

## CHAPTER 3

# Arrested Modernities: The Popular Cultures that Could Have Been

### 3.1. Arrested Modernities I: A Culture Rooted in Tradition Faces the Transition

#### 3.1.1. Counter-figures of the modern intellectual

The modernizing paradigm of the liberal Spanish intellectual elites is deeply rooted in the cultural scene of 'democratic' Spain. In that scene, the figures capable of embodying modernization, or its degraded version of 'international success' in the culture and image markets, have been models and agents of legitimation often perhaps even more potent than the expert counselors, technical managers, and political executives for the actual integration into neoliberal Europe. But if we explore the genesis of this intellectual figure, which frequently seems to be the only one possible, we soon find other counter-figures and cultural alternatives, like those of the underground whom Germán Labrador studies, who were ultimately unable to dislodge this figure from his hegemonic position.

To complement the brief incursions I have made up to now into the genealogy of that pro-European or 'modernizing' public intellectual, I would now also like to propose the outlines of an intellectual counter-figure. This figure is neither as compact nor as able to create community as the 'enraptured' poet studied by Labrador, but he has the very interesting characteristic of maintaining a dialogue with a Spain that is neither as 'civic' nor as 'abundant' as the one that appears in Javier Marías's memories of the 1950s, a Spain made up of other people and places. The places are the rural areas that lost a large proportion of their inhabitants to urban emigration; and the people, the workers and peasants who were defeated in the civil war, and their descendants, who suffered economic hardship and political repression as a two-pronged punishment.

With these people and places I want to contribute in some measure to the construction of counterfactual reflections such as the one suggested by Sánchez León in his article 'Encerrados con un solo juguete,' when he asks:

What would have happened if the dictatorship had lacked the capacity for institutional penetration and/or time to destroy the social bases of traditional Spanish culture with its roots in the community? What would have happened if, as in the cultures of most other emerging democracies, Spain had had a greater short-term swing between dictatorship and democracy in the twentieth century, and the successive transitions had been obliged to recognize those cultures that were impermeable towards liberalism—call them cultures of class, ethnicity, language, and culture, etc.—that are today the required interlocutor of every alternative political agenda in the era of globalization and interculturality?

In the world of Spain in the forties and fifties, in which the divide between science and popular knowledges had not yet completely split reality in two, collective self-representation had not yet been captured so intensely by the mass media (despite the crucial importance of radio and American films), and consumerism had not yet been instituted as the basic organizational form of desire, the system of constructing reality had of necessity to be different from the later ‘democratic’ (postmodern, neoliberal) Spain. Out of this difference some people were nurtured who would later become intellectuals in Spain’s public sphere—but in the process, they brought with them echoes of those other ways of distributing collective knowledges and abilities to produce meaning (oral and written).<sup>1</sup>

The case of the Leonese writer Luis Mateo Díez is paradigmatic with respect to his relationship with rural cultures, as is that of the Catalan Juan Marsé with regard to Republican working-class cultures. Both enjoy

1 I choose to focus on this ‘counter-figures’ of the modern intellectual that, in a sense, act as mediators between the privilege of those ‘in the know’ and the under-recognized subaltern and everyday cultures, aware that this may run the risk of reproducing the tendency to attribute cultural agency only, or at least primarily, to intellectuals and writers. It is by no means my intention that this research should substitute or compensate for the lack of studies directly focused on subaltern and everyday cultures. But due to limitations of time and resources, which of course are themselves effects of the structures of cultural and material domination I am studying here, I haven’t been able to delve as deep into such a study of unlettered everyday, oral, and subaltern cultures before the period of the neoliberal crisis in Spain. I have quoted and will quote later several studies that go in that direction, such as those of Sánchez Vidal, Uría, Arguedas, Ariès, Berger, Cazorla, Díez, Izquierdo, Montalbán, Martín Gaité, Pérez Díaz, Candel, Molina, and Ong. However, I believe there is still an urgent need for more research that presents the ways in which subaltern and everyday cultures have created value and meaning in the midst of capitalist rule and cultural hierarchy in Spain.

considerable commercial success: their popular books can be found on the same new-release tables as those of Marías, Muñoz Molina, and Cercas, and their publishers, who frequently belong to major communications conglomerates, launch them with similar promotional schemes in the mass media. Furthermore, they are undoubtedly very prestigious authors in the critical and literary studies fields. They have both received numerous prizes, including some of the most renowned, and their names appear frequently in the culture sections of major newspapers.

In any case, Díez and Marsé, like other writers, intellectuals, and artists who followed a similar path, are heirs to cultures in which the system for creating reality did not stress the authority of specific individuals, enabling them to become Authors or Experts. Rather, it focused on methods of collective transmission and re-creation of traditional knowledges. In this sense, only in irregular, atypical ways do their career paths embody that ideal of pro-European modernization associated with the cosmopolitan intellectual: internationally appreciated, situated in the vanguard of a cultural development that takes charge of a 'backward' country. Precisely because Díez and Marsé have spent most of their lives outlining dialogues, demanding dignity for and remembrance of the peasant and working-class cultures that have typically been blamed by the literate elites for the country's 'backwardness,' their position is not easily included in the 'standardized' cultural and political model during the early years of Spanish 'democracy.'

It must be noted that this isn't because Marsé and Díez have a kind of 'conservative' (in the most literal sense) relationship with those cultures, and thus a frontal opposition to the complex cultural, political, and economic processes—usually called 'modernization'—that made them disappear. Rather, what happens is that in the appropriation of these traditional cultures lie projects or possibilities of other 'modernities.' These possibilities were cut short or buried under the hegemony of the hybrid of bourgeois culture and neoliberalism that has marked the Spanish post-dictatorial order and, within it, under the hegemony of the cultural scene and even of the very figure of the successful writer of which Marsé and Díez have become the embodiment.

### 3.1.2. Peasant cultures and regional effervescence in Spain's autonomous regions

Díez's active recuperation of the *filandón* (the name given to rural social gatherings in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula) is very well known as the cultural environment from which his own writing springs. This kind of 'primal scene,' as the critic Ángel Loureiro (1991) calls it, has a specific time and place, which Díez describes poetically: 'hours after dusk, calm kitchens,

the atmosphere of smoke and firewood, of wine heavy with dregs reheated in their cups, and winter creeping around there outside' (Aparicio, Díez, and Merino 1985, 40).<sup>2</sup> And in that space-time of legendary aroma, which is gradually populated to perform an act 'as natural as dinner,' the narration begins, as Díez wrote in 1977, with stories that

linked us, that helped to draw the outlines of a sensibility, like one more attribute along with all the others that nourished our culture. And ours was a peasant culture, strict, tied to the land, as much of the land as the plowed field itself. Maybe that's why the fascination for the imaginary, the attraction of fictions, permeated our spirits, like a counterpoint to the vast reality of the land and its labors in which we were immersed. (42)

No doubt it has to do with the construction of an 'origin myth,' the foundation of a literary poetic that wants to be rooted in the traditional community practice of narration as one more activity among those that made up the daily life of peasant cultures. A possible 'writer's fate' is specifically drawn: 'What a good writer's fate it is to be there for the future like one of those anonymous voices telling stories to their neighbors' (41).<sup>3</sup>

It should be kept in mind that Díez shared these reflections about peasant cultures in 1978 along with two other Leonese writers, Juan Pedro Aparicio and José María Merino, under the shared pseudonym of 'Sabino Ordás,' a character they invented and used to sign a series of articles in the newspaper *Pueblo*. These articles would later be collected in the volume *Las cenizas del Fénix*. Ordás was, according to the biography his three inventors had created, an old, exiled Republican intellectual who had returned to his tiny village in the province of León after the death of the Caudillo (Franco), only to face the tumultuous Spain of the transition to democracy. In particular, he was confronted with effervescent regional autonomous cultures that were dedicated, among other things, to the recuperation of native cultural

2 Significantly, the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas draws a similarly constructed scene of his 'origin myth' as a writer: a kitchen populated by people who narrate and listen in community, far from family and political centers where power is managed.

