

# *Letras Hispanas*

## Volume 8.1, Spring 2012

**TITLE:** Pascual Duarte's Escape From Freedom: A Study of the Authoritarian Personality and the Rise of the Authoritarian State

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**ABSTRACT:** In a 2002 article that appeared in *El País*, the Spanish writer Javier Cercas allies himself with other scholars who have argued that during the time of its publication *The Family of Pascual Duarte* (1942) by Camilo José Cela, served as an apologia for Franco's dictatorship. Following the ideas articulated by Erich Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* (1941) about fascism as a reaction against the effects of individual isolation in the modern era, I relate Cerca's political interpretation of *The Family of Pascual Duarte* with existential and psychological readings of the novel. I argue that the moral decline of Pascual Duarte is the result of his inability to live up to the existential burden of freedom in the seemingly uncaring, anarchical and meaningless universe associated, from the Nationalist perspective, with the political and social programs of the Second Republic. While Pascual tries to elude this responsibility through various *mechanisms of escape*, primarily through practices of submission and domination, the lack of any legitimate authority to submit to or of any sphere in which he can legitimately assert his own authority, leads Pascual to unwittingly present his meaningless and immoral life as a case for the reassertion of a dictatorial regime.

**KEYWORDS:** Camilo José Cela, *The Family of Pascual Duarte*, Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, fascism, existentialism

**RESUMEN:** En un artículo que apareció en *El País* en 2002, el autor español Javier Cercas se alía con otros críticos que han sostenido que, en la época de su publicación, *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942), de Camilo José Cela, sirvió como una apología a favor de la dictadura de Franco. Al seguir las ideas expresadas por Erich Fromm en *Miedo a la libertad* (1941) sobre el fascismo como reacción contra los efectos del aislamiento individual en la época moderna, relaciono la interpretación política de Cercas con lecturas existencialistas y psicológicas de la novela. Argumento que la decadencia moral de Pascual Duarte resulta de su incapacidad de cumplir con la responsabilidad de libertad en un mundo que parece indiferente, anárquico y vacío de sentido, un mundo asociado, desde la perspectiva nacionalista, con los programas políticos y sociales de la Segunda República. Aunque Pascual intenta escaparse de esta responsabilidad a través de varios *mecanismos de escape*, sobre todo a través de prácticas de sumisión y dominio, la falta de cualquier autoridad legítima a la cual someterse, o de cualquier esfera donde él pueda afirmar su propia autoridad, hace que Pascual, sin querer, presente su vida inmoral y sin objeto como un caso a favor de un retorno a un sistema político autoritario.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Camilo José Cela, *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, Erich Fromm, *Miedo a la libertad*, fascismo, existencialismo

**DATE RECEIVED:** 09/28/2011

**DATE PUBLISHED:** 02/16/2012

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# Pascual Duarte's Escape from Freedom: A Study of the Authoritarian Personality and the Rise of the Authoritarian State

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*Millions in Germany were as eager to surrender  
their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it.*

Erich Fromm

In the Middle Ages a person's station in life was established at birth and determined by rigid hierarchies that were believed to be part of God's divine plan. While to the modern Western political consciousness a society that restricts individual freedom and social mobility in this way is viewed as inherently oppressive and unjust, at the same time, as Erich Fromm argues, it continues to exercise a certain attraction for many (*Escape*, 41). Although clearly repressive, such a political system does not breed the same kind of anxieties about one's identity and sense of belonging. Moreover, a firm belief in a divine and/or natural order to the universe, which characterized the Medieval period, made suffering tolerable and gave life meaning (41). Thus, along with secularization and emerging political and economic freedoms came "a deep feeling of insecurity, powerlessness, doubt, aloneness, and anxiety" (63). These anxieties were clearly present in those who opposed the Second Republic before and during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). According to Helen Graham, what largely mobilized the Republic's opposition was a fear of the destruction of an "older cherished world of order and hierarchy" (4). They saw themselves as defending an endangered way of life. Thus, in many ways the Nationalists sought to 'save' Spain from a threatening modernity by returning to a Medieval World order where the Patriarch and Church ruled side by side in the maintenance of traditional class and gender hierarchies. Following the ideas of Fromm and placing the novel within

its appropriate socio-historical context, I shall argue in this paper that many people read Camilo José Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) at the time of its publication in the early post-Civil War period as an exposé of the pernicious effects of the freedoms associated with Republican Spain and as evidence for the need for a return to a strict authoritarian regime.

According to Fromm, the positive aim of freedom is self-sufficiency and the maximum realization of one's unique potentialities, a lifelong process that begins early on, when the infant comes to recognize itself as a being separate from its mother, and continues throughout the entirety of one's adult life (*Escape* x, 24-29). Paradoxically every step toward independence can bring physical, emotional and mental growth along with feelings of aloneness, anxiety and individual insignificance (28). Fromm posits that so long as every step in the direction of autonomy is matched with corresponding growth of the self, the individuation process will be successful and the individual will be able to form loving relationships with others without having to sacrifice his or her uniqueness (29-30). However, when social and/or economic circumstances do not allow for this type of personal development, feelings of isolation and powerlessness outweigh those of self-worth and self-sufficiency, leading the individual to take refuge in what Fromm refers to as psychic *mechanisms of escape* (30). One of these mechanisms involves assuming a self-abnegating position in relation to authority.

The surrender of oneself to a larger power provides relief from feelings of aloneness and insignificance because “by becoming part of a power which is felt as unshakably strong, eternal, and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory” (154). Moreover, in an authoritarian system, blind submission to authority is rewarded in turn with opportunities to derive feelings of power over those who are lower on the hierarchy. Citing this dynamic in German fascism Fromm writes:

Racial and political minorities within Germany and eventually other nations which are described as weak or decaying [were] the objects of sadism upon which the masses [were] fed. (224)

Thus, sadomasochistic desires for domination and submission are what characterize both the authoritarian personality and the fascist state, or in Fromm’s words: “By the term authoritarian character, we imply it represents the personality structure which is the human basis of Fascism” (162).

