Jamón, jamón* (1992) as a modern text that explores the issue of the so-called Being of Spain. Although the Being of Spain has often been considered an issue constricted to the first half of the twentieth century (as well as centered around the question of which landscape could best express the essence of Spanishness), I want to add to the discourse that such an issue is not an issue that must be constricted temporarily to the first half of the twentieth century, but still a current one.

In developing this topic, I will use two texts from writers of the Generation of 98: Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* (1897), which praises Spain's isolation from foreign influences in order to preserve Spanishness, and José Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (1921), which asserts Spain's need for openness to foreign, modernizing influences. This confrontation of viewpoints is visualized in *Jamón, jamón,* but with the particularity of not offering a dichotomy between a rural Spain and a modern Europe (which is what Ortega, Ganivet and most of the '98ers discussed), but between Spain, Europe and the new global market. These three spaces are embodied by the three male characters, Raúl, Manuel and José Luis, respectively. Alongside an analysis of the rich imagery which pervades the film, my claim in the thesis is that Luna envisions the preservation of Spanishness against the United States and the global neoliberal

economy through a combination of both Ganivet's and Ortega's views. In other words, whereas Ganivet and Ortega offered opposing visions regarding the Being of Spain (isolation *versus* openness), Luna synthesizes both positions against a third agent (the openness to a global culture that depersonalizes and converts everything in commodities) that does not appear in the writers above. In this sense, my claim in the thesis is that the Being of Spain that Luna emphasizes in *Jamón, jamón* is an identity which only can be preserved within the European context because, only through the openness to Europe can Spain's cultural specificity can be preserved. In addition to the texts from writers of the Generation of 98, I will utilize part of Benedict Anderson's and Anthony Smith's theoretical framework on nationalism.

In addition to this, I will outline some of the contradictions that I find regarding this argument. Therefore, one of my main concerns in the thesis will be the analysis of the character of Manuel, probably the less studied male character of the movie by scholars, as well as the validity, today, of Bigas Luna's argument that Europe comes to represent that location in which tradition and modernity can coexist peacefully –an argument that would be seen as impossible by Ganivet and Ortega. Therefore, it is my purpose to argue how Luna explores that confrontation between those three bodies as a metaphor of Spain's resistance to modernity.

To my brother

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars exploring Spain's cultural specificity tend to consider Francisco de Goya's painting *Duelo a garrotazos*[1] (1820–23) a visual synthesis of the so-called Being of Spain. This painting, in which two unknown men fight in the middle of an arid, desolated landscape, is often discussed in relation to the phenomenon of Spanish culture known as *cainismo*, which means the fraternal antagonism within Spanish society (Deveny 5). Although scholars such as Santos Zunzunegui consider this image of Spain as a country rooted in a permanent, fratricidal fight as a distorted construction rather than fact (Zunzunegui 10–11), it is undeniable that both Goya's painting and the concept of *cainismo* portray the existence of something primitive, irrational, quasi-savage in the Spanish land which marks, on the one hand, its difference in the European context and, on the other, seems to condemn the country to the impossibility of accomplishing the "normalcy" or rationality (and so the progress) that countries like Germany, France or United Kingdom have accomplished.[2]

To explain this assumed anomaly in the Spanish land has been a serious concern for intellectuals since the end of the nineteenth century. In his book *España invertebrada* (1921), Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset argued that Spain appears to be a failed nation because the country has lived in a permanent atmosphere of decadence for three centuries and, as a consequence, Spaniards have interiorized the idea of abnormality, perceiving it as normal (Ortega 122, Thaler 4). Pedro Laín Entralgo, for his part, opened his work *España como*

[1] *Fight With Cudgels.*

[2] This does not mean that Spain definitely can be considered primitive and irrational, but it has often been portrayed in this way. In addition to Goya's *Duelo a garrotazos*, see also Darío de Regoyos' paintings in Émile Verhaeren's book of poems *España negra* (*Terra incognita*) (1888). In this work, the Belgian writer, during a trip across the Iberian Peninsula with the Spanish painter, was captivated by "lo sucio, lo abandonado, lo viejo, lo pobre, junto a todo aquello ligado a la muerte, al crimen, a la sangre –las corridas de toros- y a los más enlutados y atávicos ceremoniales religiosos" (Hidalgo n.p.) [the dirty, the abandoned, the old, the poor; everything linked to death, the crime, the blood –the bullfightings– and mourned, atavistic religious ceremonies]. On the other hand, Regoyos' paintings also portray luminous and colorful landscapes of Spain, such as *La Concha. Nocturno* (1905), or *Mercado de Villarnaca de Oria* (1909).

problema (1949) asking why Spain had not been able to produce anything relevant during the nineteenth century in areas like architecture or technology (Laín Entralgo 3, 7). Generally speaking, from every side of the political spectrum, Spanish intellectuals and artists have attempted to discern what the problem of Spain is, why it exists, and how its solution might be found.

These analyses form part of the discourse of the Being of Spain (also known as the Problem of Spain), the intellectual debate that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth as a result of the loss of Spain's last three colonies in 1898 (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines), and the awareness among intellectuals of the country's backwardness with regard to other nations.[3] As Dena Crosson (2009) states, "[t]he final collapse of Spain's once enormous empire left the nation-state floundering with issues of national self-definition" (Crosson 67). The awareness of such a backwardness and the sensation of doom made thinkers of the so-called Generation of '98 explore the possibility of an essence (or cultural identity) which would gather and define Spain's diversity in order to, first, explain the source of its problems; second, to prevent confrontations between its several regions (and thus to avoid a fratricidal fight); and third, to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the country.

This essence, named *hispanidad* (Spanishness), was an issue with metaphysical, aesthetic and political implications,[4] defining Spain as "an historical entity, an organic, timeless and ancestral nation-state whose former greatness was inherent to a [such a] *hispanidad*" (68). Solely

[3] This debate was the result of a very convulsive nineteenth century in which different revolutions and attempts to modernize the country clashed with a resistance to change –a convulsive nineteenth century which had also had its precedents in the eighteenth century under the influence of the French Enlightenment and, as a result, a decided purpose of solving rationally the problems of the country. See José Cadalso's *Cartas marruecas* (1789) and *Noches lúgubres* (1790), or Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos' *Informe en el expediente de ley agraria* (1795).

[4] In 1898, writer Francisco Silvela wrote in 1898 the article "España, sin pulso" ("Spain, With No Pulse"), which has become an expression that synthesizes the way in which Spain was seen at the turn-of-the-century: apathetic, without energy.

by honoring and embracing the past could Spain heal its wounds and thus emerge into modernity (68). The debate about the Being of Spain –including issues about the country's fragmentation, its resistance to any modernization, or the unsuccessful quest for a *hispanidad* that would provide a cultural identity to explain its problems and would help to improve its situation– degenerated into the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the apex of the aforementioned *cainismo*. It brought, along with the subsequent nationalist-Catholic dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), a very defined cultural imaginary that largely embraced the designated locus for redemption and rebirth that the '98ers had suggested: in Franco's Spain, the country was Catholic, rooted in the values and aesthetics of the Castilian landscape (i.e. austerity, strength, solitude), isolated from the rest of Europe (whose modernizing ideas had only brought the disgrace to the country), and with the purpose of preserving the memory of glorious past conquests. Difference and dissidence were severely punished, even inside the regime.[5] Despite the turning point of American president Dwight D. Eisenhower's visit in December, 1959,[6] as well as the opening of the country to foreign investments during the following decade, the regime encouraged such a national identity until its end in the triennium of 1975–78, only accepting Spain's cultural diversity as a touristic strategy.[7] Since the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, the transition of the country from a dictatorship to a democracy, its acceptance into the

[5] The Falangist section was which more openly disagreed with Franco, being finally displaced from key political positions around 1942. Cultural Anthropologist (and openly Falangist) Pedro Laín Entralgo would publish in 1949 *España como problema* (*Spain as Problem*), in which he persevered in this idea of something wrong with the country that Franco's regime had been unable to solve. On the other hand, the same year appeared Rafael Calvo Serer's *España, sin problema* (*Spain, With No Problem*). Calvo Serer, a faithful adept to the regime, wrote this book as a response to Laín Entralgo's. (Translations of my own)

[6] According to Israel Viana, Eisenhower's visit was seen as "el momento de la consolidación del régimen de Franco y la prueba definitiva de que el dictador había conseguido salir del aislamiento que sufría tras la derrota del Eje en la II Guerra Mundial." [the moment of the consolidation of Franco's regime, as well as the definite proof that the dictator had been able to escape from the isolation that it had been suffering after the defeat of the Axis during the Second World War] (Viana n.p.)

[7] The slogan *Spain is different* was coined as such a touristic strategy in order to attract Northern European tourists, who flooded Spain's coasts seduced by the sun, the Andalusian imaginary and who, paradoxically, helped perpetuate the Francoist regime as Swedish filmmaker Vilgot Sjöman mentions in his diptych *I am Curious (Yellow)* (1967) and *I am Curious (Blue)* (1968).

European Union in 1986,[8] or the landmark that the year 1992 represented because of the celebration of three important international events (the Olympic Games of Barcelona, the Universal Exposition of Seville, and the designation of Madrid as a European Capital of Culture) helped to consolidate the idea that, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Being of Spain was historically an issue that had been overcome (Tomás 11–12; Seco Serrano 20-21).

During the culturally significat year of 1992, in which much of Spain was actively engaged in redefining the nation and its sense of self, Bigas Luna released *Jamón, jamón*.[9] Josep Joan Bigas i Luna (1946–2013)[10] is unanimously seen today as one of the clearest examples of contemporary Spanish artists who have both explored and interrogated the nature of Spain's cultural specificity, paying special attention to the idea of a primitivism that impedes the complete embrace of modernity ("Bigas Luna, el buen anfitrión"). His *oeuvre*, which touches several genres and covers film, theater, literature, video-art and painting, explores primitive human passions by means of a strong interest in the interconnections between sex, food and women.[11] Furthermore, his films may be understood as a series of *tableaux* going through Spain's cultural diversity, either from a geographical viewpoint (*Jamón, jamón, Huevos de oro, La teta i la lluna*), a sociological/anthropological lens (*Bilbao, Caniche, Yo soy la Juani*), or a historical perspective (*Voláverunt*). In general, his films, which are all the result of meticulous observation,[12] explore situations that symbolize questions of *hispanidad* without moralizing about them.

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8 Then the European Common Market.

9 *Ham, ham*.

10 Hereafter, Bigas Luna.

11 Women are always represented through the lens of the male gaze in Luna's films. But while women are normally understood as objects in his works, many of the actresses she worked with have recognized that his works perceptively depict female psychology, and have suggested that he himself was not the sexist that the perspectives of his films might otherwise suggest. ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión")

12 Luna used to publish printed works explaining the creative process of his films, in which he showed his drawings and wrote his thoughts about the applicable movie.

Luna's filmography is divided in two parts. *Jamón, jamón* (1992) represents the turning point between both. Prior to this work, his filmography is extremely dark, depressive, and very influenced by underground aesthetics –with closed shots, a predominance of urban environments, and granular image textures. Later in his career, Luna's filmography is more luminous and more consciously commercial, giving predominance to both long shots and the detailed reconstruction of landscapes.[13] Despite this shift toward more commercial endeavors, scholars unanimously recognize that his later films, although simplistic in tone and structure, are as complex as his early films (Wharton 134). *Jamón, jamón* is also the first part of his so-called "Iberian/Red Trilogy," a series of films whose purpose was to explore the heterogeneity of the Spanish landscape and culture.[14] The origin of this trilogy lies on an anecdote that Luna used to tell about how surprised he was after seeing a British friend of his shocked by ham legs hanging from the ceiling of the bars –a perfectly normal image for Luna: "Empecé a darme cuenta de que vivía inmerso en una realidad muy próxima a lo surrealista […], desarrollándose en mí una profunda fascinación por todo lo que representa nuestra cultura," he said (Luna and Canals 9).[15]

Jamón, jamón narrates the story of Silvia (Penélope Cruz), a poor teenager who lives with her prostitute mother Carmen (Anna Galiena) in the desert of Los Monegros –an arid area of Northern Spain. She is pregnant by José Luis (Jordi Mollá), the son of Concha and Manuel (Stefania Sandrelli and Juan Diego), who are in an unhappy marriage and the owners of the "Sansón" [Samson] brand of underpants. Concha is extremely protective of José Luis, and because she does not want him to marry Silvia, whom she thinks just wants her son's money, she

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[13] This turn to mainstream cinema had begun with his previous film *Las edades de Lulú* (1990), an adaptation of the novel by Almudena Grandes, and a polemic work because of its explicit sex scenes and the inclusion of a *ménage-à-trois* between the main female character (Lulú: the Italian actress Francesca Neri) and two men.

[14] The other two films of this "Iberian Trilogy" are *Huevos de oro* (1993) and *La teta i la lluna* (1994).

[15] "I started to be aware that I lived in a reality very close to Surrealism, growing my interest for everything that represents our culture." – My translation.

hires Raúl (Javier Bardem), a prototypical *macho ibérico*,[16] to seduce Silvia. Surprisingly, Raúl and Silvia fall in love with each other, but Concha, who during the story has had an affair with Raúl and now does not want to lose him, tells Silvia that she hired the man to seduce her. In the meantime, José Luis, who is continuously depicted as a weak and indecisive young man who is humiliated by everyone, discovers Raúl and Silvia's relationship, as well as the affair between his mother and Raúl. Furious, he finally confronts Raúl, and both fight in the middle of the desert with two ham legs. In the fight, Raúl kills José Luis. The movie finishes with a strange image in which Manuel and Silvia, Concha and Raúl, and Carmen and José Luis all embrace, looking at the sky. Economically a big success inside Spain and abroad, the film holds a cult status today since it is often seen as the first movie of both Spanish actors Javier Bardem (b. 1969) and Penélope Cruz (b. 1974),[17] and because of its balanced mixture of excess, surrealism, comedy, tragedy, and grotesque eroticism.

This thesis analyzes Bigas Luna's *Jamón, jamón* as a modern text that explores the issue of the Being of Spain. I argue that the Being of Spain is not an issue that is limited temporally to the first half of the twentieth century, but is still a current one. I seek to explore *Jamón, jamón* as a text that deals with the Being of Spain as an aesthetic issue and as an exploration of modernity, claiming that, unlike writers and artists of the first half of the twentieth century who tried to visualize the most representative landscape of that Spanishness (tending to disregard Spain's diversity in order to favor the landscape associated to the region of Castile), Luna assumes Spain's diversity both to construct his trilogy, and to explore the issue of the Being of Spain. I

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[16] Archetypal Spanish macho man (translation of "macho ibérico" in www.oxforddictionaries.com)

[17] This assertion is not exactly accurate, though broadly (and mistakenly) accepted. Actually, Penélope Cruz's first film is Rafael Alcázar's *El laberinto griego* (1991), in which she has a secondary role as Elisa, the daughter of the Italian actor Omero Antonutti's character, and Javier Bardem had already had a cameo with no text in Pedro Almodóvar's *Tacones lejanos* (1991), as well as he had a secondary role in Luna's *Las edades de Lulú* (1991). Alcázar's *El laberinto griego* was released in 1993.

examine the confrontation between modernity and backwardness through Luna's exploration of the male body in the characters of José Luis (prototype of modern man), Raúl (the semi-savage *macho ibérico*), and Manuel (who embodies the idea of Europe), and though how he explores that confrontation between these bodies as a metaphor for Spain's resistance to modernity, making the film a renegotiation of its Spanishness in the context of emergent neoliberal economy which took the country in the early 1990s. These perspectives will be interconnected, and all of them share a common ground: the idea that Spain is a country permanently embattled, and reluctant to accept changes that might modify its traditions. Spain as a nation thus falls into the '98ers thinking, serving as an example of contemporary characterizations of a nation: as the contingent, created by-product of industrialization (Crosson 68), or, for Anthony Smith, the so-called perennialist nationalism.[18]

In developing this topic, I will use two texts from writers of the Generation of 98: Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* (1897), which praises Spain's isolation from foreign influences in order to preserve Spanishness, and José Ortega y Gasset's *España invertebrada* (1921), which asserts Spain's need for openness to foreign, modernizing influences. This confrontation of viewpoints is visualized, I think, in *Jamón, jamón*, but with the particularity of not offering a dichotomy between a rural Spain and a modern Europe (which is what Ortega, Ganivet and most of the '98ers discussed), but between Spain, Europe and the new global market. These three spaces are embodied by the three male characters, Raúl, Manuel and José Luis, respectively. Alongside an analysis of the rich imagery which pervades the film, my claim in the thesis is that Luna envisions the preservation of Spanishness against the United States and the global

[18] See Smith, Anthony. *Theories of Nationalism*, and *Nationalism and Modernism*. Rather than being actually rooted in the past, cultural nationalism is based on myths and an "imagined community" created by the intelligentsia which seeks "to give coherence to the upheavals of industrialization, the growth of cities at the expense of rural communities and the separation from traditional village life engendered by the modern age" (Crosson 68).

neoliberal economy through a combination of both Ganivet's and Ortega's views. In other words, whereas Ganivet and Ortega offered opposing visions regarding the Being of Spain (isolation *versus* openness), Luna synthesizes both positions against a third agent (the openness to a global culture that depersonalizes and converts everything in commodities) that does not appear in the writers above. In this sense, my claim in the thesis is that the Being of Spain that Luna emphasizes in *Jamón, jamón* is an identity which only can be preserved within the European context because, only through the openness to Europe can Spain's cultural specificity can be preserved. In addition to the texts from writers of the Generation of 98, I will utilize part of Benedict Anderson's and Anthony Smith's theoretical framework on nationalism.

The thesis is divided in three chapters. The first one is aimed at the issue of the Being of Spain, or Spanishness. Using Benedict Anderson's and Anthony Smith's theoretical framework on nationalism, the chapter takes the episode of the crisis of 1898 and the reaction of Spanish intellectuals to the loss of Spain's last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines) as the starting point to explore the awareness of Spain's backwardness with regard to other European nations at the beginning of the twentieth century. The chapter will read Ángel Ganivet's and José Ortega y Gasset's works *Idearium español* and *España como problema* as examples of two opposing visions about Spain, its culture and its relationship with foreign nations, establishing the context and some of the topics that I will explore in chapter three.

