UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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The Aesthetic of the Grotesque in Post-Franco Spain

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by

Elizabeth Mary Warren

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Aesthetic of the Grotesque in Post-Franco Spain

by

Elizabeth Mary Warren
Doctor in Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literature
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Professor María Teresa de Zubiaurre, Chair

This dissertation examines the aesthetic of the grotesque in contemporary Spanish cultural production (1975-present). I maintain that in the aftermath of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), film directors and writers resort to the grotesque to unveil the contradictions of the political narratives of the Transition to Democracy in order to destabilize them. For these authors, the grotesque is the key instrument used to challenge the perception of Spain as a paradigm of democratic transformation: they contest the celebratory democratizing discourse of the Transition, undermine the reconstruction of national and political identity in Catalonia, and question and denounce the negative social and political effects of the Pact of Forgetting in twenty-first century Spain.

In the first chapter, I study how Luis García Berlanga's film *Patrimonio nacional* (1981) and Pedro Almodóvar's film *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984) criticize the presumed modernization and democratization of the period. Against the grain, their authors present the survival and continuity of traditional Spain and Francoism as grotesque. In the second chapter, I explicate how Juan Marsé's novel *El amante bilingüe* (1990), Bigas Luna's film *La teta y la luna* (1994), and Albert Boadella's theater play *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*

(2001) subverted the vision of Catalan national identity propagated after Franco's death by Catalan President Jordi Pujol via grotesque satires of cultural normalization initiatives, Europeanist ambitions, and the political persona of Pujol himself. In the third chapter, I examine how Laila Ripoll's theater play *Santa Perpetua* (2010), Álex de la Iglesia's film *Balada triste de trompeta* (2010), and Hernán Migoya's novel *Una, grande y zombi* (2011) address the deliberate suppression of historical memory that defined the Transition. In these three works, the grotesque is the fundamental element employed to challenge the silencing of the traumatic legacies of the Civil War and the Franco regime.

The dissertation of Elizabeth Mary Warren is approved.

Silvia Bermúdez

John C. Dagenais

Jesús Torrecilla

María Teresa de Zubiaurre, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

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VITA

EDUCATION

University of California, Los Angeles

2016 C. Phil. in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

2013 M.A. in Spanish

Indiana University, Bloomington

2009 B.A. English (Honors), B.A. Spanish, B.A. American Studies
Honors Thesis: *'Either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.' Dominican-American Nationhood in Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

HONORS AND AWARDS

2014-2015 Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship. UCLA

2014 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship. UCLA

2009 Department of English Honors Thesis Award. Indiana University, Bloomington

2007 Edward L. Hutton International Experiences Travel Grant for Summer Study Abroad in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Indiana University, Bloomington

PUBLICATIONS

"Memorializing Trauma: An Interview with John Patrick Thompson." *Mester* 43 (2014-2015): 67-75. Co-conducted with Verónica García Moreno and Juan Jesús Payán

Translation from Spanish to English (with Rafael Ramírez). Pere Gimferrer, "*Death in Beverley Hills*. V" [*La muerte en Beverly Hills*. V"]. *Párrafo* 6 (2014): 8-9

PAPERS DELIVERED PUBLICLY

"Grotesque Europeanization in Bigas Luna's *La teta y la luna*." *Of Books and Roses: First California Symposium on Catalan Studies*. University of California, Los Angeles. April 25, 2017

"The Grotesque Vision of Immigration and Pujolian Catalan Identity in Juan Marsé's *El amante bilingüe*." *2017 Kentucky Foreign Language Conference*. University of Kentucky, Lexington. April 22, 2017

"Specters of Patriarchy in Transition-Era Madrid: Gendered Space in Rosa Montero's *Crónica del desamor.*" *2015 Kentucky Foreign Language Conference*. University of Kentucky, Lexington. April 24, 2015

"The Otherness of Heterosexuality in Lola Van Guardia's Queer Barcelona." *Department of Spanish and Portuguese 12th Annual Graduate Conference: Otherness: Manifestations and Tensions.* University of California, Los Angeles. April 16, 2015

"'A Dictator-for-Life:' Rafael Trujillo and the Legacy of Dominican Hypermasculinity in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*." *Department of Spanish and Portuguese 9th Annual Graduate Conference: Power, Resistencia, Transformação.* University of California, Los Angeles. May 18, 2012

"Bodies that Change: The Shifting Relationship between Power and the Body in *La piel que habito.*" *The 9th Annual Graduate Student Conference on Luso-Brazilian and Hispanic Linguistics, Literature, and Culture*, Indiana University, Bloomington. March 24, 2012

"Queen of Diaspora?: Construction of Femininity in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*," *Indiana University Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference: Transmission, Translation, Relocation*, Indiana University, Bloomington. March 28, 2009

OTHER ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

2015-present — Co-organizer, UCLA Latin American and Iberian Annual Film Festival

2015-2016 — President, UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese Graduate Student Association

2013-2014 — Vice President, UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese Graduate Student Association

Introduction

In his study *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen* (*History of Grotesque Comedy*) (1788), German literary historian Karl Friedrich Flögel contends that "the Spaniards, because of their eccentric and heated imagination, [seem to] have exceeded all the peoples of Europe in the grotesque-comic."[1] Evident in Flögel's observation, the tradition of "the grotesque" in Spanish culture is long-standing and extensive. From Francisco de Quevedo's *Sueños*, Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos*, Mariano José de Larra's satirical essays, José Gutiérrez Solana's paintings, Ramón del Valle-Inclán's *esperpento* plays, the novels of *tremendismo*, and the films of Luis Buñuel, Luis García Berlanga, and Álex de la Iglesia (among a myriad of other examples), Spain has "una merecida fama de ser territorio abonado para el gusto por lo bizarro, por los personajes ridículos, disparatados, por la crueldad extrema presentada con naturalidad, una crueldad no sólo centrada, como es frecuente en otros países, en el sexo" (Ovejero 14). With regards to Spain, the grotesque does not merely pertain to the realm of the arts—it also forms part of its social reality. In Valle-Inclán's *Luces de bohemia* (1924), the protagonist Max Estrella famously declares that "España es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea" (162). Similarly, over ninety years later, upon the premiere of his film *El bar* (2017), De la Iglesia comments that "[l]o grotesco es lo único que sirve hoy para hablar de la realidad. La única forma de hablar del mundo desde un punto de vista realista es lo grotesco. Todo lo demás es farsa y da miedo" (Piña). Given that Spain has long been a breeding ground for incongruous cruel humor and the

[1] Cited in Henry W. Sullivan's *Calderon in the German Lands and the Low Countries: His Reception and Influence, 1654-1980*, p. 166.

absurd, the grotesque has consistently been and continues to be a fundamental element for the understanding of Peninsular culture today.[2]

Drawing on the extensive tradition of the grotesque in Spanish visual art, literature, and film, this dissertation examines the aesthetic of the grotesque in post-Franco Spanish cultural production (1975-present). My objective is to scrutinize the use of the grotesque as a response to the emergent sociopolitical realities of democratic Spain. I contend that in the aftermath of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), film directors and writers resort to the grotesque to unveil the contradictions of the political narratives of the Transition to Democracy in order to destabilize them. For these authors, the grotesque is the key instrument used to challenge the perception of Spain as a paradigm of democratic transformation. Through my examination of a diverse corpus of films, novels, and theater plays produced during three distinct moments of the post-Franco era—1975-1984, 1990-2001, and 2010-2011—, I analyze how the authors employ the grotesque to contest the celebratory democratizing discourse of the Transition, to undermine the reconstruction of national and political identity in Catalonia, and to question and denounce the negative social and political impact of the Pact of Forgetting in twenty-first century Spain.

In Chapter 1, I examine how Luis García Berlanga's film *Patrimonio nacional* (1981) and Pedro Almodóvar's film *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984) use the grotesque to contest

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[2] In his study *La ética de la crueldad,* José Ovejero comments on the Spanish attraction to the cruel, the excessive, and the grotesque: "Sería una tarea difícil, y que desde luego excede mis fuerzas y mis conocimientos, intentar encontrar la razón de que lo apolíneo tenga tan poco éxito en España, donde los lectores parecen sentirse mucho más atraídos por lo dionisiaco, lo excesivo, lo tremendo, lo vulgar, lo esperpéntico. Si en el ensayo no es infrecuente la elegancia, la contención, el discurrir pausado y sin alharacas, como vemos en Gracián o en Jovellanos, en la ficción parece mucho más difícil de encontrar, al menos entre los escritores más destacados: un rápido repaso a los grandes nombres de la literatura nos lleva de inmediato a cultivadores de lo bizarro y absurdo, de lo exagerado, y en los casos más amables, de lo melodramático: Quevedo, Cervantes, Valle-Inclán, Cela, el Bécquer narrador, Vila-Matas, cultivadores del exceso cada uno a su manera. Incluso Galdós, que pasa por realista, no puede escapar al gusto por los excesos sentimentales […] Nuestra literatura tiende al torbellino y evita las aguas demasiado calmas" (15-6).

the perceived arrival of modernity and the predominance of Franco-era ideologies and institutions in the new democratic society.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrate how Juan Marsé's novel *El amante bilingüe* (1990), Bigas Luna's film *La teta y la luna* (1994), and Albert Boadella's theater play *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* (2001) resort to the grotesque to condemn the nationalist agenda of longtime Catalan President Jordi Pujol (1980-2003), who spearheaded the revitalization of Catalonia's political and linguistic institutions after the dictatorship.

Lastly, in Chapter 3, I study how Laila Ripoll's theater play *Santa Perpetua* (2010), Álex de la Iglesia's film *Balada triste de trompeta* (2010), and Hernán Migoya's novel *Una, grande y zombi* (2011) employ the grotesque to challenge the terms of the Pact of Forgetting about the Civil War and the Franco regime, and its projection into the present (responding to the Historical Memory Law of 2007).