Not surprisingly both domination of the weak and sacrifice of oneself for the state and the Church were prominent themes of propaganda used to mobilize Franco’s supporters. These two seemingly antithetical drives were easily reconciled in a vision of a strong, united Spain that exalted hard work and self-sacrifice and whose survival depended, at the same time, on the elimination of the undesirable members of society (Graham 84-85). This call for social ‘cleansing’ translated into extrajudicial killings of segments of the civilian population perceived to be responsible for current social ills (29). In other words, vigilante death squads not only targeted political opponents, but also anyone

who symbolized cultural change and thus posed a threat to old ways of being and thinking [such as] progressive teachers, intellectuals, self-educated workers, [and] ‘new’ women. (29)<sup>1</sup>

In a 2002 article that appeared in *El País*,<sup>2</sup> the contemporary Spanish writer Javier Cercas accuses those who read Camilo José Cela’s 1942 novel *La familia de Pascual Duarte* as an anti-Franco invective of suffering from historical amnesia. As Cercas points out, it is impossible that Cela intended his novel to contain an unambiguous anti-Franco message considering Cela’s own political affiliations and the fact that the novel was published in 1942, three years after Franco’s victory, at the height of censorship and when “[...]el único antifranquismo que existía en España estaba enterrado, en el exilio, en el monte o callado!”<sup>3</sup> Moreover Cercas notes that:

La España de desolación que en teoría refleja la novela es precisamente la anterior a la guerra, aquella con la que, de acuerdo con la lógica de los vencedores, la España esplendorosa de Franco vino a acabar. O, dicho de forma más clara: durante los años cuarenta *La familia de Pascual Duarte* no pudo ser leída más que como una constatación de la trágica necesidad de la guerra, considerada, de este modo, como una suerte de catarsis de urgencia que limpió el país de los Pascual Duarte que lo asolaban, sembrándolo de ruido y de furia.

Here Cercas allies himself with other scholars who have argued that the novel served as an apologia for Franco’s military dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> Following the ideas of Fromm as well as Weberian analyses of fascism as a reaction against the alienating affects of modernity, I intend to relate these political interpretations of *La familia de Pascual Duarte* with existential and psychological readings of the novel. I shall argue that the moral decline of Pascual Duarte, the novel’s protagonist, narrator and anti-hero, is the result of his inability to live up to the existential burden of freedom in the seemingly uncaring, anarchical and meaningless universe associated, from the Nationalist perspective, with the political and social chaos of the Republic. While Pascual tries

to escape this responsibility through various *mechanisms of escape*, primarily through practices of submission and domination, the lack of any legitimate authority to submit to or of any sphere in which he can legitimately assert his own authority, leads Pascual to unwittingly present his meaningless and immoral life as a case for the reassertion of an authoritarian political system that would save people like him from themselves and protect Spanish society from further 'pollution'. In other words, Pascual's behavior can be seen as a consequence of the lack of an authoritarian political system as well as an exhibition of Pascual's own unconscious desires to submit to such a regime.

The most recent critic to analyze Cela's novel in existential terms is Edwin Murillo, who in a 2009 article argues that Pascual Duarte is guilty of bad faith because he tries to escape the existential burden of freedom by invoking destiny as the explanation for his behavior and by omitting and obfuscating the details of his life story that would incriminate him.<sup>5</sup> Murillo insists, however, that despite Pascual's efforts to exonerate himself, his "own accounts of the murders draw attention to the importance of choice and the lucidity of his will to being, which are the true culprits for his actions" (242). Not all critics, though, have accepted such interpretations of Pascual's behavior. For example, in a 1967 article David W. Foster rejected existential readings of the novel because he sees Pascual as lacking both any awareness or anguish regarding his absurd predicament (29-31). It is my contention, however, that Pascual's apparent lack of existential angst is due to his avoidance of feelings of meaninglessness and isolation through mechanisms of escape outlined by Fromm, primarily through the adoption of an authoritarian mindset that makes him attempt to overcome his insecurities by engaging in sadomasochistic behaviors that lead to his most baleful crimes, the murder of his own mother and of the Count of Torremejía. Nevertheless, in the end, these actions do not provide him with any permanent relief from

his feelings of isolation and meaninglessness since, as Fromm argues, these behaviors "are not solutions that lead to happiness or growth of personality [since] [t]hey leave unchanged the conditions that necessitate the neurotic solution" (237). This explains why Pascual continues to behave this way up until the very moment of his death, when he simultaneously protests and accepts his own execution by garotte, thereby ending his life with a consummate manifestation of both his need (he cannot control himself) and desire (he knows it is what is best) to submit to a totalitarian power.<sup>6</sup> While throughout most of the paper I concern myself with illuminating the pro-Franco reading of *La familia de Pascual Duarte* through the lens of Fromm's own analysis of the sociological and psychological conditions that led to the rise of fascism in Germany, I conclude, still following the ideas of Fromm, by arguing that the novel shows that it is actually repressive social circumstances that stifle the individual's opportunity for growth and self-realization that lead to violence, criminality and corruption.

