

Hard Gelatin.

Hidden Stories from the 80s

It was 1976. Franco had died the previous year and a new political panorama was dawning. Three people were meeting around a table to talk about the first democratic elections to be called. Felipe González, of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español – PSOE), Ramón Tamames, of the Communist Party of Spain (Partido Comunista de España – PCE) and Raúl Morodo, of the People's Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Popular – PSP). The discussion centered on the strength and presence of the left in the political panorama, and on the possibility of a single candidacy which could increase its presence. At one point, Tamames mentioned the risk that a party like PSOE might want to demonstrate its political power and run on its own. Indeed, given that it was the first electoral encounter, González said he thought each party should present its own profile to the public. Later, if necessary, there could be alliances, as electoral approach was different from institutional commitment. The scene is from the film *Informe general* (1976), directed by Pere Portabella. Some months later, the Spanish TV company offered airtime to the parties which were running in the elections which were set to take place on 15 June 1977. For Popular Alliance (Alianza Popular – AP), Manuel Fraga Iribarne, a former minister in Franco's regime, called for careful consideration of the vote: 'Do not vote out of nostalgia, out of resentment, do not vote out of feelings of revenge [...]. See who can give the country security, order, and law [...], face up to the great enemies of Spain, which are Marxism and separatism.' Following this, Carlos Arias

Navarro, who was the last prime minister in Franco's regime, stated: 'Spain finds itself in one of the most dangerous periods that a nation can go through. The alarming deterioration of our economy, the unsustainable situation of public order, the gloomy social perspective, justify the fear that without a rapid and effective remedy we will soon find ourselves in a pre-revolutionary climate with an unpredictable outcome.' The left, which finally was able to take part in political decision-making, fought to define itself ideologically and mark out limits within itself. The right, already working feverishly in governance, stood on fear. In the light of the political circumstances we have lived through over recent years in this country, the discourse and electoral proclamations of the 1970s throw up a symbolic background to the current political and strategic framing which possibly tilts our reading; for sure.

On 15 December 1976, the Political Reform Act (*Ley de Reforma Política*) was put to a referendum: the bill established popular sovereignty as a political right and also the two chambers, elected by universal suffrage, of Congress and Senate; lastly, it allowed the government to start constitutional reform. Shortly after the opening of the exhibition *Hard Gelatin* at MACBA in November 2016, the Sexta television station broadcast a previously unseen clip from an interview carried out in 1995 by the journalist Victoria Prego with the man who was the first prime minister of Spanish democracy, Adolfo Suárez, for the Antena 3 station. The clip in question was caught on camera, but was not included in the resulting programme as it had been assumed that the cameras were not recording at that time. Suárez was explaining that, in the face of international pressure to put the question of monarchy or republic, and in view of opinion polls showing that the first option was losing, the words 'monarchy' and 'king' were included in the text of the Political Reform Act. In this way, it was presented as fact that this option had been subjected to popular consultation. This act was voted through by a large majority of the population. The song which accompanied the campaign to encourage citizens' participation in the referendum was entitled *Habla pueblo, habla* (Speak, people, speak) and in one verse it invited people to do so, 'if you have the desire to erase the marks of rancour...'

To celebrate San Sebastián as 2016 European Capital of Culture, the *1516-2016. Tratados de paz* (1516–2016. Peace Treaties) exhibition¹ wanted to open with a white flag. In popular imagination, the white flag signifies a ceasefire, temporary or permanent, a period when weapons are not used, the end of war, the beginning of peace. This, however, proved extremely problematic for the exhibition, as military museums do not keep or conserve white flags, because in their codes of meaning they symbolise dishonour, surrender, defeat, even disloyalty. From this perspective, which legitimises fighting, hoisting the white flag does not deserve to be remembered and far less extolled, not even mentioned. The paradox which this piece of white cloth represents, the various readings it can prompt, has much to do with the task in which we are now involved. Because that is what this project is about, how symbols are read and hoisted, little pieces of history, words and acts. About how the same piece of white cloth has different meanings depending on by whom, when and how it is read. Far from historicist readings or trying to cover historiographical gaps, *Hard Gelatin*² addresses what the 1980s were, in Spain, and aims to give visibility to some of the symptoms which emerged at that time and confirmed its pathology, but which the hegemonic retelling has obscured. Because *Hard Gelatin* is about clouded stories, those hidden narratives which seem, rather like a conjurer's act, to disappear from view but are still there. It is about unheard stories, giving voice to other tales, but above all raising questions, including asking ourselves why these questions still do not have answers; it's about what lies behind the dominant narratives and how the hegemonic discourses have been articulated, blurring many stories; about how to approach the task of joining up the pieces, complementary and at times counterposed, of a multiple and complex framework; about how we construct memory and how we forget, and what mechanisms produce history. It's about restoring memories, refuting single narratives, being open to voices that are heterogenic, discordant, diverse.