3 In the prologue to *El pasado legendario*, published in 2000 (13 years after 'Sabino Ordás' wrote these words), Díez used the same expression to refer directly to his own 'writer's fate': 'Some of the neighborly rituals of orality, so unique to certain rural Nordic and mountain cultures, were a part of my childhood. That circumstance marks, in some way, my own fate as a writer, and I accept it without nostalgia, without romanticizing it, the same way I like to accept everything to do with my childhood' (20).

traditions like the Leonese *filandón*. In this sense, it is necessary to frame his literary project of ‘being there for the future like one of those anonymous voices chatting with the neighbors’ within Labrador’s ‘transitional cultures’ that were resistant to the mesocracy, and particularly within the small Leonese autonomous ‘counterculture’ in which the invented Sabino Ordás appears.

Ordás writes at the time when the so-called ‘Spain of the autonomous regions’ was being politically and legally formed, not without considerable controversy. From the initial euphoria to the later disappointment over the 1981 ‘cerrojazo autonómico,’ in which Adolfo Suárez’s government reduced the amount of political self-determination it had originally promised to the autonomous regions, the ‘provinces’ experienced a frenzy of collective activity in which the literary and the political were often conflated into a single amalgam. All this was still far, however, from the professionalization and specialization of the fiction writer that the growth of the publishing industry would later promote around the middle of the eighties.

During the years of the transition, provincial writers often shared physical and symbolic space with local ethnographers, folk musicians, members of rural communes, neighbors from towns threatened by reservoirs, militants working for regional autonomy, and ecological activists. In fact, there is no reason to consider Díez during these years merely as a fiction writer who develops an individual creative project. (Similar examples of other such narrators would be Julio Llamazares, Manuel Rivas, and Bernardo Atxaga, to name some of the better known ones.) That is just one more facet of his production, which can be found clearly imbricated in networks of social interaction and in collective projects, which often go beyond literary creation.<sup>4</sup>

So, for example, Díez worked in those transitional years on anthropological approaches like ‘Una introducción a la literatura popular leonesa’ (1980) and others that result from his active involvement in the House of León in Madrid and its journal (*León*). He also participated in numerous activities of cultural diffusion and investigation that were compiled under different names (‘Gumersindo Azcárate study group,’ ‘Papalaguinda Press,’ ‘Compendium

4 This type of work on the boundaries between ‘creation’ and ‘documentation’ is notably similar to what the numerous folk music groups of the Spanish transition did, performing an extensive job of compilation and ethnographic study while also developing their own style (examples include Oskorri in Euskadi, All Tall in Valencia, Chicotén in Aragón, and Fuxan Os Ventos in Galicia, to name just a few). This last group, according to González Lucini (2006), usually ended their concerts by asking the audience to teach them some native songs of the region where they were performing.

of Fish Street collection,' and the apocryphal Sabino Ordás himself), and shared a common interest in popular culture and Leonese identity.<sup>5</sup> Those projects were defined in large part by a desire to create regionalist 'popular culture,' which had to share space with the criteria of 'aesthetic quality' that belong to the literate traditions of high culture, so they often managed to reach diverse sectors of the population (from young writers and intellectuals to old peasants). In fact, in this type of forum there is often a great concern for being open to citizens who don't belong to the cultural elites. Thus, they always insist that regionalism is not a means of producing exclusivity, but rather, is exactly that, a 'popular culture' that tries to differentiate itself from the culture of the elites.

Ordás's articles return again and again to the problem of cultural elitism, which frequently associates the authoritarian vices of the dictatorship with the 'cliques' that govern the literary world from Madrid or Barcelona (and even with the hegemony of formal experimentalism). Thus, in connection with a comment on the career of the critic José María Castellet, Ordás indicates that the power coming from the use of those cultural argots is comparable to the model of dictatorial political power that had permeated all social functioning:

Over the flowchart *par excellence* (Dictator exercises his authority absolutely from the top down, through successive layers of obsequious petty dictators) was layered the map of general performance, and therefore, of the cultural world. Whether he wanted to or not, the intellectual who 'constituted a nucleus of influence' ended up becoming a dictator capable of exercising absolute power in his field, using dogmas and clichés without even imagining disparities or replicas, and thus converting the rest of his sphere of influence, through a set of subsidiary petty tyrants, into a submissive and obedient—if not terrified—group. (69)

In a society deeply impregnated with relationships of authoritarian power, culture could not keep from reproducing those schemas of authority and submission; rather, it propagated them through the argot of the intellectual field. In 1978, after three years of a still insufficient transition to democracy, things hadn't changed much.<sup>6</sup> Ordás proved, for example, in connection with

5 Asunción Castro Díez (2001) has identified in detail all of Díez's 'paraliterary' activities based on her study of Sabino Ordás.

6 There are, however, studies that have highlighted precisely the emergence of living civic languages, unaware of elitist jargons, in those transitional years and even long before. Jordi Gracia, in *La resistencia silenciosa*, investigates the tenuous line

a polemic about a public sculpture in Chillida, that both art critics and the Spanish media took shelter ‘in a jargon equivalent, for their shortcomings, to what Valle-Inclán blamed on the “divine words,” jargon that makes possible some powers of restricted access and giving blessings to whomever it wants’ (127).<sup>7</sup>

For Ordás, the mistreatment of words practiced by the elites in power for the almost 40 years of the dictatorship had produced a ‘disarticulation between culture and society,’ and resulted in the creation of ‘a state culture, or, at times, an anti-state culture (as over-structured as its opposite, if not more so)’ (44). Both Francoist and anti-Francoist culture created a language apart from ‘the people’; hermetic, ‘rootless’ argots designed for the use of a few. In general, Ordás confirms the survival in Spanish society of ‘the idea that the cultural world should not be easy to access, that a knowledge of art should be surrounded by special difficulties, that only through suffering, even if only mental, can cultural riches be obtained’ (98). This idea seems to make an even stronger impression on precisely those people who have managed to become administrators of the cultural patrimony, and are dedicated to creating obstacles to prevent the common man from participating in this patrimony.

When Ordás counterposes his project of recuperating the ‘anonymous voices’ of the peasant *filandones* against that cultural elitism, he doesn’t do it out of a kind of conservatism that desires a return to an ideal past. Rather, he wants to provide Spanish ‘modernization’ with true democratization, which for him must include attention to the native popular cultures. The comparison between elitist culture and the rural cultures constitutes in and of itself the embryo of a whole politico-cultural program of rapprochement between culture and society (culture and ‘the people’) that Ordás (and other cultural agents close to him) will defend: ‘let us guard ourselves against the cultural bureaucracies, let us leave places that send letters of this or that kind of quality, of this or that style, let us pursue spontaneity, connections, the articulation between culture and society, between art and the people’ (67).

drawn during the years of the dictatorship by various cultural manifestations that opted for clarity and sobriety in the face of the darkness and petulance of fascist style.

7 The metaphor of religious language is also used by Ricardo Piglia to refer to the elitist argots that require ‘experts’ to interpret them: ‘Perhaps the dominant discourse in this regard is that of the economy. The market economy defines a dictionary and a syntax and acts on the words; it defines a new sacred, cryptic language that requires priests and technicians to decode it, to translate it, and to comment on it’ (38).

There is in Ordás's articles an exaltation of rural egalitarianism and independence that has to do with their desire to 'root' the new Spain of post-Francoism in regional and anti-imperial cultural traditions, no matter how far back in time they might go. Thus, Ordás associates, for example, the rebellious spirit of the Leonese anarchists, like Buenaventura Durruti, with the resistance of the Asturian-Cantabrian people against the Roman Empire. Likewise, in an essay entitled 'Una carta al ministro de cultura' (1979), he advocates for the creation of a Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography that will show the wealth of diverse cultural identities Spain is home to, precisely with the intention of not losing those that have not supported projects of imperial expansion: 'A permanent temptation between *cantonalism* and *imperial unity* seems to be marking our historical avatar: from that tension the originality of our human panorama is fed, filled with different cultures, some holding their own, still alive, ancient embers' (168).