By detailing Pascual's dysfunctional family life and upbringing, the novel clearly points to the breakdown of the traditional family as both a microcosmic representation of the state and as a cause of Pascual's insecurities, weak moral character, criminal behavior and yearning to surrender to a legitimate authority. In *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (1996) the cognitive scientist and linguist George Lakoff argues that the family serves as a conceptual metaphor for the state and that one's understanding of how the world works is largely influenced by the extent to which one subscribes to the Strict Father model or the Nurturant Parent model of the family.<sup>7</sup> Conservatives generally subscribe to the Strict Father model of the family which emphasizes above all else self-discipline, self-reliance and respect for authority (66). According to this mode of thinking, without discipline and a system of reward and punishment, children will tend to simply satisfy their instincts and desires

and grow up to be irresponsible (67). It is the father's duty to support and protect his family, maintain order, live up to his own moral standards, and cultivate self-discipline in those for whom he is responsible (70). Moreover, the father's place as head of the family is based on the belief in a Natural Moral Order in which God has moral authority over humans, adults have moral authority over children, men have moral authority over women and, in some cases, certain social classes, races and religions have moral authority over others (81). In short, like the authoritarian personality outlined by Fromm, those who subscribe to Strict Father Morality believe that humans are naturally controlled by their lower instincts and that in order to rise above them, they must be instilled with a fear of a higher power and that within the family this power must be embodied by the father (Fromm, *Man* 93, 213). Pascual's family's failure to live up to this model can be seen both as the source of Pascual's psychological ills that lead to his behavior and as an implied criticism of the mores and social values of the Second Republic.

It is easy to see where Pascual's family fails to live up to this model. As Pascual himself tells us, his parents not only were lacking in virtue but they do not even try to live up to any type of moral standards: "se cuidaban bien poco de pensar los principios y de refrenar los instintos" (31). Uneducated and unable to exercise self-discipline themselves, Pascual's parents are clearly in no position to instill these qualities in their children. Moreover, Pascual's father fails miserably in his role as family patriarch. A Portuguese criminal who served time for trafficking in contraband, Esteben Duarte Diniz does not provide for and protect his family. This is seen most clearly in Pascual's father's unwillingness to insist on his son's completing his education, in his poor upbringing of his highly intelligent daughter who becomes a thief and a prostitute, and in his wife's infidelities which lead to the birth of an illegitimate child. Pascual the narrator, looking back, points to his

father's inability to assert his authority in situations that actually mattered:

Mi padre, que, como digo tenía un carácter violento y autoritario para algunas cosas, era débil y pusilánime para otras: en general tengo observado que el carácter de mi padre sólo lo ejercitaba en asuntos triviales, porque en las cosas de trascendencia, no sé si por temor o por qué, rara vez hacía hincapié. (33)

As a young boy, Pascual obeyed his father, but not out of respect, even though he identifies it with this term, but out of fear of his father's size and volatile nature:

Yo le tenía un gran respeto y no poco miedo, y siempre que podía escurría el bulto y procuraba no tropezármelo; era áspero y brusco y no toleraba que se le contradijese en nada, manía que yo respetaba por la cuenta que me tenía. (29)

The adult Pascual, however, recognizes that his father ultimately failed to assert his authority when he should have and that the man died in utter disgrace leading Pascual to tell the priest don Manuel at his father's burial: "Lo tocante al recuerdo de mi padre, lo mejor sería ni recordarlo" (47). This lack of a male role model and legitimate authority to submit to leaves Pascual a victim of feelings of meaninglessness. He is left without any clear sense of right and wrong and is unsure of the proper way to lead his life or how to act in order to fulfill his responsibilities. He is also left with a profound fear that if he cannot inspire the respect his father never earned, he could be humiliated in the same way. This, combined with his constant yet unfulfilled desire for a legitimate father/authority figure to protect him and to give meaning to his life will serve, as we shall see, as the motivating force behind Pascual's crimes.

Pascual's mother's failure to nurture her son is also a critique of Pascual's father's lack of authority as well as of the new gender roles

Nationalists associated with the feminism of the Republic (*La Guerra*). The Republic had liberated women; they gave them the right to vote and legalized civil marriage, divorce and birth control (Graham 11; *La Guerra*; Lanon 70-72). After the outbreak of the Civil War, some women even fought on the front (*La Guerra*; Lanon 71). This lifestyle was seen as abhorrent to the Nationalists. Pilar Primo de Rivera, the leader of the *Sección Femenina*, a fascist women's organization dedicated to training women in their proper domestic role under Franco, explains that for the Nationalists, the woman's proper role was in the home; it was the woman's duty to give herself entirely to her family and that women's educational, vocational and professional aspirations should be postponed until the children were grown, and even then, should be kept to a minimum:

Nuestra postura siempre fue que la principal misión de la mujer y donde está el verdadero puesto suyo era en la familia, era en el hogar. Así que nosotros sí que defendíamos la integridad de la familia, la entrega de la mujer a la familia sobre todo mientras son los hijos pequeños que no pueden valerse por sí mismos. Además de, que cuando ya tuviera una mayor soltura para desenvolverse podía aplicarse también a sus labores vocacionales por ejemplo a sus estudios, a sus trabajos, a lo que fuera, pero sin desbordarla. Nosotros siempre hemos querido mantener un equilibrio en cuanto, sobre todo, a la defensa de la familia. (*La Guerra*)

Pascual's mother is the absolute antithesis of the Nationalist ideal of motherhood and consequently serves as a grotesque portrayal of the supposedly selfish, "liberated" woman associated with the ideologies of the Republic. Tall and gaunt with a masculine yet sickly appearance accented by a faint, grey mustache and pus-filled scars around her mouth, Pascual's mother swears, drinks excessively, never bathes, sleeps around and lashes out

through physical violence (30-31). She is devoid of virtue, lacking in the faith that there is anything worth striving for in life and unable to practice the ultimate fascist value of knowing how to "sufrir y callar" (34).<sup>8</sup> Pascual tells us that "la respeto habíasela ya perdido tiempo atrás, cuando en ella no encontraba virtud alguna que imitar, ni don de Dios que copiar" (53). Most incriminating, however, is her lack of affection and nurturance of her own children symbolized by her inability to suckle Pascual, who tells us that: "¡poca vida podía sacar de los vacíos pechos de mi madre!" (37). She is incapable of showing love for her children or concerning herself with their well-being. Not only is she herself physically abusive but she also fails to protect her children from danger. For example, she allows her lover to brutally kick and wound her youngest, and severely retarded son, Mario. Pascual's reasons for the hatred of his mother are made manifest when Mario dies and his mother shows no emotion: "Mi madre tampoco lloró la muerte de su hijo; [...] tal odio llegué a cobrar a mi madre, y tan de prisa había de crecerme, que llegué a tener miedo de mí mismo" (52).

