

**DEMOCRACY IN TRANSICIÓN:
POLITICS, MELODRAMA, HISTORY**

by

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Politics and Culture

On October 30th, 1975 Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón took over as head of state.¹ Francisco Franco was near death with peritonitis, lingering on hidden from view, which encouraged the question of whether he was even still alive. But he was, only barely, and by the grace of God held on long enough to die on the same day, November 20th, as José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the fascist Falange and son of Miguel Primo de Rivera, the military dictator in power until a year before the foundation of the 2nd Republic.² Together these figureheads of Spanish fascism and authoritarianism would be buried in the subterranean basilica in the Valley of the Fallen, a site consecrated with the bodies of *la Patria's* most diligent and dutiful defenders. Imagine: a towering cross over 500 feet tall on top of a majestic mountain, an esplanade just below, which every November 20th could be filled with thousands of dedicatees looking down upon the majesty of the land and up above to the heavens, who could file in passing through the

¹ See Paul Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 313. He would officially be proclaimed King of Spain on November 22nd. Juan Carlos had briefly assumed powers of state before, in the summer of 1974, when Franco was hospitalized for phlebitis, though this lasted less than two weeks. See Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London; New York: Methuen, 1986), 63.

² For more on the conjunction of these two figures, and an exploration of how Falangist fascism differed from or was similar to Francoism, see Stanley G. Payne, *Franco y José Antonio, el extraño caso del fascismo español: historia de la Falange y del movimiento nacional (1923-1977)* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1997).

almost infinite corridor replete with religious tapestries and military arms, then enter into the muted and shadowed nave to stand in front of these heroes' tombs and celebrate at once both God and his earthly gifts of leadership and salvation.

That such celebrants might carry out the task to keep Spain fixed upon the path blazed by Franco and Primo de Rivera *films* was the wish motivating the heroic pomp and grandeur celebrating Franco's place in Spanish history following his death. Yet, no matter how much mythologizing might be made of this date, or how much medical effort had been expended if doctors had truly kept his catatonic body alive to make the date, it was hard to ignore that on November 20th something had changed. Even those who desired that nothing would change would be hard pressed not to admit that with Franco's death came the end of an era. A new era was announced, not only by King Juan Carlos's address on November 22nd to Parliament proclaiming his succession to the throne, but also by the substantial surge in the value of shares on the Madrid stock exchange leading up to Franco's death, which followed the sharp decline experienced earlier in the year after the harsh repression and executions meted out by the regime: the new present of a constitutional monarchy and a free market economy.³

With an ending, of course, there is always a beginning, or as Slavoj Zizek likes to point out often, quoting Schelling, "the beginning is the negation of that which begins with it."⁴ In this case, the beginning would be the process of moving away from Francoism, the negation of which was imagined as a democratic State and society, while keeping intact the economic foundation of capitalism developed under the regime, now to

³ Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, 74-75.

⁴ Slavoj Zizek, "From History and Class Consciousness to the Dialectic of Enlightenment...and Back," *New German Critique* 81 (Autumn, 2000): 109.

be deepened. After a series of stumbles, all part of a struggle between the holds of the past and clamors for a new present, a democracy would be firmly established by the end of the *transición*. This transition from dictatorship to democracy, 1975-1982, signified a historical turn when, using terminology provided by Cornelius Castoriadis, “new social imaginary significations” of and for Spain—the nation, the people, the place—were posited and articulated. The *transición* was a historical movement towards developing and filling out these social imaginary significations, a process to

bring into being a world in which this society inscribes itself and gives itself a place...[and] constitutes a system of norms, institutions in the broadest sense of the term, values, orientations, and goals of collective life as well as individual life.⁵

That is, the *transición* can be understood as a process of bringing into being a new society after the end of the Francoist regime, a new society both in terms of interpersonal relations and relations between the State and citizen, and in the values and norms that it would both promote and allow.

The *transición* began at a historical juncture when there were demands for a new society by the majority of the left, and an acknowledgement by the majority of the right that Francoism as such had reached its end, which was made clear by the ‘rupturist’ and ‘reformist’ political projects being proposed from the beginning, while the more radical demands of ‘revolution’ or ‘continuation’ were banished from the political domain by leaders from both sides.⁶ Both the leading opposition party, the socialist Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), and the majority party, the moderate right Unión de

⁵ Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 84.

⁶ Álvaro Soto Carmona, *Transición y cambio en España, 1975-1996* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), 52-57.

Centro Democrático (UCD) who held onto power until the PSOE's victory in 1982, worked together to cement the new State and society as a democracy. But what is meant by a 'transition from dictatorship to democracy': to a liberal democracy, a democratic society, or is it possibly something else all together?

Does democracy signify an eventual reconciliation of societal divisions, which were deep given Spain's not so distant past that included a civil war and a vicious regime, to be accomplished by means of a politics of consensus at the level of the State? Or, is democracy instead a constant rupture of the contingent social order imposed by the State, an emancipation of those excluded now to be included as parts of the whole? Another way of asking this is: Should democracy be conceived of as a 'modern' idea that entails an eventual end to antagonism after a long history, a universality achieved through progress? Or, might it make more sense to think of democracy as a result of social space always being in flux because of the sheer contingency of how the *demos* is imagined and constructed, which makes progress a moot point because there is no final end to be achieved, a 'post-modern' idea?

I use 'modern' in the sense that an argument is made for a universal idea of democracy promising freedom and equality to all, given that everyone is recognized by the other and all are able to participate. One example of this is Jürgen Habermas's idea of "communicative reason" which "makes itself felt in the binding force of intersubjective understanding and reciprocal recognition [that] circumscribes the universe of a common form of life."⁷ There is a reconciliation and a recognition possible, if reasonable discourse provides the means by which subjects understand and acknowledge each other and a

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 324.

deliberative politics works to circumscribe them together through consensus, which requires State institutions to mediate differences. ‘Modern’ political theory is an extension of the Enlightenment categories of universality and autonomy, an understanding of politics as rational debate to realize individual freedom and collective equality.

I use the term ‘post-modern’ in the sense that there is an argument made in favor of the particular, a society of parts that are never made whole except as contingency or in bad faith, which follows and disavows the possibility of a ‘modern’ universality. An example of this (though he might disagree with my labeling of his political theory as ‘post-modern’ even with the use of a hyphen to distinguish it from ‘postmodern’), is Alain Badiou’s notion of democracy as “the always singular adjustment of freedom and equality” wherein “the State is put at a distance” and whereby “in the distance thus created, the political function is applied” to treat each and every singularity identically.⁸ This does not require the disappearance of particularity into universality, rather it involves a continual readjustment to ensure an egalitarian consideration of non-resolvable divisions in the public sphere. Such activity happens at a distance from “the consensual figures of the State” because the State only manages to diffuse difference through consensus, yet political activity must retain its particularity and make democracy “a space of emancipation” in which differences are never resolved, but continue to make demands of and from each other.⁹

While ‘post-modern’ political theory might evidence a tendency to introduce seemingly universal and collective goals—Badiou’s “egalitarianism,” Richard Rorty’s

⁸ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 151.

⁹ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 90.

“human solidarity,” Jacques Rancière’s “equality,” Ernesto Laclau’s “hegemony”—that sound similar to those proposed by ‘modern’ theory—such as Habermas’s “lifeworld” or Cornelius Castoriadis’s “autonomy”—a difference between them remains: contingency as opposed to finality, synchronic disorder as opposed to diachronic progress.¹⁰ There might be political activity motivated by universal-sounding beliefs, but because of the contingency of the social order, and because a democracy is never complete—as egalitarianism, solidarity, equality, or hegemony are never to be guaranteed or achieved—democracy is a continual struggle, as there is no point at which it might be said that the project has reached its end. There is a tension between the universal and the particular that will never be resolved; instead, there are disruptions. ‘Post-modern’ political theory does not treat democracy as something static and stable, and thereby refutes the essentialism of ‘modern’ political theory.¹¹ Instead, it insists on “the prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists.”¹²

Here then we have two theorizations of what a democracy is: a reconciliation of interests negotiated by the institutional practice of consensual politics at the level of the State, or an ever-present dissensus between political singularities that expands the space of emancipation by forcing increased recognition and inclusion into the always contingent social order. Yet it is important to note what distinguishes these theories not

¹⁰ See Badiou, *Metapolitics*, Cornelius Castoriadis, "Power, Politics, Autonomy," in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. David Ames Curtis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics* (New York: Verso, 1995), Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹¹ See Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹² Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 24.

only in content, but also in form. Each responds to the collapse of the concept of democracy into one type of democracy, that of a liberal democracy. The ‘modern’ theorization can be understood as accepting that ‘democracy’ and ‘liberal democracy’ have become the same, thus its prescriptions are corrective measures by which to make it a better democracy, a good State. The ‘post-modern’ theorization can be understood as a critique of liberal democracy, locating another type of democracy outside and against the instituted State, for its liberal democracy impedes the cyclical ruptures and disagreements by imposing a social order based on exclusion and inequality.

The political theorists mentioned above all write from within an already constituted democratic context, and thus they critique what ‘democracy’ has become understood to mean. However, the Spanish situation offers another approach: to put such ideas to work while analyzing a democracy in the midst of becoming. Most interesting is that, looking back now, both theories seem to have gotten it right: on the one hand, there was an institution of a liberal democracy through a politics of consensus at the level of the Spanish State, while on the other hand there can be discerned cultural representations disrupting the social order inscribed by the State. But before jumping to the end of this history, however, it is instructive to start at the beginning, before either idea of democracy came into being, when there was only the possibility of democracy. As Ramón Buckley suggests, Spain had “not yet already had a transition towards democracy... [and] Spain still was not democratic and not European... In the conflict between this “still” and “already” one has to look for the key to [the Spanish]

transition.”¹³ What this study intends is to progress from the beginning to the end of the *transición*, 1975-1982, providing an outline of the movement from imaginary significations to material actualizations of democracy, from the still not yet to the already, and to contextualize the transitions in politics and in culture as part of a larger history: that of postmodernity, a historical age informed by the logic of late-stage capitalism, which is at work in how both a liberal democracy at the level of the State and a cultural ‘democracy’ came to be.

There were not concurrent transitions in politics and culture, for it is only in the practice of politics that there was a movement towards consensus and reform, while in Spanish culture there could be discerned a movement towards a politics of aesthetics to disrupt the contingency of the social order imposed by the liberal democracy. Politics became less about contestation and difference—questioning which State, which political project not only for the present but also for the future—and more about forging consensus between parties to streamline service to the good State, a liberal democracy that seemed not to require further political disruption because of its guarantee of equality and freedom.

The PSOE has a long history, being founded in 1879 by Pablo Iglesias. Before the *transición*, it was split between an old guard and a younger generation. The former had fought in the war, or the *maquis* struggle afterwards, were largely living in exile, and were motivated by the memory of the lost Republic. The latter were Spanish-born and products of the student movements in the 60s, and were more interested in pushing

¹³ Translations of primary and secondary material in the original are mine, unless noted. For longer quotations of primary material, I provide the original as well. Ramón Buckley, *La doble transición: política y literatura en la España de los años setenta* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España, 1996), xi.

forward the modernization project begun under the Franco regime, as ‘revolutionary’ reform. The younger generation began to occupy positions of power in the 70s, which culminated in the election of Felipe González as General Secretary in 1974. At this point, both sides were still unified around the idea of an eventual social democracy. However, during the *transición* the PSOE split into two camps, the older *histórico* and younger *renovado*, each advocating different platforms, and the *renovado* camp even fought to keep the other off the ballot.¹⁴

The Unión de Centro Democrático resulted when Franco’s National Movement was abolished in 1977. It was the moderate camp, while the ‘bunker’ formed the Alianza Popular. The first was composed of technocrats and Opus Dei members, who were conservative but invested in the modernization project begun in the 1960s, while the later were more interested in ‘order and security’ through authoritarian rule. The UCD disintegrated after the PSOE’s victory in 1982, and its followers, along with the soon to be defunct AP, formed the Partido Popular.¹⁵

What is important to recognize, however, is that the PSOE and the UCD did not oppose each other, but instead they worked together to institute a liberal democracy. However, the freedom and equality guaranteed by a liberal democracy, built to service the interests of an expanding free market and bring the Spanish economy more in line with the dictates of the Common Market, was by definition reserved for the few. As Fredric Jameson points out, the values of “freedom and equality turn out to be unfreedom

¹⁴ See José María Maravall, *La política de la transición* (Madrid: Taurus, 1982).

¹⁵ See Carlos Huneeus, *La Unión de Centro Democrático y la transición a la democracia en España* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1985).

and inequality” in a liberal democracy.¹⁶ They “cannot be realized...[as long as] the system that generates them [only as ideals]” still survives.¹⁷ As the liberal democracy took shape and was eventually instituted, culture became a place of refuge for political disruption and disagreement to include the excluded, to give name to the unnamed, to represent the non-parts of the whole. Yet, though representations of disorder and contingency might have introduced imaginations of democracy into culture, the meaning of such activity with respect to disrupting social reality remains to be interrogated, for democratic representation does not necessarily translate into democratic actualization. Only by the end of this study will an answer to this question be possible.

What happens in Spain over the years 1975-1982, politically and culturally, provides the terrain on which we can cognitively map out the relationship between postmodernity and possibilities for democracy within it, both in socio-political reality and in socio-cultural representations. The *transición* is a beginning not only of Spain’s democracy but also of its historical entrance into postmodernity, and thus a study of it will help shape and inform how the two terms are related, which is not only useful for peninsular scholarship, but also for other area studies, or comparative studies, that ask the question of what possibilities for democracy might exist in postmodern politics and culture.

There have been, of course, many studies that take on this perplexing question, which began in force in the 1990s, and which approached the question from many different perspectives. For example, Edward Said has argued against the supposed end of

¹⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 261.

¹⁷ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 262-63.

narratives of enlightenment and liberation in postmodernity, suggesting instead that intellectuals argue in support of a renewed investment in proposing such activity and knowledge to bring to light universal and human connections.¹⁸ Gayatri Spivak argues against the multiculturalism of cultural studies, an academic project taken to be a product of postmodernity, in that a shared but dissimilar economic reality faced by multiple particularities is obfuscated. However, to imagine any alternative reality outside the fragmented present was possibly impossible because one could not emerge from the present unblemished, thus suggesting that one should critique the present but remain mute as to what might be in the future.¹⁹ Terry Eagleton does not advocate a return to narratives of enlightenment, nor suggest that one cannot gesture towards a positive position with regards to future possibility. Instead, he maintains that one should perform a negative evaluation of the present situation in addition to suggesting more appropriate means of representing constitutive and political forms of universality to include and recognize multiple particularities.²⁰ Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek, two other critics of political possibility in postmodernity, will be returned to more fully in the conclusion.

My study does not approach the *transición* to reveal a particular or unique quality of the Spanish case; in fact, it is from the particular to the universal that I wish to bring a consideration of the *transición*. At issue then is not how the Francoist past, the democratic present, and foreseeable future of Spain are intertwined/disconnected as a result of continuity/rupture in a Spain-specific way. For this reason, I do not recount the

¹⁸ See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

¹⁹ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

²⁰ See Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

history of the *transición*, offering a historiography to isolate the significance of actual events and how they inform Spanish history specifically (place, people, nation, etc.).²¹ I also do not look to the question of the remembrance of Spanish history, a recent field of interest that has contributed significantly to rethinking historical recuperation and has made Spanish history a multivalent narrative.²² Nor will I explore issues such as memory and trauma in representation, which would be central for exploring how contemporary or *transición* culture has or did reveal processes of remembering and forgetting in representational form and content, necessary to peninsular studies of culture during or following the transition to democracy, which has also produced much engaging and insightful scholarship.²³ (The exponential growth of such scholarship concerned with the *transición* might be a symptom of the nagging malaise of postmodernity, its uncertain

²¹ There are many studies of the *transición* that have been written with this in mind. See Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy* (London; Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1981), Julián Casanova et al., *La transición a la democracia en España: Actas de las VI Jornadas de Castilla-La Mancha sobre Investigación en Archivos, Guadalajara, 4-7 de noviembre 2003* (Guadalajara: ANABAD Castilla-La Mancha, 2004), Santos Juliá, *Orígenes sociales de la democracia en España* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 1994), Charles S. Maier and Santos Juliá, *Democracia y España* (Madrid: Voz de los sin voz, 1995).

²² See Paloma Aguilar Fernández, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), Santos Juliá, "Echar al olvido: memoria y amnistía en la transición a la democracia en España," *Claves de razón práctica*, no. 129 (2003).

²³ See *Del franquismo a la posmodernidad: cultura española 1975-1990*, ed. José B. Monleón and Carlos Blanco Aguinaga (Torrejón de Ardoz: Akal, 1995), Ofelia Ferrán, *Working through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), Jo Labanyi, *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Cristina Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática* (Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2002), Joan Ramon Resina, *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy* (Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), Eduardo Subirats, *Intransiciones: crítica de la cultura española* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002), Teresa M. Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto: una crítica cultural de la transición española (1973-1993)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España, 1998).

and dissatisfying democracies, I might add, for which this study is not a cure, though it does hope to offer a diagnosis).

I am focused on the historical happening of the *transición*, the fact that it occurred in the late 1970s when the organization of Western economies was dramatically changed following the oil crisis, the collapse of Bretton Woods and the gold standard, the burgeoning of the global market, and the end to all revolutions in Western Europe with the rise of Eurocommunism and the turn to democratic socialism, both of which envisioned significant political change to come from internal reforms to the State. I will build out from the historical events of the *transición*, and not turn inward to find the Spanish essence they contain. I do this in order to use the *transición* as a case study to search for possibilities of democracy in postmodernity: both in the institution of a liberal democracy and in the creation of symbolic spaces of emancipation, that is, in both the socio-political and the socio-cultural spheres.

It is important to note, however, that the *transición* was not one simple movement, and that these transitions in politics and culture did not happen all at once, for there were distinct periods within each transition. The signification given to and taken from democracy in politics is distinct at the beginning of the *transición* and its end, which I will address in the second and fourth chapters. To trace this movement I will analyze and interpret the writings of Eduardo Haro Tecglen in *Triunfo. Triunfo*—one of the most important weeklies of the day, and the most ‘neutral’ as it was not committed to an ideological viewpoint, as were others like *Cuadernos para el Diálogo* (socialist/Christian democratic), *El Viejo Topo* (Marxist), and *Fuerza Nueva* (fascist/Falangist)—continually asked if the democracy being actualized would lead to a flourishing of political

opposition and a securing of freedom and equality, which were taken to be fundamental. *Cambio 16* was also not affiliated with a particular ideological perspective, and they were very dedicated to the institution of democracy as well. However, as announced in the lead editorial of their first issue, they were primarily interested in analyzing the “economic reality inside of the social totality,” as they were focused more on the socio-economic and not the socio-political, which was more *Triunfo*’s concern.²⁴

For *Triunfo*, the initial period from 1975-1977 was one of intense questioning of what is meant by ‘democracy,’ of what it consists and what it requires to exist. Answers were provided by a group of writers, but instead of coalescing around a certain ideological perspective, there were a collection of different ideological perspectives: the somewhat Christian democrat Enrique Miret Magdalena, the ambivalent Marxist Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, the almost anarchist Fernando Savater, and the nostalgic republican Eduardo Haro Tecglen, to name but the most influential and longstanding.

Admittedly, *Triunfo* was not some unbiased objective account of the *transición*, and certainly most cast their votes for the socialist PSOE or the communist PCE,²⁵ but these parties do not elude criticism; in fact, they are the targets of most invectives. This is

²⁴ See "Editorial," *Cambio 16*, no. 0 (October 1971): 5.

²⁵ The Partido Comunista de España had undergone a significant reconstitution in the 60s and early 70s. With Santiago Carrillo made General Secretary in 1960, the PCE was put on a path towards Eurocommunism, which was the attempt to distance the party from the USSR and repackage it as a party willing to work within a multiparty plurality for reform. In 1964, the PCE officially renounced armed struggle to overthrow the Franco regime and vowed to work for national reconciliation. This shift caused fissures at first, and then splintered it into many groups, including Marxist-Leninist, Maoists, Workers’ Party subgroups. They all distanced themselves from the PCE’s project of national reconciliation, and some began to carry out clandestine attacks against the military and police in the hopes of provoking a revolution. See Gregorio Morán, *Miseria y grandeza del Partido Comunista de España, 1939-1985* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1986), Eusebio Mujal-León, *Communism and Political Change in Spain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

important to note, for at the time, ideological neutrality was a coveted designation to grant legitimacy to one's critique of the *transición*, which unabashedly, some hard-line rightists like Manuel Fraga Iribarne tried to claim. For example, he wrote:

No other country has had experiences as complete as ours, whether in the exploration of the limits of anarchy or in the impossible intent to restore the spiritual and social order of the Middle Ages. Now we have to come face to face with reality. And as we speak clearly, neither *Fuerza Nueva* nor *Triunfo* gives us the answer.

[Ningún país ha hecho unas experiencias tan completas como el nuestro, ni en el explorar los límites de la anarquía ni en el imposible intento de restaurar el orden espiritual y social de Medioevo. Ahora tenemos que enfrentarnos con la realidad. Y hablemos claro: ni "Fuerza Nueva" ni "Triunfo" nos dan la respuesta.]²⁶

Fraga's attack was absurd, but he was right to distrust *Triunfo's* answer, for it was nothing less than that Francoism had ended and that a rupture was necessary so as to allow a new present to flourish, which suggested as well that the end was near for officials like Fraga. *Triunfo* had already fired the first salvo in April of 1975 (before Franco's death) in an article proclaiming that fascism should be understood less as an ideology, and more as a form of power requiring unique historical circumstances and an eternal leader.²⁷ The article went on to say that Spanish society must prepare for the inevitable *ruptura* that would occur once Franco had died, which required an organizing of the people to guide the process from the bottom up and not from the top down as did the regime. The suggestion that ordinary citizens should occupy positions of power instead of officials of the regime might have provoked Fraga's ire, and it most certainly caused the regime discomfort, for *Triunfo* was forced to shut down for four months after

²⁶ The original quote is from *Ya*, 31 July 1975, which is quoted in "Fraga inventa su centro: 'Entre 'Triunfo' y 'Fuerza Nueva'", *Triunfo*, no. 674 (30 August 1975): 15.

²⁷ See José Aumente, "¿Estamos preparados para el camino?," *Triunfo*, no. 656 (26 April 1975): 51.

this article was published. However, when it returned in January of 1976, it seemed to respond even more forcefully to Fraga's question of how to understand the new reality, dashing its cover with "LA RESPUESTA DEMOCRÁTICA" (THE DEMOCRATIC ANSWER).

The 'democratic answer' to the new reality of post-Franco Spain, as to how it should be structured and organized, became *Triunfo*'s primary concern. While it is not possible to explore in depth the volume of articles that this weekly produced, it is the intent here to provide a general sense of how *Triunfo* functioned to critique the institution and imagination of democracy during the *transición* by focusing on the lead editorials written each week by Haro Tecglen. There was always the question, and significant doubt as the *transición* proceeded, of whether or not the form of democracy being instituted was democratic enough. As Alicia Alted Vigil puts it, confronted with "the weight of a reality that since its recent historical beginnings spoiled the imagined and dreamed of change," *Triunfo* and Haro Tecglen put themselves in service of critiquing what the Spanish democracy became.²⁸

More than the other writers, Haro Tecglen's critical perspective began to shift as the weight of this reality created more imbalances and disparities than a leveling of the field.²⁹ There are compelling cases to be made for other writers, who were active critics of both the *transición* and the democracy, but they did not evidence the bifocal

²⁸ Alicia Alted Vigil, "Del olvido y recuperación de la memoria," in *Triunfo en su época: jornadas organizadas en la Casa Velázquez los días 26 y 27 de octubre de 1992*, ed. Alicia Alted Vigil and Paul Aubert (Madrid: École des hautes études hispaniques; Casa de Velázquez; Ediciones Pléyades, 1995), 309.

²⁹ See Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Cómo liquidaron el franquismo en dieciséis meses y un día* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1977), Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Crónica sentimental de España* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1971), Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Crónica sentimental de la transición* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1985).

imagination of Haro Tecglen, as they were consistent throughout in their approach and perspective. A good example of this is the skeptical criticism of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who also wrote for *Triunfo*. Juan Goytisolo was also an active critic and occasional writer in *Triunfo*, but he always approached the question of Spain from outside, seeing it with 'exilic' and individual eyes.³⁰

What makes Haro Tecglen most interesting is that once there was a liberal democracy instituted, his perspective shifted from an initial optimism for democratic possibility to a mournful critique of the liberal democracy's demolishing of political opposition. These later writings demarcate a second period of the *transición*, from 1977-1982, when a disenchantment with the depoliticization of the socio-political started to mark the page. At this point, his writings were no longer directed at giving form to social imaginary significations of what the democracy might be. Instead, they began to warn of the unfreedom and inequality inherent in a liberal democracy and, eventually, to explore how the practice of consensual politics stymied political possibility. I shall follow this shift in Haro Tecglen to tell the history of how the self-reflexive imagination of democracy began to diminish in the practice of politics.

This is not to say that there was no longer, *tout court*, a reflection on the shortcomings or successes of democracy, for as Castoriadis points out

democracy consists in this, that society does not halt before a conception, given once and for all, of what is just, equal, or free but rather institutes itself in such a way that the question of freedom, of justice, of equity, and of equality might always be posed anew.³¹

³⁰ See Juan Goytisolo, *Libertad, libertad, libertad* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1978).

³¹ Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," 87.

However, with the depoliticization of opposition in politics, there was not any self-reflexivity to be found in this socio-political sphere near the end of the *transición*. A politics of consensus is not a process of critical reflection and does not work to redefine the signification of democracy: of what it should consist of outside of what is already inscribed. With “the general retreat into conformism,” there was no longer the necessary contestation or disagreement to fuel critical reflection in politics.³² In culture, however, the questioning of freedom, justice, equity, and equality was becoming a possibility just as the liberal democracy was becoming immutable. The limits and shortcomings of the liberal democracy, the gap between the powerful and the powerless, and the interests of those previously unrepresentable were beginning to be projected on the film screen near the end of the *transición*.

As Walter Benjamin writes, “a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man.”³³ Cinema can have us imagine reality differently by displaying a social unity of individuals informed by forms of value, beliefs, and desires in a spatio-temporal reality separated from actual reality. Benjamin suggests, however, that there is an overlap, in sensation and understanding, between diegetic reality and social reality, and that while we may experience the latter somewhat unconsciously, we bring conscious attention to the former. If the conscious reflection is then brought to bear in reality after having been summoned and awakened by cinema, a critical

³² Cornelius Castoriadis, “The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism,” in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 42.

³³ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 237.

possibility opens up for the experience of reality. A critical reflection of reality is possible if looked upon now with eyes consciously exploring its space and time after being trained by the conceptualization and imagination of diegetic reality. As Jacques Rancière says, reality “must be fictionalized to be thought,” for which films provide: “a double resource of the silent imprint that speaks and the montage that calculates the values of truth and the potential for producing meaning.”³⁴ The imprint of reality speaks still, but what it speaks of is given new meaning through cinematic representation. The potential of a different experience of democracy outside of the liberal democracy is possibly provided by the cinematic apparatus, offering an alternative reality positing new values, freedoms, and visions of equity and equality continuously anew. This is conceptually different than other narrative experiences, such as when reading a novel,³⁵ for cinema deals more with the social than with the individual, whereas much like Proust suggests, “each reader, when reading, is the proper reader of himself...to discern in the book what he might not have seen in himself.”³⁶

The number of films during the *transición* that made explicit socio-political or political reference numbered 132, which accounted for roughly 20% of the total output of

³⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), 38.

³⁵ Individual experiences and identities were rewritten ideologically and historically as protagonists moved through the past and negotiated the present. See, in particular, Juan Goytisolo, *Juan sin tierra* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1975), Juan Marsé, *Si te dicen que caí* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976), Jorge Semprún, *Autobiografía de Federico Sanchez* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1977). See also Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Los Mares del sur* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1979). Though somewhat different because it is a ‘detective’ novel, critical perception and investigation of the social space are still carried out through individual activity.

³⁶ Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 217-18.

films.³⁷ Of course, this does not include films with indirect reference to the socio-political or political, which would include each and every one, as all cultural artifacts are imprinted with marks of their material history, thus any such reference could be located through interpretative means. Instead, only films making explicit reference are a concern, for this study seeks to outline how democracy was expressly engaged by films from the *transición*'s beginning to its end. Two primary means of directly questioning and representing what democracy signified were evidenced in documentary films and melodramas. I will analyze and interpret melodramatic representations of democracy, for they reveal a radical reversal in how the melodramatic mode was employed, which occurs in relation to the institution of a liberal democracy over the course of the *transición*. Just as there was a transition in politics, there was also a transition in melodramatic representations of democracy, a transition which is differentiated in chapters three and five.

At the beginning of the *transición*, there can be discerned melodramatic representations of democracy as a *demos* formed around a common ethos, a universality construed as a 'people' by an ethical essence that was shared by all. These can be understood as representational means to provide order, at least for the diegetic reality, determined through a clear-cut distinction between good and evil. Such representations of democracy imagined the good to be a national reconciliation, threatened by the evil of political opposition, visions appearing against the backdrop of an uncertain social reality, given the initial fears that democracy would only be a possibility. Films, such as Jamie Camino's *Las largas vacaciones del 36* and Pedro Olea's *Pim, pam, pum... ¡fuego!*,

³⁷ Antonio Dopazo, "La transición democrática en el cine español," in *El cine y la transición política española* (Valencia: Filmoteca Valenciana, 1986), 48.

projected a political desire to break from the past taken to be still very much present, a past marked by ideological conflict and societal divisions.³⁸

Yet, as the liberal democracy was taking root, some melodramas, such as Pedro Almodovar's *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* and Eloy de la Iglesia's *Navajeros*, began to invert the mode to disrupt and disorder any national identity or reconciled society proposed for the present, not because democracy was not desired, but because the liberal democracy taking shape did not include all parts of society into the whole. That is, just as there was a social order being imposed, there can be detected a shift in some melodrama towards representing either the inclusion of new identities not accounted for, or how the liberal democracy still excluded certain particularities from the universal society that it proposed. The melodramatic mode, as an aesthetic of reconciliation or order, was upset from within to insert new values, norms, meanings and identities into diegetic reality, employing its mode of excess to an excessive degree in which any narrative order was disallowed. This was not an aesthetic resolution to societal divisions, but instead was an aesthetic disruption of representing the social as universal, immutable, or complete; in short, what was represented was a different imagination of democracy, as contingent and in flux, which could be read as similar to how 'post-modern' political theory imagines political possibility for postmodernity.

³⁸ The distinction between 'ethics' and 'politics' in relationship to a liberal democracy has been addressed by, among others, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. See Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London; New York: Verso, 2001), Slavoj Žižek, "From Politics to Biopolitics... and Back," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004). They identify the ideology of human rights as, respectively, a division of the global world into helpless victims and villainous benefactors, or between charitable cases and accumulating capitalists. This is different than the victims and villains represented during the *transición*, but is still relevant in that they critique inequality and unfreedom being approached as ethical instead of political issues.

By following this movement, I will explore why an ethics for national reconciliation and identity was represented at a time when democracy was only a possibility, and why this was then followed by representations of a cultural politics to demonstrate the particularity of specific segments of society, or the exclusion of them in the social order because of the liberal democracy. Along the way, I will read and view the interrelationship of these transitions in politics and culture, and interrogate what they signify about political possibility in postmodernity. While the names and events that will be referenced will be specific to Spain, the conclusions are not to be limited to its particular case. The Spanish *transición* helps us understand what possibilities for democracy exist in postmodernity, specifically because it allows for an analysis of a political transition towards a liberal democracy as well as a cultural transition to an alternative imagination of democracy in opposition to the former. Instead of probing within an already constituted postmodern democracy, the case of Spain—with its strange confluence of both a pursuit of a political modernity (reconciling or eliding the clashes and conflict between a type of fascism and those of socialism and communism) and a cultural postmodernism (the turn to represent fragmented and fluid identities)—reveals dramatic political and cultural transitions as they happen during Spain’s transition into postmodernity.

There seems to a desire—academically, politically, socially, culturally—to move beyond the postmodern (only announced in 1979 by Jean-François Lyotard “as incredulity toward metanarratives,” but which has already, and inevitably, become its

own recognizable ‘metanarrative’ more than ever).³⁹ The *transición* offers an opportunity to think our way out of postmodernity’s eternal present. Though I will not gesture towards future realization but only future possibility, I hope at least to expose the permeability of what seems like the closed system of liberal democracy by locating potential political possibilities in cultural representations, which might gesture towards a more democratic form of democracy, for its promise still allures and confounds. Possibly the melodramatic mode, and its disruption and disorder, offers a counter to the politics of consensus that seems to foreclose political possibility; perhaps, they gesture towards “dissensus,” to use Jacques Rancière’s term: “a gap in the sensible...a dissensus about the givens of a particular situation.”⁴⁰ Do they symbolize then, not only a contestation of what is given, but also a location of political possibility for some other form of democracy beyond our particular situation?

As Castoriadis states, if politics become a practice of conformism and consensus, the form of democracy instituted in the socio-political sphere is “a tragic regime.”⁴¹ The different sort of democracy imagined in the aesthetic sphere during the *transición*, as rupture and contingency, introducing non-parts and demanding the inclusion of the unseen and unheard in through the interstices, appears on the surface to bring into being dissensus, “making visible the fact that [one] belong[s] to a shared world that the other

³⁹ Lyotard provides the first epistemo-philosophical definition of the ‘postmodern’, see Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979). That what is called ‘postmodern’ today is so varied that either everything or nothing counts further complicates things, and also announces the anxiety with and within ‘postmodernity’. In translation see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiii-xxv, 71-82.

⁴⁰ Jacques Rancière and Davide Panagia, "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière," *Diacritics* 30, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 124.

⁴¹ Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," 93.

does not see.”⁴² It remains to be seen whether such dissensus in representation, without possibly a corresponding dissensus in social reality, serves as a counter to our contemporary hubris in imagining that we actually live in a democratic society or under a democratic State.

The question quite simply is this: is there a future for political possibility if it only survives in representation but is absent from reality? Or, does a democracy require political ruptures, continuously and critically, in both the socio-political and the socio-cultural spheres? As Reinhart Koselleck notes, “it is the tension between [past] experience and [future] expectation which, in ever-changing patterns, brings out new resolutions and through this generates historical time.”⁴³ Liberal democracy’s promise of progress, a reduction of “the temporal difference between experience and expectation to a single concept,” seems to smooth over any tension between experience and expectation by reducing history to an eternal present.⁴⁴ Can cultural representations alone propel historical time, generating gaps in the sensible by introducing unknown and unseen perspectives of experience? Or is it that culture can help to perceive and conceive of alternate expectations for the future, but without a politics to institute the means of arriving there, then it is quite difficult to have new resolutions in a contingent reality? It could be that the restart of historical time requires that the experience of progress—the eternal present of a liberal democracy—becomes a future past, a past expectation for the future that has been superceded not only in culture but in politics as well.

⁴² Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.3ranciere.html.

⁴³ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 262.

