

## CHAPTER 2

# ‘Standardizing’ from Above: Experts, Intellectuals, and Culture Bubble

### 2.1. Experts in Something and Experts in Everything: The Two Pillars of the Culture of the Transition

#### 2.1.1. A less than democratic way to construct a democracy

His first name appears alone on the screen: just ‘José Luis,’ with no last name. He speaks in the first person plural, clearly differentiating *we* (‘we never managed to hear the conversations’) from *they* (‘they asked for coffee, they asked for water’). He narrates a scene of intrigue, one might almost say a secret meeting. The place: the Madrid restaurant that bears his name, ‘José Luis’; the time: the night bridging May 23 and 24, 1978. ‘It was here, in this booth,’ gravely intones the voice-over, while the camera pans between tables that still seem to exude power, ‘that Alfonso Guerra and Abril Martorell drafted and negotiated 25 key articles of the Constitution.’

Indeed, during five long hours that night, from 10 pm to 3 am, these two politicians, one from the PSOE and the other from the Unión de Centro Democrático, decided such fundamental things for the future of Spaniards as that their state would be defined as a ‘parliamentary monarchy,’ ‘secular,’ and composed of diverse ‘nationalities’; that their representatives would be chosen by means of an electoral law that distributed them across 45 provincial subdivisions—thus favoring the majority political parties; that their education would not take place in a single public lay school; and finally, that the Constitution that arranged all this would make it difficult for the citizens themselves to have any influence on that very document.

To be fair, it should be noted that Guerra and Martorell did not in fact personally decide these things; rather, they negotiated them for later approval by a commission of 37 representatives. The Basque Group and the Popular Alliance protested at not being invited to this particular nocturnal meeting, but it wouldn’t have mattered in any case. The commission always voted in favor of what was negotiated by Guerra and Martorell and a few

others who often met with them *en petit comité* outside the halls of congress, to negotiate the constitution of the nascent Spanish democracy.

The so-called 'seven presenters of the Constitution' are traditionally known as 'the fathers of the Constitution,' and on more than one occasion—including in the very documentary featuring the aforementioned José Luis, *Memoria de un consenso (Documental Canal Historia sobre la constitución española 2004)*—it has also been said that Guerra and Martorell helped 'birth' it. Whether two or seven, the attraction of such low numbers seems irresistible for this type of laudatory, and often overly dramatic, audiovisual story of the Spanish transition to democracy. In fact, such stories already constitute very nearly a subgenre, beginning with Victoria Prego's famous series for Spanish television, 'La Transición' (1995): the fewer the actors involved in events that are decisive for 'the future of Spaniards' (as the expression usually goes), the more this type of news article seems to delight in the events.

The scenes behind closed doors, the departures from the 'official' script due to unusual circumstances, the small injustices, and the almost amusing anecdotes that are generated are all recurring motifs. 'It has been said that we were eating supper,' Guerra says of nocturnal meetings in congressional offices, 'but the truth is, we didn't have a single bite to eat, not a thing. Once, at the beginning, Arzallus wanted to go out for sandwiches, but there were journalists with cameras and such, and everybody decided not to leave. So we didn't eat anything, not sandwiches, not anything.' Guerra is right: cigarettes and coffee go better with the aesthetics of this type of story than food. Ashtrays piled high in the wee hours of the morning. Men, a handful of men, smoking and deciding the fate of the country while everyone else sleeps. Guerra recounts in his memoirs that even after the Constitution was approved, Martorell and he continued meeting regularly, late at night. 'We developed the habit of spending the night talking about Spain and her problems,' he says.

Santiago Carrillo narrated in audiovisual news article for *El País Semanal* on the attempted coup d'état of February 23, 1981, known as the 23F (*Qué pasó la noche del 23-F, según Carrillo 2011*), a particularly dramatic version of this type of scene. On that ill-fated night, the coup participants put him next to General Gutiérrez Mellado in one of the congressional rooms, where they had also sequestered Felipe González and Alfonso Guerra, whom they had placed in separate corners facing the wall. They didn't make Carrillo and Mellado face the wall, perhaps because of their seniority, but they did assign a Civil Guard with a rifle to each of them. They couldn't speak, but they could smoke. When they finished off the cigarettes, an 'usher friend' (another one of those 'generic,' almost nameless witnesses, like José Luis, who are in charge of providing for the needs of the men who think for

everyone), brought them a ‘cartridge’ [*sic*] of tobacco. ‘The things history has [to tell],’ says Carrillo, in voice-over. ‘Who would have ever thought that we would find ourselves together that night defending the same thing? Me, a member of the Defense Council, and Gutiérrez Mellado, head of the Fifth Column of Madrid, sharing cigarettes and, in that moment, sharing feelings. That’s enough to give you historical optimism,’ he concludes.

The two Spains could be reconciled because their leaders smoked together. But to do that they needed secret, and even bizarre, intrigues, sometimes orchestrated by characters who had no leadership or official position, but who crept from the shadows for a moment to take part in History. The journalist and lawyer José Mario Armero is a paradigmatic case. As Victoria Prego recounts in ‘La Transición’ (1995), he offered his private home for the clandestine meeting between Suárez and Carrillo in 1976 that would culminate in the crucial decision to legalize the Spanish Communist party.

Armero adjusts to the foibles of the genre, narrating the scene in the present tense for greater vividness: ‘Both of them smoke a ton of cigarettes. My wife has prepared something to eat, but they don’t eat anything, not a bite.’ His wife is another one of those nameless figures that serve. And Armero himself is perhaps a hybrid figure between the leaders who think and decide everyone’s fate, and the servers who make sure they lack for nothing. He was there that night for the entire seven-hour duration of the conversation between Suarez and Carrillo, until well past midnight. It was not the only time he found himself in the middle of matters of ‘high politics.’ In a series of Spanish news articles titled ‘Españoles con poder desaparecidos’ (Papell 2011), he was said to be ‘a key figure of the Spanish Transition, although he was never active in politics: he did his work in the name of and on behalf of civil society, of which he was a distinguished member.’ The report called him a hybrid figure between the distinction of the great men with whom he rubbed shoulders (‘he was the support of the young king in the social circulation of the crown’) and the solicitude, which he shared in some measure, of the ‘common man.’ He embodied the ‘cooperative sentiment of helpfulness that infused citizens at that time, when there existed an awareness of the delicacy of the task of transitioning peacefully from a dictatorship to a democracy that had yet to be built.’

Figures like Armero emphasize that the boundary between the ‘distinguished gentlemen’ and ‘the common citizens,’ so insurmountable for the majority (and especially for those who barely managed, as explained in the previous chapter, to meet the requirements to be considered the latter), sometimes becomes malleable and porous. Powerful people like to be magnanimous and cheerful with those around them, to skip official protocol and to treat those who surround them like friends. (‘Suárez greeted me as

if he had known me all my life. He was very friendly!' says Carrillo). Power is demonstrated by the capacity to give it to others, to show oneself to be above what 'the script' demands. That is, in many respects, the essence of the so-called 'transition to democracy' in Spain: a big, conspiratorial pat on the back for the citizenry from those in power, so that the former would feel so flattered that they would agree to turn a blind eye to the opaque, elitist maneuvers supposedly required by the exceptionality of the moment—a less than democratic way, as everyone knows, to try to build a democracy.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.2. Of friends, good educations, and common sense

Afterwards, when the supposed exceptional moment is past, how do we stop playing that old game of 'the elites' who decide collective fates in closed offices while their discreet servers trust them and bring them coffee and cigarettes? It's a whole way of life. It is impossible to overestimate the inertia and the comfort of reading every situation based on the exceptionality and brilliance of a few capable, authorized individuals, close to each other despite their 'official' opposition, which, in any case, always facilitates the exercise of their power. Gregorio Peces Barba, one of those seven 'fathers of the Constitution' whom Guerra and Martorell had to attend like 'midwives,' affirmed the following about that group of seven, who held supposedly opposing political views:

We were very good friends. After all, we all knew each other from before. That is, I knew Don Miguel Roca of the Court of Public Order, Miguel Herrero, José Pedro Pérez-Llorca, and 'Gabi' Cisneros from

1 There is already an entire tradition of studies that have shown this 'lack of democracy' in the very 'transition to democracy' itself. This tradition has been articulated through the voices of such intellectuals as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, and Ignacio Echevarría. These and others took it upon themselves to point out, during the 1980s and '90s, the costs of a transition that aspired to be exemplary, but that, according to these critics, was actually little more than the exchange of certain power elites for others (Montalbán 1998), embraced a trivialization of public discourse and culture (Ferlosio), and preferred to hide recent history beneath a mantle of consensus that cancelled the critical ability of the intellectual media (Echevarría). Guillem Martínez has recuperated this tradition in his exploration of the concept of a Transition Culture. Martínez himself also mentions Gregorio Morán and Juan Aranzadi, who round out an already classic list, to which should be added the research of authors who work in North American academia, such as Teresa Vilarós, Eduardo Subirats, Cristina Moreiras, and Germán Labrador. The writer and essayist Rafael Chirbes deserves special mention, since throughout his career he has traced a rich panorama of possible lives woven around betrayals, resignations, and impossibilities that for these critics characterize the transition period (see especially in this regard his novel *La caída de Madrid*).

college, and anyway, some had even been very good friends of mine. And I knew Fraga from when he had sent me to a town in the province of Burgos, because I had somehow collaborated, as he said, as a government spokesman with the student subversion.

The documentary *Memoria de un consenso* quickly dispels doubts about the possible animosity between Peces Barba and Fraga (a central figure of the Franco regime). The journalist Soledad Gallego, charged by the newspaper *El País* with covering the ‘birth’ of the Constitution, explains: ‘Manuel Fraga was quickly on good terms with Gregorio Peces Barba. ... In spite of the conflict between left and right, their interactions were cordial.’ Curiously, something similar happened between Fraga and his other possible adversary—who was even further to the left than Peces Barba—among the presenters of the Constitution, then-communist Jordi Solé Tura. Fraga comments: ‘Like me, he was a professor of political law,’ and although ‘in principle we didn’t have very compatible [political] positions, it soon turned out that we agreed on many things.’ For Fraga, the subject of the similar ‘training’ of the group was very important:

It must be recognized that we were all people with similar backgrounds; there were two political law professors, [and] a philosophy of law professor, which was Peces Barba. In short, we had early training that didn’t agree on the conclusions, but did on the working methods, and on the custom of using legal reasoning, and that was good.