The burning question is, however, how alive can those embers remain when the phantom of museumification hovers over them? To what extent, and how, can fires still be started from those ancient embers of ancestral cultures in the Spain of the transition? When Ordás proposes the need to create an anthropological and ethnological museum in Spain to promote 'the cultural reconciliation of the Spains' (167), not only does he want acknowledgment of the regional cultural specificities that Francoism had buried, but he also wants that museum to house objects pertaining to rural ways of life, 'before this stubborn race towards who-knows-where leaves our villages in ruins and forgotten forever' (169).

It must be remembered that, in the context of that biopolitical transformation of farming carried out by Francoism to which I referred in the first chapter, between 1955 and 1975, 6 million Spaniards (20% of the population) had moved away from the provinces. Of those, 2 million migrated to Madrid, 1.8 million to Barcelona, and 1.5 million elsewhere in Europe. With these massive displacements, 60% of small farmers and 70% of laborers disappeared from the rural world. At the same time, the number of Spanish cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants jumped from 20 (in 1960) to 40 (in 1975).

At the end of the seventies, the project of creating a 'rooted' culture, a modernity that doesn't bet everything on the false cosmopolitan novelty that masks cultural elitism, confronts its greatest obstacle in the very extinction of those rural cultures on which it wants to base that rootedness. In terms of Díez's literary and intellectual project, the difficulty can be simply stated: how can someone keep being an 'anonymous voice chatting with the neighbors' in a society that tends to turn anonymous voices into Authors and the neighbors into publics or consumers?

### 3.2. Words in the Kitchen: Subsistence Cultures and Productivist Cultures

#### 3.2.1. Peasant *tertulias* as images of a culture in Luis Mateo Díez

According to the Real Academia Española's dictionary, a *filandón* is an 'evening get-together of women to spin and chat,' and this is how Mateo Díez uses it (partly because the maintenance of that dictionary has been one of his responsibilities as an academic since 2001). But the Leonese writer has always suggested in his work that these get-togethers served to construct, maintain, and reactivate the cultural patrimony of the rural, eminently peasant communities that practiced them. In his book *Relato de Babia* (1991), Díez deliberately played on that function, including a central chapter titled 'Filandón' that presents, in dialogue form (and with no substantial modifications in the three extant editions of the book), an encounter between neighbors or friends (men and women) who recall various local anecdotes, stories, legends, jokes, and ballads relating to cultural, geographical, and historical characteristics of the Leonese region of Babia.<sup>8</sup>

Díez's Babia is the epitome of peasant cultures, which for him are, above all, *filandón* cultures; that is, cultures that constantly negotiate their meaning and their identity through the collective narration of oral stories. Stories that people speak to explain what they are and where they are: that, for Díez, is Babia. John Berger corroborates this in his quote that Díez put at the beginning of the third edition of the *Relato de Babia*:

The self-portrait of every town is not built with stones, but with words, spoken and remembered: with opinions, stories, eyewitness accounts, legends, comments, and rumors. And it is a continuous portrait, it is a

8 Regarding the question of gender's relation to narration, it is very interesting to observe that although Mateo Díez broadens his version of *filandón* to include both men and women, in his conception of 'popular' narrative, women continue to have a certain priority. Often women appear in his narrative to be the best prepared to tell the story of the 'forgotten ones' left behind by modernity and 'progress.' This characteristic is in line with the construction of narration as 'feminine space' which the Argentine Edgardo Cozarinsky uses in his essay 'El relato indefinible' (2005). According to Cozarinsky, the link between the feminine and narration goes back to the early Middle Ages, when, while men hunted and warred, women studied nature and transmitted 'legends passed from mother to daughter, where the gods of pagan antiquity found a fragile but persistent survival' (21). For a historical analysis of the relationship between women and popular culture, I think it is essential to relate both terms to the arrival of capitalist productivism, according to Silvia Federici's study in her book *Calibán y la bruja: mujeres, cuerpo y acumulación originaria* (2004).

never-ending job to paint it. Until relatively recently, the only materials a town and its inhabitants had at their disposal to define themselves were their own spoken words. The portrait that each town made of itself, apart from the physical achievements of the fruits of their labor, was the only thing that reflected the meaning of their existence. (29)

‘Until relatively recently’ is crucial in the consideration of peasant cultures. In the *filandón* narrated by Díez, the elaboration of Babia’s collective self-portrait is constantly swinging between a before and an after: the chapter is narrated in the present, and the temporal references situate the encounter at a time close to the writing of the book (1980–81), but the question of Babia is constantly posed in terms of a comparison between the Babia of the present and the Babia of the past. So they discuss changes in agriculture and in social composition, the erosion of local dialects, the durability of popular knowledge like recipes, and even the imprint of macroeconomic changes like the arrival in the area of the coal industry.<sup>9</sup>

Time changes lived practices and how they gain meaning. Televisions that have already found their way into the homes of Babia have begun to form the self-portrait, or those writers who, like Mateo Díez, sat in on the *filandones* as children, and as adults write their ‘literary’ versions of the stories they heard there. It’s beginning to be done with words and voices that come from other places and tell of other experiences, until Babia’s very existence, and that of other peasant cultures, is called into question by the whirlwind of migration, the proliferation of the mass media, and the diffusion of the urban, capitalist way of life.

In that whirlwind many things were broken, among them perhaps some of the things that could have provided that democratizing, anti-elitist component that Ordás and Mateo Díez wanted to bring from the peasant cultures to the post-dictatorial present of the 1970s. Of course, the capacity

9 ‘Here in Babia a lot of us still bake cakes. Other things are lost, but not that’ (Díez 126). ‘Agriculture here went to hell in a handbasket. You go around looking for a pound of lentils, you know we were famous for our lentils in Babia, and they still talk about them in cookbooks, but now you can’t find them’ (134). ‘What there are, in spite of everything, are different degrees of preservation in the different areas of Babia. There are towns that deliberately hang onto their old ways of speaking, for instance in Quintanilla, in Babia Alta, and in Robledo down in Babia Baja’ (135). ‘Well, you could say that all the towns have good infrastructure: streets, running water, good light, television, and bathroom and heating equipment’ (134). ‘For example, see what kind of impact the coal industry has had, especially in Laciana and Babia Alta, the huge social changes that cause changes in our way of life, and at the same time they attract a huge number of people from other regions who bring their own influences with them’ (135).

of human communities for self-representation through orality is one of those broken threads, but it's important to find that thread within the complex fabric of peasant cultures, which compose and weave symbolic needs and tasks with materials in an especially compact way.

So not only stories are told in the *filandón*, but also recipes, home remedies for ailments, and, in general, any type of eminently practical knowledge (such as, in part, the fictions themselves, for their exemplarity). In the *filandón*, of course, not only do they talk, but they also drink and eat; it is no coincidence that these *tertulias* are held in kitchens. What's more, people sing and dance at these gatherings. And, as the Peruvian writer and sometime anthropologist (like Díez) José María Arguedas related, the peasant gathering was the natural place for the young men and women of the village to meet someone special and fall in love.

### 3.2.2. Disarticulation of a way of life: Sayago through José María Arguedas's eyes

Arguedas's book, *Las comunidades de España y del Perú* (1968), is an exceptional document for understanding the process of disarticulating the peasant cultures during the period when Francoism began opening up to capitalist 'modernization.' He documented his research and his stay in several towns in the Zamora region of Sayago from 1958 to 1962, in connection with a project funded by UNESCO to investigate the possible survival of rural Spanish communitary cultures that might have an impact on the colonization of Peru. Arguedas found himself in a changing world and, among other things, he noted a particularly striking symptom: in the towns he studied, there was a growing number of single people, and fewer and fewer marriages. Speaking with people, he discovered that the general perception was, 'It's too expensive to get married,' and so men preferred to stay single. This is particularly striking in an agrarian society that only gives the title of *vecino* (neighbor) to married men. With that title come the rights to use parcels of the community fields and pasturelands that are redistributed annually. True, the benefits to be gained by exploiting those community parcels are not great, but it hasn't always been seen this way. The elders of the place speak of an even more miserable past, when wheat—now the main source of food—was not yet cultivated, and when country folk made their own clothes, slept on the floor, and 'hardly even knew what money was.'