1. Exhibition curated by Pedro G. Romero, Museo de San Telmo and Koldo Mitxelna Kulturenea, San Sebastián, 18 June – 2 October 2016.
2. The title comes from verses in the poem *Soles gemelos* by Eduardo Haro Ibars: '[...] allá tras las montañas de gelatina dura' (... there beyond the mountains of hard gelatin), *Empalador*. Madrid: La Banda de Moebius, 1980.

The construction of the story of the Spanish Transition, the period in which democracy was established and consolidated, was based on a project of reform, defined by

the Spanish Royal Academy (RAE) as 'That which is proposed, projected or executed as an innovation or improvement in something', policies of consensus, exemption from responsibilities, the avoidance of possible destabilising factors for the common good, and the maintenance of a balance which would prevent splits. There were great achievements, of course. But the political advances toward democracy, modernity, internationalisation and the euphoria implicit in all this were to be pieces of a gelatinous façade. The framework would be much more complex, and harder. Hard gelatin. The oxymoron lies in something solid, soft, colourless and transparent, odourless and insipid, but notable for its coherence; the hardness, meanwhile, is that intrinsic quality of something that is resistant to being worked on, which does not lend itself to taking on a new shape, or makes it much more difficult. The soft, easily digestible but apparently coherent way in which the move from dictatorship to democracy and its consolidation was mapped out and described, excluded anything that grated in order to configure the common imaginary of the eighties as pleasant, easy and very palatable. As Bernat Muniesa points out, Franco died 'without cancelling the spirit of the Civil War, and a "victorious" Spain and a "vanquished" Spain lived on. [...] And in the middle, a very broad social body, ignorant, uncertain, disconcerted, but sociologically impregnated with the habits of the long Dictatorship.'³ And the political project which was begun lay in the equation 'Dictatorship + Reform = Democracy'.⁴ 'Those who set out our democratic game were frightened of the spontaneous and uncontrollable politics that the masses might generate once the Francoist cork had been popped, and above all have tried to channel political action through the most conventional mechanisms. They have engineered a reproduction of a constituent process and formal democratic procedures which divide political attributes into two drastically delimited territories: those who celebrate Mass and those who attend Mass, those who do politics and those who express their assent or dissent every four years through their vote. It is not enough to re-educate depoliticised masses and too little to compensate the political, economic and social frustrations aggravated by a time of crisis.'⁵ The forgetting,

3. Bernat Muniesa, *Dictadura y monarquía en España. De 1939 hasta la actualidad*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1996, p. 153.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

5. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, 'Estado de la cuestión, cuestión de Estado', *La Calle*, no. 6, 2 May 1978, pp. 14–15, in *Obra periodística, 1974–1986*, vol. II: *Del humor al desencanto*. Barcelona: Debate, 2011, p. 191.

amnesia, poor memory and silence – the *Homologated Silence* to which the work of Federico Guzmán alludes –, which still endure in our historical present, force us to weave a cartography transcending the simplification that has in many cases marked the story of the Transition. Ortega said that in teaching, one should teach to doubt what is being taught. Perhaps there is space to rethink a project which defined itself as model, and drew good dividends out of the dangers any destabilising factor might entail.

Hard Gelatin debates the past from the present, and aims to let transversal stories be seen.⁶ It is not set up as a chronologically sequenced story, nor one with historical continuity. Rather, it goes beyond the limits of discussing a decade: it begins in the mid-seventies, when a number of pacts, negotiations, attacks and various happenings occurred, prefiguring the social, economic and political panorama of the country in the years to come; and it continues to the beginning of the nineties, when the huge celebratory events of 1992, with which we will concern ourselves later, determine, together with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in the same year, the culmination of the process of modernisation and internationalisation of the country, which marked the route map of the eighties. *Hard Gelatin* puts forward possible stories which cut across each other, which emerge and configure a complex cartography, full of nuance, which problematises not only the hegemonic story but is a way to understand how it is built, what it avoids or misshapes. In the words of Max Estrella, one of the characters in *Luces de bohemia* (Bohemian Lights): 'The tragic sense of Spanish life can be rendered only through an aesthetic that is systematically deformed [...]. Spain is a grotesque deformation of European civilisation.' There is something nonsensical, even absurd and almost grotesque, in the fact that a sequence in Fernando Ruiz de Vergara's documentary *Rocío* (1979) can be censored in a democracy at a time when some mem-

6. The titles of the various parts (*Forgotten memory, Blind spots, From blue overalls to white collars, In the neighbourhood of my dreams, Beautiful losers, Stolen words, Gaseous state*) of the exhibition are drawn from a number of publications about this period, as a kind of licence, without making direct reference to the content expressed in the book from which the title is taken.

bers of the community still remember the repression carried out by the rebels and the murder of a hundred people in Almonte in 1936, and which even now cannot be seen in its entirety. Or that in 1979 the journalist Xavier Vinader could

be found guilty following the publication of reports in the magazine *Interviú* in which he was investigating links between the police and extreme-right groups operating against the Basque independence movement: two of the ultra-right-wingers named in his articles were murdered by ETA and he was found guilty of 'criminal professional negligence'. In this case, the judiciary acted against the person who uncovered the conspiracy rather than those responsible for it.