Pascual's mother's incapacity to care for and nurture her children has pernicious effects. A child's primary caregiver's capacity to provide the infant child with a safe, loving environment, is fundamental in creating a child's sense of security and assuaging the child's dread of abandonment since, as Fromm notes, "The possibility of being left alone is necessarily the most serious threat to the child's whole existence" (19). When such a relationship is absent, the child often grows up with deep insecurities and feelings of inadequacy.<sup>9</sup> It is not surprising therefore that Pascual's behavior vis-à-vis his mother oscillates between a nagging desire to recapture what he never had, that is, a submissive symbiotic relationship with his mother, and a desire, when feeling her rejection, to dominate and even kill her. In other words, he seeks both to submit to her and to dominate her, another example of the practices of sub-



mission and domination associated with the authoritarian personality and one's attempts to escape the burden of existential freedom, a dynamic that we will explore in more detail below.

This breakdown of traditional gender roles continues to haunt Pascual when he establishes his own family in the hopes of finally finding a space in which to feel loved, needed and respected. He eventually comes to realize that his wife is very much like his own mother and that their marriage has simply become a repetition of his parents' marriage. Pascual is initially blind to his future wife's true character. This is evident when Pascual proves himself incapable, even in retrospect, to recognize Lola's initial taunts as provocations of her own supposed rape and as a trick to trap him into marriage.<sup>10</sup> Yet, Pascual eventually comes to see the similarities between Lola and his mother and between his own marriage and that of his parents. During their honeymoon Lola laughs when their horse startles an old woman and makes her fall. Lola's laughter makes Pascual uneasy since it seems to remind him, on an unconscious level, of his own mother's cruel laughter at other people's misfortunes: "[Lola] se reía y su risa, créame usted, me hizo mucho daño; no sé si sería un presentimiento, algo así como una corazonada de lo que habría de ocurrirle" (73). Lola's cruelty, however, becomes undeniable after their second child dies. Lola unjustly blames Pascual and in an alliance with his mother throws insults his way in an attempt to constantly remind him of his disgrace. And, of course, the trajectory of Pascual and Lola's marriage is not dissimilar to that of his parents since Lola is eventually unfaithful, becoming the lover of Pascual's most hated enemy.

In his discussion of the rise of authoritarian sympathies in men of lower socioeconomic standing in the modern era, and specifically during the rise of Nazism in Germany, Fromm points to overwhelming feelings of powerlessness that were exacerbated by the breakdown of the traditional

family, the one place where men of lower economic standing had once felt empowered:

For those who had little property and social prestige, the family was a source of individual prestige. There the individual could feel like "somebody." He was obeyed by wife and children, he was the center of the stage, and he naively accepted his role as his natural right. He might be a nobody in his social relations, but he was a king at home. (121)

A general demise in the belief in natural hierarchies and authority figures, however, also led to a weakening of the father's authority within the family, leaving many men with feelings of impotence in all aspects of life (213-14). This is clearly the situation with Pascual, who, in the absence of any sphere in which to feel respected, turns to criminal acts of violence and domination to seek affirmation.

Thus, the grotesque portrayal of the inversion of gender roles and the breakdown of the traditional family is shown to be responsible for the feelings of worthlessness and insecurity that fuel Pascual's criminal behavior. The lack of a self-abnegating, nurturing mother and of a strong, capable father who provides for his family and instills discipline and feelings of respect, seems to lead to Pascual's pathological insecurities and paranoia. Later, his own wife's cruelty and lack of respect for him exacerbates these feelings and makes Pascual lash out violently when taunted about his masculinity.<sup>11</sup> All of this can be read as an indication that the breakdown of traditional hierarchies leads to degeneracy and social chaos. Moreover, the lack of a legitimate patriarch at the family level can be read as a microcosmic critique of the lack of legitimate authority under the Republic, and as an indirect plea for a return to a supposedly natural and divinely-inspired moral order. In the absence of such an authority, be it family patriarch, national leader or God Himself—we will return to the question of

the Church and the secularism of the Second Republic shortly—Pascual attempts to escape these feelings of alienation and meaninglessness through the acquisition of an authoritarian conscience.

In *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (1947), published six years after *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Fromm expands on his concept of authoritarian conscience by contrasting it with the humanistic conscience. According to Fromm, from the authoritarian mindset humans are by nature inclined to be hostile, envious, jealous and lazy unless “curbed by fear” of a power that transcends oneself and that is “neither assailable or changeable” (*Man* 213, 93). Distinctions between good and evil and right and wrong are not the product of one’s own conscious deliberations, but rather are determined by external authorities, such as parents, teachers, society or religious institutions. Submission to an external authority provides certainty, security, and strength as well as rewards in terms of opportunities to improve one’s position within the hierarchy. In other words, the reward for obedience is the right to assert one’s own authority over others, leading Fromm to argue that the authoritarian character “admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him” (*Escape*, 162). Fromm explains the simultaneous presence of sadistic and masochistic drives in the authoritarian personality in terms of the need to form symbiotic relationships with others in order to escape the loneliness of existence:

Both the sadistic and the masochistic trends are caused by the inability of the isolated individual to stand alone and his need for a symbiotic relationship that overcomes this aloneness. (220)

Nevertheless, the price one pays for occupying a place in such a hierarchy and for submission to an external authority is great since one must relinquish one’s freedom to

think for oneself and act according to one’s own personal convictions. In other words, it involves the denial of one’s own conscience. Thus, in a system of authoritarian ethics “to be virtuous signifies self-denial and obedience, suppression of individuality rather than its fullest realization” (Fromm, *Man*, 23).