Certainly Arguedas found a small, very isolated society, but it was already highly destabilized by the transition towards what the geographer David Harvey has called 'the money community.' Harvey analyzes the urban experience under capitalism by foregrounding the substitution of traditional ways of organizing mutual human dependence that is based

on direct social ties and relationships with others based on ‘objective’ relationships. This substitution effectively creates a situation where the use of money is the only measure of all social wealth. The arrival in Sayago of wheat as the main subsistence crop could be a decisive moment in that transition, in that it brought with it the more generalized use of money as an organizational system for subsistence. But the most truly destabilizing moment for this type of Castillean peasant (who for the most part had supported Francoism during the civil war), the moment that put an end to what the sociologist Víctor Pérez Díaz calls the ‘traditional model’ of Spanish peasant communities, happened when the regime rescinded the ‘autarchy’ policies that had directly favored them, through key organizations of the postwar statist economy, such as the National Wheat Service. At that moment, Francoism produced a progressive economic liberalization that would force traditional peasants to either become ‘businessmen farmers’ (through the mechanization of agriculture) or to migrate to the cities.

This is precisely what was happening when Arguedas arrived in Sayago, and he personally observed the pressure these changes brought on the financial situation of those who couldn’t buy agricultural machinery, in the ‘*quignonización*’ (parceling and privatizing) of the common lands of some towns, as well as in the state’s appropriation of communal forests. In general, he saw the breakup of a hybrid economy in which money and state protection through a controlled wheat market were key, but in which certain institutions were still maintained that were unfamiliar with the logic of monetary exchange—notably, the common lands, which were often called *vecindades*.

Arguedas’s sensitivity to questions of daily life, and to its symbolic and affective dimensions, also makes him an excellent witness to the parallel breakup of the processes of creation and transmission of meaning that underpinned that not entirely monetarized world. He realized that if getting married, and thus becoming a *vecino* (someone who had a share in the *vecindad*) with all the rights that entailed, ‘is very expensive’ in Sayago, it’s because, in fact, everything was becoming very expensive in a community that was being urged to complete its transition to the monetary quantification of all its social wealth. He also realized that this monetarization of life affected the ways a traditional society managed its own reproduction without needing recourse to money. At the center of those traditional institutions facilitating the reproduction of community life was what in Sayago was called the *tertulia* (gathering, get-together) or *serano*.

One particularly eloquent informant, who is identified by the initials C. A., revealed several key issues to Arguedas: the *seranos*, he says, were to help young men and women meet; after the *tertulias*, couples would ‘lose

themselves in the fields.' There was a tacit sexual freedom, which was what usually initiated the processes of dating and marriage. But this disappeared after the civil war. The informant lists the causes of the change: 'money, the war, priests, the severity of the authorities, which are the work of the masters; all that has come down on these young men's heads, it's intimidated them. Now all they do is work, talk to their families, or watch girls singing in sunny meadows ...—they're afraid' (143).

When Arguedas was in Berrillo, the capital of Sayago, a new dance hall opened up with a cover charge (one *duro* for the young men). Children weren't allowed in, changing a long-standing custom of allowing children at the dances, all adults spontaneously sharing the responsibility of looking after them. In the new dance hall, 'modern slow dancing' was imposed, contributing to the gradual demise of native songs and dances. Only young girls kept them alive, like games, in the 'sunny meadows' mentioned by C. A. They have become a kind of entertainment for the adults, who watch the songs and dances but don't perform them anymore. One *vecina* said of the new dance hall: 'the damn business creeps everywhere, it's a sin!' (113).

These tensions articulate the problematic transition between what the writer and researcher of peasant cultures, John Berger, called 'survival cultures' and the very different 'cultures of progress.' In the former, eking out a living, or what is sometimes called the reproduction of life, is the most important thing, and it is inconceivable that the state of permanent scarcity which impels that constant struggle for survival might someday disappear. In the latter, in contrast, the emphasis is on the future, precisely because one always hopes to gain greater abundance and better living conditions in the future.

In the case of the Sayago peasants, the introduction of wheat into their economy meant an extension of the subsistence mentality, supported in this case not only by their work, which would be used for their own consumption (and often sustained by community property structures), but also by the sale of their agricultural product in a state-protected market. But only when that system starts breaking down does the demand to think in new ways become stronger, to produce not just for subsistence, but for 'progress.' This is clearly seen in the investments required of the peasant who wants to mechanize his work to be able to become a 'businessman farmer,' according to the program that technocratic Francoism had designed for this population. Money very quickly began to be in short supply for everything, including for cultivating the land, and therefore, for surviving. Whoever couldn't adapt to that new way of life in the field, had to emigrate to the city, where in the vast majority of cases, he would come to depend directly or indirectly on salaried work.

Without a doubt, as Berger affirms, it is extremely unfair to idealize the

very difficult conditions of life for the peasant cultures, no matter how traumatic the processes may have been that ended up dismantling them. But at the same time, that shouldn't prevent a critical analysis from also being made of these processes of change. What happened in rural Spain during the fifties was that the Francoist dictatorship forced an adaptation to capitalism, which in turn forced many to emigrate. As opposed to what could have been an idealization of subsistence, feminist historical and economic analyses such as those of Silvia Federici or Amaia Pérez-Orozco remind us that the problem of 'cultures of progress' based on capitalism is that they tend to put all the emphasis on production and accumulation (of products or capital), making invisible and even putting at risk the reproduction of life itself.

Therefore, Federici has critiqued Marx's concept of 'primary accumulation,' as noted in a previous chapter. It's true that the privatization of lands and common resources, which often served to guarantee European peasants their subsistence (and therefore a certain autonomy from the feudal lords), constitutes a central process in the implantation of capitalism. However, she explains, another, no less important, process is the constant appropriation and exploitation of the work necessary to maintain and reproduce life (caring for children, domestic work) by a system that doesn't recognize it as creating value, and therefore doesn't integrate it into its system of wage distribution.

Without the millions of women, customarily in charge of doing that reproductive work, who have brought into the world and taken care of the men whose manpower would drive capitalist production, this system could never have existed, no matter how much it had pulled them from the communal lands to those proletarian futures. The interesting thing about the rural cultures of survival is that within them, despite their many problems, including the maintenance of violent precapitalist versions of patriarchy and many other forms of hierarchy, reproductive work was recognized as a fundamental source of value, because in fact, as Berger explains, it was inconceivable that there could have been valuable work beyond the reproductive.

### 3.2.3. From reproduction to production: A writer between two worlds

The management of human subsistence by means of communal structures foreign to the productivity and monetarization of social wealth was not the only thing, therefore, that is profoundly alien to the type of individualistic and consumerist urban society that most of Spain quickly became during the fifties and sixties. So too was the mentality that puts the reproduction of life at the center, that doesn't understand the separation between work

and play, that believes that the stories, the recipes, the jokes, the dances, and tumbles in the hay shared by young men and women all form part of a single continuum of the reproduction of community life, as much as the work in the fields or the meetings to decide what to do with communal lands.

Referring to the kitchens in which the *filandones* were held, Mateo Díez (2000) said, 'what was told in them, what was heard, with that point of respect and entertainment from which the knowledge of things, pleasure, emotion, mystery, is best derived, was not separate from the fire and the food; not even words conflicted with the wood and the pots and pans' (20). That continuity between language and food, between the symbolic and the material, is found in rural cultures because both aspects are indispensable to the unquestionable priority of the reproduction of community life. As that priority is increasingly replaced by the production of quantified monetary wealth and applied to individual (as opposed to community) use, both words and material goods become segmented into distinct functions organized to make them produce that new type of wealth.