The Aesthetic of the Grotesque

Many critics have noted that the grotesque is an idea that resists defining.[3] To some extent, this is because the concept has evolved extensively throughout time and within different cultures and art forms, combined with the fact that the word "grotesque" has long been arbitrarily coupled with sensations, styles, and genres that convey disharmony or incongruity. As Shun-Liang Chao explains, the term is often exploited loosely, "to describe any mode of *discordia concors*, any form of *bizarrie*," and it "has been invested with meanings such as fantastic, absurd, antic, monstrous, bizarre, marvellous, disgusting, terrible, and incongruous; and it has been associated or equated with artistic styles and genres such as the Gothic, the arabesque,

[3] See, for example: Kayser (181); McElroy (2); Harpham (3); Swain (11); Connelly (2).

Danse macabre, *chinoiserie*, caricature, the *Commedia dell'arte*, *diablerie*, and the comic" (7). In colloquial usage, "grotesque" has come to connote "almost anything unseemly, disproportionate, or in bad taste" (McElroy 1).[4] For these reasons, Bernard McElroy contends that

> the limits of definition of the word must be fairly flexible. There can be no precise point at which one says, "the grotesque stops here; commence some other term," because the grotesque is not a genre to which a work either does or does not belong. It does not originate in a particular school or artistic theory, but antedates all schools and theories. Nor is it an absolute which is either fully present or not at all. Rather, *it is a continuum which may be present in varying degrees in otherwise disparate works.* (2, emphasis my own)

My general understanding of the grotesque is rooted in much effort by previous critics, and stresses what I perceive to be the fundamental components of the aesthetic: distortion, disharmony or incongruity, and a clash between ludicrous and terrible elements.

To fully comprehend the grotesque as an aesthetic category, it is necessary to return the Renaissance-era origins of the term. The word "grotesque" arose in late-fifteenth century Italy, when it was used to describe the recently-excavated frescos that decorated the walls and ceilings of the subterranean compartments (*grotte*) of Nero's *Domus Aurea* ("Golden Palace").[5] The

[4] In the same vein, Lee Byron Jennings notes: "We find [grotesque] in the proximity of, and apparently equated with, such other terms as 'eccentric,' 'odd,' 'extravagant,' 'far-fetched,' 'fantastic,' 'absurd,' 'preposterous'—but also 'frightening,' 'malevolent,' 'morbid,' 'Gothic,' 'monstrous,' and 'gruesome.' The middle ground between these spheres of meaning seems to be held by 'freakish,' 'ugly,' and 'deformed'" (3). For an extensive overview of the colloquial uses of "grotesque," see Jennings (3-5).

[5] For a detailed description of the *Domus Aurea* and the Renaissance-era origins of the word "grotesque," see: Kayser (19-21); Barasch (17-9); Harpham (23-7).

elaborate underground Roman paintings featured an assortment of fanciful human, animal, plant, and pagan imagery, which Frances K. Barasch describes in vivid detail:

> [T]he painted ceilings followed a single symmetrical principle of design. All were intricately framed geometrical arrangements of compartments—circular, square, oblong, or combinations of these. In the compartments were landscapes and pastoral scenes portraying graceful or satyrical figures from the pagan world. The remainder of the ceiling surface was filled with fantastic inventions—satyrs, cupids, fruit, foliage, festoons, frets, knots, and bows. An effect of space and distance was achieved by the geometrical design, and occasionally the illusion of light and air was created by ceiling "windows" in *trompe l'œil* […L]ike the ceilings, [the walls] also contained compartments and fantasies, but their arrangements differed […] The lower third of the wall was covered with marble veneer, and the upper third was painted in landscape fantasies. This upper division contained architectural features—slender pillars, surmounted by delicate architraves from which floated graceful figures, attached at their crowns by impossible slender wires. Scenes of ruined columns, festoons and fruits, cities and temples were included in the landscape arrangement. (18-9)

These whimsical, ornamental designs—which had drawn fire during antiquity[6] —resisted comprehension, and deviated from the realistic, methodical style esteemed during the Italian

[6] In their descriptions of the discovery of the *Domus Aurea*, Kayser and Harpham cite Roman author and architect Vitruvius' critique of the *Domus Aurea* frescoes in his study *De architectura* (*Ten Books on Architecture*). In it, Vitruvius laments that "subjects which were copied from actual realities" are now scorned "in these days of bad taste," and proceeds to condemn the fantastic style of the palace: "We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things. For instance, reeds are put in the place of columns, fluted appendages with curly leaves and volutes, instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures senselessly seated upon them; sometimes stalks having only half-length figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of animals. Such things do not exist and cannot exist and never have existed. Hence, it is the new taste that

Renaissance (Kayser 20; Connelly 7-8). Yet the incongruous nature of the *Domus Aurea* paintings also inspired the imagination, and for this reason they would become the object of imitation throughout Europe. This growing popularity, in turn, resulted in the emergence of "grotesque"—derived from the Italian *grottesche*, meaning "of or pertaining to underground caves"—as an aesthetic category within the area of decoration (Harpham 27). In the subsequent centuries, the concept of the grotesque would come to be associated with other art forms (most notably literature), and would take on a variety of connotations—evolving from fanciful and ornate to ludicrous, distorted, and aberrant.

During its relatively short history as an aesthetic category, the grotesque "has meant very different things to different eras, and even in our own day it has a subtly graded series of connotations" (McElroy 1). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various authors began to understand "grotesque" as being a confrontation between disparate elements. German poet and literary critic Friedrich Schlegel was one of the earliest scholars to construct a theory of the grotesque. Per Wolfang Kayser's synthesis of fragments 75, 305, and 389 of the first volume of Schlegel's *Athenäum* (1798), grotesqueness "is constituted by a clashing contrast between form and content, the unstable mixture of heterogeneous elements, the explosive force of the paradoxical, which is both ridiculous and terrifying" (53). Similarly, in the "Preface to Cromwell" (1828), Victor Hugo comments on this contradictory nature. He argues that the grotesque "plays an enormous part in the idea of men of modern times" and that "[i]t is found

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has caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence. For how is it possible that a reed should really support a roof, or a candelabrum a pediment with its ornaments, or that such a slender, flexible thing as a stalk should support a figure perched upon it, or that roots and stalks should produce now flowers and now half-length figures? Yet when people see these frauds, they find no fault with them but on the contrary are delighted, and do not care whether any of them can exist or not" (*Ten Books on Architecture*).

everywhere; on the one hand[,] it creates the abnormal and the horrible, on the other[,] the comic and the burlesque" ("Preface to Cromwell"). Several decades later, in his essay "On the Essence of Laughter" (1855), Charles Baudelaire compares the grotesque (what he refers to as "the absolute comic") with ordinary humor ("the significative comic"). Whereas conventional humor "is an imitation mixed with a certain creative faculty" and is rooted in human pride (the superiority of man over man), the grotesque pertains to "fabulous creations, beings whose authority and *raison d'être* cannot be drawn from the code of common sense" because it "has about it something profound, primitive, and axiomatic, which is much closer to the innocent life and to absolute joy" (Baudelaire 144).

Building on these earlier theories, in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1874), John Ruskin offers a more-complete account of the characteristic disharmony of the grotesque. He maintains:

> It seems to me that the grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful; that, as one or the other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque; but that we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects, because *there are hardly any examples which do not in some degree combine both elements: there are few grotesques so utterly playful as to be overcast with no shade of fearfulness, and few so fearful as absolutely to exclude all ideas of jest.* (Ruskin 126, emphasis my own)

Here Ruskin concretizes the conception of the grotesque as a contradictory aesthetic, thereby forging the path for twentieth century scholarship on the subject (Chao 2).

One of the most thorough investigations of the grotesque is Kayser's *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (1957). Kayser examines the evolution of the aesthetic in European

(principally German) art and literature, paying special attention to the sixteenth century, the Romantic era, and the twentieth century—periods during which "the belief of the preceding ages in a perfect and protective natural order ceased to exist" (188). Kayser's analysis of the grotesque is pioneering in that he considers its psychological element. He contends that the word "grotesque" is related to three realms—"the creative process, the work of art itself, and its reception" (180). This third realm is fundamental to the author's conceptualization of the grotesque, given that he perceives its defining quality to be alienation. For Kayser,

> [t]he grotesque is a structure. Its nature could be summed up in a phrase that has repeatedly suggested itself to us: the grotesque is the estranged world… For viewed from the outside, the world of the fairy tale could also be regarded as strange and alien. Yet its world is not estranged, that is to say, the elements in it which are familiar and natural to us do not suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous. It is our world which has to be transformed. (184)

Such estrangement, he maintains, can be achieved through a variety of techniques—"the fusion of realms which we know to be separated […] the loss of identity, the distortion of 'natural' size and shape, the suspension of the category of objects, the destruction of personality, and the fragmentation of the historical order" (185). Fundamentally, though Kayser claims this alienation is linked with absurdity (185), he deemphasizes the role of the comic in the grotesque. "It may begin in a gay and carefree manner," he explains, "[b]ut it may also carry the player away, deprive him of his freedom, and make him afraid of the ghosts which he so frivolously invoked" (187). In this sense, Kayser concludes that the grotesque also represents "an attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world" (188).[7]

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[7] Here Kayser elaborates: "In many grotesques, little is to be felt of such freedom and gaiety. But where the artistic creation has succeeded, a faint smile seems to pass rapidly across the scene or picture, and

In *The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose* (1963), Lee Byron Jennings takes issue with Kayser's emphasis on the fearful elements of the grotesque. He comments: "Though [Kayser] admits that laughter may accompany this phenomenon, he seems to feel that it must be a Satanic laughter of desperation, and though he feels that the demonic may be exorcised through laughter, he is rather vague as to how this is to take place" (Jennings 6). Jennings proposes a return to an ambivalent definition of the grotesque (similar to Ruskin's), asserting that it "always displays a *combination of fearsome and ludicrous qualities*—or, to be more precise, it simultaneously arouses reactions of fear and amusement in the observer" (10).[8] He then articulates these coexisting ludicrous and horrifying elements around the pivotal function of distortion, implying both "a standard or original form which is changed and a force which does the changing" (8). Distortion is a negative term, Jennings continues, that insinuates "that the new form is in some way less desirable than the old one. There is a change for the worse, a process of decay or disintegration—a progression from the beautiful to the ugly, the harmonious to the disharmonious, the useful to the useless, the meaningful to the meaningless, or the healthy to the diseased" (8). In this sense, the distortion that is key to the creation of the grotesque "acts to produce objects at once fearsome and ludicrous. The current of demonic fear and the playful comic tendency must have a point of

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slight traces of the playful frivolity of the *capriccio* appear to be present. And there, but only there, another kind of feeling arises within us. In spite of all the helplessness and horror inspired by the dark forces which lurk in and behind our world and have power to estrange it, the truly artistic portrayal effects a secret liberation. The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, the incomprehensible forces challenged" (188).