Humanistic ethics, on the other hand, requires the individual to “acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate, to recognize that there is no power transcending him which can solve his problem for him” and that one must use one’s own conscience and intellectual powers to make sense of the world and to decipher right from wrong (Fromm 53). It also requires that one accept that only we ourselves can give meaning to our own lives (53). Humanistic ethics asks us to distinguish what is right from wrong in terms of what is good for us and fosters our growth. From this perspective happiness is not equated with immediate pleasures but rather with moral and edifying behaviors that lead us closer to the aim of life: self realization. It is in this way that humanistic ethics differs from hedonism. Hedonism, concerned only with immediate pleasure, is undisciplined, whereas a humanistic ethics in its pursuit of lasting happiness depends on discipline and a respect for what is universally beneficial for human psychological growth.

Humanistic ethics differs most strikingly from authoritarian ethics in its rejection of the notion that man is inherently lazy, immoral or evil. It argues rather that evil arises, rather, from the stifling of one’s capacity for genuine love, growth and productive work. In order to compensate for this, one seeks power over others, which for Fromm is a perversion of real power:

“Power over” is the perversion of “Power to.” The ability of man to make productive use of his powers is his potency; the inability is his impotence. With his power of reason he can penetrate the surface of phenomena and understand



their essence. With his power of love he can break through the wall which separates one person from another. With his power of imagination he can visualize things not yet existing; he can play and thus begin to create. Where potency is lacking, man's relatedness to the world is perverted into a desire to dominate, to exert power over others as though they were things. Domination is coupled with death, potency with life. Domination springs from impotence and in turn reinforces it, for if an individual can force somebody else to serve him, his own need to be productive is paralyzed. (94-95)

Thus, from a humanistic perspective the strivings for dominance associated with authoritarian ethics is in itself a manifestation of the evil that springs forth from the individual's inability to realize him/herself.

This sadistic desire for dominance, as one manifestation of the authoritarian personality, is clearly present in Pascual. As Fromm explains,

The very sight of a powerless person makes [the authoritarian personality] want to attack, dominate, humiliate him. Whereas a different kind of character is appalled by the idea of attacking one who is helpless, the authoritarian character feels the more aroused the more helpless his object has become. (167)

Perhaps the best example is the scene in which Pascual kills his beloved dog Chispa. After she has given birth to stillborn puppies, her disgrace reminds him of his own (since he was partly responsible for the miscarriage of their first child). The dog's eager desire for Pascual's affection and approval make her even more pathetic:

Y ella me miraba como suplicarme, moviendo el rabillo muy de prisa, casi gimiendo y poniéndome unos ojos que destrozaban el corazón. A ella

también se le habían ahogado las crías en el vientre. En su inocencia, ¡quién sabe si no conocería la mucha pena que su desgracia me produjera! Eran tres los perrillos que vivos no llegaron a nacer; los tres igualitos, los tres pegajosos como la almíbar, los tres grises y medio sarnosos como ratas. (86)

It is in this passage that we learn that it was these feelings that invoked in Pascual a sudden desire to destroy his canine companion: "Cogí la escopeta y disparé; volví a cargar y volví a disparar. La perra tenía una sangre oscura y pegajosa que se extendía poco a poco por la tierra" (28).

Pascual feels similarly aroused by what he perceives to be Lola's helplessness before sexually forcing himself on her. He insists that she was a virgin at the time and that lustful thoughts had never crossed her mind. Blind to her obvious provocations, he prefers to view the sexual encounter as an example of his power and dominance over a helpless being, and the more he sees her as dominated, the more aroused he becomes:

Fue una lucha feroz. Derribada en tierra, sujeta, estaba más hermosa que nunca [...]. Yo la agarré del pelo y la tenía bien sujeta a la tierra. Ella forcejeaba, se escurría...

La mordí hasta la sangre, hasta que estuvo rendida y dócil como una yegua joven. (58)

Similarly Pascual's younger retarded brother, who never learns to walk or talk, who has his ears eaten off by a pig, and who is physically abused by his mother's lover, arouses the same sort of disdain and desire for destruction. In fact, it is Lola's comment "¡Eres como tu hermano!" that incites Pascual to rape her (58). And later, he admits that if he had a son like Mario, he would kill him: "El recuerdo de mi pobre hermano Mario me asaltaba; si yo tuviera un hijo con la desgracia de Mario lo ahogaría para privarle de sufrir" (87). Although he frames this statement as if it would be a

merciful act, it still reveals his desire to subjugate and destroy weakness in himself and in others. In fact, later when he is a prisoner and sees himself as a sacrificial lamb, he recognizes this desire to destroy living beings perceived to be weak and pathetic in other people's reaction to him as a criminal and a prisoner:

Nos miran [a nosotros prisioneros] como bichos raros con los ojos todos encendidos, con una sonrisilla viciosa por la boca, como miran a la oveja que apuñalan en el matadero—esa oveja en cuya sangre caliente mojan las alpargatas—, o al perro que dejó quebrado el carro que pasó—ese perro que tocan con la varita por ver si está vivo todavía—, o a los cinco gatitos recién nacidos que se ahogan en el pilón, esos cinco gatitos a los que apedrean, esos cinco gatitos a los que sacan de vez en cuando por jugar, por prolongarles un poco la vida—¡tan mal los quieren!—, por evitar que dejen de sufrir demasiado pronto... (75)