The second chapter summarizes Bigas Luna's biography and his works as much as in cinema as in video, theater, painting or writing. The purpose of the chapter to contextualize *Jamón, jamón* within Luna's filmography as a turning point of his career, as well as within the Iberian Trilogy, composed of *Huevos de oro* (1993) and *La teta i la lluna* (1994).

The third chapter analyzes *Jamón, jamón* as a modern text which explores the issue of the

Being of Spain. I will focus on the three male characters, Raúl, José Luis and Manuel as symbols of a traditional Spain, a modern one and the European context. I will read *Jamón, jamón* as a Bigas Luna's claim for resistance against modernity, understanding that "modernity" as the neoliberal market which began in Spain in early 1990s, and understanding the European space as a location that can both preserve the cultural roots of the country and promote its definite inclusion within the international scenario. In saying this, although I will start considering the idea that the character of Manuel (Europe) comes to act as a protector of the Spanish soul within the international context, I will also outline some of the contradictions that I find regarding this argument. Therefore, one of my main concerns in the thesis will be the analysis of the character of Manuel, probably the less studied male character of the movie by scholars, as well as the validity, today, of Bigas Luna's argument that Europe comes to represent that location in which tradition and modernity can coexist peacefully –an argument that would be seen as impossible by Ganivet and Ortega.

CHAPTER 1

In his essay *Idearium español* (1897),[19] Spanish diplomat and writer Ángel Ganivet (1865–98) compares the main character of Calderón de la Barca's play *La vida es sueño*[20] (1635), Segismundo, with Spain's history until the end of the nineteenth century. In Calderón's play, Segismundo abandons his austere and reclusive life in order to both fight against other people and accomplish epic endeavors. At the end of the play, Segismundo returns to his initial life, and asks himself whether everything that he has lived has been real, or just a dream. Something similar, Ganivet states, has occurred with the Spain's history, something that can help explain its weakness as a nation: "España, como Segismundo," he writes,

> fue arrancada violentamente de la caverna de su vida oscura de combates contra los africanos, lanzada al foco de la vida europea y convertida en dueña y señora de gentes que ni siquiera conocía; y cuando después de muchos y extraordinarios sucesos, que parecen más fantásticos que reales, volvemos a la razón de nuestra antigua caverna, en la que nos hallamos al presente encadenados por nuestra miseria y nuestra pobreza, preguntamos si toda esa historia fue realidad o fue sueño, y sólo nos hace dudar el resplandor de la gloria que aún nos alumbra y seduce como aquella imagen amorosa que turbaba la soledad de Segismundo y le hacía exclamar: "Sólo a una mujer amaba – que fue verdad creo yo, – pues que todo se acabó – y esto sólo no se acaba."[21] (Ganivet 132)

Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), on his behalf, outlines in his work *España invertebrada* (1924)[22] a similar idea to Ganivet's regarding the weakness of Spain as a nation: the conquest of America three centuries before, he says, was done in a moment in

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[19] Hereafter, *Idearium*.

[20] *Life is a Dream.*

[21] "Like Segismundo, Spain was violently pulled up from the cavern of its dark life of combat against Africans, thrown into European life and converted into master and owner of people that it did not even know. And when, after many extraordinary events (which seem more fantastic than real), we the Spaniards come back to the reason of our cavern (in which we are now, chained by our misery and our poverty), we ask if that whole story was real or only a dream, and it only makes us doubt the brilliance of the glory that still both enlightens and seduces us, just like that lovely image that made Segismundo's solitude turbid, and which made him to claim: 'I only loved a woman – who was real, I think – because everything ended – and only this has not yet ended.'"

[22] *Invertebrate Spain*.

which the constitution of the Spanish nation was still in its early stages, and because the territorial expansion throughout the American continent became a priority for the Royal authorities, that impeded Spain's focus on the construction of a solid, and well-directed, national identity (Ortega 144). The attempts to fragment the Iberian Peninsula[23] that were occurring in Spain during the first half of the twentieth century, Ortega adds, were nothing but the natural continuation of the dismantling of the Spanish territories which had firstly started with the independence European territories during the seventeenth century, and which had continued in the American colonies during the early nineteenth century. Those attempts at dismantling the political unity of the peninsula were occurring because the conscience of a nation had never been consolidated for Spaniards in the same way that it had happened for people from other countries, such as France or the United Kingdom (152).

Ganivet and Ortega are largely opposed in their views of Spain, but this is one of the few points upon which they agree: Spain's history, according to them, was the history of a nation that did not have time enough to develop itself properly because it strayed from the typical route of constructing of a national identity. That route had been initiated in the Late Middle Ages, and it had started with the merger of the territories of the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon at the end of the fifteenth century, but it had been abandoned to favor the expansion over the American continent and the fight against other European powers. Four centuries later, the country had returned to that point which it had abandoned three centuries before, but now with a weak national identity after years of having lived under the illusion of being a great empire, and having intended to accomplish great political endeavors. Therefore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Spain grew aware of the end of its empire and of its economic backwardness,

[23] Ortega refers here to the regionalisms of Catalonia and the Basque Country as attempts at breaking up the peninsula.

developing a strong identity crisis that made it seem urgent to discern what both Spain and Spanishness meant.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the concern of the Spanish intellectuals that have become known as the Generation of 98, or the '98ers, was Spain itself: not Spain as a background or as a metaphor for literary/artistic purposes, but as an object of study (Pinedo 135). A decisive episode within the development of this concern was the defeat of the country by the United States during the Spanish-American War (1898). According to Pinedo, despite the awareness of being, within the European context, part of a rural country, strongly controlled by both military and religious institutions, and with severe problems in education and economy, Spaniards never seemed very concerned. However, their defeat by the U.S. roused not only the painful awareness of the official end of the Spanish Empire, but also the appearance of a series of considerations about the supremacy, or superiority, of the Saxon race over the Latin race, of Protestantism over Catholicism, and of Science over Spirituality (136–37).[24]

The crisis of the country was considered as a kind of illness in a living entity. Intellectuals like Ramiro de Maeztu (1875–1936), Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936), Pío Baroja (1872–1956) or the aforementioned José Ortega y Gasset, among others, spoke about Spain as a moribund body that needed to be cured.[25] This opposition between illness and cure thus constructed a so-called *Weltanschauung* (conception of the world) of Spain (138). This *Weltanschauung* was twofold. On the one hand, it depicted the aforementioned awareness of a

[24] For a greater understanding of the theoretical development of these points, see Bagehot's *The English Constitution* and *Physics and Politics*, which takes from Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* the idea that only a few nations evolve –those rooted in the Saxon culture– and others not.

[25] Although a lot is usually said about the influence of *krausismo* to explain this conception of Spain as a moribund living entity, I cannot disregard here the possibility of the influence of Social Darwinism, especially in Ortega's thought, who even mentions Herbert Spencer in *España invertebrada*.

moment of national crisis with a sensation of anguish and uneasiness of the spirit and, on the other, it sought a set of ideas to help the country get over its stagnation, as well as over its ideological chaos. In other words, the *Weltanschauung* of the writers of Generation of 98 sought to create a new Spain in which people could feel proud of the positive things in the country's past, but also be mature enough to be critical. This is why, along with the criticism, an intense appreciation for being Spaniards emerged too (138).

The position that these intellectuals adopted toward this *Weltanschauung* of Spain at the turn-of-the-century was, however, neither homogeneous nor static. Whereas people like Ramiro de Maeztu (1874–1936), José Augusto Trinidad Martínez Ruiz "Azorín" (1873–1967) or Miguel de Unamuno moved from progressive to more conservative positions,[26] others like Antonio Machado (1875–1939) or Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866–1936) made the inverse path. In general, this opposition between progressivism and conservatism relied on a vindication of the isolation of the country in order to protect what was considered its distinctive features, as opposed to the openness to Europe and the adoption of modernity as the only solution to convert Spain in a nation like France or United Kingdom.

Whether they praised isolation or openness, it is commonly accepted the Spanish intellectuals concerned about Spain were initially inspired by Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium*. When

[26] Ramiro de Maeztu, for example, was an early advocate of Socialism, but he became disillusioned by the First World War (1914–18) while serving in London as the correspondent of several Spanish newspapers. Once he returned to Spain, he claimed that human reason was not enough to solve the problems of Spain, and argued the need of recovering the authority of the country's tradition in the Roman Catholic Church. During the 1920s, he supported Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, calling for recovering Spain's sixteenth-century sense of Roman tradition. In his book *Defensa de la hispanidad* (1934) [In Defense of Spanishness], he called for a return to "pure Spanishness" [my quotes], deploring Liberalism and the ideals of the French Revolution (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). On his behalf, "Azorín" held different political positions during his life. An early progressive (and sometimes times embracing anarchist ideas), he became conservative by the beginning of the twentieth-century. During the Spanish Republic (1931–36), he moved again to progressive ideas, being exiled in Paris during the Spanish Civil War. Once he returned to Spain in 1939, and unable to find a job, he supported Francisco Franco's regime in order to be admitted back. Between 1939 and 1962, he wrote for several newspapers praising Franco's dictatorship, and continued with the analysis of the issue of Spanishness. His position regarding Franco's dictatorship is still unclear, because it is said that he actually was intimidated by it.

he wrote *Idearium* in 1897, Spain's evolution was uncertain. He decided, first, to praise Spain's legacy in history; second, to emphasize its particularities compared to other European nations, and third, to outline possible solutions which, based on those particularities, helped solve the situation of collapse –solutions which only could come, according to him, through an isolation from abroad.

In this chapter, I will focus on Ángel Ganivet's and José Ortega y Gasset's views about Spain as two instances of contrasting positions around this *Weltanschauung* of Spain. Therefore, whereas Ganivet is seen in the thesis as a vindicator of isolation, Ortega is seen as a vindicator of openness. The dichotomy of isolation versus openness was the bottom line of the aesthetical approach toward the *Weltanschauung* of Spain during the first half of the twentieth century, and it will be the base of my reading of Bigas Luna's *Jamón, jamón* in chapter 3.

This *Weltanschauung* is what here I have convened to name "Being of Spain." The Being of Spain does not have a closed, defined definition, but it is a term used by scholars to define what Spain and Spanishness meant for the 98ers. The term usually encompasses (and sometimes is exclusively associated with) the problems of both Spain and Spanishness. By "problems" I mean what Ortega and Ganivet recognize as one of the biggest evils of the country: the perennial menace of fragmentation, and the endless confrontation between regions and social groups, along with its assumed incapacity to progress. The terms "Being of Spain" and "Problem of Spain" are many times used indistinctively, but I think that, for the purpose of this thesis, the former is a more accurate term since it fits better in the broad meaning of the *Weltanschauung*, not being merely reduced to the problems of the Spanish nation. In other words, my claim is that, as a *Weltanschauung*, the Being of Spain recognizes the existence of problems, but it also comprehends a world-view which, at the end, is what was sought when the '98ers talked about

Spanishness.

According to Dena Crosson (2009), Spanish nationalism has received little attention among modernist theorists (Crosson 11). Although it is tangentially mentioned in his work on the nation as a historical construction, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) finds nationalism (territorial and modern) emerging first on the American continent (12).[27] In addition to the role of newspapers, novels and other structures of modernity in the construction of the nation, other elements, such as myths and memory, also play an important role in Anderson's history of the development at nationalism: "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past" (Anderson 11). Nations thus rely on myths, depending upon myths of historical identity that pre-date actual political identities that might be labeled as such. In this sense, nationalism rewrites history in order to grasp at proto-identities in the fragments of a mythological past. Nevertheless, by considering these two sides of the construction of a nation (the structures of modernity, and the use of myths and memory), the orthodoxy of modernist nationalism, Crosson concludes, may be challenged (Crosson 14).

Benedict Anderson defines a nation as an "imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 6). A nation is "*limited* because even the largest of them … has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7). It is also "*sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely–ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (7), and it is "a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each,

[27] Although Anderson's focus is certainly not on Europe, this does not mean that he precludes the existence of nationalism in this continent, as well as in Africa. See, for example, when he states that, in Western Europe, "the Eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism, but the dusk of religious modes of thought" (Anderson 11).

it is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Historically, Anderson argues, the nation as a conceptual community replaced the religious community in the eighteenth century due to the explosion of rational secularism, and nationalism thus appeared aligned "with the large cultural systems that preceded it" (12).

Novels and newspapers, examples of what Anderson calls "print-capitalism," produced a sense of simultaneity that helped construct the imagined community called nation. In this sense, the parallels made between novels and societies led people to perceive sociological entities as entities moving in a kind of empty time. This simultaneity that, Anderson says, occurs between the individuals of a community (and which moves in empty time) is the nation. Thus, while books appeared as a distinct, self-contained object, reproduced on a large scale, newspapers served modern man as a substitute for morning prayers.

Building upon Anderson's definition, Anthony Smith (2005) defines "nation" as

> a named and self-defined community whose members cultivate common myths, memories, symbols and values, possess and disseminate a distinctive public culture, reside in and identify with a historic homeland, and create and disseminate common laws and shared customs. (Smith, 2005: 96)

Both Anderson and Smith describe what is known as "perennial nationalism," and which is, according to Crosson, the way in which the '98ers saw Spain at the turn-of-the-century (Crosson 68). Eric Hobsbawn (2005) defines perennial nationalism as a view of a nation that incorporates the materialist conception of modernist nationalism, while simultaneously seeking to explain the abiding power of myth and memory in nationalist ideology, not exactly as imaginary and contingent, but as necessary components toward an authentic nation-state wherein citizens share a common story and a sense of place (Hobsbawn 80). Therefore, historical forgetting and nostalgia are important for the construction of that mythic past since they serve as a bridge

between the agrarian past and the dislocation that modernity produces (Smith, 1998: 44). Instead of being dismissed as a sort of brainwashing, the nationalist sentiment thus serves to provide continuity to the rapidly changing and disorienting action of modernity (44). In his book *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998, 2005), Smith summarizes the necessary features of a modern nation in Western Europe, based on Enlightenment rationalism. These features are, among others, a well-defined territory; a legal-political community; mass participation in social life and politics; collective autonomy as a sovereign state; and legitimation through the ideology of nationalism (Smith, 2005: 95).

Both Ganivet's *Idearium* and Ortega's *España invertebrada* can be seen as examples of perennialist nationalism in which the development of the market economy and the use and modulation of a mythical past seek to provide a kind of continuity that helps to deal with the changes that the country experiences by the end of the nineteenth century. In saying that they thought that Spain had separated from what was understood as a normal path in the construction of a national identity during the Late Middle Ages, Ganivet and Ortega are actually praising the Castilian landscape and the process of peninsular organization that the Crown of Castile led in those years, and which moved the new political entity called Spain toward progress.[28] Both authors also agree on the fact that Spain (as a country in a specific historical moment, but also as a *Weltanschauung*) desperately needs organization if it wants to progress and overcome its

[28] Progress is understood here by both Ganivet and Ortega as the development that occurred during period of time previous to the conquest of America, in which there was a significantly development of the economy and politics. Ortega summarizes this idea very clearly in *España invertebrada* –idea which I think is extensive to Ganivet: "[…] la incorporación nacional, la convivencia de pueblos y grupos sociales exige alguna alta empresa de colaboración y un proyecto sugestivo de vida en común. La historia de España confirma esta opinión, que habíamos formado contemplando la historia de Roma. Los españoles nos juntamos hace cinco siglos [mid-fifteenth century] para emprender una *Welpolitik* y para ensayar otras muchas faenas de gran velamen" (Ortega 45) [[…] the national incorporation, the coexistence between people and other social groups demands a high collaboration, as well as a suggestive proyect of common life. The history of Spain confirms this opinion, which we had formed observing the history of Rome. Spaniards united five centuries ago to start a *Weltpolitik*, and to practice other very important tasks] The entity called Spain is thus seen as a symbol of progress, which means, as something that *represents* progress.

disastrous state at the end of nineteenth century. That organization can only be found right before the discovery of the American continent (a time that Ortega even dates between 1450 and 1500), in which Spain showed discipline and a view toward the future. That discipline and view toward the future were accomplished because the Crown of Castile had such discipline and such view toward the future and, due to them, it decided to be united with the Crown of Aragon. Ganivet and Ortega see this moment in which both kingdoms united as crucial for the history of the country.

This moment of merger between the two biggest peninsular kingdoms during the second half of the fifteenth century[29] is seen as crucial because it appears, in Spain's history, as the only moment in which Spaniards fought against what both authors also see one of the biggest problems of the country: *particularismos* (particularisms). Particularisms are the attempt of the peoples from the peninsular periphery to secede from the rest of the country. Ganivet and Ortega think that the problem of particularisms has intensified during the nineteenth century, especially because of the so-called intellectual movement of *Regeneracionismo,*[30] and has become a serious problem for the future of the Spanish nation.

Particularisms and the search for what Castile represented in the Late Middle Ages are the two points in which Ortega and Ganivet agree about the diagnosis of Spain, yet from this point their opinions diverge. To solve the country's lack of structure, Ganivet favors isolation and Ortega openness. *Idearium* and *España invertebrada* thus develop these ideas assuming the

[29] In 1492, the peninsula was composed of the Crown of Castile, the Crown of Aragon, the Kingdom of Navarra (824–1620), the Kingdom of Portugal (1139–1910) and the Emirate of Granada (1238–1492).

[30] Broadly speaking, *Regeneracionismo* was an intellectual movement advocating the need to overcome many of the vices of Spain. Its main intellectual leader, Joaquín Costa (1846–1911), synthesized by means of his slogan "Escuela, despensa y doble llave al sepulcro del Cid" [School, pantry, and a double lock of El Cid's tomb] what Spain needed in order to be considered a modern nation. Therefore, *Regeneracionismo* opened a division in Spanish society regarding the best way of solving the country's problems, much like the Generation of 98. Both Ganivet and Ortega frequently discuss and criticize *Regeneracionismo* and its implications for the life of Spaniards, , considering it too liberal.

premise that Castiliam energy is consubstantial to Spanish identity, and it must be recovered. That is, that Castilian energy is something permanent, and is not reduced chronologically to the Late Middle Ages.