[8] Moreover, Jennings notes that the grotesque "can never lie entirely in the realm of the terrible, for it arises only when the terrible is treated playfully and rendered ludicrous. On the other hand, it can never be completely innocuous or playful, even if a fantastic or scurrilous form of play is meant. The grotesque presents the terrible in harmless guise, and its playfulness is constantly on the verge of collapsing and giving way to the concealed horror" (16).

contact deep within the mind, a point at which they interact to form peculiarly distorted images" (14). Additionally, Jennings' work is a precursor to Mikhail Bakhtin's study of the carnivalesque, in that he emphasizes the primitive factor of grotesque humor. He notes that "[t]he comic urge involved here has little to do with wit, that is to say, the humor that rests upon subtle intellectual relationships; it rather approaches the coarse laughter aroused by the vulgar, bestial, and cruel, and the guilty pleasure with which morbid or obscene things may sometimes be regarded" (11).

In contrast to Kayser and Jennings—whose studies privilege the Romantic era—, Bakhtin's analysis of the grotesque underscores the medieval period. In his seminal work *Rabelais and his World* (1965), he conceives of the grotesque as being defined by laughter and, most notably, void of fear. He too contests Kayser's study, noting that his definitions of the grotesque

> strike us by the gloomy, terrifying tone of the grotesque world that alone the author sees. In reality gloom is completely alien to the entire development of this world up to the romantic period […T]he medieval and Renaissance grotesque, filled with the spirit of carnival, liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying; it takes away all fears and is therefore completely gay and bright. All that was frightening in ordinary life is turned into amusing or ludicrous monstrosities. (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 47)

Bakhtin also dismisses Jennings' proposal that the grotesque must contain both humorous and horrifying aspects. Examining the grotesque as it appears in Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and other medieval and Renaissance-era texts, he perceives the aesthetic as a carnivalesque phenomenon—one that invokes the humor, chaos, and subversion of social rules

and hierarchies characteristic of folk celebrations.[9] Per Bakhtin, carnival "celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and complete" (*Rabelais* 109). Given this lifting of norms and restrictions, and the lively and uninhibited festivities that ensued, he associates the carnival grotesque with excessiveness, hyperbolism, and exaggeration (particularly of the vulgar and the improper) (*Rabelais* 307).

The principal category around which Bakhtin organizes his reading of Rabelais—and his theorization of the grotesque—is "grotesque realism," a literary mode that invokes the disorder and festivity of carnival. Marked by its use of degradation, grotesque realism involves "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract" (*Rabelais* 19). By degradation, Bakhtin refers to the "coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs" (*Rabelais* 21). In this vein, he also describes grotesque realism as possessing a revitalizing spirit, which functions "to consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, [and] to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" (*Rabelais* 34).

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[9] Per Mary Russo, "Bakhtin's focus on carnival in early modern Europe contains a critique of modernity and its stylistic effects as a radical diminishment of the possibilities of human freedom and cultural production. He considers the culture of modernity to be as austere and bitterly isolating as the official religious culture of the Middle Ages, which he contrasts with the joy and heterogeneity of carnival and the carnivalesque style and spirit" (61).

Paramount to grotesque realism is the concept of the grotesque body—per Bakhtin, it is the body, in its most offensive states, that conveys the degradation, expressiveness, and exaggeration that we have come to associate with the aesthetic of the grotesque.[10] The grotesque body, Bakhtin maintains, "[i]s a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body […] the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world" (*Rabelais* 317). Rather than idealizing the human body, he imagines it as being "multiple, bulging, over-or under-sized, protuberant and incomplete. The openings and orifices of this carnival body are emphasized, not its closure and finish. It is an image of impure corporeal bulk with its orifices (mouth, flared nostrils, anus) yawning wide and its lower regions (belly, legs, feet, buttocks and genitals) given priority over its upper regions (head, 'spirit,' reason)" (Stallybrass and White 9). Given this emphasis on process and transformation, Bakhtin's grotesque body concept is associated with unsightly corporeal behaviors that generally signify regeneration or decay—birth, death, pregnancy, copulation, eating, drinking, defecation, and other forms of elimination—, and signals uninhibited social and physical actions and exchanges (*Rabelais* 317-18).

The above-mentioned features of the grotesque have a primary function: social critique. In *The Grotesque* (1972), Philip Thomson describes the aesthetic as a weapon, given that it is typically found in "satirical, parodistic and burlesque contexts, and in pure invective," where it is "used to bewilder and disorient, to bring the [public] up short, jolt [it] out of accustomed ways of perceiving the world and confront [it] with a radically different, disturbing perspective" (58). Per

[10] Per Susan Stewart, the grotesque body "thus can be effected by the exaggeration of its internal elements, the turning of the "inside out," the display of orifices and gaps upon the exterior of the body. But in addition to this interpenetration of the exterior and interior of the body, an exchange of sexuality and an exchange between animal and human can also be used to effect the grotesque and its corresponding sense of interchange and disorder" (105).

Thomson, the most reliably distinguished characteristic of the grotesque is "its fundamental element of disharmony, whether this is referred to as conflict, clash, mixture of the heterogeneous, or conflation of disparates. It is important that this disharmony has been seen, not merely in the work of art as such, but also in the reaction it produces" (20).

Thus, the grotesque operates to provoke deep-set fears, to stimulate anxieties, fantasies, and guilt by alienating the spectator via the display of a disharmonic or incongruous cultural product—taking a familiar image or scenario and altering it into something physically and/or emotionally unrecognizable, or into something that demolishes artistic and social conventions. McElroy also emphasizes this particular characteristic in *Fiction of the Modern Grotesque* (1989), where he describes how grotesque aesthetic "transforms the world from what we 'know' it to be [into] what we fear it might [be, and] distorts or exaggerates the surface of reality in order to tell a qualitative truth about it" (McElroy 5). Therefore, the grotesque's prominent critical features cause an aesthetic and psychological effect that "direct[s] our attention to the undignified, perilous, even gross physicality of existence" (11). By means of distortion or deformation—exaggeration, juxtaposition, and/or degradation—, the grotesque breaks the reader or spectator's horizon of expectation, transforming a familiar scenario into one of alienation (11). Taken together, these characteristics reveal the uncanny nature of the aesthetic, given that it transforms familiar subjects into new outrageous states, and calls our attention to internalized terrors, fantasies, and/or shames. Due to its reliance on distortion and incongruity, the grotesque generates a truly altered emotional and psychological state by creating a sensation of absurdity or disharmony in both the work itself and in the public's response to it (Barasch 163; Ilie 45).

The Grotesque Tradition in Spain

Despite the extensive trajectory of the grotesque in Spanish literary, art, and cinematic history, there has been minimal comprehensive study on the subject in and of itself. Furthermore, nearly all the existing investigations of Spain's grotesque tradition focus on earlier time periods, without considering how the aesthetic appears in post-Franco cultural production. My dissertation fills this gap in contemporary Spanish literary and cultural studies, and demonstrates that the aesthetic of the grotesque is indeed a trans-historical phenomenon that continues into the present day.

The only known comprehensive book-length study on the grotesque in Spain is Paul Ilie's *The Grotesque Æsthetic in Spanish Literature: From the Golden Age to Modernism* (2009).[11] Arguably the foremost expert on the subject, Ilie examines the aesthetic within a wide variety of movements and genres throughout Spanish history, spanning the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries. However, his study does not consider any subsequent appearances of the grotesque in Spain after the publication of Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* in the early twentieth century. Additional book-length manuscripts dedicated to the grotesque in Spain include: James Iffland's *Quevedo and the Grotesque* (1978), Henryk Ziomenk's *Lo grotesco en la literatura española del siglo de oro* (1983), Henry W. Sullivan's *Grotesque Purgatory: A*

[11] Ilie's book is a compilation of his previously published articles on the tradition of the grotesque in Spanish literature and art. These articles, which are also some of the most commonly cited sources on the grotesque in Spain, are the following: "La prosa de Solana" in *Papeles de Son Armadans* (1961); "Antonio Machado and the Grotesque" in *Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1963); "Bécquer and the Romantic Grotesque" in *PMLA* (1968); "The Grotesque in Valle-Inclán" in *Ramón del Valle-Inclán*: *An Appraisal of his Life and Works* (1968); "Grotesque Portraits in Torres Villarroel" in *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (1968); "Gracián and the Moral Grotesque" in *Hispanic Review* (1971); "Grotesque Elements in the Pastoral Novel" in *Homenaje a William L. Fichter* (1971); "Espronceda and the Romantic Grotesque" in *Studies in Romanticism* (1972); "Larra's Nightmare" in *Revista Hispanica Moderna* (1974-75); "'Capricho/Caprichoso': A Glossary of Eighteenth-Century Usages" in *Hispanic Review* (1976); and "Concepts of the Grotesque Before Goya" in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (1976).