⁴⁴ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 268.

It could be that history once again will be thought of historically, for there is a mood in the air that the future will not be more of the same, but instead is ominously silent and unclear. It seems that our postmodern present stands upon the edge of a new temporality, and as Koselleck states, “the more a particular time is experienced as a new temporality... the more that demands made of the future increase.”⁴⁵ This study asks that we reconsider democracy and political possibility in politics and culture, looking to past experience to articulate expectations for the future, to transition towards new resolutions in history. José Ortega y Gasset, prefacing the first issue of the *Revista de Occidente*, while staring out into the future from the precipice of his present with the past at his back, suggested in 1923 that there was an “excitement of departing, the tremor of the unknown adventure, the illusion of arriving, and the fear of getting lost.”⁴⁶ Now we may be about to embark upon another adventure, full of excitement, full of doubt, one we might call the pursuit of democracy in postmodernity.

⁴⁵ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 3.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Ernesto Laclau, "Democracy and the Question of Power," *Constellations* 8, no. 1 (March 2001): 14.

CHAPTER 2

What Democracy?

Thoughts about the possibility of democracy after the end of the regime had circulated before the *transición*. During the *apertura* ('opening') of the late 1960s and the *dictablanda* ('soft dictatorship') of the early 1970s, censorship strictures were relaxed (though the relaxation of these strictures was countermanded whenever the State felt like it had to demonstrate its might and quell too vocal protests) and cultural journals were able to suggest, subtly, that Francoism might not last forever. José Ángel Ezcurra, director of *Triunfo* from its beginning to its end, describes its critical methodology as writing a metalanguage to read its readers metaphorically.⁴⁷ In *Triunfo*

one sought the complicity of the reader through a metalanguage that served to communicate implicit analogies of time and space, that is of History and international politics, which were metaphoric instruments to analyze life as it truly was in our country from the perspective of what had come to be called that of the intellectual left.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For a fascinating account of Ezcurra's history, starting with the first inception of *Triunfo* as a film journal in 1946, the creation of the influential film journals *Objetivo* (1953-55) and *Nuestro Cine* (1961-70), and the recreation of *Triunfo* as a socio-cultural magazine in 1962 see José Ángel Ezcurra, "Crónica de un empeño dificultoso," in *Triunfo en su época: jornadas organizadas en la Casa Velázquez los días 26 y 27 de octubre de 1992*, ed. Alicia Alted Vigil and Paul Aubert (Madrid: École des hautes études hispaniques; Casa de Velázquez; Ediciones Pléyades, 1995).

⁴⁸ José Ángel Ezcurra, "Apuntes para una historia," in *Triunfo en su época: jornadas organizadas en la Casa Velázquez los días 26 y 27 de octubre de 1992*, ed. Alicia Alted Vigil and Paul Aubert (Madrid: École des hautes études hispaniques; Casa de Velázquez; Ediciones Pléyades, 1995), 46-47.

Especially important for this study is the beginning of *Triunfo*'s political criticism during the *transición* until financial problems forced its demise in 1982, a period that Ezcurra describes as one of critical freedom and examination. Though Spain was confined to its Francoist prison, *Triunfo* imagined the socio-political contexts of its democratic European neighbors as its own. As Teresa Vilarós states:

the deployed positions in the social struggle against the dictatorial apparatus of Francoism, which *Triunfo* and other similar journals gave voice to, had been studied above all as responding to a feeling of “being outside” of the global circuit of politics.⁴⁹

This international/national metalanguage spoken from deployed positions did not take explicitly political form, for such articulations would not have had much chance for circulation.⁵⁰ Articles and editorials became increasingly more political towards the end of the regime, when Spanish leaders and Spanish politics were criticized more openly, especially after Franco diminished his control in the early 70s, and after the regime suffered a severe blow with the assassination of Franco's handpicked successor, Luis Carrero Blanco, in 1973. Publications such as *Triunfo* and *Cambio 16* tested the limits of what was permissible, and sometimes found themselves facing fines, censure, and suspension.

To avoid such governmental countermeasures, comments about the limited lifespan of Francoism were made through reference and analogy. Comparisons were made between the growing consumerism in Spain with that found in other Western nations, or how Spain was experiencing the same late-modern cultural movements of

⁴⁹ Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 64.

⁵⁰ See the section entitled “La prensa en el segundo franquismo” in Jordi Gracia García and Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, *La España de Franco (1939-1975): Cultura y vida cotidiana* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2001), 303-08.

other democratic societies. By presenting the similarities between Spain and Europe or America in cultural production and the driving force of consumerism behind it, or the overlap between artistic movements like the New Spanish Cinema or the New Novel and their Western cousins, and at the same time criticizing the national politics of the West except Spain's, *Triunfo* did perform a type of criticism by having the reader reflect on its absence from the material page. As Ezcurra states, "*Triunfo* constituted itself as a platform to stimulate the freedom of criticism, of unfettered examination... preferring to use cultural means to come to understand and know this freedom."⁵¹ Cultural criticism was the avenue open to critics at the time to articulate an alternative understanding of Spanish culture, but also to make oblique references to the socio-political context, for which they relied upon the reader to perform the necessary inferential leap. As Vilarós points out, *Triunfo*'s peculiar "symbolic/ideological/social" apparatus presented Spanish culture as if "it denotes the possibility of achieving a substantial value identical to the rest of the West in a future that one already begins to see as near and real," a future fulfilled by the conversion of democracy as an idea into a reality.⁵²

The imagination of a future with a different practice of politics and the possibility of democracy could be written in between the lines through reference to the ongoing struggles of the Cold War in Cuba or Vietnam, the dynamics of the left and right in the United States or the rest of Europe, or to other dictatorships. While *Triunfo* had to leave unsaid how Spain's practice of politics either differed or was similar to these other contexts, a commentary about the Spanish situation could still be made. This became even more explicit after 1973 when Luis Carrero Blanco was assassinated. Carrero

⁵¹ Ezcurra, "Apuntes para una historia," 49.

⁵² Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 63.

Blanco wanted to halt and contain the increasing liberalization of society as a result of the economic boom throughout the 1960s. He also dealt severely with any form of dissent. His death was a blow to the regime unlike any other before because it was the first successful violent attack against its leadership. The assassination was also the first successful ETA operation of such magnitude, which catapulted it and the issue of regional autonomy onto the national stage.⁵³

Franco's next choice, Carlos Arias Navarro, made his *espíritu del 12 de febrero* address in 1974, which promised concessions such as political associations (not parties), relaxed censorship, and electoral reforms that would give the populace more control over electoral representation instead of simply voting yes or no in referendums (though there was no mention of elections). The end of the regime was less imaginary, almost tangible, and journals began publishing political critiques that began to toe and even cross the line. The question of a new state was referenced much less subtly, and politics began to be considered independently of culture. However, this happened in spurts as the government alternated between liberalization and repression, which was characteristic of Arias Navarro's reign as president, for he just as often bowed to the pressure from the hard-liner 'bunker' not to institute change, many of whom, it must be noted, he had chosen for leadership roles and did not simply inherit.

A fractured, schizophrenic state, led by a smattering of the more economic-minded and those sounding slogans from the Civil War, alternated between repression and relaxation, which consequently weakened the disciplinary arm of the regime because it lacked the unabashedly brutal approach to dissent that characterized the Carrero

⁵³ For a historical overview and analysis of the Carrero Blanco years, see Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, 18-52.

Blanco years. At this point, policing the social body was not an easy matter for the regime, for its 'enemy' was less an ideological foe from the Civil War like the republican *maquís* than an amalgam of opposition composed of workers, ethnic and regional groups like ETA, or university students. As Paul Preston argues, Arias Navarro was unable to mediate the various demands within the regime, often walking "a tight-rope between the wishes of the reformists and those of the bunker, while all the time the problems of the opposition pressure, labour militancy and terrorism grew unchecked."⁵⁴

The limits imposed by censorship or punishment were more easily crossed in this context. In *Triunfo*, the political question of how democracy might take root in Spain began to be asked. Direct comparisons were made between the case of Spain and transitions unfolding in nearby Portugal and Greece, which of course were the only other countries in Western Europe still controlled by authoritarian governments. These countries' attempts and struggles to institute democratic governments were treated as examples to be learned from and to imagine the eventuality of Spain's own transition. That is, the question of a democracy was not a matter of if but when, and what remained to be done. Eduardo Haro Tecglen, writing in August of 1974, posited the question as such:

The political is always very slow and conservative to act, in general terms, and usually responds to historical changes well after the fact. Great political changes are generally produced many years after they are necessary and only when social classes are sufficiently convinced of the necessity for change, even though these changes would have served everyone best earlier on. They are finally made in resignation and with fear... As such, it happens that political changes are made by those classes that at first did not try to change anything only after already much irreparable damage has been done.

⁵⁴ Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, 56.

[La política es siempre muy lenta y muy conservadora (en términos generales), y suele ir con una situación de retraso. Los grandes cambios se producen generalmente muchos años después de ser necesarios, cuando los estamentos están sobradamente impregnados de la necesidad de cambiar, aunque sea en su conveniencia: se producen por resignación y con miedo....De esta forma, sucede que cuando el cambio se produce, muchas veces se han producido ya daños irreparables, precisamente para los mismos estamentos que tratan de no cambiar.]⁵⁵

Haro Tecglen not only offered an insightful dissection of the situations in Greece and Portugal, but provided a much bolder commentary on the specifically political situation in Spain. This quote and the majority of the article functioned as a direct attack on the entrenched autocratic elite in Spain as well as a call to moderates within the regime to use their power to bring about democratic change instead of remaining passive in the face of the hard-line bunker of the right.

Furthermore, fascism is declared to be an ideology that has become historically irrelevant because of the shift towards a consumer society in Spain. Haro Tecglen gave three reasons:

Without doubt, its harsh and repressive control of people does not correspond to the demands of a consumer society that requires some liberties and a certain autonomous individual to consume... In addition, there is no revolutionary threat from the left that would require the police state of fascism to control and contain such a threat... The third factor is that of the mold of international relations based on the notion of coexistence.

[Sin duda, no corresponde su mecanismo de sociedad dura y represiva en la sociedad de consumo que requiere el funcionamiento de unas libertades y de una cierta autonomía individual del consumidor... No existe, por otra parte, una tensión revolucionaria de izquierdas que requiera la policía del fascismo para ser reprimida... El tercer factor es el del molde de las relaciones internacionales, basadas en la coexistencia.]⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," *Triunfo*, no. 618 (13 August 1974): 6.

⁵⁶ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 6.

Haro Tecglen made clear the contradictions inherent in the Spanish government's intent of continuing to develop a consumer society while also continuing to control society using the same repressive tools even though the threat of 'revolution' has long been made irrelevant by ideological shifts in history. Haro Tecglen was explicit in demonstrating that the tremendous push for international markets and economic policies based upon increased consumerism, and the weakening of the left and a growing conservatism throughout Western Europe since the end of World War II, led to a new practice of politics. A new world of interconnected consumer societies (the establishment of contemporary globalization) had been formed, which made the continuation of the regime historically unnecessary, if not impossible, for Francoism was rooted in a past ordered by now irrelevant social and economic relations, which was known by both sides along the power divide even if it wasn't openly declared. As Haro Tecglen stated, "for the moment the various forms of fascism are not viable. Those who try to perpetuate them, sometimes with success by means of convenient disguises, know as well."⁵⁷

This is not to say that fascism was forever banished to the past, for the inequalities fostered by a consumerist, capitalist economic system could again foment thoughts of radical change and upheaval, circumstances that aid fascism as much as 'revolutionaryism' in organizing forces. If inequalities widened too much between social classes, there would then exist the possibility that "ideas of revolution will reappear and consequently fascist responses will follow, whether or not the lesson of their unsuitability and their delayed capacity for true solutions" was learned.⁵⁸ By Haro Tecglen's reckoning, revolutionary ideas are a response to inequalities in society, and fascism is a

⁵⁷ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 7.

⁵⁸ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 7.

reaction to such ideas in order to preserve the status quo. The Franco regime reacted to the policies of the 2nd Republic enacted to reduce the gap between the powerless majority and the elite landowners and industrial capitalists. Attempts of unionizing or redistributing land, for example, were considered revolutionary threats against which rightist and corporatist groups like the Falange and its Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalismo (Councils of the National-Syndicalism Offensive) wanted to stamp out back in 1936. However, the socio-economic backdrop in 1974 was composed of new relations, ones built around the idea of a consumer society, thus making this particular version of fascism outdated. That is, the unique fascism of the Franco regime should no longer structure society, thus it was time to look for different political avenues to construct a new state and society.

Haro Tecglen argued that only a new state form can negotiate the new sets of conflicts brought about by the contemporary inequalities generated by consumerism/capitalism (which also means that even if a new form of fascism were to spring up in reaction to attempts of reducing inequalities by means of a new state form, it would be historically distinct from the Franco regime which was designed to counter the 2nd Republic). Drawing upon the examples of Portugal and Greece, and their “change of regime[s] without revolution or blood: a demonstration that violent compulsions are absent in contemporary Europe,” Haro Tecglen concluded that it was possible to transition away from fascist regimes and create States that would more closely resemble those of Western Europe.⁵⁹ In describing how Portugal and Greece managed their transitions, and not specifically mentioning Francoism, Haro Tecglen suggests that there

⁵⁹ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 7.

is a future beyond the present of an authoritarian State, which would apply to Spain as well.

He identified elements for a non-revolutionary transition, such as a pact to quell any fears by the regime's leadership concerning accountability for past actions, a transitional government tipped strongly towards the right and the interests of the elite, so as to not upset the power structure too much at first, and one which also conceded just enough to the left and the young (those now imagining the possibility of the future) so that these marginal groups would participate in the transitional process:

the change has been the result of a pact... that has managed to demand the security of all those members pertaining to the previous regime... and has formed a government that is backed by the right and the older generations while giving some measure of concession to a weak left and the younger generations.

[el cambio ha sido fruto de un pacto... ha debido exigir la seguridad de todas las personas pertenecientes al Régimen anterior... ha formado un Gobierno con enorme peso de la derecha y de las clases de edad avanzada, con alguna concesión a una izquierda suave y a algún joven.]⁶⁰

Haro Tecglen was careful to point out that these are only first steps, and that a transition would also have to take account of the still pressing matters regarding the return of exiles and the liberation of political prisoners. The push and pull to meet these other demands, the discouragement of reactionary responses, the patience to see the process through in hopes of bringing about real change, the attempts to break from the past—these are taken to be necessary for a transition away from an authoritarian regime. The only measure of a transition's success would be if it managed to leave the conflicts of the past behind and secure a democratic future, which the transition in Greece had yet to attain: "The fall of Fascism...is a fact; the restoration of some liberties, as well. But only the development of

⁶⁰ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 7.

many more advanced successes in Greece can return to it the enjoyment of an authentic democracy.”⁶¹

Haro Tecglen’s reading of a transition away from an authoritarian regime to a democracy in 1974 establishes a beginning point from which to begin a consideration of Spain’s entrance into the postmodern age and its construction of a certain ‘democracy.’ That he is able to openly conceive of democracy within the Spanish context, of a new social imaginary signification for it to institute and claim, already reveals the “rupture of the closure of signification” that Castoriadis singles out as the break from past norms and laws and the “unlimited interrogation” of what should now be instituted.⁶² In just over a year, Spain would begin its transition, and Haro Tecglen would write *in situ* new social imaginary significations for the concept of ‘democracy.’ He took it as certain that the Spanish politics would bring about real change—democracy instead of dictatorship—once Franco had fallen. The question is: how would history affect what he imagined as ‘political’ or ‘democracy’ signifying? The anti-Francoists had always believed that, eventually, a democracy would be realized. Haro Tecglen labeled himself as a member of this opposition. Yet as Spain stumbled into the postmodern world and erected a liberal democracy, how would the ideas of ‘opposition,’ ‘democracy,’ and the ‘political’ in politics and cultural politics be impacted by history and shifts on both sides of the ideological divide? The political criticism in the pages of *Triunfo* during the *transición* provides some answers.

The ability to perform political criticism on the part of the press after Franco’s death no longer required that politics only be discussed as a matter of culture, as for

⁶¹ Haro Tecglen, "Grecia: la caída de otro fascismo," 7.

⁶² Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," 86.

example during the *apertura* of the 1960s and the *dictablanda* of the early 1970s.⁶³ Then politics could not be openly discussed, and thus it fell upon cultural criticism to subtly reference the socio-political situation. Cultural criticism was a vehicle to gesture towards reality through an analysis and interpretation of its representation. For example, the cultural criticism in the film journals, *Objetivo*, from 1953-55, and *Nuestro Cine*, which lasted from 1961-71, framed films in relationship to what they said about the reality of Spanish society, which was treated as an extension of the regime. *Triunfo* itself started as a film journal in 1946, but was developed into a more comprehensive cultural journal by Ezcurra in 1962. However, it was not an active socio-politico-cultural journal until the mid-1970s when the focus was no longer on consumerism (Miss Europe, the newest commodities, 'modern' life, the 'new woman', etc.) but was fully engaged in the pursuit of a post-Franco State and society.

With censorship relaxed significantly, it became more possible to criticize the practice of politics in Spain (though censorship was not completely abolished until April of 1977). In the first years of the *transición*, politics as a matter of government and parties was present in discourse as an object of analysis openly approached and discussed. Once *Triunfo* began publishing again in January of 1976 after finishing a four month suspension, the political landscape of Spain was no longer referred to only allegorically, analogically, or via metaphorical representations. For the first time since the

⁶³ For an analysis of the pre-*transición* years see Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction, The Struggle for Modernity* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Barry Jordan, *Writers and Politics in Franco's Spain* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), María Encarna Nicolás Marín and Alicia Altred Vigil, *Disidencias en el franquismo (1939-1975)* (Murcia: DM, 1999), Paul Preston, *Spain in Crisis: The Evolution and Decline of the Franco Regime* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976).

installation of the Franco regime, a critical analysis of politics became the primary focus, and cultural criticism was moved to the back of the journal in the ‘Arts, Letters, and Entertainment’ section.⁶⁴ This is not to say that there was not an exploration of cultural politics, or that cultural articles were mere reviews or announcements of events, but rather that politics as practice and the politics of culture were now critiqued as related but distinct questions.

Triunfo’s political criticism in 1976, a year in which nobody was in control and nothing was certain, was directed at the referential gulf separating words from the situation on the ground.⁶⁵ For the first half of the year, the government talked plenty about making significant changes: the legalization of political parties, the reform of the penal code, the abolition of state censorship, the right to organize outside of the government union, and a general amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. Of course, it would not have been realistic to think that such things could be achieved overnight. However, as the gulf dividing what was said and what happened in reality widened with time, as speeches about democracy were not followed by actions, the situation reached an untenable point and its contradictions became obvious and absurd.

For example, in March the government authorized a gathering of leftist leaders, after which one participant was jailed and fined a million pesetas for openly declaring himself a communist, though a month later Louis Althusser was openly welcomed by the

⁶⁴ This section had appeared as far back as the November 22nd, 1969 issue, no. 390. However, articles on modernism, Hungarian cinema, etc. continued to be placed centrally throughout the early 1970s, whereas at the beginning of the *transición* such articles hardly appeared anywhere else but at the back of the journal.

⁶⁵ As Javier Tusell writes, “[t]he essential difficulties of the Arias Navarro government derived, especially, from its incoherence and from the limitations of who presided over it.” See Javier Tusell, *La transición española a la democracia* (Madrid: Historia 16, 1991), 39.

state to speak at a university.⁶⁶ Even as late as the 6th of June, already after the right of political association was granted (with the exception of communism) by the government, one could still be arrested if s/he declared such an association according to the penal code because reforms to the code were continually tied up in session or tossed out. The Arias Navarro government maintained a holding pattern: unsure of what to do, unwilling to let go, trying to put forth an image of democracy to the international arena, but hardly doing anything to change the national.⁶⁷ In this it was performing much like the official practice established long ago by Franco: to represent an official reality more real than reality.

Triunfo's textual world wanted to bring the signifier and the signified closer together, for social reality no longer approximated the official reality spoken of by the 'democratic' regime. Juan Goytisolo wrote an article in *Triunfo* arguing that the gap between referent and reality, long maintained by those in power, was beginning to reveal itself:

In one case or another, the oppositional reading material of our periodicals or newspapers... reveals to us a fact with incalculable consequences: the moral scandal of having lived a long and invisible occupation without helmets, guns or tanks, an occupation not of land, but rather of the spirit through the expropriation and seizure of the power and practice of the word by a few. Years and years of illegitimate possession and exclusive end to vacate words of their genuine content by evoking human liberty when defending censorship or praising the dignity and justice of government unions, with the result of sterilizing the subversive potency of language and converting it into a docile instrument of a discourse voluntarily arranged, deceptive and soporific... Opposite this situation of poisoning and asphyxiation, the present system of a tolerated semi-liberty appears to us almost like an early fig: the soothing readjustment of language to the facts, the end to the continuous and painful schizophrenia of living day after day in between two distinct and irreconcilable planes.

⁶⁶ See A. Ramos Espejo, "Louis Althusser, en Granada," *Triunfo*, no. 689 (10 April 1976): 29, "La legalidad y el reformismo," *Triunfo*, no. 684 (6 March 1976): 6.

⁶⁷ See Álvaro Soto Carmona, *La transición a la democracia: España, 1975-1982* (Madrid: Alianza, 1998), 28-35.

[En uno y otro caso, la lectura contrapuesta de nuestros periódicos y revistas... nos descubre un hecho de incalculables consecuencias: el escándalo moral de haber vivido una larga e invisible ocupación sin cascos, fusiles ni tanques, ocupación no de la tierra, sino de los espíritus mediante la expropiación y secuestros por unos pocos del poder y ejercicio de la palabra. Años y años de posesión ilegítima y exclusiva destinada a vaciar los vocabulos de su genuino contenido evocar la libertad humana cuando se defendía la censura, la dignidad y la justicia en materia de sindicatos verticales a fin de esterilizar la potencia subversiva del lenguaje y convertir lo en instrumento dócil de un discurso voluntariamente amañado, engañoso, y adormecedor... Frente a tal situación de envenenamiento y asfixia, el sistema acutal de semi-libertad tolerada nos parece casi una breva: el reajuste lenitivo del lenguaje a los hechos, el fin de la continua y penosa esquizofrenia de vivir día tras día entre dos planos distintos e inconciliables.]⁶⁸

Goytisolo's 'early fig' was still ripening, but it did signal a hope for the present: that discourse, political or otherwise, might now reference the real world. He implied that the occupation of Spanish minds and the evacuation of any perception of a reality different from the logic of those in power was coming to an end, which might now be contested because the power of language was returning to those previously silenced.

However, democracy was scarcely more than an idea at this point. As Javier Tusell writes, "one deduced in the summer of 1976 that a *ruptura* was impossible, as well as a *ruptura pactada*; but reform, which everyone talked about, was not realizable either if it was directed by Carlos Arias Navarro."⁶⁹ Just before Goytisolo's article, in July of 1976, there was some shuffling by the King to replace Carlos Arias Navarro with Adolfo Suárez as president, but this move in itself was hardly a clear indication that reforms would be made in the near future, for Suárez was a loyal member of the Opus Dei and the former Secretary General of the National Movement. Yet, it is instructive to point out that, according to Goytisolo, language had been liberated somewhat already in these early

⁶⁸ Juan Goytisolo, "Hemos vivido una ocupación," *Triunfo*, no. 705 (31 July 1976): 26.

⁶⁹ Javier Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Taurus, 1998), 61.

moments of the *transición*—not enough to make the referent and reality one, but enough that Goytisolo could publish his words of rebuke and condemnation to provide a textual ground for the idea of a present distinct from the past: language was returning to those who had been silenced by the regime, or as Jacques Rancière might phrase it, was “mak[ing] visible what had no business being seen, and mak[ing] heard as discourse what was once only heard as noise.”⁷⁰

For Rancière, such activity—the inclusion of the unseen and unheard, the rupture of a closed system by their insertion into the social as equal subjects with equal voice—is the political:

[w]hat makes an action political is not its object or the place where it is carried out, but solely its form, the form in which confirmation of equality is inscribed in the setting up of a dispute, of a community existing solely through being divided.⁷¹

As the regime faltered without its leader and hero, it was now possible to dispute its ideas concerning Spain’s future, which split a community previously created and regulated by the Francoist regime, thereby opening up spaces for the inclusion of those before invisible and unheard and the practicing of political activity. The idea of what ‘democracy’ and the ‘political’ should and could mean was now a matter of dispute and disagreement. Goytisolo described such a transformation:

Polio-stricken monkey of speech and writing in the hands of pseudo-politicians, pseudo-union leaders, pseudo-scientists, pseudo-intellectuals, and pseudo-writers who, inside or out of the ‘bunker,’ tremble today in panic and sacrosanct indignation in observing that their presumed intangible truths are objects of discussion; that their arbitrary privileges are questioned; that attacking their stale rancid dogmas has ceased to be a sacrilege; watching with fury and impotence as those who have lived in

⁷⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 30.

⁷¹ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 32.

exile or who have been gagged now raise their voices, and who to defend their own cushy positions and perks have to come forward and fight like anyone else; observing, finally, with desolation and dejection that the people have lost respect for them, not because of a zeal for revenge, but rather because of a spirit of equity... Gradual change that day by day, inch by inch, opens new breaches and cracks in the ancient verbal jail erected by censorship, disarticulates the rigid straightjacket that has paralyzed periodicals, and permits the passage of oxygen and fresh air into the long-suffering lungs of the masses.

[Mono polio del habla y escritura en manos de pseudo-políticos, pseudo-sindicalistas, pseudo-científico, pseudo-intelectuales, pseudo-escritores que, dentro o fuera del 'bunker', tiemblan hoy de pánico y sacrosanta indignación al observar que sus presuntas verdades intangibles son objeto de discusión, que sus privilegios arbitrarios son puestos en tela de juicio, que atentar a sus rancios dogmas ha dejado de ser sacrilego viendo, con rabia e impotencia, que quienes habían vivido en exilio o amordazados comienzan a elevar la voz y que para defender sus propias sinecuras y prebendas deben saltar a la palestra y luchar como cualquier hijo de vecino, comprobando, en fin, con desolación y abatimiento, que el pueblo les ha perdido el respeto y no por afán de venganza, sino por espíritu de equidad... Cambio gradual que, día a día, pulgada a pulgada, abre nuevas brechas y grietas en la vetusta cárcel verbal erigida por la censura, desarticula la rígida camisa de fuerza que paralizaba a los diarios, permite la entrada de oxígeno y aire fresco en los sufridos pulmones de la gran masa.]⁷²

Language used to imagine or describe alternate realities was now spoken from mouths not of the select few, and with each breath emitted came the possibility of voicing difference.

Goytisolo attributed the slow pace to the fact that the bunker remained strong and that the public had little experience in critical reflection and articulating divergent political landscapes, or in demanding more concessions from leaders. His piece was a beginning salvo, a call to arms now that words were tools with which to fight:

To abandon the imposed leaders, to examine the specific weight of concepts and words will not be in the near future some rhetorical exercise, but rather will be the indispensable business for national health if we truly

⁷² Goytisolo, "Hemos vivido una ocupación," 26.

want to rid ourselves from the consequences of past oppression and start along the path towards a free and just society, worthy and livable. [Abandonar los cuadros impuestos, examinar el peso específico de los conceptos y palabras no será pues en un futuro próximo un excusable ejercicio retórico sino una empresa indispensable de salud nacional si queremos desembarazarnos de verdad de las resultas de la opresión anterior y emprender la ruta hacia una sociedad libre y justa, digna y habitable.]⁷³

Goytisolo finished by saying that the end to Francoism and the beginning of a new society would depend on the collective work of “us writers, intellectuals, readers” to articulate new experiences, to write a new present defined by a new approach to reality, and make seen and heard those not considered as equal parts of society before.⁷⁴ Goytisolo’s concept of democracy seemed to require, politically and socially, a disagreement that would continually introduce new voices to the debate.

This is like Rancière’s idea of democracy as a process of continual rupture of the social order that make visible and heard heretofore unequal parts. He writes that the social is always ordered as a:

symbolic distribution of bodies that divides them into two categories: those that one sees and those that one does not see, those who have a logos—memorial speech, an account to be kept up—and those who have no logos, those who really speak and those whose voice merely mimics the articulate voice to express pleasure and pain.⁷⁵

The social order is divided into those that participate and create, and those that can only articulate sensations in response, yet this social order is ruptured once the previously invisible without logos speak, “the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciating what is just.”⁷⁶ Goytisolo, long forbidden to speak in

⁷³ Goytisolo, "Hemos vivido una ocupación," 27.

⁷⁴ Goytisolo, "Hemos vivido una ocupación," 27.

⁷⁵ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 22.

⁷⁶ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 23.

Spain, is seen on the page and heard declaring what is just. One who was not considered an equal part of society before, but now is free to disagree, demonstrates a rupture from the Francoist past that had previously silenced and enshrouded any dissenting voices before. The appearance of disagreement signals a moment of interrogation, of redefinition, on the part of those unheard and invisible before. However, there is still the question of whether the democracy that would be instituted after this moment of rupture would be one of continual disagreement, or would work to reconcile competing interests. These are very different imaginations of a democracy, guided by a politics motivated either by ‘dissensus’ or consensus.

At this point, Spain was still not a democracy, but was already motivated by other models of democracy outside. It sat in between the imagination and the realization of democracy, and a study of its transition offers the means to think about what democracy was taken to mean along the way, from conception to inception. We already know how the *transición* would end—it was a transition not only to a liberal democracy guided by the logic of late-stage capitalism, but also from modernity to postmodernity—though a study of how it arrived to institute its particular postmodern democracy allows us to ask what shift in the practice of politics enabled this transition. Thus the questions of what a transition to a liberal democracy entails and how this is achieved politically become central: consensus or dissensus, reconciliation or opposition, and the relationship between the universal and the particular.

To guide our study, the editorials of Eduardo Haro Tecglen in *Triunfo*, appearing weekly, provide a means to analyze steps taken towards democracy at ground level. His writings provide a material ground on which it is possible to follow how a democracy

was created as well as the ideas behind the particular form it took in Spain. With Goytisolo's "early fig" ripening and political criticism burgeoning, Haro Tecglen opened every weekly issue with an editorial documenting political happenings and institutional changes, commenting critically on how they impeded or furthered the push for democracy, and suggesting what was necessary for democracy to exist and survive.

Haro Tecglen has been accused of being a 'collaborator' with the regime.⁷⁷ He did associate with the Falange as a youth, but his donning of the uniform can be understood in light of the fact that by doing so he helped his father's death sentence be commuted to a thirty year incarceration instead. This was a personal and familial position, not an ideological one. After he began writing for *Triunfo* in 1968, he was never a member of any leftist party (neither discretely in Paris or Tangiers during the regime, nor openly during and after the *transición*, though he has referred to himself as a 'red'). He did not take a side, nor did he toe the line; rather, he attempted to place himself at an objective distance from either ideological position, and critique the politics of all parties and politicians if they stood in the way of realizing his idea of a democracy.

Haro Tecglen referred to himself instead as a 'republican child.'⁷⁸ While he certainly was a child before and after the Second Republic's brief history, what he matured into under the regime was a proponent of democracy, which had nothing to do with the question of whether or not a democracy should be coterminous with a republic. The 'republicanism' that Haro Tecglen brought to his idea of democracy was that

⁷⁷ For example, Gregorio Morán published an 'obituary' in the newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, on 10/29/2005 following Haro Tecglen's death, in which he accused him of being a coward and a collaborator. One hopes that this outburst was not only because Haro Tecglen decided against hiring Morán at *Triunfo* during the *transición*.

⁷⁸ See Eduardo Haro Tecglen, *El niño republicano* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1996).

political plurality was necessary for democracy to survive, but also that political divisions had to be lessened so that democracy might first exist. What was remembered about the Second Republic, his lost childhood, was that its demise was the fault of the State, unable or unwilling to mediate the political divisions that led ultimately to the internecine war of ideologies.⁷⁹ Haro Tecglen attempted to take a non-partisan position to observe and comment critically on what was required from the State to meet and mediate political demands and interests.

In a 1976 editorial from just before the referendum to legalize political parties, the Ley de Reforma Política, Haro Tecglen suggested that a democracy is not simply defined by politics or parties, but instead “deals with a new division of wealth—and poverty—of the nation according to more just rules of organization.”⁸⁰ Democracy depends on the character of its institutions, which should guarantee not only the right to vote and political association, but must also ensure economic mobility and social liberty. Haro Tecglen took acts of violence, such as those of ETA or the extreme right, to be surface expressions of a deep fear or mistrust of democracy. ETA assassinated 338 people between 1976 and 1982, and the most famous example of violence by the extreme-right was the Atocha Massacre by the group, Triple A, when on 01/24/1977 five members of a militant labor union and the communist party were murdered.⁸¹ While leftist groups like GRAPO or the regionalist group of ETA accounted for the most deaths (respectively, 29

⁷⁹ See Alberto Medina, "Sharing Loss, or the Ethics of Discontinuity: The Republican Imaginary in Haro Tecglen and Haro Ibars," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (July 2005).

⁸⁰ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "El odio y la violencia," *Triunfo*, no. 715 (9 October 1976): 6.

⁸¹ See Soto Carmona, *Transición y cambio en España, 1975-1996*, 78-79.

and 67 in 1979 alone), the extreme right accounted for the largest amount of violent attacks (roughly 60% of them through 1978).⁸²

Only when institutions functioned “to create the conditions so that protesters do not take to the streets, and to create the abundant and necessary channels of communication to avoid confrontations,” would the violence abate.⁸³ Haro Tecglen believed that such violence was motivated by a disbelief in the idea of democracy, but that once it was experienced, and proven to grant to all the same mobility and liberty, then the violence would cease. For this reason, he blamed the Suárez government for sullyng the idea of democracy by staging referendums that did nothing to feed the hunger for democracy, or quell the panic it induced on the part of an increasingly frustrated public. The only way to discourage violent reactions was to perform the necessary work of eliminating the causes behind disruptions to the public order, which meant working to correct the economic and social inequalities. The democracy had to be visible in reality and not just a rhetorical mirage.

This editorial imagined democracy similarly to Castoriadis’s “genuine democracy”:

a substantial and substantive universality, that can be done only by putting ‘enjoyments’ in their place, by demolishing the excessive importance the economic sphere has taken on in the modern world, and by trying to create a new ethos... connected at its center to man’s essential morality.⁸⁴

Castoriadis suggests that this genuine democracy can only be realized with a corresponding collective imaginary: new norms, values, orientations, and goals for

⁸² See Cayo Sastre García, *Transición y desmovilización política en España (1975-1978)* (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, Universidad de Valladolid, 1997), 147-49.

⁸³ Haro Tecglen, "El odio y la violencia," 6.