Back in 1978, Vázquez Montalbán said that the democracy which was being built rested 'on a *correlation of weaknesses*, rather than a correlation of strengths' with the 'backing of a social majority convinced that it is necessary to go through the servitudes of a period of transition', which he classed as *politically culpable ostrichism* by 'insisting we believe that *what is possible* has been and is being done'.⁷ An exercise that was also coloured by lack of memory and forgetting. The country's modernisation had certain aspects of concealment, of painting over a society perhaps not able to face up to its dark areas and contradictions, or perhaps preferring not to. Lack of ability or will not to generate alternative stories, nor to carry out an exercise in refuting the past, in this case our own recent history. On 22 August 1979, the editorial of *El País* entitled 'Reform, Break-up and Symbols' reflected on the first few years after the Dictatorship and the 'peaceful and gradual' movement toward a parliamentary monarchy, led by 'professional politicians from the previous system, who acquired their skills and abilities in the service of a power which denied, in theory and in practice, the liberties and rights of our current constitutional democracy'. The silenced and persistently uncomfortable memory about the limits drawn in what came to be called the Transition, whose imaginary would culminate in the Spanish TVE station series directed by Victoria Prego and broadcast between July and October 1995. The TVE programme claimed to be an objective and true telling of a period of upheaval, by means of the official narratives which reinforced the discourse of political stability in the democratisation and social cohesion process. Between 1996 and 1997, Marcelo Expósito, Fito Rodríguez and Gabriel Villota decided to assemble a countermodel to the television series in the film *No haber olvidado nada* (Not having forgotten anything), which introduced a criti-

7. Vázquez Montalbán, *Obra periodística*, p.192.

cal and subversive twist in the 'mythological writing of the transition' in our mass culture and our collective imaginary. Their offering refuted institutional narratives, in a project in which art became an instrument of recovery of what had been left out. For this, they made use of some of the material compiled by sister and brother Cecilia and José Bartolomé in *Después de...* (After... 1979–80), a film in two parts which take their titles from phrases spoken by Franco: *No se os puede dejar solos* (You cannot be left alone) and *Atado y bien atado* (Tied up and well tied up). The latter comes from a broadcast of 30 December 1969, supervised by the then director of TVE, Adolfo Suárez. The task of the historian reminds one of that of the film-maker, as Expósito points out; a task of montage: 'It consists of privileging some images and stories at the time of constructing narratives which are never innocent because they look to intervene in the present.'¹⁸

It is thus about impugning a sustained denial in collective memory, that *forgotten memory*,⁹ a denial that had orbited in the dissolution of the immediate past, turning the page after the end of the Dictatorship. If official narratives reinforced the discourse of political stability in the Transition and consolidated democracy, some voices read it as an exercise in antihistory and counterinformation against the liberating catharsis which Vázquez Montalbán¹⁰ called for, between humour and disenchantment. The recovery of collective memory and the questioning of the violence of political silences, in this case one of the most flagrant and ominous silences to which the victims of Francoism were subjected, was the focus of research carried out by Francesc Abad in his work *El Camp de la Bota* (2004) about the shooting of 1,704 people by the Franco dictatorship, between 1939 and 1952, in this old neighbourhood in Barcelona, a place which was to be chosen as the site of the Fòrum de les Cultures in 2004.

8. Text on the video *Octubre en el norte: temporal de noroeste* (October in the north; storm from the north-east), May 2009.

9. The term is taken from the poetry anthology by Félix Francisco Casanova, *La memoria olvidada: poesía 1973–1976*. Olózaga: Hiperión, 1990.

10. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, 'Si Franco viviera' (If Franco were alive), *Mundo diario*, 28 May 1977, p. 4, in *Obra periodística*, p. 157.