Study of Cervantes' Don Quijote*, Part II* (1996)*,* Beatriz Fernández Ruiz's *De Rabelais a Dalí: La imagen grotesca del cuerpo* (2004),[12] and Tiffany Gagliardi Trotman's *Eduardo Mendoza's Crime Novels: The Function of Carnivalesque Discourse in Post-Franco Spain, 1979-2001* (2009).[13]

However, as their titles imply, the abovementioned texts are limited in that they only consider single authors, artists, or time periods and, like Ilie, generally do not treat contemporary materializations of the aesthetic. The only known book-length study on the grotesque in the post-Franco Spanish context is Trotman's text, which is limited to the work of Eduardo Mendoza, and fails to analyze the larger social and psychological implications of the grotesque in the aftermath of *franquismo*. Furthermore, there are numerous smaller studies (journal articles and book chapters) that examine the grotesque in Spanish cultural production, yet these too are generally limited to just one author, film director, or artist, and typically focus on works from the mid-twentieth century and earlier.[14]

The grotesque is by no means a phenomenon unique to the post-Franco period: the most-recent materializations that I analyze in this study form part of a long-standing trajectory in

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[12] Fernández Ruiz's work is more a conceptualization of the grotesque aesthetic in general—that uses Dalí for textual support—than an expansive study of Dalí or of the grotesque tradition in Spain.

[13] Furthermore, relatively recent dissertations on the subject include Jorge Zamora's *Elementos de lo grotesco en algunas narraciones de Francisco Ayala* (Texas Tech University, 1999) and Kathleen L. Vlieger's *The Grotesque and its Masks in Contemporary Spanish Theatre* (Vanderbilt University, 2003). Vlieger's dissertation is an exception, as it is in fact focused on the post-Franco era. Her work, however, is limited to contemporary Spanish theatre.

[14] Some examples include: John W. Kronik's "Galdos and the Grotesque" in *Anales Galdosianos* supp (1978); Isolina Ballesteros' "Feminidad almodovariana o la deformación grotesca del sistema patriarcal: *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!* (1984) y *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988) in *Cine (ins)urgente*; Carmen Rabalska's "A Dark Desire for the Grotesque" in *Spanish Cinema: Calling the Shots* (1999); Peter L. Podol's "The Grotesque Mode in Contemporary Spanish Theater and Film" (1985) and "Spanish Sources of Fernando Arrabal's theatre of the grotesque: Goya, Valle-Inclán, and Buñuel" (1998).

Spanish arts and letters. Having studied the Spanish grotesque tradition extensively from the Early Modern period through the early twentieth century, Ilie maintains that the grotesque "is the vehicle that concretizes Spain's changing status of rationality. Seen as an evolving constant through the centuries, the grotesque's ongoing metamorphosis is a fitting mirror of the philosophical changes that it accompanies" (285). Though the Spanish grotesque displays a variety of characteristics and implications across different genres and movements, "incongruity and dehumanization are constants from beginning to end, but each new stage finds them further intensified by images that are increasingly unreal, arbitrary, ironic, and harsh" (Ilie 284). This evolution and intensification are the result of the grotesque being contingent upon the climate of society at any given time in Spanish history.

Some of the most celebrated instances of the grotesque in Spain can be found in Francisco de Goya's *Los caprichos*—a series of etchings that fuse humorous and monstrous images to condemn the follies of late-eighteenth century Spanish society—, and his *Los desastres de la guerra*, which act as a protest against the violence of the *Dos de Mayo* uprising (1808) and the Peninsular War (1808-1814).[15] Per Ilie, the *capricho* and the grotesque are independent categories—though the latter may result from the former—, yet they

> converge in two respects, producing an aesthetic experience as well as involving the creative process […] if a composition causes surprise or unexpected wonder due to its disordered, ridiculous, haphazard, or chimerical features, it is called a *capricho* in

[15] Many comprehensive studies of the grotesque in art and literature are northern-Eurocentric and mainly focus their attention on the German, French, and/or English traditions (and, in the case of more recent studies, the American). Yet despite these national focuses, many works highlight Goya—generally the lone representative from the Spanish tradition—in their historical overviews of the aesthetic. See, for example: Kayser (1963), Clayborough (1965), Barasch (1971), Galt Harpham (1982), Connelly (2003), Swain (2004).

> eighteenth-century Spanish usage […] *el capricho* (with the definite article) signifies a psychological mechanism associated with the imagination, and one that operates unsystematically, thereby producing a defective or grotesque result, depending on how this is judged. (268)

Furthermore, regarding the grotesque in Goya's work, Kayser vividly explains:

> In one of the etchings from the *Desastres,* "Against the Public Welfare," we see a kind of jurist coldly and indifferently writing in a book. But is this still a human being? His fingers end in claws, his feet in paws, and bat's wings have taken place of ears. Yet he is no creature belonging to a purely imaginative dream world: in the lower right corner the victims of the war cry and writhe in despair—it is our world in which this horrible monster occupies a prominent position. Much in Goya's etchings is caricatural, satiric, or topical, but none of these categories provides a fully satisfactory explanation. These etchings contain distinctly ominous, nocturnal, and abysmal features that frighten and puzzle us and make us feel as if the ground beneath our feet were about to give way. (18)

Evident from Kayser's description, Goya's use of the grotesque reveals a true combination of satirical and ominous sensations, generating a distinct feeling of uneasiness in the viewer. The grotesque in Goya is also highly dependent on fantastic, imaginative, and dreamlike scenarios, which are typically combined with degenerate visions of reality (Schulz 189).

The emphasis on fantasy and emotion in Goya is a precursor for how the grotesque would operate during the Romantic era of the following century. Romanticism signals a sharp turn in the trajectory of the grotesque, and during this time it would come to be defined by sensations of "frenzy, horror, hyperbole, and supernaturalism" that indicate "dissonance, inverisimilitude, and [irrationality]" (Ilie 269). At this point, the Spanish grotesque develops into a dramatically darker

phenomenon in which terror and tumult predominate over humor, which can be seen in eerie works such as José de Espronceda's *El estudiante de Salamanca* or Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's poetry. Ilie proceeds to argue that the post-Romantic grotesque veers from the previous Romantic incarnation, and becomes deeply rooted in reality. Here writers and artists "take realism as the material for grotesquerie" (277), thereby recognizing that Spain itself exhibits truly grotesque characteristics.

Appropriately, during the periods of naturalism and realism, the grotesque picks up the repulsive aspects of daily life. Here it functions to spotlight, or even magnify, the defects of urban and rural Spanish society, as seen in the writings of Benito Pérez Galdós, Clarín, and Emilia Pardo Bazán. These writers provide a "gleefully devastating" critique of the "moral decay, warped values, and hypocrisy of contemporary society [and institutions]" (Vlieger 67). For example, in his examination of the grotesque in Galdós, John W. Kronik signals that "the distortion of surface features places [the characters] into ridicule […] such descriptions and the conceptions that underlie them […] surpass the merely caricaturesque and reach the grotesque in the extreme degree of their exaggeration" (42-3).

This tendency is also evident in the literary and artistic tradition of *La España negra*. The *España negra* concept originates in Émile Verhaeren and Darío de Regoyos' travel narrative *Viaje a la España negra* (1899), which depicts their journeys through the depths of rural and urban Spain. *Viaje a la España negra* and other comparable works—such as José Gutiérrez Solana's chronicle *La España negra* (1920), as well as his paintings that exhibit similar visions and themes—emphasize the real-life misery of Spain's rural poverty, antiquated religious celebrations, and obsession with death. Solana's written and visual work, for example, "portrays the humble, the popular, the wretched, the prostituted, and, above all, gives social and biological

expression to collective ritual and festival […] but death underlies the themes of most of his art" (Barrio-Garay 18). In the works of the *España negra* tradition, the grotesque does not rely on fantasy, comedy, or illogicality, as seen in Goya's *Caprichos*. Instead, it is a gloomy and frightening phenomenon viewed as an innate feature of Spanish reality (Trapiello 14).

Of special interest to my investigation is the *esperpento*, the grotesque genre developed by Ramón del Valle-Inclán in the early twentieth century that has continued to resurge in Spanish cultural production ever since. One of the most prominent scholars of Valle-Inclán's oeuvre, Anthony Zahareas asserts that "[p]robably no other Spanish or European writer has integrated with his art more forcefully and more consistently the flexible machinery of the grotesque tradition than did Valle-Inclán in his esperpentos" ("The Absurd" 78). Likewise, Ilie argues that

> [i]t is difficult to avoid using the word 'grotesque' in connection with Valle-Inclán's works, especially when his aesthetics are involved. The reason for this is not simply that he perfected the *esperpento* form, or that he wrote scripts for so-called marionette shows. These tendencies are, along with his stylistic idiosyncrasies, manifestations of a more fundamental attitude, a deep-seated principle which fixes both historical and psychological ideas into a framework of deliberate distortion. (217)

Whereas "the grotesque" is an aesthetic category, the *esperpento* is a uniquely Spanish genre that employs systematic grotesque deformation to capture the "sentido trágico de la vida española" (Valle-Inclán, *Luces de bohemia* 168).[16]

This notion of the grotesque nature of reality continues into the mid-twentieth century with the social realist novels of *tremendismo*, a literary style that employs sensationalist

[16] I will expand upon the concept of the *esperpento* genre and how it relates to the grotesque in chapter 1.

violence, marginalized characters, and expressionistic distortion in order to construct an extremely harsh sense of reality in response to the miseries of the Civil War and the post-war period.[17] Its most emblematic work is Camilo José Cela's novel *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942), and another notable example is Darío Fernández Flórez's *Lola, espejo oscuro* (1951). *Tremendismo* arrives at the grotesque through its emphasis on misery—"el mundo de lo degradado, incluso de lo abyecto" (López Molina 374)—and through the true discomfort in evokes in the reader: "[E]l tremendismo tiene su gloria y su miseria. En su raíz hay un ingrediente fundamental de disconformidad con el mundo en torno y, en consecuencia, de rebeldía y desacato frente a él" (López Molina 374).