The exceptional ability of those who are called to lead in exceptional times is unquestionably justified by their ‘training.’ Bauman explains that never in the history of the world has there been a caste more convinced of its role as the vanguard of humanity than the one that formed around the modern power/knowledge complex:

From at least the seventh century and well into the twentieth, the writing elite of Western Europe and its footholds on other continents considered its own way of life as a radical break in universal history. Virtually unchallenged faith in the superiority of its own mode over all alternative forms of life—contemporary or past—allowed it to take itself as the reference point for the interpretation of the *telos* of history. (110)

Is it going too far to interpret from Bauman’s affirmation the attitudes and the self-perception of the elites that orchestrated the Spanish transition from the dictatorial regime to the parliamentary monarchy? Perhaps it

doesn't seem like much of an exaggeration after listening to Fraga—who had been Franco's minister for seven years—justify his participation in the writing of the democratic Constitution by saying that 'he had been prepared for it, he had written books,' and that he had created 'an institute for studies on democratic reform.' Questions like that of his responsibility, as the Minister of the Interior, for the death of at least five people during the 'Vitoria massacre,' just two years before Fraga was seated to write the Constitution, are put on hold: books are books, studies are studies, and a university professor is a university professor.<sup>2</sup>

The expert 'fathers of the Constitution' are legitimized because they write books and because they have 'training'; in other words, because they are fluent in the technical language of the law. But also, and this is different, because they know how to negotiate, 'they interact cordially,' 'they have known each other for years,' and even 'get along well.' If you think about it, these arguments are rather contradictory. It is as if these 'distinguished gentlemen' gained legitimacy both because of their specialized training and because they could rise above that same technical specialization. Gabriel Cisneros, another one of the seven '*com-padres*' of the Constitution, echoes this tension when he recalls that some people said (despite the presence of eminent jurists among them), 'The fact that the great "midwives" of contemporary Spanish constitutionalism are an agricultural engineer and an industrial engineer never ceases to be amusing.' But again it is Alfonso Guerra who confronts the contradiction more directly, making it work in his favor, when he says that Martorell and he were two people who hadn't studied law but who had 'something that is essential for a lawyer: common sense.'

Again the work of de Certeau is an excellent source of ideas to help us understand such questions of cultural authority and its contradictions. As I indicated in the previous chapter, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau explains that at the same time that Western 'modernity' was born, when reality began to be considered something that must be understood empirically rather than as an invisible essence, a new structure of epistemological legitimization was formed. This means for de Certeau that since then the ability 'to speak in name of reality' has come to be considered as belonging mainly to two figures, supported in different ways by this new horizon of legitimacy: the Expert and the Philosopher.

The Expert, according to de Certeau, specializes in a specific area of technoscientific knowledge. Based on that specialization, he is granted an

2 Regarding the so-called 'Vitoria massacre' and the lack of reparation offered to its victims, see Muriel (2012).

authority that, in principle, would consist of communicating or making his specialized knowledge useful for the rest of society. But it always ends up extending beyond that particular mission, and becoming an authority not directly related to his area of expertise. Ultimately, in fact, the Expert is expected to have ‘common sense.’ Or rather, his personal opinions end up being perceived as ‘common sense,’ because he is recognized as an ‘authority’ in general, and everyone forgets that in the beginning his authority was based on a particular type of technical, specialized knowledge. Thus it is that the ‘expert in something’—in a certain specific thing—magically ends up becoming an ‘expert in everything.’ That is, he becomes an authorized representative of that ‘common sense’ that Guerra considers the key to Martorell’s and his own success as creators of the legal norm of social coexistence that has been at work in the Spanish state for almost 40 years.

What happens with de Certeau’s other figure of modern cultural authority, the Philosopher, is actually very similar. The Philosopher is someone who, to a certain extent, would be introduced from the beginning as a kind of ‘expert in everything.’ The Philosopher, according to de Certeau, acquires his legitimacy through the very fact that he does not specialize in something in particular. On the contrary, he claims to speak in the name of universality, in a meta-language that would allow him to observe from outside both expert knowledges and, in general, the daily production of meaning in ordinary language. This prerogative has been shown by studies of language and ‘ordinary’ culture, such as those of de Certeau himself (which in this regard take Wittgenstein’s work as a point of departure), to be impossible. This is in line, in other respects, with all the critical theory that has, in many different ways, laid to rest those pretensions to universality during the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

De Certeau would consider, then, that both figures, the Expert and the Philosopher, receive an ‘excess of authority’ based on fallacies. Both start from a position of illegitimate power that constitutes the source of their authority in society. Thus, the problem is not (only) that it is not possible for ‘anyone’ to easily access the cultural authority of these figures. Rather, it lies in these figures’ very ambition to monopolize the power/knowledge

3 The breakdown of positivism provoked the abandonment of an ingenuous view of referentiality as a correspondence between words and things. In its place was embraced an understanding of reality (whether that be ‘language’ or ‘world’) as a series of processes of identification and differentiation that enable or hinder the production of meaning. Key texts that articulate this tradition are, to name just a few, ‘On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense’ by Nietzsche, ‘Identity and Difference’ by Heidegger, Wittgenstein’s own *Philosophical Investigations*, and later, ‘Differance’ by Derrida, and Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense*.

complex, regardless of who they might be. The fact that Guerra reminds us that he rejected the offer of a noble title and of an honorary doctorate in law for his participation in the birth of the Constitution is of little importance. What matters is that the ways of constructing power and cultural authority in Spanish society during the transition made it possible for only two people (or seven, it doesn't matter) to perform the critical task of outlining for the public, in the form of the Constitution, what a life with dignity must consist of.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1.3. The meritocratic version of elite exceptionalism

Guerra uses the argument of 'social mobility' covertly when he says that upon being offered those honors, he responded to Martorell (who transmitted the message to him from Suárez), 'Look, Fernando, you have only recently left the plow' (i.e., he is from a farming family), and adds that he himself is 'of very humble extraction,' although 'it's true I did also study technical engineering.' Guerra's point is—I believe—that the 'distinctions' being offered were excessive for those who had played a crucial role by using 'common sense'; in other words, they were excessive for those whose origins are in the world of the 'commoner' and not that of 'distinguished gentlemen.' However, what is implicit is that in order to be able to rise to the point where their 'common sense' would serve to place them in a position to negotiate a Constitution *en petit comité*, something had to happen. This might be a way for his 'it's true I did also study technical engineering' to be seen as a recognition that actually, this 'commoner' has 'taught himself' and has earned other titles more appropriate to his humble origins, and perhaps it was these that brought him to his present position, that he does not wish to go to the extreme of trying to show off a noble title or an honorary doctorate.

César Rendueles indicated in a text published on his blog 'Contra la igualdad de oportunidades' (2013) that in recent decades the left has assimilated the discourse of 'social mobility' and 'meritocracy,' which actually has clearly conservative origins:

If being conservative means anything, it means justifying the privileges of the elites because of their superior intellectual or moral achievements. That is the classic argument of Burke, Bonald, Maistre,

4 This type of opaque, elitist constituent process has become so naturalized that it can also come to seem like 'common sense.' Nevertheless, recent decades have contributed numerous examples of how things can be done in much more democratic ways: in recent decades, countries like Iceland, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador have opened constituent processes very different from the Spanish one. See, for example, the dossier published by *Periódico Diagonal* on 'constituent processes' (2012).

and all the reactionaries of the nineteenth century. The new left confuses democracy with an expansion of the mechanics of selecting elites.

Again, the problem is not that there are few Martorells or Guerras who can ‘leave the plow’ to take up the pen that writes the Constitution, but that there is only space for a few hands to hold that pen. Rendueles specifies the critique of the idea of ‘social mobility’ by quoting these words of the sociologist Christopher Lasch (1996), from his book *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*:

Meritocracy is a parody of democracy. Theoretically, it offers possibilities for [social] ascent to whoever has the talent to take advantage of them. But social mobility doesn’t undermine the influence of the elites. In fact it contributes to the intensification of their influence by supporting the illusion that it is strictly merit-based. It only makes it more probable that the elites will exert their power irresponsibly when they recognize few obligations with respect to their predecessors or to the communities that they claim to manage. (41)

Alfonso Guerra’s discourse in *Memoria de un consenso* represents a meritocratic variation on the leitmotif of the need for exceptional individuals in exceptional situations which is the backbone of the ‘official’ narrative of the Spanish transition. The social democratic inflection of that transition clearly imprinted a different tone on the ‘distinctions’ that indicated cultural authority in Spanish society in the eighties and nineties, incorporating into them the ‘popular’ origin and the ‘humble extraction’ of many other ‘commoners’ who were able to ascend to those distinguished heights. But at the same time, the social democratic turn of the Culture of the Transition (to borrow once more the term coined by Guillem Martinez) also maintained, perhaps inevitably, the basic structures of legitimation and cultural authority that underpin the modern paradigm—technoscientific, liberal, capitalist—by which this social democracy was recognized and expressed.

If we were to look for technocratic figures equivalent to Franco’s planning engineers, we would find them, as Isidro Lopez (2012) indicates, primarily among the economists who introduced neoliberalism with the PSOE, such as the ministers Miguel Boyer and Carlos Solchaga—although we could also add the profile of the ‘eminent jurist’ (who would be embodied by Manuel Fraga in his ‘improved, democratic’ version 2.0). Beyond these figures, however, the cultural authority that predominated in the eighties and nineties must be sought out in places that were especially propitious for the meritocratic, populist version of the modern power/knowledge complex,

such as education and what is usually called 'the cultural world,' in reference to the fine arts and literature.

I have already mentioned in the previous chapter the critical importance of the long pro-European, pedagogical tradition of the Spanish intellectual elites for post-Franco 'standardization.' Now I would like to expand on this issue, giving some examples of how these elites exert their authority and their capacity for legitimation from the 'world of art and culture,' but in close proximity to the political and financial worlds. Through these examples, I hope to enrich the analysis of the different varieties of cultural authority (technocratic, intellectual, aesthetic) which nurture that cultural elite. I also hope to refine the study of their importance in the post-transition period, during which the forms of modern cultural authority (bourgeois, liberal) converge with the generalization of the way of neoliberal life, which is based on indiscriminate competition and the corporatization of the individual.

## 2.2. Men Who Smoke and Men Who Drink (or, Culture, that Modern Invention)

### 2.2.1. The expert, the intellectual, the artist, and their checks

Essentially, alongside those 'men who smoke' all night to save the nation, there are others who, more and more often as the 'democratic' era progresses, do more than smoke. They drink 'hectoliters' of 'free alcohol' at cultural openings and cocktails, paid for with public funds from the State Treasury, and against which Rafael Sanchez Ferlosio railed in his famous article 'La cultura, ese invento del gobierno' (1984). Although the former are characterized by their untiring vigil, and the latter by their inspired drunkenness, perhaps there isn't much difference between the 'men who smoke' and these other 'men who drink.' It must be kept in mind that, as Ignacio Echevarría asserted in his article on the Culture of the Transition, the state and the 'cultural world' got along well enough at the height of the PSOE's rise to power in 1982—when, says Echevarría, 'the ideals of change, liberalization, and cosmopolitanism assumed by the state in the political action plan were also assumed by a good part of the creators and intellectuals' (CT 31).

It is interesting to see the similarities in the 'approach to ideals' taken by both politicians and cultural elites, as well as those in their respective approaches to practices and languages. The letter inviting Ferlosio to contribute to an exhibition catalogue and which sorely tried his patience—and made him write that famous article—is an excellent referent for this. The letter also shows that habit so typical of the elites of treating each other with complicit familiarity ('If you don't know me, don't even think

of addressing me with [the familiar, informal] ‘tú,’” says Ferlosio) and of assuming that all ‘distinguished gentlemen’ are friends: ‘We have invited pre-eminent essayists and poets,’ the letter explains, ‘whose contributions we think could be very interesting, and among whom you [tú] will find many friends.’ Ferlosio is outraged by the brazenness, but at the same time he considers it archetypal of ‘the current uses of cultural exchange.’