Just as the cultures of survival based on the reproduction of life become 'cultures of progress' based on the production of private property and exchange value, reality remains divided into two halves: the 'productive' half, supported by technoscience, and the half that is not yet productive but will be as 'progress' advances. The artist, and in particular the fiction writer, can oppose projects to this model that radically question productivity, and this is what many have been doing ever since modernism and the avant-garde all the way up to postmodernity. But that doesn't mean that an individual artist, confined to the aesthetic sphere, is able to construct the conditions for her symbolic work to function as an element incorporated into the reproduction of community life, when this reproduction has been subsumed into the productivity of money and the markets.

This, I think, is the main difficulty facing the project of translating the rural subsistence cultures' experience of traditional collective oral narration into the world of written authorship as the cultures of progress understand it: how can one now be not only 'an anonymous voice chatting with the neighbors,' but a voice that integrates narration into the reproduction of community life when one lives in a society that has subordinated reproduction to production and the community to the individual?

Perhaps in institutions like the Casa de León in Madrid or the CCAN in León, Mateo Díez and his colleagues in the autonomous Leonese culture could recreate in some measure situations in which words recuperated the nourishing value they had in the traditional cultures, at least for communities that still believed in the primacy of reproduction over production. Or rather,

to use the language of the cultures of the transition, the value of ‘the millenary culture of the people’ against the domination of the cities.

Those autonomous cultures were subjected to countless contradictions, and the history of their attempts to construct a ‘rooted,’ civic, foundational alternative that was both ecological and pacifistic towards the neoliberal ‘Europeanization’ already under way is complex and still unfinished. The same is true for other democratic cultures born out of the transition (including the neighborhoods movement, youth countercultures, and working-class autonomy). One of the threads of that history, and perhaps not the least significant, is constituted by the evolution of artists and writers who, like Mateo Díez, were heir to the symbolic heritage of the peasant cultures of survival and tried to keep it alive in a culture as markedly *progressive* as the Spain of the transition with its hopeful eye on Europe.

Two central elements ended up channeling the fate of that evolution: on one hand, the specialization and ‘professionalization’ of the artists, which involved distancing themselves from those civic cultures in which they acted as ethnographers, journalists, activists, or cultural agitators. On the other, there was a progressive mythologization of rural cultures and their symbolic legacy, which allowed a pushing to the background of the historical material transformations—the implantation of capitalism in the context of the Francoist dictatorship—which led to their breakdown. In light of these two elements, writers like Mateo Díez ended up finding a space of recognition in the highly commercialized culture of post-dictatorship Spain, after encountering many difficulties in even getting published during Francoism and the transition.

These types of stories promote a non-elitist use of fiction, as Ordás intended. They become material that is particularly appropriate for circulation among the broad sectors of society that the new culture industries of the democracy wanted to attract as consumers of novels.<sup>10</sup> So it’s not unusual to find, among the rolls of the ‘banners of literature’ of the political, cultural, and economic ecosystem forged in the Spanish state of the early eighties, writers who

10 Which doesn’t mean that the only literature produced during Francoism was ‘elitist’ or ‘not appropriate for consumption by broad sectors of the population.’ There was a broad spectrum of ways of writing and editing that in many cases tried to reach a wider public. Examples range from pulp fiction like the famous westerns and romances of Bruguera Press to prestigious literature written in accessible language published by Destino Press (which included the greats of realism like Delibes, Matute, Cela, and Martín Gaité). However, as Labanyi and Graham and others have shown, it is not until the arrival of democracy and the appearance of the big culture-media groups of the eighties that literature becomes a true mass phenomenon in Spain.

prefer a 'rural' or 'provincial' poetics, including Mateo Díez himself during his first phase, as well as Julio Llamazares, José María Merino, Manuel Rivas, and Bernardo Atxaga, among others. Close to them on the new release tables, although with perhaps an even more central position, the publishing industry would place another 'great narrator,' also with ties to cultures that tend to be mythologized, but who had already managed to get published during the years of the experimentalists' hegemony: Juan Marsé.

### 3.3. Arrested Modernities II: Postwar Cultures and Creative Consumption

#### 3.3.1. Building 'cardboard ghosts' with Juan Marsé

At the beginning of his novel, *Un día volveré* (1982), Marsé presents a panorama offering glimpses of certain tensions and transformations that recall those that Arguedas experienced in Sayago. The difference is that these are now situated in an urban environment, and told from a narrative voice that invokes the resurrection of a legendary storytelling spirit that belongs to the past of the 'cultures of survival,' but that can return when least expected:

And then, when the *vecindario* was already replacing its capacity for surprise and for legend with resignation and forgetfulness, and the asphalt had already buried forever the tortured map of our knife games in the streambed of packed earth, and some cars on the sidewalks were already beginning to replace the old people who sat outside to enjoy the cool night air; when indifference and tedium threatened to bury forever that grinding of trolleys and of old *aventis*, and the men in the tavern no longer told anything but uninteresting stories about their families and their boring jobs, when that little bit of hatred and rejection needed to keep on living began to falter in everyone, he finally returned home: the man who, according to old Suau, more than one person in the *barrio* would have preferred to see far away, dead, or locked up forever. (14)

Those men who 'in the tavern no longer told anything but uninteresting stories about their families and their boring jobs' no doubt remember the young men of Sayago who 'now only work, talk to their families or watch girls singing in sunny meadows,' as the informant C. A. told Arguedas. But is this similarity a coincidence? Marsé's characters have almost always been interpreted as representatives of the Republican working-class world of the groups defeated in the civil war, and no doubt they are. That 'minimum of hate and rejection needed to keep on living' to which Marsé returns in almost all his texts has been understood as the reaction to the

overwhelming, annihilating defeat that affects both bodies and collective identities, threatening to completely erase them. But perhaps that emphasis on the Republican memory has tended to blur other cultural elements present in his novels that have to do with those streets that still exude ‘a musty, wet-earth smell like in the days when asphalt wasn’t used yet, and their daily hustle and bustle, their pulse, was different’ (24).

The world of Marsé’s defeated people is a world where people struggle to keep not only their Republican identity and memory, but also their ‘right to an epic and an aesthetics,’ as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, another essential explorer of those worlds, said in his *Crónica sentimental de España* (first published in 1969, quoted here in a 1986 edition). Marsé’s characters have been stripped not only of their freedom and their political identity, but also of that still unpaved street in which the neighbors of the working-class *barrios* sat to reproduce the immemorial habit of the *tertulia*. Notably in his long-awaited novel *Si te dicen que caí* (1976), but also in many of his other texts, Marsé gives narrative centrality to that residue of oral cultures that he calls ‘*las aventis*’ (a neologism based on ‘adventures’) told by the youngsters of the defeated postwar period, in a kind of clandestine recuperation of the *tertulia*, or at least of the narrative ability that was cultivated in these gatherings.

The culture that supplies these youths with their ways of telling, their tactics, and their cosmovision, is not only the culture of those defeated by Francoism, but also an ‘agro-urban’ culture formed by rural emigrants or *vecinos* who have seen their towns annexed to cities through industrialization. The institutions of the modern world (school, factory, state, etc.) entered this culture more slowly than in the metropolis, which is why they have maintained an understanding of the world based more on narration than on information. In addition, of course, we can’t forget the (more or less remote) ties between that traditional world and the cultures of survival in which all things material and symbolic fed the reproduction of community life, including knowledges and tactics of orality.<sup>11</sup>

11 I am not trying to essentialize the ‘peasant or rural culture,’ nor to consider it a ‘native’ environment; rather, I am trying to theorize the cultural hybridity of a transitional Spain in which strong oral traditions coexisted with a bureaucratic, institutional world based on writing, and an important audiovisual sphere that was rapidly expanding. There are two interesting sociological books about this world of ‘agro-urban’ *barrios* (because of their strong element of immigration from rural areas) on the outer edges of cities: *Los otros catalanes* by Francisco Candel (1965), and *Los otros madrileños: el pozo del tío Raimundo* by Esperanza Molina (1984). Both contain testimonies about the importance of orality and narration in the cultures of these *barrios* during the last phase of Francoism and the transition.