⁸⁴ Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," 99.

collective as well as individual life, imagined by and in society then manifested through social institutions. However, Haro Tecglen believed that social institutions should provide the means by which it is possible to make a collective out of individuals, which then make possible the imagination of different norms, values, etc. He argued that for there to be a new ethos, the State has to be constituted by a democratic election of leaders, who then work to guarantee equality in the distribution of wealth and the freedom of expression for all. Haro Tecglen took the transition to democracy to be a process to bind the political, economic, and social together, “to ratify the country to the Western systems of political, economic and social democracy.”⁸⁵ As such, the State would ensure that the national body fragmented by the regime would now be recognized and reconciled, and a new essence would constitute the *demos*.

In a later editorial from just before the 1977 elections (the first in over forty years), he wrote that the transition to democracy would render a new ethical essence formed by national identity: “this country at each grand step, actual or not, examines not only the form of government, system of administration, alteration of social classes, or the better distribution of wealth, but also examines its own essence, its own identity.”⁸⁶ The suggestion is that if a genuine democracy were instituted at the level of the State, then its citizenry would be composed around a democratic ethos. Democratic institutions produce democratic results (economically, politically, socially) and foster a Spanish *demos* with everyone having a fair share and say.

⁸⁵ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Los falsos errores," *Triunfo*, no. 718 (30 October 1976): 7.

⁸⁶ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "La historia y el miedo en las elecciones," *Triunfo*, no. 745 (7 May 1977): 6.

This sounds very much like the notion of the ‘good State,’ which as Badiou points out, is taken to signify the circulation and distribution of goods, the fostering of a national identity, and the guarantee of freedom (of opinion, association, etc.).⁸⁷ The ‘good State’ would effectively, fairly, and judiciously administer the economy, bind the social together, and ensure democratic freedoms and liberties. It is not surprising that a ‘republican child’ imagined democracy be brought about by the ‘good State,’ for as Reinhart Koselleck points out, republicanism is a “concept of movement” in which “republic” becomes a telos towards which history leads.⁸⁸ Haro Tecglen’s expectation for the future was the realization of a democracy, a republic or otherwise, and he measured the progress of the *transición* towards this goal: a ‘good State’ able to mediate differences and bind the social together, all the while respecting individual freedom and liberties, and to promote an ethics of equality concerning wealth and power.

The realization of the ‘good State’ in Spain would not be easy, thanks in large part to the hold of the past over the present. Haro Tecglen wrote

the ‘blank page of history’ is not so blank. History never erases itself: it holds on, it continues on, it mixes itself into the present and the future... It is absurd to think that the past forty years’ monumental creation of a system of power that still prevails and its political class that still sustains itself are not going to leave a significant mark of this supposedly ‘blank page’ that one assumes should be written... The collection of interests and forces that dominate the country maintain their position with great vigor. [la “página blanca de la historia” no es tan blanca. La historia nunca se borra: se arrastra, se continúa, se mezcla en el presente y en el futuro... es absurdo pensar que los cuarenta años pasados y su creación monumental de un sistema de poder que prevalece y de una raza política que se sostiene, no van a tener un peso decisivo en esta supuesta “página en blanco” que se supone que debemos escribir... El entramado de intereses y fuerzas que dominan el país se mantiene con un gran vigor.]⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 83.

⁸⁸ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 273.

⁸⁹ Haro Tecglen, "La historia y el miedo en las elecciones," 6.

However, with a strong and committed opposition, Haro Tecglen believed that eventually a new present could be written into Spanish history. He conceived of the opposition as the means to represent norms and values that would be different from those of the past, thereby granting representation to those parts of society occluded by Francoist regime, and expanding and deepening the understanding of national identity. There was doubt that the present would be freed from the past, for the left remained disorganized leading up to the elections in 1977. For this, Haro Tecglen had often taken them to task for their inability to form a unified coalition, as he maintained that a democracy could only be achieved if the left did not particularize their platforms, for the strength of the moderate right was too great to defeat single-handedly, though this seemed to have changed after the 1977 elections.

After the release of the results, and the announcement that the socialist party, the PSOE, barely finished behind the moderate right, the UCD, Haro Tecglen's doubts diminished. He thought that, with such a large base and a strong showing, the path towards a genuine democracy was all but guaranteed. He celebrated with a fervor that could not be contained on the page, quite literally as his usual two page editorial was a staggering eight pages this time around. He wrote: "After the curious elections on the 15th of June, what has been formed for the immediate present is a bourgeois democracy with a conservative court solidly established, but flanked by a thriving socialist party with dauphin possibilities."⁹⁰ Such a statement took the PSOE's showing (29% of the vote behind the UCD's 35%) to indicate that a significant step towards democracy had been

⁹⁰ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Unas elecciones positivas," *Triunfo*, no. 751 (17 June 1977): 8.

“accomplished.”⁹¹ That 78% of the voting public had turned out was encouraging as well.⁹² However, Haro Tecglen’s celebration of the “positive elections,” the title of the editorial, also contained a warning for the PSOE of the future:

The realization of this party has been spectacular. They have managed to create an image of an uncompromising left... The new historical responsibility of Spanish socialism expressed in the PSOE, which has managed to overcome divisions and splits, is very great. There are European socialist parties...that have deceived or are deceiving the hopes placed on them by left in general, by the non-militant and voting left.
[La realización de este partido has sido espectacular. Ha sabido crear una imagen de izquierda no pactante... la nueva responsabilidad histórica del socialismo español expresado en el PSOE, que ha sabido salir adelante de escisiones y concurrencias, es muy grande. Hay partidos socialistas europeos... que han decepcionado o están decepcionado las esperanzas puestas en ellos por la izquierda general, por la izquierda no militante pero sí votante.]⁹³

The 1977 elections seemed to signal the end of Francoism, but what remained uncertain was what kind of democracy the socialists imagined for the future, or if they would continue to work towards an ethos of equality. There was still much work to be done before it could be said that Spain had entered a democratic present (changing directives for institutions, new economic policies, diminishing the role of the military and eliminating its tribunals), and it was troubling that the UCD were still in power. But, Haro Tecglen issued a reminder to the socialists that they had legitimized their oppositional position, and that they needed to struggle against the UCD to secure a full democracy for Spain:

One spoke of possible pacts at the last hour when it was thought that they would have less seats than they won. Maybe pacts are not necessary. Maybe some compromise is enough... What will occur, then, with regards to an in depth analysis of constitutional reform? This is unknown now. But

⁹¹ Haro Tecglen, "Unas elecciones positivas," 9.

⁹² Tusell, *La transición española a la democracia*, 84.

⁹³ Haro Tecglen, "Unas elecciones positivas," 9-11.

unknown in how the parliamentary left, and the other leftist parties not represented in Parliament, should compel an appropriate path towards reform. If they make good on their directives, it is possible that their public base will carry them out.

[Se hablaba de posibles pactos, cuando se pensaba a última hora que el poder tendría menos escaños de los que ha tenido. Quizá no hagan falta. Quizá baste con algún compromiso... Qué va a ocurrir, entonces, con la profundización de la reforma consitucional? Esto aparece ahora como una incógnita. Pero una incógnita en que la izquierda parlamentaria y las posibilidades de entendimiento de los partidos de izquierda fuera del Parlamento deben forzar hacia un camino apto. Si lo hacen sus directivas, es posible que sus bases se lo impongan.]⁹⁴

What then was the appropriate path for the opposition in instituting a full democracy and following through with their directives after these “positive elections”?

The left could have advocated a dismantling of the State, if such a Leninist idea was even possible at the time, or they could have refused to participate, as some did before the 1976 referendum to legalize parties because it was feared that they would be left out of the political equation. But, really, these were not viable options, for the left believed, just as Haro Tecglen did, that the elections were the necessary first step towards a democracy. Haro Tecglen and the left put so much significance into the elections because they believed that a balanced government (ideally with the PSOE weighted just a bit more) would ensure the drafting of a fair constitution, the establishment of just laws, and the creation of a social space promising freedom and equality. These components—the rule of law, a constitution, individual rights—are those of a liberal democracy. Elections are necessary for a liberal democracy. However, elections, by themselves, are not the *sine qua non* of democracy. They are only a symbolic expression of an individual’s freedom to appear at an appointed time and place to cast a vote, but they are hardly the same as political participation or political articulation as “sonorous speech.”

⁹⁴ Haro Tecglen, "Unas elecciones positivas," 16.

Once elections are taken to signify anything more meaningful than this, then political activity signifies nothing more than a choice between party platforms vying for votes, and the idea of democracy once again is collapsed into a singular type of democracy, that of a liberal democracy.

Haro Tecglen desired democracy to be a national reconciliation and the fostering of an ethos of equality, which is understood, given his biography as a ‘republican child,’ and because of Spain’s history of fragmentation and uneven distributions of power and wealth. His desire for democracy was a future expectation of the righting of wrongs and the inclusion of unequal parts, which would be won through an oppositional struggle. As such, this was a political desire. However, his desire took essentialist and universal form—a national identity, an essence of the *demos*—and thus it is no surprise that the means to fulfilling this desire would take similar form—reasonable debate to promote social and economic justice guaranteed by a constitution and the rule of law. For the left, the socialist PSOE and communist PCE, the means determined the end. Eurocommunism and the new socialism dictated that the revolution would be a matter of reforming the liberal democracy from within, and thus the primary importance was to secure a spot at the table of negotiation. Consensus was the means by which the revolution would become a permanent practice of reforming the State.⁹⁵ However, as Koselleck points out, “within the declaration of the revolution’s permanence lies the deliberate and conscious anticipation of the future, as well as the implicit premise that this revolution will never be

⁹⁵ See Abdón Mateos, "Una transición dentro de la transición: Auge, unidad y 'conversión' de los socialistas," in *Historia de la transición, 1975-1986*, ed. Javier Tusell and Álvaro Soto Carmona (Madrid: Alianza, 1996).

fulfilled.”⁹⁶ There was not a specific end towards which the means were directed, rather it seemed that the establishment of the means was the end. As such, there was nothing political about this activity, for there was no expectation of the future besides its anticipation, and there was no end at stake that had to be won.

Possibly the left was at pains to avoid even the mere suggestion of an antagonistic confrontation, given the calamitous past that Spain was extricating itself from, and the fear that the public had for another ideological conflict. There were examples of antagonistic extremists (GRAPO, FRAP, Triple A, etc.) who were waging a war of sorts on the streets by carrying out brutal assassinations and acts of aggression, and who openly condemned the mere suggestion of a democracy. Or, possibly their participation in working with the right, negotiating consensual pacts and looking for rational solutions to conflicts, was a sign of how politics as practice had changed historically. Castoriadis claims that the waning of political conflict over the last half century is because there is “no longer a struggle over the institutions, but a struggle aimed at the changing of these institutions.”⁹⁷ It was a matter of being in position to reform the institutions from within the corridors of power.

Yet, neither fully accounts for the difference between Haro Tecglen’s political desire for democracy and the left’s desire for an internal reform of the State, for Haro

⁹⁶ Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 54.

⁹⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Crisis of Culture and the State," in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. David Ames Curtis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 222.

Tecglen still did stress the importance of conflict, which is different from consensus. What the fulfillment of his desire required was what Chantal Mouffe calls “agonism”:⁹⁸

[A]gonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are ‘adversaries’ not enemies. This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. We could say that the task of democracy is to transfer antagonism into agonism.⁹⁹

By October of 1977, it was already clear that the PSOE did not conceive of politics as agonism, or that they would propose a new vision of society, such as Haro Tecglen’s imagination of a social democracy. The PSOE, instead of proposing an alternative set of economic reforms to promote the distribution of wealth, worked with the UCD to rework the reforms instituted in the 1960s and 1970s by the regime so as to facilitate the international exchange of goods and capital and stave off a soaring rate of inflation. They gladly sat down with the UCD to hammer out the Pactos de la Moncloa, a set of pacts that required the working and lower classes to sacrifice their interests so that the economy might flourish. The Pactos de la Moncloa will be discussed in detail later, but as Álvaro Soto Carmona points out, while they succeeded in righting the Spanish economy from a free market perspective, they also contributed to the growing social demobilization and disenchantment because they legitimated the continued presence of members of the

⁹⁸ Her notion of “agonism” borrows from Carl Schmitt’s concept of the “political,” though while he locates an us/them struggle between States, she locates this struggle within a State, as a we/they relation. See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976).

⁹⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2005), 20.

regime—financiers, the police, and politicians—that seemed to work against any authentic democracy.¹⁰⁰

However, it was not that the PSOE were too weak to form a viable opposition, or that they simply wanted to get in on the profits. It was that they had already conceived of the democracy as a liberal democracy, as the means to bring about the desired modernization of the nation's infrastructure and the requisite economic expansion that would stop the downward spiral of inflation and unemployment, all of which largely depended upon foreign investment. Together, in order for Spain to gain entrance into the international market, the PSOE negotiated for the institution of the same socio-economic principles sought by the entrenched elites. When they were unsuccessful once again in 1979, González clearly signaled that the PSOE should not be considered as a party opposed to a liberal democracy. He resigned his leadership in protest in May of 1979 when the membership hesitated to renounce Marxism, though eventually they caved and Felipe resumed his leadership post in September. Needless to say, the PSOE would win in 1982.¹⁰¹

To win in the election, they pursued a politics of consensus to appeal to the undecided middle classes, whose primary concern was continued economic development and social stability. By presenting a non-antagonistic face to the public, and avoiding being labeled as part of the militant or extreme left, the PSOE was able to gather enough

¹⁰⁰ See Soto Carmona, *Transición y cambio en España, 1975-1996*, 96.

¹⁰¹ See José Luis García Delgado, "Economía e incorporación a la comunidad europea," in *Historia de la transición, 1975-1986*, ed. Javier Tusell and Álvaro Soto Carmona (Madrid: Alianza, 1996).

diverse voters in order to garner enough votes.¹⁰² The PSOE (and even the communist party, the PCE) had to win over a greater number of the public so as to eventually come out on top and gain control of the government. But, again, this pursuit was a means without an end. They thought that by simply securing a seat at the table, democracy would be achieved.

It was at this point that Haro Tecglen began to examine more critically the consensus required by a liberal democracy. What he first took to be missteps on the part of the left to form an oppositional front, Haro Tecglen began to realize were in actuality clear steps towards consensus rather than competition, an attempt that he began to identify with alarm. As Mouffe points out, “envisaging the aim of democratic politics in terms of consensus and reconciliation is not only conceptually mistaken, it is also fraught with political dangers.”¹⁰³ Haro Tecglen perceived that the antagonistic element of politics, if ignored or thought to have been reconciled, might return all at once and in abundance to threaten the democratic order. Antagonism might erupt if not given a vent for release through agonism. The attempted coup on February 23rd, 1981 would be the ultimate expression of this. 23-F, as this attempted coup was termed, was carried out by leaders isolated from both the right and the left, who attempted to install a military dictatorship and reorder Parliament. Javier Tusell argues that it was a result of the irresponsibility on the part of the political class: Suárez contributed to its occurrence by

¹⁰² See Antonio García Santesmases, *Repensar la izquierda: evolución ideológica del socialismo en la España actual* (Madrid; Barcelona; Iztapalapa, México: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia; Anthropos; Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 1993), 55-82.

¹⁰³ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 2.

leading the nation to a political impasse, just as much as González had by maintaining that the *transición* was over.¹⁰⁴

If democracy was taken to be a consensual reconciling of society—that is, the dismissal of any ideological conflict with respect to interests and beliefs—then a genuine democracy would no longer be possible, if it was taken to be a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects that can never be reconciled rationally, or a competition for hegemony between adversaries.¹⁰⁵ Even though Haro Tecglen perceived that a democracy required an agonistic element, at this point he failed to see that such an element could not be incorporated within a liberal democracy (this would come later). That is, it was not the left's lack of putting up a fight that was at fault; rather, it was the inadequacy of the form of the fight itself.

Because of the fact that the left and right entered into negotiations from the beginning, with Suárez meeting with leaders from the 'opposition' immediately following the 1977 elections, the possibility for Spain to realize an agonistic, and consequently less dangerous, democracy was foreclosed at the same time when many thought that it was being achieved. Though the signs were already present that the political path the opposition would follow would be one of consensus and reconciliation—or as the head of the PCE, Santiago Carrillo, announced as early as 1976,

¹⁰⁴ See Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 173-80. The king stepped in and made clear that the few military leaders behind it did not act on his behalf. There was also a mass mobilization on the streets following the attempted coup. Somehow those removed most from the institution of democracy were the ones who saved the possibility for democracy.

¹⁰⁵ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 21.

a “consensual democratic rupture” not to be understood as “revolutionary”¹⁰⁶—the depoliticization of the practice of politics that would follow the 1977 elections was not immediately apparent, but it was foretold. In late 1977, Haro Tecglen would begin to reflect critically on the ‘modern’ conception of democracy and the limits that it imposed on disagreement, which he became convinced, denied the possibility of democracy altogether with its politics of consensus. This will be the focus of chapter four, but first I turn to the transition in culture. At the beginning of the *transición*, there was a similar desire to represent democracy as a national reconciliation in filmed melodramas, and like the transition in politics, it was represented as the end to ideological conflict. In this, Spanish cinema evidenced a similar tendency towards the ‘modern’ political project to construct a universal *demos* that surmounted political differences, thereby creating a democratic social space of equality and freedom. However, that they are representations allows for a comparison—the differences and similarities—to be made between the emerging practice of politics in reality and the politics of aesthetics in imagining a *demos* and projecting democracy on the screen.

¹⁰⁶ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, “Los límites de la amnistia,” *Triunfo*, no. 706 (7 August 1976): 4.

CHAPTER 3

Filming the Past: The Ethics of Melodrama

Just as the socio-political history of Spain began a new epoch with the present of the *transición*, so too did Spanish cinema enter into a transition. While Haro Tecglen's reportage attempted to document the practice of politics in the immediacy of the present—reporting on contemporary events and actors, telling the facts in order to hold them fixed for the focus of the interpretative eye—Spanish films created worlds temporally and spatially distinct from reality, whose form and content were now marked by this new present. As Fredric Jameson points out, “there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is “in the last analysis” political,”¹⁰⁷ but an analysis and interpretation of Spanish cinema offer a different picture of the political situation of the *transición* than do Haro Tecglen's editorials. In the gap between reality and representation there can be found imaginary visions of past experiences and future expectations that require aesthetics to take form and speak.

Haro Tecglen attempted to capture the nature of the socio-political transition on the page, and determine its essence and function by reporting on events and actors and interpreting the meaning behind them. What culture performed, by contrast, was the telling of a (hi)story in images and words outside of ‘real’ time and space, retelling or

¹⁰⁷ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 20.

foretelling events according to desires for political possibilities, which should not be understood in all cases to be progressive/revolutionary but could just as well be conservative/reformist. That is, the desires that can be read in cultural texts represent diverse political possibilities, though there are social desires more pronounced than others in a given time and place.

At the beginning of the *transición*, representations of the past were most common, returning to past events to situate them with respect to the present. There was a boom in documentaries, often made up of footage from newsreels before or during the war, or of Francoist parades and speeches, and often interspersed with interviews. Basilio Martín Patino's *Canciones para después de una guerra* (*Songs for After a War*, 1976), *Caudillo* (*Supreme Leader*, 1977) and *Queridísimos verdugos* (*Beloved Executioners*, 1977) are most expressive of this tendency, all of which represented experiences of the past on the screen to be seen and reflected on in the present. Given not only the historical distance, but also the referential distance between reality and representation, these films allowed for a critical approach to the past. As Manuel Trenzado Romero points out, until the end of 1977, the theme most prevalent at the beginning of the *transición* in these documentaries was the Civil War and the figure of Franco, which he suggests was a means to reclaim a collective memory of the past.¹⁰⁸ Marsha Kinder likewise argues that these earlier documentaries "refigured" Spanish history, while later documentaries turned towards more contemporary issues.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Manuel Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas; Siglo XXI, 1999), 311-12.

¹⁰⁹ Marsha Kinder, "Documenting the National and Its Subversion in a Democratic Spain," in *Refiguring Spain: Cinema, Media, Representation*, ed. Marsha Kinder (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 73.

In fictional films, the prevailing genres were comedy and melodrama, with comedies dominating the box office, especially the sub-genre of the ‘sexy’ comedy, which as Casimiro Torreiro writes, exploited the “sexual imaginary of the Iberian male” and satirized “national customs.”¹¹⁰ Melodramas, on the other hand, were oriented around history, and for this reason the genre is most often referred to as “historical cinema” and not melodrama, for as Kinder points out “most Spanish discourse in film criticism uses melodrama only in the pejorative sense.”¹¹¹ Following the subversive melodramatic tradition established during the 1950s and 1960s around the New Spanish Cinema, which inverted the ideological import of Francoist melodramas by offering new figurations of the patriarchal family or issues of gender and sexuality,¹¹² melodramas in the *transición* became “the means by which current political and historical issues were investigated” in the post-Franco period.¹¹³

Most often, as we will see in the films discussed below, these investigations seemed to imagine democracy as a national reconciliation and a shared ethics binding individual parts together as a *demos*. Ideological conflict was not represented as within the national body, but rather it was figured as an outside threat to the *demos* by unethical individuals who threatened its constitution. This conflict relied upon a Manichean ‘good’ and ‘evil’ structure to symbolize the desire of a universal and the threat to this possibility (particular ideologies that divided the community, or immoral individuals that

¹¹⁰ Casimiro Torreiro, "Del tardofranquismo a la democracia (1969-1982)," in *Historia del cine español*, ed. Román Gubern (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997).

¹¹¹ Marsha Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 55.

¹¹² Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 70-86.

¹¹³ Stephen Tropiano, *Out of the Cinematic Closet: Homosexuality in the Films of Eloy de la Iglesia*, ed. Marsha Kinder, *Refiguring Spain: Cinema, Media, Representation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 161.

undermined the community). Such representations provided the means to give form and content to the desire for democracy during a time marked by an uncertainty that it could be achieved or instituted given the ideological struggles still embroiling the present. As Chantal Mouffe might put it, the relationship between reality and representation was one of a “struggle between ‘right and left’” in reality and a “struggle between ‘right and wrong’” in film, a relationship of politics and ethics.¹¹⁴

In order to approach this relationship between politics and ethics, in reality and in representation, it is necessary to begin at the beginning: the question of how the *transición* ushered in a new present for Spanish cinema. This involves a consideration of Spain’s film history. Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui Díez, though they do not name names,¹¹⁵ suggest that most film histories of Spain are surveys, which while useful in providing historical facts and figures do not interpret specific films in great detail: “the films themselves, as cultural artifacts, are missing, either because of the critical point of view adopted by the authors or simply due to the lack of space.”¹¹⁶ To approach films as cultural artifacts, Talens and Zunzunegui Díez write, “it is not a matter of proceeding to a diachronic and exhaustive description of a vast field (that of cinema)... [but] [r]ather,

¹¹⁴ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 4, 5.

¹¹⁵ For surveys light in analysis but informative of the industry and general trends, especially helpful when looking at Spanish cinema for the first time, see Peter Besas, *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema under Fascism and Democracy* (Denver: Arden, 1985), José María Caparrós Lera, *El cine español de la democracia: de la muerte de Franco al "cambio" socialista (1975-1989)* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1992), Marvin D'Lugo, *Guide to the Cinema of Spain* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), John Hopewell, *Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema after Franco* (London: British Film Institute, 1986).

¹¹⁶ Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui Díez, "History as Narration: Rethinking Film History from Spanish Cinema," in *Modes of Representation in Spanish Cinema*, ed. Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui Díez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 36-37.

through the discovery and identification of a series of problems, historically dated.”¹¹⁷ As such, a “cartographic history” can be written that avoids any tendency towards generalization and allows for an analysis of specific films as modes of representation addressing a specific set of problems.

However, even film histories that treat individual films as cultural artifacts can still tend towards a totalizing perspective. Antoine Jaime argues that films from this time were involved in “a true ideological fight between supporters of the *status quo* and those of a new society” for how the past should be remembered;¹¹⁸ or, they “dreamed of living another way and demanded with their desires and acts a better future.”¹¹⁹ Spanish films, including melodramas, were just as varied as in any other time, and it was not the case that all were involved in such an “ideological fight,” or that their position in this fight were always clear when they did. Jaime’s film history tends towards totality as a result of his understanding of Spanish history as a simple movement from dictatorship to democracy, whereby democracy, non-critically understood, is a triumph in itself with the ‘people’ freed in the end after the forty years of oppression under the regime. He claims that Spanish cinema was militant in this fight during the whole of the *transición*, which he defines as between 1975 and 1981, which ignores that there were different transitional moments in Spanish cinema’s modes of representation at this time and different sets of questions asked and approaches taken.¹²⁰ To make sense of the political and historical questions that melodramas might have asked, it is necessary to situate them historically,

¹¹⁷ Talens and Zunzunegui Díez, "History as Narration: Rethinking Film History from Spanish Cinema," 23.

¹¹⁸ Antoine Jaime, *Literatura y cine en España, (1975-1999)* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000), 135.

¹¹⁹ Jaime, *Literatura y cine en España, (1975-1999)*, 140.

¹²⁰ Jaime, *Literatura y cine en España, (1975-1999)*, 141.

to then understand how they imagined the notion of democracy differently over the course of the *transición*.

Spanish cinema during the *transición* can be divided into two periods. Many film historians divide film production during the *transición* into at least two stages: the immediate post-Franco period after his death, which some extend back into the early 1970s; and, the constitutional period from 1978 until the election of the socialists in 1982.¹²¹ The first—when democracy was imagined but not yet instituted—stretches from the death of Franco in 1975 to the formal institution of the democracy with the Pactos de Moncloa and the Constitution in 1977/1978. To outline this first period, the film criticism of Diego Galán in *Triunfo* during the *transición* helps guide our approach, for what is important to highlight is, not how cinema prefigured the later cinema of the *transición*, but rather how it differed from cinema under Franco. Galán's criticism stretched over this historical divide. He had developed his critical eye during the years of the *apertura*—or the 'opening' during the 1960s when the regime relaxed its social and cultural controls somewhat in order to promote tourism and attract foreign investment—and had established cine-clubs in the early 1960s and wrote for *Nuestro Cine*, one of the most important Spanish journals to cover and contribute to the awakening and development of cinema under Franco.¹²² Of course, during the Franco years it was not

¹²¹ For a good overview of the historiography of Spanish film history see Javier Hernández Ruiz and Pablo Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2004), 15-44.

¹²² Diego Galán is one of the most distinguished film critics of Spanish cinema. He began writing for *Nuestro Cine* in 1967. Following its collapse, he and Fernando Lara made *Triunfo* renowned for its film criticism. Though Lara would depart to form the more left-leaning journal *La Calle*, Galán continued on at *Triunfo* until the end. Along the way, he directed films and television shows, which he continues to do. He was also been the director of the San Sebastián Film Festival for nine years.

possible to present overtly political representations to the public. Instead, political articulations were made by metaphorical or allegorical inference, and this mode of symbolic representation continued during the *dictablanda*, or ‘soft dictatorship’ of the early 1970s by filmmakers such as Juan Antonio Bardem, Luis Berlanga, José Luis Borau, Victor Erice, Fernando Fernán Gomez, Marco Ferreri, and Carlos Saura.¹²³

After Franco died, there were further relaxations with respect to censorship. Slight at first—one no longer had to have script approval before beginning production, nudity was allowed ever more, and previously unmentionable topics like adultery or homosexuality could be addressed—the Suárez government then relaxed censorship to the point that a transition truly did begin with respect to how the political was represented in Spanish cinema, for representations of political possibility could be explicit in referencing history and ideological conflict. To an unprecedented degree, films near the end of 1975 could approach critical representations of history and ideology to engage the public’s contemplation about how the experiences of the past and the postwar period might be remembered.¹²⁴ Yet, just as socio-political changes were slow to come at the beginning of the *transición*, so too were changes in representation.

Galán, now writing in *Triunfo* after *Nuestro Cine*’s collapse, perceived that cinema had entered into a transition itself, now with the possibility of imagining Spain’s past from new perspectives, which required a symbolical mode of representation different

¹²³ See José María Caparrós Lera, *El cine español bajo el régimen de Franco, 1936-1975* (Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1983), Carlos F. Heredero et al., *Los "nuevos cines" en España: ilusiones y desencantos de los años sesenta* (Valencia: Institut Valencià de Cinematografia Ricardo Muñoz Suay, 2003), Virginia Higginbotham, *Spanish Film under Franco* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

¹²⁴ Caparrós Lera, *El cine español de la democracia: de la muerte de Franco al "cambio" socialista (1975-1989)*, 113.

from the preceding years. In October of 1976, he argued for a new type of cinema: one more sophisticated and critical of history, one that could tell past stories long silenced by the regime, and one that would gesture towards the almost near democracy. At this point, he argued that Spanish films should have the audience consider Spanish history and society explicitly. Because the *transición* seemed to promise that political articulations were possible, because it was more and more imperative that culture become critical as the *transición* seemed to need help getting off the ground, and because cinematic representation was becoming inclusive of previously unrepresented segments of the population, Galán maintained that the clear presentations of political alternatives should be a central concern for Spanish cinema. He recognized that, though films had become more technically advanced (in cinematography, editing, etc.) and thus more sophisticated on the surface, they were not yet critical enough in their representations of the Spanish history, past or present. He wrote that Spanish cinema demonstrated

two fundamental aspects: on one hand, an indispensable 'quality' (well-made, excellent casts, brilliant photography, etc.)... on the other, a dose of political criticism together with a complex anecdote to hide or dissimulate this criticism... films 'critical' of two matters that, hard up for years in our cinema, have never had the opportunity to be developed: the Civil War and its consequences and sex... films authorized by the administration, which possibly gives off a critical air by confronting Spaniards with their History and their responsibility, but such criticism is far from actually existing in the reality of these films. They remain honest products that do not manage... to become real documents of determined aspects of our History or expositions of those who lost before.

[dos aspectos fundamentales: de un lado, una imprescindible "calidad" en la factura (películas bien cuidadas, excelentes repartos, fotografía brillante, etc.)... De otro lado, una dosis de crítica política condimentada con una compleja anécdota que encauce esa crítica o la disimule... películas "críticas" a dos cuestiones que, arrastradas durante años en nuestro cine, nunca han tenido oportunidad de verse desarrolladas: la guerra civil and sus consecuencias y el sexo... autorizada por la Administración, que pueda dar el aire de una apertura crítica que enfrente a los españoles a su Historia y sus responsabilidades, pero que en la

realidad de estas películas está lejos de existir. Siendo productos honestos no llegan... a convertirse en documentos reales de determinados aspectos de nuestra Historia o en la exposición de una España vencida.]¹²⁵

In 1976, steps towards a more critical cinema were tentative, as the regime was very much still in place (Carlos Arias Navarro had just been replaced by Adolfo Suárez as president, political parties and labor unions were still illegal, the referendum to legalize them was two months away, and the elections another eight months, and the penal code was still undergoing reform). However, Galán did still detect initial steps towards a mode of representation to critique “the mythification of heroism and the crusade repeated to us so often.”¹²⁶

Retrato de familia (*Family Picture*, dir. Antonio Giménez-Rico, 1976),¹²⁷ the film under review by Galán, does not tell the story of those who fought against Franco’s forces, thus does not bring to the screen the past experiences of those unseen and unheard during the regime. It represents the history of a family from the winning side that nonetheless loses all the same in the end. The family is held together by reactionary and repressive values—fear, brutality, hate, lies—that cause the family to break apart—the son sleeps with his father’s mistress, then dies on the battlefield, while the father rapes his wife to beget another son, then flings himself out the window when he is rejected by the mistress. All of this undermines the image of family maintained by the regime during

¹²⁵ Diego Galán, "Retrato de familia," *Triunfo*, no. 714 (2 October 1976): 57.

¹²⁶ Galán, "Retrato de familia," 57.

¹²⁷ A brief biography: born in 1939, Giménez-Rico was licensed in law, directed cine-clubs, wrote for the magazine *Cinestudio* and worked on the radio; his first film was made in 1966, which was unsuccessful, so he began to work in television; he returned to make *Retrato de familia*, based upon the book *Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí* by Miguel Delibes, which was his most successful; he also made the film *El disputado voto del señor Cayo*, also based upon a Delibes book, but he has mostly continued to work in television. From Augusto M. Torres, *Diccionario del cine español* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1996), 231.

its long reign, for it shows that behind the illusion of Francoism is a maligned and fragmented morality. Galán applauded this film for presenting a different history of the past. It did not represent a national reconciliation—for example, showing ideologically differentiated families overcoming difference to survive the hardships of the Civil War or the postwar period—but did nonetheless project an image of the ‘victors’ differently than how the regime had often portrayed them. In the familial locus, we see vice instead of virtue, sacrilege instead of piety, and cowardice instead of nobility.

What made this film different from the critical films during the regime was that it was a commercial release and not an ‘art film,’ attracting a large number of viewers instead of being a limited release, or being relegated to cinema clubs and film festivals. *Retrato de familia* had close to 1.4 million spectators in 1976. Compared to the allegorical/metaphorical films from before, this was almost five times the amount for Victor Erice’s 1973 film *El espíritu de la colmena* (*Spirit of the Beehive*), over three times that for Carlos Saura’s 1966 film *La caza* (*The Hunt*), and almost forty times that for Juan Antonio Bardem’s 1955 film *Muerte de un ciclista* (*Death of a Cyclist*)—arguably the three quintessential films of Spanish cinema under Franco.¹²⁸ A new moment in Spanish film history was underway, for not only was *Retrato de familia* critical of Spanish history and society, but it was also distributed into the mainstream market and was a commercial success.

In 1976, the attendance for Spanish films was greater than that for American films by more than 2 million spectators (and greater than British, French, and Italian films combined); and, when one considers that the bulk of attendance for American films was

¹²⁸ See Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 54-196.

derived from only a half dozen blockbusters, it is clear that Spanish films attracted a more stable viewing public.¹²⁹ The stories that it told were free from censorship after the November 11th, 1977 royal decree as well, after which point the government had relinquished all control over production, though a judge could deny a film's right to exhibition if it was somehow deemed threatening to the public order or too pornographic for release in non-specialized theaters, but this did not happen often. Some films were temporarily withheld from exhibition because of a deemed threat to the public order, but all were eventually released.¹³⁰ Only Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom* and Nagisa Oshima's *Realm of Passion* were deemed too pornographic for release. There was a significant threat posed to Spanish cinema, however, as the liberalization of the economy subjected its weak industry to the onslaught of Hollywood's might.

The market became oversaturated by foreign competition following the royal decree of November 11th, 1977, which did away with the obligatory distribution of one Spanish film for every four imported films and only required that 120 days be reserved for the exhibition of Spanish films (though this would be further reduced to one day for every three days of foreign films, or a minimum of 90 days, near the end of the *transición*).¹³¹ Though there were no signs of a decreasing demand for Spanish films, distributors and exhibitors were no longer required to supply them if they did not chose to

¹²⁹ Diego Galán, "Nuestro cine es un desastre," *Triunfo*, no. 812 (19 August 1978): 53-55.

¹³⁰ The film that was denied exhibition for the longest period of time was Pilar Miró's *El crimen de Cuenca*, which was eventually released after a year and a half. Only one other film was ever withheld from exhibition by judicial order, which was Fernando Ruiz's 1980 film *Rocío*, a documentary questioning the importance given to the Virgin. However, there were at least four censors that judged the content of films to be shown on state television until the end of 1980. See Torreiro, "Del tardofranquismo a la democracia (1969-1982)," 370.