‘How many times lately,’ he laments, ‘have I had to put up with being told, “It’s nothing, two or three pages about anything, whatever you want, whatever occurs to you ...” Come on, I know that when you sit down at the machine ...!’ This is what Ferlosio calls ‘unconditional loyalty to the name’: this is all they want, because he is part of the cast of ‘distinguished’ characters who can help to legitimize any cultural enterprise. Ferlosio’s article has often been read as a critique of the PSOE’s subsidized, populist government culture, which it undoubtedly is. However, it also contains a critique of a much older cultural elitism—the supposed superiority of those who appropriate the monopoly on knowledge—which in this commercialized context turns the work of intellectuals and artists into purely superficial prestige.

And in any case, there is no contradiction between these two critiques. On the one hand, the PSOE’s cultural, subsidized populism can be perfectly understood as an expanded version of the traditional authoritarianism of the modern cultural elites. On the other hand, what the social democratic government tried to do was incorporate elements of ‘popular culture’ into the existing structures of cultural authority—chaired professorships, museums, Ministries of Culture, big cultural industries, etc.,—instead of making space for other, more democratic ways of producing and maintaining cultural value.

‘It is a showing of current painters, who instead of painting on canvas will do it on fans,’ explained the invitation. But then it immediately clarified, ‘However, it isn’t an exhibition of “fans,” but rather the background isn’t canvas.’ In other words, a fan can be put in the space where a canvas was (just as it is possible to put a ‘deserter of the plow’ where a jurist would normally be), but the space continues to be the same, as the ‘head of a public organization’ who invited Ferlosio knew very well. No matter how much they want to integrate colorful or folkloric elements—like fans—into these ‘high’ places, it is always about maintaining the legitimacy of the ‘cultural’ sphere as a privileged space that is adorned, certainly, with symbols that are much less austere than those that surround those ‘men who smoke’—expert saviors of the nation—but always fulfills, as Ferlosio says, the ‘clairvoyant prophecy’ of the song: ‘in Chicote a posh entertainment / with the cream of intellectual society.’

'Honorary boozers drinking on the government's dime, to lend prestige to events with the hollow sound of their names.' According to Ferlosio, that is what the so-called Spanish 'intellectuals' became in the eighties. Pierre Bourdieu (1995) explained, however, that the invention of the figure of the intellectual—which may be summed up in Emile Zola's famous 'J'Accuse' (1898, Dreyfus case)—involved a moment of affirmation for the autonomy of art in the face of politics. Since then, for Bourdieu, and according to the idea that became hegemonic, the intellectual's legitimacy was based precisely on his independence from political intrigue, which he could denounce from an impartial position.

Denouncements of the PSOE's wasteful spending on culture; mentions of Felipe González's and Carmen Romero's famous regular meetings with the 'cream of the intellectual society' in the *bodega* of Moncloa Palace (the Spanish presidential home); allusions to the possible 'clientelism' of the cultural world with respect to the Spanish 'democratic' state—all these have occurred abundantly in connection with the notion of the Culture of the Transition. And it seems to me that when these things are done, perhaps what they have in mind is the ideal counter-image of that 'intellectual autonomy' that was instituted at the end of the nineteenth century with Zola's symbolic gesture. The Spanish intellectuals and artists of the post-dictatorship period would be exactly the opposite of that critical, independent figure. As Guillem Martínez said, 'basically, the relationship between the state and culture in the CT is the following: culture doesn't get involved in politics—except to acknowledge that the state is right—and the state doesn't get involved in culture—except to subsidize it, to award it, or to give it honors' (16).

There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in all this. But it seems to me that there is a danger in exaggerating the explicit, deliberate complicity between the 'cultural world' and the state. This can end up blurring—even if only accidentally—a deeper type of structural complicity that has to do with the common root of both political and 'cultural' power in the modern power/knowledge complex I have been analyzing, and to which the figure of the intellectual is in no way a stranger, even when he maintains his autonomy towards political power and money. Again, it has to do with enormously complex questions that I can only partially illuminate; but I still want to attempt to do so without departing from the more or less flexible path of my reasoning. In this regard, I will try to expound briefly on the keys of that structural complementarity between political power and modern cultural power (including that of the 'intellectuals') by returning to the meat of Ferlosio's substantial article. It seems to me that the three basic pieces of the complicated puzzle of 'modern' cultural authority were

indeed already present in the famous fan exhibition just as the CT inherited it: political-technocratic power, cultural prestige—with the added variant of the aesthetic aura, to which I will now turn—and the power of money.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, on one hand, we have the head of the ‘public’ institution who invites Ferlosio. This would be the representative of political power, and that power is always based/founded on the expert’s technocratic legitimacy. It is assumed that this gentleman is there because he has been suitably ‘trained’ in something specific, that is, because he has some ‘technical’ expert knowledge necessary to do his job. At the same time, the representative of this power seems ‘complicit,’ a ‘friend of his friends,’ with ‘common sense’ that leads him to *tutear* (address informally) everybody, even if he doesn’t know them, and to be magnanimous and friendly with his close friends.

On the other hand are those ‘pre-eminent essayists and poets’ whom the political power invites to write something for the exhibition catalogue. These people are nourished by another type of legitimation that is no longer

5 There are many valuable contributions to the study of the often endogamic relations of these three sectors (state, money, and art/culture) since the Spanish ‘transition to democracy,’ including some of the critical approaches to the transition in general, which I mentioned earlier (see note 35). This is actually a very vibrant field of study, energized not only by Guillem Martínez’s crucial notion of *Cultura de la Transición* (and Fernández-Savater’s later reworking of the concept), but also by the recent publication of important works in the field of contemporary intellectual and cultural history, such as Delgado’s aforementioned *La nación singular* (2014) and the much-anticipated and controversial *El cura y los mandarines* by Gregorio Morán (2014). Although different in scope and methodology, these two books are somewhat complementary in terms of their chronology: Morán extends his study from 1966 to 1996, and Delgado seems to take off from where Morán left it, focusing on the years from 1996 to 2011. In these, as well as in other important contributions—like Eduardo Subirats’ criticism of the authoritarian cultural elites of the transition *Después de la lluvia* (1993) or Joan Ramon Resina’s challenge of Castilian centralism in ‘Hispanismo’ *Del Hispanismo a los Estudios Ibéricos* (2009)—we find very important analysis of the specific ways in which ‘the Spanish cultural class’ has negotiated its ties to money and state power. While Morán is particularly meticulous in his almost detectivesque reconstructions of the corruptions great and small involved in those ties, some other authors work with broader contexts or are more theoretically focused. Despite, or because of, their differences, these works provide a wealth of historical knowledge to which I would like to offer my own research as a humble addition. Perhaps what I am mainly able to contribute in this respect are two different lines of work: on one side, a wide contextualization of Spanish cultural power in processes of modern cultural ‘segregation’ (those described by Bauman, de Certeau, and Rancière), and, on the other, a renewed vision of cultural authority based on the experiences of collaboration and radical democracy which, despite all their shortcomings and contradictions, have been creating a new cultural space of relative autonomy during the years of the present crisis (2008–15).

specialized and technocratic, but rather that of their intellectual capacity to have an opinion 'on anything': 'It's nothing, two or three pages on anything, whatever you want, whatever occurs to you ...' These 'pre-eminent essayists and poets' are invited not to share their own philosophical or literary research, but rather to express their opinion on the cultural event of the day. And they might share with 'the men who smoke' the practices and languages of that deeply rooted elitism due to which the distinguished gentlemen 'are all friends,' although they don't know each other. Furthermore, crucially, they might trade on the empty prestige of their name in exchange for entitlements and alcoholic 'refreshments,' thus integrating themselves into that great organizational system of the value of things to which the technocrats also respond: that of 'the money community' (Harvey 1989).

But, in addition—and this seems to me very useful for nuancing the arguments on the complicity between power and culture in the CT—the letter that infuriated Ferlosio includes another fundamental element: those artists of the fan exhibition who, according to the head of the public institution, 'have absolute freedom to paint them, to break them, to play and whatever [else] occurs to them.' Ferlosio is angry, and he wonders how much those artists will earn 'to make asses of themselves' with the fans. But here I want to emphasize that, besides the name of the prestigious intellectual, the 'popular' flavor the fans give, and the check made out to the 'bearer' for the participants, what the organizer also needs for his event to be successful is the playful, transgressive freedom of the artist, who, like the intellectual, is requested to do 'whatever occurs to him.'

What appears in that requirement is, of course, the third great transformation that, together with the capitalist and liberal-bourgeois ones, gave rise to the foundations of modern Western cultural authority, and which, as Graham and Labanyi remind us, Francoism had interrupted in Spain at the height of the thirties: 'aesthetic modernization.'

### 2.2.2. The individualistic heart of the modern aesthetic

The Argentine critic Reinaldo Laddaga summarizes the basic characteristics of this 'aesthetic modernity' in his *Estética de la emergencia*. He interprets it as a reaction to capitalist modernization. This, in turn, implies abandoning ways of life based on the power of the past and on tradition, replacing them with new ways of life governed by a culture of experts who determine the necessary means (always ruled by capitalist logic) to exert control over nature, which, one assumes, will bring progress in the future.

This technocratic culture produces a void of meaning and a deficit of sociability that causes the aesthetic reaction of modernism and the avant-garde. But—and this is the interesting thing here—Laddaga adds

that this void of meaning and deficit of sociability is basically due to a series of massive processes of ‘specialization and abstraction’ in the face of which aesthetic modernity has an ambiguous answer: although it often tries to construct a ‘new unity’ that gives meaning to so much dispersion, it simultaneously manages to put on an exhibition—and almost an exacerbation—of the alienating aspects of those ‘automatizing’ processes of life.

This second aspect is what interests me. Modernism undoubtedly introduces a distortion of languages, a relativization of conventions—thus accompanying the ‘melting into the air’ that characterizes capitalist, urban, industrial modernization. Perhaps that is the origin of the suggestion—which, on the face of it, there is no reason to take for granted—that what the artists might do with the fans is ‘to break them, to play.’ And the assertion that ‘it’s not an exhibition of fans’ is the organizer’s way of making the familiar unfamiliar, very like the typical move/aim of the avant-garde and modernism, which seek to make us look at ordinary objects in new ways, ‘outside the box’ of convention.

In essence, Laddaga explains that the modern aesthetic, understood as a cultural regime begun in the eighteenth century and based on the presentation of a work of art by an artist to a silent spectator, necessarily consists of an interruption of the conventional: it has to do, says Laddaga, with presenting ‘something completely exterior to the situation in which it appears.’ He adds, ‘that exteriority is conceived as an occurrence that cancels the routine implementation of communications and actions, it separates them from themselves and surprises them: it is a moment of absolute interruption of the community that can simultaneously be a promise of particular fullness’ (41).