Ganivet's *Idearium* provides an overview of Spain's history in the form of a philosophical essay, seeking to unfold the particularities of the country in relation to the rest of Europe. In addition to this focus on Spain itself, he explores the cultural and spiritual legacy of Spaniards through history, paying special attention to its effects in the South American republics. According to Ganivet, Spain needs organization, but only according its own terms because it encapsulates a *Weltanschauung* that is specific, autonomous and opposed to the rationalistic view that the Enlightenment has imposed on the rest of the world. Therefore, although he believes that Christian religion, Greek art and Roman law are the roots of the country just like they are the roots of any other European country, he argues that it is the way in which these three elements are combined that makes Spain unique, and is what impels Spain to follow its own pace and methodology to overcome the collapse.

According to Ganivet, Spain is a stoic nation and Spaniards embody Seneca's ideas: "Seneca no es un español hijo de España por azar," he claims, "es español por esencia"[31] (Ganivet 38). After Stoicism, he continues, Christian thought became ingrained in the Iberian Peninsula, and both Stoicism and Christianity helped modulate the spirit of Spaniards. Ganivet conceives of Stoicism and Christianity as correlative schools of thought and claims that the mixture of both only occurred in the Iberian Peninsula (42). As a consequence, from the moment that Christianity was mixed with Stoicism, Spain's history has been a continuous succession of events in which the stoicism of Spaniards has been tested. *Idearium* therefore outlines a history of the Spanish soul considering these two elements (Stoicism and Christianity, and a continuous

[31] "Seneca is not the son of Spain by coincidence, he is essentially Spanish."

test of both of them), using them as a proof of the exceptionality of Spaniards within the European continent.

The religious spirit of Spaniards, Ganivet continues, accomplishes its apex with the encounter with the Arabs (711–1492), at which point two more of the national characteristics appear: mysticism and fanaticism (45). He favors mysticism because he argues that it leads to poetic exaltation and thus helps produce beautiful artistic works (46-47). Mysticism also becomes, for Ganivet, a kind of African blessing, for without the encounter with the Arabs, mysticism might have never taken hold in the peninsula (44-45). Ganivet praises the mysticism of Spaniards, which he views in contrast to the more materialistic orientation of other Europeans. In contrast, although he also sees religious fanaticism as broadly positive for establishing in Spaniards a strong personality and encouraging an exaltation of action, he also feels that it can blind them. Since the end of the *Reconquista*,[32] Ganivet adds, fanaticism has become a kind of curse because it has frequently led Spaniards to be impulsive and unthinking.

The conquest of America appears for the diplomat as the turning point of Spain's history. In general, he defends the idea that such a conquest was absolute nonsense, not only because it was done in a territory completely removed from Spain's interests, instead of continuing the territorial expansion initiated (with the merger of Castile and Aragon) toward Africa, but also because it de-emphasized for Spaniards from what the King of Aragon (Fernando el Católico) and the Queen of Castile (Isabel) had inculcated as a necessity: hard work to materialize not only physically, but also intellectual and spiritually, the growth of the Spanish nation (63). Instead of

[32] *Reconquista* (literally, "Reconquest") is the term used to label the period of history in the Iberian Peninsula between the 710s and 1492 that comprises the Islamic conquest of the peninsula and the subsequent expansion of the Christian kingdoms. The Battle of Covadonga (718-722) is considered the trigger of the *Reconquista*. In that battle, a small Christian army defeated an army of the Umayyad Caliphate (one of the biggest Arab caliphates after the death of Muhammad), establishing itself in the North of the Peninsula as a space of resistance against the Islamic presence. The *Reconquista* officially ended with the fall of Granada (the last Islamic state on the peninsula) in 1492, right before the arrival of Christopher Columbus to America.

doing this, Spaniards were seduced by stories of gold, jewelry and other fantasies that came from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, abandoning the Castilian construction named Spain. Since the construction of this national identity of Spain was in its first stages,[33] the people who went to America had neither conscience of nation, nor knew why they went there, nor how to expand the ideals that had been initiated in the peninsula (57). Instead, the indigenous people of America came to know Spain as the source of greedy people who only wanted to become rich as easily as possible, instead of having access to the more positive vision of what Spain attempted to signify in (and for) the world. In this sense, Ganivet praises those who, in those years, thought that the American endeavor was absurd, such as the Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517), whom he sees as fortunate for dying almost immediately after the successor of Fernando el Católico, Carlos I (1500–58), assumed the control of the Crown in 1516. The death of Cisneros was, according to Ganivet, the death of Castile (94).

Yet even though he blames Carlos I, Ganivet recognizes that he did good things for Spain as well (95). He compares him with Napoleon, praising his intuition for international relationships. However, his view about Carlos I's son, Felipe II (1527–98), is totally different. Felipe II is a Spaniard, he says, with a Spanish mentality, but not a Spanish mentality like his predecessors had; it is a provincial mentality that, sadly, also rules the moment in which Spain accomplishes its biggest territorial extension, and the Empire starts to represent a menace for the

[33] Ganivet here divides countries in three types, according to their *espíritu territorial* (territorial spirit): continental (which are characterized by a solid ability to defend themselves because the menace of other territories is always permanent), insular (which are essentially aggressive since their borders are well delimited and they know, in case of a foreign invasion, from where that invasion comes), and peninsular, which are those that combines poorly the characteristics of continental and insular countries (Ganivet 56). Spain is a peninsular country. It lives in a permanent situation of defense, but also had the need of conquering other spaces. However, both of them are not as stronger are they can be in continental and insular territories. Ganivet thinks that, when Spaniards arrived to America, the Royal authorities started to think as if they were part of an insular country, distorting the natural essence of the Iberian Peninsula which also still was weak and not well-formed (57). According to the diplomat, an insular country is the United Kingdom, and a continental country is France. Both are organized and act according to their nature, but Spain not. In the American conquest, Spaniards were people fighting with no organization, and that reverted in the failure of the conquest (65).

rest of the European powers. This characterization of Felipe II as a Spaniard with a provincial mind is not seen by Ganivet as something completely negative. On the contrary, he defines him as someone smug and independent (traits he associates with Spaniards), as well as someone who seeks to enjoy the glory of Spain politically when those who preceded him had only pursued the image of such glory.[34] Nevertheless, this attitude of Felipe II has consequences and Spain, as the synthesis of a world-view, disappears. Instead, the preservation of the territory begins to be the center of all political activity. The seventeenth century is thus a slow, long history of decay and decadence, and when Felipe V (1683–1746) and the French Bourbon dynasty arrive to Spain in 1700 after the last Habsburg ruler of Spain, Carlos II "El Hechizado"[35] (1661–1700), dies prematurely and with no progeny, Spaniards begin to accept every foreign imposition (99).

In general, *Idearium* does compare and contrast the materialistic and practical thinking of other Europeans with the spiritual thinking of Spaniards. Even though Ganivet praises the foresighted character of other Europeans, their good management of money, and all the scientific advances that they have provided to the world, for him nothing compares with the ability of Spaniards to deal with the unknown, the intangible, or the ideal, concepts that, in the end, are more useful than the accomplishments of other Europeans. Following this praise of the abstract and the spiritual, Ganivet dedicates the second half of *Idearium* to providing a set of strategies to save the Spanish soul.

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[34] Ganivet's position regarding Felipe II is, in my opinion, ambiguous. Although he praises Felipe's independence, he also regrets that he did not have the vision of his predecessors with regard to the issue of the relationship between Spain and foreign powers. The fact he regrets that Spain as a world-view is lost with his kingdom (and points out that this change of attitude is what initiates the decadence of Spain) makes me think, since he also praises Felipe's independence, in two possibilities about what Ganivet's position would be: one, that he definitely sees the king as a wrong man for Spain's history, and two, that that independence in Felipe II (which is extensive to the rest of Spaniards) is misunderstood by the rest of Europeans, making them jealous of the Spaniards. In assuming this second position, I think that Ganivet minimizes the real problems of Spaniards by saying that everything they suffer is, at the end, a mere case of jealousy from the rest of Europeans toward Spain. In other words, that Spain's problems exist because Spaniards are independent and that is not accepted by Europeans. This possibility fits better in Ganivet's vindication of isolation to solve the nation's problems.

[35] Carlos II "The Bewitched." The nickname refers to his extensive physical, intellectual and emotional disabilities as a result of generations of inbreeding between the Habsburgs, as well as because his ineffective rule.

As stated above, Ganivet thinks that Spain needs organization. Such organization can only be accomplished through purity of thought, moral virtue and good will (78). Since Ganivet sees Stoicism as a flexible form of thought, he thinks it can help achieve this. Spaniards are not as rational as other Europeans, but their mysticism, faith and intuition can overcome this problem. An example of the connection he establishes between religion and intuitiveness is found in Spanish art, in which religious influence is very strong (81). According to Ganivet, Spanish artists usually compensate for their lack of technical skill by means an enormous amount of intuition. Therefore, painters like Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) or Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) worked intuitively, independently and always exploring as if they were conquerors (85). They are, for Ganivet, paradigmatic instances of the Spanish soul. Their works (just like the works of any artist worthy of being considered Spanish) always were unfinished because otherwise it would have meant they surrendered themselves to the establishment. As opposed to Velázquez and Goya, Ganivet considers Calderón de la Barca as a paradigmatic example of artist who surrendered to the establishment because he is an artist closer to the European mentality than to the Spanish (86).[36] Ganivet does not even think that the *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age)[37] was as good as people normally think. It was good, but it could have been better if Spain had not abandoned the path of national construction initiated after the *Reconquista* (91).

Politically, Ganivet argues, Spain must abandon any idea of continuing its presence in the American continent. Imagining what would happen if the South American republics united just like the United States did in the north of the continent, he argues that this union of the South

[36] Here Ganivet sees the way in which European artists work as a surrender of what always must be something inherent in any artist: independence. European artists are, for Ganivet, controlled, repressed, and even though they have a refined style and their works are technically perfect, they lack of the personality and independence that, at the end, is what Spanish artists have, and what makes superior the Spanish art.

[37] The *Siglo de Oro* does not have defined chronological limits. It is accepted that it did not start before 1492, and Calderón de la Barca's death in 1681 is accepted by many people as its official end. The *Siglo de Oro* is a period of flourishing in both arts and literature in Spain, coinciding with the political rise and subsequent decline of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty.

American republics would be a mistake because, unlike the latter, the former possess a strong personality, and a confrontation of egos would produce chaos. With regard to Europe, Ganivet disregards both the possibility of uniting Spain and Portugal, and the idea that both countries could form a Confederation like in Germany, arguing that Spain's separation from Portugal helps keep together the existing Spanish territories. Conversely, he views the Mediterranean Sea as a natural extension of Spain, but a good Mediterranean policy requires a strong naval power, and Spain does not have it (117). By affirming this, he recognizes that Spain is a poor country, with no international influence. There is no way to expand, toward the West, North, South, or East. The best thing Spain can do is to retire itself voluntarily: "Una restauración de la vida entera de España," he claims, "no puede tener otro punto de arranque que la concentración de todas nuestras energías dentro de nuestro territorio"[38] (131).

Because Spain is, in economic terms, a poor country, it cannot be distracted with fantastic adventures on other continents nor dreams of economic superiority to countries like France, United Kingdom or Germany. Instead, it must focus on its intellectual superiority. In this aspect, Spaniards are by far superior to the French, the British and the Germans. Yet this superior intellect demands that they not imitate others, but create something that helps Spaniards stay together (135). This leads Ganivet to praise, again, Catholicism, and to criticize the liberal education that *Regeneracionismo* sought to implant in Spain. He sees this liberal education as illogical, inconsistent and a fabric of dumb people (137).

The last pages of *Idearium* are dedicated to the acedia that invades Spaniards (138). This is, according to Ganivet, one of the biggest problems that the country has. Illustrious, intelligent men are necessary to solve this problem of apathy (143). Like Ortega, Ganivet sees a need for

[38] "A restoration of the whole life of Spain can only start with the concentration of all our energies in our territory."

men of superior intellect to rule the rest of the nation. The problem of Spain is, however, that Spaniards do not listen to wise people, and wise people tend to dismiss everything that exists in the peninsula just because they pretend to be modern and advanced like other European nations (145). The conclusion that Ganivet proposes is to trust those Spanish intellectuals who want to improve the nation; Spanish intellectuals who, educated under the Catholic faith and having sought the values of the Spanish soul inside Spain, can communicate their orders in a clear, understandable way. Establishing a parallel to explain the scope of this task, he mentions Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (1605–15), not only for its artistic values, but also as an attitude and as a way of life: to think that what seems theoretically impossible is actually a possibility (151). He concludes *Idearium* claiming that

> [a]sí como creo que para las aventuras de dominación material muchos pueblos de Europa son superiores a nosotros, creo también que para la creación ideal no hay ninguno con aptitudes naturales tan depuradas como las nuestras […] Hemos de hacer acto de contrición colectiva; hemos de desdoblarnos, aunque muchos nos quedemos en tan arriesgada operación, y así tendremos pan espiritual para nosotros y para nuestra familia.[39] (151)

Part of Ganivet's descriptions of Spaniards is found in Ortega as well, though the philosopher's perceptions of them are different. Whereas Ganivet sees the intuitive, mystical, unique character of Spaniards as something truly positive when compared with the rest of Europeans, Ortega also recognizes that Spaniards are culturally distinctive, but in a negative sense. Ganivet praises the sort of Spaniard who is brave, profoundly spiritual, and capable of accomplishing a communion with things that are beyond the scope of materiality. He thinks that Spaniards are probably not as intelligent as, for example, French or British people, but he thinks

[39] "Although I think that many European peoples are superior to us in affairs of material domination, I think there is none like us in pure, natural aptitude for ideal creations […] We have to recognize our errors; we have to unfold metaphorically, even though we do not complete that risky task, and only in this way we will have spiritual fuel for us and for our families."

they have other qualities that make them superior. Ortega is not as sure as Ganivet about this point. Instead, he thinks that this "popular" character of Spaniards[40] that the former finds so appealing is not a positive quality, and it must be corrected by allowing the entrance in the peninsula of the ideas that have modernized and made other countries great. *España invertebrada* aims at explaining this idea.

Ortega's *España invertebrada* is a collection of articles whose main topic is the issue of Spain's particularisms. The book is composed of two parts, divided in nine and seven chapters respectively. Ortega dwells on the issue of Spain's particularisms within the framework of Darwinism by envisioning Spain as an enormous organic entity that evolves towards an hypothetical situation of perfection which he labels as "totality"[41], and which only works by means of a continuous process of incorporation (Ortega 27).[42] In saying that Spain, just like any other nation, is immersed in a process of historical incorporation, Ortega means that Spain evolves and, like any organism, it was born, grew up and can decay. However, even though Spain's history is the history of decadence (28), such decay does not necessarily mean death. Instead, the nation can recover.

Totality, according to Ortega, needs the disperse energy of particular groups in order to achieve its unifying energy (27-28). Thus, Ortega identifies the fragmentation of Spain as both a problem and the core of a potential solution. On the one hand, he depicts the fragmentation of Spain as a problem because that fragmentation represents the aforementioned particularisms that he denounces in the text. On the other hand, he understands fragmentation as the core of a

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[40] By "popular" I am meaning here a character not very rational or cultivated, but more impulsive and emotional than logical.

[41] *Totalización* – My translation.

[42] It is not possible disregard here the similarities between Ortega's thought and the Hegelian dialectic. *España invertebrada* relies extensively on Hegel's ideas on historical incorporation toward totality, and on the dichotomy of the individual versus the whole. Therefore, I am assuming here that Ortega is using Hegel's concept of totality as part of his discourse; thought which, on the other hand, was very extended in those years in both the European and American continents.

potential solution because it can help provide the energy that Spain's totality requires. In other words, fragmentation, if organized, is good and can help the evolution of the nation.[43] Moreover, totality through incorporation does not mean that those parts which are integrated into the center disappear. That did not happen when Aragon, Catalonia or the Basque Country were integrated under the Castilian rule: "Nada de eso," he claims, "sometimiento, unificación, incorporación, no significan muerte de los grupos como tales grupos; la fuerza que hay en ellos perdura bien por sometida […] que los obligue a vivir como parte de un todo y no como todos aparte"[44] (27-28).

After outlining the concept of totality, Ortega asks himself why there are so many regionalisms, nationalisms and separatisms in Spain. Because he thinks Spain has never presented regional differences,[45] he also thinks that speaking about regionalisms is both a new and an artificial debate within the Spanish context (39). Separatism exists because of personal selfishness, he says (39). Like Ganivet, he thinks Spain is a Castilian product, and therefore only Castilian minds will be able to solve this problem of particularisms (40). Chapter 4 of *España invertebrada* deals with the process of the merger between Castile and Aragon, and how the concept of Spain appeared as an idea that might be fully accomplished in some moment of the future: "Para quien tiene buen oído histórico," he writes,

> no es dudoso que la unidad española fue, ante todo y sobre todo, la unificación de las dos grandes políticas internacionales que a la sazón había en la

[43] This draws on [or "is similar to"] the ideologist of Social Darwinism Herbert Spencer's principle of heterogeneity, which is consubstantial to any progress. For Spencer, homogenous societies are stagnant, and heterogeneous societies are always evolving (*First Principles*, 1958: 407).

[44] "No way: submission, unification, incorporation, they do not mean the death of the groups as such. Their strengths remain because they are subjugated […] and are obliged to work together as parts of a whole, and not separately."