If it was opening up a reflection on the uses of culture and the transformation of public spaces, it also had a bearing on the recuperation of historical memory, a conflictive historical memory which remains uncomfortable today. The democracy agreed in the Transition, as

evidenced by Alán Carrasco in his project *Resiliencias* (2016), served as a mechanism for the reabsorption of some of the holders of high office in the Franco regime who emerged unscathed and maintained their positions of power. But in his work, Carrasco also incorporates a study which contradicts, according to the artist, the supposedly peaceful character and agreed process of the Transition: a list bearing the names of those who died as a result of torture, political repression, 'simple police triggers', and another with the names of those murdered by the ultra-right and/or State terrorism. What is certain is that there was a lot of violence in the years following Franco's death, carried out by the extreme left and the extreme right. ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Basque Country and Liberty), GRAPO (Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre, 1 October antifascist resistance groups), FRAP (Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota, Antifascist and patriotic revolutionary groups), Terra Lliure (Free Land), the Guerrilleros de Cristo Rey (Fighters of Christ the king), the Triple A (Alianza Apostólica Anticomunista, Apostolic anti-communist alliance), GAE (Grupos Armados Españoles, Armed Spanish groups), the Batallón Vasco Español (Spanish Basque battalion) are some of the groups who were active in those years, and in some cases continued their activities for longer. In 1997, Tino Calabuig directed the film *Lunes negro, Atocha 55*, about the massacre committed on 24 January 1977 in the offices of labour lawyers for the trade union Comisiones Obreras (Workers' commissions) and clandestine militants of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) who were based at number 55 calle Atocha, in the very centre of Madrid. Five people died and four others were wounded and 'survived'. The perpetrators of the attack were hired killers connected to the Sindicato Vertical de Transporte (Vertical transport union), which still maintained control over the sector and was linked to the extreme right of Fuerza Nueva. At the time, the lawyers' practice was advising striking transport workers, against a background of severe labour conflict. The then still-illegal PCE were to take charge of guaranteeing order at the victims' funerals, although shortly afterwards they were legalised. Some voices see the violence of the extremes as a reason to fortify moderated policies. 'Contrary to what the official version has tended to demonstrate that thanks to the responsibility of the Spanish people extremist violence was isolated, which is the official version of the Transition, some of us

maintain that it was the opposite: that it was thanks to violence, largely artificially generated on the extremes, that the Spanish population were drawn to the centre.’¹¹ The Scala case ended up dismantling the influence of the anarchist union CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo [National work confederation]), which had increased its involvement in the labour world, and its role as an axis in libertarian activism, organising strikes such as those of Roca or fuel stations (which Video-Nou were to follow), among others. CNT would reach its peak with the rally in Montjuïc on 2 July 1977, where according to CNT 300,000 people attended, and the International Libertarian Conference the same year, held in the Saló Diana and Parc Güell in Barcelona. On 15 January 1978, CNT organised a demonstration against the economic agreements reached at the Moncloa Pacts, during which Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Scala night club in Barcelona, causing a fire in which four workers died, three of them affiliates of the CNT itself. Several members of the union were arrested and charged, in a quick and irregular judicial process. This case constituted a turning point for the anarcho-unionist and libertarian movement, and brought about the end of the major growth which CNT had maintained up to that point. The linking of CNT to the attack not only weakened its position, but also neutralised the rise of libertarianism which was of concern to a significant segment of those in political power.

There were many *ángulos ciegos* (blind spots)¹² over the years when the demands of the citizenry, the desire for freedom, the fight for civil rights and changes to legislation made the streets into a bubbling space. The fights of autonomous groups, some previously clandestine and others

formed under the auspices of the new democracy, shared a need for renewal and change which was articulated through very diverse movements: workers’ movements, student movements in the universities, political and union groups and legal action by political and social prisoners; the feminist movements, which demanded modifications to

11. Declarations by Ernesto Milá, writer and political activist, in the documentary *El Paps. Anatomía de un atentado*, produced by David Fernández de Castro, TV3-TVE, 2010, 36’ 40”. On this subject, see also Mariano Sánchez Soler, *La transición sangrienta: una historia violenta del proceso democrático en España (1975–1983)*. Barcelona: Península, 2010.
12. The term is taken from the book by Alejandro Ruiz-Huerta Carbonell, *Los ángulos ciegos. Una perspectiva crítica de la transición española*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva–Fundación Ortega y Gasset, 2009.

the Civil Code with regard to laws that exclusively affected and differentiated against women, the right to the use of contraception and abortion; protests against NATO, conscientious objector movements; ecological groups and antinuclear positions, a myriad of demands and needs. The new democratic institutions progressively absorbed some of the pushes by autonomous groups and moved power towards centrality, towards what Vázquez Montalbán called 'the utilitarian conscience of the agreed State'.¹³ A State which, however, condoned laws such as the Social Danger Law. Successor to the Vagrants and Criminals Law and passed in August 1970, like its predecessor it penalised behaviour rather than actual crimes. Included among such 'dangers' were vagrants and habitual ruffians; homosexual acts; the exhibition, trafficking or defence of pornography; prostitution; beggars and habitual drunks; drug addiction and the trafficking and taking of drugs; morally perverted minors under 21 abandoned by their family, and the mentally ill or handicapped who might represent a risk to the community. It did not include penalties but means of removal, control and retention – such as internment in custody or re-education centres – or arrest. It allowed the re-imprisonment of prisoners who, having been released, could not find work, and made no provision for sentence reduction through work, suspended sentences, pardons or amnesty. In 1974 and 1978, some of these dangerous positions regarding homosexuality were abolished, and the law was partially revoked in 1989 and finally repealed in 1995.