This moment of irruption of the strange isn’t all that different, in other respects, from the operation of traditional cultures, which also have their mechanisms for causing rupture, improvisation, or ecstasy. But what is peculiar in the modern aesthetic, according to Laddaga, is that it accompanies that strong emphasis placed on the irruption of exteriority—as opposed to the maintenance of tradition—with a characteristic centrality of the individual, in the function of both creator and spectator:

[A]n artist, in a state of solitude where she focuses intensely on increasing her receptivity, composes—from the fragments of sensitivity that she isolates—an object where a different thought is produced, destined to be developed elsewhere, perhaps neutralized, where an unknown, silent spectator scrutinizes it closely, with the intention of discovering its structure. (41)

Surely it is in relation to this priority of the singular that we must understand the 'absolute freedom' the organizer of the fan exhibition demands, so that the artists can 'paint them, break them, play, and whatever [else] occurs to them.' Only from that freedom could those artists find 'the occurrence that cancels the routine implementation of communications and actions,' that moment of creating meaning by distorting the conventional as aesthetic modernity understands it. But then, what is it in that description of the artists' work on fans that is so humiliating and upsets Ferlosio so much? Is it only the implied matter of them earning too much?

What happens, it seems to me, is that, like the case of the 'unconditional loyalty to the name,' the irritating thing here is that the possible 'occurrence' of exteriority at the center of the modern aesthetic experience may become a mere 'whim' of the individual who holds the title of 'artist.' The 'whatever occurs to them' that Ferlosio repeats is a perversion of the moment of 'exacerbated receptivity' (Laddaga) that is demanded of the modern artist to facilitate the irruption of something external not only to her, but also to the common world to which, ever since Schiller formulated the paradigm in *Letters for the Aesthetic Education of Humanity*, she is understood to belong.

If art is important in modernity, says Laddaga, paraphrasing Schiller, it is because in it 'the exhibition of a certain general truth of individuals or communities occurs such that it can be produced in a singular way.' He adds, 'it is how it is distinguished with respect to the world in which it originates that artwork becomes capable of indicating the authentically common at the heart of the common' (33).

Only because Guernika is painted that way, with those uncertain, tangled lines, only because it includes each one of those unique figures and not others, does it manage to achieve the intensity that makes it a widely recognized symbol of human suffering and of war. Only because it wanders through those phrases with strange, drawn-out rhythms, only because it invents the unique, peculiar characters Albertine and Marcel, can *À la recherche de temps perdu* achieve 'the exposition of a certain general truth' about the common experience of mortality and the passage of time. In this connection of the unique with the common, a fundamental ambiguity is expressed about modern aesthetics in the face of capitalist modernization, which I have already mentioned: at the same time as it aggravates the processes of deterritorialization (as Deleuze and Guattari say) that moves capitalism, it still manages to try to establish new 'common senses.'

Perhaps the clearest, most extreme cases of this second function of aesthetic modernization should be sought in the famous 'bringing art to life' of the historic avant-garde. In the wake of the many interpretations of this motto, aesthetics would play a foundational role in community-wide

political experiments. Of these, those of the early Soviet Russia come to mind. Also, and more relevant for this context, there are those of Lorca's La Barraca theater group and other similar initiatives that united the avant-garde with popular culture during the Spanish Second Republic.<sup>6</sup>

Going forward, I don't find it unreasonable to assert that one of the problems with the type of perverse adaptation to aesthetic modernity that Ferlosio criticizes—and which he considers recurrent in the Spain of democratic cultural 'normalization'—is precisely that it erases that 'common' component which resonates in the modern aesthetic experience, changing it into a mere individual 'notion' or 'whim.'

### 2.2.3. Putting culture in my name

But why? Why would anyone be interested in thus perverting aesthetic modernity?

In part, no doubt, because of the existence of that other central element which, together with expert power, intellectual prestige, and the aura of aesthetics, completes the puzzle Ferlosio has drawn: the famous 'check made out to bearer' that the government wrote every time it heard the word 'culture,' those '10,000 *duros*'<sup>7</sup> a head given to those who participated in the catalogue, the plain and simple 'price of your name' to which the intellectual finds himself reduced. To wit: money. But not money as a kind of scapegoat or as the mysterious embodiment of all the ills of humanity; money as a very specific, very real instrument used historically to reduce all social value to something quantifiable, instrumental, and subject to becoming exclusive individual property. Changing culture into something that can 'put a name' on supposedly exceptional individuals in whom all the value of aesthetic creation—and even, more generally, cultural creation—is concentrated, facilitates the monetarization of that cultural value. And this is something that the most individualist interpretations of modern tradition allow. This is better understood if we consider that the process of cultural privatization and commercialization entailed by this monetarization is much more difficult to carry out in societies—known as 'traditional'—that understand their culture as a common, collective, anonymous process of production and maintenance of meanings that are necessary for life.<sup>8</sup>

6 Regarding experimental convergences of the aesthetic avant-garde and projects of political change during the Second Republic, see Graham and Labanyi (1995).

7 A Spanish coin worth 5 pesetas, or roughly US 4c.

8 It would be ingenuous to think that there are cultures in which the shared, the common, is not in tension with the individual, or in which the use value ('what is necessary to sustain life') is not in tension with the exchange value. To avoid oversimplifications, I think David Graeber's classification of the 'moral foundations

As Ferlosio explains, in the world of money, intellectual work isn't appealing if it's not 'paid':

Nobody ever appeals to the so-called intellectuals by taking them seriously, as would only be the case if somebody sought them out, not to pay them just for the use of their names, but to request some free, anonymous benefit of them. (And what Government could have dreamed up a better disposition towards collaborationism than what the present one had before it in October 1982!) But their possible usefulness—whatever it may be worth—is neither wanted nor needed; in fact, being useful might actually be a hindrance. Rather, it is only the decorative emptiness of their fame and their names that is desirable.

Intensifying the quantifying logic of money and the abandonment of the use value that are both implied by neoliberalism led to a progressive commercialization of the 'cultural world' in Spain. Fortunately, there are already numerous studies about this, such as those of Graham and Labanyi, Bértolo (2008), López de Abiada (2001), Acín (1990), Alonso (2003), Reig (2012), Rowan (2010), Ferlosio himself (2000), and others.<sup>9</sup> Now is not the

of economics' is very useful. He identifies three: exchange, hierarchy, and what he calls 'baseline communism,' which functions according to the tacit principle of 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.' Conversations among friends, music, dancing, parties, or games, says Graeber, are environments in which 'baseline communism' or 'communism of the senses,' in which the goal is sharing in and of itself rather than competition, are frequently practiced. In precapitalist European peasant societies, like those studied by John Berger, the ties of interdependence were often so evident that many of the activities of daily life, including work, cultural transmission, and decision-making, were managed from that 'baseline communism.' This doesn't mean that that was the only form of social organization, since this tendency always appeared together with the other two forms of human relationship identified by Graeber. He does note, however, that 'baseline communism' is a kind of 'foundation' for all sociality, even though it is never found in a 'pure' form: 'baseline communism might be considered the raw material of sociality, a recognition of our ultimate interdependence that is the ultimate substance of social peace' (99).

9 One of Ferlosio's own texts that seems to me particularly effective for describing these dynamics and which I have mentioned on other occasions (Moreno-Caballud 2012) is 'Las cajas vacías,' included in the book *El alma y la vergüenza* (Ferlosio 2000). In it Ferlosio talks about the proliferation of an 'intransitive' individual ethic (indifferent to the object of its action as it produces individual profit) that affected all of society, and particularly the world of culture. He detected this 'intransitive' ethic in the (literally) 50,000 'cultural acts'—whatever those might be—proposed in advance by the organizers of the Universal Exposition of Seville in 1992, and in the need felt by the mass media to fill the same number of pages every day, even

time for that kind of analysis, which is very well developed in these works. They all agree on the importance of the ‘fame and name’ paradigm to which Ferlosio refers, the ‘proper nouns’ with which the new cultural industries, designed for mass consumption and concentrated around a few big media groups, were creating a kind of cultural ‘star-system’ to stimulate sales.

I will return shortly to the type of ‘culture bubble’ to which that ‘cultural world’s’ neoliberal decline leads. However, first I want to propose that there is something else that works together with the power of money to foster that perversion of aesthetic modernity, which tends to turn it into nothing more than a mere individual whim. That something is the appearance of a specific historical juncture at which a large part of the Spanish ‘creative class’ tended to hide the relationship between their aesthetic work and the historical and cultural communities from which they took the conventional materials they used (languages, traditions, collective imaginaries, etc.), and to which, inevitably, they returned those materials transformed into ‘works of art.’ In other words, I propose that the type of degraded individualism that facilitated the ‘buying and selling’ of artists (and intellectuals) by those in power during the so-called Culture of Transition derived in part from the artists themselves, in exacerbating the individualism that was latent in the tradition of aesthetic modernity (to the detriment of its civic potential).

### 2.3. The Engineer’s Great Style: A Depoliticized Aesthetic Modernity

#### 2.3.1. An itch for artistic modernity in the face of Francoism

This is not at all a new idea. There have been innumerable discussions about the famous ‘modernizing’ itch that afflicted Spanish culture perhaps more than other countries during the 1960s and ’70s. This is due precisely to the fact that Spain had experienced such a long interruption in its aesthetic ‘modernization’ because of Francoism—an interruption that entailed, of course, a notable decrease in the ‘openness to a perceivable exteriority’ that constitutes modern aesthetics. Such openness was replaced, by both the regime and its opposition, with a more conservative formal paradigm. To synthesize and simplify the argument: the new ‘moderns’ at the end of

when there wasn’t any news. In any case, I think it’s important not to see this commodification of culture as an isolated phenomenon, but rather, as one more dimension derived from the widespread financierization of global capitalism that occurs in neoliberalism (as explained by Dardot and Laval (2014); Harney (2010); Harvey (2005); López Hernández and Rodríguez López (2010)).

Francoism would have disapproved of anything that smacked of collectivity, of aesthetics in service to a community, or even, more generally, to 'politics,' and would identify these elements with the 'backwardness' that Francoism had imposed on aesthetic modernization.<sup>10</sup>

We know this wasn't always so, and shortly I will give some examples of important exceptions. But at the same time, a tendency was undeniably forged towards the end of Francoism, and continues today with different variations in the sphere of institutional culture. That tendency emphasizes the individual aspect of aesthetics over the collective, its transgressive capacity over its foundational aspect, the formal over the historical, the ephemeral over the sustainable. And finally, in Spain, the side of aesthetic modernity that carried the relativization of the conventional to extremes tended to be emphasized over the side that sought a new convention. This relativization was understood (perhaps simplistically) as an expression of overcoming Francoism, which was associated with the past and with tradition.

An archetypal example of this modernizing itch in the Spanish aesthetics of the 1960s and '70s is the figure and the work of the writer Juan Benet. Bringing him into the discussion is particularly useful because it also allows me to clarify my small contribution to the debate about the CT. As I noted earlier, this deals with illuminating the structural connections between politics and cultural power (including the aura of aesthetics) that appear beyond the explicit personal alliances or collusions in the world of the CT. Juan Benet (1982) wrote in his famous 1965 essay *La inspiration y el estilo*, that the latter, when it could be characterized as *grand style*, was 'the state of grace,' that is, the place in which to seek

that region of the spirit which, after having evicted the gods who had dwelled there, needs to replace their functions to give the writer an obvious path of knowledge ... that prepares him for a full description of the world, and is ultimately able to supply any type of response to the questions the writer had previously raised to his god. (38)

By putting style in the place hitherto occupied by divine inspiration, Benet repeats the move of modern aesthetics, for which formal experimentation would be, as Laddaga says, a procedure without rules, increasingly different, always unlikely and unpredictable, which the artwork must carry out every time to find the singularity that reveals the whole.