[45] Ortega says in *España invertebrada*: "Era España una masa homogénea, sin discontinuidades cualitativas, sin confines interiores de unas partes con otras. Hablar ahora de regiones, de pueblos diferentes, de Cataluña, de Euzkadi [sic], es cortar con un cuchillo una masa homogénea y tajar cuerpos distintos en lo que era un compacto volumen" (Ortega 39) [Spain was a homogeneous mass, without qualitative discontinuities, without inner boundaries between parts. Speaking now about regions, about different people, about Catalonia, about the Basque Country, is to cut a homogeneous mass with a knife, and to cut different bodies in what was a compact volume]

> península: la de Castilla, hacia África y el centro de Europa; la de Aragón, hacia el Mediterráneo […] [P]or vez primera en la historia, se idea una *Weltpolitik*: la unidad española fue hecha para intentarla.[46] (45)

Although Ortega praises this union between the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon as the result of the initiative of the former, he also remarks upon the Aragonese's attitude, specifically the attitude of the king of Aragon, Fernando el Católico. In the fifteenth century, Fernando accepted the union with the Crown of Castile in order to control and discipline the people of his territory. Both kingdoms had, in brief, "una sensibilidad internacional,"[47] and that is why they united themselves (43). Something similar, Ortega claims, must be done with the problem of particularisms. That is to say structuring and strengthening Spain under Castilian rule is the only thing that can prevent a wave of separatisms, and the rest of the territories must understand that that attitude is the only viable solution.

According to Ortega, particularisms appear when every group (either territorial, or social) stops thinking of being part of a whole, and of sharing the feelings of other people (53). He dates the beginning of the country's decay at 1580. Before this date, Spain's history shows an ascendant tendency but, after it, the territorial dismantling grows dangerously, beginning from the periphery of the Empire (the colonies). By 1900, Spain has been reduced to the peninsula, but the process of dismantling continues through the separatisms of territories like Catalonia or the Basque Country (51). In addition to these territorial particularisms which are dismantling the country, he also considers the so-called social particularisms, in that different social groups have stopped thinking of them as part of the social whole that forms Spain. There is not

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[46] "For those who have good historical knowledge, it is doubtless that the Spanish unity was, above all, the unification of the two greatest international political regimes that were in the peninsula: Castile's politics, oriented toward Africa and the center of Europe, and Aragon's politics, oriented toward the Mediterranean. […] [F]or the first time in history, a *Weltpolitik* is thought up: Spanish unity was created in order to try it.

[47] "an international sensibility."

communication between the different factions, and the energy that every part puts in its own is wasted because it is neither explained nor offered to others (62, 65).

Although Ortega thinks these separatisms are artificial, it is important to remark that he does not think that the differences are bad *per se*. It is the moment in which these parts begin to think, and act, for their own interests rather than considering being part of a social whole when the problem of particularism emerges as something negative and attacks the nation. Nationalism is produced when the parts act in a positive way, and particularism is produced when the parts act negatively. This difference between nationalism and particularism is used by Ortega to establish the difference between what he calls "acción directa"[48] and "acción indirecta" or "acción legal."[49]

The first part of *España invertebrada* ends with a chapter dedicated to the different *pronunciamientos*[50] which took place in Spain during the nineteenth century, and which he perceives as examples of the aforementioned direct action.[51] The chapter concludes with two ideas about the Spaniards, which may help summarize Ortega's vision of the Spanish nation in this work: the first one, that everyone (i.e., the Spaniards) has the capacity to undo things, but not much capacity to create, nor even guarantee their own rights. And secondly, that Spain does not have social energy.[52] This last idea is also denounced by Ganivet in *Idearium*, who points it out as another of the most important features (and problems) of the Spaniards (95).

The second part of *España invertebrada* deals with the concept of "hombre-masa"[53];

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48 Direct action.

49 Indirect action / Legal action.

50 Insurrections.

51 Ortega mentions Ernest Renan's discussion of the need to exclude every exclusion in order to consolidate the (Spanish) nation, and thinks that the insurrections that occurred because of the period of *Regeneracionismo* were pernicious for the development of Spain (95).

52 Ortega agrees here with Francisco Silvela (see footnote 4) in the idea that one of the most serious problems of the Spaniards is passivity.

53 Mass-man.

concept which Ortega explores more in-depth in one of his most famous texts, *La rebelión de las masas*[54] (1930). What Spain needs is not men, he claims, but mass-men. The mass-man is that who never is efficient for his individual qualities, but because of the social energy that the social mass has put over him/her. The mass-man has talent because there is an environment which has invested energy in him/her, and therefore when that man acts and produces something valuable he/she is returning part of that energy previously invested in him/her (91).

Particularisms emerge, however, because men stop of thinking about being part of the whole, and their claim for individual wishes requires them to blame those who do not think like them. That complaint becomes an expression of selfishness that, implicitly, rejects any men of intelligence since nobody thinks anything is owed to anybody. To fight this, it is necessary to create a selective minority of mass-men, intelligent and well-prepared, to whom the rest of men can be submissive.[55] If, as Ortega states, a nation is "una masa organizada, estructurada por una minoría de individuos selectos" (95)[56], the organization that he thinks Spain needs to fight the particularisms must be done by that selected minority. The exemplarity of those who rule the nation, Ortega continues, is thus transformed into the submissiveness of the majority, and that reverts in the development of a good society: "Esto indica," he concludes, "que la sociedad es ya de suyo y nativamente un aparato de perfeccionamiento"[57] (96).

However, Ortega regrets that Spaniards reject any kind of exemplarity in people (96-97): "Peor que tener una enfermedad es ser una enfermedad,"[58] he categorically affirms (97-98). The Greeks in Ancient history were exemplary people, as were the French and British in more recent

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54 *The Revolt of the Masses.*

55 Ortega utilizes specifically this word, *docilidad* (submissiveness), which he sees in a positive way. Submissiveness is not, according to him, submission or subjugation according to a negative view, but the voluntarily obedience of those who understand as positive what the intelligentsia says about the rest of society, because they recognize them as wise people whose work is to rule the rest.

56 "[A] nation is an organized mass, structured by a selected minority of individuals."

57 "This indicates that society is essentially a system of perfection."

58 "One thing worse than suffering an illness is being an illness."

history. Russia and Spain are drawn as examples of the opposite. According to him, the way in which Spaniards see Spain's history is what really impedes the progression of the country even though, originally, there was nothing wrong with them (128). In this sense Spain, as a social organism, is like France, the United Kingdom or Italy. When Ortega says that Spain is a social organism, he means it is a historical animal that is part of specific specie: the specie (or society, or nation) that was created in central and Western Europe after the downfall of the Roman Empire. In other words, Spain has the same roots that the rest of the European countries. Nevertheless, what makes it different is not (as Ganivet states in *Idearium*) the way in which those roots are combined, but the type of Goths[59] that occupied the Iberian Peninsula after the Roman Empire's downfall (130). While Ortega thinks other European territories were occupied by disciplined peoples, he blames the Visigoths (418–720) that stayed in the peninsula, whom he identifies as the worst of the Goth peoples. Here, Ortega's argument has certain parallels with Ganivet's idea of Castile as the core of Spain. He criticizes the feudalism of the Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula to the feudalism of the Gauls in France, and points out that the problems that Spain has suffered after the conquest of America are the consequence of that Visigoth feudalism that was wrongly applied (131).

Around the year 1450, Ortega thinks the state of the Iberian Peninsula was miserable. However, between 1450 and 1500, energy, culture and progress took hold in the territory and accomplished the aforementioned unification between the Crown of Castile and the Crown of Aragon (143). He thinks that this unification happened so quickly because feudalism had been very inconsistent during the previous centuries, and there was not any kind of national conscience among Iberians. In other words, Ortega suggests that that lack of a structuring

[59] The Goths were nomadic German peoples who flourished and spread across the European during the Late Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.

principle between the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula made it easy to organize a political supra-entity named Spain.[60]

After the year 1500, Ortega argues that Spain returned to the times before 1450. The colonization of America fascinates him, but not for conquest itself (which he sees as a mistake), but for the fact that it was done by ignorant people who were not aware of the scope of the enterprise that they were carrying out. Thus, he depicts Spain as a country that is essentially popular,[61] rural, undeveloped and different from other European nations (145). Conversely, he praises England's reflection, planning and care with its colonies. The reason for England's success is clear to him: unlike Spain, the United Kingdom has intelligent minorities ruling the country (145).

España invertebrada ends with Ortega's reflections about how different Spain is when someone has the chance to travel across Europe. Spain is not a modern nation, he says, because it is not rational, democratic, mechanical, industrial or capitalist. Instead, what can be found in its territory is ignorance and political abuse, particularisms and direct action, as well as a confused soul, which it is the first thing that should be addressed. Unlike Ganivet, he does not think changes can come from inside the country. Even though he agrees with the fact that the spirit of Castile must be recovered, he does not think that that recovery can be accomplished by isolation. Spain requires an opening to Europe, just what Castile sought when it united with the Crown of Aragon during the fifteenth century.

This confrontation between openness and isolation in the Spanish soul had aesthetical

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[60] My point here is Ortega thinks that the quickness with which the unification took form in the Iberian Peninsula would have been impossible in other European territories because feudalism in those places had been stronger, and a sense of community or something common shared had made much more difficult that imposition of a supra-entity.

[61] "La colonización de América fue una obra popular," he says – ["The colonization of America was a popular work."]

consequences. The fact that both Ganivet and Ortega understand Spain as a Castilian construction has, as a consequence, the constitution of the Castilian landscape as the most accurate landscape representation of the Spanish soul. Nevertheless, this constitution of the Castilian landscape as the most representative landscape of what meant to be Spanish was not exempt from controversy. Dena Crosson explains why this vindication of the Castilian landscape was the predominant vision of the '98ers: in addition to thinking of Spain as a Castilian construction, the '98ers sought a landscape totally opposed to the landscape that the French, British or Americans had popularized during the nineteenth century. Spain had been portrayed under an Orientalistic lens in order to provide, within the European continent, similar narratives to those from who used to travel to the Middle East, or the Far Orient (Crosson 60). People like Alexandre Dumas (1802–70), Washington Irving (1783–1859), Théophile Gautier (1811–72) or Jan Potocki (1761–1815) saw Spain as a mysterious, exotic country that could offer the mystery of Oriental territories along with the familiarity of the European continent: "Spain was a constant source of interest as a country identified with exotic Orientalism and pre-modern civilization," Crosson continues, "while remaining within the European community" (60). In this way, as industrialization, market capitalism and Enlightenment-based educational, secular and civic structures took control over Europe, Spain maintained a status of rural, exotic and primitive country wherein the Andalusian landscape became the paradigmatic representation of it. Books like Potocki's *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (1794, 1804, 1810), Irving's *Tales of Alhambra* (1832) or Gauthier's *Voyage en Espagne* (1843) mystified the semi-primitive, quasi-savage characteristics of Spain by means of stories wherein *bandoleros*,[62] sorcerers, legends and inhospitable spaces like the mountains of Sierra Morena, the Granadian *alpujarra* or the great cities of Andalucía like Seville, Córdoba or Granada allowed the encounter with the sensual and

[62] Bandits.

the unknown. As opposed to these landscapes, these writers also remarked the austerity of people from the Castilian plateau, in cities like Burgos or Segovia. By the end of the nineteenth century, this stereotyped view of Spain as a Romantic space had been so abused that even French writer Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) claimed in his novel "Les chouans" that "[Le public] aujourd'hui rassasié de l'Espagne, de l'Orient, des supplices, des pirates et de l'histoire de France Walter-Scottée"[63] (Balzac 54).

The praise of the Castilian landscape by Ganivet, Ortega and most of the '98ers (including Machado, Unamuno, "Azorín," and Baroja) did not result, however, in a unanimous consensus about whether that landscape was the most accurate depiction of Spanishness. In this regard, there were contrasting opinions. For instance, whereas Miguel de Unamuno divided Spain in two aesthetic areas—a Castile–Basque Spain, and a Valencian–Andalusian Spain (Tomás 13)—Spanish writer Ramón del Valle–Inclán considered three zones: Castile (to which he saw as a dead area because its imaginary always looked at the past, and the past always is dead), the Levant (which he deplored because he characterized it as having a Phoenician, gypsy, cheating nature), and the Cantabrian area, which he saw as young and full of energy and opportunities (Tomás 22–23). Along with this problematic of painting the ideal Spanish landscape, other aesthetic forms to depict Spain's abnormality (physical and moral) within the European context started to gain an audience. In this sense, *esperpento* would gain critical acceptance as a valid aesthetic option to express this abnormality by praising a character in the Spaniards which was defined as a mixture of extreme ridiculousness and monstrosity. Its creator, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, claimed in his play *Luces de Bohemia* (1924) that the Spanish reality only could be seen under a lens of extreme distortion and grotesque because Spain was actually a

[63] "Today, people are fed up with Spain, the Orient, torture, pirates and the history of France according to Walter Scott."

twisted image of the rest of the European continent.

The question about the Being of Spain that arises in the beginning of the twenty-first century is in which way is the vindication of the Castilian landscape as representative of Spanishness still valid and "accurate,"[64] artistically? Also, how valid are the claims of Ortega and Ganivet about the differences between Spain and the rest of European countries? The problem with these questions is that both Ganivet and Ortega reacted to a specific situation of collapse and decay of Spain, even though they tried to argue that their claims were not the product of a concrete historical moment, but something permanent. Also, it is not difficult to accept the fact that a pictorial representation of the Being of Spain[65] is as complicated to accomplish today as it was in the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, in chapter 3 I will read Bigas Luna's *Jamón, jamón* as a text in which many of Ganivet's and Ortega's concerns about Spain are expressed and in which it is possible to perceive the dichotomy between isolation and opening that both thinkers explored. In the reading, I will start by considering what Juan Egea (2013) notes as a missing point in Benedict Anderson's text about nationalism: the role of the visual in the construction of a national identity.

[64] My quotes.

[65] This is actually something that is impossible to accomplish because it will always imply a narrative/a myth/a reduction of all complexities to something representative.

CHAPTER 2

Josep Joan Bigas i Luna[66] initiated his creative works within the world of video-art in 1969, when he founded the *Estudio GRIS* with Carles Riart. *Estudio GRIS* was a studio dedicated to industrial design, through which Luna won several awards over the course of years. Alongside this work as an industrial designer, he started to develop an interest in both conceptual art and the emerging technologies of the image, an interest that compelled him to make his first short films. According to Luna, his experience as an industrial designer would be important for understanding his continuous emphasis toward objects and spaces in his movies (Weinrichter 84–85).

In 1971, Luna made *El llit. La taula*,[67] an 8-mm short-movie consisting of the superposition of different slides. During the early 70s, he alternated between his work with *Estudio GRIS* and several creative works within the world of artistic design. In 1973, he organized his first individual art exhibition, *Taules*[68] (also 8-mm), and participated in an exposition dedicated to the French Dadaist Marcel Duchamp in the Casino of Cadaqués with a project titled *Taula Marcel Duchamp*.[69] In those years, Luna said,

> [a] mí como diseñador me estaba yendo muy bien, [pero] mis diseños eran un poco 'anti-diseños.' Hacía mesas rotas, sillas que volaban […] Y aquí empezó esta conexión mía al mundo del arte, al mundo de la cultura, donde teoricé un poco que lo que yo quería era ser artista. Quería pintar. Quería seguir con mis mesas. Quería dejar lo del diseño convencional. Y a partir de aquí hubo un proceso teórico donde llegué a la conclusión de que el arte más representativo era

[66] To condense Bigas Luna's *oeuvre* is not an easy task, for he worked extensively in different formats and he always was very curious about the advances in technology and its expressive possibilities. In this chapter, I am focusing mostly on his cinematographic work.

[67] Spanish: *La tabla. La mesa*. English: *The board. The table.* Unless stated otherwise, all translations, from both Catalan and Spanish, are my own. (Word won't let me add marginal comments in footnotes so I have to type it here): Why include the Spanish translations here and elsewhere? The thesis is written in English; the Spanish translation seems superfluous.

[68] Spanish: *Mesas*. English: *Tables*.

[69] Spanish: *Mesa Marcel Duchamp*. English: *Marcel Duchamp Table*.

> el cine y que entonces yo, lo que yo quería era hacer…, ser artista. [70] ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión")

During the early 1970s, he continued to work as an industrial designer while also doing pedagogical activities, printing serigraphs, participating in several art expositions, filming of numerous short-movies, and self-editing his notebooks (Espelt 293–94). Finally, in 1976, he made his first feature--length film, *Tatuaje*,[71] an adaptation of the homonymous novel by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939–2003). Luna conceived of this movie as a way to learn the art of filmmaking. In it, he did not attempt to be too "artistic," and focusing exclusively on how to narrate, in the clearest possible way, a story (Weinrichter 22). However, the film was an enormous failure, and it met with a lot of problems under the censorship regime that continued in the immediate aftermath of Francisco Franco's death (22). In an interview with Marcos Ordóñez, Luna later declared,

> No me gusta mucho hablar de *Tatuaje*, porque tengo poco que decir. Me sirvió para aprender y lamento mucho que me arruinase y arruinara a los que metieron dinero en ella. Se trataba de hacer una primera película y decidimos basarla en un libro de éxito en lugar de hacer un discurso personal […] Para mí supuso una zambullida en el mundo del cine, del que lo desconocía todo. A años vista, creo que se trata de una película digna, bien contada, y que no se merecía el fracaso comercial que tuvo [pero] [d]e todos modos, el lado costumbrista de la película me sigue gustando.[72] (qtd. in Weinrichter 24)

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[70] "I was very successful as a designer, but my designs were 'anti-designs,' actually. I used to make broken tables, flying chairs […] And here is where started this connection with the artistic world, with the world of culture in which I discerned that what I really wanted to be was an artist. I wanted to paint. I wanted to continue with my tables. I wanted to abandon the design in a conventional way. From this point, there was a theoretical process in which I concluded that the most complete art was cinema, and what I wanted was to make…, being an artist."

[71] *Tattoo*. The movie was released in 1979.

[72] "I don't like to talk about *Tatuaje* because I don't have too much to say. Basically, it helped me learn, and I'm sorry it ruined both me and others economically. We only wanted to make our first movie, and we decided to base it on a best-seller rather than attempting to create a personal film […] For me, it [*Tatuaje*] meant immersing myself into the world of movies, about which I was totally ignorant. Seen in retrospective, I think it is a nice, well narrated movie which didn't deserve the economic failure that it had [but], in any case, its costumbrist style still pleases me."