In this context, the case of Video-Nou is interesting: this interdisciplinary group was established in Barcelona in 1977 in the context of the counterculture and the democratic struggles of a time which sought decentralisation of power and the strengthening of social autonomy. The collective came into being out of the 7th International Video Meeting, organised by CAYC (Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Art and communication centre) at the Fundació Joan Miró. Using what was then a novel technical medium, portable video cameras, Video-Nou produced more than thirty contributions including actions of sociological video/social participation video, documentaries, alternative information routes, and works in artistic, educational and professional fields. Two years after its appearance, it became the Servei de Vídeo Co-

13. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, '¿Qué es España?' *El País*, 23 February 1984, pp. 9–10. In *Obra periodística*, p. 354.

munitari, with the aim of spreading and promoting the use of video as a means of communication and social, educational and informative dynamism about community life. Video-Nou/Servei de Vídeo Comunitari aimed to strengthen disseminating networks and reinforce the communities in which it operated, developing the reappropriation of their mediating and self-representational instruments. It disappeared in the face of the new process of democratic institutionalisation and the emerging centralising policies of social planning with the ending of the Barcelona City Council's support, framed by the forced and agreed withdrawal of popular protagonism in favour of the new legitimate channels personified by unions and political parties. Among its works, the coverage of the International Libertarian Conference, the petrol station strike, the neighbour responses in Can Serra and the underground scene stand out, although its brief was very wide and it became a fundamental counterinformative instrument.

The Preiswert Arbeitskollegen (Sociedad de Trabajo No Alienado) collective, born in Madrid, was formed as a movement of the masses whose aim was to take back channels of communication through minimum, easy and cheap formulas of intervention in public spaces which would give rise throughout society to a contagious activity of reappropriation of these channels and languages. Between 1990 and 2000, they used the photocopied image, stencilled texts and subtly distorted advertising hoardings. Through a strategy of occupying public spaces, they aimed to reclassify communication systems, artistic genres, and also objects of use or consumption. We, however, are especially interested in the collective's interventions that referred to the GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación [Antiterrorist liberation groups]). The GAL were parapolice groups who carried out State terrorism between 1983 and 1989, during Felipe González's first socialist governments, financed by the Ministry of the Interior. The 'El silencio de Amedo está sobrevalorado' (Amedo's silence is overrated) and 'Ración de Estado' (State portion) graffiti, and the 'El que traga un hueso...' (He who swallows a bone...) painting about the kidnapping and subsequent murder of José Antonio Lasa and José Ignacio Zabala in October 1983 have a bearing on the perversion of the system itself, when terrorism is fought against by State terrorism. It was judge Baltasar Garzón who proved that Subcomissioner Amedo's journeys were

paid for with secret State funds and were official in nature. Amedo and Inspector Domínguez were convicted, but the GAL's hierarchy in the Ministry of the Interior was not established, and thus nobody further up the chain of command was prosecuted. It is perhaps one of the most relevant cases wherein the system upsets itself, in this case losing its legitimacy.

The establishment of democracy had a determining factor: the alarming economic situation. 'The installation of democracy was brought about in Spain, once again, at a juncture of international economic instability caused by the energy crisis, artificially triggered in 1973–74 by the confluence of interests between the big oil corporations and the producing countries. The same happened to the Second Republic in 1931, established during the economic backlash that foreshadowed the Second World War.'¹⁴ The price of oil had gone up overwhelmingly, the trade deficit had accumulated, unemployment had risen and inflation was at stratospheric levels. At the beginning of 1977, the then prime ministerial candidate for Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD [Centre Democratic Union]) Adolfo Suárez (who was to hold this post from then until 1981) stated: 'I can promise and I do promise [...] to dedicate every effort to achieving a social understanding which allows the setting of the new basic steps the Spanish economy must follow in the years to come.'¹⁵ The Moncloa Pacts, signed on 25 October 1977, were aimed at resolving this issue. The State agreement was signed by all the political parties¹⁶ and unions, with the exception of CNT, with the objective of stabilising the Transition process and containing inflation, which, in the eighties, would also bring about

the dissolution of organised workers' struggles and the absorption of part of the mid-level industrial employees, among others, into civil servant posts being created in the new government departments and autonomous regions. The economic measures were accompanied by free dismissal and limits on pay increases, among other things. The economic policies developed as a