This comparison of himself with a sacrificial lamb, is not only reflected in his name (Pascual is clearly a reference to the Paschal, or sacrificial, lamb) but is also in accordance with the authoritarian character that engages in behaviors not only of domination, but also of submission. For example, Pascual enjoys submitting to the will of the Church. When he confesses that he has impregnated Lola out of wedlock he states: "Me confesé, y me quedé suave y aplanado como si me hubieran dado un baño de agua caliente" (68). And, then when he starts having second thoughts ("Momentos de flaqueza y desfallecimiento tuve" [70]), rather than backing out, he decides that "lo mejor sería estarme quieto y dejar que los acontecimientos salieran por donde quisieran: los corderos quizás piensen lo mismo al verse llevados al degolladero..." (70), again not only submitting himself to a higher law but also repeating the theme of himself as some sort of sacrificial lamb in doing so.

Moreover, Pascual reveals his masochism in his yearnings for limitations to his freedom. Throughout the novel Pascual attempts to escape the burden of existential freedom by invoking fate in deterministic arguments for his behavior. From the opening lines of the novel, Pascual insists that he is not responsible for his own actions:

Yo, señor, no soy malo, aunque no me faltarían motivos para serlo. Los mismos cueros tenemos todos los mortales al nacer y sin embargo, cuando vamos creciendo, el destino se complace en variarnos como si fuésemos de cera y en destinarnos por sendas diferentes al mismo fin: la muerte. Hay hombres a quienes se les ordena marchar por el camino de las flores, y hombres a quienes se les manda tirar por el camino de los cardos y de las chumberas. (21)

He then continues, throughout the entirety of his confession to blame destiny and uncontrollable circumstances for his own criminal behavior. His lack of faith in his ability to rise above his circumstances and his consequent desire to have his freedom curtailed by a higher authority is seen in his admission that he is actually happier in prison:

Tres años me tuvieron encerrado, tres años lentos, largos como la amargura, que si al principio creí que nunca pasarían, después pensé que habían sido un sueño; tres años trabajando, día a día, en el taller de zapatero del penal; tomando, en los recreos, el sol en el patio, ese sol que tanto agradecía; viendo pasar las horas con el alma anhelante las horas cuya cuenta—para mi mal—suspendió antes de tiempo mi buen comportamiento. (132)

Since Pascual is released from prison under Republican rule, only to go on and commit two more murders and later be arrested and executed under Nationalist rule, the rebels are shown as being the only ones able to administer the

type of discipline and punishment that Pascual needs and deserves (Osuna 94).<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Republic, like Pascual's father himself, fails to assert its authority appropriately in such matters and is not only guilty of producing a Pascual Duarte but also of being too lenient with him, and of not being able to regenerate him (93).

Thus while in Republican Spain all authorities prove to be wanting and unable to provide Pascual with the authoritarian structure and framework that he seems to want and need, the authority figures associated with the Nationalists are shown to be strong, yet just. The other important patriarchal figure in the novel, who is associated with the Nationalists, is don Jesús González de la Riva, or the Count of Torremejía. Even though don Jesús is conspicuously absent from most of Pascual's narrative, a description of his house and his churchgoing activities establish him as a "devout Catholic and title landowner of Estremadura [who] could have been marked for liquidation by extremist Republicans in 1936" (McPheeters 38). Most importantly, from the transcriber's note that follows Pascual's confession, we learn that Pascual was convicted of don Jesús's murder (159). This seems to suggest that Pascual committed the murder

perchance as a member of the Republican militia of his hometown, which was subsequently defeated when the Nationalist forces of the then Colonel Yagüe Blanco, the Spanish Patton, swept through the region. (McPheeters 37)

While there is simply not enough information to completely ascertain this hypothesis, D. W. McPheeters convincingly points out that: "for Spanish readers of the period immediately after the Civil War, only the allusion to such an atrocity was sufficient" (38).

If Pascual is guilty of murdering don Jesús, why does he choose to send the manuscript to the only friend of don Jesús whose

address he has? (159). Why does he dedicate his confession to the Count? (19). And, why does he not go into any detail about his motives for the murder? (15). The dedication reads: "A la memoria del insigne patricio don Jesús González de la Riva, Conde de Torremejía, quien al irlo a rematar el autor de este escrito, le llamó Pascualillo y sonreía" (19). This passage seems to reveal that don Jesús genuinely cared for Pascual—"le llamó Pascualillo y sonreía"—and that Pascual feels guilty for having killed him, so much so that he is incapable of even writing about the event even though he goes into great detail about the murder of his mother. In his letter to Joaquín Barrera López, Pascual admits that there are certain events that are simply too painful to recount: "otra parte hubo que al intentar contarla sentía tan grandes arcadas en el alma que prefería callármela y ahora olvidarla" (15-16), which seems to be a reference to the murder of don Jesús, which is glaringly absent from his narrative. What is important here is that the glimpses we do get of don Jesús and his relationship to Pascual suggest that he was a compassionate man and that it was an angry, confused Pascual who got caught up in the fervor of the revolution that committed a murder he would later come to regret.