For an investigation in more abstract terms about the relation between oral cultures

But at the same time, and in contrast to the case of Mateo Díez and other 'rural' writers, for Marsé another central aspect is working with the materials of the incipient mass culture that fed those capacities for memory and oral narration in the Spanish postwar period. So, for example, when the gang of boys to which the narrative voice of *Un día volveré* belongs first discovers the mysterious man who has returned to the *barrio*, the moment is inscribed in relation to the movie theater: 'We had a sensation of *déjà vu*,' says the narrative voice, 'of having lived this appearance in a dream or maybe on the screen of the Roxy or the Rovira in the Saturday afternoon matinee' (10).

The movie cinema theater, together with the native legends of the *barrio*, is a constant source of language and models for construction of meaning for the young protagonists, as well as for Marsé's novel itself, which owes a lot to American *noir* classics. There is a confluence here between the threads of the *barrio* culture and American mass culture that focuses on the character of old Suau: besides being the bearer of collective oral (Republican) memory, he has worked all his life (and still does) as a theater sign painter. At one point, when the diverging narrative versions of Suau (the clandestine version) and Polo, the *barrio* policeman (the official version), clash (the two old men meet every day in the painter's workshop to argue), it might seem like the signs come to help that 'ruinous memory' defended by Suau:

He thought that, despite Polo's scornful indifference, despite his boasts and his insults, his memory of that rainy night must also be infected by fear; and that the presence of those colorful figures now surrounding him, those poor cardboard ghosts condemned to be forever trapped on theater walls, caught in the act of shooting, or kissing, or dying here and now, must make much more real for him, in his exasperated mood, the presence of those other ghosts who populated his dirty cop's memory. (24)

But 'those poor cardboard ghosts' serve not only to torment the guilty memory that hides behind the official version: they are also utopian models,

and narration, see the works of Walter Ong (1982) and de Certeau. For a sociocultural analysis (based on the French model) of the transformation of urban *barrios* during the second half of the twentieth century, see 'The Transition from Neighborhood to Metropolis' in *A History of Private Life* (Ariès and Duby 1987). This chapter stresses the importance of orality in the 'old' *barrios* (the ones that did not experience major urban changes). In particular, it shows how access to details of the private lives of the *vecinos* completely changes the use of 'conventional wisdom' and the proverbs used in daily life (107).

the stuff of dreams. The narrative voice talks about ‘the ominous darkness of old Suau’s workshop, with his cardboard imitations of a life more intense than the one we would ever have’ (33). And the desire to appropriate and recreate the fictions of mass culture is one clear and deliberate choice here for a type of discourse that can resist the overwhelming weight that is reality for some people. From among all the voices that circulate through the city, these *barrio* boys (children of those defeated in the war, poor boys, condemned to witness the humiliation of their elders and to work, themselves, in tedious or grueling jobs) do not choose the ones that celebrate the status quo. They do not choose the proclamations of the regime, nor lessons on the Imperial History of Spain, nor even the promises of social mobility offered by development policy through advertisements. They choose the Hollywood epic, the epic of comic books or of radio adventure programs, because it is the voice most disconnected from the world around them: they can get close to those figurations of a life more intense than they will ever have, while allowing them, as de Certeau would say, to affirm ‘the lack of coincidence between facts and meaning.’

Essentially, it is not so much a matter of trying to bring into reality those other models to replace the official version, but to open a utopian, impossible space in which things happen differently.<sup>12</sup> What Marsé calls the ‘thwarted illusion of the defeated ones’ (287) must remain an illusion. De Certeau talks about the function fulfilled by the miracle stories of popular cultures, in terms that also seem pertinent for our case: ‘Without removing whatever one might see every day, miracle stories respond “on the edge,” in a twisted way, through a different discourse that one can only believe, much like an ethical reaction must believe that life is not reduced to what can be seen of it’ (21).

That’s why, when they discover that Jan Julivert Mon—the mysterious Republican fighter and member of the first armed resistance against the dictatorship who has returned to the *barrio*—isn’t seeking revenge, the

12 As de Certeau explains, ‘In narration, it is no longer a question of approximating a “reality” (a technical operation, etc.) as closely as possible and making the text acceptable through the “realism” that it exhibits. On the contrary, narrated history creates a fictional space. It moves away from the “real”—or rather it pretends to escape present circumstances: “once upon a time there was ...” (79). That movement, that declarative gesture that restores fiction is parallel to the notion of ‘surprise’ and ‘occasion.’ The narrator gets sidetracked towards that other place with the intention of taking advantage of the occasion offered to him and surprising his listeners (or readers): ‘(Narration) is a detour by way of a past (“the other day”, “in olden days”) or by way of quotation (a “saying”, a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium taken by surprise’ (79). The power of narration, then, lies in surprising or causing a change through the creation of a fictional space.

lesson the boys learn in *Un día volveré* is not merely a rejection of violence, or of the discourses that support it, but also a lesson of fidelity to that other reality ‘that is not seen,’ and which they reactivate with their ‘*aventis*,’ inspired by the epics of mass culture.

### 3.3.2. Theater and song: Creative appropriations of mass culture from the postwar period to disillusion

Transformed into consumers, no matter how much Marsé’s characters may still inhabit a very marginal place in the increasingly totalizing ‘community of money,’ they are still the grandsons of the peasants of the *filandones* and the *seranos*, and they now continue constructing their popular culture by appropriating the cultural products of consumption that are offered to them. De Certeau explains that, in fact, this type of operation is common, quotidian, and massive in a technocratic consumerist society, in that it floods our lives with products whose consumption is never completely neutral. Consumption, says de Certeau, can be understood as a secondary form of production that is not manifested through its own products, but through the ways it uses those of a dominant economic system.

In particular, Hollywood cinema was one of the more fertile objects of consumption for this secondary production during the Spanish postwar period. As Labanyi (2011) indicates, ‘the pleasures offered to Spanish film audiences by Hollywood cinema ... in a time of political repression and extreme material hardship after the Civil War, was the main form of entertainment and thus played a huge compensatory role’ (2). She also indicates the shortage of studies on the quotidian, active, creative reception of Hollywood cinema in the postwar period, and the importance of fiction writers like Marsé and Montalbán when it came to understanding these phenomena.

In his much-quoted *Crónica sentimental de España*, Montalbán called attention to the popular appropriations of another product of basic consumption in postwar Francoism: the so-called ‘national song.’ In principle, this type of popular song emerged as a pro-Spain reaction in the face of the arrival of the *cuplé*, the tango, jazz, and other ‘foreign’ sounds. The national song was constructed from two traditions, the *tonadilla* (a popular Spanish ditty) and traditional lyric poetry, and was anticipated by the Generation of ’27. But in the forties, the Francoist autarchy took advantage of those roots to move it towards what was considered ‘typically Spanish,’ according to Montalbán: ‘individualism, peculiar historical destiny, women, wine, music.’ Interestingly, these songs also revealed two great contradictions: on the one hand, the immorality of the female characters, who articulated the possibility of a rebellious reading, and, on the other, the background sadness of a people who had just suffered through a war.

Montalbán chose some key songs as examples of both contradictions. Thus, the ‘Romance de la otra’ was for him particularly interesting because its protagonist is a wicked woman, the ‘lover’ who breaks with social conventions, who feels mistreated by them and therefore questions them: ‘I am the other, the other / and I have no right to anything / because I don’t wear a ring / with a date on the inside / I don’t have a law that supports me, nor a door to knock on.’ The song ‘No te mires en el río’ also expresses a type of sadness and frustration that could be reinterpreted as protest, but in this case it wasn’t centered on a female character of dubious morality, but on what Vázquez Montalbán called a kind of sense of the absurd that resonated with violence and misfortunes. ‘This song was a crowd-pleaser,’ affirmed Montalbán:

because, like a work of Shakespeare, it has different levels. There is a sentimental, primitive song: a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a tragic, atavistic death in the water. But the logical relationship between all these elements is irrational. There is a logic, but it is not the logic that pertains to the common theme of the song of consumption. It is a ‘sub-normal,’ retarded logic, for which one must develop one’s eighth sense of subnormality. And those beings of the precarious epic, those Spaniards of the forties who had been lost in the river of uncontrollable events—girlfriends, boyfriends, homelands, memories, honors, sacred words, ideas, symbols, myths, joy in one’s own shadow—had developed it very well. That song helped them express their right not to understand things completely and to make of that profession of the absurd an extreme declaration of lucidity. (11–12)

The rebellion, the sense of the absurd, burst forth along with expressions of a collective wounded sentimentality that appropriated elements of the culture of consumption, like those songs that provided people, says Montalbán, with ‘that small ration of aesthetics and indispensable epic to keep living with their heads on straight.’ Both Marsé and Montalbán understand the culture of the Spanish postwar popular classes as a fundamental element of their survival, as much as or more so than the pathetic rye bread they ate to fill their hungry stomachs.