¹³¹ Diego Galán, "Peligro de muerte," *Triunfo*, no. 806 (8 July 1978): 22-23.

do so, which happened less and less as more resources were directed towards importation than production, for it was always cheaper to book the bulk goods that Hollywood provided. The fact that there was no longer a dubbing tax imposed on foreign films to provide a monetary base for Spanish films (152 million pesetas in 1975, 170 million in 1976, and 163 million in 1977) greatly affected Spanish production as well.¹³² However, though the number of Spanish films dropped from 112 in 1973 to 101 in 1978 to 88 in 1979—and Spanish films would continue to struggle in the marketplace during and after the *transición*—Spanish cinema was able to maintain a constant enough presence on movie screens to ensure a share of the market and keep the industry afloat even with fierce international competition.¹³³ Though the 1977 decree did slow the development of the industry and keep it from ever fully flourishing—causing Galán to exclaim that “just as Spanish cinema has some chance of truly connecting with the public, of breathing liberty desired for all these years, new decrees kill it off”—Spanish films did survive on the screen and were competitive at the box office.¹³⁴

The films that will be analyzed below all managed to attract nearly one million spectators. This could be because their critical representations of history and society matched the public’s experience of a changing history and society, and thus offered a visual vehicle to remember past experiences and situate expectations for the present or future. However, this potential might be just as easily lost if a film were ideologically extreme, or its form incomprehensible—neither taken seriously, nor understood—which

¹³² Diego Galán, "La nueva ley del cine: tal cómo eramos," *Triunfo*, no. 821 (21 October 1978): 46.

¹³³ Agustín Sánchez Vidal, "El cine español y la transición," in *Del franquismo a la posmodernidad: cultura española 1975-1990*, ed. José B. Monleón and Carlos Blanco Aguinaga (Torrejón de Ardoz: Akal, 1995), 92.

¹³⁴ Galán, "Peligro de muerte," 22.

Galán warned against: “hackneyed, false, cheap topics, without an original or renewed approach to the already known” had to be avoided if cinema were to achieve “the cinematographic possibility of reconciling us with our History.”¹³⁵ Galán argued instead that Spanish cinema provided a lens to the whole of society, “that has been until now limited to the few and privileged readers of expensive books,” by which they could now contemplate and imagine History: “the investigation and obtainment of little known documents and the transmission of information that—on occasion—can only be achieved by the image.”¹³⁶ Galán took films to be the imagination, quite literally, of new narratives of history, or the representation of the “non-contemporaneity” of history, using Ernst Bloch’s terminology, or the “heterogeneity of the historical universe,” using Siegfried Kracauer’s: a present composed of “multiple temporal strands... [some of which] are residues of past eras, others are anticipations of future ones; the significance depends on the larger narrative in which they figure.”¹³⁷

At the beginning of the *transición*, narratives gave significance to the residues of the past. Galán recognized that after Franco’s death, the historical and social landscape was being reimagined and refigured in films. As Walter Benjamin might have phrased it, the past was being burst free from the “prison-world” of the regime’s univocal narrative “by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung debris” the Spanish public might “go traveling” back through it.¹³⁸ What was most important to Galán at this time was to imagine in creative and coherent ways the

¹³⁵ Diego Galán, “España debe saber,” *Triunfo*, no. 736 (5 March 1977): 55.

¹³⁶ Galán, “España debe saber,” 55.

¹³⁷ Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xvii.

¹³⁸ Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 236.

democratic possibilities for the future that the present of the *transición*, and its loosening from the past, offered seemingly all at once. The difference between the two critics was that Haro Tecglen argued that the concepts of social unity and democracy should be interrogated and constructed anew by politics in reality, while Galán focused on how films might contribute to and aid the political process of reimagining history and society in representation. Given that the present was yet to have clear definition, and that an ongoing disengagement with the past was forcibly clear, most Spanish films at this time turned attention to situating the present in relation to the past under the Francoist regime, and to how it instituted and maintained the socio-political sphere.

Galán enthusiastically welcomed the return in Spanish cinema to question and remember history differently, its ideological conflicts and societal divisions, for he took this as the symbolic activity necessary to enable an expectation for a democracy that “Spain might one day happen to know truly.”¹³⁹ A film like *Retrato de familia* narrated experiences of the past that were silenced or ignored. By remembering the past, and offering a history different from that maintained by the regime, it represented the Francoist social unity of the past as one of fragmentation and not cohesion, and it showed the desired national identity of Francoism to be diseased, thus working to deny its past ideology a place in the emerging present. Though the film did not advocate anything specifically political, it explicitly worked to free the socio-political of the present from any ideologies of the past to make way for a democracy, however it might take form.

As Javier Hernández Ruiz and Pablo Pérez Rubio write, *Retrato de familia* was one example of the shift in 1976 towards “historical fiction... [that] reclaimed a

¹³⁹ Galán, “España debe saber,” 55.

revision—a reconstitution—of certain events from a perspective incipiently democratic.”¹⁴⁰ The film returned to the past to warn of a politically indifferent society by critiquing the passivity of the bourgeoisie in face of the approaching Civil War. The protagonist “rejects any type of political compromise” because he believes that his own interests will best be served by maintaining political neutrality.¹⁴¹ Even though he does not explicitly take a side, he still pays a price, losing everything as the war consumes his family and business. Ultimately, he is driven to commit suicide. This film does not make an argument for a particular political project that the bourgeoisie should adhere to or support; it only demonstrates the undesirable, traumatic, and ultimately destructive results when one attempts to remain passive to the threat of an unethical regime and exist outside of its enforced social space: all become immoral and depraved in the end.

There is no explicit demonstration of democratic values or liberties, for there is no display of a plurality of interests or political projects, but there is a clear statement made that individuals must take a stand if this history is to be avoided again. At such an uncertain time in the *transición*, this call serves not to announce the actualization of a concrete democracy, but wants to establish a break from the past so that a democracy might be actualized. Read negatively, what *Retrato de familia* makes clear is that the present needs a different sort of ethics than what Francoism foisted onto past society. In 1976, it was still unclear whether or not there would even be a democracy in the future, but this film is one example among many films narrating the history of the past according to political desires of the present, or as Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio suggest:

¹⁴⁰ Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 114-15.

¹⁴¹ Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 115.

“Spanish cinema appeared to prepare itself to look forward, but also it became aware that to do this, truly, then it had to look back.”¹⁴² To look forward to a new social reality, first there had to be a look back to analyze social disunity during times of ideological conflict and divide and absent of any collective ethos.

More often than not, the catastrophe of the past was represented as a result of political extremism. José Enrique Monterde argues this was because films were made with commercial success in mind and not a critical reflection on history or society: “the tendency towards centrism, understood as negation of any ideological extremism, political or aesthetic, in search of an ‘average’ public.”¹⁴³ He sees this tendency in historical films, and especially in the films of the *tercera vía*, which were comedies representing the ‘new’ Spain and marketed towards the younger generations.¹⁴⁴ To appeal to this large and consumerist segment of the population, who did not identify with either the militant left or the reactionary right, films represented moderation and balance. Yet, it must be remembered that at the beginning of the *transición*, political parties were still forbidden and there was not a clear path towards elections or the numerous other reforms that would take place, and thus this representation of moderation and balance cannot be said to correspond, like a reflection in the mirror, to the practice of consensual politics still to come in reality.

Monterde is right to write that Spanish cinema tended to avoid ideological extremism, which is a clear “indicator of what will be the entire process of the political

¹⁴² Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 116.

¹⁴³ José Enrique Monterde, *Veinte años de cine español (1973-1992): un cine bajo la paradoja* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1993), 21.

¹⁴⁴ Monterde, *Veinte años de cine español (1973-1992): un cine bajo la paradoja*, 64.

transition,” but this is different from being the instigator.¹⁴⁵ Monterde takes Spanish film history to reflect how the social and political history of Spain will be in the future, though it is yet to be at the beginning of the *transición*. There is another way to interpret this centrism, one that does not read film history in a flash forward to a still undetermined future; that is, one that does not conflate aesthetic centrism with the eventual practice of consensual politics. To imagine symbolically a collective ethos as a political desire for democracy is not the same as the real practice of a politics of negotiation and pacts, for the former is a social desire while the latter has social actuality as its referent. Furthermore, for historical melodramas at the beginning of the *transición*, any perceived centrism was an aesthetic effect of the melodramatic mode itself as much as any ideological intent or political desire on the part of their filmmakers.

Melodrama has been understood variously, depending upon historical and national context, as well as whether it was written, performed, or filmed. David Mayer argues that melodrama has “substantially changed style, structure, and subject matter in response to various pressures and events.”¹⁴⁶ As a film form, Linda Williams suggests, it is “marked by “lapses” in realism, by “excesses” of spectacle and displays of primal, even infantile emotions, and by narratives that seem circular and repetitive... [T]he form exceeds the normative system of much narrative cinema.”¹⁴⁷ The excessiveness of its form has been understood in terms of affect, that it must exceed the limits of realism imposed by classical narrative style in order to elicit a sensational response on the part of

¹⁴⁵ Monterde, *Veinte años de cine español (1973-1992): un cine bajo la paradoja*, 54.

¹⁴⁶ David Mayer, review of *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensationalism and Its Contexts*, by Ben Singer, *Modernism/modernity* 9, no. 2 (April 2002): 346.

¹⁴⁷ Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer, 1991): 3.

the spectator. However, as Mayer insists, “sensational melodrama” is only one type, a minor one at that.¹⁴⁸ What defines melodrama is less its intended effect and more its historical cause, less what response it elicits and more what it responds to through its mode of representation.

Peter Brooks argues that “within the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath” melodrama is a fictional system that makes sense of experience:

This is the epistemological moment which it illustrates and to which it contributes: The moment that symbolically, and really, marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society, and the invalidation of [forms]—tragedy, comedy of manners—that depend on such a society.¹⁴⁹

The context of the French Revolution and post-Franco Spain are quite different in that the specific content of what is liquidated, shattered, and dissolved is not the same, but there is still a similar structural relationship at play between reality and the representation of it. With both, there was a historical movement away from a notion of the Sacred that informed and fixed meaning and guided social relations, from the myths that instructed meaning and ethics, and from an organic and cohesive society instituted as a result. Of course, it can certainly be argued that society under the regime was hardly cohesive, and that the regime’s myths were pure fantasy, but this does not discount that its Sacred was still successfully instituted into the social, regardless of whether underneath its smooth veneer there were fractures. What does matter is that the fractures were made visible by

¹⁴⁸ Mayer, "Review of *Melodrama and Modernity*," 346-47.

¹⁴⁹ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 14-15.

the *transición*, thus liquidating the regime's myths and its Sacred notion of *patria*, *familia*, y *Diós*, and that a void was left over to be filled.

As Kathleen Vernon notes, after the death of Franco, “[m]elodrama provides the mode of exploring the breakdown of old hierarchies and the resulting dissolution of barriers and boundaries in a post-patriarchal, post-religious Spain.”¹⁵⁰ Yet, it is not only that it provides a mode of exploring, but also that melodrama provides a mode of representation to fill in the void, to substitute substance for the lack. Without the Sacred to guide actions, without an ethics learned through the reading of myths, and especially in a society uncertain of itself, melodrama offers up a representation of a Sacred—an ethical system to inform and bind the community—to counter its loss in reality. As Mayer observes, melodrama steps in “when events occurred that were not immediately subject to rational explanation or where explanations of phenomena were numerous and contradictory and the comforting presence of divine justice was absent.”¹⁵¹ This was certainly the case at the beginning of the *transición*, when it was unclear if the regime would fight to hold on, or if there would be a rupture and a historical movement beyond, and the question of social or ethical justice was unanswerable.

Brooks is right to suggest that other forms such as tragedy refer to a notion of the Sacred that gives action and thought significance. Its narration is a tale of normative ethics, of how one should act, or the collision of multiple prescriptions. Melodrama, on the other hand, narrates descriptively, representing what one simply does. It is not concerned with asking what is right and wrong, or why, but rather displays clear-cut

¹⁵⁰ Kathleen Vernon, "Melodrama against Itself: Pedro Almodóvar's *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*," *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Spring, 1993): 30.

¹⁵¹ Mayer, "Review of *Melodrama and Modernity*," 346.

distinctions between the two. Robert Lang defines melodrama as a demarcation of “clearly legible differences on all levels. It is a world of binary structures: men and women, masculine and feminine, the ‘right’ side and the ‘wrong’ side.”¹⁵² This is what makes melodrama excessive: precisely when an ethos is absent in reality, and seems to be a remote possibility, it represents an ethos unproblematically as if it were clearly present. Its villains and victims could not be more obvious, which provides a simple ethical order to counter the overwhelming disorder in reality. As Mayer argues, melodrama is:

an explanatory narrative that attribute[s] public disaster and private tribulation to the malign operation of evil seeking to overcome goodness... [whereby] evil [is] represented through the character and actions of the villain, and unwelcome events occur[r] because the villain, motivated by greed, avarice, lust, jealousy, and other antisocial impulses, intentionally [brings] misfortune to good people.¹⁵³

Melodrama shows the dissolution of a cohesive society to be the work of antisocial elements motivated by their own individual interests.

In melodrama, these villains are inflected ideologically. The ‘good’ of the community, its ethos, is threatened by villains not only motivated by profit and greed, but also by an ideology counterpoised to that of the *demos*. Melodramatic tension is built around the struggle between a universal, non-ideological, and particularities, represented as ideological. Of course, the ‘good’ community united through a shared ethics is just as much an ideology as the others. Ideology is not a party platform or a particular means of instituting the State, nor is it truth as opposed to bad faith. It concerns social relations, much like Terry Eagleton’s definition of ideology as:

¹⁵² Robert Lang, *American Film Melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 163.

¹⁵³ Mayer, "Review of *Melodrama and Modernity*," 346.

an organizing social force which actively constitutes human subjects at the roots of their lived experiences and seeks to equip them with forms of value and belief relevant to their specific social tasks and to the general reproduction of the social order [though] those subjects are always conflictively, precariously constituted.¹⁵⁴

Ideology institutes the social, constitutes subjectivity, and informs values and beliefs, as does the ethos of the democratic community. However, in melodramas the democratic ‘ideology’ is naturalized in representation—universal, informed by sacred notions of justice and equality, essential—while other values, beliefs, and social forces are represented as ideological villains. To fill the void left after the dissolution of the Franco regime, past ideologies from both the left and the right were represented as the villains, and an ethical *demos* as its victim.

Pedro Olea’s *Pim, pam, pum... ¡fuego!* (*Ready, Aim, Fire!*, 1975) represents such a struggle between the universal essence of democracy, an ethos of equality, and the particular ideologies that undermine its possibility during the immediate postwar period. Olea was born in 1938, graduated from the Official School of Cinematography, and wrote for *Nuestro Cine*.¹⁵⁵ He began directing television shows before his film debut in 1967, though his first real success was *Tormento* (*Torment*, 1974), adapted from Benito Pérez Galdós’s novel. He then went on to make *La Corea* (*The Chorea*, 1976), about homosexuals and prostitutes in Madrid; then, *Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño* (*A Man Named Flower of Fall*, 1978) about a 1920s lawyer/transvestite living in Barcelona under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.

Monterde applauds the “filmic recuperation of memory” in *Pim, pam, pum... ¡fuego!* because the film frames the postwar period “realistically” from the perspective of

¹⁵⁴ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 222-23.

¹⁵⁵ See Torres, *Diccionario del cine español*, 351-52.

those who were on the losing end after the war.¹⁵⁶ However, this is a type of film criticism intent only on interpreting the content of the narrative and not the film form, on evaluating the story but not the melodramatic mode. Monterde salutes the remembering of past experiences from the perspective of those who were victimized by Francoism, but does not analyze the melodramatic form used to render the film's villains and victims. Taken simply as a story, Monterde can claim that *Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego!* offers a "radicality...rarely equaled" in its recuperation of the past, but the question of how a representation of the past, melodramatically, functions to fill the ethical void at the beginning of the *transición* and substitute the ideology of democracy for past ideologies is left unanswered.¹⁵⁷ This film is 'radical' in that it is one of the first to offer a perspective of the past from the losing side, and it certainly represents the lives of those struggling to survive the initial years of the postwar period like no other of its time. We see how the autarky instituted after the Civil War established a strict division between the few who had connections and controlled the exchange of goods, mostly on the black market, and the many who had to scrounge for food, employment, and housing.

However, while in reality the haves and the have-nots were divided along ideological lines—nationalist or republican, blue or red, right or left—this is not the line distinguishing the film's villains from its victims. They are instead differentiated by self-interest or self-sacrifice, vice or virtue, depravity or civility: an ethical difference of 'good' and 'evil' rendered melodramatically. Thus instead of looking for elements of correspondence between the 'reality' of the past and diegetic reality, it is more instructive

¹⁵⁶ Monterde, *Veinte años de cine español (1973-1992): un cine bajo la paradoja*, 63.

¹⁵⁷ Monterde, *Veinte años de cine español (1973-1992): un cine bajo la paradoja*, 158.

to identify how the past is represented, and what such a mode of representation signifies for the present of the *transición*.

The film begins on a train traveling from Sevilla to Madrid. In one shot, we dolly down the aisle of the train, moving from flamenco singers (the train is coming from Andalusia after all), to neighbors across the aisle sharing cigarettes and a wine skin and breaking bread together, then we arrive at our heroine, Paca. She is then framed in a medium shot, identifying her as our central protagonist, and in this case, our soon-to-be melodramatic victim. Paca sits across from Luis, a *maquis* on the run to France, who shares his bread and chorizo with her when asked. The collective sharing of goods and the congeniality of the shared space seems to be immune from the discord and misery of the postwar: a good-natured people unified even with the disorder of society just outside the windows. But, this collective is broken up with the arrival on the scene of two officials demanding documentation. For Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, this scene shows the division between “those in power and their victims of oppression” and it condemns the ideology of Francoism as represented by the officials.¹⁵⁸ This is like the division proposed by Monterde, a representation of the price demanded by Francoism and paid by society.

However, this scene does not have such a clear ideological target. True, there are two authority figures, who are obviously members of the regime, but this is not what sets them apart from the people on the train; in fact, there are no looks of fear nor is there distress, except on the part of Luis, who flees the car, which would have been a moment of excessive brutality and repression if this melodrama were aligned around ideological

¹⁵⁸ Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 94.

poles (*guardias* entering the car with menacing stares looking to ferret out any ‘reds’ and possibly injuring some innocent party along the way). Instead, the officials are first defined as separate from the collective of the car, as they move through it, then they are singled out as immoral individuals, when they approach Paca in the bathroom.

After Luis flees, Paca pursues him and stops him from jumping recklessly off the train, then hides him in the bathroom with her. When the officials knock to ask for her papers, she pulls her panties down, and opens the door. They take a full glance between her legs before shutting the door. But, they are not the only one who takes in the view: Luis does too from the bathroom floor. Here then we have possibly an unethical look from above and one from below. There is a difference in ideological perspective—Francoism has the power to look down at Paca, while the *maquis* has to look up—but their gazes have the same victim: Paca’s virtue. This scene, instead of setting the stage for a series of ideological conflicts to be repeated throughout the film (in fact, regime officials are never seen again), signals the melodramatic body that will be victimized innumerable times and makes clear that both sides of the ideological divide will be the immoral villains.

Looking back, now more closely, a similar proposition had already been announced in the dolly scene. The collective that the scene holds together—sharing resources, good-natured and respectful to others, singing and dancing—is ideologically complex. There are members in this group from both the losing and winning sides. There are flamenco dancers, working class Andalusians who by and large were opposed to the regime. Yet the man who asks for a cigarette is reading *Pueblo*, an unabashed and deliberate mouthpiece for the Falange, the Spanish fascist party, and the National

Movement party. Both the informal ‘you’ and the formal ‘you’ can be heard in conversations between those sharing bread and wine, which reveals an admixture of those from both the losing and winning sides. The organizing social force is not an ideology, but rather is an ethics, a sharing and concern for one’s neighbor, a recognition of each individual’s freedom and equality: an ethics fitting of a democracy. However, the film does not represent this democratic space as a space in which ideologies that contest each other ultimately respect the other’s legitimacy. Rather, the scene acts to diffuse ideological differences symbolically by displaying these supposedly distinct ideological subjects sharing the same universal essence of a democratic ethos. To this, in following scenes, will be opposed the immoral villains that threaten the collective, individuals who seek to impose an alternate organizing force upon society.

After the train, we then follow Paca—the figure of the universal essence—and witness the spectacle of her victimization again and again. She is a singer struggling to support herself and her invalid father, a republican who was wounded during the war. Luis pursues her through the streets. He admits that he had been fighting Francoist forces in the mountains, and that he now needs to escape. He has to wait for a set of identification papers in order to cross the border, but he knows no one in Madrid. She allows him to stay with her and her father, though adding that just when it seemed that things could not be worse, he brings this additional ideological baggage with him, which only promises to add to the family’s hardship. She will have to provide for him, just like her republican father, both of them confined to the house. They cannot enter into society, for their ideology is a disability, whether in body as for the wounded father, or in spirit as for Luis unable to escape from his shadowy existence.

She was barely managing to provide for herself and her father, so the addition of Luis has put her in a bind. Paca, now overwhelmed with financial responsibility, reaches out to Julio, a black market profiteer who will ultimately prove her undoing. Julio's price for helping her gain employment and secure an apartment through his nefarious connections is that she sacrifice her virtue and become his mistress. However, while he is brutal in his villainy, hitting and forcing himself upon Paca, Julio is not the only villain. Luis too performs a type of villainy albeit less extreme. He watches Paca undress each night in the one-room apartment. After some time, she reaches out to Luis for comfort after Julio has exacted his price from her one night, at which point he does just the same. Later, he watches her perform in the cabaret, taking in her scantily clad routine. Luis is not in a position to make demands of her like Julio, for Luis is ultimately powerless, but he profits from the weakened and compromised position of Paca that results. He may not cause her demise as a direct result of his own immorality, but he is immoral all the same in that he takes advantage of the situation: Paca's body, what goods she can scrounge up, and the protection of her apartment while he waits for identification papers. He then walks away from her when he thinks that he has secured legitimate documentation, which is precisely when she needs him most as protection from Julio, who has found about Luis and is homicidal.

The fact that Julio contributes to the death of Luis—a newspaper announces that a *maquis* without proper papers, which Julio had procured, was shot by the police—and murders Paca—shooting her point blank then kicking her lifeless body into a ditch—has Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio take Julio to be the sole villain in the end. They write that the most interesting aspect of this film is

not its tendency towards realism in the description of the devastation of Spain in the 40s, nor its dialectical approach to the traumatic and unequal lived experience of the powerful and the victims of oppression, but rather its useful... ideological formulation to confront two antagonistic concepts of morality: the supported one by way of corruption, blackmail, influence pedaling, and the abuse of power, and the accredited one by the reciprocal solidarity between the losers to palliate the voluntary inattention of a State more interested in taking revenge and exercising repression than in attenuating public misery.¹⁵⁹

According to them, the film represents the postwar period's contrasting moralities to depict 'realistically' the cost of the regime's "abject objectives" paid by those from the losing side.¹⁶⁰ But, again, there is a single morality—the universal, non-ideological essence of Paca—that is victimized by both Julio and Luis—who are both ideological and immoral, only different in degree. That is, both Francoism and the ideology of the left (the film depicts it variously as pre-Civil War or postwar *maquis* republicanism) are indicted as villains. Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio read the film from a perspective, like Monterde's, that looks to the story to find its meaning and significance for the *transición*, but do not analyze its structure. As such, they are trapped in the diegetic reality, but do not perceive that the melodramatic form is structured around victims and villains in order to imagine a notion of the Sacred that binds society and makes it cohesive. In *Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego!* this is the ethics of the collective as represented in the first scene, a collective to which Paca belongs, but to which Luis and Julio do not.

Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego! has been interpreted by Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, and Monterde, to represent two conflicting ideologies in the 'love' triangle between Luis, Paca, and Julio, the latter who, through immoral means, exacts a price

¹⁵⁹ Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 94.

¹⁶⁰ Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio, *Voces en la niebla: el cine durante la Transición española (1973-1982)*, 95.

from the other two and causes their deaths. This kind of interpretation asks that the film's representation of the conflict between morality and immorality be read as a 'real' depiction of the ideological struggle between the left and the right, republicanism and Francoism, in the postwar period, and that the film be read as an attempt to renarrate the past to allow a more ideologically nuanced representation of the past to appear on the screen. However, the film is melodramatic in its mode of representation and tells the story of how Paca is a victim of immoral 'love.' Paca, the moral representative of the majority who collectively struggle and are made to suffer, is destroyed by those who are immoral in that they are motivated only by individual interests or ideology, which are both condemned. Thus the film works to renarrate the past, not to read the reality of the ideological conflicts of the time, but to symbolize the possibility of a democratic ethos lost because of ideological conflict in the past, and to imagine its possibility again for the present of the *transición*.

Las largas vacaciones del 36 (*The Long Vacations of 36*, 1976), by Jaime Camino, is another melodramatic representation of the past. Born in 1936, Camino was licensed in law, wrote for *Nuestro Cine*, and was a member of the experimental Barcelona School, though he made more commercial films than others of this group.¹⁶¹ His first feature was *Los felices 60* (*The Happy Sixties*, 1963) was a contemporary picture; however, his documentary *La vieja memoria* (*The Old Memory*, 1977) was a historical film that returned to the past, which he focused on as well in *El largo invierno* (*The Long Summer*, 1991). The historical focus of *Las largas vacaciones del 36* is the Civil War, and its protagonists are the bourgeoisie, who are shown trying to remain free

¹⁶¹ See Torres, *Diccionario del cine español*, 132.

of ideological conflict by retreating to a mountain village outside of Barcelona. Some take the funicular back and forth to the city to work during the day, and are subject to conflict there, but once back in the village, the closest signs of the war are distant rumbles or flashes in the night from either the city's defenses or its bombardment. A school is even established so that the children never have to return. What was a place for vacationing becomes a place to live year round as the families hunker down to wait out the war.

When the film starts, it seems that the war, or the ideological divide behind it, might upset the tranquility of the village, as there is a shootout in the village when four fascists and a priest attempt an right-wing uprising, but the working class villagers put it down. At the same time this is occurring, the film shows a pregnant bourgeois woman rushing to the doctor's office to make sure that the pandemonium and gunshots have not upset the baby. What is represented here is a motif that will be repeated again and again: the bourgeois family threatened by ideological conflict even if they have not taken a side.

The bourgeoisie is not aligned with the villagers, who are organized around the ideology of the left (a mixture of republicanism, anarcho-syndicalism, and Catalanian regionalism), and we never actually see members of the right except during the failed uprising. CNT-FAI trade unionists maintain vigilance around the village, administer its government, and at a local dance their banners hang everywhere, but the bourgeoisie are never represented in these spaces. Instead, the bourgeoisie are only shown in familial spaces. The worlds are distinct with no overlap. While there are traces of ideology in the familial space, they have no real presence. The republican grandfather in Jorge's home listens to war reports on the radio, while the children round up fascist spies and execute

them in the yard. In another family, there is a fascist supporter who pretends to drive his car over the reds behind a bricked up wall. There does seem to be an exception: Quique, Jorge's nephew, joins the republican army once he comes of age. However, his case is different. He is not a full member of the family—he only lives in Jorge's house because his father died and their familial space was broken up—and his crossing over is not represented as a reconciliation of the two groups. Quique is represented as a threat to the family order, for he upsets the household by engaging in an affair with the maid, which he had carried on secretly in his private room.

The bourgeoisie's shared dedication to family is an organizing force, but this is not an ideology because it functions to isolate familial space from social space. The bourgeoisie are not aligned with the ideologies of the left or right either. The two principle families of the film, Jorge and Ernesto's, seem to support opposite sides in the war, yet they go on excursions together in the woods, have picnics, and create a school in the village for their children to share thus avoiding a return to the city or the war. Political allegiances are represented as inconsequential whereas the shared dedication to family and work is what binds the bourgeoisie together, which is best represented when they all discuss the war one day. Ernesto laments, and others agree, that there are militants on the right, anarchists on the left, while those tending to their families and businesses, the bourgeoisie, are trapped in the middle. Ideological conflict is a threat to the family order no matter one's supposed allegiance to a side. The families are eventually forced to compete for scarce resources as the situation becomes more dire. However, the families are divided by blood and not ideology, a division that crosses ideological lines as each family unit attempts to survive the duration of the war. The bourgeois family is the victim

of the villainous war carried out in the name of ideology, and they are all scattered into individual parts when forced to evacuate the village on foot at the end of the film.

One might read this film then as a melodrama built around the structure of the bourgeoisie as victims and the ideological conflict between the right and left as the villains, which posits an ethics based around family as the counter to the dissolution of society and its disastrous effects. However, looking more closely at how the bourgeoisie are represented, the film offers an alternative reading of villain and victim: they are the villains because they extricated themselves from society instead of defending it, thus making the village the victim. That the villagers are represented excessively, as primal and infantile, reinforces their figuration as melodramatic victims. They are not victimized by the bourgeoisie in the sense of villains taking advantage of a sweet and simple disposition, but rather in that the bourgeoisie do not provide guidance, instruction, and resources (one scene stresses that Jorge would rather prefer performing clinical tests on mice in his home office than tend to the wounded). The film possibly renders the village as lost without the bourgeoisie, and subject to the threat of an opposing social force (the Francoist forces are never seen, but they approach steadily to destroy the village). That is, the bourgeoisie are not like the wretch who threatens the virtuous maiden in a sensational melodrama, but neither are they the man who saves her and foils evil at the end. Instead, *Las largas vacaciones del 36* offers a more complex melodrama in which the villainous act is that the bourgeoisie, flush with resources (education, money, etc.), did not integrate themselves into the social space, which was destroyed by its lack of participation. In this, the village is symbolic of the 'people' to be ordered by an organizing social force, who fall prey to fascism because of an absconded bourgeoisie who leave the village to defend

themselves, and who cling to an form of left ideology that does not organize them effectively or save them from Francoism.

The maid, both primal when seen dancing or copulating with Quique and infantile in histrionics, relies upon Jorge's family to read letters from her brother fighting on the front. She needs their education to identify with the struggle occurring in the social space, but they do not identify with what they read to her, and eventually have no more time to give her. The teacher hired for the private school is from the village, and who is a vocal republican, remains silent in the classroom because he is sick and hungry. He provides a service to the bourgeoisie, but no care is given to his situation outside the classroom doors. Finally, when the CNT-FAI take over the administration of the village, they are unsure of what to do, except that all in the village should use the informal 'you' when speaking to each other. The maid, arriving back at Julio's home after the meeting, makes an impassioned demand that the informal 'you' be used, which causes all to promptly laugh and they continue on just as before. Symbolically, again and again, the interests of the village are stymied by the bourgeoisie, either by ignorance or in pursuit of their self-interests. What is lost is the possibility of cultivating a universal essence combining both the villagers and the bourgeoisie, a cohesive social unity that could have resisted Francoism. The ultimate victim in *Las largas vacaciones del 36* is the loss of a unified society, in which the interests of the bourgeoisie and the working class villagers are both served.

No collective is ever realized because the bourgeoisie never pushed to organize society, their lack of faith left the possibility of its Sacred status to perish, a 'wrong' disallowing the 'right' community to become. The ideology of Francoism filled the void

because no other ideology—or organizing social force—opposed and contested it. In the end, both the families and the villagers are displaced by the forces of Francoism, which the film represents as the fault of the bourgeoisie, for only they could have directed the organization of the ‘people’ otherwise: a democracy requiring their participation to mature beyond its infantile expression by the villagers and become a bourgeois democracy. The final image of the film represents how Francoism forced the dislocation and division between and within the groups, as individually, figures scatter across the screen to travel alone into the immediate future. The victim in this film was the possibility of proposing an organization of society different from that which it would become under Francoism. Melodramatically, *Las largas vacaciones del 36* offers the uncertain present of the *transición* a clear-cut representation of how now to form a cohesive society after its dissolution, imagining past experiences as a future expectation for a bourgeois democracy.

This is different than the democratic ethos represented in *Pim, pam, pum... ¡fuego!* In the former, the collective is organized around a universal and ethical essence, which is represented as Sacred and symbolizes the ‘good’ that is threatened by the ‘evil’ of all ideologies. In the latter, the collective never coheres because the *sine qua non* of its essence, the bourgeoisie, turned its back to the Sacred and isolated itself in a familial space, thus symbolizing the ‘wrong’ done to the possibility of the ‘right’ social force that could have opposed Francoism. However, even though the films represent different social ‘realities’ diegetically, both offer melodramatically political codes for the reality of the present. As Manuel Trenzado Romero writes, “[t]his type of cinema [a recuperation

of collective or historical memory] intends not to realize rigorous analyses of the past, but rather to ‘re-read it’ from the new political codes of the present.”¹⁶²

The code of *Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego!* imagines the political to be an organization of society realized ethically and not ideologically, a reading of the past to represent the victimization of the *demos* by the immorality of a few, which the present should disallow with the institution of a democracy. *Las largas vacaciones del 36* offers up a different code, in which the political is the active constitution of a bourgeois democracy, which was victimized by the lack of responsibility on the part of the bourgeoisie in the past, and which requires their participation in the present to unify society.

Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego! was released around Franco’s death, and *Las largas vacaciones del 36* was released over a year later, three months after Suárez had been made president; thus these codes have to be understood in relation to the early years of the *transición*, a period of imagining the possibility of democracy and not one in which the political process of instituting a liberal democracy had begun. They both project the political desire for the establishment of a democracy, and do so by representing why the potential or possibility of democracy had been lost in history before. They both represent a set of obstacles to, or the destruction of, a democratic-like social unity in the past, so that democracy might exist now that Francoism has reached its end. They are not allegorical readings of the past, as they were (and had to be) in the 1960s and early 1970s before Franco’s death: instead of the past prefiguring the present under Franco, it is the Francoist past that disfigures the uncertain and conflicted present. For this reason, the mode of representation they employ to retell the past and project an image of cohesion in

¹⁶² Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición*, 311.

the immediate future was melodrama: the excessively clear-cut depiction of ideological villains and its democratic victims. This is a new moment in Spanish cinema, a period of historical melodramas returning to the past and offering multiple narratives imagining democracy as a cohesive society precisely when the social was fragmented and between histories.

Las largas vacaciones del 36 represents a political code to present a unified opposition to prevent the continuation of Francoism so that a democracy might take hold. Other films, like the aforementioned *Retrato de familia* or *La guerra de papá* (*Daddy's War*, dir. Antonio Mercero, 1977), return to the past to represent how divisions among distinct, but not ultimately opposed, groups allowed Francoism to succeed. These films, too, represent democracy from the perspective of the bourgeoisie who absented themselves from society. This absenteeism is demonstrated to be the villain that made democracy its victim by allowing Francoism to fill the void. *Pim, pam, pum...¡fuego!* represents a political code that presents democracy as a shared ethics unifying society, which was denied in the past because of the villainy of ideology. Imagined for the present is a cohesive society around an ethos of equality and fraternity, not victimized by ideology, which is represented similarly in such films as *Los días del pasado* (*The Days of the Past*, dir. Mario Camus, 1977) or *Asignatura pendiente* (*Unfinished Business*, dir. José Luis Garci, 1977) in which reconciliation is a return to the ethical.