14. Bernat Muniesa, *Dictadura y Transición. La España lampedusiana*, vol. II: *La monarquía parlamentaria*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2005, p. 148.
15. Speech on 3 June 1977. In the 1977 film by Llorenç Soler *Votad, votad, malditos* [Vote, vote, wretches].
16. Curiously, the political agreements with legal standing incorporated in these pacts, including the right to union and association and the reform of the Civil Code, were not signed up to by Manuel Fraga as representative of Alianza Popular (Popular Alliance), as he considered that it was not yet time for these measures to be included.

result of the 1977 economic agreements contributed to the demobilisation of the working classes. Vázquez Montalbán warned: 'The economic crisis is a serious factor in social disintegration, more serious than ideologies.'¹⁷ But this would be the first stage in a series of measures which would lead to the move *del mono azul al cuello blanco* (from blue overall to white collar).¹⁸

When Felipe González came to power in 1982 he was to classify the situation of deterioration in the country's industry as 'necrosis'. Among the proposals in his electoral campaign of 1982, he had promised 800,000 jobs although later, as prime minister in the state of the nation debate in September 1984, he had to admit this had been an error: 'The global situation and investor reluctance do not allow it.' The socialist government gave precedence to economic policies which were gradually adjusted to neoliberalism. Industrial reconversion and the dismantling of industry, which was to affect especially the shipbuilding and steel sectors, would also be determined by entry into the European Economic Community in 1986, which was to limit the production capacity of other sectors and would lead to the tertiarisation of the economy. In a statement to *El País* on 3 December 1983, Felipe González said that industrial reconversion was fundamental in bringing the country up to date in respect of Europe. 'Clearly these changes in this policy are going to be difficult in the short term, but what European country hasn't already gone through them?' The economic questions of those years had for some time also brought about migratory policies to European countries with better work prospects, as María Ruido records in *La memoria interior* (2002), where she develops personal experience, activating political players

17. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, '¿Qué es España?', *El País*, 23 February 1984, pp. 9–10. In *Obra periodística*, p. 355.

18. The term is taken from the exhibition *Del mono azul al cuello blanco. Transformación social y práctica artística en la era posindustrial*, curated by José Luis Pérez Pont and organised by the Consorci de Museus de la Comunitat Valenciana and the Secretaria Autònica de Cultura de la Generalitat Valenciana, and presented at the Lonja del Pescado in Alicante, 29 July – 1 September 2003.

as mechanisms for the production of memory; or as evidenced by the photographs taken by Colita of workers waiting at the railway station on their way to the French grape harvest.

In the sixties, a large part of the population had moved away

from rural areas to the cities, on the periphery of which new neighbourhoods converted into dormitory towns sprung up, often with very poor standards of construction and habitability, and with many lacking community services. Some Video-Nou documentaries highlighted the residents' concerns in neighbourhoods such as Can Serra or Canyelles in Barcelona. Magazines like *Ajoblanco* or comics like *Butifarra!* echoed how far away that *barrio de mis sueños* (neighbourhood of my dreams) lay.¹⁹ In *Arquitecturas prematuras*, a series of architectural projects developed by Isidoro Valcárcel between 1984 and 1992, various proposals for buildings and urban interventions put forward attempts towards a possible disengagement between the logic and use of building and the logic of construction in public space: 'Okupa y resiste' (Occupy and resist), 'Aparcamiento universal' (Universal car park), 'Edificio torpe de oficinas' (Clumsy office building), 'Museo de la ruina' (Museum of ruin) and 'Cárcel del pueblo' (People's prison). The social and cultural contamination of ideas which in this instance are expressed architecturally, but which could be done in another language, implicitly contain a criticism of the usability and the very origin of their necessity. In fact, the logic of *use* of the city at that time brings about a process of transformation which is embarked upon under the cover of projects for the future, the great celebratory events of 1992: Madrid European Capital of Culture, the Universal Exposition in Seville, the hosting of the Olympic Games in Barcelona and the commemoration of the fifth centenary of the discovery of America. Events of differing scope and success, which attracted large budgets, promoted urban plans and new structures of inconsistent use and irregular duration. City turned into spectacle, transformed by *coup de théâtre*, wrapped up in big speculative operations with a political propaganda background: the destination city conceived as a tourist shop window, epicentre of Muntadas' work, or Rogelio López Cuenca's *Sin ir más lejos* (Without going further) posters for public spaces.

