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Nil Santiáñez. Topographies of Fascism. Habitus, Space, and Writing in Twentieth Century Spain. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2013. xiii + 411 pp.

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Abstract

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Keywords

Spain, fascism, space, habitus

Nil Santiáñez. *Topographies of Fascism. Habitus, Space, and Writing in Twentieth Century Spain*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2013. xiii + 411 pp.

This is a book about how fascism configures space and its lasting impact on contemporary democratic society. It is also about the performance of fascism, an ideology rooted more in action than in theory. Following this line of thought, the purpose of fascist cultural products is to insert violence in language.

Chapter one is dedicated to Ernesto Giménez Caballero. The first key text analyzed is *Genio de España* (1932) ('Spanish character') in which the falangist writer develops a modern concept of space. The author defines the essence of Spain in territorial and metaphysical terms using techniques of the avant-garde like the collage and the aerial perspective. In a typical fascist way the fatherland is mythical instead of historical and the gaze of the protagonist over territory is violent. The book ends with a call to a coup d'état. *Arte y estado* (1935) ('Art and State') by the same author builds on the irrationalism of his previous book. The two loci that Giménez Caballero favors are the union office and El Escorial; the first is the habitat of the new artist and the second summarizes the totalitarian state. In the words of Rafael Sánchez Mazas, only those who can rule the universe can inhabit the monastery-palace. *Roma madre* (1939) ('Mother Rome') represents the Fascist order and the eternal (i.e. ahistorical) and hierarchical ideal city.

Chapter two is about imperial Spain and its domination of Morocco and the creation of a neocolonial habitus. It is about the development of the naturalization of the intimate relationship between colonialism, war, and fascism. *La pared de tela de araña* (1924) ('The Spiderweb Wall') by Tomás Borrás, a falangist writer like Giménez Caballero, is about the "new grammar" (71) the Army imposes on Morocco based on modern technology. The author unveils the Spanishness of Moroccan towns; therefore Spain is not conquering Morocco because this territory is just an extension of Andalusia. This grammar was utilized again during the Civil War in which, according to Francoism, the Nationals recuperated an occupied territory by foreign forces. Giménez Caballero published *Notas marruecas de un soldado* (1923) ('Moroccan Notes of a Soldier'), a text that links militarism and fascism, especially the ethos of the legion and its cult of death. Santiáñez comments on ten books about the legion published in this period, among them the ones penned by its founders, Generals Francisco Franco and José Millán Astray. The latter defends the militarization of society and its natural consequences, obedience and hierarchy. Santiáñez indicates the high quality of the novel *Tras el águila del César: Elegía del Tercio 1921-22* ('The Quest of the Caesar's Eagle: Elegy of the Legion') by Luys Santa Marina, who later became a falangist. It is a mixture of modern, psychological, militaristic, and literary. It deals with the truthfulness of totalitarians and their Manichaeic way of life.

Santiáñez is impressed by a scene in a brothel in which murder and sexual intercourse intermingle (106) because it is about the destruction of the body of those perceived as the other. José Asenjo Alonso's novel *¡¡¡Los que fuimos al tercio!!!* (1932) ('Those of us who fought in the Legion!!!') links communism and Islamism as mutual enemies of the Spanish essence. Rafael Sánchez Mazas published fifty-three articles in 1921 as a war reporter and in his case, fascism is the perfect antidote to the danger of effeminacy. Santiáñez summarizes magisterially how "Spain, the first modern imperial country to lose its empire, was also the first to convert its colonialism into an endo-colonial military and political praxis" (116).

Chapter three deals with the construction of the fascist myths like the ur-Castilla. One of the founders of *falange*, Onésimo Redondo, used the Castile myth to put together and reject anti-materialism, anti-Semitism and modern civilization. He was also one of the first to promote the Bolshevick-Jew-masonic conspiracy theory in Spain. Redondo defended the annihilation of the enemies of Spain. José María Alfaro wrote in 1942 *Leoncio Pancorbo*, a fascist bildungsroman. The protagonist internalizes violence as he grows. Besides Castile, Rome is the second cherished myth; Rome is the authentic and moral capital of Fascism. According to José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Roman fascism is Catholic in its universal meaning as opposed to Nazi racism. The third fascist myth is the empire, which can be applied to a territory like Spain itself once the enemies were perceived as foreigners.

Chapter four is dedicated to the city. Fascism was fascinated by the leftist masses and their marches to downtown Madrid. While falangists were just a minority group at the beginning of the II Republic, they used terrorist acts such as bombing businesses owned by Jews or assassinating union leaders to gain control of the city. *Madrid de corte a checa* (1938) ('Madrid from Royal Court to the Gulag') is a fascinating novel written by Agustín de Foxá about the fear of proletarianization of the city, the cultural vitality of the Republic which fascinates the protagonist but which, in the end, he rejects with all his might. Foxá imposes a diachronic map to his synchronic Madrid. It is also the idea that wars are about cities. *Plaza del Castillo* (1951) ('The Castle Plaza') by Rafael García Serrano returns to the modernism/traditionalism dichotomy and the militarization of civil society and its control by a military gaze, model followed by similar novels. Santiáñez includes a very complete analysis of the victory parade and its meaning.

Chapter five concerns the specters and the literature produced by the Blue Division and the 45,000 Spaniards who fought in the Russian front to combat communism. Being the most literate military unit in the history of Spain, it produced 132 books and four movies. After World War II, Spanish fascism became a ghost. The most important text is Dionisio Ridruejo's posthumous memoir, published in 1978, where he reflects on his estranged relationship with

the Russian landscape and people. *Division 250* (1954) by Tomás Salvador is a novel about specters and the embarrassing place of Spanish *falange* in the new totalitarian Spain allied to the United States.

Santiáñez's superb book is a complete analysis of the full range of Spanish fascist literature, with some texts of high quality, but with the moral flaw of instilling violence in society, violence that crystallized in a cruel Civil War and a monstrous dictatorship.

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