These codes structure political desires for a democratic future and not political positions from which to specifically participate in the construction of the democracy. That is, these films are signs of political anxieties concerning the past and political desires for the present as the *transición* began. It is important to consider these initial

codes in relation to the instability and uncertainty of the moment, and not just as demonstrations of the consensual processes still to come, as Monterde does in his film history; nor, as confronting the reality of the past, as Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio take them to be, for they are melodramatic renderings of the past to symbolize political possibility for the present. They are imaginary representations of a political desire for democracy, and examples of what Trenzado Romero calls a *cine de reconocimiento*, or recognition/examination: a cinema for recognizing in the past a means for “collective identification” by which to examine the present.¹⁶³

The films return to the past to represent a collectivity that has not coalesced in the present, a desire taking shape in representation for what reality might be. That the films represent such a collective either simplistically, as a clear-cut ethical community undermined by avarice and cruelty in *Pim, pam, pum... ¡fuego!*, or from an elevated and possibly condescending perspective, as a ‘people’ who require the leadership of the bourgeoisie to guide and instruct them, is less important than the appearance of the screen of imaginations of political and historical positions oriented towards democracy. The “collective identification” here is a matter of returning to the question of how a social unity might be formed again after the fragmentation and dislocation imposed by the Franco regime, a crucial question to ask if there is to be a democracy at all. John Hopewell writes, these films “drawing parallels between past and present found deep analysis difficult partly because they lacked present coordinates to work out their own

¹⁶³ Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición*, 306.

historical conditions.”¹⁶⁴ Through the melodramatic mode, however, representation stepped in to provide coordinates that reality did not provide.

After the Pactos of Moncloa and the process to draft and ratify the Constitution from 1977 to 1978, there would be other political codes offered by Spanish melodramas, not directed towards the past but towards the present and its different set of villains and victims. Following the institution of Spain’s liberal democracy, another period of cinema in the *transición* would begin, a *cine de conocimiento*, or knowledge/consciousness, intent on “reflection and political analysis” concerning the democracy that was instituted.¹⁶⁵ As Trenzado Romero writes, “the political transition is a privileged moment of the interdependence between the logic that governs the political changes and that of the cinematographic changes.”¹⁶⁶ As politics transitioned, so too did desires for and representations of political possibility, which means that film histories of Spanish cinema should not consider the entirety of films from 1975-1982 as a cohesive set of films, which Monterde, Hernández Ruiz and Pérez Rubio seem to do, for this disallows a reading of films as cultural artifacts involved in a melodramatically symbolical act that changed just as much as the socio-political landscape did in reality over these seven years.

Before turning to the second half of the *transición*, and the changing logic of politics and cinema, I offer a few comments about the documentary, *El desencanto* (*The Disenchantment*, dir. Jaime Chávarri, 1976), as a segue.¹⁶⁷ Trenzado Romero suggests

¹⁶⁴ Hopewell, *Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema after Franco*, 110.

¹⁶⁵ Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición*, 306.

¹⁶⁶ Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición*, 328.

¹⁶⁷ A brief biography: born in 1943, Chávarri enrolled in the Official School of Cinematography in the late 1960s; his first feature was *Los viajes escolares* from 1973;

that it is the only film that can be cataloged as an example of *cine de conocimiento* at this point because it does manage a critical reflection and political analysis of Spanish history and society.¹⁶⁸ However, as *El desencanto* is intent on deconstructing the Francoist myths of family and culture, and thus is part of the project to recognize the malignancy of past ideologies and their social effects, it is not an example of a *cine de conocimiento* of the present. Rather, it straddles the line between the two, *reconocimiento* and *conocimiento*, because it returns to the past through the memories of the protagonists narrated from the present. It negotiates both the past and the present in the diegesis, which works to sever ties to the past by exposing the sham myths of Francoism, and also suggests how the political is becoming a matter of individual and not national identity in the present. This political transition is not the explicit focus of the film, for it is more a narrative of the disenchantment with the past; instead, it is signaled in how the sons of a Francoist poet distinguish themselves from their father, and the past, by adopting new social and political expressions. Here already we have elements of the political that will take more solid shape during the second half of the *transición* after 1977, which include the performativity of the political, the politicization of lifestyles (drugs, sexuality, etc.), and the individualization of political expression and identity. The irony is that while *El desencanto* engages the past to free the present and possibly prepare it for democracy, it is a disenchantment with the institution of the liberal democracy and with the practice of

he went on to make *El desencanto* as well as *A un Dios desconocido* and *Dedicatoria* with the producer Elías Querejeta; more successful than *Las bicicletas son para el verano* in 1983 were the musicals *Las cosas del querer* in 1989 and its sequel in 1995. From Torres, *Diccionario del cine español*, 143-44.

¹⁶⁸ Trenzado Romero, *Cultura de masas y cambio político: el cine español de la transición*, 309.

consensual politics that will come to reinforce these political positions of identification in the present.

The “abyss” identified by Castoriadis in liberal democracy “between the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ spheres, between ethics and politics... and the resignation of the critical spirit before the gates of power” would grow as consensual politics became the norm and a rift was created between the State and a disenchanted public.¹⁶⁹ Yet, in some melodramas near the end of the *transición*, the terms would reverse themselves: the private would become political. In such films, the modern idea of an ethical essence to reconcile the Spanish *demos* and give it a national identity would be confronted and undermined by postmodern representations of private and particular identities victimized or threatened by its universality. In representation, a critical spirit would continue fill the screen, which raises the question of the next chapter: Why did opposition continue in the socio-cultural but fade to black before the gates of the State in the socio-political?

¹⁶⁹ Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Ethicists' New Clothes," in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 116.

CHAPTER 4

Disenchantment with Democracy

Following the Pactos de la Moncloa, Eduardo Haro Tecglen recognized in October of 1977 that the consensual path towards democracy was less that of “agonism”—built around the idea of competing projects and clearly demarcated opposition—and more of a process of negotiation amongst elites. With the drafting of the Pactos, his writing became less the imagination of what a democracy should or could be and more a critique of the democracy being instituted. He wrote of the “pilfering of the democracy” that the pacts exemplified, drafted behind closed doors by select politicians:

Consensus, following the term as it is used and applied in present democracies, is an acceptance of basic general ideas, of elemental principles, of a line of conduct, but does not mean the definitive elaboration of laws and pacts, of meticulous agreements. This is the work of the Congress and the Senate.

[Un consenso, según el término está siendo utilizado y admitido en los regímenes democráticos actuales, es una aceptación de ideas generales básicas, de unos principios elementales, de una línea de conducta: no significa la elaboración definitiva de leyes y pactos, de acuerdos minuciosos. Eso es lo que corresponde al Congreso y al Senado.]¹⁷⁰

Even though the actual content of the pacts was not yet known, he was alarmed by the fact that only a handful of recently elected representatives drafted them, thereby negating the historical achievement of the elections to reintroduce plurality into the government after the lone party of Franco’s National Movement. Only the ten most established

¹⁷⁰ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, “El hurto de la democracia,” *Triunfo*, no. 769 (22 October 1977): 7.

leaders of the leading parties were involved in drafting the economic and political future of the democracy. The signatories of the Pactos de Moncloa, signed on the 25th of October in 1977, were: for the economic pact, Adolfo Suárez (UCD, center-right), Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo (UCD), Felipe González (PSOE, socialist), Enrique Tierno Galván (PSP, socialist), Joan Reventós (CSC, Catalan/socialist), Josep Maria Triguera (PSC, Catalan/socialist), Miguel Roca (CDC, Catalan/Christian democratic), Juan Ajuriaguerra (PNV, Basque/nationalist), Manuel Fraga (AP, far-right), and Santiago Carrillo (PCE, communist); and, for the political pact, all the same except Triguera who did not sign and Fraga who abstained.¹⁷¹

Haro Tecglen also worried that, for the most part, such debates about the future were not had in society or in the press:

Public opinion does not cease to matter after its vote: it continues acting without end, it continues in permanent dialogue with its representatives and its parties, it wants to see and hear them in action. Debates within the political chambers are debates that should be held at the same time in the street and the plaza. And in the press.

[La opinión pública no termina en el momento de emitir un voto: sigue actuando continuamente, sigue en diálogo permanente con sus disputados y sus partidos, quiere verles y escucharles en sus actuaciones. Los debates de las Cámaras son debates que se mantienen al mismo tiempo en la calle y en la plaza. Y en la prensa.]¹⁷²

However, even with his growing disenchantment with the democracy being instituted, Haro Tecglen still held tightly to his idea that a *demos*—involved in the pursuit of a singular goal, in the street, press, and parliament—was possible if there was greater involvement and, as a result, more opposition. More troubling than when the pacts were voted on in parliament and there was only one dissenter, Francisco Letamendía from the

¹⁷¹ See Víctor Márquez Reviriego, "Apuntes parlamentarios: De tributos y pactos," *Triunfo*, no. 771 (5 November 1977): 9.

¹⁷² Haro Tecglen, "El hurto de la democracia," 7.

Euskadiko Ezkerra coalition (the Basque left nationalists), who opposed the failure to grant Basque autonomy (he would also be one of the few who would vote against the Constitution).¹⁷³ It might be asked then: Why did Haro Tecglen continue to expect anything other from the State than consensus and backroom deals, especially given that the only type of opposition did not critique the foundations of the State? Why did he continue to believe that there was a collective identity formed around an ethos of equality and freedom that each subject shared its essence? Especially after it would become clear soon enough that the Moncloa Pacts were “in many respects the culmination of the policies of moderation and self-sacrifice pursued by both the Socialists and Communists throughout the transition period,” which meant that “the government fulfilled few of its promises and, in consequence, the Spanish working class bore the brunt of the economic crisis.”¹⁷⁴ It was because Haro Tecglen was lost in time, historically that is.

Alberto Medina argues that Haro Tecglen conceived of democracy as “a privileged political form of modernity, built around the idea of progress and thus focused upon the future.”¹⁷⁵ Accordingly then, Haro Tecglen would have understood Francoism as the impediment of modernity, an unfinished project that would be complete with the establishment of a democracy, or so Haro Tecglen hoped. This appears to be like Habermas’s idea of the unfinished project of modernity waiting to be completed, though his is much more ambiguous with respect to what part the State would play. As Fredric Jameson points out, “Habermas’s formula remains usefully ambiguous, and allows one to

¹⁷³ See Víctor Márquez Reviriego, "La gran estrella de la pantalla (pequeña)," *Triunfo*, no. 771 (5 November 1977): 10, Tusell, *Historia de España en el siglo XX*, 126.

¹⁷⁴ Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, 137.

¹⁷⁵ Medina, "Sharing Loss, or the Ethics of Discontinuity: The Republican Imaginary in Haro Tecglen and Haro Ibars," 229.

entertain the possibility that modernity is incomplete because it is never completed by the middle class and its economic system.”¹⁷⁶ That is, while Habermas posits that modernity might be complete once ‘communicative reason’ is at its essence, this process is stymied by the economic system, and its class structure, and not the actions of the State or its representatives.

For Haro Tecglen, there is nothing ambiguous about the role of the State. If it, internally, is formed around consensus amongst a few and not an opposition that the many would introduce, then it cannot institute a social and economic democracy, and modernity will remain incomplete. The idea of opposition being necessary for modernity suggests that modernity involves self-reflection (“a reflective process, a more-or-less advanced attempt at critique and auto-critique in a bid for knowledge”¹⁷⁷ as Henri Lefebvre puts it), which is like Castoriadis’s definition of democracy as unlimited interrogation in contrast to a society informed by unquestioned laws given by God, Nature, or any other absolute.¹⁷⁸

With respect to Spain’s history, and Haro Tecglen’s past and present position in it, his conflation of modernity and democracy is understandable, given that Francoism was a reaction to modernity and a stifling of any interrogation of laws, norms, and values, by imagining itself as absolute and disallowing any political opposition that might openly interrogate this.¹⁷⁹ Thus he essentially imagines the present to be everything that

¹⁷⁶ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London; New York: Verso, 2002), 11.

¹⁷⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961* (London; New York: Verso, 1995), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Castoriadis, "The Greek and Modern Political Imaginary," 86.

¹⁷⁹ See Santos Juliá, *Historias de las dos Españas* (Madrid: Taurus, 2005), 317-53, Raúl Morodo, *Los orígenes ideológicos del franquismo: Acción Española* (Madrid: Alianza,

Francoism was not and what it got in the way of: the 2nd Republic's transition into modernity and its pursuit of democracy that involved a continual interrogation of itself.

Of course, it must be remembered that the Republic's antagonistic form of opposition always prevented stability and the institution of democracy, with its changes in government not the result of some collective interrogation of democracy, but rather as radical reactions to each other.¹⁸⁰ However, for Haro Tecglen, the *transición* was not a return to the actual Republic, but instead was a new beginning to the historical movement that the Republic began, and for which the necessary progress to its future completion was denied. His imagination of democracy was motivated by a symbolic and nostalgic remembrance of a possibility denied that waited for completion. What he did not realize at the time was that this thoroughly 'modern' idea was a historical antinomy, for the *transición* could not complete some possibility denied in the past, a remainder waiting for time to suture it into social space, for it was a transition away from modernity into postmodernity.¹⁸¹ Haro Tecglen's imagination of the institution of democracy through

1985), Stanley G. Payne, *Falange: A History of Spanish Fascism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

¹⁸⁰ See Raymond Carr, *The Republic and the Civil War in Spain* (London; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's, 1971), Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), Stanley G. Payne, *The Collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933-1936: Origins of the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹⁸¹ There are those like Anthony Giddens who would argue that postmodernity is simply a nihilistic reaction to the contradictions and crises of modernity, and that it is really only a barrier standing in the way of a achieving a radicalized modernity. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). It is hard not to read such a historicization of postmodernity as another return to complete a lost opportunity in modernity, one impeded by a reaction against it, but one that can also be overcome and improved upon in the future. Progress in the eye of the beholder beholding historical movement as progress with a discernible telos.

political activity in the social and by the State, together forming a *demos* with a shared national ethos, was as much part of the past as the Franco regime.

However, Haro Tecglen's conception of the *transición* as a historical completion of a past remainder is not unique. The historian and political scientist, and active member of the PSOE's cultural foundation, Santos Juliá also sees the *transición* as a return and renewal of what the 2nd Republic began. He writes that

[because of the popular mobilization and cultural dynamism that drove the Republic], what defines the Spain of the 1960s and 1970s is not, therefore, the beginning of a change that sociologists call modernization, industrialization, advanced capitalism, or the reconstruction of a bourgeois hegemony over new bases, but rather the resumption of a history begun at the beginning of the 20th century, accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s and paralyzed by a victorious political will after a war of three years.¹⁸²

Modernity, for Juliá, began when Spain embraced democratic liberalism and consequently experienced a cultural dynamism following the brief 1st Republic and the constitutional monarchy that followed. Unfortunately, just when the essence of the *demos* was being accelerated and cemented in the years surrounding the 2nd Republic, it was paralyzed by the Francoist regime; that is, its history was not lost but just frozen in time. With the *transición*, Spanish history (understood here to be the temporal drive towards a liberal democracy) simply picks up where it left off and progresses towards a cultural flourishing and a popular mobilization. For this reason, the *transición* was not a new moment in history, but rather was a "new phase" in an already begun history to complete the unfinished product of modernity.¹⁸³ This has nothing to do with changes in socio-

¹⁸² Santos Juliá, "España en tiempos de Triunfo," in *Triunfo en su época: jornadas organizadas en la Casa Velázquez los días 26 y 27 de octubre de 1992*, ed. Alicia Alted Vigil and Paul Aubert (Madrid: École des hautes études hispaniques; Casa de Velázquez; Ediciones Pléyades, 1995), 29.

¹⁸³ Juliá, "España en tiempos de Triunfo," 35.

economic externalities, the earlier autarky or the later consumerism; for Juliá, modern history is not material. Instead, modernity is a movement towards the realization of the people's democratic essence, denied before and to be fulfilled now.

Yet, there is a difference in Haro Tecglen and Juliá's historicizations of modernity, though both take its completion to be the realization of a *demos*. Haro Tecglen's idea of political opposition is the motor driving history along towards this goal, while Juliá's historical motor is some sort of progression away from any political will.¹⁸⁴

Elías Díaz, of the journal *Cuadernos para el Diálogo* (a socialist/Christian democratic publication prominent in the 1970s) and of the PSOE, takes a position in the middle by arguing that "the motor of the transition" was the "democratic and political opposition" working together with the "forces and institutions rooted in the regime, without which the whole process would have been even more difficult than it actually was."¹⁸⁵ It is political consensus, not political opposition or disappearance, that allows for a break from the Francoist past and an improvement on the fractious and divisive 'democracy' of the 2nd Republic. He writes: "the transition in Spain was carried out through a difficult process of reform (characterized by pacts and consensus) which resulted in a genuine political *ruptura*."¹⁸⁶ For a *demos* to be realized, it is not a matter of overcoming a historical blockade to finish off what was previously started, but rather there must be a

¹⁸⁴ Outside of the scope of this dissertation, but interesting nonetheless, is how the Spanish *transición* has been read as a blueprint for transitions to democracy by political scientists who advocate that a liberal democracy is the only type of democracy with historical viability given the free market and the demands of globalization as well as an 'end of ideology'. See in particular Omar Encarnación, "Spain after Franco: Lessons in Democratization," *World Policy Journal* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2001/2002): 35-44.

¹⁸⁵ Elías Díaz, "Ideologies in the Making of the Spanish Transition," *West European Politics* 21, no. 4 (October 1998): 36.

¹⁸⁶ Díaz, "Ideologies in the Making of the Spanish Transition," 32.

reconciliation between the two elements. Díaz believes that if the Spanish democracy were not built around reform and consensus, then there would have been revolution or violent upheaval, as direct competition and contestation of political projects would have disrupted its precarious position.¹⁸⁷ It is not a matter of breaking free from history, “a radical break from the past” that would imply some institution of State and society as completely distinct.¹⁸⁸ Rather the project of the transition to democracy was to return and resolve the conflicts and divisions of the past.

Though these different understandings of how the *transición* would complete a project whose history stretched back to near the beginning of the century—either finishing off modernity’s progression towards democracy, or reconciling disparate histories encompassed by modernity—each takes the *transición* to be another phase in History. Given Spain’s history, the weight of the past cannot be denied, for it is full of incompleteness and instability, which can be traced far beyond the 2nd Republic and deep into the 19th century to include the Carlist Wars, the brief 1st Republic, and the various authoritarian rulers along the way.¹⁸⁹ For this reason, Mouffe’s “agonism”—democratic adversaries with irreconcilable political projects—was maybe quite difficult to expect, though Haro Tecglen did. However, this is not to say that it was not a possibility, but it is an admission that any attempt to render a political landscape around the idea of “agonism” would have required intensive care during the *transición*, though this does not mean that history required political opposition to disappear or be negotiated away by

¹⁸⁷ This is what motivates other arguments in praise of the process of reform as well. See Enrique Tierno Galván, *Democracia, socialismo y libertad* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1977). He takes such consensus to be the only stable means of bringing about national reconciliation and democracy.

¹⁸⁸ Díaz, "Ideologies in the Making of the Spanish Transition," 31.

¹⁸⁹ See Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966).

consensual decree either. Perhaps, history demanded an entirely new understanding of politics for a democracy.

This is not addressed by conceptualizations of the *transición* as a completion of a past project, or a reconciling of the present with the past, imagining democracy with a *demos* in mind: a collective sharing of an essence of equality and freedom that was denied in the past but was possible in the present. However, what if the lost and nostalgic *demos* could never be because its conditions were historically past, that the *transición* was the beginning of a new historical epoch, that of postmodernity, historically ruptured and far flung from the past? Then a resolution of, or reconciliation with, modernity is simply begging the question, and any consideration of democracy or the political should not have the past as a referent, but should ask how these concepts are now different; how they have been inflected and redirected by history. Is democracy and the political to be found roaming the corridors of parliament or the royal palace, or ambulating about the streets and the plaza? Or was it that there was no totality (resolution) to be had in the present that might complete an essentialist conception of the *demos*—a national body sharing an identity grounded in an ethos of equality? Instead of another phase of modernity, quite possibly the present was marked by newly emerging and always morphing particularities (rupture) best understood as postmodernity.

Those like Juliá and Díaz—and this list could be very long, including not only the names of politicians like Adolfo Suárez, Felipe González, Santiago Carrillo, and eventually even Manuel Fraga, but also the names of such intellectuals as Raúl Morodo,

Enrique Tierno Galván, Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, and Ramón Tamames¹⁹⁰—for whom a liberal democracy was the telos destined by history, did not look critically at what form of democracy was instituted during the *transición*.¹⁹¹ As Juliá writes, “the election results [in 1977] were a breath of fresh air: freedom blew across the whole of Spanish society.”¹⁹² The end of history, that is of modernity, had been reached. Haro Tecglen presented a different case, however, for there was no end in sight for him.

As he believed that the democracy instituted did not complete or fulfill any historical progression, he began to imagine the political possibility for democracy as a loss. For Haro Tecglen, the *transición* hardly brought about an electoral representation of interests and needs, except those of a small cadre of elites, but rather constituted, as Jacques Rancière might put it, an “‘oligarchy’ that leaves enough room for democracy to feed” but that does not satiate.¹⁹³ That the ‘opposition’ agreed to sit at the table and negotiate with their adversaries only left one hungry still for a more just and equal society

¹⁹⁰ For a fascinating picture of these figures discussing why a liberal democracy is the requisite form of government, and the best thing for Spanish society, given its history, see Pere Portabella, *Informe general sobre algunas cuestiones de interés para una proyección pública*, Pere Portabella para Films 59, 1977, film.

¹⁹¹ To read a praise of the intellectual work carried out during the *transición*, one that reads the historical sacrifice by the seasoned intellectuals against the nihilism of the younger generations, and denounces any disenchantment with how the democracy was instituted, see José Luis Abellán, “The Function of Thought in the Political Transition (1975-1980),” in *Spain 1975-1980: The Conflicts and Achievements of Democracy*, ed. José L. Cagigao, John Crispin, and Enrique Pupo-Walker (Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1982).

¹⁹² Santos Juliá, “History, politics, and culture 1975-1996,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111.

¹⁹³ Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 74.

and for a democracy. His writing began to critique the “utopia of consensus” and its foreclosure of future possibility for a genuine democracy.¹⁹⁴

Suárez’s address to the nation on April 5th, 1978 to announce that the Constitution would be drafted by seven representatives (three from the center-right UCD, one from the far-right AP, one from the far-left PCE, one from the center-left PSOE, and one from a nationalist Catalan party, the *Convergència i Unió*)¹⁹⁵ signified that consensus was not a one-time event—the Moncloa Pacts—but would be the continued practice of politics in the new democracy, that backroom deals between political leaders would be the norm. The utopia of consensus now made a reality was taken to be the successful end to the transition: democracy had been achieved. But, this was taken as a democracy in name only, concealing an undemocratic reality: “It seemed as if the opposition—that from the right, that from the left—would be, really, an opposition. And the Congress a congress, the debate a debate. But... the grand deception revealed itself.”¹⁹⁶

There was a measure of self-deception as well, for Haro Tecglen knew that Spain was already integrated into outside markets, and that Spain’s ongoing process of modernization was tied to international capital, all to say that the institution of a capitalist and liberal democracy was not altogether surprising.¹⁹⁷ However, attached to the past as

¹⁹⁴ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, “El feliz mundo del consenso,” *Triunfo*, no. 794 (15 April 1978): 18.

¹⁹⁵ At first, there were to be nine representatives, but this would have resulted in a majority for the left against the UCD-AP minority. The UCD and PSOE negotiated to reduce the number to seven, which left the PSOE in the minority, but ensured that their main competition, the Partido Socialista Popular, would not be included. See Soto Carmona, *Transición y cambio en España, 1975-1996*, 112-14.

¹⁹⁶ Haro Tecglen, “El feliz mundo del consenso,” 18.

¹⁹⁷ See Ernest Lluch, *Transición económica y transición política: la anomalía 1978-1980*, ed. Javier Tusell and Álvaro Soto Carmona, *Historia de la transición, 1975-1986* (Madrid: Alianza, 1996).

he still was, he did not realize that his expectation for political opposition was a utopia in itself, a remnant of his modernist hope for the *transición*. That González said that “nothing but the politics of consensus will allow a better form of government” and Carrillo that “a politics of consensus or convergence is indispensable” should have signaled to Haro Tecglen that politics had entered a new historical stage different from before.¹⁹⁸ To paraphrase Rancière, politics was no longer a matter of opposing worlds, but only of differing opinions.¹⁹⁹ Haro Tecglen did recognize that the evacuation of opposition in politics created a rift between representatives and their constituents:

the political parties have become weaker than ever because of this process of legislation that bypasses the productive nature of a debate, one that should instead take place amongst the whole of the nation not taking comfort from their daily losses.

[los partidos políticos hayan quedado más débiles que antes, ante un juicio que desborda el producido en el debate: el del conjunto de la nación, que no se consuela de sus pérdidas diarias.]²⁰⁰

However, he still held onto the very modern idea of *demos* as a possibility. What he did recognize though was that a politics of consensus denied any real possibility for a fuller measure of democracy: “The politics of consensus, in the present reality—much closer than any utopia—is always a politics of compromise, and a politics of compromise tends, generally, to lead to nothing.”²⁰¹

Haro Tecglen held the PSOE most responsible for the *transición*'s failure to bring about a democracy complete with opposing political projects, one which might have realized his hoped for vision of the future as the historical actualization of social and economic equality. For Haro Tecglen, the PSOE was the only oppositional party that

¹⁹⁸ Haro Tecglen, “El feliz mundo del consenso,” 18.

¹⁹⁹ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 76.

²⁰⁰ Haro Tecglen, “El feliz mundo del consenso,” 19.

²⁰¹ Haro Tecglen, “El feliz mundo del consenso,” 19.

stood a chance to serve as a check and balance against the UCD and, more important, make demands to force significant changes in how power and wealth were distributed. However, he realized that past experience had misled his future expectation. As the Constitution neared referendum, Haro Tecglen's writings turned to document the failures of instituting democracy fully into all spheres of public life: economic, political, social, and cultural. The Constitution was understood as not only another instance of consensus and but also as a foreclosure of immediate change, for it cemented a lasting foundation in the structural organization of public life, which the opposition helped to draft along with the former members of the regime still in power.

Before the Constitution came up for referendum, Haro Tecglen offered one last attempt to shake politics free from its consensual bind by calling attention to the incompleteness of what had been achieved. He stressed that the hour was nearing when it would be almost impossible for the left to extricate itself from the current practice of consensual politics:

The democratic left has fallen into the trap of having to defend the "situation," with all of its imperfections, as well as Suárez and the permanency of the UCD in power; as the situation is unsatisfactory, the left's defense of the situation has undermined the credibility of its parties. [La izquierda democrática ha caído en la trampa de tener que defender "la situación," con todas sus imperfecciones, y al propio Suárez, y a la permanencia de la UCD en el poder; como la situación is insatisfactoria, su defensa hace perder credibilidad a los partidos de la izquierda.]²⁰²

The left did not address the lack of infrastructure, the artifice of the economy's success, the continued emigration for a decent wage, the crackdown on strikes or protests, or the

²⁰² Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "La tormenta de septiembre," *Triunfo*, no. 815 (9 September 1978): 11.

status quo, as they did not want to lose their place at the table.²⁰³ By backing a Constitution that did not promise any real reform, they made themselves responsible for a form of democracy that did not promise anything different. Haro Tecglen wrote:

What the nation needs, and what the Government and those who support it still do not admit, is a rapid and true reform, a reform at the foundation of the structure of Spanish society, which does not allow for antiquated or past molds and maneuvers free from the elocutionary twists of the Constitution still being written, but rather leads to rapid and direct actuation. If consensus has served for something, it has not been the promotion of a defensive, resigned or frightened attitude, but rather has been the revelation of society's problems with all the clarity and profundity that is necessary.

[Lo que necesita el país, y ya se le está yendo el tiempo al Gobierno y a quienes le apoyan, es una reforma rápida y verdadera, una reforma a fondo de la estructura de la sociedad española, que no cabe ya en los moldes antiguos y férreos, y que está desbordando incluso los ambages de la Constitución aún no hecha, sino una actuación rápida y directa. Si el consenso ha de servir de algo, que no sea para una actitud defensiva, retraída y asustada, sino para abordar los problemas con toda la claridad y la profundidad que hace falta.]²⁰⁴

He read the days just before the Constitution was voted upon as the last chance to put forward an opposing set of demands, to realize a more just and equitable society in the institution of a democracy that might come closer to completing what he understood as the project of modernity, and to avoid the growing *desencanto* and *pasotismo* (disenchantment and indifference) as a result “not of the democracy, but of a non-democracy.”²⁰⁵

Of course, none of this happened. As Gregorio Morán explains, the *transición* was a “defeat of all that which were considered inevitable anti-Francoist objectives for the future: liberty without oligarchies that might limit it, the transformation of society and

²⁰³ Haro Tecglen, "La tormenta de septiembre," 11.

²⁰⁴ Haro Tecglen, "La tormenta de septiembre," 11.

²⁰⁵ Haro Tecglen, "La tormenta de septiembre," 11.

politics as a result of the now active citizenry.”²⁰⁶ There was no return to the past to resolve its incompleteness or instability, no completion of or reconciliation with modernity. The idea of democracy that was conceived of as the opposite to Francoist repression and authority when the regime still stood, the idea of a democratic future that motivated the anti-Francoists towards a future that would free the Spanish people and grant them liberty, the idea of democracy that constituted the political project of the opposition when they were still denied the right of representation—these never came to be a reality after the 1977 elections.²⁰⁷ Once the opposition was in position to make demands and debate the future of the Spanish state, they no longer had the anti-Francoist political project in mind. Instead, during the *transición*, the project was to negotiate and make concessions to assure a continued rise to power, to win the backing of the influential by assuring them that their idea of democracy did not entail a significant transformation of politics or society except in the expansion of individual rights that would in turn best serve an economic expansion. As Juliá states, though without a hint of irony, the ‘opposition’ “saw themselves as replacements for the bourgeoisie, ready, willing, and capable of carrying out the task of transforming the country into a modern [liberal] democracy.”²⁰⁸

One could counter that the socialist-led opposition was simply trying to foment ‘revolutionary’ reform within the confines of the State.²⁰⁹ Surely, however, even this would not have necessitated a free market liberal democracy over a social democracy.

²⁰⁶ Gregorio Morán, *El precio de la transición* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1991), 31.

²⁰⁷ “It would not have been easy to recognize the political forces from 1975. What did not change were the names of the politicians.” Morán, *El precio de la transición*, 184.

²⁰⁸ Juliá, “History, politics, and culture 1975-1996,” 113.

²⁰⁹ José Luis L. Aranguren and Antonio García Santesmases, *La izquierda, el poder y otros ensayos* (Madrid: Trotta, 2005).

There was to be no ‘revolution’ even in reform, as the opposition made it clear that they were as equally invested as the center-right in steering the *transición* towards a liberal democracy by working with them freely and fully committed. The only distinction made was that the PSOE appeared as more ‘modern’: they were not tied to the regime, and they did work for enhanced freedoms of expression and choice (for example, phasing out the penalization of adultery or the use of contraceptives, a more public debate over abortions, an end to censorship, etc.). However, at the same time, they distanced themselves from the earlier emotional promises to do away with the concentration of power—the oligarchies, the entrenched elites, the monarchy, etc.—which revealed a self-directed depoliticization of opposition within their ranks.²¹⁰ As Morán puts it, “the *transición* converted itself into a treaty of how to make politics disappear from society.”²¹¹

Morán seems less concerned with the PSOE’s disavowal of their historical constituency—the workers’ movement—than he does with the ideological reconstitution of the PCE during the *transición*. Carrillo’s willingness to turn a blind eye towards the past receives most of his criticism, for Morán takes the ‘price of the transition’ to be the continued influence of the past (the Civil War and the postwar regime) on the national body and psyche in the present.²¹² Cristina Moreiras also suggests that the present was “constituted precisely over the ruins of phantasms still living without having been put to rest,” which demonstrates a continuity between an injurious past and a wounded

²¹⁰ The ultimate success of the PSOE in the October 1982 elections was a testament to the effectiveness of this strategy.

²¹¹ Morán, *El precio de la transición*, 13.

²¹² Morán even argues that if Carrillo had occupied the place of Suárez, then the *transición* would have unfolded just the same, for they were both motivated by the same desire to erase any connection between the past and present. Morán, *El precio de la transición*, 83.

present.²¹³ As Morán points out, because of this continuity, “the primary equality that the *transición* established for Spanish democracy was that we are all equal in relation to the past. A guaranty for maintaining inequality for the future.”²¹⁴ Even for these critics of the *transición*, then, the present is not seen as resolving wounds or inequalities from the past, thus not establishing a *ruptura* or historical break.

Possibly, as Jameson writes, “the only satisfactory semantic meaning of modernity lies in its association with capitalism,” which does seem to offer a means of understanding why there would be a continuity.²¹⁵ The *transición* did demonstrate, at the level of the State, a continuous historical progression towards and completion of a liberal democracy in the service of capital after the failed 2nd Republic and the dark years of Francoism. Zizek would point out that “every rise of fascism is a sign of a failed revolution,”²¹⁶ which was the Republic, and that “fascism emerged as an attempt to master capitalism’s excesses, to build a kind of capitalism without capitalism,”²¹⁷ like the consumerist middle class developed by the regime in the 1960s and 1970s following the Economic Stabilization Plan in 1959 that began the so-called ‘Spanish Miracle’ that was all the while firmly controlled by the State. The institution of a liberal democracy motivated by the demands of capitalism in the *transición* then would have been a continuation of this process, completing the project of modernity in the form of a free market economy and a democratic society.

²¹³ Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática*, 17.

²¹⁴ Morán, *El precio de la transición*, 108.

²¹⁵ Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, 13.

²¹⁶ Slavoj Zizek, "Ethical Socialism? No, Thanks!," *Telos* 129 (Fall-Winter 2004): 187.

²¹⁷ Slavoj Zizek, "The Ongoing "Soft Revolution"," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 294-95.

However, while the liberal democracy could be taken to be a completion of the unfinished project of modernity, whether through depoliticization and reconciliation (the ‘end of ideology’) or late-stage capitalism (the ‘end of history’), Haro Tecglen continued to imagine a different type of democracy for society that did not only serve a selected few. He would mourn the loss of what he saw as modernity’s potential, but he would continue to look for promising signs that a people’s democracy might still be a possibility for the future, much like Jacques Derrida’s promise

that can only arise in such a diastema (failure, inadequation, disjunction, disadjustment, being “out of joint”). That is why we always propose to speak of a democracy to come, not of a future democracy in the future present, not even of a regulating idea, in the Kantian sense, or of a utopia—at least to the extent that their inaccessibility would still retain the temporal form of a future present, of a future modality of the living present.²¹⁸

With the betrayal of the opposition and the *desencanto* and *pasotismo* all around, and the dislocation of democracy and the opposition from the practice of politics, what was needed was not a historical phase, but rather a new historical stage.