In sum, in Spain and beyond, the aesthetic category of the grotesque has experienced an extensive evolution throughout history, and has acquired a wide variety of meanings and appearances over time. Within its trajectory, numerous formal characteristics—distortion, disharmony, incongruity, and the clash between comical and terrible elements—have remained essential features. The grotesque has consistently implied a distortion of aesthetic or social norms that generates a twofold sensation of ludicrousness and horror—in the work itself and in the reader/spectator's response to it. By transforming something familiar or accepted as normal into a deformation, the effect of the grotesque is to disconcert, perplex, shock, and alienate. For this reason, the aesthetic has long had a prominent critical function, having been employed as an instrument of social criticism to direct one's attention to the unfavorable elements of reality.

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[17] The term "tremendismo" was first used by Antonio de Zubiaurre and Rafael Vázquez-Zamora. The *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española defines "tremendismo" as being a literary and artistic movement "caracterizada por exagerar los aspectos más crudos de la vida" and, interestingly, as being "[la] tendencia a exagerar los aspectos más tremendos o alarmantes de las cosas."

The works that I study in the following chapters are a testament to the breadth of the grotesque as an aesthetic category in contemporary Spain. The corpus of films, novels, and theater plays spans genres and styles. Some works privilege the comic grotesque, whereas others emphasize the more somber elements of the aesthetic. Others, in turn, showcase the grotesque body, featuring a scatological and/or sanguinary aesthetic. Despite these differences, the texts that I analyze share the abovementioned essential characteristics of the grotesque, and their authors employ the aesthetic as an instrument to contest the celebratory narrative of Spain's Transition to Democracy.

Chapter 1: The Grotesque and the Arrival of Democracy

In this first section, I examine how Luis García Berlanga's film *Patrimonio nacional* (1981) and Pedro Almodóvar's film *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984) address the persistence of *franquismo* in late-1970s/early-1980s Spanish society. Berlanga and Almodóvar resort to the grotesque to undermine the triumphant political narrative of the Transition to Democracy. In my analysis of *Patrimonio nacional*, I focus on how Berlanga uses the grotesque characterization of the aristocratic Leguineche family to criticize supporters of the monarchy who are nostalgic of the social order previous to the Second Republic, as well as the Francoists who desire to maintain the privileges enjoyed during the dictatorship. Regarding *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, I interpret the film as an *esperpento* that challenges the perception of post-Franco Spain as modern, and through which Almodóvar showcases a side of Spanish society overlooked by the celebratory *Movida* discourse—how the urban working class (personified by a set of extravagant antiheroic protagonists) overcome the authoritarianism inherited from Franco era (represented by grotesque puppet-like characters).

1.1 The Legacy of the Franco Regime in the Spanish Transition

With the death of Francisco Franco on November 20, 1975—which signaled the end of thirty-six years of dictatorial rule—, Spain experienced an era of turmoil and political realignment, marked by the election of Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez in June 1977, the ratification of the Spanish Constitution in December 1978, the attempted coup d'état led by Antonio Tejero on February 23, 1981, and the victory of the socialist party in the 1982 general

election. This initial period forms the political core of *la Transición*, which has been represented in the Spanish imaginary in a celebratory manner, as

> an exemplary process that established a stable parliamentary democracy characterized by ideological diversity and tempered by moderation and concord […T]he Transition retold—in the press, school texts, etc.—was a time outside and above society in which noble statesmen built consensus and unity […T]he period has been seen as an intelligent system that predicted each and every milestone and event according to a plan or chronogram designed by its divine makers: King Juan Carlos I, Adolfo Suárez, and others. Spanish democracy's own "founding fathers." (Fernández de Mata 128)[18]

For this reason, as Josep Colomer elaborates, Spain's Transition has been viewed by other nations as a paradigm for political transformation in the aftermath of authoritarian regime:

> El 'modelo español' suele ser asociado a negociaciones y pactos entre las élites políticas y a un amplio consenso entre la ciudadanía que elude los actos de venganza, la confrontación violenta y la guerra civil. Los políticos españoles de la época suelen presentarse en el extranjero como el orgullo de la obra bien hecha y numerosos políticos de otros países en transición, sobre todo en Europa meridional a finales de los años setenta, en América latina en los ochenta y en Europa oriental desde finales de los ochenta, se han referido con frecuencia a la experiencia española y han buscado inspiración en ella. (9)

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[18] In the same vein, Germán Labrador Méndez claims: "En el llamado 'discurso oficial,' la transición se presentó como un proceso luminoso, como el tiempo radiante en la cual sus actores supieron ponerse de acuerdo, dialogar, pactar, negociar y construir un futuro en el que todos los sectores de la sociedad pudieron reconocerse. Ahora, este ciclo de la memoria, que es a su vez ciclo generacional, se cerró con el fin del milenio, instalando este relato en un esquema más amplio en el que España cierra por fin sus deudas con la Historia y se sitúa en una dimensión europea, posmoderna, actual, acorde con el signo de los tiempos" (65).

Nonetheless, the circumstances surrounding the end of the dictatorship directly influenced how democratic rule was reestablished in Spain. Unlike neighboring Portugal, the Spanish authoritarian regime was not overthrown by the opposition—Franco died at the age of eighty-two after an extended illness, and his death did not result in the abrupt collapse of the Spanish state (Humlebæk, "Pacto" 186; Violi 118).[19] This "seemingly trivial fact," Carsten Humlebæk explains, is fundamental for understanding the character of the Transition, given that there "was no revolutionary upheaval or tradition for opposition in which to feel pride and through which to construct a new democratic continuity, as it had happened shortly before [in Portugal]. Instead the opposition had to negotiate the construction of a new regime with the representatives of Francoist dictatorship, *which had been decapitated, but not ceased to exist*" ("Pacto" 186, emphasis my own). Thus, as Salvador Cardús i Ros has noted, the Transition was "a process that did not take place within a framework of democratic liberties, but rather under the shadow of all that has been said about *the rattling of the swords*. That is, in a situation in which the heirs of the regime and those with whom democratic aspirations are usually associated were forced to negotiate without knowing exactly *what* each side represented" (20).

The Transition consisted of a series of political negotiations carried out by politicians from within the Francoist apparatus and members of the former democratic opposition.[20] Given the pronounced division within the post-Franco political establishment, the question of how to

[19] For a detailed account of Franco's declining health and his final days, see Prego (261-321).

[20] Per Humlebæk, "the former opposition was generally able to rely on existing party structures that had survived in clandestine during the dictatorship, the most important of which were [the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Partido Comunista de España (PCE)] both on the left-wing, and the moderate conservative Basque and Catalan nationalist parties. The right-wing had to reinvent itself in the transition because it had not been in opposition to the dictatorship and therefore had no clandestine party structures. The dominant parties created during the transition were the center-right-wing [Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD)] and the right-wing [Alianza Popular (AP)]" ("Pacto" 195).

dismantle the regime was approached from a variety of standpoints (Song 9). On one hand, the *rupturistas*—comprised of the socialist and communist parties and other left-wing groups—aimed for a "swift and complete demolition of the Francoist system" (Preston, *Triumph* 80), and looked to the Spanish Second Republic and the provisional governments formed after the fall of the fascist dictatorships in post-World War II Europe as models (Pradera 54-5). Conversely, the different factions of the Franco regime called for varying degrees of reform. *Reformistas* or *aperturistas*—comprised of the more-progressive wing of the dictatorship, including Adolfo Suárez and Carlos Arias Navarro—called for a legal, gradual, and top-down reform or opening of Francoist institutions. *Continuistas* or *inmovilistas*—made up of the conservative wing of *franquismo*, including many politicians, government employees, and military leaders—were resistant to change, and looked to secure the continuity of the authoritarian regime (Colomer 31-2; Encarnación, *Spanish Politics* 33).

Despite these ideological differences, the essential goal of the Transition, which all parties appeared to pursue, was the peaceful consolidation of democracy (Aguilar Fernández, *Memory and Amnesia* 269). For this reason, as Teresa M. Vilarós describes, the various right and left-wing factions "aunaron fuerzas para llegar a un consenso sociopolítico, a un modo de entendimiento que, aunque precario, evitara precisamente el desmembramiento, la rotura del cuerpo nacional" (14). In the same vein, Juan Luis Cebrián contends that

> [l]os deseos de democratización tenían su expresión más vívida en lo que se llamaba la *reconciliación nacional*, en términos empleados tanto por el partido comunista y la oposición de izquierdas como por los sectores católicos. Se trataba de una reconciliación entre españoles, divididos éstos secularmente por sangrientas guerras civiles […] La

transición política exigía, para ser fructífera, el aceptamiento de la existencia de una honda fisura en nuestro cuerpo social y nacional. (14)

Many scholars have underscored how this reconciliation relied on the silencing of the legacies of the Civil War and the dictatorship in order to invent a new political tradition. As I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 3, it was believed that consensus politics required "some forgetting about the recent past as much as political crafting, institutional engineering, and elite moderation. *It was amnesia, not memory, that could secure a pluralistic regime and would prevent Spain from repeating the mistakes of the past*" (Alonso and Muro 5, emphasis my own). Moreover, as Cardús i Ros observes, the Transition depended on "the erasure of memory" and the "reinvention of a new political tradition" given that "a process of change built on the strength of the previous memory would never have facilitated a broad social consensus in favor of democracy" (19-20). Barring their ideological differences, the left and right opted to prioritize national reconciliation—anchored in the silencing of recent history—in the interest of successfully establishing a democratic government (Labanyi, "Modernity" 94; Humlebæk, "Pacto de Olvido" 186-87).[21] However, Cebrián contests that "[n]o se estaba procediendo a una reconciliación fundamental entre españoles, mediante el cambio cualitativo del tejido social, sino a una aminoración de tensiones que permitiera la reacomodación del viejo poder a las nuevas