Against the setting of triumphalism and the push for a Europe united economically, and the oversized Spain which had its epicentre in the annals of 1992, Isaías Griñol and Angustias García created *Habita-*

19. From the title of the book by Christian Louis, *Sábado noche en el barrio de mis sueños*. Barcelona: Producciones Editoriales-Star-books, 1979, with a cover by Alberto Alix.

ción Europa, walls constructed with handmade bricks covered in that year's newspapers featuring stories about the social, political and economic situation of the time, and showed the contradictions and frailties of those great ideals and conflicting visions. Adrià Trescents, an instructor at the religious La Salle school, daily recorded opposing, even antagonistic, realities in his sociological work in marginalised areas of Barcelona. Between 1975 and 2006, he produced a meticulous everyday story through very highly detailed diaries, correspondence and research by way of journeys through the lives of those of the city's inhabitants in a situation of social exclusion. It records the crime, prostitution, prison life, poverty, drugs and the situations of conflict which make up another side of the city and its inhabitants, its *beautiful losers*.²⁰ Heroin caused havoc in the eighties. If the taking of hallucinogenic drugs in the seventies was mainly due to a desire to experiment, expand reality and go beyond the boundaries of the system, the impact of heroin decimated a generation of young people who, maybe through disconnection or disenchantment, fell gradually into dependence on the drug without knowing its consequences, and it ended up killing hand in hand with the AIDS pandemic. AIDS, which arrived quickly but was known about late, was demonised because it attacked 'druggies' and homosexuals and it took a long time for it to find its place in the public consciousness and in the need to research and make medical treatment accessible. The film *Morir de día*, directed in 2010 by Laia Manresa and Sergi Dias, based on a project started with Joaquim Jordà before his death, tells of the Transition years through the arrival of heroin in the Barcelona of the eighties. This documentary follows a path from initial consumption to addiction and self-destruction through four well-known personalities in cultural life: Mercè Pastor, the partner of the singer Pau Riba; Pau Maragall, a member of the Video-Nou collective and author of 'Nosotros los malditos' (We the damned), a series of articles on Barcelona's underground published in *Star* magazine under the name of Pau Malvido; the cartoonist and writer Juanjo Voltas; and Pepe Sales, painter, poet and cofounder of the group Bocanegra, for whom he did the drawing for the cover of their record, transforming the map of Barcelona into the black mouth

20. The term is taken from the title of the novel by Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*. Canada: McClelland & Stewart, 1966. Eduardo Haro Ibars uses it as the title of a chapter in his book *De qué van las drogas*. Madrid: Las Ediciones de la Piqueta, 1978.

of a wild animal. The film tells the story of the drug's emergence and opens up questions as to the increase in consumption in urban areas, socially marginalised groups and prisons.

Mar Villaespesa analysed the Spanish artistic scene of the eighties as a reflection of the political and social reality of the country, highlighting the static structure parallel to the power which over the previous forty years had avoided critical and neutralised thought of the present as a possibility for action.²¹ The euphoria for the recent democracy at the beginning of the eighties dismantled, however, a project for the future which differed from the consensuated Transition. After the UCD's years in government, in the 1982 general elections the PSOE were to win an absolute majority. The new politics reinforced the propaganda work of culture. In the electoral campaign for the first general election held in democracy, in 1977, the leader of the PSOE, Felipe González, included among his programme's proposals the responsibility of his party towards culture: 'There is a promise of defence of an egalitarian culture, which reaches everybody, absolutely to the entire people. [...] Without any kind of demagoguery.'²² If the talk in 1977 was of egalitarian access to culture, from 1982 onwards culture was used as an instrument to promote the government and the country, with large doses of populism. How could one not remember the then mayor of Madrid, the 'Old Professor' Tierno Galván, when at a concert in 1984, dressed in an impeccable suit, he stirred up the audience with the proclamation: 'Rockers, anyone who's not high, get high, and watch out!' Quite the symbol of modernity. Culture understood as a celebratory, festive act, largely best manifested in the Madrid *movida*, was still an instrumentalised form which offered the image of a country with an active, dynamic, fashionable youth, of a country which had got over a grey stage and was looking to the future with creative designs, with an apparent energy for renewal and a good dose of innocuousness in artistic practice. If, up to that point, the country had been characterised by a lack of cultural institutions promoting art and contemporary creation, it looked to compensate for this through grants for creativity, spaces for young art, large-scale facilities such as the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte

21. Mar Villaespesa, 'Síndrome de mayoría absoluta', *Arena*, no. 1, February 1989.

22. See the film by Llorenç Soler, *Votad, votad, malditos*, 1977.

Reina Sofia (MNCARS) or the project for the future Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the setting up of the ARCO art fair in 1982, festivals and many other events.