Political participation in the State did not have any value beyond the symbolic one bestowed by the act of voting, which was limited to choosing between parties who appeared different on the surface but worked together towards a shared end. Haro Tecglen argued for something different than the “democracy that has not been easy to comprehend, that has moved along fearfully, with hesitation, with moderation and vague words, and that has made it so that the nation coming into being is met only with negative

²¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 64-65.

reactions.”²¹⁹ The disenchantment and indifference signaled a break between the public and the practice of politics, which meant the impossibility of his imagination of democracy from becoming, for just as “one should consider that if a form of destroying democracy is by fire and sword, another form of destruction is with a negative attitude of disdain or a type of autism that prevents us from communicating with it.”²²⁰ Democracy was now outside the realm of perception, neither to be seen or touched, but hopefully not too far off in the distance.

Haro Tecglen recognized its absence in that the Constitution was approved by an overwhelming majority, almost 90%, though a third of the public chose not to participate in the referendum.²²¹ Besides the abstention by the extreme right, those protesting the failure to resolve regional autonomy, or the usual amount of people unable to vote (the sick or infirm, absentees, etc.), the high amount of non-voters suggested other factors contributing to the low turnout, which was not only the lowest of the *transición*, but was also one of Europe’s lowest in recent times.²²² Haro Tecglen argued that these factors were:

the “pasotismo” on the part of the youth included for the first time as members of the voting public... and the “desencanto” of recent times on the part of the population dissatisfied by the insufficient change of life that was hoped for during the democracy or pre-democracy as well as the lack of credulity in “historical change.”
[el “pasotismo” de una parte de la juventud incluida por primera vez en el censo de votantes... el “desencanto” de los últimos tiempos de parte de la población por la insuficiencia en el cambio de vida que ha supuesto la

²¹⁹ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Entre la bomba y la indiferencia," *Triunfo*, no. 827 (2 December 1978): 18.

²²⁰ Haro Tecglen, "Entre la bomba y la indiferencia," 18.

²²¹ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "El referendun: una base de analisis," *Triunfo*, no. 829 (16 December 1978): 18.

²²² Haro Tecglen, "El referendun: una base de analisis," 18.

democracia o predemocracia, y la falta de credulidad en el “cambio histórico.”²²³]

The indifference and disenchantment were symptoms of a liberal democracy that minimized “agonism” by means of a politics of consensus, and as a result created a vacuum of political alternatives to question the measures of equality or justice that a liberal democracy offered. Because there was no opposition, no political projects fundamentally different from those making decisions and maintaining the rule of law, Haro Tecglen concluded that the public would only continue to lose interest in the merely symbolic act of voting. The number of those participating in the electoral process did continue to decline. After the March 1st, 1979 elections, the UCD won again, though paradoxically those voting in their support, 24% of the total number of possible voters, were less than the number of abstentions, 33%.²²⁴ The winner was determined by a number of votes fewer than those who decided not to participate. There did not seem to be much in the way of democratic promise for the immediate present.

Yet, the municipal elections on April 3rd of the same year resulted in the left winning control in 1800 municipalities, representing 70% of the population and an overwhelming majority of the largest cities, including Barcelona and Madrid, which Haro Tecglen quickly suggested signified “something more than reform...it is a *ruptura*.”²²⁵ Of course, any promise for democracy of a political opposition was premature, as the municipalities did not have much power beyond their borders. However, Haro Tecglen was overwhelmed by this “first true rupture,” which he thought would reinvigorate the possibility for opposition and democracy

²²³ Haro Tecglen, "El referendun: una base de analisis," 19.

²²⁴ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "U.C.D. no está sola," *Triunfo*, no. 841 (10 March 1979): 14.

²²⁵ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "La primera ruptura," *Triunfo*, no. 846 (14 April 1979): 15.

if the parties of the left do not allow themselves to be carried away by triumphalism and do not fall back on consensualism, so politics in Spain can begin to take on different dimensions. And the future can begin to be seen with less pessimism.

[si los partidos de izquierda no se dejan llevar por el triunfalismo, pero no vuelvan a caer en el pactismo, la política en España puede empezar a tener otras dimensiones. Y el future puede empezar a verse con menos pesimismo.]²²⁶

Haro Tecglen admitted that “this is still just a hope,” as nothing still had not changed at the level of the State.²²⁷ He further tempered his optimism later on, writing that

what should be a most urgent work is to create a political culture, an understanding of History, a global conception of the world, an ideological study of Spanish reality and that of other countries...For the left, the time of a negative culture, or a counterculture has passed: they have to realize their own positive culture.

[la urgencia en crear una cultura política, un sentido de la Historia, una concepción global del mundo, un estudio ideológico de la realidad de España y de los otros países, debería ser una tarea más urgente... Se ha pasado el tiempo, para los partidos de la izquierda, de la cultura negative, de la cultura en contra: tienen que rehacer su propia cultura positiva.]²²⁸

It was time for the opposition to create and not continue to respond, time to rupture and not work towards consensual reform.

However, what he conceived of as a political culture was a conjoining of politics as practice and politics as poetics in the same pursuit of an unfinished project of modernity. Haro Tecglen continued to fall back on his modernist conception of the republic, which he did not cast off into the dustbin of history though the possibility of democracy seemed absent from the corridors of a State formed as a liberal democracy, which only served to complete the expansion of capital and depoliticize opposition. It certainly did not want to posit anything radically new, which he continued to hope from

²²⁶ Haro Tecglen, "La primera ruptura," 15.

²²⁷ Haro Tecglen, "La primera ruptura," 15.

²²⁸ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "La cultura de la izquierda," *Triunfo*, no. 852 (26 May 1979): 27.

it. Nor was it clear that any conjunction between politics and culture could be had at this point in history.

Teresa Vilarós argues that such a conjunction was an impossibility given the “collapse of political-cultural practices on the part of the left in the face of the progressive and massive capitalization of the global market.”²²⁹ She maintains that beginning with Spain’s induction in the United Nations in 1955—though possibly a more appropriate marker is 1959 when the International Monetary Fund and World Bank restructured the Spanish economy with the first of many development plans—Spain followed an economic path directed by the expansion of capital, which had a complex effect on the relationship between politics and culture. While Juliá argues that the creation of a consumerist culture generated a middle class and a political desire for democracy, which ultimately led to the end of the regime,²³⁰ Vilarós interprets international capital as the historical cause of a rift between politics and culture that would continue into the *transición*, which generated a social desire for expanded consumerism and a mistrust for anything other than the ideology of capitalism.²³¹

Juliá and Vilarós seem to reach different conclusions, but they are essentially saying the same thing: what was desired was a liberal democracy, or capitalism, but what was not desired was a politicized culture. Unlike any past period when politics and culture were wedded—say during the 2nd Republic when culture was an extension of politics in posters, literature, and films, or to a different degree, during the post-War movements of social realism in literature and neo-realism in film—there was no longer a

²²⁹ Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 65.

²³⁰ Juliá, “España en tiempos de Triunfo,” 32.

²³¹ Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 62-65.

clear link between politics and cultural politics.²³² Yet, while there was a depoliticization of politics as practice during the *transición*, this might have in fact further fueled cultural politics. Cultural politics were not tied to a larger political movement that included parties and politicians, but cultural texts were a last refuge of opposition, evidenced by the surge of critical texts, which Jo Labanyi reads as the means available at that time to negotiate the “apocalyptic sense of the ‘end of history,’ exacerbated, as capitalism has moved into its post-industrial phase, by the collapse of the liberal belief in material progress and, crucial in Spain, of the Marxist dream of a more just future.”²³³ Cultural politics were not easily identifiable as part of a liberal or Marxist project, but they were still involved in the critique of history and society.

All of this to say that Haro Tecglen was a bit misguided to assume that it was up to the State to develop within society the means of approaching an “understanding of History, a global conception of the world, an ideological study of Spanish reality,” especially given how much the PSOE and PCE seemed more to desire a depoliticized society.²³⁴ However, as he grew more disenchanted with the ‘progress’ of the *transición*, Haro Tecglen did seem to realize that this notion was of the past, based more in a nostalgia for linkages between politics and culture. It seemed that his idea of modernity had reached a historical end (not completion). There would be no totality instituted and no *demos* constituted in the present. The *transición* was marked by an economic and a

²³² See Jordi Gracia García, *La resistencia silenciosa: fascismo y cultura en España* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2004), Jordi Gracia García and José-Carlos Mainer, *Estado y cultura: el despertar de una conciencia crítica bajo el franquismo (1940-1962)* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1996).

²³³ Jo Labanyi, "Narrative in culture, 1975-1996," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150.

²³⁴ Haro Tecglen, "La cultura de la izquierda," 27.

social crisis, and also a crisis of human relations and ideologies...a crisis of protagonists and spectators” in which “reality is partially described, but not totally, and democracy cannot yield more because of these crises that are part of this civilization, this system.”²³⁵ Because there was little in the way of oppositional political projects to confront and correct the glaring crises and contradictions in reality—for the projects of the left, which had traditionally been opposed to the anti-democratic tendencies of capitalism, had by this time ideologically aligned themselves with the project of democratic capitalism and renounced their historical ties—there was not a political resolution to be had in the foreseeable future.

Haro Tecglen took note of the fact that the changes and crises occurring in Spain were much the same as elsewhere in the Western world, for which Spain served as a microcosm to perceive them in a more exaggerated and visible manner:

In Spain, the new limitations of the democracy are more noticeable because it is incipient, because the antidemocratic influence has infiltrated deep into the organisms of authority... This is not only a Spanish phenomenon, but also a European one sharing the same reason for being: the reduction of the revolutionaryisms, the perplexity of the left, the slow loss of faith in democracy, all united by the profound economic crisis, fear of the middle class—especially their ascension—and the return of class warfare... All this is what has shaped the scarcity of happiness in the 1970s. Years in which if anything positive was produced it was immediately transformed into a negative.

[En España, las nuevas limitaciones de la democracia son más sensibles, porque es incipiente, porque el peso de lo antidemocrático está más infiltrado en los organismos de autoridad... No es sólo un fenómeno español, sino europeo, y tiene una razón de ser: la reducción de los revolucionarismos, la perplejidad de la izquierda, la pérdida paulatina de fe en la democracia, unidos a la situación profunda de crisis económica, al miedo de las clases medias—sobre todo, de las ascendidas—, el regreso de la lucha de clases... Todo esto es lo que configura la escasa fecilidad de los

²³⁵ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "De quién es la crisis," *Triunfo*, no. 861 (28 July 1979): 14.

años setenta. Unos años en los que todo lo que sucedió de positivo se transformó inmediatamente en negativo.]²³⁶

Spain was not the only one to experience the negation of democracy, common to other States and societies sharing the same form of democracy. A liberal democracy did provide a relative calm and stability, order and security, what Haro Tecglen termed “the sensation of democracy,” which deflated any collective desire for “revolutionaryisms,” or political opposition, even though individually there were often also sensations of injustice and inequity.²³⁷ Possibly these individual sensations, if they were ever experienced as shared, would one day encourage opposition again, though Haro Tecglen could only locate this possibility “in a future far away, when a certain type of revolutionaryism may reappear... with a panoply of ideologies and philosophical innovations.”²³⁸

This future might have been closer than it appeared, if Haro Tecglen had looked in the right place, for such a panoply of ideologies and, if not philosophical at least aesthetic, innovations were already present in the present of the *transición*. However, they were to be found in a sphere distinct from that of politics and politicians, as an oppositional imagination of democracy was flourishing in the socio-cultural sphere, fueled more and more by the disenchantment in the socio-political. He could not see this because his historical vision had been oriented towards the past in his imagination of democracy, and the modern idea of a *demos* that could be instituted by the State, which still looked for longing in future possibility. His writings betray an unwillingness or an inability to see the *transición* as a new historical situation to be ruptured from

²³⁶ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Los infelices setenta," *Triunfo*, no. 884 (5 January 1980): 24.

²³⁷ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "El estado actual de la revolución," *Triunfo*, no. 14 (December 1981): 9.

²³⁸ Haro Tecglen, "El estado actual de la revolución," 12.

modernity—to imagine democracy and political opposition historically different—which Medina reads as the attempt to turn “the absence of a political reality, the interruption of the republic, into a... view of the ruins and a script that nostalgically invokes the return of an ideal situated in the past.”²³⁹

The corresponding absence of the political reality that Haro Tecglen gave representation to in his editorials might help explain why *Triunfo* struggled to maintain its readership, then eventually had to shut down. There was no social desire to match what he desired of and for society. “We were products of our time, and also killed by the time, or by the evolution of customs, thought and people, if this appears less abstract,” Haro Tecglen provided as an answer to why *Triunfo* closed down in 1982.²⁴⁰ Three months before the PSOE won the general election on October 28th of 1982, *Triunfo* could no longer afford to publish, even though they had already reduced their output from weekly to monthly. In 1992, he tried to explain why *Triunfo*, widely popular before the *transición*, paradoxically experienced a steady decline in readership through the *transición*:

Readers believed that after the death of Franco they had entered directly into paradise and did not need any viatica: we had accompanied them on their trip towards the democracy, and for some we had provided a guiding light, but then they didn’t need us anymore.²⁴¹

To Haro Tecglen, it did not appear that 1982 Spain was a paradise, but what might explain the decline of *Triunfo* is the difference of time that Haro Tecglen alludes to with

²³⁹ Medina, "Sharing Loss, or the Ethics of Discontinuity: The Republican Imaginary in Haro Tecglen and Haro Ibars," 234.

²⁴⁰ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Triunfo: Nacimiento y muerte," in *Triunfo en su época: jornadas organizadas en la Casa Velázquez los días 26 y 27 de octubre de 1992*, ed. Alicia Alted Vigil and Paul Aubert (Madrid: École des hautes études hispaniques; Casa de Velázquez; Ediciones Pléyades, 1995), 57.

²⁴¹ Haro Tecglen, "Triunfo: Nacimiento y muerte," 57.

the use of ‘our time’ and ‘the time,’ a difference between his imagination of democracy and what possibility it had in reality. By the *transición*’s end, the history that he had attempted to write became quite distinct from the history that came to be, for while he remained attached to the idea of democracy as the completion of modernity, the *transición* was a transition into postmodernity.

‘Our time’ might then refer to the 2nd Republic and the regime, while ‘the time’ refers to the period of the *transición*. His imagination of democracy was rooted in the past, which helps to explain Haro Tecglen’s disenchantment with the present situation in which there was no discernible possibility of instituting a *demos* with an ethos of equality and freedom. However, as Teresa Vilarós points out, this idea of an interruption in the past that can be resolved in the present is a nostalgic remembering of history because of the uncertain and contradictory present. She writes, referring to Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the left thought “Against Franco we were better” just as the right maintained that “With Franco we were better” that there are two elements to consider:

One makes reference to the willingness to rethink the immediate past as a politically unified goal, already with a post-Franco nostalgia on the part of the right (*with* Franco) and a nostalgic resistance by those on the left (*against* Franco). The other, more volatile and difficult to point out, gives evidence precisely of the division, disintegration, and most important, depoliticization of a great majority of the Spanish population, not only *after* Franco’s death, but rather, and above all, *before* it produced itself as such.²⁴²

Vilarós’s two elements help to expand upon the difference between ‘our time’ and ‘the time’: the past is mourned as a lost political resistance, or opposition, even though what the *transición* makes visible is that there was already division and depoliticization under

²⁴² Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 66.

the regime. A cathectic reading of Haro Tecglen would suggest that he mourned the past because he cannot locate political opposition in the present, nor any signs of a *demos*, which he then imagined as possibilities in the past that could have been completed had a different type of democracy been instituted in place of a liberal democracy organized around negotiation and consensus to guarantee, as Teresa Vilarós puts it, the “integration of Spanish society into the globally economic apparatus of late capitalism.”²⁴³

As such, the institution of a liberal democracy required the deadening of oppositional ideologies—the end of ideology, save that of the market of course—to gain full entrance into the global economy. This idea of democracy did not center around political projects engaged in constant contestation of norms, values, and beliefs instituted in the name of democracy, but instead was more concerned with reducing politics to consensus so as not to disrupt the socio-economic foundation of the State. To be sure, there would still be differences between political parties, but these differences were not fundamentally opposed to one another. They differed as a matter of opinion about social and cultural issues—such as sexual freedom (intercourse outside of marriage, adultery, homosexuality), individual choice (abortion, contraception), regionalism, and immigration—but not ideologically. There was still a right and a left, but these were not designations tied to opposing political projects that demanded alternative state practices and institutions, for both were committed to the liberal and capitalist democracy. Instead of introducing oppositional perspectives, politics in practice flattened opposition to make way for consensus and negotiation.

²⁴³ Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 62.

The only real possibility for political opposition was the PSOE, but the same charge that Stuart Hall levels at New Labour's 'double-shuffle' can be applied to its leadership: they turned "democracy into a particular variant of free market neo-liberalism" all the while promising both transformation and stasis to maintain electoral support from both their historical constituency and the established oligarchy.²⁴⁴ It was, of course, impossible to achieve equal measures of both, so stasis was the operating norm, while transformation was always the promise of something more to come. As Mouffe points out, this variant does not offer a means to confront the inequality and instability of capitalism, for there is no countering hegemony.²⁴⁵ As a result, in Spain, there was no "possibility for citizens to decide between different ways of organizing society."²⁴⁶ The liberal democracy offered nothing except for what Castoriadis calls the "capitalist imaginary of the unlimited expansion of production and consumption."²⁴⁷ He goes on to say elsewhere that after 1950, with the "waning of social, political, and ideological conflict," as a result of the conformist and consensual practices of politics, the ability to imagine "a new vision of society and to face the overall political problem as such" has been severely diminished.²⁴⁸

While the critics above do highlight significant shortcomings of politics in a liberal and capitalist democracy—its inadequate practice of consensus that cannot imagine anything outside of itself, not offering oppositional projects, not self-reflecting

²⁴⁴ Stuart Hall, "New Labour's double-shuffle," *Soundings*, no. 24 (July 2003): 12.

²⁴⁵ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 60.

²⁴⁶ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 120.

²⁴⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, "Culture in a Democratic Society," in *The Castoriadis Reader*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 347.

²⁴⁸ Castoriadis, "The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism," 39.

on its own limitations—they all look for a political solution as a function of the State, or at least its institutions. That is, they all evidence a tendency to envision the political from a theoretical perspective that takes the socio-political to be the primary pressure point necessary to restart the motor of history stalled in the presentism of capitalism that is shrouded behind a veil of democracy. As such, there seems to be no way out in the foreseeable future: “politics as collective activity... has been able to be present so far only as spasm and paroxysm, a bout of fever, enthusiasm and rage, a reaction to the excesses of a Power.”²⁴⁹ Given capitalism and a liberal democracy’s ameliorative effect, the relative order and security experienced in everyday life, moments when politics as collective activity have surfaced, have been few and far between.

The analysis and interpretation of Haro Tecglen’s writings have not revealed anything different, for the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain yielded the same situation: a depoliticization of opposition, an absence of collective activity, a disenchantment with politics, and a feeling of comfort and stability. All of this motivated Haro Tecglen’s critique of how the *transición* squandered the possibility to complete what he took to be the unfinished project of modernity: a democracy that truly would institute full equality and freedom because an active *demos* demanded it and a political opposition guaranteed it. He desired that Spain would have indeed arrived at the end of a history begun long ago, progressing even with interruptions to the point of achieving a social democracy. His timetable misled his imagination of democracy, however, for it was not modernity but postmodernity in which the democracy was instituted, which left

²⁴⁹ Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Movements of the Sixties," in *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 55.

him mourning the past, skeptical of the present, and hoping for an unperceivable and unrepresentable future in which the necessary conditions would arise for a genuine democracy to come into being. This is not that different from what any ‘modern’ political theory proposes as a possibility for the State or its institutions, an ability to mediate or negotiate a plurality of interests that might be realized one day. All hope rests upon whatever the future may provide.

For now, let us assume that a socio-political democracy in postmodernity is synonymous with a capitalist and liberal democracy. There is no transition from here into an unknown future, which to borrow from Benjamin, takes the *transición* to be “a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop.”²⁵⁰ This is not the final conclusion of my study, but it does enable us to approach the questions of democracy and political opposition another way. We can discontinue, for the time being, a further consideration of any ‘modern’ political theories, as they seem to offer many different criticisms of the current state of consensus and stasis, but any solution seems to argue for a different form and content for the State while accepting the primacy of its place.

If we move out and away from the socio-political into the socio-cultural we can consider democracy and political opposition as “movement of thought and action that frees itself from dominant statist subjectivity and proposes, summons and organizes projects that cannot be reflected or represented by those norms under which the State operates,” as Badiou suggests.²⁵¹ That is, we can question how ‘post-modern’ theories of

²⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 262.

²⁵¹ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 85.

opposition and democracy, and the perplexing problem of performing political activity in postmodernity, might play out in representation. If the answer is not to be sought within the corridors of parliament or the palace, then we are left to imagine political possibility in the socio-cultural realm. The difference to highlight is how 'post-modern' political theory argues against an instituted resolution of the social order by means of politics, opting instead for an uninterrupted irruption of its always and only contingent imposed order, which a postmodern aesthetics might provide.

CHAPTER 5

Filming the Present: The Politics of Melodrama

Though Cristina Moreiras has the post-*transición* in mind when she writes that “Spain had little temporal space to assimilate, with hardly a transition, the arrival of modernity and the passage to postmodernity,” it is my argument that this is already happening during the *transición*, in that both modernity and postmodernity defined its present.²⁵² Two different historicizations of what the present signified were imagined, with the rift between them signaling two different ideas of democracy and political opposition. In the socio-political sphere, democracy was conceived of as a project of modernity, its progress measured by the diluting of opposition until it could no longer be tasted in the watered down reformism of negotiated difference. In the socio-cultural sphere, there was an insistence on rupture, a historical beginning emerging simultaneously just as modernity’s history had ended, a democracy of disruption and difference to feed freely on all fruit with no norms to dictate which were forbidden.

This is different from thinking of the rift as a result of the *desencanto* that resulted from the emerging practice of consensual politics. Haro Tecglen read the public’s disenchantment with democratization as such, but only because he held onto the idea of an active citizenry engaged in political opposition like that experienced during the 2nd Republic, at least in his remembering of it. Politicians were understood to have betrayed a

²⁵² Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática*, 26.

public desire for political alternatives, so it was imperative to stimulate the public to demand once again opposition in the practice of politics. His account of the rift considers the *transición* as another historical stage of modernity, a present in direct relation to the past.

Some trace this rift back to the rise of a consumerist culture, encouraged and expanded during the 1960s and early 1970s, and carrying through into the *transición*. Teresa Vilarós argues that the Spanish population “turned their back on political projects,” especially those aligned with the historical Marxists, as the desire for Spain to be integrated into the global economic apparatus was greater than any desire for political alternatives during the *transición*.²⁵³ As such, the *desencanto* should not be thought of as a reaction to the institution of a liberal democracy, but rather both evidence a similar depoliticization in State practices and social desires because of Spain’s pursuit of its integration into the global market. For this reason, then, Vilarós takes 1993 to be the end of the *transición* with the signing of the treaty of Maastricht and the granting of full membership in the European Union. Her account of the rift considers the *transición* to be a phase of a history determined by the logic of late-stage capitalism, which is conterminous with postmodernity

Vilarós is right that the logic of capitalism certainly explains both the practice of consensual politics and the disillusionment that the State serves the interests of the public, but her reading of the *transición* as a continuous process does not explain the emergence of a new politics of aesthetics not tied at all to those from the 1960s or 1970s. Haro Tecglen is right too in suggesting that the liberal democracy failed to offer political

²⁵³ Vilarós, *El mono del desencanto*, 62.

alternatives, but he does not ask if there was a pursuit of alternatives outside of the socio-political sphere. Such readings of the *transición* as a unified event and situation with a single historical point of reference—global integration or a new ‘republic’—does not explain why there was continuity at the level of the State, while there was also rupture at the level of culture. What is lost in these versions of history is that the *transición* displays a simultaneous experience of modernity and postmodernity in the transition to a capitalist and liberal democracy.

By these two terms I do not mean two distinct historical periods, but rather two different conceptions of history and ideology. That there were two conceptions, at the same time, leads away from the debate of whether the *transición* evidenced either continuity or rupture, for instead both were in evidence, only in two distinct spheres: continuity in the socio-political, and rupture in the socio-cultural. This makes inconsequential the question of whether the *transición* demonstrated memory or forgetting, at least for this study, for while the argument could be made for one side or the other concerning the socio-political transition (though an argument that past cracks were covered underneath a tapestry of democracy, a type of forgetting, would be most convincing), any such argument seems inappropriate when considering the socio-cultural transition because there was no past to speak of in that most often the present was conceived of as year zero. Instead, what is important is how the simultaneous experience of modernity and postmodernity, respectively, in reality and representation, provides two different imaginations of democracy and political opposition, and how this is a result of the transition to a liberal democracy, which is what ultimately severed the socio-political from the socio-cultural and introduced the seemingly unbridgeable rift.

By ‘modernity’ I do not mean a sociology of modernization, rationality, and atomization resulting from the expansion of capitalism and its effect on social beings, as best articulated by Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies.²⁵⁴ Rather, this study approaches the concept of modernity through ‘modern’ political theory, as a project whose completion requires that differences be mediated and overcome by reasonable dialogue and debate, and which has democracy as its telos. There is an overlap, however, between a sociology and a political theory with modernity as its reference in that the critical task for both is to overcome the fragmenting elements of irrationality found in modernity, as it is not a matter of too much rationality, but rather too little of it that has kept history stalled in an eternal present and society from totality.²⁵⁵ By modernity, then, what is meant is a political project directed towards universality, a totality formed around an ethos of equality and freedom binding particularities, which is taken to be essential in a democracy, and which requires rational mediation.

²⁵⁴ See in particular Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2002).

²⁵⁵ See David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Horkheimer and Adorno’s argument to overcome the myth that the Enlightenment has become makes the same point. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1995). For a consideration of modernity’s fragmentation and irrationality in relation to totality in representation see Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London; New York: Routledge & K. Paul, 1986), Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

In Spain, after the Franco regime, it seemed for a time that the possibility for national reconciliation and the forging of a new national identity was possible with the institution of a democracy, which would complete the progression of its experience of modernity, which had been continually interrupted by ideological conflict and fragmentation. In the transition away from authoritarian and fractious rule, and the conflicts and trauma engendered under it, democracy was taken to be a means to assuage historical wounds and unify the national body as a universality. Also, the relative stability and sensation of freedom and equality that a democracy would provide in relief to the past made it seem for a moment that such universality was possible. However, the problem, as we have seen, is that while this project was said to have reached completion by the consensual politics of the *transición*, a critical look at the inequity and injustices of its liberal democracy reveals that any resolution was still waiting for a future still to come.

This presents the separate problem of how to push the stalled motor of modernity's history, progress, toward some fuller measure of democracy—defined by, for example, 'communicative reason' or 'autonomy', to use Habermas and Castoriadis's language—when the entity responsible for stasis, the State, is also the requisite engine of change, even though it has shown no discernible signs of recognizing its own limitations. In Spain, there was reasonable dialogue between politicians, and there was an economic totality established—that of the free market—but there was no social totality ever gained. If anything, the liberal democracy instituted during the *transición* only fueled more fragmentation in the social order by not representing the plurality of the public in the corridors of power nor opening doors to them. Consensual politics did not conjoin the

particular and the universal, which is antithetical to any resolution required by ‘modern’ political theory’s imagination of democracy.

These problems of ‘modern’ political theory are dismissed by ‘post-modern’ political theory because they miss the point: democracy is not associated with the State, especially if it has instituted a liberal democracy. In fact, the resolution of opposition in universality is taken to be thoroughly undemocratic. Instead, the social order should be ruptured by oppositional particularities, continually revealing any seeming totality to be contingent and unstable, in a battle that pits social groups or individuals against the political will of the State. Against the universalizing rationality of consensual politics and dialogue, politics is defined to be “that activity which has the rationality of disagreement as its very own rationality,” as Jacques Rancière puts it, which does not intend resolution through its activity, but rather disruption of the social order.²⁵⁶

Democracy is not to be conceived of as a totality, for this is taken to exclude even if it attempts to unify, for history will always offer up new subjects “not previously identifiable within a given field of experience.”²⁵⁷ For this reason, that resolution will always exclude that which has not yet appeared, equality is not something created in advance. It must constantly be reestablished, and “the form in which confirmation of equality is inscribed [is] the setting up of a dispute, of a community existing solely through being divided.”²⁵⁸ ‘Post-modern’ political theory resists the idea that democracy signifies a collective, for society is always divided, as well as the idea that equality and freedom are always ensured, as what these terms refer to or mean are always in dispute.

²⁵⁶ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, xii.

²⁵⁷ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 35.

²⁵⁸ Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 32.

‘Post-modern’ political theory imagines democracy as becoming and not to be; there is no completion, only pursuit.

However, while ‘post-modern’ political theory still has reality as its referent, what is often understood as postmodernity in relation to Spain, as Jo Labanyi points out, is a privileging of representation because no political alternatives are to be had in reality, which she reads as a result of the PSOE’s adoption of monetarist policies in line with the supposed ‘opposition’.²⁵⁹ Representations now display “an attitude apparently non-ideological and fundamentally ahistorical,” according to Moreiras, because political alternatives no longer reference reality in that a liberal democracy denies them extension outside of the symbolic realm.²⁶⁰ That they seemingly evade engagement with ‘real’ history and ideology does not mean, however, that there was not a critical move against representing the present in relation to the past, as if it were simply another historical phase of modernity.

As Moreiras suggests, by not mentioning the past, and by only representing what was ‘new’, a critical position was taken with respect to the past.²⁶¹ Representations of ideological and historical positions different from the ‘reality’ confronted the idea of the present as a historical phase tied to past ideologies. However, while Labanyi and Moreiras focus more on the explosion of such representations onto the scene and screen after the PSOE formally put an end to the *transición* with their electoral victory in 1982, especially in the *movida* of Madrid—a lifestyle as much as a movement to express

²⁵⁹ Jo Labanyi, "Postmodernism and the Problem of Cultural Identity," in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction, The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 396.

²⁶⁰ Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática*, 90.

²⁶¹ Moreiras Menor, *Cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática*, 102.

everything new—this study will show that they were already present at the end of the *transición*. Simultaneously, while the socio-political was being imagined as a reconciliation of a society divided, as a national identity, the socio-cultural was expressing new conceptions of identities that had nothing to do with the past. In this sense, then, both modernity and postmodernity, as reality and as representation, were present in the *transición*: the reality of the liberal democracy that had the past as its referent (even if it was to be forgotten), and the representation of a present ruptured free from it (an original beginning).

Yet the question remains of how to understand a relationship, if any, between postmodern representations evidencing rupture and new conceptions of identity and ‘post-modern’ political theory’s imagination of democracy as a disruption of the social order and the inclusion of subjects not previously identifiable. Were these representations involved in a critique of the liberal democracy, or did their representation of particular identities and historical rupture not inform critical understandings of reality? What does a new politics of aesthetics centered around opposition mean for reintroducing political opposition into a society instituted as a liberal democracy? That is, were postmodern representations political beyond their cultural politics? Answers to these questions can be approached through a study of Spanish cinema’s melodramatic mode, its sensibility and style, at the end of the *transición*. Just as melodrama functioned to give order to the disorder of the social at the beginning of the *transición*, so too was melodrama used to represent the social order distinct from its experience in reality as the rift between the socio-political and the socio-cultural widened.

We have seen how a national identity informed by a shared ethos and absent of any political opposition was imagined in films at the beginning of the *transición*. There was a symbolic desire to have the present complete a project began in the past: the creation of a *demos* that was denied before by ideological conflict or imposition. It is important to remember, however, that they imagined the possibility of democracy for a reality that had yet to institute one, a referential “relation of melodrama and modernity, demonstrating the degree to which it becomes the form both to register change and to process change, in particular mediating relations between a lost but problematic past and the present,” as the melodramatic mode has been defined during moments of chaos and uncertainty.²⁶² In this instance, the melodramatic mode was used to provide order to a reality that was without one, an order based upon ‘right and wrong’ instead of ‘right and left’; that is, a moral order to displace the political disorder that fractured the present at the beginning of the *transición*. By surmounting what was taken to be a past society split by particularity, with the evacuation of political ideology and will, a universal identity and body was represented as a possibility for the present: the dual recognition of the melodramatic mode, as identified by Linda Williams, “of how things are and how they should be.”²⁶³

However, as Walter Benjamin warns, “[b]eware of the smooth surface of history, looking backwards, making everything make sense” when thought of in reality.²⁶⁴ These melodramas imagined democracy much like ‘modern’ political theory’s ideal notions of

²⁶² J. S. Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill, "Introduction," in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. J. S. Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 3.

²⁶³ Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 48.

²⁶⁴ Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street* (London: Verso, 1997), 18.

universality and essence, though it was very different to imagine their possibility than to institute such a democracy. Though it was possible in representation to make sense of the past in order to push forward a present imagined as a national reconciliation and an ethical order not threatened by political disorder, the already established economic structure of capitalism at the foundation of the socio-political would not make such a project so easy. These melodramas offered a way to conjoin the present and the past in imagining what a democracy might signify. In reality, however, the form of democracy necessary for the further expansion of the market economy and global integration was a liberal democracy, which would not confront the past, but would fix an eternal present through a consensual politics of forgetting of past conflict and of future change. That is, while melodramas at the beginning of the *transición* might have represented a possible completion of modernity's unfinished product begun but stymied in the past, the reality of the situation did not live up to expectations for the immediate future. The present was yet another installment in a history of opportunities lost.

In reverse fashion, however, melodramas at the end of the *transición* did not represent the past, nor did they imagine an order to countermand the uncertainty of reality. Instead, they began to introduce disorder into social space by representing particularities in the process of becoming; not identities rooted in or implied by the past, but wholly new constellations of norms, values, and beliefs. That these films appeared on the scene just as the disillusionment with the established order of the liberal democracy, which was taken by many to be firmly established with the new Constitution that

officially declared Spain a constitutional monarchy on December 27, 1978,²⁶⁵ might seem to imply that they were interrelated events; that such films reacted to the failure of modernity to realize a genuine democracy, disordering the instituted order to rearrange the pieces once again.

However, that they did not reference the past at all, except by absence, resists such a line of thinking. Instead of taking them to be motivated by the same historical concerns of earlier melodramas, and the project of modernity, they can also be understood as postmodern representations of a present that had nothing to do with the past. As Siegfried Kracauer points out:

history consists of events whose chronology tells us but little about their relationships and meanings [s]ince simultaneous events are more often than not intrinsically asynchronous, [so] it makes no sense indeed to conceive of the historical process as a homogenous flow. The image of that flow only veils the divergent times in which the substantial sequences of historical events materialize.²⁶⁶

While earlier melodramas represented the past and the present as one homogenous flow, which is similar to the idea that a democracy in the present would complete an interrupted project of the past, melodramas near the end of the *transición* represented a divergent time, or rather “a time of its own—which implies that the way it experiences temporality may not be identical... You must, so to speak, jump from one period to another.”²⁶⁷ Or, another way to say this, representation jumped into postmodernity, which was a rupture from the continuous temporality that the liberal democracy evidenced,

²⁶⁵ See Ofelia Ferrán, "Memory and Forgetting, Resistance and Noise in the Spanish Transition: Semprún and Vázquez Montalbán," in *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*, ed. Joan Ramon Resina (Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 192.