[21] In the immediate aftermath of Franco's death, the left pressed for free elections, political amnesty, free trade unions, the legalization of all political parties, and the dismantling of the *Movimiento Nacional* and the *Organización Sindical* (Preston, *Triumph* 80-1). However, as Omar G. Encarnación notes, their chief concern was "not to punish the old regime but to get democracy off the ground in as swift and non-confrontational a manner as possible" (*Democracy without Justice* 50). This "pragmatic stance" was rooted in "the realization by the early 1970s that the kind of regime change that it had prepared for or had wanted for Spain—the toppling of the dictatorship—was unlikely to come into fruition due to the remarkable resilience of the authoritarian regime; this in turn deepened the desire for a swift transition. Left-wing leaders were also cognizant of the political environment in which the transition unfolded, especially rising violence, and did not wish to pursue any policy that would make a delicate situation even more so" (*Democracy without Justice* 50-1).

instancias y modas de la política" (15). This so-called reconciliation not only necessitated the silencing of Spain's traumatic past, but also required forgetting that "la democracia española desciende directamente del franquismo. No se acuerda que sus espacios, sus signos y sus actores han sido formados por las escuelas y las formas de vida de aquellos sombríos años, por sus mismos cuadros políticos y élites intelectuales" (Subirats, "Contra todo simulacro" 27). Hence, in the aftermath of Franco's death, the career trajectories of key politicians and civil servants went virtually uninterrupted, and the regime's major institutions—the *Consejo del Reino*, the *Consejo Nacional del Movimiento*, and the *Cortes*—remained in the hands of devoted Francoists and backed by the army, the police, and the *Guardia Civil* (Preston, *Triumph* 76; Carr and Fusi 207; Gunther 21).[22] Above all, the Heads of Government and State were entrenched in the dictatorship—per the *Leyes Fundamentales del Reino* (Franco's *de facto* constitutional laws), Arias Navarro could continue in his role as Prime Minister until 1979, and two days after Franco's death, King Juan Carlos I was crowned, having been personally chosen by the dictator in 1969 to be his successor.

Juan Carlos is often labeled as "the motor of the transition" and is considered to be a key symbol of Spanish democracy (Desfor Edles 58-60; Gunther 21; Encarnación, *Spanish Politics* 34; Humlebæk, *Inventing* 78). Humlebaek contends that this was because the monarchy was "one of the few institutions, perhaps the only one, which had the potential to build a bridge across traumatic Spanish history and serve as a facilitator [to] reconciling *las dos Españas*" (*Inventing* 78). However, the restauration of the monarchy was also part of an elaborate attempt

[22] Cardús i Ros expands upon this idea, noting: "[T]he Transition to democracy was possible to a large extent because it guaranteed the continuity of the fundamental institutions and apparatuses of the state, particularly the Civil Service, and especially those that had played a central role in the previous regime, as was the case with the state police force, the Guardia Civil. But continuity was also ensured in other areas of administration and service, from state teachers or university professors to the administration of the judicial system" (21).

of *continuismo* developed by the Francoist apparatus prior to the dictator's death. Cardús i Ros has identified this ambivalence, arguing that the Transition relied on the "*construction* of the monarchic figure, a figure that, maintaining an extraordinary—and extremely useful—ambiguity during the Transition, became a symbol *both of renovation and of political continuity*" (20-1, emphasis my own). The other key element of this strategy to create "Francoism without Franco" was the naming of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco as Prime Minister on June 1973 (Carr and Fusi 207; Preston, "The monarchy of Juan Carlos" 27; Encarnación, *Spanish Politics* 33). It was believed that Carrero Blanco, a trusted advisor of the *Generalísimo*, would ensure "that the young King would not veer off from Franco's well-laid-out plans" (Encarnación, *Spanish Politics* 33).[23] For this reason, many Spaniards initially feared that Juan Carlos would indeed attempt to continue *franquismo* (Humlebæk, *Inventing* 78). He was educated under Franco's supervision, had been required to swear fidelity to the dictator and the principles of the *Movimiento*, and never publicly indicated that he would not follow Franco's intentions (Carr and Fusi 207-8; Cardús i Ros 21).[24] Furthermore, upon coronation, Juan Carlos' delay in replacing Arias Navarro as Prime Minister "raised doubts about his commitment to democratization"

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[23] The regime's strategy, however, unraveled prior to Franco's death, when Carrero Blanco was assassinated in an ETA attack on December 20, 1973. His successor, Arias Navarro, would preside "over three very chaotic years (1973-6) when no one knew for sure in which direction Spain was heading" (Encarnación, *Spanish Politics* 33).

[24] In this vein, Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi describe Juan Carlos at the time of his coronation as a "political enigma". They explain: "So far his statements had been rare and irrelevant. His family life, his sporting prowess were public property. His real political ideas were known only to his more intimate friends. He had confined himself to proclaiming loyalty to the regime and to hinting at some vague sympathy towards the spirit of the new generations" (Carr and Fusi 208). Likewise, Cardús i Ros observes: "The king, who had kept a complicitous silence during the last executions carried out by Franco's regime, who had sworn loyalty to Franco's laws upon the dictator's death, and whose first monarchical reception was held, emblematically, for a representation of fascist ex-combatants, ended up, five years down the line, representing the highest guarantee of the Transition to democracy, thanks to the opportunity offered him by the frustrated coup d'état on February 23, 1981" (21).

(Preston, *Triumph* 89).[25] Arias Navarro's government, which contained a number of prominent Francoists, was crippled with political turmoil and indecision, and confronted a wave of strikes and civil unrest (Preston, *Triumph* 53-90; Carr and Fusi 208-17). Seeking a "speedy and orderly" transformation (Encarnación, *Democracy without Justice* 52), in July 1976 Juan Carlos dismissed Arias Navarro, replacing him with Adolfo Suárez—an act that is generally interpreted as "the starting point of Spain's democratization process" (Gunther 21).[26] Like Juan Carlos, Suárez is represented in the Spanish imaginary as a hero of democracy. During the Transition, the young, photogenic politician was lauded as the image of modernity and charm (Preston, *Triumph* 94) despite his "deep familiarity with the structures of the Franco regime" (Encarnación, *Democracy without Justice* 52). Formerly a Francoist official, Suárez had been the head of the *Movimiento Nacional*, and his insight into the dictatorship, Encarnación notes, made him "ideally suited" to reform it from the inside out (*Democracy without Justice* 52).

Alongside this political scenario, a process of sociocultural modernization was taking place in Spanish society. As Eduardo Subirats contends, although Spain's institutional modernization maintained a blind continuity with the Franco dictatorship, the Transition, conversely,

> adoptaba la programada alegría de una orgía de formas y colores nuevos […] en el terreno de la comunicación y del diseño, en la arquitectura, la pintura y el urbanismo, en

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[25] Per Preston: "[Juan Carlos'] first government was, almost inevitably, disappointing to those who hoped for reform. Juan Carlos would have preferred to dispense with Arias and appoint some more sympathetic figure. There was already some friction between them in part because of Arias's tendency to treat the young King in the same patronizing and dismissive way as Franco had. Now, on 13 November [1975], Juan Carlos had, without Arias's knowledge, met various members of the military high command to discuss the future. Arias was furious when he found out. To assert his authority, he resigned, in the confident knowledge that, with Franco in his death agony, Juan Carlos would find it difficult to cope with an additional crisis. As he expected, the King was forced to ask him to stay on" (*Triumph* 78).

[26] See also: Encarnación (*Spanish Politics* 33) and (*Democracy without Justice* 51).

el cine y la ficción literaria y la música popular: es decir, en las expresiones estéticas de la nueva industria cultural. Este balance entre una tradición que permanecía y el espectáculo de lo nuevo ha garantizado precisamente la estabilidad social de esa transición. ("De la transición al espectáculo" 26)

However, this joyous spectacle *de lo nuevo* that Subirats associates with post-Franco cultural production—in contrast to the persistence of tradition that defined the political sphere—is an unsuitable category to describe works that criticize the enduring legacies of *franquismo*, such as *Patrimonio nacional* and *¿Qué he hecho yo…*. As I examine in this chapter, Berlanga and Almodóvar depart from this colorful, celebratory discourse, resorting to the aesthetic of the grotesque to destabilize the Transition's myth of democracy, and to underscore the fundamentally anti-modern nature of the continuity of *franquismo.* Whereas both directors tackle the endurance of Francoist ideology in democratic society, the films take distinct approaches and showcasing distinct social groups with Spain. In *Patrimonio nacional*, Berlanga explicitly addresses the political sphere, using his satire of the aristocracy to challenge how parts of Spanish society continue to support the institution of the monarchy, or are nostalgic for the recently departed dictatorship. On the other hand, politics remain largely implicit in *¿Qué he hecho yo…*. Almodóvar instead presents an esperpentic social painting of the everyday life of the Spanish working class, who live under the effects of this enduring Francoist authority.