Luna's qualities as a heterodox and *avant-garde* filmmaker were fully revealed in his next film, *Bilbao* (1977), which he made after almost two years of filming many short-movies (most of them inscribed within the pornographic genre[73]), and with the intent of creating a movie totally opposed, aesthetically speaking, to *Tatuaje*. Thus, whereas his first film had been conceived of as a conventional work, Luna attempted the opposite with *Bilbao*, pursuing an "artistic" tone by means of a strong emphasis on the aesthetics of the underground, which he liked very much (27). In *Bilbao* a man, Leo (Ángel Jové), kidnaps a prostitute named Bilbao (Isabel Pisano) and, obsessed with owning her completely, converts her into an object, a thing.[74] Likewise, his subsequent film *Caniche*[75] (1978) is another sordid *tableau* of human primitivism, as well as one of the few films in the Spanish cinema that have dealt with the controversial issue of zoophile. According to Luna, *Caniche* is an experiment on *canantropía* (Weinrichter 36, qtd. in "Caniche").[76] Also, in *Caniche* he starts to consolidate one of the constants of his films: duality. According to Ramón Espelt,

> *Caniche* sigue, de alguna forma, esta investigación (formal y narrativa) de Bigas que se basa muchas veces en el concepto de polos, de polaridad, de contradicción. O sea, convertir un hombre en un animal y ver la parte de animal que todos tenemos.[77] ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión")

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[73] *Cóctel internacional*, *La deportista*, *El espejo*, *El desayuno* or *La guitarrista* are some of these titles, all of them gathered subsequently under the title of *Historias impúdicas*.

[74] When I say "object," I mean not metaphorically, but literally. In this sense, the movie has similarities with titles like Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) or William Wyler's *The collector* (1965). Asked about the resemblance of *Bilbao* to these titles, Luna said that he was very surprised when someone told him about Powell's film (which he had not seen) and discovered such connections. He saw Wyler's film as a sort of unconscious influence because he did not remember too much about it when he made the movie (Weinrichter 81).

[75] *Poodle.*

[76] *Canantropía* (canantrophy – translation of my own) was defined by Luna as "un caso extremo de licantropía incestuosa" (an extreme case of incestuous lycanthropy) (qtd. in "Caniche"). The movie narrates the story of two siblings, Bernardo (Ángel Jové) and Eloísa (Consol Tura), who live in an isolated house in a rich neighborhood of Barcelona. They share their monotonous lives with Dani, a poodle, while they patiently await the death of their rich old aunt to inherit her fortune. Bernardo, jealous of the attentions that Dani receives from his sister (whom he secretively loves) transforms progressively into a dog, even raping other dogs. In spite of this gruesome plot, the movie is a subtle critique of the corruption and stagnation of the late Francoist bourgeoisie.

[77] "*Caniche* continues, to some extent, this (formal and narrative) research by Bigas about polarity, about contradiction. In other words, converting a man into an animal, and then seeing the animal side that all of us have."

Caniche is also the first of Luna's works in which the influence of the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya is tangible, not only because the film shows the house of the two main characters full of Goya's paintings, but also because the film itself reproduces visually many of Goya's *Caprichos,*[78] highlighting the interest of both the Catalonian filmmaker and the Aragonese painter in the interrelation between humanity and animality in Spanish society.

Both *Bilbao* and *Caniche* were conceived of as part of a trilogy that Luna hoped to complete with the adaptation of a novel of his own, titled *Le nen de l'estany.*[79] This film (about the manipulation of child sexuality) never was made. Carolina Sanabria, on her behalf, considers *Bilbao* and *Caniche* as part of a so-called "Black Trilogy," along with Luna's subsequent film *Angustia* (1987). In this trilogy, there is an exploration of "las prácticas de los hombres que parecen rayar en el absurdo,"[80] as well as the pursuit of the dismantling of what was one of the pillars of Francoism: the family. *Bilbao*, *Caniche* and *Angustia* represent families as the location in which "se ponen a pequeña escala las tensiones generadas por las relaciones de poder entre sus miembros, conflictivos y neuróticos éstos, hasta con […] tendencias incestuosas"[81] (Sanabria, 2010: 35).

After finishing *Caniche,* Luna moves to the United States, where he makes *Reborn* in 1981, becoming familiar with the American film industry. Although it is considered a failed film, *Reborn* is actually a key title in his filmography since it seems to have forged his opinion of

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78 Goya's *Caprichos* are a series of eighty prints, published in 1799, with which Goya pursued an artistic experiment to condemn the universal follies and foolishness in the Spanish society. According to Susan Sontag (2003), Goya's *Caprichos* introduced in art "a new standard of responsiveness to suffering" (Sontag 45) because every print contained a sentence to define the horror that was exposed, converting every image in "an invitation to look," as well as to consider the difficulty of doing just that (45).

79 Spanish: *El niño del estanque*. English: *The boy of the lake.*

80 "[…] the practices of men which seem to be completely absurd."

81 "[…]the tensions that are created by power relationships are put in a small scale, and in where those who practice those power relationships are conflictive, neurotic and have incestuous tendencies."

Hollywood filmmaking and U.S. culture. *Reborn* is a story about tele-evangelism in the early year of Ronald Reagan's presidency. Along with the exposition of religious organizations' tyrannical power structures, from which it is very difficult to be freed, the film asks if the so-called melting-pot of the United States can survive in a country in which a strong conservatism is resurging after the liberalism of the 1960s and the 1970s (Benet 3). "Para él fue más una aventura," Luna's daughter Betty says: "Él quería descubrir esa sociedad y tal… y entonces se fueron allí, con mi madre y un grupo de amigos un poco a… a descubrir Estados Unidos y, una vez allí, sí, le encantó y decidió hacer una película"[82] ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión"). Although Luna learned a lot about the art of making movies, the film's production was complicated, and it seems that in the end, Luna's experience with the U.S. film industry was poor ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión"). Scholars tend to see this episode in Luna's life as one of the sources of his growing interest in Spanish cultural identity based on an opposition to American culture (Wharton 137; Sanabria, 2010: 76).

In general, the decade of the 1980s was a time of transition for Luna, in which he sought to move from the darkness of his first works toward more luminous and accessible stories. After returning to Barcelona from the United States, he directed *Lola*[83] in 1985, trying to make a more commercial movie and anticipating some of the style that he developed during the 1990s. Even though it is still a dark film,[84] *Lola* has a lighter style, less cryptic and depressive than his

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82 "For him that was a kind of adventure. He wanted to discover that society, and he went with my mother and some friends to discover the United States. Once they were there, he realized that he liked it, and he decided to make a movie."

83 *Lola.*

84 *Lola* also sketches some of the themes that Luna will explore in *Jamón, jamón,* especially those concerned with the relationship between body and nation. In this sense, when Lola (Ángela Molina) escapes from her jealous, aggressive and alcoholic boyfriend Mario (Feodor Atkiné), marrying with Robert (Patrick Boucheau), Luna establishes a dichotomy between a savage Spanish man (Mario), and an cultivated, rational, cosmopolitan French-European man (Robert), suggesting (just like it occurs in *Jamón, jamón*) that the salvation of Lola is not in Spain but in Europe.

previous works, with a more luminous tonality in the texture of the image. *Angustia*[85] (1987), on the other hand, is a return to his origins, a sort of *aggiornamento* of *Bilbao* and *Caniche*. Along with Bilbao, it is considered Luna's other masterpiece, as well as one of his films that he appreciated the most. Filmed in Barcelona, *Angustia* has the appearance of an American movie: the location, actors, and names of the characters all call to mind a U.S. movie of the 1980s. The film narrates the story of a mother and a son (Zelda Rubinstein[86] and Michael Lerner) who have an oedipal relationship. He is a psychopath who enjoys takin the eyes of his victims out, and she controls him by means of hypnosis. The originality of *Angustia*, however, relies on its turning point after the first thirty minutes. In that moment, we the spectators discover that what we have seen up until then is actually a movie which is being projected in a theater. The second half of a movie is the narration of what happens in that theater, where another psychopath (Ángel Jové) kills several people in the same way that the psychopath of the movie does. At the end, both films (the film that we the spectators watch, and the movie that the people of the theater watch) converge.

Angustia was an important success, both commercially and critically, and today it maintains a cult status in both inside and outside Spain. Shortly after its release, however, Pepón Coromina (1946–87), who had financed all of Luna's earlier films and was a close friend of his, died. Depressed, Luna moved to Tarragona to dedicate a few years to painting and to spend some time alone. He returned to filmmaking in 1990, when producer Andrés Vicente Gómez convinced him to direct the filmic adaptation of the Spanish writer Almudena Grandes' novel

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85 *Anguish*.

86 Between the fans of the fantastic and the *fandom*, it is well known that Rubinstein's role was firstly offered to the American actress Bette Davis (1908-89). Davis expressed her interest in the role, but her delicate health impeded her to travel to Barcelona, and to participate in the movie (Santos Gargallo in "Angustia"). Davis would die in 1989 in Paris, one week after she received an honorific prize for her whole career in the Donostia-San Sebastian International Film Festival (Spain).

Las edades de Lulú,[87] a movie that achieved enormous commercial success. Along with *Jamón, jamón*, *Las edades de Lulú* does serve as a turning point in Luna's career, after which Luna became well known by the public. He began work on the so-called "Iberian Trilogy" of *Jamón, jamón* (1992), *Huevos de oro* (1993), and *La teta i la lluna* (1994). Together, the films form a series "que termina de marcar una inflexión con respecto a la trilogía anterior, puesto que al explicitar una situación geopolítica interesa mostrar tanto la trascendencia del medio –por eso despunta un mayor empleo de planos largos– como el desarrollo de los personajes"[88] (Sanabria, 2010: 62). It is, in brief, a conscious attempt to build the concept of cultural specificity called *hispanidad* by means of showing the Iberian peninsula's political, economic and cultural fragmentation from different signs, cultural practices and stereotypes as, for example, the bull and the bullfighting (*Jamón, jamón*), the Catalonian *castellers*[89] (*La teta i la lluna*), the *hortera*[90] (*Huevos of oro*), or the idea of the Iberian virility in the trilogy as a whole (62).

Jamón, jamón, *Huevos de oro* and *La teta i la lluna* received the recognition of both the European public and critics, helping Luna make *Bámbola* (1996) and *La femme de chambre du Titanic*[91] (1997), both of them with international casts. Whereas the former, a tragic, violent, and sexually explicit film, was an enormous failure, the latter surprised everyone with its melancholic, elegant tone and almost fairy tale narrative. Both *Bámbola* and *La femme de chambre du Titanic* were originally conceived as part of a new Luna's trilogy (the Mediterranean

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87 *The Ages of Lulu*.

88 The Iberian Trilogy is a series "which marks a turning point with regard to Luna's previous trilogybecause, through its exploration of a geopolitical situation, it attempts to show the transcendence of the landscape –thus the use of long shots-as much as the development of characters."

89 A *castell* is a human tower built in festivals at many locations in Catalonia. In Catalan, *castell* means "castle."

90 Vulgarian, philistine. According to the Real Academia Española de la Lengua, the *hortera* is a vulgar and tasteless person (def. 1). The term is utilized by Spaniards to label people who are ostentatious and pretend to be sophisticated, but who lack of education and manners. Many times (and this is the meaning that Luna remarks in *Huevos de oro*), the term is associated with people who have become rich very fast, but who have been unable to improve their rude attitude and their ignorance. Thus, in *Huevos de oro* Luna claims that the fast prosperity of the country because of the economic bubble and the corruption has invaded Spain of *horteras*.

91 In Spanish: *La camarera del Titanic*. In English: *The Chambermaid on the Titanic*.

Trilogy), composed of a third title (*Carmen, el destino*) which was never made.

Luna's filmography continued with *Volavérunt*[92] (1999) and *Son de mar* (2000).[93] *Volavérunt*[94] is an adaptation of the homonymous novel by Uruguayan Antonio Larreta (1922–2015), depicting the murder of the 40-year-old Duchess of Alba (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón) on the night of July 23rd, 1802, after a dinner with some of the most important personalities of Spain's aristocracy, their lovers and the painter Francisco de Goya (Jorge Perugorría). *Son de mar* is another filmic adaptation of a novel, by Spanish novelist Manuel Vicent (b. 1936), who wrote the screenplay as well. Set on the Levantine coast of Spain, *Son de mar* is sometimes included within the aforementioned Mediterranean Trilogy (Sanabria, 2010: 103), though Luna never stated this and preferred to connect the film with the Iberian Trilogy (qtd. in Portaceli n.p.).

With his short-film *Collar de moscas*[95] (2001), Luna returned to his interest in innovative experimentation and small audiovisual formats. His staging of Ramón del Valle-Inclán's trilogy of *Comedias bárbaras*[96] (2003) for the *Bienal de Valencia*[97] is another noteworthy project of Luna's during the early 2000s. According to Luna himself, the staging was a request of the Greek actress Irene Papas (b. 1926), a great connoisseur of the work of the Spanish writer ("El faro de Alejandría: Bigas Luna"), and was meant to be a sumptuous exercise of intertextuality in which Luna combined theater, live music, gastronomy, sculptures with a strong sexual component, digital formats and video-art (Sanabria, 2010: 118).

In 2006, he released *Yo soy la Juani*,[98] a film about the urban peripheries. Intended as a

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92 *Volavérunt* is also the name of the Francisco de Goya's 61st *capricho*, dated on 1799. According to the Real Academia Española de la lengua, *Volavérunt* is used to indicate that something is missed, or lost, or has disappeared ("volavérunt").

93 *Sound of the Sea*.

94 *Volavérunt*.

95 *A Necklace of Flies*.

96 *Savage Acts.*

97 Biennial of Valencia.

98 *My name is Juani.*

purely commercial project, the movie confused both critics and the public, not only for its content (a sort of homage of the pejoratively so-called culture of *chonis* and *canis*[99]), but also for the way it was done –by combining, just like he had done with *Comedias bárbaras*, different formats and textualities, including video-clips, videogames and text messages. From the perspective of today, the movie seems less shocking, however, and we can appreciate its innovative nature. It narrates the story of Juani Jurado (Verónica Echégui), who lives in a poor suburb of a city, and whose life is reduced to working in a store and spending the weekends partying with her boyfriend Jonah (Dani Martín) and her best friend Vane (Laya Martí). All the money she earns is spent on "tuning"[100] Jonah's car and buying clothes and accessories that, to some extent, help her express an inner creativity. One day, she decides to pursue her dream of becoming an actress, and moves with Vane to Madrid. In the beginning, she thinks it will be easy. But with no training and no contacts, achieving her goal becomes an arduous task. The movie ends with Juani taking her ambition seriously and deciding to work hard to accomplish her goals. As with others of Luna's films, the movie was released along with complementary material, in this case a documentary describing the production of the movie and, at the same time, the world of the Spanish urban peripheries during the 2000s' economic bubble. This is a world in which everything is reduced to materialist consumption, and in which that consumption is also used as a creative tool aimed to fight against the lack of vital perspectives, unqualified jobs and, in general, misery: "Vio este mundo, ¿no?," Luna's screenwriter Carmen Chaves says, "que nos atraía mucho: [el mundo] de las poligoneras,[101] gente con muy pocas oportunidades,

[99] There is neither definition nor translation of *choni* and *cani*. Both are used as pejorative labels for teenagers who live in working-class neighborhoods of Spanish urban peripheries; people who do not have much money or future prospects, but who are able to combine cheap jewelry and clothes in order to have the appearance of rich, elegant people. Despite its offensive connotation, both labels have been reclaimed as a source of pride by these teenagers.

[100] Car styling.

[101] The word *poligonera* is not accepted by the Real Academia Española de la lengua, and there is not

pero muy luchadora y… sin posibles de dinero, pero con mucha creatividad" ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión")[102]. Luna always talked enthusiastically about *Yo soy la Juani* and the fascination that the teenagers of urban peripheries produced in him: "Ellos son, los pequeños héroes de nuestra cotidianidad […] Son capaces de influir en la moda llevando un par de pendientes de plástico y vistiendo una minifalda y una chaqueta de chándal" (qtd. in Robles n.p.)[103], he claimed. Because Luna's filmography is easily divisible into trilogies, *Yo soy la Juani* has also seen as part of a trilogy along with *Bilbao* and *Jamón, jamón*. In this sense, Catherine Bourland Ross (2008) sees these three titles as a trilogy aimed at using both the female body and images of Spain "to underline the immutable Spanishness of Spain, its consistent ability to be unique unto itself," throughout the years, "and to emphasize the constantly changing international importance of Spain [t]hrough his filmic structure, images of sexuality, and focus on consumerism" (Bourland Ross 63). The use of objects and cultural symbols as mere commodities is very present in *Yo soy la Juani*, which makes the movie an interesting depiction of the Spanish society during the economic bubble of the 2000s.

Yo soy la Juani was actually originally conceived as the first title of a new trilogy, not dedicated to explore the issue of Spanishness, but dedicated to explore the world of fame and success. In the beginning, the second title of the trilogy was going to be *La Juani en Hollywood* (Robles n.p.), thus continuing Juani's adventures after the first movie. However, the unexpected economic yield of *Yo soy la Juani* led Luna to leave aside the character of Juani, and to rewrite

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translation to English. In the Spanish colloquial speech, it is way in which is labeled the kind of girl who lives in the industrial suburbs of big cities, usually with low income and coming from a working class family, but who normally is dressed up. The masculine word is *poligonero*. *Yo soy la Juani* is a story of *poligoneros* and *poligoneras*.

[102] "that world was so attractive to us, [the world] of *poligoneras* [girls of industrial areas], of people without many opportunities, but very courageous and… without money, but with a lot of creativity."