The question then is: why does Pascual ultimately rebel against the very social structure that he desires to submit to by murdering one of its benevolent representatives, the Count of Torremejía? First of all it is important to remember that Pascual is unaware of the unconscious forces that control him. He does not experience his desires to dominate and submit on a conscious level nor does he understand his predicament or the true sources of his anger. In fact, Arnold M. Penuel argues that because of Pascual's inability to think

abstractly and critically, Pascual lacks the basic tools for developing the self-insight and the perspectives on reality which might at least have afforded him half a chance to surmount the conditions of his early life. (365)

Moreover, as Fromm explains, such men often think that what we need is even more freedom still and tend to rebel against all authority all the time without really understanding their motives:

the authoritarian character's fight against authority is essentially defiance. It is an attempt to assert himself and to overcome his own feeling of powerlessness by fighting authority, although the longing for submission remains present, whether consciously or unconsciously. The authoritarian character is never a "revolutionary"; I should like to call him a "rebel." (*Escape*, 168)

So, despite his desires for submission, Pascual unknowingly rebels against the very authoritarian system to which he unconsciously desires to submit.

Another important institution of authority under Nationalist rule shown to be benevolent in the novel is the Catholic Church. In addition to the hierarchy of parents over children, husband over wife, is that of God over humans. However, Pascual is equally deprived of God, the ultimate patriarchal authority who was seen as bringing meaning, order and justice to the universe. Pascual's interactions with the clergy reveal what seems to be the intrinsic benevolence of the institution of the Church. For example, the priest don Manuel is the only one to try to console Pascual after the death of his father (47). Moreover, he tries to educate him in the teachings of the Church and the solace they can bring in such times (47). His words resonate with Pascual, who thereafter kisses his hand upon seeing him. This interaction both indicates Pascual's yearning for faith in and submission to a benevolent Church hierarchy and God, something he was deprived of growing up in a secular family, again, a microcosmic representation of the state, making the areligious nature of Pascual's family serve as an oblique criticism of the secularism of the Second Republic. However, Pascual's wife

successfully pulls him away from the Church by ridiculing his interactions with the priest as unmasculine:

Desde aquel día siempre que veía a don Manuel lo saludaba y le besaba la mano, pero cuando me casé hubo de decirme mi mujer que parecía marica haciendo tales cosas y, claro es, ya no pude saludarlo más. (47)

The priest don Manuel proves to be equally compassionate when Pascual expresses his desire to marry Lola once she has become pregnant:

Pues sí, hijo; lo mejor es que os caséis. Dios os lo perdonará todo y, ante la vista de los hombres, incluso, ganáis en consideración. Un hijo habido fuera del matrimonio es un pecado y un baldón. (68)

His desire for submission to don Manuel is also seen in the feeling of calm he experiences after confessing (68). It is important to remember that to the Nationalist and medieval mindset, religion played a fundamental role in giving meaning to life and sustaining the right and necessary hierarchies. Fate, heredity, and environment do not make us aspire to be better; they simply give us an excuse to do whatever. Thus, the benevolence of don Manuel as well as Pascual's desire to submit to him serve as an argument for the Church's more active role in society and family life, something that did indeed take place under Franco's regime. Furthermore, it is shown to be something both needed and desired by the narrator/protagonist himself.

From an authoritarian perspective, it seems that Pascual's inability to become a responsible adult is the result of the lack of discipline and authority within his family and under the governance of the Second Republic. Nevertheless, one could argue that the oppressive socio-political circumstances—circumstances that the Republic was trying to rectify and that existed because of a long

cultural legacy of authoritarian childrearing and repressive political regimes—do not provide Pascual with the opportunities for growth and self-realization that would have prevented his fall into criminality. According to Fromm, social conditions actually matter more than innate talent in determining one's potential for self-realization (28). With regard to Pascual's family, while it is true that his parents failed in many ways, it is not because they were not strict enough, but rather because they did not give him the kind of nurturance he needed. According to contemporary attachment theory:

A child will function better in later life if he is 'securely attached' to his mother or father or other caregiver from birth. That is, he will be more self-reliant, responsible, socially adept, and confident. Secure attachment arises from regular, loving interaction, especially when the child desires it. Letting a child go it alone and tough it out, denying him living interaction when he wants it does not create strength, confidence, and self-reliance. It creates 'avoidant attachment'—lack of trust, difficulties in relating positively to others, lack of respect for and responsibility toward others, and in many cases antisocial or criminal behavior and rage. (Lakoff 350)

In other words, it is a lack of nurturance, not a lack of discipline, that leads to Pascual's antisocial behavior. Indeed, Pascual's lack of parental nurturance, education, positive role models and opportunities for individual growth explain his incapacity to understand his predicament, to connect affectionately with other people, and to have faith in his ability to overcome adversity. Although the Strict Father model of parenting justifies absolute obedience from children on the grounds that they are inherently evil and sinful, the vast majority of child developmental research indicates that this is false, and that such child rearing actually harms children (339-40). Pascual is not inherently evil or

sinful for despite having been deprived of love and affection as child, and despite the other obstacles in his life, there are moments when he tries to be a loving, caring person to others. By trying, for example, to be a good husband and father, Pascual demonstrates an inherently benevolent side of his personality that is simply not given the opportunity to flourish. It is when he feels thwarted in his attempts to be a good person that Pascual turns, as we have seen, to senseless rebellion and acts of domination and submission in a desperate attempt to escape his utter loneliness and confusion. Therefore, if we are to understand the family as a conceptual metaphor for the state, a convincing argument can be made that Pascual's family, like oppressive authoritarian regimes, does not provide him with the opportunity to grow and realize his unique potentialities and that it is precisely this stifling of his capabilities that leads to his irrational violence.