1.2 *Patrimonio nacional*

A "constant disruptive presence" in Spanish culture during the second half of the twentieth century, Luis García Berlanga (1921-2010) is renowned for his comically irreverent

depictions of Franco-era and post-Franco life (Marsh 97).[27] As Antonio Gómez Rufo summarizes, his eighteen satirical films (produced over five decades) showcase a wide range of absurd characters and storylines:

> Lo que Berlanga hizo fue ironizar sobre lo sacralizado, miserabilizar, desmontar parafernalias y artificios, denunciarlos y desnudarlos, reírse de las normas porque siempre pensó que no hay placer mayor que el de la trasgresión. Pero su cine, aunque esté compuesto por un rosario de comedias, no es un chiste continuado, ni mucho menos. Es, por el contrario, un caramelo amargo que, cuando no deja un regusto de rabia, es aún peor, porque es corrosivo como el más dañino de los ácidos. (22)

Fittingly, when asked in an interview with Juan Hernández Les and Manuel Hidalgo if his cinema contained any "señas de identidad," Berlanga commented: "Hay una serie de situaciones, de sucesos cotidianos, de imágenes de la vida real que alguna gente identifica como propios de mi mundo personal, de mi cine. Hay personas que dicen 'esto parece de Berlanga,' ante un suceso *grotesco*, ante una situación esperpéntica o disparatada" (139-40, emphasis my own). It is therefore no surprise that the Valencian director has been regarded as one of the greatest practitioners of the grotesque in contemporary Spanish culture and, moreover, as the foremost inheritor of Valle-Inclán's *esperpento* genre.[28] Per Carlos Cañeque and Maite Grau, the term

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[27] Similarly, Concepción Torres Begines argues: "No hay duda de que García Berlanga ha sido uno de los directores que mejor ha sabido retratar a la sociedad española de la segunda mitad del siglo XX[:] Parejas felices que participan en concursos patrocinados por empresas de jabones, pequeñas poblaciones castellanas que se disfrazan de andaluces para engatusar a los americanos, clases medias que buscan un novio para la hija durante el verano, fuerzas vivas que fingen milagros para devolver el turismo al pueblo, señoras que organizan falsas campañas benéficas para atender a los pobres durante la noche de Nochebuena, nobles que regresan del exilio interior para convertirse en figuras de museo, monjas asesinas, curas criminales…" (9). Here she refers to *Esa pareja feliz* (co-directed with Juan Antonio Bardem) (1951), *¡Bienvenido Mister Marshall!* (1952), *Novio a la vista* (1954), *Los jueves, milagro* (1957), *Plácido* (1961), and *Patrimonio nacional.*

[28] For somewhat extensive readings on Berlanga and the grotesque/the *esperpento*, see: Higginbotham (1988), Marsh (2006), Zunzunegui Díez (2006), and Torres Begines (2014). Also of note is Camila

“berlanguiano” refers to “un tipo de situación definida que flota entre las aguas de la picaresca, el esperpento y hasta lo kafkiano que podemos hallar, sin demasiado esfuerzo, en la idiosincrasia de este país que Valle-Inclán llamaba ‘el rabo grotesco de Europa’” (11). Similarly, Román Gubern maintains that Berlanga’s characteristic humor

> se hereda de una misma tradición española en la que no habría que descartar la pintura de autores como Goya o Solana. También ese espejo cóncavo que tiene el esperpento de Valle-Inclán para ver la realidad está también en Berlanga. Las autoridades y jerarquías del alcalde, el cura, el militar, el funcionario, el notario o el marqués son tratadas en Berlanga con una ironía estética próxima al esperpento. Yo me atrevería a decir que Luis Berlanga introduce el esperpento en el cine español y, con ello, conecta con la tradición de la literatura española (Cañeque and Grau 241)

In *España vista desde el aire. La influencia del esperpento de Valle-Inclán en el cine de García Berlanga*, Concepción Torres Begines expands upon this link between the director’s films and the *esperpento* genre, explaining that

> [a]l igual que Valle-Inclán tomó para la creación de su estética modelos como Goya, el carnaval, las farsas y sainetes de la época y toda una serie de manifestaciones de lo grotesco, Berlanga recupera los recursos propios del esperpento y de toda la tradición que este arrastra para obtener como resultado la deformación de la realidad con el fin de provocar la risa y con ella la reflexión del pueblo que se ve reflejado […] Como la obra esperpéntica de Valle, *el cine de Berlanga resulta un reflejo deformado de una sociedad*

Segura’s article “Estética esperpéntica en *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* de Luis García Berlanga y *El cochecito* de Marco Ferreri” (2004). Additionally, in his article “Genre Cinema in Spain in the 1970s: The Case of Comedy,” Barry Jordan situates the *Trilogía nacional* within the *esperpento* tradition, yet his brief analysis of the series is limited to *La escopeta national.*

española atada a una mísera realidad impuesta por la incapacidad de la clase política. La transgresión, la crítica y la burla hacia la ideología dominante son la marca de autenticidad de un arte que busca hacer tambalear las conciencias. (33, emphasis my own)

In *Patrimonio nacional*,[29] Berlanga offers a distorted vision of the Spanish nobility in the early 1980s, resorting to the aesthetic of the grotesque to condemn the persistence of *franquismo* in democratic society.[30] Through his satirical portrait of an aristocratic family, he denounces the unwavering supporters of the monarchy who seek to relive the grandeur of pre-Second Republic Spain, and the staunch Francoists who desire to maintain the privileges they enjoyed during the dictatorship. At the start of the film, Don José, the Marquis of Leguineche (Luis Escobar), returns to his family's palace in Madrid after having spent the dictatorship "in exile" at his rural estate.[31] Accompanying him are his adult playboy son Luis José (José Luis López Vázquez), and

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[29] The film's title alludes to the Spanish state institution of the same name. *Patrimonio nacional* are locations of historical-cultural interest traditionally associated with Spain's monarchy. The *Consejo de Administración del Patrimonio Nacional* is a Spanish public organization that administers sites owned by the State and used by the royal family as residences and in ceremonies (*sitios reales*): palaces, monasteries, convents, and other locations. These locations were formerly owned by the Spanish crown, yet were transferred to the State in 1982. The agency also manages the Prime Minister of Spain's residences.

[30] *Patrimonio nacional* is the second installment of Berlanga's *Trilogía nacional*. It is preceded by *La escopeta nacional* (1978) and followed by *Nacional III* (1982). Set during the final years of the dictatorship, *La escopeta nacional* portrays a degenerate group of Spanish aristocrats and government ministers participating in a hunting excursion on the Marquis of Leguineche's rural estate. In *Nacional III*, the Leguineche family flees the country in the aftermath of the 23-F coup d'état, and in anticipation of the socialist party's victory in the 1982 Spanish general election.

[31] In his review of the film, Francisco Umbral comments on its depiction of the internal exiles of *franquismo*—those who "fled" the dictatorship by retreating to their country estates. He describes Don José's character as "la metáfora visual y esencial de un exilio *otro*: el de los monárquicos y aristócratas que, fieles a don Alfonso XIII o a don Juan, se retiraron a sus hectáreas o al extranjero, ilesos de la 'fiebre del legionario' de Franco, enfermedad que ahora vuelve a ser actualidad, y no sólo clínicamente. Entre la nostalgia y el egoísmo, entre el 'baile en Capitanía' y la Plaza de Oriente, entre Foxá y Lampedusa, creyeron que con la Monarquía iba a volver el rigodón de las camaristas, y se han encontrado una

Luis José's estranged wife Chus (Amparo Soler Leal). The two men are monarchists that aspire to resume their splendorous court life of yesteryear, yet they are comically oblivious to the changes that have occurred in Spain with the end of *franquismo*. Hence, what ensues is a ludicrous account of the family's affairs as they adjust to democratic society. Upon their arrival, Don José is shocked to discover that his once-lavish palace is now in a dilapidated state and, above all, that his legitimate wife Eugenia, the Countess of Santagón (Mary Santpere), does not welcome them. A loyal Francoist, the boorish, grotesque Eugenia despises her husband (to whom she has been separated from for over thirty years) and son for both political and personal motives. They too do not tolerate the matriarch's presence, and their frustrations intensify after realizing that the family is crippled with debt because Eugenia did not pay property taxes on the palace for the duration of the dictatorship. Still determined to reintegrate themselves into the Madrid elite, Don José and Luis José scramble to resolve their financial troubles, renovate their once-splendorous residence, and rid themselves of their wife/mother by having her declared legally incapacitated. In the process, they not only face resistance from the Countess—who aims to make her husband and son's lives miserable—, but also from society, which, unlike the obsolete family, has evolved with the arrival of democracy.

Berlanga's filmography has been the subject of extensive scholarship, yet most studies center on the director's Franco-era works, particularly *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953), *Plácido* (1961), and *El verdugo* (1963).[32] *Patrimonio nacional*, conversely, has received little

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Monarquía que por primera vez, desde el 31, les hace pagar impuestos y saca o no saca las listas" ("Luis Escobar").

[32] To date, the most complete study of Berlanga is Cañeque and Grau's *¡Bienvenido Mister Berlanga!* (2009). For comprehensive studies of Berlanga, see also: Hernández Les and Hidalgo (1981) Gómez Rufo (1997); Perales (1997); Franco (2005); Torres Begines (2012). Also of note are the studies of Berlanga in Marsh (97-144) and Egea (49-65).

critical attention. To date, Torres Begines's monograph offers the sole extensive reading of the film, where it is considered alongside *La escopeta nacional* and *Nacional III*.[33] Taken together, she argues that the *Trilogía nacional* "explota la posibilidad de criticar a unos estratos sociales que habían permanecido vetados hasta ese momento y que ahora se presentan a través de la sátira corrosiva con la que están caracterizados los personajes de poder, por primera vez personajes principales" (83). Nonetheless, Torres Begines's reading of *Patrimonio nacional*—though detailed and comprehensive—is largely descriptive. She notes that the Leguineche family represents "la lucha de una raza caduca por sobrevivir en medio de una sociedad nueva que no les ha reservado un lugar. A ellos les dedica [el director] una mirada ácida que, sin embargo, no está exenta de ciertas dosis de ternura" (173). However, she neglects to analyze the connection between the characters' foolish and grotesque natures and the "mezcolanza de las diversas posturas políticas" (84) presented in the work. Berlanga, however, gave numerous interviews that provide additional insight into the film. Renowned for his comic portraits of rural life and the popular classes, regarding the *Trilogía nacional*, the director mentions having the desire to

> crear nuevos peleles, nuevas marionetas para mi "tingladillo" personal. Conocía bastante bien el mundo ricachón, distinguido, rijoso y esnob de nuestro país y nunca lo ataqué antes por la simple razón de mi atracción hacia la gente modesta. Nunca es fácil hacer una película en la que penetres en un territorio, el de la alta sociedad, mucho más complejo que los pueblos de *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!, Calabuch* o *Los jueves, milagro.* Pero aquella sociedad era para mí como un diamante en bruto, como otra faceta

[33] There are brief mentions of *Patrimonio nacional* in Gómez Rufo (361-63); Perales (293-99); and Caparrós Lera's (202-3). These texts, however, are largely descriptive—they mainly provide summaries of the film and outline its production details and reception.

del calidoscopio, menos cutre en lo puramente visual, pero con una carga de profundidad mucho más sangrienta y despiadada. (Franco 174)

In this sense, he classifies *Patrimonio nacional* as a satirical portrait of the Spanish aristocracy that

> se ha insertado en el mundo de los negocios o en el mundo político y cultural de la ciudad. De ambas maneras, se ha prostituido y ha perdido su antigua grandeza. Mi película es la crónica del fin de una raza, la raza aristocrática, que se ha convertido en raza marginada, en vías de extinción. Junto a la dimensión esperpéntica, humorística, hay, como siempre, una mirada comprensiva, ternura antes que agresividad. (Hernández Les and Hidalgo 142)

In its depiction of early 1980s Madrid, *Patrimonio nacional* presents a humorously explicit contrast between the Leguineche family—who remain anchored to the past—, and the rest of society that has adapted to the new realities of democracy and is presented in a normal, non-grotesque fashion. Building on Torres Begines's observations and the director's commentaries, the film uses the aesthetic of the grotesque to denounce two distinct attitudes within Spanish society in the aftermath of *franquismo*. Whereas one faction supports the monarchy as a means of recovering their bygone life of luxury and privilege, the other defends the legacy of the Franco regime and desires the continuity of the dictatorship. Berlanga portrays the first group (personified by Don José and Luis José) as infantile fools in a burlesque light, and the second (represented by Eugenia) as a grotesque caricature of power and authority. This differentiation between the male and female protagonists establishes a gendered disparity, in which the two men are in a position of inferiority to the matriarch.