[103] "They are the little heroes of our daily lives [because] [t]hey are able to influence the fashion world by wearing a pair of plastic earrings and putting on a short skirt and the jacket from a sweat suit."

the story with another female character and a more popular actress. *Di Di Hollywood*[104] (2010) thus was interpreted by Elsa Pataky (b. 1976), an actress better known by Spanish audiences. She plays the role of Diana Díaz, a bar worker who goes to Hollywood to pursue a career as an actress. When the agent she hires, Michael McLean (Peter Coyote), gives her false hopes, Diana's quest for fame is revealed as a very bitter experience. Compared with *Yo soy la Juani*, *Di Di Hollywood* revealed itself as a tasteless and uninteresting film, despite Pataky's performance. It is not considered one of the best Luna's films (Torreiro n.p.).

Before the making of *Di Di Hollywood*, in 2008, Luna had prepared the exhibition *Ingestum*, a staging about the concept of origin and its connections with food, water, blood and milk for the Valencian IVAM[105]. The same year, he also exhibited *Lonas y osos*[106] in the gallery "La cerverina," in the town of Cervera (Lérida). In 2009, he inaugurated the exposition *Ninots*,[107] in Torino (Italy), and assumed the direction of the cabaret "El plata," in the city of Zaragoza. In 2012, he started to work on *Segundo origen*,[108] an adaptation of the novel *Mecanoscrit del segon origen*[109] by Manuel de Pedrolo (1918–90) which he planned to be released in 2013. However, his sudden death stopped the project.

The death of Bigas Luna surprised the Spanish artistic world. His legacy covers not only his (long and short) films, but also more than 200 paintings and drawings, (incomplete) literary works, performances, theatrical stagings, TV spots and photographs. He used to like to quote Spanish painter Ignacio Zuloaga's sentence ("Hay que atreverse con todo y chiflarse con

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104 *Di Di Hollywood*.

105 *Institut Valencià d'Art Modern*. In Spanish: *Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno.* In English: *Valencian Institute of Modern Art*.

106 *Canvas and Bears.*

107 According to the *Real Academia Española* (Spanish Royal Academy), *ninot* is "cada una de las figuras que forman parte de una falla" [every figure that make a *falla* [papier mâché figure made for festival]] ("ninot" def. 1). *Ninot* is the Catalonian word for *niño*, *chico* (guy).

108 Second Origin.

109 In Spanish: *Mecanoscrito del segundo origen*. In English: *Second Origin Typescript.*

todo"[110]) to synthesize his motto, and his work comes to represents such a statement. Luna never discriminated between high or popular culture, and he always tried to see the expressive possibilities of everything surrounding him: "Vengo de un país muy pobre," he said once, "[y eso] es algo que me gusta asumir en su vertiente creativa"[111] (qtd. in Weinrichter 17).

As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, to condense Luna's oeuvre is not an easy task. My purpose in this chapter has been to offer a very general overview of his filmic work in order to contextualize, in general, the position that the Iberian Trilogy occupies within his filmography and, in particular, the position of *Jamón, jamón* as an aesthetical (though not thematic) turning point from a first half characterized by darkness and the cryptic, to a second half characterized by luminosity and more accessible narratives. Moreover, it has been my objective here to emphasize Luna's interest in objects and symbols, and their expressive possibilities, mostly due to his previous professional experience as an industrial designer. The use of objects and cultural symbols, their expressive possibilities, and their re-semanticization thus are part of his filmography, things that are also found in *Jamón, jamón*.

110 "Someone has to dare, and be enthused, with everything."

111 "I come from a very poor country, and that is something that I like to assume creatively."

CHAPTER 3

According to the Spanish film critic Ángel Fernández Santos, when *Jamón, jamón* was premiered at the Venezia Film Festival, critical opinion on it was divided ("Bigas Luna y su *Jamón, jamón* provocan una intensa oleada de opinioes" n.p.). Although Luna's previous film *Las edades de Lulú* (1990) had already signaled an aesthetically significant shift in his career, the use in *Jamón, jamón* of an apparently conventional narrative seemed to certify the definite end of a phase in his career which had been characterized by formal experimentation. The film provoked general surprise, and resulted in a formidable economic success both inside and outside Spain. It is still considered the turning point in the career of the Catalonian filmmaker, as well as his biggest international hit. *Jamón, jamón* is the first film of Luna's "Iberian Trilogy," composed of *Huevos de oro* (1993) and *La teta i la lluna* (1994) whose purpose was, according to Carolina Sanabria (2007), "[una] reflexión consciente en el redescubrimiento de lo local"[112] (Sanabria, 2007: 7).

The release of *Jamón, jamón* in 1992, a year that represents a sort of landmark in contemporary Spain's history, seems paradoxical in retrospect. For Spain, 1992 was a sort of test of its definitive inclusion into modernity. The confluence of many international events (the Olympic Games of Barcelona, the Universal Exposition in Seville, and the designation of Madrid as both the European Capital of Culture and the host of the Ibero-American Summit) flooded the country with multiple acts, attracting international attention. In Spain's former Prime Minister Felipe González's words,[113] 1992 was "el año de España,"[114] in which the country offered an image of discipline, professionalism and modernity, and positioned itself within the orbit of other

[112] "[a] conscious reflection on the rediscovery of the local."
[113] Felipe González (b. 1942) was Spain's Primer Minister from 1982 to 1996.
[114] "The year of Spain." - Qtd. in "1992, el año en que España se creyó capital mundial con Felipe González." *La Sexta*. 1 April 2016. Web. 13 April 2016.

Western countries.[115] In this context in which an intensely desired sensation of normalcy and acceptance into modernity finally seemed accomplished, it is paradoxical that Luna (up until then considered an *avant-garde* filmmaker) decided to make a film like *Jamón, jamón*, in which many of the cultural stereotypes about Spaniards that had always been considered symbols of backwardness by Spaniards themselves were praised. As Ramón Freixas stated in his review of the film for the magazine *Dirigido por*, Bigas Luna depicted with precision "la España de puticlubs, de jubilados, de carretera y polvo: la idiosincrática España de ajo arriero y tortilla de patatas con cebolla"[116] (qtd. in Deleyto 271); a part of Spain, in brief, pejoratively labeled as "España profunda" because of its connotations with the rural and the backward.[117]

The choice to set *Jamón, jamón* in the desert of Los Monegros in a year, 1992, associated with modernity, is not casual. Luna takes a landscape which had been considered for many years the trademark of Spanishness, and to praise it again in a moment in which Spain's freedom after the death of Francisco Franco "metamorphosed into corruption and greed against the backdrop of increasing globalization," eroding of national identity and pride (Wharton 134). It is necessary to remark here the fact that the fifteen years that separate the beginning of democracy (1978) and the release of *Jamón, jamón* had witnessed the displacement of this landscape, associated with Castile and Aragon and previously considered the most representative of the Spanishness, in favor of the Southern and Mediterranean coasts (as well as the cosmopolitism of urban centers like Madrid or Barcelona), considered more representative of modern Spain. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, two situations thus converge: on the one hand, there was a

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[115] According to Fernando Morán (Spanish diplomat and politician who served as Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1982 to 1985), the Spanish Transition did end with the entry of Spain into the European Common Market in 1986 (qtd. in Morán n.p. 31 March 1996). This assertion expresses the idea that Europe was, in those years, a synonym of progress and modernity, characteristics that Spaniards perceived they lacked of, but which seemed finally achievable with that entry into the ECM.

[116] "the Spain of whore houses, jubilees, highway and dust: the idiosyncratic Spain of garlic and Spanish omelets with onion."

[117] "España profunda" [Deep Spain] and "España negra" are terms used indistinctively. See footnote 2.

rejection of a landscape (the Castilian landscape) which, though it had been praised during Francisco Franco's dictatorship as the most accurate representation of Spanishness, had been rejected after the death of the dictator in favor of those landscapes (the coasts, the South) which before had been labeled as merely exotic and touristic, becoming during the 1980s the paradigmatic representation of modern Spain. On the other hand, there grew a progressive sensation between Spaniards that, despite the overcome of the idea of the country's backwardness with regard to other European nations, increasing globalization was attacking the cultural roots of the country.

Parallels between the historical context in which *Jamón, jamón* is located, and the context wherein the '98ers and writers, artists and intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century developed their works can be established here. In the first place, both moments represent a time of change in Spain's history. Also, both periods force Spaniards to reconsider issues of national identity. At the turn-of-the-century, thinkers and artists put Spain as an object of study, and to define the essence of a Spanishness became a crucial purpose. Thinkers and artists question what the role of Spain is once its perception of abnormality within the European continent seems overcome. Unlike the films made during Spain's dictatorship (which explored Spain's history in order to praise it), or the films of the decade of the 1980s (which looked back in history to explore themes that had previously been censored), *Jamón, jamón* focuses on the cultural aspects of recent Spain rather than on its history, also taking advantage of the fact that enough time has passed since the end of Franco's dictatorship to look back with a certain distance and analytical thinking (Evans 20).

During the decade of the 1980s many filmmakers explored Spain's history either by

establishing parallels with familial structures (Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's *La mitad del cielo*,[118] 1979), or by analyzing the issue of political dissidence during Franco's dictatorship (Julio Sánchez Valdés' *Luna de lobos* [1987],[119] and Pilar Miró's *Beltenebros*[120] [1991]), among other topics. Luna's purpose in *Jamón, jamón* is to explore with irony the ideological structures of Spanish society, such as male chauvinism, familial relationships, or the conflict between tradition and modernity, but not making reference to the aforementioned dictatorial period (21). In his exploration of the ideological structures of the Spanish society, he utilizes sex as the means to accomplish his goal. The use of sex in the Iberian Trilogy was necessary because because, according to Luna, passion is its defining characteristic. He claimed: "*Jamón, jamón, Huevos de oro* y *La teta y la luna* son tres películas que hemos querido que fueran profundamente ibéricas y pasionales porque, como dice Borges, 'no se puede contemplar sin pasión.' Para mí ha sido un gran viaje por Iberia" (Luna and Canals 7).[121]

Luna's purpose in *Jamón, jamón* is therefore to analyze visually Spanishness or, in other words, to analyze what makes Spain culturally distinctive in a context of increasing depersonalization at the end of the twentieth century as a result of globalization. In this sense, his purpose is not too different from what writers and intellectuals like Ortega, Ganivet and other '98ers did at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The difference between him and the former relies, however, on the way he approaches this project. Metaphysically, Luna observes Spain as a location in which many particularities coexist, and in where they *are* the essence of Spanishness. In this point, he seems to agree with Ortega's

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118 *Half of Heaven.*

119 *Moon of Wolves* – My translation. As far as I know, there is no official English translation of this title.

120 *Prince of Shadows.*

121 "*Jamón, jamón*, *Huevos de oro* and *La teta i la lluna* are three movies that we wanted them to be profoundly Iberian and passionate because, as [Jorge Luis] Borges says: 'one cannot see without passion.' For me, this has been a great trip throughout Iberia."

statement that differences in the Iberian Peninsula are necessary to construct the concept of Spanishness (Ortega 27–28), but, unlike Ortega, Luna does not think that those differences must be surrendered to a Castilian ideal. Instead, the Castilian identity is just another identity within the puzzle of regionalisms that compose the totality of Spanishness. Aesthetically, Luna approaches the endeavor of the Iberian Trilogy by creating three passionate stories, as he sees Spain as a passionate country. Next, he does not ignore the new political context in which Spain is integrated, inexistent one century before: in 1992, Spain is already part of the European Common Market–European Union, as well as an active agent in the construction of the global economy. On the other hand, it is a peripheral country when compared with other Western nations, such as France, United Kingdom or Germany: "El ordenador y el jamón conviven hoy en España en una gran armonía. Posiblemente uno de los pocos países donde el culto a lo animal y la tecnología conviven," Luna said (Luna and Canals 9).[122] Finally, Luna faces his task of analyzing Spanishness with an expressive tool which was in its early stages for the '98ers: film. Whereas Ortega and Ganivet used the written word, Luna utilizes the visual image.

In his book *Dark Laughter* (2013), Juan Egea remarks how Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, despite its groundbreaking status in the study of the nature of nationalism, barely deals with visual images in the construction of national identities (Egea 11).[123] Because Anderson dates the need to imagine the nation "towards the end of the eighteenth century" (Anderson 11), Egea argues that film as a form of expression which was inexistent in that moment, rather than imagining a community, helps

> in the refashioning (or reimagining) of a community that […] has been imagining

[122] "Computers and ham coexist in today's Spain harmoniously. Probably, [Spain] is one of the few countries of the world where the cult toward of the animal and the technology coexist."

[123] Examples of those punctual uses of image, see Anderson (1983), chapter 1 (section "Apprehensions of Time").

> itself with only very limited assistance from the real of the visual. In other words, cinema supplies the most forceful images, the images that move, in the business of imagining oneself as part of a geopolitical and cultural community. (Egea 12)

Bigas Luna's *Jamón, jamón* thus reimagines topics about the Spanish nation which had previously been imagined by others, here the '98ers. In other words, he synthesizes and reimagines what had previously been imagined by people like Ortega or Ganivet (i.e., the aforementioned confrontation between openness and isolation of Spain) by means of a set of signs which have been seen as elements of Spanishness, yet not as the "quality of being Spanish but […] the quality of being Spanish as it is thought and written about and filmed into existence" (13).

According to the sociologist José Luis Sangrador García, stereotypes are "not only a reflection of reality, [but] they help to create it" (qtd. in Fouz y Hernández 15). Mazzara also explains how, even though there are socio-historical reasons which assist in the formation of stereotypes, people actually have a need both to simplify reality and to recognize "others," along with the need to belong to a group that shares some of their characteristics, whether those characteristics are the product of generalizations or not (Mazzara 93). With regard to the issue of maleness, *Jamón, jamón* can be read "as the story of the [stereotype of the] Spanish male's self-deluding fantasy of his own sexual and social potency in an age of radical economic change" (D'Lugo 70), thereby reimagining his role within the national sense of self.

Although the character of Raúl has been seen as a representation of the stereotypical Iberian *macho ibérico*, it is important to mention here that this image of the Spanish male body has not always been rigid in Spanish cinema. Instead, when thinking of the stereotypical representation of the Spanish male in Spanish cinema, most Spaniards still tend to think of the characters portrayed by actors like José Luis López Vázquez (1922–2009), Antonio Ozores

(1928–2010), or Alfredo Landa (1933–2013), very far away from the *macho ibérico* image that an actor like Javier Bardem entails in Luna's film. Certainly, that so-called "average Spaniard" of the so-called Francoist *comedia celtibéricas* and the *destape* films that followed the dictatorship was also considered "the epitome of Spanish maleness" (Jordan and Allison 127), but rather than the strong, muscular and healthy man that Raúl signifies in *Jamón, jamón*, he was a "short […], balding, a little overweight and not good-looking" man (126) from whom, "when stripped down to his underwear, the sight of his bent legs always seemed guarantee a good laugh" (Fouz-Hernandez & Martinez Esposito 11). Additionally, men in those type of comedies became a symbol of the "surface of embarrassment" that revealed the contrast between "fantasies of endless sexual activity" and "the reality of anxious and incompetent lovers" that characterized these narratives (Pavlović 82). For many years, this "average Spaniard" was the dominant stereotype of masculinity in Spanish cinema because, despite the embarrassment, the fantasies of endless sexual activity and the reality of incompetency as lovers, these *comedias celtibéricas* also celebrated an interest in the so-called *producto nacional*[124] that foreign females had discovered when they started to flood Spain in the beginning of the 1960s thanks to the touristic boom (Fouz-Hernandez & Martinez Esposito 11).

While the *destape* films that followed the dictatorship were prodigal in the exposure of female bodies, male actors usually kept most of their clothes on, thus accentuating the "objectification of women and the self-confidence of men, who rarely had to expose their own bodies or put under scrutiny their physical adequacy as sex symbols" (12). The decade of the 1980s gradually changed this attitude towards the male body in Spanish cinema. The success of filmmakers like Eloy de la Iglesia (1944–2006) and Pedro Almodóvar (b. 1949), as well as the

[124] National product. "Product" is understood in this expression as everything that is Spanish. In the context of the paragraph above, the product is the man.

presence of good-looking actors like Imanol Arias (b. 1956), Antonio Banderas (b. 1960) or Jorge Sanz (b. 1969) introduced the possibility of exploring the male body more openly, as an object of desire, by means of the inclusion of sequences of explicit sex in which both male and female actors shared identical exposure.

Spanish cinema in the decade of the 1990s sought to blur the differences between the Spanish male and his Northern European counterpart, thus placing the Spanish man within a modernized global context of "metrosexuality." The metrosexual man was (is) a man who was (is) both aware of his appearance and took care of it (14), as well as someone sensible, polite and cosmopolitan. In addition to this repositioning within the European context, the Spanish male body was also repositioned inside Spain, thanks to the new *autonomías* (devolved administrative territories) that were constituted with the arrival of democracy. Therefore, filmmakers of the 1990s and 2000s pursued the (mostly humorous) depiction of Spain's stereotyped diversity far away from the former pejorative or exotic connotations that had been often ignored from a certain norm sustained on the Castilian model.[125]

Chronologically, *Jamón, jamón* is located in a period of transition in which former stereotypes coexist with new approaches towards the male body. The resulting tension from this location in a period of transition is projected in *Jamón, jamón*. The narrative of the film is, according to Marvin D'Lugo,

> informed by a dialectical tension between a pristine sense of Spanish tradition and

[125] Fouz-Hernandez and Martinez Esposito mentions Labanyi's work on the Andalusian stereotype in the cinema during Francisco Franco's dictatorship to illustrate how the dominion of Castilian values and aesthetics in Franco's dictatorship converted in exotic other identities in the Iberian Peninsula. Labanyi explains how the gypsies exploited their own stereotype (with both the Spanish bourgeoisie and the tourists) because it was in their interest, adding that the "the colonized subject can subvert the stereotype projected over it by imitating to the point of excess, in a parodic way, in a type of transvestism that demonstrates its falsehood" (qtd. in Fouz-Hernandez & Martinez Esposito 11). Example of the new approach toward the different stereotypes during the 1990s and the 2000s would be Juanma Bajo Ulloa's *Airbag* (1996) or, more recently, Emilio Martínez-Lázaro's dyptich *Ocho apellidos vascos* (2014) and *Ocho apellidos catalanes* (2015).