At the same time, Benet's essay attacked the type of literature that seemed incompatible with the revelation of aesthetic singularity, by

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Mainer (1994, 113).

concentrating on a function that he called ‘informative,’ ‘realist,’ or ‘social’: ‘The informative novel has ended ... Naturalism died and the realist social novel was exhausted because its information interests very few people and leaves little impression other than a brief moment of febrile interest and a sequel of fraudulent interruptions’ (128). He goes on to add, ‘literature is only interesting for its style, not for its substance’ (135). Starting from these types of considerations and from the prolonged, intense elaboration of a fiction that tried to put them in practice, Benet concentrates on his surroundings much of that ‘modernizing itch’ which Francoism had caused in opposition circles—not without a certain amount of misunderstanding, it seems to me. His rejection of the ‘informative,’ ‘realist,’ or ‘social’ in literature was often understood as—or at least contributed in one way or another to—a disdain for anything that seemed to put a political twist on aesthetic things. This helped foster that ‘perverted’ interpretation of aesthetic modernity denounced by Ferlosio.

Benet’s interpretation of aesthetic modernity—with its misunderstandings—would stand for three decades until it became a whole aesthetic-political canon (of which Benet was obviously not the only inspiration). His substantial identification with the irrefutable value of ‘modernity’ was clearly announced in *El País* (García Posada 1994) on the first anniversary of his death:

The emergence of Juan Benet in 1967 with *Volverás a Región*, put a permanent end to that never, or almost never, achieved desire for modernity in the Spanish novel ... Juan Benet takes on and finishes off the enterprise of locating the Spanish novel in the very center of modernity. What the poets of [the Generation of] ’27 did for poetry, Benet does all on his own in his novel. *Volverás a Región* channels Joyce, channels Proust, and above all, channels Faulkner. It also channels the impenetrability that Ortega noted as an essential characteristic of narrative fiction capable of being fully modern.

### 2.3.2. Political consequences of a depoliticized aesthetic

Ignacio Echevarría’s aforementioned article, ‘La CT: un cambio de paradigma,’ quotes this same essay by Benet, *La inspiration y el estilo*, but not to investigate whether the author ascribes to aesthetic modernity and how. Rather, he wants to recuperate Benet’s idea that intellectuals in Spain had always been apart from the state, something that, according to Echevarría, could only have changed with the advent of the CT. As a notable example of this change, besides those already cited of the meetings in the *bodeguilla* of Moncloa Palace, Echevarría recalls the outstanding participation of Juan Benet in the

manifesto 'Yes to NATO' that the PSOE in government had requested of the citizens in the 1986 referendum (País 1986).

Indeed, one might be surprised, as Echevarría says, not only to find Benet among the signatories of that manifesto, but even more surprised to find so many other intellectuals. Right besides Benet was none other than Ferlosio, 'characterized by his heated anti-war and anti-military stance' (besides being a fundamental model for the 'CT hypothesis'), as well as many others like Julio Caro Baroja, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Jorge Semprún, Santos Juliá, Assumpta Serna, Sancho Gracia, Adolfo Domínguez, and Luis Antonio de Villena. And there are still more: Eduardo Chillida, Antonio López, Carlos Bousoño, Amancio Prada, Oriol Bohigas, Juan Cueto, Víctor Pérez Díaz, Juan Marsé, Luis Goytisolo, José María Guelbenzu, Álvaro Pombo, Eduardo Úrculo, Jaime de Armiñán, Blanca Andreu, Luis de Pablo, Francisco Calvo Serraller, Javier Pradera, and even Michi Panero (among yet others).

It is worth asking why so many artists and intellectuals would agree to support something when, in principle, it might have brought them more popularity among their respective audiences if they had rejected it—or at least not supported it publicly. What kind of pact of the elites, or what 'spirit of the times' brought them to this surprising agreement?

When it comes to explaining these phenomena, there are two important points, temporal and structural, that must be borne in mind. First, and perhaps more typical, is the 'setting aside of any overtly critical attitude in the interest of a conciliatory, universal spirit'—more temporal—that Echevarría talks about (borrowing from Vázquez Montalbán). Second, and perhaps more critical for my purposes, is the influence—more structural—of the traditions of cultural modernity that had been recuperated at the end of Francoism in a form that was particularly blind to the political and social potentialities of aesthetic modernity. These were potentialities that could assuredly have provided shared alternatives from which to offer consistency to intellectuals' and artists' criticisms of capitalist power, which at that time was entering its neoliberal globalization phase.

In fact, there were plenty of criticisms. A trip through the archives reveals that in reality there was no lack of 'critical spirit' among the intellectuals and artists of the CT. Echevarría himself acknowledges that in the 'Yes to NATO' manifesto Benet was 'very critical' with 'the evident contradictions and culpable errors of the socialist leaders.' And there are many other examples, many of which I will return to later.

What *was* lacking, however, was that constructive, community component which was latent in the tradition of modern aesthetics, that 'will to bring art to life' of the avant-garde. This had been erased from the map by those, like Benet, who would establish the depoliticized canon of the Spanish version

of aesthetic modernity by understanding ‘style’ as a formal and individual matter. Given that, perhaps we can view Juan Benet’s promotion of the ‘Yes to NATO’ manifesto as an effect derived from helplessness in the face of the capitalist version of economic and political modernization produced by his particular interpretation of aesthetic modernity. Furthermore, we can understand the fact that so many other artists and intellectuals also signed it as an effect derived from the general acceptance of Benet’s interpretation.

All this, by the way, is in no way incompatible with the idea of the ‘deactivation of culture’ in the CT discussed by Guillem Martínez. It will, though, perhaps allow us to nuance it, above all in the sense that it would no longer be necessary to deny the existence of constant criticisms of power from intellectuals and artists. Rather, it seems that starting in the early eighties, the intellectuals of the CT assiduously and openly protested and criticized the government and power in general. However, their critiques were made from an understanding of the figures of the intellectual and the artist that annulled their political capacity to open alternative social worlds. They were limited in this regard to movement in an abstractly formal environment and, tacitly, to a hegemonic understanding—liberal and capitalist—of society: ‘society as a pact of theoretically independent individuals who decide to associate to exchange property,’ to recall the words of the philosopher Marina Garcés discussed in the first chapter. The ‘style’ of the individual artist or intellectual would be, then, perhaps simply one more of those ‘properties.’

### 2.3.3. Counter-example: The politicized aesthetic of the transitional underground

In any case, perhaps the strongest argument to explain the importance of this ‘depoliticization’ is the confirmation of the existence of a very important counter-version of that same aesthetic modernity: the underground counterculture. This counterculture did cultivate its civic, community aspect, and moreover, it did it during those same years. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the historian Germán Labrador has studied this counterculture exhaustively and exceptionally lucidly, as part of what he calls ‘transitional cultures.’ These transitional cultures construct subjectivities that don’t fit with Francoist mesocratic values. Labrador has unearthed a whole constellation of practices, identities, and forms that turn on the recuperation of aesthetic modernity by marginal youth cultures that understand art as something that must necessarily ‘change life,’ in the same way that Rimbaud and the avant-garde envisaged it.

This culture begins in the sixties with the emergence of some ‘strange lives,’ which accompany their aesthetic experimentation with experiments in ways of life that clash head-on both with Francoist norms and with the

orthodoxy of the opposition—for example, the transvestite artist Ocaña, the singer-songwriter Chicho Sánchez-Ferlosio, and the poets Leopoldo María Panero and Eduardo Haro Ivars. Despite the strangeness and radical positions of these figures, the enormous relevance of Labrador's research (2008) is based precisely on demonstrating that they were pioneers of a whole 'politics of life' that would spread among the youth of the generation he (and Pablo Sánchez León (2004)) calls the generation of '77; that is, those who were no longer socialized in the anti-Francoism that understood politics more as a change of institutions than of daily life itself, but did not socialize in the democratic 'normalization' that depoliticized cultural practices either.

Among these 'youth of '77,' experimentation with drugs, sex, music, and poetry constituted a form of political life and an avant-garde aesthetic all in one. Labrador exemplifies this double dimension by analyzing groups of poets he describes as 'from the extreme wing of the *novísimos*.'<sup>11</sup> He finds in them a cosmivision that doesn't exclude politics, since they follow the romantic and avant-garde creed according to which 'the poet must supply aesthetic ideas that serve to change life and reality.' Surrounding these poets, and with respect to that generation of '77, Labrador studies an entire almost forgotten archive of what he calls an 'epochal culture':

In very general terms, we would be talking about a nucleus of some 2,000 books (poetry, narrative, theater, academic essays, or overtly countercultural, revelatory texts, texts of current events, translations of theoretical works about the counterculture and similar topics, biographies, translations of marginal or unorthodox literary works, collage texts, photograph books ...), some 20 magazines, ten alternative publishers and a couple hundred by very active cultural agents, thinkers and intellectuals. All together, and taking productions from all artistic disciplines, we should be able to speak of a legacy of some few thousand cultural objects; not a huge number, but still significant enough to constitute an epochal culture. (2006, 93)<sup>12</sup>

11 The *Novísimos*—translated as the 'Newest Ones'—were a group of poets in Spain who took their name from an anthology in which the Catalan critic Josep Maria Castellet gathered the work of young experimental poets in the 1970s: *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* [*Nine Very New Spanish Poets*] (1970).

12 Labrador goes on to specify, 'At a strictly descriptive level, we would be talking about the works and productions of publishers such as La Banda de Moebius, La Piqueta, and Star Books; magazines like *Ajoblanco*, *Bicicleta*, and *El Viejo Topo*; poets like Aníbal Núñez, Fernando Merlo, and Carlos Oroza; musical groups like *Derribos Arias* or *Veneno*; and filmmakers like *Maenza* or *Zulueta*; not to mention innumerable painters, artists, and comic book illustrators' (92).

The mostly tragic end of this epochal culture is perhaps what is best known about it decades later. The violent deaths, the suicides, and the drug overdoses have contributed to feeding the individual legend of some of its most emblematic figures, tending to assimilate the lifestyle experimentation of this counterculture within the individualistic and depoliticized paradigm of modern aesthetics, which was imposed as hegemonic. In fact, the great misunderstanding is to confuse this world with what in fact was its decline and transformation into a culture of individualist consumption, during the years of the so-called 'Movida' in Madrid. But, on the other hand, as Labrador asserts, the transitional underground was a culture that

in its moral order, in its world view, had a collective definition of identity; there the subject was a social being who needed relationships with others, destined to grow and better herself by living in community, with her limits and opportunities determined by the community, and committed to its improvement to achieve in this way her own improvement. (2008, 410)

It seems to me that we should never lose sight of this communitarian understanding of life held by the underground if we want to understand figures like Ocaña. He was a contradictory character whose stripteases and homoerotic shows scandalized even the anarchists of the Jornadas Libertarias de Barcelona in 1977, but also returned regularly to his hometown to organize *pasacalles*, costumed musical events held in the streets with local youngsters. In one of them, Ocaña ended up getting burned by accident when his elaborate sun costume caught fire from some firecrackers. He would not survive his injuries.