What we have here is, again, an understanding not only of aesthetics and epics, but of the entire symbolic universe in general, like one more dimension integrated into the material universe, with both constituting a single system of reproduction of a life and a ‘sentimentality’ that are perceived as collective. But unlike what happened in the rural cultures of survival, in these postwar popular cultures portrayed by Marsé and Montalbán, the symbolic universe

has begun to fill up with 'products' offered for individual consumption, which are slowly replacing the traditional communal properties entrusted to memory and orality to guarantee the reproduction of collective life. This does not assume that those 'products' are not constantly reappropriated on a daily basis by communities that reintegrate them into their collective systems (typically oral) of symbolic reproduction, particularly into their systems of epic and aesthetic reproduction.

In his novel *El pianista* (1985), Montalbán draws one of the richest portraits of those postwar cultures, this time in fiction. In the second part of this novel, Montalbán describes a daily gathering of neighbors on the roof of a building in the working-class *barrio* of Raval in Barcelona during the forties. Once again, it is an account of a moment of leisure when people get together to share their indispensable ration of epic and aesthetics: a spontaneous *tertulia* among the *vecinos*. During this get-together, they bring up references to boxing, the *copla*, and cinema, but also secret stories from *represaliados* (people who had been punished for their participation in the Republican side of the Civil War) and *maquis* (members of the antifascist resistance), anecdotes about the food shortage, and even urban legends of the time, like the one about the tuberculous vampires.

In the comings and goings of the *vecinos* on the roof there also appear a whole series of elements that construct a hybrid land between 'high' and 'low' culture, like the realist novels of Blasco-Ibañez and Fernández-Flores, which are secretly exchanged, comments on the *zarzuela*, the rhetoric with which Mr. Enrique suddenly surprises everyone, a newspaper salesman who 'when he was young did theater in the Ateneo Obrero de Sants' (169), or the pagan wisdom of a *vecina santera* who invokes 'God or the Great Fate.' Montalbán thus astutely paints a portrait of a class that was punished but still filled with creative abilities and a desire to live; a class which seems to echo what one of the characters, little Ofelia, says just before starting to dance: 'I'm so fed up of mourning and tears.'

Dance, music, and, again, song are, in fact, the central thread of this novel which features a Catalan pianist and composer, Albert Rosell, who returns to Spain when the civil war breaks out, instead of remaining in Paris among the avant-garde circles to which he has risen. This effectively cuts short his career and almost his life; he ends up in jail and later in poverty and anonymity, until finally finishing out his days playing banal pieces in a nightclub in the Barcelona of the transition to democracy. Or rather, in the Barcelona of *desencanto* (disenchantment, disillusion), because that feeling, which became the name for an entire era, is what gives consistency and force to the novel *El pianista*, no less than to *Un día volveré*, and to that time to which, directly or indirectly, both of them contribute.

In *El pianista*, the 1982 transition to democracy commanded by the triumphal Social Democratic party is portrayed explicitly and extensively as a betrayal. The war and the dictatorship took bread from the mouths of the defeated Republicans, and very nearly took their lives; but the transition, as the novel tells it, ‘robbed [them of] their song.’ The pianist Rosell had a companion, Luis Doria, during his avant-garde days Paris. Luis is a figure that embodies betrayal, because he decided to remain in Paris and subordinate politics to his personal artistic career, which continued to flourish during Francoism and reached its zenith during the democracy, surrounded by the halo of a revolutionary tradition to which others like Rosell were sacrificed.

In Marsé’s case, it seems to me that the false hope placed on the arrival of a possible legendary avenger recounted in *Un día volveré* need not be read as a condemnation of the violent Spanish past and an exaltation of the new democratic times. Rather, I see it as a vindication of a critical space in the present to confront the forgetfulness of past defeats (political, social, cultural) at the hands of Francoism. In this sense, it is possible to understand why in the last paragraph the narrative voice, now an adult, affirms: ‘today we no longer believe in anything, they’re cooking us all in the rotting pot of forgetfulness, because forgetfulness is a strategy of living—although some of us, just in case, still keep our finger on the trigger of memory’ (287).<sup>13</sup>

We have seen that Díez and his writer colleagues who took their inspiration from rural life also faced the destruction and forgetfulness into which the

13 Santos Alonso emphasizes the demystifying aspect of the novel, based on the undoubtedly central issue of the divergence between Jan Julivert’s behavior and what his legend expects of him: ‘that’s why, and herein lies Marsé’s realist lesson, [Jan Julivert] doesn’t enjoy being a myth of political idealism committed to the *barrio*. What’s more, he rejects it, and only aspires, in what remains of his life, to become a person, something that in the novel he achieves through all the realistic characteristics of his personality’ (123). Nevertheless, I insist on the sweeping defense of the capacity to invent stories that runs through the novel (and which doesn’t exclude a clear look at the dangers involved in that invention). With regard to the question of memory, clearly it is not separate from the utopian tension: having ‘one’s finger on the trigger of memory’ assumes the same insurrection in the face of the reality imposed by the powers that be as inventing legends about other possible worlds. To reject the myth, as Alonso suggests, would also be to reject the memory. Rafael Chirbes reflects on these themes in relation to novelistic practice in *El novelista perplejo*: ‘Every era produces its own injustice and needs its own investigation, its own laws,’ he asserts. ‘Walter Benjamin knew that legitimacy lies in the permanence of the resentment of an injustice that was committed in the past, and that the struggle for legitimacy is the struggle to appropriate the injustice of the past’ (35).

peasant cultures were falling due to ‘capitalist progress.’ In the same way, Marsé and those who worried about Republican memory in the early eighties faced the decaffeinated reappropriation that built the triumphant social democracy from that tradition, in the era of *desencanto*. But unlike Díez and colleagues, who wove their program to recuperate those past traditions into the framework of the foundational civic cultures of the transition, Marsé and Montalbán acted more like memory ‘snipers,’ working those subjects on their own in times when they still were far from fashionable. In fact, this would only happen later when, as Chirbes—another of those few pioneer snipers of ‘historical memory’—writes, the PSOE found itself in opposition and decided it was an opportune moment to revitalize those subjects (in a new and unexpected ‘theft of the song’ of the defeated Republicans) to reap electoral ‘profits.’

### 3.3.3. Adaptation of the ‘writer-worker’ to his circumstances

It seems, then, that writers like Marsé, Montalbán, and Francisco Candel, among others, developed their work of reconnecting with working-class cultures and with the Republican tradition from positions that were less porous to nonliterary manifestations of civic cultures of transition. Perhaps this was in part because they belonged to an earlier generation than Díez, Aparicio, and Merino; because of their age, they were already professional writers during Francoism. Thus, they arrived at the transition from a well-defined, specialized place, from a position as more established, recognized fiction writers. This could have meant that they experienced the political and cultural effervescence of the moment differently, including the intense irruption of working-class autonomy in the seventies. One might think this a possible space of affinity for them, but there are not many indications of a connection, or even inspiration.