²⁶⁶ Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 149.

²⁶⁷ Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, 155.

which might have consensually forgotten about the past, but these representations were only about the present.

Here then we have a jump from one period to another in representation, a rupture of sorts with material reality that was still involved in a history conceived of as a homogenous flow. For this reason, it is not instructive to interpret postmodern representations only as a response to the failings or inadequacies of the liberal democracy—and to read them as a deliberate forgetting of the past like the practice of consensual politics intended—but rather they can be approached as tales of another history whose temporality was distinct from modernity's flow. As such, they can be read for how they might gesture towards another way of imagining democracy, a disorder of disagreement that has nothing to do with the State, but might yet symbolize a political possibility in the sphere of the socio-cultural.

In relation to one filmmaker, Pedro Almodóvar, Kathleen Vernon argues that melodrama has allowed him

to articulate a moment of rupture in Spanish history, nor merely imagining a Spain in which Franco never existed but constructing a repertoire of stories and images for a post-Franco Spain that is perhaps yet to be.²⁶⁸

One of the most popular directors by the mid-1980s, Almodóvar began making Super-8 shorts in the 1970s that documented the beginnings of the Madrid cultural movement, *la movida*.²⁶⁹ His first feature film was *Folle... folle... fólleme Tim! (Fuck, Fuck, Fuck Me Tim!, 1978)*. Most of his films are melodramatic, though he has made some that have

²⁶⁸ Vernon, "Melodrama against Itself: Pedro Almodóvar's *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*," 29.

²⁶⁹ From Torres, *Diccionario del cine español*, 66-67. Almodóvar won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, for his 2002 film *Hable con ella*, and Best Director at Cannes, for his 1999 film *Todo sobre mi madre*, which also won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, one of two Spanish Oscars.

more of a comedic component, such as the *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, 1988). His melodramas are oriented in the present, representing a world becoming and, maybe, to be: a rupture of the present from the past performed through the melodramatic mode, a temporal beginning that does not simply flow from the past, but rather leaps into postmodernity.

Almodóvar has always said, quite famously, that he made films as if Franco had never existed, that the world of his films started after Franco and therefore has nothing to do with the past.²⁷⁰ *Carne trémula* (*Live Flesh*, 1997) begins in 1970, but then quickly jumps twenty years ahead, the protagonist born during the Franco regime but without reference to any time before he is a mature adult or an individual. *La mala educación* (*Bad Education*, 2004) does reference the 1960s and the 1970s, though the past is represented more in terms of individual sexual politics than as a reconciliation of any ideological conflict dividing the social. However, most interesting, is that Almodóvar had written a story treatment for this last film already in 1975, the year of Franco's death, which suggests that while he waited thirty years to return to the past explicitly in this film, he was also thinking about it all the while more than he admits.²⁷¹

His film *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (*Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls of Many*, 1980) certainly represents an image of Spain that had never appeared on the screen before, as well as a reflection on lingering elements from the past, then an ultimate rejection of them through the melodramatic mode. Of the three main

²⁷⁰ Besas, *Behind the Spanish Lens: Spanish Cinema under Fascism and Democracy*, 216.

²⁷¹ Paul Julian Smith found the story in the Biblioteca Nacional, but his comments on it were published before the movie was made. See Paul Julian Smith, *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar* (London; New York: Verso, 2000), 1-2.

characters—as is evident from the title, though as it suggests as well, these three are representative of women in general, a small collection of a possible many—we are introduced first to Pepi. The film begins with a very rough handheld pan that takes in the large amount of marijuana plants on Pepi’s window sill, then comes to a stop on her lazing about in bed cutting and pasting pictures of Superman into a collage. This shot is not only a testament to the small budget of the film, but also to a realism that the film will continually exceed with the melodramatic mode: “where realism ignores and modernism exposes gaps in bourgeois ideology, melodrama insists on the realities of life in bourgeois democracy and, at the same time, implicitly recognizes the limits (inadequacies) of conventional representation,” and exceeds them to a significant degree.²⁷² *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, however, is not an indictment of the bourgeoisie, but rather is an insistence on the reality of the present that is constrained by the past, which it wants to exceed. For this reason, the first shot immediately sets us in the present, in an apartment of a young woman living alone, fully occupied by leisure, surrounded by pop culture and recreational drugs. It also sets up the conflict to be resolved by the film’s end, for there is a knock on the door by a policeman who lives next door and who has noticed the plants. He threatens to denounce Pepi, but he is quickly distracted from this when she hikes up her skirt and exposes herself. As he moves in, she squeals and laughs, but when he takes out his penis, she tells him that he should go “in the back,” as she is more accustomed to this because she has been saving her virginity.

However, he ignores her, which then makes her thirsty for revenge, as announced in the intertitle, and introduces the melodramatic framework of the film: as Williams

²⁷² John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility* (London; New York: Wallflower, 2004), 79.

argues “melodrama begins, and wants to end, in a space of innocence.”²⁷³ Though the ‘innocence’ in this first scene is quite different from, say, that in Hollywood melodramas from the 1950s, there is an innocence lost. But it is not Pepi’s maidenhood that falls victim to the brutal villain, for as Paul Julian Smith points out, Pepi is actually abstaining because she wants to sell herself to the highest bidder.²⁷⁴ The innocence lost, which demands vengeance, is that the past forced itself upon the present, the latter’s new set of norms, values and beliefs not respected and violated. Pepi is not to be interpreted as a virtuous maiden, but rather symbolizes the ‘new woman’ embodying new virtues: sexual frivolity and libidinal liberation. Pepi is not opposed to being penetrated, she actually suggests it, but she does oppose that her terms are ignored and disregarded. The rape that occurs is not one signified by a penile penetration, but one symbolized by the penetration of the past into a space of the present, a brutal overpowering and disregard of a spatio-temporal world established at a distance from the past, an intrusion of past desires and their imposition on her symbolic postmodern body that shares nothing with the past.²⁷⁵

The victim is the present and the past is the villain, and the struggle between them is to rupture one free from the other, to finally break beyond, not through reconciliation but through confrontation. For this, Pepi has to enlist help. She visits Bom, who is rehearsing with her band. In fact, Bom is played by Alaska, a fifteen year old wunderkind of the *movida* who often appeared with the real-life band in the film, *The Pegamoides*. In this sense, the film also serves to document the main figures of the movement, including

²⁷³ Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 65.

²⁷⁴ Smith, *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*, 10.

²⁷⁵ In fact, none of the characters have a backstory, that is they have no history to speak of except for that which unfolds from the present moment on until the film ends. Even within the representation of the new present, the diegetic reality is a present without a past.

appearances by the drag-queen Fabio, or Fanny McNamara, and the painters Costus. Here we have another representation of the present: they are a 'punk' band, all dressed in leather pants, mini-skirts, and neon leopard-print shirts, squatting in an abandoned building, signifiers of the new urban culture. After they finish playing their song on screen, another instance of capturing the reality of the present digitally, Bom and the band agree to beat up the policeman in exchange for the pot plants. Following this, we have another melodramatic excess that spills over the limits imposed by realism and signals another confrontation between the past and the present.

The film cuts away from the band rehearsal to the street, where they wait to spring upon the policeman. In order to get close enough to him, without giving anything away, Bom and the band are dressed as *majos*, the traditional and dignified working-class of 19th century Madrid, and as they approach him, they begin to sing as if in a *zarzuela*.²⁷⁶ A moment of 'melos' is introduced into the drama, but in such a way as to reinscribe these traditions of the past with new meaning. Bom and the band members self-consciously act the part, parodying the performance of tradition, then attack the policeman and soundly beat him. They use the lure of tradition to ensnare the past and free the present from its grip. The film reworks the melodramatic mode again in that 'melos' is used to bring disorder into the drama by unleashing excess, and not to force order by containing it. What Geoffrey Nowell-Smith identifies as the primary function of music in 'traditional' melodramas is turned against itself. He writes that the more "plots press towards resolution the harder it is to accommodate the excess... The undischarged

²⁷⁶ Paul Julian Smith argues that these "traces of tradition were the very condition of possibility for future art, future lives" in that they have to be re-adapted to be superseded. See Smith, *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*, 17.

emotion which cannot be accommodated within the action... is traditionally expressed in the music."²⁷⁷ Here the music is expressed to represent a rupture from the past, a punk reinscription of tradition.

However, just as in 'traditional' melodramas, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* does not achieve resolution either, for the beat up man is the twin brother of the policeman, thus the struggle continues. The next step taken by Pepi is to wreck her vengeance upon the policeman's wife, Luci. Pepi invites her over to knit, another performance of tradition done self-consciously in order to turn tradition against itself. Luci is lured in, talks for a bit with Pepi, then Bom shows up. She has to urinate, at which point Pepi tells her to do it on Luci, though this does not have the intended effect. Luci is turned on by this, actually lapping the urine up as it streams over her face. She confesses that she is "a dog" dirtier than one might think, who does not even respect her mean-spirited husband, for he is not brutal enough, treating her instead like he would his mother. Luci is a masochist, her desires constrained by past traditions too, but this is not to say that she is representative of the present like Pepi and Bom.

Instead, there is a strange shift in the film's identification of the melodramatic victim from Pepi to Luci at this point, as it is now her body upon which the struggle between the past and present will be carried out, with Pepi and Bom dedicated to saving her from the holds of the past that her husband represents. The "dialectic of pathos and action" Williams identifies as the principle structure of any melodrama will play out through Luci, for we begin to pity how she is trapped, unable to emerge fully into the

²⁷⁷ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Minnelli and Melodrama," *Screen* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 117.

present, though she acts to free herself again and again.²⁷⁸ The “triangular relationships” between victim, villain, and savior common to the melodramatic mode is also now established, as Pepi and Bom seemingly try to help Luci free herself from the grip of her husband.²⁷⁹ Though just as the scenes before diverged from the more ‘traditional’ melodramatic mode in its representation of innocence and its use of music, the triangular relationships and the dialectic of pathos and action will diverge from such melodramas as well. What follows in the film is not so much saving Luci from sexual predation as it is from sexual norms. The new present is one in which desires are to be fulfilled, and Pepi and Bom introduce Luci into this new world where anything goes.

In the next scene, this is expressed most excessively. A party is held. We see Luci, now Bom’s lesbian slave eating dried snot from Bom’s nose, and dressed now in a skirt that does not cover anything, though before she was covered head to toe. We meet Roxy, a drag queen. Neighbors watch from above: an effeminate husband and a bearded wife. They begin to have sex, though while she sits on his lap looking inside, he has his binoculars trained down on the males outside revealing themselves for the party’s main event: ‘General Erections,’ a not so subtle reference to the general elections held a year before when the script was written.²⁸⁰ A handful of men pull their pants down to reveal their members, which are then measured and judged (by none other than Almodóvar himself) and recorded by Pepi, who laughs with delight along with the raucous crowd. The winner is selected and gets to pick someone to fulfill his wish. He chooses Luci to fellate him, who kneels down and obliges, continuing on even when the party breaks up

²⁷⁸ Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 69.

²⁷⁹ Bratton, Cook, and Gledhill, "Introduction," 2.

²⁸⁰ Smith, *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*, 16.

because of another neighbor's complaints. An orgy of the present is represented, or as Paul Julian Smith reads it, the film proclaims a "blatant assertion of the autonomy of pleasure" that defines identity in the present, and which has nothing to do with a liberal democracy.²⁸¹

There is an autonomy of pleasure, experienced for itself, expressed by transgressing lines of gender, sexuality, and identity, pushing past any imposed limits, a liberation and a satisfaction in excess. This excess carries through into the next scene, when Pepi decides that she needs a job. She sees an announcement for an advertising agency, and imagines three outrageous underwear advertisements that play out on the screen: one pair hides the scent of a woman's flatulence while she drinks champagne, one soaks up her urine as she releases it while out in public, and one pair turns into a dildo for her pleasure as she lazes about the home. All are designed to help women "do what they do" with convenience, products that allow women to express their urges on the go and satisfy them without excuses or constraints. All are tied to a new idea of identity.

In two other scenes, we again see Roxy, the drag queen. In the first, s/he introduces Bom and the band on stage, screaming incomprehensibly in English to the audience, bringing them to a fever pitch. Later, s/he visits Bom's home. A telegram arrives and Roxy pounces on the messenger, the camera lingering on them for an excessive amount of time while Roxy screams, moans and climbs over him, all without adding anything to the narrative. While "acknowledging the limitations of the conventions of language and representation, [melodramatic excess] proceeds to force into aesthetic presence identity, value, and plentitude of meaning," which Roxy's

²⁸¹ Smith, *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*, 16.

performances and Pepi's ads symbolize.²⁸² The difference here is that these aestheticizations of gender and sexual fluidity free from constraint provide no meaning to the story except to provide an excessive display of new identities and values found in the present, but they do provide further examples of how this film diverges from the 'traditional' melodramatic mode.

However, there is a distinction to be made between the pleasure experienced by Pepi and Bom, and those at the party like Roxy, and Luci's experience of it. Luci is the melodramatic victim that yearns to be free like the others. Once she has entered Pepi and Bom's world, there are signs that she is satisfying her masochistic desires: we see her being dragged around on a leash by Bom; when she moves in with Bom, she must fetch things and obey commands. However, as Bom grows tired of this, though Luci continues to delight in her masochistic plight, her desire is not represented as liberation but as servitude, not as positive but as negative. For her, masochism never becomes a game to break limits and perform new roles, but instead is always a depraved form of abuse. She is the melodramatic victim that cannot rupture herself from the past: her masochism is a way to remain enslaved and not break free. Even as a "groupie" to the new scene, she fails "to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment... The world is closed, and the characters acted upon," as Thomas Elsaesser notes of melodramatic victims.²⁸³ Luci cannot enter into the world of the present. Of all the central protagonists, she is the only one who has a past, which guarantees her

²⁸² Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 33.

²⁸³ Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," *Monogram* 4 (1972): 9.

suffering. She is a victim of history while those with no roots in the past are free and satisfied in the present.

As the victim, Luci bears out Elsaesser's idea of melodrama conferring upon the victim "a negative identity through suffering" which by the film's end will have her "emerge as [a] lesser human bein[g] for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world."²⁸⁴ Pepi, Luci, and Bom go to a nightclub, and when Luci leaves to get Bom cigarettes, her husband steps out of the shadows to confront her. Luci laughs at him, calls him a coward who cannot give her what she needs, and tells him that he is all bluster. Then we witness a most disturbing scene: he throws her down on the ground, beats her savagely, and rapes her amongst the scattered garbage. Later, as she convalesces at the hospital, he twists her broken arm while she grimaces in pleasure made more extreme because she has refused any pain pills. Bom and Pepi visit to make sure that Luci is all right, but she tells them to go away because she needs someone who will almost kill her again and again. The film ends as Pepi and Bom leave the hospital, Bom saying "so many changes for one day" and Pepi saying that they have begun a "new life" that will bring many more. They go back to their lives in the present, while Luci returns to her past life, a lesser human being in that she is now depraved to the point where she does not care if her life is brutally extinguished or not. Pepi and Bom detach themselves from her without a care except for what happens next. They tried, but in the end, there is no overlap between the postmodern present and that which preceded it. Here again the film diverges from the more typical melodramatic mode, for the would-be heroes at the end do not pity the ultimate victimization of Luci at the hands of a villainy rooted in the past, but they

²⁸⁴ Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," 9.

simply move on and think of what to do next, for themselves: they alone have entered the innocence of the present without a care for the perversity of the past.

Clearly, this is not a typical melodrama, even though it continually employs the melodramatic mode to introduce excess and to drive the narrative. The film still is similar to Elsaesser's understanding of melodrama as "the struggle of a morally and emotionally emancipated bourgeois consciousness against the remnants of feudalism," though the struggle is now against the past *tout court* in order to emancipate postmodernity.²⁸⁵ However, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is more a pastiche of melodramatic moments than a 'traditional' melodrama, which is why the film diverges so much from the mode: introducing excessive representations of excess that do not serve to smooth over logical contradictions in the narrative, but rather enhance its illogic; employing a triangular relationship of victim/villain/savior to push the narrative forward, but then once at an end, simply discarding it; swelling music once to signal the confrontation of a moral injustice (the *zarzuela*), but mostly music used to document the 'realism' of the *movida*. What the film performs then, besides any rupture of the present from the past diegetically, is a rupture from a past melodramatic mode.

The pastiche of melodrama is a new mode that introduces disorder, rather than any attempt to make sense of reality by giving it order; and, subverts traditional morality by representing values and norms as individual, rather than insisting on a shared morality that shapes collective experience. *Pepi, Luci Bom* not only registers a struggle and emancipation in content, but also works to emancipate the melodramatic mode from how it has been used. It does not provide certainty and order in historicizing Spain's past and

²⁸⁵ Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," 3.

crafting a national identity. Instead, it is used to increase the uncertainty ushered in by the *transición*, to introduce a measure of disorder to the enforced order within society that the liberal democracy portends. We do not have “victim-heroes” who articulate “the moral structure of feeling that animates” a democracy, which we identify with through a “recognition of their virtue,” as Williams suggests is the *sine qua non* of most melodramas.²⁸⁶ In *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, it is through an identification with the victim-heroes’ libidinal anarchy that all moral structures are upset. In contrast to the melodramas from the beginning of the *transición* that represented Spanish society as a *demos*, bound by clear-cut ethical distinctions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, here we have a representation of society as individuals, freed by sexual ambiguity making anything permissible as long as it is new.

Marsha Kinder writes that this type of ‘subversive’ melodrama, best exemplified by Almodóvar and Eloy de la Iglesia, “foreground[s] the ideological contradictions that [melodrama] normally glosses over,” which makes them part of a “political struggle.”²⁸⁷ Through “lurching ruptures in the narrative” that call attention to the performance of melodramatic excess, the naturalization of contradictions through *mise-en-scène* or swelling music is denied.²⁸⁸ Melodrama is not used here to smooth out the disorder of reality through the controlled measures of representation, but instead representation is used to upset the experience of reality as ordered and fixed. However, is this political, as Kinder suggests, or is there a difference between identity politics in representation and the political with respect to reality, and more specifically, to a liberal democracy?

²⁸⁶ Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 82.

²⁸⁷ Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 55.

²⁸⁸ Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 57.

The subversion performed by *Pepi, Luci, Bom* might only represent a playful world that has no reference beyond itself, or at least beyond the limited numbers part of the *movida* scene in Madrid. That is, possibly this film does not reference actual reality. While there is a performance of the ambiguity and fluidity of gender and sexuality, a rupture from moral and traditional constraints through melodramatic excess, and a reinscription of the past as perversity and the present as purity, the film does not reach beyond its diegetic world. The melodramatic mode is used to rupture the present from the past, but its temporality is very specific to those few individuals who make up the new urban culture: the *movida* of the culturally sophisticated, seemingly unaffected by the spiraling unemployment or inflation, without a care in the world except for libidinal excess and satisfaction. Melodrama is used here to signify a freedom, but from what? Does *Pepi, Luci, Bom* represent a present free from the past only as an imagination, as a playful construction of some world removed from reality?

The political potential of Almodóvar's postmodern pastiche is not so easy to discern, for while on the screen there is certainly a liberation of new identities and desires, each individually satisfied, it is questionable if such a representation presents a political opposition to critique the idea of democracy in reality. Its diegetic representation is possibly diametrically opposed to reality, which is precisely why Pepi and Bom are able to enter the new present in innocence, for they are free from both the hold of the past and reality.

Such a 'happy ending' is not possible in Eloy de la Iglesia's *Navajeros (Knife-fighters, 1980)*, which introduces another example of a distinct melodramatic mode. De la Iglesia was the most commercially successful filmmaker of the late 1970s and early

1980s.²⁸⁹ He began making films in the late 1960s, but always had problems with the censors, which is why he turned to making police thrillers that did not openly critique the regime or social mores. After Franco's death, his films became much more erotically and politically charged, referring openly to homosexuality, zoophilia, and politics. In the 1980s, he began to focus on juvenile delinquency and drug use, often in sensational melodramas that managed to provoke critics on both the right and left.

If *Pepi, Luci, Bom* ruptures the present from the past by representing experience as divorced from reality, by employing excess to break away from the everyday and showcase the liberation in the performance of alterity, *Navajeros* wants to demonstrate the brutal reality of the present as plagued by a set of problems newly created by the liberal democracy, which imprisons working-class youths by severing them from past experiences and offering them no future expectations. This film does not represent a world distinct from the everyday, but rather wants to represent it fully so as to indict those responsible for its institution. To capture reality, the film offers a pastiche of sorts as well: a measure of realism to document the experience of the present democracy and a measure of melodrama to sensationalize the misery of its effects. As Kinder suggests, the tie between these two styles already exists, for melodrama is "rooted in realism yet highly idealized and hyperbolic."²⁹⁰ Williams too acknowledges that melodrama borrows from realism, only to exceed it.²⁹¹ However, *Navajeros* goes beyond any 'traditional' melodrama rooted in or borrowing from realism, for its conflation of styles, which also includes some modernist narrative devices, is excessively postmodern.

²⁸⁹ See Torres, *Diccionario del cine español*, 251-52.

²⁹⁰ Kinder, *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, 71.

²⁹¹ Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 67.

Navajeros begins with a black screen and the statement: “This (hi)story [historia] is based on real facts even though its characters are imaginary.” Then a long shot takes in an oppressive sky while panning over the suburbs of Madrid, largely made up of the working-class living in housing complexes or shanties and stricken by crime and drugs. The shot, without showing any human characters, comes to rest with a penitentiary as its final image. Another intertitle appears: “People do not become criminals because they want to, but rather they are led to commit such acts because of misery and necessity.” Much like the beginnings of other Spanish films that told the (hi)story of working-class youths fighting to survive amidst urban poverty, and sometimes turning to crime as a result—such as Luis Buñuel’s 1950 film *Los olvidados* or Carlos Saura’s 1961 film *Los golfos*—*Navajeros* gestures towards a ‘neo-realist’ sociology: it is society that determines the character of its individuals in how they are forced to experience it. Thus *Navajeros* announces from the beginning that it will represent the social reality of the present as experienced by youths, and will show how such a reality forces them to become criminals, not because they want to, but because they have no other option.

However, just as quickly as the film form of neo-realism is deployed, we cut into the penitentiary when *Navajeros* then employs the melodramatic mode. The principal character, el Jaro, stands in front of a gated wall. As a lawyer approaches him, he turns. An extreme close-up frames his face, snarled and defensive like an animal surprised and on guard. This shot with its overwrought emotion establishes an important motif that will be stressed throughout the film: Jaro, though only fifteen, is not a child, nor is he a man. He is forced to fend for himself, to defend himself, which he does as best as he can, though he is hardly wise in the ways of the world, or self-consciously deliberative. This

melodramatic moment signals the storm beneath the surface that will shape the trajectory of the film, for the storm will eventually find release as we know from the preceding intertitle as well as the title of the film itself. Yet, as soon as we find out through his conversation with the lawyer that Jaro is there to visit his brother, we see him walk towards the visitor's entrance and the film stops in a freeze frame: a modernist narrative device.

Less than two minutes into the film and three different film forms have been used. *Navajeros* demonstrates both 'realist' and 'modernist' styles, but at the same time interjects sensationalized melodrama in between. The film distances itself from art cinema, either as representation for itself or capturing reality in itself, by bringing melodrama into the story. As Paul Julian Smith suggests, de la Iglesia "subverts conventional forms and conflates disparate genres," to reject any pretension to art cinema and enable an engaged political cinema.²⁹² Yet, melodrama's tendency towards establishing order and offering a clear moral structure is disrupted by these ruptures in style, for the mode is bracketed in between and exposed self-consciously. All at once, *Navajeros* distances itself from art cinema by introducing melodrama, but also inflects the melodramatic mode by placing it in relation to art cinema.²⁹³

²⁹² Paul Julian Smith, "Homosexuality, Regionalism, and Mass Culture: Eloy de la Iglesia's Cinema of Transition," in *Modes of Representation in Spanish Cinema*, ed. Jenaro Talens and Santos Zunzunegui Díez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 222.

²⁹³ Paul Julian Smith points out that this conflation of styles was often misunderstood by film critics no matter what their political perspective, from the left or right, for they read the introduction of melodrama as betraying any realism that the film intended: "the rough texture of the film surface is taken to be neorealism, and the films are criticized for failing to live up to criteria that they themselves do not recognize." See Smith, "Homosexuality, Regionalism, and Mass Culture: Eloy de la Iglesia's Cinema of Transition," 220.

In *Navajeros*, the melodramatic mode will be primary in driving the plot, but only in the conflation of styles will a political cinema emerge. The experience of reality must be sensationalized and exposed as representation for it to be engaged, to feel what Smith calls “the immediate irruption of the real into the text.”²⁹⁴ This requires a melodramatic excess that calls attention to itself and to that which it refers, which is the plight of working-class youths caught in the consumerist world of a liberal democracy, to which they have no access except through purposeless force. Yet the irruption of the real must be a jarring experience so as to not be naturalized by containing excess through melodramatic devices like elaborate *mise-en-scène* and swelling music. Excess must become excessive by making it cinematically artistic, in the sense of using ‘realist’ or ‘modernist’ devices at the same time. As such, fact and fiction will be conflated, with representation informing a new look at reality, and reality being experienced anew in representation.

After the freeze frame, we hear a reporter’s interior monologue as he types, which will occur sporadically throughout the film. He recounts the facts concerning Jaro: five hundred muggings and purse snatchings, two hundred cars robbed, three bank robberies, fifty store robberies, twenty-nine escapes from the reformatory, three major criminal cases, and he is not yet sixteen. However, this story will be written about Jaro only after he starts his exploits, which have not yet begun. Temporality is disrupted by this modernist flash forward, while the reporter’s sociological approach to the problem of juvenile delinquency is similar to the omniscient narrator of realism. At the same time, the sensational and staggering numbers that defy belief add a melodramatic dimension.

²⁹⁴ Smith, "Homosexuality, Regionalism, and Mass Culture: Eloy de la Iglesia's Cinema of Transition," 217.

This brief scene employs at once all three styles—modernism, realism, melodrama—in order to document facts of social reality, to make them into an excessive hyperreality, and at the same time to resist a passive viewing of it as entertainment.

The film unabashedly admits its desire to elicit an emotional and engaged response, but it also suggests that this fictionalization of reality might be more real than expected. The conflation of styles puts reality and the representation of it in relation to one another, with neither fact or fiction privileged because of a constant disruption that undermines both: making fact into sensationalized fiction to see it with fresh eyes, but interrupting fiction to enable a return to the facts and see them now from a critical perspective. Just as quickly as we left Jaro, the film then jumps back to him, the stage now set for how to experience what will unfold on the screen.

He talks to his brother behind bars, which provides the viewer an account of Jaro's everyday life from a personal, not sociological, perspective. He says that he sleeps in the street, finding shelter wherever it might be at the end of the night. After this, we get an extended montage of Jaro and his gang unleashed: robbing purses, breaking open pay phones, stealing motorcycles and cars, and breaking into stores. The pacing of the montage and the driving music does draw us in, having us enjoy the rampant destruction and breaking the law symbolically, all achieved melodramatically. However, we do not fully identify with Jaro and the gang, for while we are drawn into the sensationalized fury of action, the music is antinomic in the sense that it is from Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*. The melodramatic mode draws us in only to reveal that it is artifice, which allows us to experience Jaro's world at the same time that it forces a distance by which to

observe it, just as the anterior scene with the reporter suggests that we are to ask why they commit such acts.

The mode performs the same effect in the next scene, bringing us deeper into Jaro's experience of the social while putting at us a distance to observe the consequences or causes of this. We see him naked in the tub, and the camera lingers long on his body while he splashes around then dries off. Needless to say, such a long take of a naked male body, from the back and front, of a fifteen year old in reality, was not a common shot seen on the screen. Here again sensationalist imagery not only fascinates the viewer, but also shocks by what it reveals: the pleasure of a spectacle that might cross some moral line, but drawn out to such a degree that it causes an objectifying discomfort.

This is especially pronounced when Jaro walks to the bedroom doorway and stops, a full frontal framing as he displays himself not only to his diegetic lover but also to the camera positioned as if we were looking through her eyes. As the camera turns to her, we see that she is much older, and the eroticism is lost with the irruption of the real into the film once again. Jaro is with a prostitute, who professes to love him, but whose devouring gaze suggests more a fascination with his young body. She will say later that each time they have sex she feels like it is her first time all over again. However, he is not completely naive and this is not abuse, for he uses her just as much for the comfort and the stability of her home. This scene depicts instead how Jaro is both a man and a child, involved in consensual sex but dependent on her to provide a security lost when he left home at twelve years of age and ended up in the streets. The scene is divested of any such 'lofty' emotions of love and happiness, presenting instead a picture of desire as a will to survive and a means of coping with a harsh reality.

To this reality we return in the next scene where we find the gang hanging out in an empty lot above a cemetery, listening to the radio, smoking a joint, and drinking. One of them, Pirri, pops some pills as well.²⁹⁵ Aimless with nothing to do but get high and pass the day, these ‘hooligans’ have no structure and therefore no consideration of temporality outside of the immediate present. Action is taken in the moment without any conception of consequence or effect. John Hopewell argues that such figures, represented as only living in the present, comforted audiences who were fearful of past conflicts and future uncertainties.²⁹⁶ Experience in the present tense alleviated historical discomfort.

However, while there is a historical distance from the past or the future, the melodramatic mode represents the present as unstable and uncertain, a disaster waiting to happen, a chaos about to be unleashed. True, we see these figures living day to day, but the excessive amount of intoxicants taken all at once coupled with what happens next introduces a sense of dread that will power the film from this moment on: Jaro appears holding a bag, draws a sawed off shotgun, and the boys become ecstatic while the music from the radio now blaring non-diegetically. Violence and self-destruction are imminent, which is certainly not a comforting picture of the present, at least not how they must experience it.

²⁹⁵ Fact and fiction would collide in the cases of ‘Pirri’, or José Luis Fernández Eguia, and ‘Jaro’, or José Luis Manzano. Both were born in the notoriously rough and drug-infested marginal suburb of Vallecas, chosen because they were authentic for the roles, and who would both appear in many more de la Iglesia films. Even though they gained fame and a bit of fortune through acting, they never left behind the lifestyle of delinquency and drugs, and both would be dead twelve years later from heroin overdoses.

²⁹⁶ Hopewell, *Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema after Franco*, 223.

The next scenes are shot on-location near the Puerta del Sol in downtown Madrid, in an area known for ‘cruising.’ Like before, there is a ‘realist’ grounding of the narrative, a reference to the actual social reality outside of the diegesis, such as the real-life Cine Carretas, an infamous rendez-vous point. Yet, melodramatic excess once again enters into this representation of the real to introduce a critical distance by which to view it. They are looking for their friend Johnny, who as a male prostitute, can arrange a ‘house party’ for them to crash and rob. All the while they are solicited by gross exaggerations of gay men, stereotypical depictions that become laughable in the next scene at the chosen house. We see a large group of men, including a drag queen, a flamboyant host, and some in suits, all having a gay time. When Jaro and his gang smash through the sliding glass door, taking the time to break out each individual shard, storming the party with gun drawn, at which point they are invited to dance, we have an example of a “relation between melodramatic comedy and melodramatic excess [that] is often ironic or parodic.”²⁹⁷

The melodramatic excess performed by both Jaro’s gang and the group of gay men does more than disrupt the ‘realism’ of the street scene. This ironic, or parodic, representation of exaggerated performances—both those of the homosexuals and of the gang—reveals something that the marginalized share: for those outside of the established moral or economic order of society, action is always excessive, a means to disrupt reality’s order with disorder so as to gain access. However, there is a difference of class between the two groups, for the gay men are represented as quite comfortable, belonging to the bourgeoisie, while the hooligans are clearly members of the working class. This difference is what separates comedy from pathos. While the bourgeoisie is lampooned,

²⁹⁷ Bratton, Cook, and Gledhill, "Introduction," 2.

Jaro's attempts to gain access into the social, while comedic at times, are always failures with disastrous consequences, such as when the police approach him in a shopping mall and want to open his bag of booty from the house party. We pity him because his experience is full of impasses in moving towards a goal, pathos caused by "action made difficult to implement" common to melodramas, for the poor decisions he makes are the only ones seemingly available to him.²⁹⁸

Singer has in mind melodramas from earlier times, however, so his understanding of pathos in relationship to "psychic energies and emotions which the narrative "represses," blocks from full expression, gratification, or resolution" is turned on its head by *Navajeros*.²⁹⁹ there still is no final resolution or gratification, but this is because the narrative takes the energies and emotions to such an excess that they are incompatible with reality. This postmodern reversal of the melodramatic mode—not to release the repressed through swelling music and non-naturalistic mise-en-scène, but instead to make excess so excessive that it spills out of the text—ruptures the narrative to expose contradictions instead of introducing an ordered surface to smooth over them. This is why scenes of 'realism' are continually reintroduced after moments of melodramatic excess, for its contradictions are to be exposed by melodrama in order to be perceived by the viewer: a collision between the vicious 'reality' of the present in a liberal democracy and a marginal identity victimized by being denied access except through destructive excess.

²⁹⁸ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 40.

²⁹⁹ Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, 39.

The dialectic of realism and melodrama is repeated again and again for the rest of the film, with modernist devices employed from time to time to expose this relationship as one that is enabled by the cinematic apparatus. This postmodern pastiche of styles, however, is utilized to reveal through rupture the contradictions of the dominant ideology—that of a capitalist liberal democracy—and not, as Jean-Louis Baudry writes, “to obtain a precise ideological effect necessary to the dominant ideology” by naturalizing them.³⁰⁰ The narrative never stabilizes around either reality, as the social, or melodrama, as Jaro attempts to gain access. The next scene returns us to the reporter, narrating more facts to ground the fiction on the screen—45% of crimes are committed by juveniles, 50% of those detained are less than 18—only to then rip this ground away via melodrama. Jaro is saved in the nick-of-time from sure arrest by his lover, followed by a sex scene that is so grotesque in framing and acting—extreme close-ups in shot-reverse sequence of their faces, contorted with tongues hanging out while groaning—that melodrama comes crashing back in excessively. Then a scene of intense reality—shot on location, traveling along on motorcycles, natural lighting—though Tchaikovsky blares again and the scene is interrupted by rapid jump cuts: reality, an experience of it that is sensationalized and excessive, followed by the self-reflexive revelation that this relationship between fact and fiction is a representation.

The scenes that follow function to ramp up the stakes in this collision between fact and fiction, reality and melodrama—and the modernist revelation of a self-conscious cinematic representation—but never deviate from this established structure. We follow

³⁰⁰ Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Apparatus," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 295.