One might think that comparing someone like Juan Benet to Ocaña doesn't make much sense. But do they not both represent fundamental reappropriations of the tradition of modern aesthetics that are produced in the same historical moment? Ocaña, too, believed in 'style,' in his own way. While Benet practiced style in art, Ocaña practiced it in art and in life. But also, and this is the key to their differing modern aesthetics, Ocaña understood that the power of his style was only validated in community, in the construction of a daily relationship with others.

For the type of aesthetics, of style, that Benet represents, leaning more towards the formal and hermetic than towards the performative and common, the relationship of the artist with the communities of which he forms a part in his daily life isn't relevant. For Ocaña, it was just the opposite: living with the prostitutes of the Plaza Real in Barcelona was a

central part of his life's aesthetics. But I don't think Benet would consider important aspects of his private life relevant to his *grand style*; for example, the fact that he worked as an engineer constructing reservoirs to help Francoism in its 'colonization' of farmland. Having said that, however, there were still times when Benet would let the two domains meet. The writer Javier Marías, disciple of Benet, recently shared an anecdote about this very thing: 'One time, they gave him a medal from the School of Engineers, and he made sure all his literary friends went to the ceremony, although it didn't matter to us and we couldn't care less, but it *was* important to him' (González 2014).

In few cases like this does that tandem between technocratic, engineering modernization and aesthetic modernity go so well together, perhaps because they are so well separated. But in many other cases, thanks in large part to the canonization of a depoliticized version of aesthetic modernity in which Benet was key, a fluid convergence can be seen between that aesthetic modernity and other aspects of capitalist modernization, which, considered as the only economic-political framework possible, would generate those dynamics Ferlosio condemned, in which the artist and the intellectual are reduced by the market and the state to the 'decorative emptiness of their fame and their name.' Especially since the onward march of neoliberalism intensified the search for brand names and tended to turn every culture into an object of economic speculation.

## 2.4. 'Normalization,' Deactivation, and Culture Bubble in the CT

### 2.4.1. A 'modernizing, normalizing' intellectual

Let's rewind for a moment to 1985: only three years have passed since the PSOE's historic rise to power, which the sociologist Lamo de Espinosa considered the victory of the 'immense, historic national modernizing and Europeanizing project that first inspired the Enlightenment thinkers, and later the regenerationists, the Generations of 98 and 14' (13). Javier Marías, Benet's disciple—and one of the most distinguished heirs of both his paradigm of depoliticized 'aesthetic modernity' and that tradition of cultural elites to whom Lamo alludes—returns from Oxford and is surprised to find a country already very critical of the government. 'I must admit,' he says in his article 'Visión de un falso indiano' (1985), 'that my surprise was considerable upon hearing opinions, reading articles, and studying supposed news reports about that same socialist government that had inspired both hopes and improvised support when I left.' It concerns him, he says, that people now often say things like:

‘Before, we thought that in Health, in Education, in Housing everything was screwed up because it was *them*, but now it turns out it’s also us. There’s no doubt any more of how little the country gives back.’ That argument, as simple as it is simplistic, is what, to my way of thinking, is most surprising and worrying. It ominously recalls the somber comment that often closed political conversations in Franco’s time: ‘There’s no hope for this country.’

Even in a moment when one might expect collective enthusiasm for the new era just begun, people seem not only disillusioned with the government, but also, possibly, at a deeper level with themselves. But perhaps Mariás shouldn’t be so surprised by the Spaniards’ lack of self-esteem. He himself would go on to write numerous articles that were critical of the socialist government and very critical of various aspects of democratic Spain. More importantly, he would admit only five years later that he couldn’t help but be happy despite himself when someone occasionally told him that ‘he didn’t seem Spanish’:

Unfortunately, every time some foreigner has said to me for some reason that I didn’t seem Spanish, I have had the embarrassing sensation that they were complimenting me and that I should therefore consider it an insult to my country, or at least to my countrymen. This didn’t seem like such an odd occurrence when I was younger; that is, in the past, when Spain was a despised nation that was then promptly associated with a decrepit dictatorship, with bullfighters, with a high crime rate where cases never got solved, with loud, rude people, with tricorne hats, with stone lifters,<sup>13</sup> clay water vessels, guitars ... But the most offensive thing is that even today, when one would think our country has changed so much, and always for the better, I still occasionally hear (not as often as I would personally want, and much more frequently than a civic perspective might want) someone tell me in the most complimentary tone, ‘You don’t seem Spanish.’ (2011, 30)

Mariás’s statements here remind me of the dilemma of those who feel ‘avant-garde’ among their people. On one hand, they want to lead everyone to the long-awaited ‘modernization.’ But at the same time, their mission links them annoyingly to those ‘backward’ people—or at least, to an image of backwardness—from whom they want to differentiate themselves at all times.

13 *Levantar piedras* is a traditional sport in the Basque Country, practiced by a *harrijasotzaile* or *levantador de piedras* (stone lifter).

The topic of negative self-perception is a slippery one. Thus, even when they are happy for the small progress of their compatriots, it seems that the avant-garde can't help but be offended, as when in the same article, Marías pats himself on the back because

something very worthy, though arbitrary, has been achieved: people in Spain today are blond and blue-eyed in ridiculously greater numbers than in the fifties or sixties, which, unlike the increase in average height, cannot be explained. But it is a great achievement, at least for the existence of a variety of images or physical types and the suppression of the monotonous individual of the past. (33)

At the same time, Marías says, 'Spanish women are the cleanest and most conscientious [women] on the continent,' and that men, 'although less attractive ... have made a tremendous effort to seem like normal beings and not delinquents, which is in itself a lot' (33).

However, it isn't all good news, it seems. If Marías still feels extraordinarily complimented despite himself when someone tells him he doesn't seem Spanish, it is because the image of the country, 'which, when all is said and done, is what counts in times like these, much more than the country itself for all intents and purposes,' often keeps reproducing, out of sheer inertia, the backwardness and folkloric vulgarity that has been expected of it 'for the last couple of centuries,' despite the fact that in the last few years there has been 'an awareness that such an image was not easily compatible with modern—or yet postmodern—aspirations' (34).

Marías has returned repeatedly, in articles and interviews, to this topic of the supposed 'backwardness' or the 'poor image' of Spain. As noted in the previous chapter, in 2006 Marías was already complaining that 'Spain is being destroyed by the trickery of construction firms, mayors, owners of public works, and independent counselors,' but he also had time to continue developing his classic theme of the supposed 'backwardness of Spain.' So, in a long interview granted to *The Paris Review*, Marías responded in these terms to a question about the criticisms he had received throughout his career 'for not being Spanish enough':

There are people who expect Spanish literature, theater, movies, and painting to be folkloric, but the Spain I know is a fairly normal country. It was normal even during the dictatorship, in the sense that our cities aren't so different from other European cities. In Spain there are educated people who haven't been represented in any Spanish novel. There was a certain tendency to write about rural passions and rural

crimes, and women with a switchblade in their garter. (Marías and Blanca 2008, 379)

In other texts, Marías elaborates what he probably understands by that urban, educated ‘normality’ that, surprisingly, goes back all the way to the years of the dictatorship. In an article from years earlier about the Madrid of his childhood, entitled ‘En Chamberí’ (originally published in 1990), Marías defends his belonging to that ‘pure-blood’ *barrio* and compares it mockingly to the criticisms often made about it being ‘foreignizing.’ But pure-blood or not, it is interesting to note that what Marías highlights with pleasure about the Chamberí of his childhood is, for example, that ‘the sidewalk was a civilized, respectful place,’ in which the only vehicles to be seen were ‘very clean, shiny automobiles whose owners drove them as if they were apologizing.’ This was in stark contrast to ‘the indescribable flood of cars driven by habitual criminals’ that inundates Madrid today. Likewise, he entertains himself remembering how to his childish eyes ‘Madrid, or if you prefer, Chamberí, was a city dominated by bakeries and import stores, scenes of abundance and even of good taste’ (2008, 38).

Together with those symptoms of civility and abundance, there also existed some picturesque touches, like the ‘mule- or burro-drawn carts’ in which the junkmen carted their wares or, ‘always standing with her back turned, and so facing the trolleys or taxis, some girl or young lady with gypsy-like beauty and light-colored eyes.’ To that touch of archaic exoticism Marías adds another, rather less erotic one: ‘in the middle of the intense refinement of that *barrio* it was not unusual to suddenly smell a strong odor of cows,’ which came from the still existent ‘milking parlors.’ In any case, with those picturesque nineteenth-century details, Marías concludes, ‘the memory of the Madrid of those days is one of an unhurried and orderly city (perhaps too orderly; it is where I have seen the highest concentration of police in the streets)’ (39).

If we pay attention to Marías’s other related texts, they confirm that in fact his ideal of ‘normality’ seems to fit better with that city of businesses, civility, good taste, and sparse traffic that was Madrid under Francoism, that with the noisy, crowded, vulgar neoliberal metropolis it became during the ‘democracy.’ I will not travel too far down the thorny path that would open up if we began to wonder why in that orderly Madrid of the 1950s some traveled in shiny cars and others in donkey carts, or why some lived in a world of abundance and ‘good taste’ while others’ lives were merely ‘picturesque,’ or even why there were so many police in the streets. I will merely recall that after a civil war that resulted in half a million deaths, the state went on to kill some 100,000 more of the defeated parties until

1949; that 200,000 people ended up dying of hunger the decade before; and that in the years following the establishment of the dictatorship, 20% of the population would migrate from the countryside to those 'normal' cities in which so often the recently arrived migrants, without access to such central districts like Chamberí, were crowded into shacks on the outskirts of town.

But what I want to do now is show that the efficacy of Marías's discourse, while representative—voluntarily or not—of the thesis of Spain's 'normalization,' is to some degree independent of his opinions about the time period and places that best embody that normalization. For the stability and hegemony of the CT, which I see here as the legitimizing framework of a project of neoliberal transformation which mainly uses that modernizing, pro-European discourse, what is important isn't that Marías sees the Francoist city as more 'normal' than the democratic one, but that it disseminates and embodies an idea of what is 'normal' (and, in contrast, what is 'abnormal') which is compatible with that modernizing, pro-European tradition. Thus, Marías can both praise the civility of the Chamberí of his childhood and criticize the management of the first PSOE, or regret the survival of Spain's 'poor image' into the nineties. At the same time, he can keep adding material that will construct a desire for modernity and Europeanization which is understood as 'normality,' even though at times it is expressed in very surprising ways.

Marías recently compiled an enviable number of political articles in his book *Los villanos de la nación*, most of them very sharp and critical of various institutions and governments. This would seem to contradict the image of the 'disactivated' culture in the CT proposed by Guillem Martínez. But I think that the loyalty to the roots of the CT felt by intellectuals and artists like Marías is more structural than deliberate. This kind of structural coincidence can be better understood if we add to the analysis not only the 'standardizing' discourse of notable cultural figures but also their occasional activity as 'columnists.'