Marsé, Montalbán, and Candel came, in different ways, to embody a marginal figure that finally earned its place in the literary establishment of the anti-Francoist opposition of the fifties and sixties: the ‘writer-worker.’ This doesn’t mean that their access to publication and to that same establishment was easy in general—it was not by any means—but unlike what happened with ‘provincial’ writers or those inspired by rural life during those final years of the dictatorship, those literary power groups of which Sabino Ordás spoke ended up making a space for them in their rarefied circle.

The biographies of these ‘writer-workers’ are simultaneously atypical and characteristic. They all include new arrivals to fiction writing from unsuspected places, never from a position of the subject agent who sits down to a blank page to say what he wants to say, always from collective flows

of appropriation (or, as de Certeau would say, of 'secondary production') of discourses and symbols used to reproduce a community's universe of meanings.

Marsé began listening to the oral histories of Barcelona's *barrios* when he worked as a commercial distributor, later writing film critiques and letters to a lady friend from which his first novel would emerge. Montalbán soaked up the folk songs and ballads he had heard rural emigrants singing and reciting for their elders, and he combined that heritage with mass culture and 'high culture' in his first poetry. But, at the same time, he earned a living as a journalist writing food articles in sometimes odd magazines like *Hogar Moderno*. In his childhood before the dictatorship, Candel read kiosk novels like those of the anarchist collections 'La Novela Ideal' and 'La Novela Libre,' and Andersen, Salgari, and Verne in the local Republican Library of his neighborhood, 'Casas Baratas,' which, in turn, was completely permeated by the rural orality of Murcian and Andalusian emigrants. Later, as an adolescent he began to write to fill the long hours of his convalescence from tuberculosis.

All these 'writer-workers' gained access to publication, and later to the consecration of precarious and contingent ways. Marsé's mother worked taking care of Paulina Crusat's mother; Crusat was a writer who collaborated in the literary magazine *Ínsula*, and she would help Marsé publish his first stories. Later, Marsé submitted his first novel for the Seix Barral publishing house's prize without knowing anybody. To his great surprise, the 'popes' of the literary left, Carlos Barral and José María Castellet, were interested in the novel, and even more in Marsé himself, as a paradigm of the 'writer-worker' they longed to discover. From then on, they protected him and intervened in his never fully complete integration into the circles of the so-called *gauche divine*. Montalbán, on the other hand, was secretly communist from a very young age, and was one of the 0.07% of children of workers who were able to go to the university at the end of the fifties. He was arrested and jailed when he was 23 years old. When he was released, he worked hand to mouth as a freelance journalist until the *Crónica sentimental* assignment earned him the confidence of the magazine *Triunfo*, a strong institution of the (crypto) anti-Francoist culture. Only later would he attempt fiction writing, devoting himself to his series of crime novels featuring the detective Pepe Carvalho.

Candel's case is perhaps even stranger. Completely lacking contacts or any kind of access to literary circles, he spent years trying to publish his first novel. Later he wrote another one that specifically dealt with young writers ignored by the publishing industry, *Hay una juventud que aguarda*, and submitted it for the Editorial Destino prize. No writer had come from Candel's *barrio* before, but there was a soccer player, Eduardo Machón from

Barça, who hooked Candel up with the famous publisher Janés, of the publishing house Plaza y Janés, whom he knew because Janés was a big soccer fan. Surprisingly, Janés liked Candel's novel precisely because it was controversial in the publishing world, and so he published it. Later, Candel became relatively famous due to his exceptional status as a writer from a marginal *barrio*, notably with his novel *Donde la ciudad cambia su nombre* (1957) and his chronicles on emigration *Los otros catalanes* (1965).

There is an episode in Candel's literary career that is especially illuminating about what it meant to become a 'writer-worker' during Francoism. In the novel that gave him his first taste of popularity, *Donde la ciudad cambia su nombre*, Candel recounted many real anecdotes of events that had happened in his and other working-class *barrios* in the Barcelona suburbs. Candel included himself as a character in these stories, and was so integrated into the narrative flow of oral self-representations of those *barrios* that he wrote so straightforwardly that he even used the real names of all the characters. This made many of those people angry to see themselves exposed this way, because often their actions in the stories left them looking very bad. Candel was the target of hostility and threats that nearly resulted in attempted lynchings. This experience of 'the characters' rebellion' served him, however, as material to write another novel, *¡Dios, la que se armó!* (1964), in which he recounted what had happened, this time with greater nuance and without real names.

This anecdote can be read as a problematic episode of adjustment in the transition from a model of community that collectively satisfies its need for representation, to another in which an individual (an author) arrogates the authority to represent a community, which is hoped to play the role of 'public.' This transition, which, as we have seen, is produced in 'rural' or 'provincial' writers through their professionalization in the publishing market of the democracy, also had to be undergone by these 'writer-workers' in the process of becoming integrated into the elitist, sectarian world of Spanish letters during Francoism. In both cases, in fact, the paradigm that prevails is clearly that of the writer of 'aesthetic modernity' (sometimes known as the 'bourgeois writer') who follows an organizational model of production of (aesthetic) meaning based on the premise that said production acts as an interruption of the common, socially shared meaning, so that it can appear 'singular.'

Artist, work, and public were the three distinct instances in the process of production of aesthetics as understood by this 'modernity' that developed in parallel with industrial capitalism and its disciplined 'community of money.' Remember that this was outlined increasingly as the only possible way to organize social wealth, promoting the production of exchange value that

could be appropriated by isolated individuals instead of the reproduction of the uses necessary for the survival of interdependent communities.

In the Spain of the transition, given the renewed strength of the modernizing, pro-European ideal as a driving social force, both capitalist modernity and aesthetic modernity prevailed decisively, displacing those other possible alternative modernities that might have been constructed in dialogue with the heritage of the rural cultures of survival and popular working-class cultures.

An important form of this displacement occurred through the absorption of elements of those alternative cultures. The aim was to assimilate them into the hegemonic paradigm seen in processes like those just described, by which hybrid figures such as the 'rural writer' or the 'working-class writer' were slowly incorporated into the 'modern' requirements of separation of author, work, and public, and into the primacy of individual production and consumption (of meaning and materiality) as opposed to collective reproduction.

But at the same time, and fundamentally, capitalist modernity and aesthetic modernity (in that particularly 'depoliticized' version which became hegemonic towards the end of Francoism) also held fast through processes of transformation of industrial capitalism into financial and service capitalism. It also took root through the appearance of a creative class of 'authors' and 'artists' who embodied the ideal of aesthetic modernity, like the descendants of the tradition of bourgeois culture that was formed through industrial capitalism in the eighteenth century, but was at the same time adjusted little by little to the exigencies of a culture industry in transition towards the model of neoliberal capitalism that was permeating everything.

In this sense, the transition to democracy produced an extraordinary demand for individuals who could embody the ideal of the modern, cosmopolitan intellectual while now simultaneously producing not only 'works,' as defined by a logic that belonged more to the manufacturing spirit of industrial capitalism, but also 'names' that could function as 'brands,' that is, as immaterial merchandise able to produce tendencies (to provoke desire for what others desire) in the new neoliberal market.

On the other hand, as I will explain in detail in the second part of this book, in a contradictory relationship of continuity and separation relative to the omnipresent commercializing logics of neoliberalism, recent decades have seen the emergence of other forms of production and maintenance of culture that are more reliant on interdependence and collaboration than on the value of the 'big names.' Forged from the convergence of multiple factors, among them the relative democratization of access to technologies of written and audiovisual culture, along with a certain depletion of the

modern models of cultural authority I have been examining, these cultures of collaboration and interdependence have proliferated, mainly in the wake of the neoliberal crisis that began around 2008, partly because their value as possible alternatives to that neoliberal model in crisis has been perceived.

In the following chapters, I will try to draw a map of the emergence in the Spanish state of what we could call ‘cultures of anyone.’ I will draw on the analysis of political processes that have been decisive for their expansion. These include, first, the struggles against the so-called ‘Law Sinde-Wert,’ which seeks to regulate forms of cultural sharing on the Internet, and then, the 15M movement, or the *Indignados*, as well as the subsequent cycle of mobilizations and social and cultural transformations which this movement drove.