> the entrepreneurial exploitation of that tradition […][,] mirrored in the motivations of the film's principal characters, its formulation of narrative space, and, most conspicuously, its development of a series of exaggerated cultural symbols and motifs. (D'Lugo 69)

The most remarkable problem that the Spain of the neoliberal era faces is, Luna seems to say, the menace of a loss of personality. This concern of his is found in the Iberian Trilogy (especially in *Huevos de oro* and *La teta i la lluna*[126]), and it is connected with his American experience in the early 1980s, which helped him reconsider his view toward Spain. He said:

> Mi estancia en Estados Unidos… Una cosa que yo valoro más desde un punto de vista cinematográfico y cultural es que pude ver mi país desde fuera. […] Estamos en un país "complicao." Un país muy especial. España es un país… en fin, maravilloso, pero muy especial. Como español, ver tu país desde fuera es un ejercicio que yo recomiendo mucho a cualquier español porque… porque es un país que tiene "miga." […] La película que he podido hacer gracias a haber estado fuera de España ha sido *Jamón, jamón*, *Huevos de oro* y *La teta y la luna*, que son… Pude ver mi país y pude ver lo bueno y quererlo más de lo que lo quería, y pude ver lo malo y odiarlo más de lo que lo odiaba.[127] ("Conversaciones en la aljafería")

The problem of a Spanishness that seems to be disappearing because of an increasing integration into the global economy is not new in Spain's history. If it is considered that, as Ganivet stated in *Idearium*, Spain's history is the history of a nation whose stoicism is constantly tested, in this sense Luna is not exposing a new problem for Spain's cultural identity, but the repetition of something that seems inherent in the Spanish soul: the test of its stoicism against

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[126] In *Huevos de oro*, the main character Benito (Javier Bardem) dreams of the possibility of going to the U.S. to make business, but once there he ends as an illegal immigrant who, furious, blames he is fed up of "las hamburguesas, y el pollo frito, y el puto café americano que no sabe una puta mierda" [the hamburgers, and the fried chicken, and the fucking American coffee which tastes like fucking shit]. In *La teta i la lluna*, Teté (Biel Durán) dreams of the possibility of removing the U.S. flag on the moon, replacing it with the European Union flag.

[127] "My stay in the US… One thing I really appreciate, both cinematographically and culturally speaking is that I could see my country from abroad. […] We are in a very complicated country, a very special country. Spain is a country…, well, wonderful but very special. As Spaniard, to see your own country from abroad is an exercise I recommend a lot to any Spaniard because… because Spain is a country with substance. […] The movies that I have been able to do thanks to my stay abroad have been *Jamón, jamón*, *Huevos de oro* and *La teta y la luna*, which are… Well, I could see my country and I could see the good (and love it much more than I used to), and the bad (and hate it much more than I used to)."

external forces that seem to diminish its identity. In other words, the cultural menace that the inclusion of the country within the global economy market represents is not very different, for example, from the menace that Ganivet visualized with regard to Europe at the end of the nineteenth century or, further back on history, the menace that Felipe II saw in Protestantism against the Catholic roots of the country.

Although this issue of Spanishness that Luna explores in the Iberian Trilogy can be seen as similar to the issue that the '98ers discussed in the past, he faces his task of exploring it in a different way from Ortega's and Ganivet's, depicting Spain's culturally diversity as a positive element of identity rather than a negative one, attempting at the same time to overcome the dichotomy between isolation and openness that Ganivet and Ortega discussed in *Idearium* and *España invertebrada*. In other words, Luna reimagines with the camera what had been previously imagined. This attempt of his, incidentally, repositions the location of Spain with regard to Europe as well. That is, while Ganivet and Ortega discussed a scenario in which the relationship between Spain and Europe was seen either as opposed (Ganivet) or as something necessary (Ortega), the introduction of the menace of depersonalization due to a global economy market repositions the European scenario as a space in which Spain's diversity may be preserved. Europe thus is not seen as an enemy anymore, but as a location which can accommodate both the preservation of a national identity (in turn composed of many regional identities) and the demands of an international market whose *raison d'être* is the commercialization of objects, people, culture, etc. *Jamón, jamón* is therefore "a film that serves as a contestatory text, questioning the static forms of traditional Spanish culture while resemanticizing the representation of that culture around notions of multinational commodification" (D'Lugo 68). Homi K. Bhaba's essay "DissemiNation" (1991) conceptualizes

D'Lugo's statement about the re-semanticization of the representation of a [the Spanish] culture by observing that, when attempting to create a national culture, different national cultures shift and develop a "critique of the fixed and stable forms of the nationalist narrative," making imperative "to question those Western theories of the horizontal, homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative" (Bhabha 303). Luna's Iberian Trilogy as a whole exemplifies, I think, this statement by Bhabha: by means of cultural symbols that were always the object of controversy and confrontation, he achieves their unification into a whole in order to contest the cultural implications that the inclusion of the country within the expected modernity can imply.

According to Luna, *Jamón, jamón* is the story of a kidnapping: the kidnapping of desire by Europe (Luna and Canals 35). Scholars have mostly explored this film in terms of the relationship between space, femininity and Spanishness (Deleyto, 1999; D'Lugo 1995), paying less attention to the relationship between the male body and Spanishness. Apart from the character of Raúl, from which "critical attention has tended to concentrate on the ideologically suspect display of 'machismo'" (Deleyto 270), an approach towards the three main male characters together within the issue of Spanishness has not been fully developed. In *Jamón, jamón*, the desire is embodied by Silvia (Penélope Cruz), from whom the debate of Ganivet and Ortega around the need for isolation or openness to overcome a situation of cultural crisis emerges. The three male characters of the story, Raúl (embodying a traditional Spain), José Luis (embodying a Spain progressively globalized and depersonalized), and Manuel (embodying a Spain which looks at the European continent and seems to offer a middle point between a complete isolation and a complete openness) compete for owning her, that is, for owning the desire that Spain signifies for Luna.

Raúl embodies Spain's interior. He is the symbol of the "secano, de lo más profundo de

Iberia. El chico del paquete. Repartidor de jamones en la empresa 'Hernán Cortés y Hermanos. Chorizos y jamones'" (Luna and Canals 31).[128] José Luis, on his belhaf, is "[e]l niño de la costa. Trabaja siempre para su padre […] La Visa Oro [es] su favorita. Las marcas son su obsesión. No tiene cojones para nada […] Su madre es la madre-puta. Termina en los brazos de Carmen, la puta-madre" (33).[129] Manuel is "[l]a voz de Europa. El poder" (35).[130] He is the North, whose destiny is in the South (Silvia), to whom he kidnaps (35).

Jamón, jamón begins with a shot of a Spanish road under the *testículos* (testicles) of what is known as a "Osborne" bull. In the Spanish language, the testicles are also named *cojones*,[131] and are a symbol of masculinity. The "Osborne" bull is a former brandy advertisement featuring a black bull, yet in this shot no bull is contemplated.[132] Instead, Luna films the back side of the advertisement, only concentrating the attention in the testicles and the landscape that is below: the arid, dry and quasi-lunar desert of Los Monegros, in Northern Spain.[133] The credits sequence thus gives the clue of how Luna is going to observe Spain: by means of "the manipulation of point of view and the use of space." Additionally, "the shot also declares that this new perspective is inevitably and spectacularly gendered… and oversexed" (Deleyto 273). The bull

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128 "[He is the symbol of the] dry-land, of the Deep Iberian. He is the boy of the crotch. The deliveryman in the company 'Hernán Cortés y Hermanos. Chorizos y jamones.'" [Hernán Cortés and Brothers. Chorizos and hams]

129 "[José Luis] is the boy of the coast. He always works for his father […] The Golden Visa Card is his favorite. The good brands are his passion. He does not have balls for anything […] His mother is the 'mother whore.' He ends in Carmen's arms, the 'whore-mother.'" I am using here the translations of the terms *madre-puta* and *puta-madre* provided by Marsha Kinder in her review of the film (Kinder 33). Luna plays with the combination of both words: *madre-puta* is Conchita, and it has negative connotations. *Puta-madre* is Carmen, seen in a positive way. The expression "¡Está de puta madre!" [It's fucking good! – My translation] is used by Spaniards when they think something is very good.

130 "[Manuel is] the voice of Europe. The power."

131 According to the Real Academia de la Lengua, *cojón* is: 1) a testicle, and 2) [*cojones* is] an expression used to express different emotional states, mostly anger and surprise ("cojón")

132 It is not possible to ignore here the fact that Luna is opening with, not just a cultural symbol of Spain, but an advertisement (indicating Spain's marketing to the outside by use of cultural stereotypes).

133 Luna defined his enthusiasm for Los Monegros in the following terms: "Es un mar de tierra, donde la aridez hace que todos los elementos destaquen" [It is a sand sea, where the aridity makes that everything is emphasized] (qtd. in Deleyto 273). Also: "Yo estoy enamorado de Los Monegros […] Es un sitio en el que, si alguna vez necesito encontrar algo en mi cabeza y tal… ¡me voy a Los Monegros!" [I am in love with *Los Monegros* […] It is a place where, if I need to find something in my mind to be creative… I go to *Los Monegros*!] ("Conversaciones en La Aljafería").

silhouette also reminds viewers of the *españoladas*, term used to label "those inventions of Spanishness first formulated by the French and gradually absorbed by Spaniards" (D'Lugo 74), and it announces "the commodification of a certain historical notion of Spanishness as the central theme of the film" (74) while it "shows the discrepancy between the static forms of the past and the movement that is engendered by contemporary commerce" (74).[134] The bull is the symbol of Spain par excellence. It embodies masculinity and uncontrolled sexuality (Sanabria 2007: 8), as well as uncontrolled violence (Chevalier and Gheebrant 1001). Yet the "Osborne" bull that Luna shows is fake, and its testicles are slightly broken. The movie is going to be observed under the perspective of the animal, the sexual, the cultural (Evans 40) because Spain's culture, Luna seems to claim, is animal and sexual. However, the broken testicles indicate that they are in danger –i.e., that Spain's culture is in danger. Spaniards' stoicism is going to be tested.

The following sequence shows two young men, Raúl and Tomás, fighting a fake bull. The camera focuses on their crotches, seeking to establish a connection between the act of bullfighting and the sexual act. Marsha Kinder considers this immediate transition from the *cojones* of the "Osborne" bull to the testicles of Raúl as part of a visual dynamic constantly associated with consumerism, and in which the camera (by means of close-up shots) pursues the objects of desire (Kinder 31). The sequence also introduces a context in which tradition and modernity coexist (Evans 40): the bull ring is actually a soccer stadium. Furthermore, the sequence has social connotations because "it captures in a visual tableau the scenario of social ascent that has been a commonplace in Spanish culture for nearly a century: the idea that the

[134] The "Osborne" bull is, as D'Lugo accurately observes, "a Spanish variant of Andy Warhol's Campbell's soup can: an infinitely reproducible two-dimensional surface image that embodies a broader culture of commerce" (D'Lugo 74-75). In his book *Ruedos ibéricos*, Luna writes: "El Toro. Amores y odios. La vieja España. Toro de hierro. Toro de Iberia. Amar bajo el toro. La bella y la bestia. Los cojones de España. El toro de hierro." (Luna and Canals 12) [The Bull. Love and hate. The Old Spain. The iron bull. The Iberian bull. To love under the bull. The Beauty and the Beast. The balls of Spain. The iron bull]

corrida represents for Spain's marginalized southern rural males access to rapid social and economic success" (D'Lugo 75). Luna thus sets his story of myths and symbols of Spanishness based on the idea of Spaniards' need and battle for economic improvement (75), which suggests, that even if it is spiritually superior (as Ganivet stated), Spanishness cannot ignore the existence of and need for both money and a material world.

Next, we the spectators see a casting of the male underwear company "Sansón." The casting seeks the best crotch. While different young men (among them, Raúl) are recorded, Concha, the woman who rules the company, observes them from a monitor. Well dressed and sophisticated, she observes the casting with captivated attention. Soon after, her business skills are revealed as she discusses with her husband, Manuel, the new advertisement of the company: women are (she says) those who really buy the underwear for their husbands, so the company's advertisement must be addressed to them in the most explicit way: "un buen paquete, vende,"[135] she concludes. Concha embodies the modern Spanish woman, who has come to assume the position of power in contemporary Spain,[136] and Luna's movement "from phallocentric iconography [of the audition] to Conchita's private television monitoring Raúl's audition foretells the cultural logic through which Spanish social and economic power is now seen as driven by the female" (76).

To this point, we the spectators have witnessed a world of primitiveness embodied by Raúl, who has been presented as someone who enjoys to being outdoors, physically appealing, strong, and with a homoerotic appeal (Kinder 34), but also in need of money. In other words, he

135 "a big prick sells well."

136 Interestingly, the actress who plays Concha (Stefania Sandrelli [b. 1946]) is Italian and is dubbed. On the other hand, the actress who plays Carmen (Anna Galiena [b. 1954]) is also Italian, but she is not dubbed, speaking Spanish with her foreign accent. According to Wharton, in a film about Spanishness as *Jamón, jamón* "it must be of interest to the critic that the audience clearly identifies the two matriarchal signifiers of modern Spain as non-Spaniards against the backdrop of an unrecognizable and alien landscape which is in fact Spain" (Wharton 135).

is free, but poor. On the other hand, these sequences have also presented a materialistic/commodified world. Raúl, in the casting, is only a crotch, something to be sold. Symbols traditionally understood as part of the Spanish culture are therefore presented as mere commodities, as part of the free market that modernity entails. Concha's son, José Luis, is presented in this context, first giving a kiss to his mother as a good, obedient boy, and then obeying his father's orders.

After a couple of sequences in which Carmen (Silvia's mother) is introduced, and her need for money is exposed, the movie focuses on Silvia and José Luis. Although they are presented by means of a long shot of Los Monegros (again from the "Osborne" bull), when the action takes place they are inside José Luis' car, listening to music. José Luis eats an omelet, and he does not listen to Silvia's complaints about her tiredness of the economic problems that her mother and her sisters suffer. Then Silvia faints, and confesses that she is pregnant. José Luis, instead of avoiding the situation, decides that they will get married; giving her the ring of a Coke can as a symbolic wedding ring. Immediately, he begins to taste Silvia's breasts. Silvia asks him about the taste of her breasts. José Luis says that they do not taste like anything, but he would want them to taste like an omelet, both with and without onion. Concha calls and interrupts the moment.

Unlike Raúl, José Luis is presented here exhibiting his high economic status. Physically, he is not very strong, and he is obsessed with material things like his car and stereo. Despite his sweet tone of voice and his noble response toward the news of Silvia's pregnancy, he does not show a strong personality. Interestingly, his voice has almost the same tone that Silvia's. His lack of personality is also emphasized when he is asked about the taste of Silvia's breasts and he answers that they do not taste like anything. Finally, his link with a materialistic world is

strengthened when he takes the ring of the Coke can, and puts it on Silvia's finger.

These ideas regarding José Luis are emphasized in the next sequence. That night, he visits Carmen's *puticlub*[137] with his friends. Before going in, he urinates on the road, and his friends laugh at him. Again, his weakness and lack of personality is remarked upon by two ways: first, when he says "Ya sabéis que cuando me cabreo tengo muy mala leche,"[138] and second, when one of his friends nicknames him as "Sansón, polla de maricón."[139] The former is a sentence that José Luis repeats constantly throughout the story, a kind of warning of violence that he in fact lacks, but also a warning that preludes the final confrontation with his nemesis Raúl once the violence he continuously represses explodes. The latter plays with the antagonism of the terms *Sansón* (Samsom) and *maricón* (fag). Although the name of the company that he will presumably inherit from his mother represents strength, the use of the term *maricón* is cataloging him as someone weak. A shot that Luna introduces in this sequence (in which the boys urinate over a Coke can) has been understood as one of the most explicit expressions in Luna's career about his position regarding the most universal symbol of the U.S. culture (Sanabria 2007: 8). Evans makes the interesting point that this moment "es irónico, porque tanto en casa de los padres de José Luis como en el ambiente del puticlub lo norteamericano es precisamente lo que se valora"[140] (Evans 45): in José Luis' house, Manuel watches a football game while in Carmen's club, Carmen sings: "Alegría y dinero, que es lo que hace falta."[141] I do not think Luna criticizes specifically the U.S. Instead, he uses the Coke can as a signifier of the global economy as a whole. As Evans states, American culture is very present in *Jamón, jamón*,

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137 Whore house.

138 "[y]ou know that, when I get angry, I get in a very bad mood."

139 "Samson, fag's prick." The sentence in Spanish contains a rhyme: "Sansón – maricón."

140 "it is ironical, because what is understood as American is what is valued in both José Luis' house, and Carmen's whore house."

141 "Happiness and money, which is what we need!"

but only as representative of a broader scenario in which the cultural symbols of other countries are now more accessible for Spaniards, creating a confrontation with the traditions of the country. The Coke can, the American football that Manuel watches at home, or the obsession with money have penetrated in Spain so deeply that they have resulted in an increased homogeneity; their confrontation with tradition also menaces the Spanish soul. In this sense, Luna is clear in his rejection of such homogeneity and, to some extent, he criticizes the blind acceptance by the characters of those symbols that are becoming paradigmatic of the global market. Inside the club, José Luis talks with Carmen about his plan to marry Silvia. Carmen is skeptical. She knows Concha will never let him marry Silvia. Although José Luis insists he will get married even though his mother does not approve, Carmen is not convinced that he will confront his family. From their conversation it becomes clear that they are lovers, and that Silvia does not know this fact.