#### 2.4.2. The columnist's individual authority

The literary critic Ulrich Winter (Abiada, Neuschäfer, and Bernasocchi 2001) has called attention to the growing importance of the 'columnism' of Spanish writers since the middle of the 1980s, in parallel with the commercialization of the literary industry. Winter relates this columnist figure to the classical roots of the intellectual *à la* Bourdieu, which I mentioned earlier. To be an intellectual, says Winter, 'one must have or be a confirmed authority because of competencies or achievements acquired in a relatively independent field like science, the humanities, literature, and culture in general' (294).

Examples of this type of intellectual would, for Winter, include some notable columnists from the democratic period, like Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Rosa Montero, Francisco Umbral, Antonio Gala, Juan José Millás, or Antonio Muñoz Molina. We could also add Marías himself to this list. What worries Winter, in line with Ferlosio, is that besides these writers, there are also those who have gained access to the intellectual's position when the only thing they have achieved is 'commercial success.' This preoccupation seems, in fact, to contain an element of suspicion regarding the legitimacy of the very position of authority held by the intellectual—in general—in the mass media: 'Once she appears in the opinion pages, the writer gains a certain moral authority; she is granted relative superiority to symbolically interpret the world, simply because of the fact that she appears in mass media, that she expresses an opinion and is heard' (297).

I think it is especially important to consider what happens with intellectuals like Marías, whose achievements in the literary world no one will deny, and who, thanks to that legitimacy, have access to the media. It is important to analyze these figures by remembering above all that the artistic field—literary in this case—in which they earn legitimacy has been conceived from that hegemonic 'aesthetic modernity' in post-dictatorship Spain which tended to erase the necessarily common aesthetic dimension: that 'revealing the authentically common at the heart of the common' to which Laddaga refers, and which has occasionally been interpreted as a possibility for uniting art with life.

In an interview in 1995, Marías said 'with democracy, political activity can be pursued through political channels, thus ending the subordination of fiction to external factors' (invoking the phantom of those 'fraudulent interruptions' that Benet condemned in the 'social novel'). But this assertion denotes a very narrow conception of the possible political consequences of the aesthetic. As Labrador explains in his analysis of the poets of the transitional underground, there is no reason why loyalty to the experimental principles of aesthetic modernity should eliminate the necessarily relational, community aspect of artistic creation.

The key question is where to obtain that artistic 'authority' that will then allow the intellectual to participate in the political arena. Does that 'authority' not develop, like every human value, from the 'relationships with others' that always constitute our frame of meaning and through which, says Labrador, the transitional artist was 'destined to grow and better himself by living in community, with her limits and opportunities determined by the community, and committed to its improvement to achieve in this way her own improvement'? (2008) But the 'depoliticized' artist believes that, in fact, aesthetics is the suspension of community.

Only after having found her aesthetic enlightenment in solitude will that artist become an 'intellectual' and be able to enter into 'relationships with others'—but she will do so from an already elevated position that articulates those relationships pedagogically, like lessons, or at least 'guidance' for those not in the same elevated position. Thus, Winter notes:

The loss of universal reference points in the increasingly impenetrable political and economic world does nothing more than increase the need for guidance in every one of the domains of daily life. That is where the successful writers and their columns come into play; their presence is also a consequence or a symptom of the changing function, or of the concept, of 'intellectual' in today's world. (296)

Intellectuals, already unable to impart 'guidance' to their peers through universal truths, will do it now by concentrating on those 'domains of daily life' from a 'premeditatedly subjective or personal perspective.' This turnaround is interesting: the intellectual who has been legitimized through a 'pure' art of 'great style'—that is, an art supposedly practiced individually and without reference to the community of meaning from which the intellectual came and to which he will necessarily return—can now not only give lessons on politics, but also 'guide' his audience on how to live their daily lives. This intellectual had eliminated his own attachments to networks of daily relationships to become legitimized as a creator distanced from 'external factors.' But now he uses his legitimacy not only to chant Zola's 'I accuse,' but also to share the prevailing postmodern disorientation, from a platform that keeps up a pedagogical pretense. That is, the intellectual answers questions that are neither technical nor specialized—and thus could be answered by anyone—but on which he still has more of a right to express an opinion than others.<sup>14</sup>

This way, the columnists of the Spanish democracy whom Winter discusses would become an odd mix of those artists and intellectuals who were asked, as Ferlosio said, to write 'whatever occurs to them' (from their 'premeditatedly subjective or personal perspective') and the classic figure

14 Bauman explains that in the intellectual's transition from modern 'legislator' to postmodern 'interpreter,' he retains part of his privileged authority, even if he no longer tries to make his discourse universal: 'While the post-modern strategy entails the abandonment of the universalistic ambitions of the intellectuals' own tradition, it does not abandon the universalistic ambitions of the intellectuals towards their own tradition; here, they retain their meta-professional authority, legislating about the procedural rules which allow them to arbitrate controversies of opinion and make statements intended to be binding' (1987, 5).

of the Philosopher as described by de Certeau, who is legitimized precisely by going beyond the technical, specialized knowledges that make up the nucleus of technoscientific modernity.

Thus, erasing her specific position in any community, speaking from the authority of one whose ‘personal’ achievements (aesthetic, cultural, intellectual) are supposedly due only to herself, the archetypical individual of the Spanish world of institutional, celebrity culture could produce copious critiques of the political and economic powers. But it seems to me that these critiques were in some sense stillborn.

#### 2.4.3. Structural deactivation of intellectual critique in the CT

As noted earlier, it isn’t as easy as one might think to find public intellectual demonstrations that defend explicitly the great milestones of the CT. Rather, the kind of participation that predominates is critical, at least in part. It is also more ‘subjective’ and ‘personal’ the greater prestige of the author in that cultural field. And, of course, it is always very discreet regarding the collective processes which generated that prestige, and therefore, regarding the criterion of the validity of what he expresses.

Paradigmatic of this is a column by the journalist and writer Juan Cueto (1985) published in *El País* the day after Spain entered the EEC, which was one of those ‘great milestones’ of the CT: ‘Just one detail worries me after yesterday’s signing of the Treaty: the European demand for specialization. Everything else can be taken care of, from the sweaty cultivation of unirrigated farmland and the national bad temper to the snooty smoke of our protected red-brick chimneys.’ From the beginning, the columnist’s ‘I’ is presented as the source of the discourse, with no need to explain the source of ‘whatever occurs to him’—thus running the risk that it becomes a mere ‘whim.’ But what is interesting about this article is that in it, form and foundation coincide, because what Cueto’s whimsical word defends is precisely a defense of the ‘specialization in everything.’ Indeed, once those ‘little problems’ of agriculture and industry were ‘solved’ (which was done, as we know, through subsidies granted for not planting and intense modernizing), Spain could join Europe and, in the face of excessive technicalities, contribute her so-called ‘wisdom of the ages’:

In the tower of free-trade reason they want us specialized, and that’s why they tempt us with all kinds of materialist happiness to pull us from the old historical mistake. For now, that aspiration is non-negotiable. We know that 90% of everything here is unspecialized, and even unrefined. But in exactly that arcane resistance to the discipline of the specific lies our wisdom of the ages. ... We will contribute to

Europe our famous specialization in everything, and in the Whole, to counteract so much abstraction of the specific.

Despite the apparent contradiction, the complementarity of this type of discourse with that of technoscientific modernity is made clear in that 'Just one detail worries me ...' Opening a window of critique and 'subjectivity' on the empire of the technical surely constitutes 'just one detail' when so many other technocratic experts—here supporters of free trade—agree not to question the narrative of necessary political and economic 'modernization' that legitimized the pacts for the transition to a parliamentary monarchy within a globalized capitalist framework. The rest is, essentially, 'details.'

As early as 1977, Fernando Savater, one of the most celebrated intellectuals of Spanish democracy, had already exemplified in his analysis of the transition that mix of apparent lack of enthusiasm and structural acceptance that has seemed to characterize the 'opinion makers' and columnists since the beginning of the 'democratic' era:

Now at last we are included in the game of Europe, of the West. But every once in a while, one remembers with longing the covert clarity of that indistinct hatred for the dictatorship and, with the proliferation of new political definitions and explanations, one mutters glumly into one's beard that famous saying of the small-town mayor: 'How can things be so bad that I don't even know if I'm on our side!' I don't doubt that this 'defusing of national coexistence'—the saying, one would suppose, is from a liberal commentator of the day—is, generally speaking, the best that could happen to this country, but those of us who don't understand politics, the few of us that are left, now find ourselves, even with so much light, more in the dark than before. (Gracia García and Ródenas de Moya 2009)

I understand that the danger whenever one talks about the transition is, indeed, the same one that Savater tacitly acknowledges in this text when he asserts the unquestionability of that 'defusing of national coexistence': that of minimizing the threats of violent political conflict that were still latent at that time. But it seems unnecessary for my argument to evaluate that danger. Never mind whether there was a little or a lot of precaution or whether the level of criticism of one or the other was greater or lesser. I believe we have the right to ask what is the place of the intellectual who, like Savater, accepts the model of columnism in particular, and that of the 'depoliticized' capitalist liberal modernizing paradigm in general. It is more a structural than a personal problem; it doesn't actually matter for my argument who may have done what, or whether or not they did it. Rather, what matters is

which cultural repertoires were hegemonic and which remained arrested possibilities.

In this sense, I repeat that what interests me is the figure of the intellectual who, although he says he speaks as one of ‘the people,’ does so from a space that can only be reached through the prestige obtained from supposedly individual activities—according to the depoliticized aesthetic individualism predominating in the cultural panorama of the post-dictatorship, and by which the ‘intellectual’ was granted a ‘letter of authenticity.’ I am interested in that intellectual who speaks as one of ‘the people’ without revealing the relationships of interdependency with them that have made it possible for him to be able to say what he says. This invisibility permits things like using the names of these intellectuals, rather than the culture of the ‘provincial’ people, to represent Spain. For instance, upon Spain’s entrance into the EEC, *El País* began to publish examples of the excellent cultural products that Spain exports to the world despite its inevitable ‘backwardness’ in its opinion section. In these, the names of Fernando Savater and other ‘exceptional individuals’ were ‘taken out for a walk’ (to use Ferlosio’s expression):

It’s true that Spain still has to make up a lot of lost time, and has a lot to learn about Europe, from which it was cut off for so many years. But if you’ve spent almost 20 years away from Spain, as I have, and been around the globe more than 15 times, maybe you will better understand why, other than the provincialism of some Spaniards who can be heard saying on the buses in Rome, ‘Well, I don’t see anything for Ciudad Real to be jealous of in this city,’ I can’t help but recognize that Spain has a lot to export besides oranges and wine. What is true is that Spain, in today’s world, is proud of its culture. Gades is applauded, and Savater and Vázquez Montalbán is read here in Italy, and people line up to see one of Saura’s films, and our orchards are insignificant. (Arias 1985)

In conclusion, it seems that at best, the cultural world that had been ‘disactivated’ during the CT produces interesting critiques of political and economic power from people such as Marías, Cueto, or Savater. But they pay a high price for their structural complicity in that same power, because they have effectively ‘deactivated’ the necessarily relational, communitary, and interdependent aspect of every cultural production (in part thanks to their identification with the figure of the ‘columnist’). Perhaps they confuse the hoped-for ‘de-emphasizing of national coexistence’ that Savater discusses with an acritical acceptance of liberal, capitalist, individualist modernity

as the only frame for reality (something none of the other 'offspring' of aesthetic modernity—avant-garde, counterculture, civic—had done).