In conclusion, my intention here has been to argue, in alliance with critics such as Cercas, Coll-Tellechea, Monleón and Osuna that, at the time of its publication, Cela's novel was read by censors and Franco supporters as evidence of the necessity of a return to a Catholic, authoritarian regime. Moreover, I have attempted to add to this argument by showing how Pascual Duarte himself, in his unwitting justification and defense of a regime that ultimately executes him, exhibits the psychological characteristics of the authoritarian personality, which led many lower, and lower middle-class men like Pascual to support authoritarian regimes that did not represent their interests. To argue that the novel was read by many as Nationalist propaganda does not, however, negate alternative readings. In fact, Pascual Duarte, as an example of an uneducated man of lower social standing who comes to assume an authoritarian mindset, does not serve as a justification of such regimes, but rather as an explanation of the mass support such regimes often obtained despite their concern with protecting the power and privilege of



the ruling classes. While the novel implies that what Pascual needed was the discipline and structure imposed by a strong dictator, military and Church, the novel also points to the lack of opportunity for self-realization as a cause of the narrator/protagonist's demise. Pascual's potential for growth and the development of a moral conscience is limited by his social conditions: he is uneducated, poor, unloved and deprived of any opportunities to improve his social standing. This is where the authoritarian argument falters. Even if the novel suggests that these things are promised by a return to a religious, military regime, history has clearly demonstrated that for the majority of people living under such regimes, this is not the case. Thus, my examination of the pro-Franco message of the novel is not intended to affirm the veracity of the message, but rather to place the work within its proper socio-historical context, and most importantly, to remind us how fascist ideologies have been able to seduce so many.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Although this type of violence also took place on the Republican side, the Republic did not authorize it nor was it in a position to curb it. The Nationalists, on the other hand, did have this power, but chose not to exercise it. This, according to Helen Graham,

points to the fundamental asymmetry between the violence occurring in Republican and rebel zones. The military authorities had the resources to stem the violence – for there was no collapse of the police or public order in rebel areas. But they chose not to. (31)

<sup>2</sup>This article was originally published in the *Opinión* section of *El País* on April 22, 2002. However, due to difficulties accessing the entire piece through LexisNexis, here I am consulting a reprinted edition available on the Website *Políticas-Net* under the *Pensamientos* section of the *Artículos* section (no pagination). To access the column directly go to: <<http://usuarios.multimania.es/politicasnet/articulos/pasadoimpo.htm>>

<sup>3</sup>As Cercas reminds us, Cela not only fought with the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War but also worked as a censor immediately afterwards.

Moreover, Juan Aparicio, the “Delegado Nacional de Prensa” under Franco between 1941-1945 held Cela up as a literary model to be emulated.

<sup>4</sup>Other critics, such as Reyes Coll-Tellechea, José B. Monleón, and Rafael Osuna have read the novel as Nationalist propaganda. Osuna uses the dates in the novel to show how the society responsible for creating and condoning Pascual's behavior is the Republic, while it is the Nationalists who ‘save’ him from himself by condemning him to death. Monleón argues that the chronology of events in the novel make it clear that the Extremadura portrayed by Cela had to have been seen as an example of the menace that justified the military rebellion. Nevertheless, he adds that the text is subversive by the mere fact that it gives the *rojo* a voice, (Monleón 270; 261-62). Coll-Tellechea, takes a slightly different approach and argues that the clear influence of the picaresque genre meant that postwar readers saw Pascual as a *pícaro/republicano* whose voice was constantly subverted by the implied author (66-67).

<sup>5</sup>Some of the critics to have commented on the existential themes of the novel are Mary Ann Beck, David W. Foster, D. W. McPheeters, Matías Montes Huidobro, Edwin Murillo and Pilar V. Rotella.

<sup>6</sup>Pascual's resistance and acceptance of his execution is typical of the way in which throughout the novel he oscillates between accepting and rebelling against others' authority over him. Such sadomasochistic behavior is entirely in keeping with the authoritarian personality.

<sup>7</sup>Lakoff is talking here specifically about contemporary American politics. Nevertheless, many of the conceptual metaphors are valid in the context of 1930s-1940s Spain as well. Lakoff makes it clear that these are central models and that a great degree of variation does in fact exist (284).

<sup>8</sup>From an authoritarian mindset “To suffer without complaining is [one's] highest virtue—not the courage of trying to end suffering or at least to diminish it (Fromm, *Escape*, 171). It is not surprising therefore that Nationalist propaganda films were filled with rhetoric extolling the virtue of suffering in silence. For example, the narrator of one Nationalist propaganda film states: “España entera es milicia y la milicia es austeridad, trabajo, resistencia y silencio” (*La Guerra*).

<sup>9</sup>For an excellent summary of contemporary attachment theory see Robert Karen's *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love*.

<sup>10</sup>Even though Pascual believes that Lola was an innocent virgin before their sexual encounter, it is clear to the reader that she intentionally tries to provoke him. She looks at him with “un mirar que espantaba” and when he does not take any initiative sexually, she accuses him of being like his retarded brother, which leads Pascual to force himself on her in an attempt to prove his masculinity (57-58). Afterwards, Pascual asks her if that was what she wanted and she unambiguously replies: “Sí” (58). She also rewards his behavior by telling him that “¡No eres como tu hermano...! ¡Eres un hombre...!” (58).

<sup>11</sup>For an excellent analysis of masculinity in *La familia de Pascual Duarte* see Carlos Jerez-Farrán’s “Pascual Duarte y la susceptibilidad viril.”

<sup>12</sup>In the final transcriber’s note we are told that Pascual is released from prison before the outbreak of the Civil War, but that the only details they know about Pascual after the outbreak of the war was that he murdered the Count of Torremejía (Cela 158-59). In short it is clear that Pascual is released from prison and goes on to commit two more murders under Republican rule. Badajoz, however, was taken over by the Nationalists on August 14, 1936 and Pascual Duarte signs his memoirs February 15, 1937 after having spent several months in prison (Osuna 86). All of this strongly suggests that Pascual was most likely arrested after the Nationalist takeover of Badajoz and that they were the ones to finally bring him to justice (Osuna 86-87, 94).

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