Concha's and Manuel's company holds an annual banquet for the employees of Sansón. Carmen and Silvia go there with many omelets that they have prepared. When José Luis introduces Silvia to his mother, Concha ignores her. Instead, she blames Carmen because she sees her talking with Manuel. Offended because her mother has been insulted, Silvia leaves the party. Not without difficulties, José Luis comforts her, but Silvia is very angry because he has not defended his mother in front of her. For the first time in the movie, Silvia remarks on José Luis' lack of *cojones*, or virility. That night, at home, Concha and Manuel discuss. From that discussion in which she reproaches him for Carmen's presence at the banquet, we gather that Manuel and Carmen had an affair in the past. This discussion is the first moment in which the character of Manuel is presented with some depth, but not many clues are given. It is also the first moment in which Manuel and Concha (or, in other words, Europe and the global market) are

alone. The tension is palpable. However, the depiction of Manuel by Luna is ambiguous (not only in this sequence, but also during the whole movie) and, to some extent, not much difference between him and Concha is drawn here. As a matter of fact, Manuel is continuously presented as an elusive and cryptic character during the film, and not many clues about him are provided. I think that this makes difficult his study, and, at least seemingly, converts the character in insignificant or superfluous in the whole of the story that is narrated. He is a man completely disengaged from the rest of the world; someone who knows very well how manipulative and perverse Concha is: "Todas las mujeres llevais una puta dentro,"[142] he says when Concha insults Carmen, defending the latter. Although Luna states in his notes on the film that Manuel embodies the idea of Europe and he is the character who finally rescues Silvia from tragedy (an idea shared by scholars like D'Lugo), the aforementioned cryptic description of his character (as well as his palpable bitterness) makes it difficult to accept such a statement without reservations. Although I will return to this point shortly what I would like to draw attention to here is the fact that the portrait of Manuel as the embodiment of Europe is not completely positive. His presence during the film is brief (he only appears less than ten minutes), and he is always confronting himself with Concha and José Luis. Only at the end, when José Luis is dead, does he show some compassion for his son.

When José Luis arrives home, Concha helps undress him to go to bed. José Luis' room is full of objects and the light is low. The atmosphere is claustrophobic, depressive. José Luis is not happy. Concha undresses him and remembers when she was pregnant, and wanted him to be comfortable in her belly. The idea of a repressed desire is suggested here. According to Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito, this is one of the sequences which most visually defines José Luis as opposed to Raúl (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito 22). While Raúl has been

142 "All women have a whore inside."

presented outdoors, José Luis' room is a confined space full of things like drums, light dumbbells or computers: "the camera travels on a medium shot barely focusing on all his [José Luis'] possessions […] only eventually to pause by his bed, where his mother is undressing him, visually and verbally recalling images of his safe and sheltered childhood" (22). Also, in this moment of the movie we the spectators know everything about José Luis' family and his dependence upon it, but we do not yet know anything about Raúl's background, thus indicating his self-sufficiency and implying the self-sufficiency of Spaniards.

Determined to break up her son's relationship, Concha visits Raúl in the meat-packing plant where he works: *Los conquistadores*, a solitary place in the middle of nowhere. The use of this name is not casual since it ironizes the Spain's past as a colonizer empire. In the first place, the name is included in a movie located in the year of the fifth centenary of the arrival of Spaniards in America (Sanabria 2007: 9). Also, in an increasing de-personalized Spain, what in the past seemed a motive for pride has been reduced to an example of "commodifying historical culture" (D'Lugo 76). The first thing that Concha observes of Raúl is his crotch. That night, after accepting Concha's proposal to break up Silvia's and José Luis' engagement, Raúl meets her. From the beginning, he tries to seduce her, but she rejects him. The next day, after bothering Silvia while she is going home from shopping, Raúl follows her to the disco, kissing her passionately while she is in the lady's restroom. In the disco, José Luis decides to present his father a project to improve the company's benefits. Again, he repeats that he is going to get married. Nevertheless, soon after Silvia and he fight because she has discovered he has not said anything yet to this family about her pregnancy. José Luis reiterates his intentions of telling the truth. In these sequences, we the spectators see the evolution of Silvia, as well as how José Luis is confirmed as a character that is completely predictable and repetitive. On the contrary, Raúl's

fearlessness in his courtship of Silvia makes him unpredictable, shameless, and rude (Silvia says, in some moment, that he is "un guarro"[143]), but also strong, decided and, in the end, appealing. When Silvia reproaches José Luis that he has not said anything to anyone about her pregnancy, she is reproaching a lack of protection from him, a protection that, instead, she will find in Raúl.

The project that José Luis presents to his father (panties for dogs) is received badly by Manuel, who accuses him of being childish. His idea is complete non-sense: "Esto no es América,"[144] he furiously asserts. Again, we are in front of a sequence in which Manuel is furious. Although Manuel is a businessman, associated with openness and innovation due to his embodiment of the capitalist market, he seems reluctant to pursue *any* kind of change. While in this sequence he says "Esto no es América," in the beginning of the movie he had expressed his rejection to the idea of changing the slogan of the company ("En tu interior hay un Sansón"[145]), which has been used for thirty years and which Concha attempted to modify. This sequence, though brief, presents Manuel's character more clearly than the sequence in which he was with Concha at home. As an embodiment of Europe, Manuel certainly represents a capitalist market, but he is also rooted in cultural and historical values that he is not willing to modify blindly. With Manuel's character, Luna emphasizes the cultural legacy of Europe against the depthless of the globalized market that his wife and his son represent. In other words, I think Luna considers Europe as another type of capitalism, which has to coexist with the global economy, but which also is not willing to surrender itself so easily. From this perspective, Manuel's anger is not an inherent part of his character but a *reaction* against the menace of depersonalization that both his wife and his son represent. Alongside the fight that he had with Silvia the previous night, the discussion between José Luis and his father makes the former to start to be aware that nobody

143 Dirty-minded.
144 "This is not America."
145 "Inside of you there is a Samsom."

thinks he is mature enough. Depressed, he goes that night to Carmen's club, and they have a private encounter, in which Carmen plays a song with a parrot, emulating the animal with the bird being able to produce words like *polla*.[146] The connection between animality and humanity, so frequent in Luna's filmography, is made again, and the mention of the word *polla* (like *cojones*, a symbol of virility) by the parrot makes both the sequence and the character of José Luis ridiculous. It is also noteworthy that this sequence, as Marsha Kinder remarks, is "wonderfully erotic" thanks to the performance of the actress Anna Galiena (Kinder 34–35), while also depicting the sadness that impersonates José Luis.

That night, Raúl and his friend Tomás break into the bull ring of a rancher in order to fight a bull under the moon, naked. This act is called *Hacer la luna*.[147] According to legend, the bullfighters who *hacen la luna* have an erection. The sequence reinforces Raúl's connection with nature, freedom and independence. Jean-Claude Seguín says that the bull is the *macho* par excellence in the Spanish culture because of its impressive size and its sex that is overtly exposed during bullfighting (qtd. in Sanabria 2007: 9). *Hacer la luna* implies that the erection the bullfighter obtains connects him with the connotations that the bull embodies. In the film, Raúl and his friend achieve their goals because they are discovered by the rancher, and must escape naked. They go to Silvia's house, who helps them dress. The sequence is funny but also intimate. Silvia cleans Raúl's feet with olive oil (another symbol associated with Spain, a natural product used to clean the artificial asphalt) and Raúl plays the role of another Spanish myth, the *Don Juan*, trying not to be as rude as the previous times in his approach to Silvia. As Sanabria remarks, "la masculinidad en la tradición hispánica tiene su representación bajo la figura universal del donjuanismo. De este modo, Bigas resemantiza este símbolo […] adecuándolo a la

146 Prick.
147 Literally, "to make the moon."

contemporaneidad y a la localidad"[148] (2007: 9). In this sequence, Silvia starts to see Raúl more positively. The following day, Concha meets Raúl in a hotel, where they have sex. Soon after, she buys him a motorcycle –again, Spanishness understood as something alternative/parallel to materialism, but which is tempted by money. With his new motorcycle, Raúl tries to impress Silvia, who pretends to be indifferent to his attentions. However, he has an accident, and Silvia finally accepts that she is in love with him. When Carmen finds out about Raúl, she disapproves of him, labeling as *chulito*.[149]

José Luis, in the meantime, begins to assume that he will never be able to escape from his mother's influence. When he confesses Silvia's pregnancy to his father, Manuel does not seem interested in helping him. Again, José Luis is recriminated for having no personality. One evening, Silvia tells him that she does not want to continue the relationship because he does not have *cojones*. Furious, José Luis rapes her and later, in order to prove that he is a real man, climbs the "Osborne" bull, and punches its testicles while shouting that he is fed up of the idea that the *cojones* implies –i.e., virility. The testicles of the "Osborne" bull finally fall down. José Luis leaves Silvia in the middle of the desert, and it starts to rain. Silvia takes the "Osborne" bull's testicles and, covering herself with them, goes to a road restaurant in which she finds Raúl playing with a slot machine. Quoting Carolina Sanabria (2007):

> El enorme miembro representa la seguridad y el resguardo (viril) de los que la misma Silvia ha carecido y que busca en su acomodado novio [y] cree hallar en Raúl […] Su necesidad la conduce hacia un hombre [Raúl] que, en su determinación (inicialmente monetaria) por conquistarla, no admite como un pusilánime José Luis, la menor duda.[150] (2007: 9)

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148 "masculinity in the Hispanic tradition is represented under the universal figure of "donjuanismo." Therefore, Bigas re-semanticizes this symbol […] adapting it to contemporaneity and to the locality of the film."

149 Cocky.

150 "The immense [genital] member represents security and (male) protection, from which Silvia has been lacking up until then, and which she looks for in her accommodated boyfriend and which she thinks she finds in Raúl afterwards […] Her need guides her to a man [Raúl] who in his (initially economical) determination to have her, does not admit to having doubts, unlike the timorous José Luis."

Both Raúl and Silvia kiss passionately in the road restaurant, starting to make love in front of other clients. Outside, José Luis sees them. Desperate, he goes home, and tells his mother everything.

Raúl takes Silvia to the store where he works, and they make love. Just like José Luis did in the beginning of the movie, he now tastes Silvia's breasts, but unlike Concha's son, Raúl says that they taste like omelet, ham and garlic. Against a depersonalized José Luis, Raúl is all passion and sensuality. Concha, in the meantime, has followed them and observes the scene. José Luis goes to the meat-packing plant too, and sees his mother. In order to comfort his son's sadness, she tells him that she will solve everything, but José Luis, completely deranged and crying like a kid, blames her. Once Raúl takes Silvia home, Concha visits her, Concha telling her that she is also the lover of Raúl. Silvia cannot believe it.

The next morning, José Luis goes to Carmen's club demanding to have sex with her, but she rejects his claims. Furious, he goes to the meat-packing plant where Raúl works and discovers his mother with him (Concha had gone to say that Silvia was pregnant, and they end up having sex). For her part, Silvia goes to see Manuel in order to get help because she intuits that José Luis and Raúl are going to fight. Manuel kisses her with an ambiguous, viscous, desperate kiss (Luna and Canals 34): "Silvia busca a su padre, ahora representado por Manuel" (34).[151] In the meat-packing plant, José Luis fights Raúl with a ham leg in order to prove that he is a real man. Raúl accepts the challenge and they hit each other, reproducing Goya's *Duelo a garrotazos*. Interestingly, in this sequence Raúl carries a robust ham leg while José Luis' harm is almost reduced to the bone. When both men are exhausted and kneeling on the floor, José Luis hits Raúl's crotch. Raúl's face expresses an intense pain. The symbol of virility, one of the main

[151] "Silvia looks for her father, now personified by Manuel."

features of Spanishness, has been attacked. Raúl then hits José Luis' head, who dies. The reason and control that modernizing ideas have always signified for Spaniards have been violently liquidated by a primitive Spain that rejects its role within the peninsula. Individuals have been mutilated because of their inherently violent impulses: "La actitud física de los personajes simboliza su derrota mental," Evans argues, "[y] esta mutilación, tanto mental como física, destruye al individuo, hasta conducir, en el caso de José Luis, a la muerte" (Evans 42).[152]

Concha leaves the plant, and sees her son dead. In that moment, Manuel and Silvia arrive too. Raúl hits the car with the ham leg, but he finally falls down. Carmen arrives soon after. The final sequence of the movie is a long shot which shows Concha and Raúl, Carmen and José Luis, and Manuel and Silvia looking at the sky.

At the end of *Jamón, jamón*, the destiny of the characters is tragic. The final shot shows Raúl kneeling in a penitent position close to Concha, and José Luis' body (in Carmen's arms) suggests his "quasi-religious status as a martyr to the forces of primitive violence embodied by Raúl" (D'Lugo 78). According to Fouz-Hernández and Martínez-Expósito, the Iberian body that Raúl represents is forcibly re-inscribed into the globalized context (Fouz-Hernández and Martínez Expósito 26), and when he pulls off the Mercedes logo from Manuel's car in which he and Silvia arrive at plant, the movie suggests that Raúl's "body itself is used as a site of resistance against such re-inscription" (26).

The only male character that seems to have a future in this scenario is Manuel, who embraces Silvia. Europe, in other words, has finally taken in passionate Spain, liberating it from its past of savagery and impulsiveness, as well as from an uncontrolled modernity which signifies depersonalization. The passion that Silvia embodies is protected by the Christian roots

[152] "The physical attitude of the characters symbolizes their mental defeat. And this mutilation, both mental and physical, destroys the individual, provoking, in the case of José Luis, death."

of Europe that both Ganivet and Ortega always considered an inherent part of the Spanish soul and proof of the European origins of the peninsula: "Not only does this painterly *tlabeau* [sic] evoke traditional Christian iconography […], but it also restores power to the rich incestuous patriarch," Marsha Kinder states (Kinder 35). Europe protects the core of the Spanish soul, and so, "[i]nstead of being barred from the door like Sylvia's lowlife father, Manuel stands upright like a rock, supporting his son's pregnant fiancée with his embrace, ready to finance and appropriate his post-Franco Madonna and child" (35). The pair that form Silvia and Manuel also suggests, according to D'Lugo, "a new formulation of the Spanish family, one forged from the very antagonisms that earlier defined the community" (D'Lugo 78). The reference to both Ganivet and Ortega and their concerns about the particularisms of the Iberian Peninsula is strong here. "The implication seems," D'Lugo continues, "to be that the future for Spain will be a troubled marriage, born of the union of the two extremes symbolized by Manuel and Silvia, and yet somehow expressing a hybridization of those oppositions to be embodied ultimately in José Luis's child, which Silvia is carrying" (78).

Although it is clear from this ending that neither Raúl nor José Luis are able to possess Silvia, my question here is if Manuel is able to possess her, which is what most scholars have argued. The main issue I have with this interpretation of Manuel and Europe as the savior of Spain is the way in which Manuel's character is portrayed. Manuel is continuously presented as a bitter person, always on the defensive. The way in which he treats his son is sometimes very cruel. He is, in brief, unhappy; he does not seem less unhappy than José Luis. If he were, as the embodiment of Europe, the savior of Silvia and the Spanish soul, the future that he seems to promise her at the end of the film does not look very appealing. Considering the way in which he embraces Silvia once the fight between Raúl and José Luis has finished, it obvious that he will be

protective. However, the way in which his character has been portrayed during the movie suggests some irony from Luna since that protection will come from a person who has shown constant signs of bitterness.

This leads me to think about the relationship between Spain and Europe today (2016). How valid are Luna's perceptions of Europe today? Needless to say, his view of the continent in *Jamón, jamón* as the salvation of Spain's soul is very biased, but it is also coherent with the moment in which the movie was made, a moment of high expectations for the future of the country where Europe as concept inside Spaniards' minds had become ingrained as something positive, a space of social rights, modernity and democracy if also depersonalization. Almost twenty-five years after the release of *Jamón, jamón,* there is no doubt that the Spanish idea of Europe is quite different, and now many Spaniards perceive it as a problem rather than a solution for the future of the country.[153]

My conclusion is that, although it is an important film to explore the issue of Spanishness in a period of change during the early 1990s, *Jamón, jamón* appears somewhat outdated today. It is still useful for exploring how Luna re-semanticizes cultural symbols which have always seen

[153] José Ignacio Torreblanca, in his 2015 article "Europa es ahora el problema" [Europe is now the problem], writes that Spaniards have become more critical with the European Union since this entity abandoned cooperation in favor of competition. By mentioning Ortega's words: "España es el problema. Europa como solución," [Spain as problema, Europe as solution], Torreblanca concludes that the economic crisis that started in 2008 has made Spaniards see Europe as another problem, looking at it with uncertainty and hate despite that, on the other hand, not too many people want to abandon the Euro (Torreblanca, n.p.). Therefore, it would be interesting to know what Luna would have thought about it considering the continent has converted itself (and very especially after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and the introduction of the Euro after 1997) in that depersonalized and unhappy space of neoliberal ideology that he observes in the character of José Luis. In my opinion, the unrealized Luna's project titled *Iberia* (loosely inspired in *Huevos de oro*) could have represented that new approach to contemporary Spain. It narrated the story of a couple who, after losing their house and having to continue paying the mortgage, decide to face their lives strongly, full of courage and with no fear. *Iberia* was conceived as a critique of the unstoppable Spain's economic bubble of the 2000s, the corruption of a part of the Spanish business sector and the consequences of these in ordinary people. Although Luna fought to materialize the project, it was not possible: "No conseguimos levantarlo," Bigas Luna's wife, Celia Oròs, said afterwards, "No. Y hubo quien nos dijo: 'no te molestes porque no lo querrá hacer nadie.' Ahí quedó" ["We couldn't do it. No. Many people told us: 'don't even try it because nobody will want to do it.'] ("Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión"). *Iberia* was conceived before the burst of Spain's economic bubble, and social movement as the *indignados*, being, to some extent, premonitory of the current situation of Spain (Chaves in "Bigas Luna: el buen anfitrión").

with a mixture of pride and shame, and which were more the result of how others saw Spaniards than how Spaniards saw themselves. That re-semanticization of symbols helps construct a cultural identity which is fragmentary but not exclusive, and not surrendered to any specific regionalism. That is, in my opinion, the greatest achievement of Luna in *Jamón, jamón*. As an artist, he accomplishes the goal of overcoming what were for Ganivet and Orteg insurmountable obstacles like the dichotomies between tradition vs. modernity, Spain vs. Europe, isolation vs. openness.

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