And at worst, the culture of the CT would be reduced to a sometimes grotesque decoration, ridiculously 'transgressive' and swollen with empty prestige, that serves to reinforce the austere authority of the technocratic experts, simply for being such a striking contrast to it. I offer a classic example that allows us to explore interesting continuities with Francoism. In that historic act of joining the EEC, someone decided that it would be a very good idea to add a little art to the occasion, and commissioned Salvador Dalí to do a personal interpretation on the topic of the 'Rape of Europe.' And so, as explained in *El País*, 'all the signers of the accord and the protocols for Spain's entry into the EEC, will receive, after signing their names at the ceremony to be held tonight, a violet-colored file folder containing 25 pages, with Dalí's signature thermo-engraved in gold on the cover' (García Santa Cecilia 1985).

Doubtless this fact would have delighted Ferlosio. For his part, Dalí himself took advantage of the opportunity to declare, in a kind of megalomaniacal contribution to the never-ending motif of 'Spain is different,' 'The only one—the only one!—who understood that myth was Salvador Dalí. The bull, which is Spain, did not rape Europe; it took her with all its spirit, with all its courage, and it keeps her where she is. Europe owes her entire being to Spain.'

#### 2.4.4. Artist and intellectual in the image domain

The technoscientific and political experts have directed and executed the program of implanting neoliberalism in the Spanish state for the last three long decades. But it is worth asking whether they could have done it without the army of public intellectuals and artists who have embodied the model of modernity and pro-Europeanism that has served as a justification for this transformation.

Mariás observes in his article 'No pareces español' (1990) that television and the other mass media have become 'the most reliable reflection that citizens have of themselves, much more so than "reality".' If Spain's 'poor image' is too well kept, he adds, the fault belongs to the leaders who decide what gets shown on television. In the image era, the pedagogical mission of teaching the masses (in this case, regarding how they should represent themselves) normally claimed by the liberal elites must be shared with political and media power. But the compensation for the intellectuals is that they can now blame that media power for 'backwardness,' for promoting a poor image.

The entire population might also share part of the responsibility.

Nevertheless, Marías asserts, magnanimously offering up a kind of postmodern version of the elitist meta-story of Spanish modernity:

this [entire population] can't be blamed too much, since fortunately it is always characterized by its anarchy, its contradictions, and its limited vision of the future. But the professionals of the future, that is, the politicians, *are* guilty of cowardice, negligence, and cynicism at the moment of directing, configuring, and manipulating the image of Spain in the present. (1990, 37)

What seems a diatribe against politicians and an excuse for 'el hombre vulgar,' as Marías likes to say, can only run the risk of falling into extreme paternalism, if not outright disdain, for the multitudes. Marías gleefully takes up the peoples' supposed 'anarchy' and 'lack of vision for the future,' but in other cases the tone of the pro-European intellectual, above all the one who isn't willing to so easily accept the fact that image is more important than reality, takes on darker tones, close to those of the illustrious and foundational precedent of *La rebelión de las masas*.

This is the case of the quasi-Hobbesian lament of Antonio Muñoz Molina in *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013), his recent book on the current Spanish crisis, a lament in which he seems to come to the conclusion not only that Spaniards seem to be or act like 'delinquents,' in Marías's words, but are thus by nature:

In thirty-odd years of democracy and after almost 40 of dictatorship, there has been no democratic pedagogy. Democracy must be taught, because it isn't natural, because it goes against the deeply-rooted inclinations of human beings. What is natural is not equality, but the domination of the strong over the weak. ... Barbarity is more natural than civilization, the scream or the punch and not the persuasive argument, immediate gratification and not long-term effort. ... Ignorance is natural: there is no learning that does not require effort and that does not take time to bear fruit. (103)

The other side of the ideology of pro-European, modernizing normality is the scorn for 'backwardness,' for the *paleto*, the lack of 'culture' that is occasionally seen, by desperate metaphysical extension, as a natural characteristic of human beings. In this sense, perhaps the public intellectuals of 'Spanish democracy' contribute significantly to the 'standardization' of society by disseminating and embodying an aspiration for modernity and progress. But, more significantly still, they disseminate and embody the idea that only a certain few are prepared to guide the masses towards that

modernity, because in general the masses are incapable of thinking and of improving their lives for themselves.

In any case, it seems to me that while the human ability for collective self-representation is being appropriated by the mass media, the importance of the pedagogical role of intellectuals and artists is growing, since they are the ones who will be in a more favorable position in the media environment. While experts and politicians undoubtedly have considerable visibility and authority in that media 'reality,' their discourse is dull, limited, and excessively specialized. This is in contrast to the humanistic depth, the aesthetic development, and the proximity to the daily worries of the 'common people' that intellectuals and artists include in their repertoire, especially those who have adapted better to the tyranny of the 'image,' who give more ground to so-called 'entertainment.'

In these media versions of the intellectual and the artist, the values of modernity, progress, and Europization are often reduced to an even greater simplification, which consists of nothing more than 'international impact.' During Francoism, the regime's constant aspiration to be legitimized by demonstrating the exportability 'abroad' of Spanish culture, art, and sports was already well known (Jorge Luis Marzo (2010) has researched this in detail with respect to art). But later, the years of democratic 'standardization' would take this ambition even further, with the leitmotif of the famous 'incorporation into Europe,' which is often announced as an incorporation into the group of 'most advanced countries.'

#### 2.4.5. Culture as 'Brand Spain'

Now we are approaching the present, in 2009 now, and the narrative about Spain being the 'eighth world power' is still very fresh. In a book that incidentally hopes to offer a critique on the spectacularization and commercialization of culture, the previously cited *Más es más*, we find a brief assessment of the cultural value of Spain in these classic terms. Using metaphorical language that reveals a conception of culture as a matter of individual competitive exchanges, the authors assert:

Spanish letters have very seldom enjoyed the credit they have today in other European countries. ... The same thing is happening in other cultural spheres, which doesn't change an obviously deficient trade balance. But it does partially correct the tendency, which is what happens with the exportation of values (including of consumption) that could be painters and sculptors (Eduardo Chillida, Miquel Barceló), architects (Santiago Calatrava, Rafael Moneo), actors (Antonio Banderas, Javier Bardem, or Penélope Cruz), movie directors (Pedro

Almodóvar, Alejandro Amenábar, Fernando Trueba), athletes (Miguel Induráin, Pau Gasol, Fernando Alonso, Rafael Nadal, or Sergio García), musicians or designers. (12)

Finally converted into a product ready for export, 'culture' will be difficult to distinguish from consumption, and so the arts, sports, design, and entertainment form an amalgam in which the only important thing is the ability to impress, or at least *sell to*, other countries. The world of the culture-product ('the Spain brand') thus inherits, like mass media, a version adapted to the new times of the program of intellectual elites who aspired to Europeanization, modernization, and international incorporation. The elitist meta-narrative of modernity behind it all doesn't disappear, it is merely transformed.

Even in its most crudely consumerist, mass-market manifestations, such as the sporting victories attributed to 'Spain,' that desire for incorporation and international recognition, that 'negative balance' of modernity the country must exorcise however it can, reappears. Many of us remember, as an iconic representation of the years of the 'economic bubble,' the image of those great postmodern mausoleums of culture, left half-built or now falling down, which the real estate-political-construction complex proliferated throughout Spain during its years of speculative frenzy. It is well known that the dizzying increase in the price of housing created a 'wealth effect' for the 87% of Spaniards who became homeowners. Something similar happened due to the magnification of Calatrava's 'cultural success' in architecture, or the success of others like Almodóvar in movies or Barceló in painting. Such magnification produced an analogous kind of 'culture effect' whose true value, beyond intensifying the 'manic' anxiety of modernity discussed by Ángel Loureiro, is questionable.

It might even be worth reading the increasingly buoyant universe of the tabloids as a kind of negative catharsis in which free rein is given to all the 'backwardness,' 'folklorism,' and 'delinquency' that the elitist modern paradigm constructs as a collective phantom to serve as the opposite of its ideal. Probably a large part of the humor that appears in the mass media during the years of democracy is built upon similar foundations of obsession with the *paleta*, backwardness, and folklorism, although these are questions that I won't be able to examine directly here.

The commercialization of culture and the spectacularization of big media have come very far during the years of Spanish neoliberalism. I would like to point out, however, that despite this, the model of the classic intellectual, with his pedagogical legitimacy and his aura of aesthetic exceptionality, is far from gone. As Labanyi (2013) said, with the coming of democracy to Spain,

literature went from being an elitist practice managed by 'well-intentioned bureaucrats' like the editor Carlos Barral to a panorama commercialized and dominated by the big publishing groups and cultural supplements in the mass media, which clearly implied a certain 'departure of literature from the ghetto of intellectuality' (147).<sup>15</sup> But Labanyi and Graham also indicated that, while it is true that this commercialization increases access to the 'high culture' distributed commercially by the same mass media, that doesn't mean everyone can understand and enjoy it equally. Perhaps it should be added that those who do understand and enjoy it also can't help but receive with that culture a model of valuation ('high culture') that tends to assume the exceptionality of the individual author, relegating the majority of people to simple passive access.

A good example of the survival of this type of cultural exceptionality attributed to authors, and to their ability to keep legitimizing the political discourse of public intellectuals, would perhaps be the emergence of new figures who have acquired important public visibility, years after the 'hard core' of the intellectualism associated with democratic 'normalization' was forged, but who continue to perform a similar function of legitimation. I am thinking, for example, of the figure of Javier Cercas. The mass media didn't 'discover' him until 2001, but he then became a key voice in opinion columnism in the same newspaper, *El País*, that, as we saw with Manuel Vicent, represented itself as heir to the tradition of 'enlightened minorities' which supposedly brought Spain into 'modernity.'

Cercas criticizes various powerful institutions and key aspects of the workings of the neoliberal system, such as the submission of the state to commercial speculation or the weakening of institutional democracy. But as with Marías and the PSOE government, these criticisms are by no means incompatible with his ascription, conscious or not, to that tradition of cultural elites who have become an essential tool—as defenders and symbolic bearers of the ideal of European modernity—for the legitimation of the same neoliberal system they criticize.

15 The commercialization of written culture is inscribed within the much broader context of the turn towards informational or cognitive capitalism in the final decades of the twentieth century. This has been analyzed by theorists of the Italian post-workerism tradition related to the journal *Multitudes*, like Negri and Hardt, Blondeau and Lazzarato, and Franco Berardi ('Bifo'). These authors have called attention to the fact that the great innovation of post-industrial capitalism has been the potentiation of the 'immaterial goods' sector (knowledge, relationships, emotions, communication, subjectivity, etc.). I touched on some of these developments relative to Spain in my article 'La imaginación sostenible: culturas y crisis económica en la España actual' (2012).

Since the crisis began in 2008, the visibility of this contradiction has increased, as the failures of the political, cultural, and economic spheres—built with the help of these intellectuals inheriting the modernizing project—have become more evident. But the same thing hasn't happened by any means with the connection between their critical ability and the legitimacy of the social order—an order which, despite themselves, these intellectuals cannot help but support as long as they continue to occupy the hierarchical position that has historically defined their work.