Jaro's downward spiral towards his eventual death, all the while knowing how it will end, yet drawn in deeper emotionally, which makes the harshness of reality all the more poignant, and our condemnation of it all the more pronounced. We follow his determined path to selling and abusing drugs, his mistreatment by those who control the drug business as well as by the police, his incarceration, his escape, and his attempt at playing house with a young woman whom he impregnated. Interspersed in all of this are constant interruptions by the narrator *cum* journalist: 2% of delinquents are from the upper class, 5% from the upper middle, 19% from the middle, and 74% from the working class; then, we see a montage of him traveling out to the suburbs to understand Jaro based on his social "situation." Meanwhile, there are jump cuts and jarring angles in shots to reveal the cinematic apparatus. Melodrama and realism, modernist representation, all as postmodern pastiche.

The list could be even longer, for the film's excesses constantly spill off the screen: a fight with neo-fascists to the music of Chopin; Jaro being raped by a dealer's henchman followed by hundreds of hooligans storming the streets in retaliation; Jaro losing a testicle after a battle with the police, who machine-gun his friend; Jaro and his gang getting involved in a shootout between the police and Basque terrorists; Jaro getting in a knife-fight to protect his prostitute mom from her pimp, though she picks the latter over him; and, then his death at the same moment that his son is born. This last scene is worth mentioning, however, for the most excessive conflation of styles is displayed in the film's closure.

Jaro and the soon-to-be mother of their boy, Toni, have a fight. He berates her for wanting to smoke a joint while pregnant. She ridicules him for acting as if they will have

a 'normal' home, when he still continues to rob and steal. They can pretend they are part of society, but in fact they persist at the margins only able to perform the part. He storms out of the apartment, on his way to collect the gang and rob a car. Tchaikovsky swells up again. This moment reiterates the statement at the beginning of the film, that Jaro is only a criminal because of necessity and misery, with the melodramatic mode to give expression to his "symptomatic behavior [that] emerges out of irreconcilable or inexpressible" contradiction, as Laura Mulvey explains the melodramatic protagonist.³⁰¹ However, it is not as if we take Jaro's side, as if he were to be admired for any heroism. Instead, through the dialectic of realism and melodrama, and the modernist self-reflexivity of the film, we are made to experience how he is victimized by the present—he is a criminal out of necessity and misery—a consequence of the unjust, immoral system of capitalism that forces parts of society to the margins, limiting inclusion and voice. Those on the margins can only express themselves through the melodramatic mode of excess, which is comical or destructive, but never acquires legitimacy. Democracy is the victim, for meaningful inclusion is denied, making opposition an inarticulate cry recognized only to be destroyed.

The sequence at the very end, beginning with this fight and ending with Jaro's death and the birth of his boy, demonstrates through parallel editing that the present as such seems to offer only an eternal repetition of the same. We are shown Jaro traveling from the outskirts into the city, while Toni travels to the hospital to give birth. Jaro and the gang attack a man getting out of his car in an affluent neighborhood, while Toni is

³⁰¹ Laura Mulvey, "It will be a magnificent obsession!: The Melodrama's Role in the Development of Contemporary Film Theory," in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. J. S. Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 125.

carted into the delivery room. A man in a house comes out with a shotgun, all run off except Jaro, who turns and approaches with his knife drawn. The man blasts him once in the chest, and the second rips his face apart, which is presented in extreme close-up. He bleeds out on the pavement, as we cut to an extreme close-up of the baby crowning, blood covering his body as he emerges from the birth canal. Jaro in the street, a chalk outline around his body, then a jump cut to the outline now absent of his body. The baby is cleaned off, passages cleared, and the music that has blared for the entirety of the sequence stops. With this last image frozen on the frame, the baby's wail exceeds the diegetic reality, as we continue to hear his cries even though the image-movement has ended.

The present reality of the liberal democracy revealed in its brutality, destroying those who cross the lines of exclusion and make attempts to be recognized: a disarticulation of the invisible in melodramatic excess. "The melodramatic mode is an ideology of the spectacle, propelled by narrative and powered by emotion. If it can be turned into a story and made legible in images, the experience is legitimate, *real*," as Lang observes.³⁰² However, what de la Iglesia manages in *Navajeros* is to inflect this mode using realist and modernist devices, thus creating a spectacle that is hyperreal, exceeding reality and positioning ideology at a critical distance: we see a grotesque vision of reality that might be more real than everyday experience or passive entertainment. A representation ruptured from material history, but not cohering as a stable text either, instead self-consciously revealing the contradictions of both fact and fiction through cinematic affect. Is this a politics for postmodernity?

³⁰² Lang, *American Film Melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli*, 21.

Navajeros does manage to avoid the pitfall of what Johannes von Moltke cautions against: the “function of emotion as a totalizing response” by charging a “historical moment emotionally... to subsume its various aspects, and even its contradictions, under the totalizing grasp of an affective response.”³⁰³ The film turns the ‘traditional’ melodrama on its head, using the mode instead to have the viewer feel the contradictions of the present while also interrupting the process of affect and response to create an emotional distance through realist and modernist narrative devices. As such, the film does seem to coincide with Rancière’s understanding of the politics of aesthetics:

configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity... a battle fought yesterday over the promises of emancipation and the illusions and disillusion of history [that] continues today on aesthetic terrain.³⁰⁴

Navajeros is political in the sense that it offers new experiences of reality and the representation of it to enable the sensation and the critical disruption of the illusion that emancipation exists in the present. But does it register a “political signification” for reality in which “modes of narration or new forms of visibility established by artistic practices enter into politics’ own field of aesthetic possibilities”?³⁰⁵

What the film does register is the invisibility of the working class youths, and their recourse to melodramatic excess as discourse, which however, is a reaction, not a position. These youths are excluded from the social order, and thus ‘act out’ to an excessive and criminal degree. They rail against the society that denies them access, which is very different than a political signification to represent any inclusion through the

³⁰³ Johannes von Moltke, "Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History, and the Politics of Emotion," *New German Critique* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 42.

³⁰⁴ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 9.

³⁰⁵ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 60, 65.

gaps of the social order exposed as sheer contingency. That is, the film works to demonstrate how the liberal democracy crushes these youths, but these figures are never made visible or heard as meaningful subjects. They never articulate anything other than melodramatic excess. This experience of reality is discomfoting, provoking a pathos of the historical moment that is depicted that makes criminals out of kids and denies them both a present and a future. Yet, there is no sign of what to do next, as we perceive more the impossibility for change rather than what is possible.

The film does not propose, summon, or organize a political project in opposition, which Badiou takes to be political activity.³⁰⁶ There is no projection of how the particular situation symbolized by Jaro might be made part of a “collective multiplicity,” which is not to imply a totality or a bounded universality, but rather refers to a collection of political positions that all have the freedom to speak equally and individually.³⁰⁷ Instead, the final image of Jaro’s baby boy gestures towards a repetition of the same disarticulation and denial. The film is a more ‘political’ representation than *Pepi, Luci, Bom*, in that *Navajeros* offers a critical experience of the present instead of taking refuge from it by representing a removed spatio-temporal realm; yet, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* is more ‘political’ in that it offers a representation of particularity that has a firm voice and a commanding presence.

Neither film, however, seems to signify a politics of opposition that would translate beyond the symbolic realm and take real form. What then are we to conclude: Is the gap between the political, as represented, and the political, in reality, a result of an excessive melodramatic mode that can only render oppositional identities as either mute

³⁰⁶ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 85.

³⁰⁷ Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 141.

or unreal? Or is it more complex, and perhaps more troubling: 'post-modern' political theory may have misplaced democracy in imagining political opposition as an actual possibility for and in reality? These films might come closer to realizing any actual 'political' possibility for the postmodern present by offering images of oppositional particularities, though they represent identity either made possible in the escape from reality or as an impossibility denied by reality.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: Political Possibility

The Pactos de la Moncloa sealed the fate of the *transición*, Tom Lewis maintains, and foreclosed the possibility for a politics of difference or opposition, as well as for any clean break with the past regime or authentic democracy for the future: “[t]alk of a *ruptura democrática* after the end of 1977 became stigmatized as immature political fantasy.”³⁰⁸ The fantasy was that the *transición* would bring about significant political, social, or economic changes that had been imagined at its beginning, but instead of change there was continuity, at least for the working and middle classes. The consensual politics practiced behind closed doors by the UCD, PCE and PSOE managed to limit wage increases to 20-22% though inflation was soaring above 29%; tight restrictions were placed on credit and borrowing; public spending was drastically cut; concessions were demanded from the unions to desist striking (previous to this Spain had the highest strike rate in Europe); and, unemployment grew from 7 to 13%.³⁰⁹ The democracy instituted did not have the ‘people’ in mind: it was a liberal democracy to develop further the expansion of capitalism first introduced under the regime and now fully instituted as a free market, nationally and internationally.

³⁰⁸ Tom Lewis, "Aesthetics and Politics," in *Critical Practices in Post-Franco Spain*, ed. Silvia L. López, Jenaro Taléns, and Darío Villanueva (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 174.

³⁰⁹ Lewis, "Aesthetics and Politics," 173.

Following the Pactos de la Moncloa, “the PCE and the PSOE repudiated flat out the political opportunity to pursue a clear constitutional alternative during the referendum campaign.”³¹⁰ The democracy being instituted would not serve the interests of those without power, influence, or wealth. In a rapid reversal of their earlier rejection of “any path of accommodation to capitalism” in order to take “political and economic power, the socialization of the means of production, distribution and exchange by the working class” during the December 1976 party congress, the PSOE instead embraced the institution of a free-enterprise monarchy to serve capital and Spain’s elites.³¹¹ The PCE, likewise, surrendered “its radical impulse in the initiation rites of bourgeois-monarchist democracy... laying the ground for the *desencanto* that would sweep the Left and [the PCE’s] membership in the years to come.”³¹² The lack of political opposition by the PCE and the PSOE, both of whom should not be understood as capitulating to the UCD but as working with them in drafting the Pactos and the Constitution, diminished the belief in and desire for political possibility. A “political apathy” followed this disenchantment, and as Lewis points out, would then become more of a “political irony, even cynicism” following the failed coup d’etat on February 23rd, 1981, which for but a moment stimulated public desire again only then to fade away.³¹³

This political cynicism was not misplaced or misdirected desire, but was a result of the practice of politics limiting possibilities to only one. Once the PSOE won control of the government following the October 1982 elections, there was no turn to the avowed

³¹⁰ Lewis, "Aesthetics and Politics," 174.

³¹¹ Patrick Camiller, "Spanish Socialism in the Atlantic Order," *New Left Review*, no. 156 (March-April 1986): 9.

³¹² Patrick Camiller, "The Eclipse of Spanish Communism," *New Left Review*, no. 147 (September-October 1984).

³¹³ Lewis, "Aesthetics and Politics," 176.

project of building a social democracy by and for the middle and working classes, but instead things became much worse for those without influence or power. Unemployment rose to 22% by 1985, though already by 1983 over 50% of youths aged 16-19 and 38% of 20 to 24 year-olds were without a job, and instead of the promised creation of 800,000 new jobs, the PSOE “presided over the destruction” of 484,000 jobs.³¹⁴ Even with the PSOE in charge, there was no change in the practice of politics except to service even more deliberately the demands of the free market.

Political cynicism was not only a result of what the PSOE did not do, but also resulted from what they did accomplish: “nothing less than the wholesale socioeconomic assimilation of members of the new ruling class to the old ruling class,” establishing a line of continuity between the totalitarian regime of the past and the ‘social democrats’ of the present: a continued relationship between politicians and the public that alienated the latter from the equation of profits and power accumulated by the former. Instead of any social democracy, the PSOE pushed Spain into the international market economy following the *transición*, “developing an economic strategy whose principal aim was to foster and deepen the restructuring of big capital that was already under way,” and reaped the rewards: holding onto power until 1996 and amassing many fortunes along the way.³¹⁵ The political irony was that the PSOE, a socialist party, administered “capitalism just as efficaciously for the times as the avowedly capitalist parties,” which certainly did not help to counter the “profound disillusionment with the professed [political] alternatives.”³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Camiller, "Spanish Socialism in the Atlantic Order," 26.

³¹⁵ Camiller, "Spanish Socialism in the Atlantic Order," 26.

³¹⁶ Lewis, "Aesthetics and Politics," 181.

In chapters two and four, I outlined how the political euphoria for democratic possibility at the beginning of the *transición* became diffused by the practice of consensual politics and the diminishment of opposition, which led to a *desencanto* with the practice of politics by the *transición*'s end. Eduardo Haro Tecglen's writings during the *transición* help to document the transition from a political desire to a political dissatisfaction or disbelief in the possibility of further change, that is, for any eventual institution of anything remotely resembling a democracy to serve the majority's interests and ensure freedom and equality, a feeling which would only increase under the reign of the PSOE (to which the contemporary constitution of the PSOE today performs almost as a corrective, as José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's *Nueva Vía*, or New Way, was announced as a project of political and social change for democratic socialism that would restore credibility to the PSOE's public image and restore faith in its message).³¹⁷

My analysis and interpretation of this transition, however, was not only performed to bring to light the transition in politics for a specific place, Spain, at a specific time, 1975-1982. Rather, by looking at this transition to a liberal and capitalist democracy, which is not that different from other such democracies around the globe, the question can be asked: how can political possibility be perceived by 'modern' political theory to exist for the democratic State, which does not reveal much potential to complete the historical project, finally, of achieving liberty, fraternity, and equality? If there is no

³¹⁷ See Óscar Campillo, *Zapatero: presidente a la primera* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2004). Zapatero certainly has made social change central to his presidency, legalizing same-sex marriage and adoption by homosexuals, granting illegal immigrants amnesty, pushing educational reform and more affordable housing; and, he has demonstrated a different set of political coordinates, renouncing the Iraq war and establishing ties with left-wing Latin American leaders. However, it is too early to say, if one ever will, that his economic policies evidence a turn away from the commitment to a neo-liberal free market economy pushed forward by the PSOE under González.

viable opposition, because of an absence of agonism or direct competition between opposing parties, or because the ‘oppositional’ parties themselves, socialists and communists in the Spanish case, administer capitalism just as or more efficaciously as the bourgeois-moderate-liberal parties, then the political possibility for anything other than stasis and an eternal present for the current state of affairs should be acknowledged, as a desire never to be fulfilled.

The other political possibility that was put forth as an alternative, that of ‘post-modern’ political theory, envisages opposition as disagreement and disruption instead of debate and dialogue, occurring either against or outside the realm of the State. In this sense, political possibility does not rely upon professional politicians to mediate differences and bring about consensus, but instead relies upon the activity of social agents fighting to be recognized and heard in the social sphere. This type of political theory perceives society to be composed of particular groups or individuals, who work towards inclusion into the social order, thereby demonstrating at the same time a dialectic of particularity and universality as well as the sheer contingency of any social synthesis or stability. There is no historical project to complete, except to drive history forever forward through continual change and reordering.

However, the *transición* reveals a concurrent transition towards social demobilization and disenchantment. This would suggest that social apathy or cynicism, besides in relation to the practice of politics, stands in the way of considering any totality, however tenuous or fleeting, beyond the fragmentation and isolation of particularities. There is no social desire to call upon in order to reorder the social around a universal essence or identity, group or amalgamation, that might bind together disparate

particularities, however contingent this might be. While political possibility might exist in making demands to be heard and included within the social order, are there signs that the social order has ever changed except to include more and more particularities? Has it been revealed that the contingent social order is contingent, or that it accommodates difference while remaining the same all along? If the latter, then an oppositional social order, such as a global ‘multitude’ against Empire or a radical ‘populism’ vying for hegemony,³¹⁸ seems to be as much a desire not to be fulfilled as the ‘good State’ that ‘modern’ political theory proposes: neither representing any tenable social or political realities that oppose the inscribed democracy and social order according to the logic of capitalism, a postmodern present stretching as far as the eye can see.³¹⁹ As Slavoj Zizek writes

the failure of the reality to live up to its notion always bears witness to the inherent weakness of the notion itself. But why should the same also not hold for democracy itself? Is it also not all too simple to oppose to the “really existing” liberal capitalo-democracy a more true “radical” democracy?³²⁰

What then is political possibility in and for postmodernity? Is democracy even an option?

Postmodernity, itself the historical age of late-stage capitalism, might also be the cause of any theoretical impasse to imagine democracy or political possibility beyond its temporal or spatial borders. Present democratic reality, both politically and socially, has

³¹⁸ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2005).

³¹⁹ One is often reprimanded for observing that ‘post-modern’ projects of opposition give an ontology to processes not yet existent, as is Slavoj Zizek by Laclau for critiquing his idea of ‘populism’ for its reification of a particularity as a universality that does not manage to upset the social order in the end. See Ernesto Laclau, "Why Constructing a People is the Main Task of Radical Politics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 4 (Summer 2006).

³²⁰ Zizek, "From Politics to Biopolitics... and Back," 516.

become naturalized and accepted, with both 'modern' and 'post-modern' political theories imagining change to come from within what is already given, no matter if this is through resolution or rupture, for both take the elements for change to be already existent, even if they have not yet been heard or seen either as consensual partners or parts to be included in the whole through disagreement. The debunking of metanarratives, epistemologically, politically and socially, and the resistance to put forth organized and total visions of realities (utopias really), even if it is accepted that the socio-political is contingent and in flux, makes it hard to represent alternate realities guided by a logic different from that of late-stage capitalism. Paraphrasing Cornelius Castoriadis, postmodernity marks a historical point when there is more interpretation than creation, or put another way, if one cannot create an alternate reality then one interprets the given reality anew.³²¹ The future has been reduced to interpreting the present state of things in order to find possibility within: there is no outside, historical or material.

Leaving 'modern' political theory aside, because of its historical confusion in situating any contemporary democracy as an extension of modernity's unfinished project, which is more a reaction against postmodernity than a way of negotiating a possible way out, how can 'post-modern' political theory begin to look at the problem of political possibility from a fresh perspective, while acknowledging contingency and disruption, but also breaking the reified shell that the idea of democracy has become? Protests against capitalism, or globalization, hold on to the idea of democracy as a counter to the inequities and contradictions of the present situation. However, ideas of 'radical' democracies seem only to suggest a better practice or institution of liberal democracy that

³²¹ Castoriadis, "The Crisis of Culture and the State," 227.

might ameliorate capitalism's most excessive consequences, thereby leaving the foundation still intact. Perhaps, as Žižek suggests, this means that 'democracy' needs to be reimagined or discarded outright, for most often "the reference to democracy involves the rejection of radical attempts to "step outside," to risk a radical break, to pursue the trend of self-organized collectives in areas outside the law."³²² Yet, again, how does one step outside when material history holds us fast inside? The answer could be: representation.

It is important to consider once again the relationship between representation and reality, for now there is also a consideration of the 'real' that is necessary in order to orient the direction of our gaze searching for political possibility on the horizon. Jesús González-Requena's Lacanian distinction between the 'real' and 'reality' helps:

Reality is the realm of an organized, categorized, predictable world, where the singular obeys the law, where meaning reigns. In other words: the reality of the world exists only insofar as it is submitted/subject to the order of discourse... In opposition to it we have the real, which is the realm of the uncategorizable, of the chaotic, of the unpredictable, where the singular is affirmed in all its irreducibility, in its radical capacity to make meaning impossible. The real escapes the order of discourse.³²³

Political possibility should be looked for, not in reality, but in the gap between reality and the real. Criticisms of late-stage capitalism and the politics of the State, of the economic and political realities of the day, must depart from the existing reality *in toto*, for what must be performed is a return to the real to then construct a wholly new organization and categorization that will predict new laws, norms, and meanings that have nothing to do with that now signified by 'democracy.' This cannot be done without anything short of

³²² Žižek, "From Politics to Biopolitics... and Back," 511.

³²³ Jesús González-Requena, "The Television Newscast: A Postmodern Discourse," in *Critical Practices in Post-Franco Spain*, ed. Silvia L. López, Jenaro Taléns, and Darío Villanueva (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

ultimate rupture and repudiation, for a disruption or rearticulation of particularities within an existent social order does not seem to escape from the bounds and limits of an already given order. “The only “realistic” prospect is to ground a new political universality by opting for the *impossible*, fully assuming the place of the exception, with no taboos, no a priori norms (“human rights,” “democracy”),” says Žižek, which requires letting go of the pieces now ordered together to fall back again into the chaos of the real, then to be rearranged and given alternate meaning through discourse: a discourse that grants time and space to the impossible.³²⁴

This task falls to representation, to fix for a moment the real according to laws and norms that refract those of reality, allowing them to be contemplated from outside. “We find ourselves with more codes, more discursive apparatus, more specialized fields of knowledge—in sum, a more refined semiotic apparatus to configure reality,” writes González-Requena, but “at the same time, we find ourselves in the most fragile reality of times” because of our theoretical impasse to imagine beyond.³²⁵ However, in an age of discredited metanarratives and absent of utopias, the narrative function to reach beyond reality might still exist and offer a way, especially in cinema’s unique framing and figuration of the real, as a represented reality different than, yet tied, to material reality.

Georg Lukács, the early philosopher of souls and forms, perceived the potential of cinema to extend beyond reality while referencing it at the same time:

Not only in their technique, but also in their effect, cinematic images, equal in their essence to nature, are no less organic and alive... Only they maintain a life of a completely different kind. In a word, they become

³²⁴ Slavoj Žižek, “Holding the Place,” in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (London, 2000), 326.

³²⁵ González-Requena, “The Television Newscast: A Postmodern Discourse,” 35.

fantastic. This fantastical element is not a contrast to the living life, however, it is only a new aspect of the same: a life without the present, a life without fate, without reasons, without motives, a life without measure or order, without essence or value... Even when the soul still—and often—longs for this life, this longing is for a foreign abyss, for something far off and internally distant[,] the world of the “cinema.”³²⁶

Cinema gives a collection of images, organized and categorized, a fantasy referring to the reality of “living life,” but removed from its present, distanced from its reasons, motives, essence, or value, a world that attracts our desire, but which we cannot fulfill yet, for this ‘other’ world is foreign, far off, a world like our own but inextricably separated and distinct. Yet, the perception of this ‘other’ world’s possibility, the contemplation of its organization, values, norms, and essence, the desire to occupy its spatio-temporal domain, all of this might power political activity to remake a cinematic reality in material form, from the abyss to an actuality, opposed to the social, political, and economic reality of lived life.

At least, this potential would seem to be possible if cinematic representation provided for a departure from lived reality, access into the real, and a critical return to see reality as a concept no longer contained: that is, if filmic representations were politically sublime, revealing present reality as no longer controlled, bringing forth an exhilaration in breaking free from it, making meaningful through affect a desire for an alternate future.³²⁷ A postmodern aesthetics of the sublime could be the first step towards political possibility, towards a reality not yet represented. To Žižek’s question—“What could be

³²⁶ Georg Lukács, “Thoughts Toward an Aesthetic of the Cinema,” *Polygraph*, no. 13 (2001): 14.

³²⁷ “[A]s for a politics of the sublime, there is no such thing. It could only be terror,” Lyotard argues, a point that seems to be accurate in so far as such a politics would have to be revolutionary, bringing chaos to order and willing to sacrifice all. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982-1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 71.

more sublime than the creation of a new liberated territory, of a positive order of being that escapes the grasp of the existing order?”—I would add only that, while the creation of a liberated territory in reality might be far from actuality, the representation of such a territory and positive order is where one might conceive of its possibility in postmodernity.³²⁸

We saw in chapters three and five that certain fantasies of reality were represented melodramatically in films during the *transición*, and that these fantasies differed at the *transición*'s beginning and its end. Before the socio-political situation became bounded by the logic of capitalism and formed as a liberal democracy, melodramatic fantasies appealed to the moral register of politics, representing what ought to be done—the evacuation of political opposition and ideological conflict—in order for a national reconciliation to proceed. The turmoil and trauma of the past were represented in historical melodramas in order that they would not spill over into the present. Such an aesthetic affect of a clear-cut distinction between good and evil, and its message that ‘we should all get along’, however, should not be understood as part of the practice of consensus that would come to define the politics of the *transición*, for the films were released well before such practice began.

The ethical treatment of history and society, and the desire for reality not to be split into two ideological camps, can still be understood in terms of political possibility, but they need to be situated with respect to temporality. These earlier melodramas were representations of ethical import—of what ought to have happened in the past instead of what did—so that the threat of a recurrence of the same failure might be averted in the

³²⁸ Slavoj Žižek, "Intellectuals, Not Gadflies," *Critical Inquiry*, no. 34, supplement (Winter 2008): 35.

present through an affective experience of national reconciliation and identity. These earlier melodramas were not motivated by an aesthetic sublime of postmodernity, for to the disorganization of reality they wanted to bring order and tranquility. They represented desires to make a reconciled and organized reality out of the undefined and chaotic real, a political possibility taken to be resolution and not rupture.

In this sense, the films represented political possibility much the same as the unfinished project of ‘modern’ political theory—a project denied in the past that the present can make right—and a social reality that should be harmonious and complete, if not for the imposition of the ideological villainy of extreme individualism and self-interest. The representation of a *demos*, whose identity preexists the enemy’s attack upon it, and for whom the enemy is an external threat, also shares something with the contemporary turn to populism, which posits a hegemonic universality to counter the antidemocratic elements within a democratic space: democracy is constrained “not [by] a fatal flaw inscribed into the structure as such but [by] an element that doesn’t play its role in the structure properly.”³²⁹ Both ideas, modernity’s unfinished project or populism, imply a universality that should be striven for, and can be achieved, if only the system itself be cleansed and purified of elements standing in democracy’s way. This too is how these earlier melodramas prefigured democracy before its entrance onto the Spanish stage.

However, the socio-political situation quickly changed with the institution of a liberal democracy, the disappearance of opposition in politics, and the demobilization and disenchantment in the social. To this, just as ‘post-modern’ political theory responds to

³²⁹ Slavoj Žižek, "Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry*, no. 32 (Spring 2006): 555.

the new historical inflection of democracy and political possibility by late-stage capitalism and postmodernity, some melodramas responded as well by disrupting the now ordered social and political realities in order to consider them from new perspectives. The films analyzed and interpreted in this study were examples of a melodramatic mode, not to present an ethics to order and organize reality like earlier, but instead to enable a perspective to perceive the instability and disorder of reality. For this reason, it is this mode and not the earlier one that we need to interrogate for its potential for representing political possibility in postmodernity, as this age cannot contemplate the idea of democracy from without but must perform an immanent critique from within the confines of what democracy has become.

Pepi, Luci, Bom offers one example of a representation of reality distinct from the socio-political reality of the times. The present is given an identity that has no history, and for this reason identity is free to cross all boundaries of sexuality and gender that had been imposed in lived life. Though victimized at times by vestiges of the past, present figurations of identity in the film heroically overcome these obstacles by its end to achieve full expression. In this representation, the order of the social order is disrupted so that marginal identities can make themselves heard and seen. The film seems to suggest a postmodern politics in that elements of the real have been reoriented according to new laws and norms, thus symbolically presenting an alternate reality to counter the one existing in actuality.

However, there is a problematic location of democratic potential as already existent in diegetic reality, just as with 'post-modern' political theory's positing of much the same in lived reality. In the diegesis, the possibility for 'democracy' already exists,

though it is stubbornly resisted by antidemocratic elements—like the police officer who has served since the regime—a conflict that provokes the melodramatic moments of the film. In this sense, even though the film is more of a melodramatic parody, there is the same clear-cut distinction made between the victim and the villain as in the earlier melodramas of the *transición*, but in this instance there is no absolute victimization of those without power or control: instead the would-be victims become heroes in control of their own destinies and desires and manage to punish the would-be villains, turning the melodramatic mode on its head. There is no democratic inclusion into society to be won, for it is already given, while struggle instead centers around getting revenge on the antidemocratic elements that persist. Though the film does reveal the contingency of the social order, and the multiplicity of identity, it does not position a critical perspective by which to see actual reality anew. We are given a beautiful picture of the present—democracy is alive and well—that suggests an aesthetics of assurance, which runs counter to a sublime aesthetics.

Pepi, Luci, Bom instead demonstrates what Fredric Jameson calls the “aesthetics of postmodernism... in which sensory beauty is once again the heart of the matter.”³³⁰ It provides a sensory feast of outlandish sexual perversities, bearded women, cock contests, and rock performances by popular musicians. In its represented reality, all is fun and carefree, with no concerns or threats except those that are easily tamed, and with a happy ending as well to show the protagonists fully gratified by the new democratic life of the present. Of course, such a reality makes only slight reference to the actual present, the *movida*, for the film was made in 1980 and released just before the coup d’etat in

³³⁰ Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), 123.

February of 1981. Like Jameson's idea of postmodern "art as a substitute for politics and the work of art about art," this beautiful picture of the present is an aesthetic representation to be enjoyed for itself no matter the socio-political situation in reality.³³¹ Instead of offering a representation that might inform a consideration of political possibility for reality, the film is a self-contained aesthetic democracy: if not the experience of democracy in reality, then at least the experience of it in representation. Its example of the melodramatic mode does not seem to provide much for political possibility in reality, for much like Zygmunt Bauman's assessment of stories told in postmodernity, *Pepi, Luci, Bom* articulates "individual lives in a way that excludes or suppresses (prevents from articulation) the possibility of tracking down the links connecting individual fate to the ways and means by which society as a whole operates."³³² We experience the fanciful fate of Pepi and Bom, rendered as a beautiful picture made possible by the present, but there is no link made between the individualized lifestyle of the *movida* and the lived life of the social.

Navajeros offers a different example, however, as a cinema of poverty in imagery and content. The rough nature of the film owing to its location shooting, its non-professional actors from the streets themselves, its disregard for continuity editing, all oppose a tendency towards beauty, which is further reinforced by the ugliness of its representation of the present as brutal and undemocratic, if this is to mean the guarantee of freedom and equality. This alone does not make the film sublime. Its melodramatic mode to suture the spectator into an affective experience of such a reality does. The

³³¹ Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, 133.

³³² Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualized Society* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity; Blackwell, 2001), 9.

excess of cinematic form to represent the excesses that its protagonist, Jaro, is pushed to in his pursuit to be recognized and heard forces the viewer into the chaos and disorganization of the real, a realm outside of the law, without value or essence, inchoate and inarticulate, the world that Jaro inhabits. The film itself, as an aesthetic representation, does organize and categorize these elements to a degree, but there is never a complete order or meaning given to diegetic reality because its pastiche of film forms prevents any unified counter to the fragmentation of the aesthetic parts. However, because of this use of the cinematic apparatus to represent the chaos and uncertainty of the real, any symbolic meaning is also incomplete. To what effect then does the film bring through affect a consideration of political possibility in reality?

The diegetic reality of *Navajeros* is not a mimetic copy of the socio-political reality, but it does reference the reality of the times, especially that of the working class and homosexuals living on the margins. At the same time, its pastiche maintains a level of fragmentation that self-reflexively reveals the film's own artifice. It is not an aesthetic stand-in for reality, but rather wants to turn a critical eye on the failures of democracy. What is shown is that in a liberal democracy, types like Jaro will never find freedom or equality, nor will they find a voice or be recognized outside of melodramatic discourse, which reduces them to particularity because of the self-destructive and violent excess that prevents any collective will from developing. But, again, what political possibility is this? Jaro is crushed by the present, represented as an absence on the screen by the film's end, and it is not inferred that his son or mates will fare any better. Nor does the film offer an assessment of what specific problems need to be addressed or what issues have to be rectified to prevent the same from happening again and again. In fact, *Pepi, Luci,*

Bom seems to offer more in the way of a 'liberated territory' or 'positive order of being', though any possibility for reality it could have offered is denied by its retreat into the aesthetic. What *Navajeros* does manage is an experience of reality as inherently undemocratic with no foreseeable future change, a world in which all are victims and there are no heroes, a world without villains except for the socio-political space itself, and yet the doors to this world of representation are left open. The world of the film is revealed as a fiction, fragmented so that it never coheres as only an aesthetic object. The political possibility that is given then is that reality is experienced anew through representation and, possibly, the viewer returns through its open doors to experience the real and see now from a critical perspective the artifice of social reality just as clearly as the artifice its representation. There is nothing free or equal about the contemporary democracy, and nothing perceived that is redeemable in a reality as such. This film offers up a picture of an entirely negative order of being and territory that cannot be liberated, a return to the real so that it is left chaotic and unstable, which makes it possible that an alternative reality might be reorganized or categorized by different means for future meaning, but far from certain. *Navajeros* does not present a political project for the future, but it does represent that one is needed, given the capitalo-liberal democracy of the present.

After our travels through the *transición*, and its political, social, and cultural transitions over the years 1975-1982, the movement from modernity to postmodernity, from dictatorship to a liberal democracy, where do we find ourselves in terms of political possibility? It is my argument that an answer is not necessary for the discussion to be meaningful, but rather what is required is that the question be asked without being

resigned to make do with the situation as such, which is to say, without finding the answer immanent to the reality of our times. Nothing less than a complete rupture from a capitalo-liberal democracy is required, though to say so is akin to standing on the edge of a veritable abyss, historically and epistemologically, for I am unable to offer up an opposing project that might direct a path towards the future. However, this lack on my part does not deter me from believing that political possibility does exist, even if as a vague shadow, tendrils and wisps that catch my eye but which I cannot not yet decipher.

For just as I cannot perceive the future, I can still make out, like Zizek, contours of

the fateful limitation of the present global capitalist system, inclusive of its democratic form of political self-legitimization... [so] I am not ready to... endorse the standard “postmodern” political solution to turn defeat into a blessing in disguise, i.e., to abandon the horizon of radical change in favor of the prospect of multiple local practices of resistance, etc.—today, it is more crucial than ever to question the very foundations of capitalism of a global system, to clearly articulate the limitation of the democratic political project.³³³

To question the foundations of capitalism and articulate the limitations of democracy requires a conceptual understanding of their costs and consequences, which is political in nature, but equally important is to experience the instability of capitalism and inadequacy of democracy through perception and affective sensation, for which the melodramatic mode provides, so as to consider the possibility of what might be.

It is hoped that the study of the *transición* to postmodernity, its culture and politics, has helped to ask the question of political possibility again, to orient our gaze beyond the situation we still find ourselves in now: a dark time for emancipatory politics, but still illuminated by flickers of light serving as faint reminders on the screen that history and society are mutable. Such reminders do not exemplify what Jameson suggests

³³³ Zizek, "Ethical Socialism? No, Thanks!," 189.

would be political art in postmodernity, if there ever is to be any: the means by which “to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects [to] regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion.”³³⁴ We are still confused, and still unable to position in representation collective subjects in addition to individual ones, but this is not to say that there are no signs of a desire to act and struggle against the contradictions of capitalism and democracy in the present day. Just as I demonstrated how the *transición* was the beginning of postmodernity in the Spanish context, it is hoped that this study’s return to the beginning allows the question of political possibility to be asked again, for the politics and culture then are not that much different from what we find ourselves with now. We do seem to have come closer to the limits of postmodernity, but this is only a feeling. By returning to analyze and interpret its beginning, rounding the concept so as to understand postmodernity historically and not as eternal, an expectation for the future can possibly be imagined in our global context still mystified by the presentism of capitalism and democracy.

³³⁴ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 54.

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