If on one hand culture was organised as a political and commercial instrument, on the other we must also discuss the exercises in subversion and critical reformulation of cultural practices themselves, *las letras arrebatadas* (the snatched words),²³ out of which many dissenting voices emerged questioning this situation. Anti-artistic and anti-institutional positionings also came to the surface as exercises in the rejection of a system which pursued convention and the spectacular. Provocation, insult, irony and pornography are some of the key features in the work of the Taller Llundàtic, which emerged in the mid seventies in Mallorca and is still active today. Over the years, its membership has seen changes, but Bartomeu Cabot and Josep Albertí have been there from the beginning. Their actions, plastic works, publications, protests and textual interventions advocate the transgressing of conventional languages, rebel in the face of traditions, against conformism and act out of dissidence to the system and any attempt at order. Meanwhile, the Super 8 films shot by the group of amateur film-makers Els 5 QK's between 1975 and 1986 made 'the queer' the leading hero, breaking the social, religious and political conventionalism of the day. They were characterised by a criticism of machismo as a manifestation of the dominating cultural patriarchy, setting out a discourse about homosexuality based on humour, the breaking up of sexual and gender categories, criticism of mass media and the reappropriation of elements of popular culture. Some of these acts were more disruptive than others, more self-satisfying and not without a certain arrogance, as Mar Villaespesa points out, displays which certainly received replies. In 1984, Rafael Sánchez Ferlioso published 'Culture, that government invention', an article which deserves to be read without missing a line, which gave no credit to the surrounding vacuousness and denounced a degenerative and reductive conception of culture, the so-called 'cultural promotion', identified with the adoption of economic forms of advertising.²⁴ Politics, in his opinion, had reduced culture to a mere window

23. The term comes from Germán Labrador Méndez, *Letras arrebatadas. Poesía y química en la Transición española*. Torrejón de la Calzada: Juan Pastor, 2009.

24. *El País*, 22 November 1984.

display and populism, disabling its intrinsic capacity for criticism. Here, culture created what Dionisio Cañas called 'thought moulds'. And we are not only interested in this distorted side to officialised culture, its flipside; we are also interested in the values of a society which is capable of enjoying itself within it: 'Since then, the ethical values of the political class and civil responsibilities are a subject of debate in the national press', writes Villaespesa in 1991 in *El sueño imperativo*.

History is never complete, it can't be. But it can let its multiple faces emerge, show the complex weaving of the stories it comprises, and allow these to question it, make it uncomfortable, disturb it. It is necessary to understand the historical process of development of our recent past, our present, out of the unease which certainties impose and necessary doubt, which can do nothing but reinforce a history which will never be understandable univocally. Our thinking can start out from a resignification of democracy, as Marina Garcés proposes, without this causing its meaning to be demolished. Rethinking, reconsidering critically, is an act of strengthening. Questioning how the narratives of history are organised allows us to also rethink the present, and these are sometimes exercises tinged with difficulty, with pain, and at other times they can be pleasant diversions, but in no way are they futile pretensions. We have dealt with some of the narratives about the eighties, but there are many more to analyse, impugn and construct. The visual representations of historical and political space, the role which art, culture, plays, how its relationship with power is articulated and how it is reformulated with the passage of time are some of the questions which result and go beyond the stories in *Hard Gelatin*. Many of them bear the mark of an era, others however have the seal of José Bergamín's 'What remains of Spain is not its past, nor what has happened in it, but what is always happening in it.' A happening criss-crossed with lucidity and caustic humour, characteristic in this somewhat nonsensical country, and which Dionisio Cañas echoes in 1993, in the coda to our project, in *Algunas propuestas impertinentes para reconstruir España* (Some impertinent proposals to rebuild Spain):²⁵ 'Change Spain's name to a number (2,000, for example); change all flags to one single flag (for example a green cloth with white polka dots); get rid of all

25. Dionisio Cañas, 'España (h)echa polvo'.
El Europeo, no. 44, Winter 1993, p. 10.

political parties and choose people who have, in some way, demonstrated their efficiency in some speciality in the post for which they run (economy, security, etc.); decentralise all powers that can be connected by computers, and for these powers not to be in big cities; empty all cities of cars and inhabitants and leave them as monuments to our failure, dedicated only to cultural activities; allow the aristocracy, the Church and the army to retire with dignity to play their games in their little houses; legalise all drugs so that everyone can go to hell however they like; ban all car adverts; teach people to criticise themselves before they criticise others; introduce a 90% tax on anyone who has more than one house, one car and decent means, depending on how the economy goes; do away with all taxes on workers and the poorest; get the phone company to work; change public toilets so when you use the bowl you don't have to use the plastic brush to clean the shit off; make small hospitals, small museums, small cultural centres, small sports grounds, so that people have somewhere near their home to go to, not just in capitals; remove all news stories about political order from the front pages of newspapers; get everyone who takes on a public post to understand that they are in that post to serve us, not for us to serve them...' Hard gelatin!

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