Through the figures of Don José, Luis José, and Eugenia, Berlanga signals the contradictory nature of the Transition's democratizing narrative. The director does not merely employ these three characters to ridicule one of Spain's disappearing social classes, the old nobility. They also serve to confront two larger political factions within the larger new democratic society (regardless of class origin)—the defenders of the monarchy, and the *continuistas* who yearned for the perpetuation of the Franco regime. Furthermore, in presenting the father and son duo as mediocre fools, Berlanga goes beyond mocking the supporters of the monarchy. He also highlights the futility and obsolescence of the Crown in post-Franco Spain. In this vein, the authoritarian figure of Eugenia not only functions to censure those nostalgic for *franquismo*. Most importantly, the grotesqueness of her character ciphers the film's strongest social critique—the condemnation of the continuity and preeminence of Francoist politicians and institutions in the new democratic government. What Berlanga does by situating the matriarch in a position of superiority over her husband and son is create an analogy to Franco's personal appointment of Juan Carlos as his successor. The male Leguineche's are subjected by Eugenia, as King Juan Carlos (a supposed emblem of democracy) was in fact originally subordinated to Franco.

To stress the Leguineche family's difference within post-Franco society, Berlanga presents a universe in which conventional realism and grotesque deformation are at odds by juxtaposing the absurd protagonists with conventional images of Transition-era society. We perceive their anomalous nature from as early as the opening credits, which are superimposed onto an extended shot of the family's ludicrously sluggish antique car and the modern vehicles that grudgingly trail behind. This shot explicitly illustrates their position within post-Franco society. As washed-up members of the Spanish nobility, the family is a relic of a bygone era, and

like their outmoded car as it drives through the city (a recurring gag in the film), they are entirely disconnected with contemporary reality. This sequence is the first of many incidents in *Patrimonio nacional* in which the family, particularly Don José and Luis José, clashes with democratic society. Berlanga also highlights the father and son's incongruity by having them interact with "normal" members of the aristocracy—such as family friend/Eugenia's ex-lover Nacho, Don José's nephew Álvaro, and the bank director—that have successfully integrated themselves into post-Franco Spanish life and instruct the father and son to do the same (always falling on deaf ears).[34]

The most discernible example of the family's otherness is their place of residence. At the start of the narrative, Don José eagerly anticipates returning to the lavish compound in central Madrid where he was raised. Upon entering the grounds, however, he quickly observes that Eugenia neglected the property during their period of exile. The Leguineche palace is the ultimate emblem of their decadence and obsolescence, and serves as an example "de tantos otros palacios [...] de esa nobleza decadente que, aunque escasa, todavía soñaba con volver a abrir sus puertas para celebrar fiestas en las que honrar al Rey" (Torres Begines 111).[35] In her reading of space in the film, however, Torres Begines does not take into consideration the completely derelict state of their home, or its contrast with the modern urban surroundings of early-1980s

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[34] Other examples of this juxtaposition include Luis José's visit to the bank to inquire about the family's (non-existent) savings, during which he obliviously enters the new drive-through lane and has a farcical argument with the teller after mistaking him for the garage attendant. Later, Don José directs his nephew's sophisticated French girlfriend, Solange, to what he claims is Madrid's "most-fashionable" hair salon. Judging from the business' antique tile façade, Don José is mistaken.

[35] The (then-closed) Palacio de Linares, situated in Madrid's Plaza de Cibeles, served as the Leguineche family's residence. Regarding the filming location, Berlanga comments: "[I]n Madrid there were only seven or eight palaces. Of those, three or four were museums that we couldn't use because other official organizations needed them for their daily activities. Two or three belonged to aristocrats who wouldn't give them to me either because they said that my movie *La Escopeta Nacional* had attacked them" (Kovács 8-9).

Madrid. Berlanga portrays the palace as a space that is simultaneously extravagant and dilapidated, which epitomizes the family's position in post-Franco Spanish society. On the exterior, the formerly-picturesque yard has become filled with overgrown gardens and a dried-up pond. Inside the massive palace, we observe one abandoned luxurious room after another.[36] Reminiscent of Andrea's family's house in Carmen Laforet's *Nada,* the space has been transformed into a cluttered repository for generations-old artwork, furnishings, and family heirlooms.[37] The palace is also covered with dust and cobwebs, has few functioning lights, its floors and wall-coverings have been destroyed, and we perceive a striking juxtaposition between its dilapidated condition and elaborate décor. The antique sculptures, mirrors, tapestries, and furniture that fill its rooms illustrate Don José and Luis José's ostentatious ways and nostalgia for a bygone aristocratic era. Like their rundown palace, the male family members—emblems of the old nobility—exist in a state of decadence, and the father's anxiety to renovate his home gestures the men's desire to return to their former splendor. Also of note is the singularity of the Leguineche residence—it is the sole decrepit location featured in the film. Echoing the depiction of Don José's outmoded car surrounded by the newer, faster vehicles, Berlanga creates an

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[36] In his depiction of the family's arrival to the Leguineche palace, Berlanga also provides an interesting contrast to the representation of the Panero family home in Jaime Chávarri's documentary *El desencanto* (1975). In Chávarri's film, Felicidad Blanc describes arriving to Leopoldo Panero's residence in Astorga for the first time after their wedding. In a voice over she nostalgically describes how "[l]a casa está tan bonita, tan llena de recuerdos, con el tiempo pasando sobre ella. En la galería, me asomé unos minutos. Leopoldo estaba a mi lado. Se veía al fondo, el sonar de las campanas. La fuente goteando. '¡Qué bonita! ¡Qué bonita!' le decía. Nunca nos debemos marchar de aquí." Chávarri accompanies Blanc's words with a panning shot of the home's interior that emphasizes its elaborate décor—paintings, pottery and other sculptures, lamps, and ornate furnishings.

[37] In *Nada*, Andrea describes her bedroom as being characterized by "su horror […] su desarreglo espantoso, su absoluto abandono" (Laforet 80), and emphasizes the frighteningly cluttered state of the space: "En la habitación donde me habían destinado se veía un gran piano con las teclas al descubierto. Numerosas cornucopias—algunas de gran valor—en las paredes. Un escritorio chino, cuadros, muebles abigarrados. Parecía la guardilla de un palacio abandonado, y era, según supe, el salón de la casa" (Laforet 76).

explicit contrast between the palace and Madrid's modern buildings to underscore the family's disconnect with democratic society and, moreover, to stress that their grotesque nature is not a universal characteristic of post-Franco Spain.

Within this incongruous setting, Berlanga situates the male members of the Leguineche family in opposition to Eugenia. The figures of Don José and Luis José undergo a pronounced evolution between the first and second films of the *Trilogía nacional*. As secondary characters in *La escopeta nacional* (which is set during the final years of the dictatorship), the two men were principally defined by their bizarre fetishes and ludicrously hypersexual personalities, yet these traits are largely absent from *Patrimonio nacional*.[38] Here Don José's main characteristic is his utter resistance to assimilation into present-day society, and the figure of Luis José revolves around his desperation to be accepted by the Spanish elite. Moreover, given that they are monarchists, their foolish personas indicate the weakness, futility, and outmodedness of the Crown in post-Franco Spain.

Having arrived to Madrid with the naïve expectation of resuming the family's splendid pre-Franco life, Don José and Luis José are unmindful to the fact that the nobility (as they conceive it) has no place in 1980s Spain. As Torres Begines observes, the Marquis is "anclado en un tiempo pasado que no existe y a cuya transformación no ha querido asistir" (175), and for this reason his character displays an assortment of conventional traits of yesteryear's aristocracy:

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[38] In one of the most memorable scenes of *La escopeta nacional*, Luis José's wife Chus intentionally destroys Don José's prized collection of female pubic hair—accumulated from his different mistresses, and categorized meticulously by the women's names and ages—, which causes him to fall deathly ill from shock. Similarly, in the first installment, self-proclaimed *onanista* Luis José is presented as little more than a hypersexual fool, and spends most of the film getting involved with the different female attendees of the *cacería.* These characterizations are largely implicit in *Patrimonio nacional.* Don José is no longer portrayed as a womanizer, and Luis José is depicted as far less hypersexual in comparison to the first film, where most of his storylines involve his sexual affairs. Here Luis José merely lusts after his cousin's sophisticated French girlfriend, Solange, yet she views him as a fool and does not accept his advances.

> atuendo adecuado siempre a las circunstancias (traje de caza, batín y chaqueta y corbata), su puro y su clavel para ir a los toros (a los que solo acude por tradición, no por gusto), su exquisita educación que le lleva a besar las manos de las damas, […] sus guantes para tomar las riendas del coche de caballos en el que se desplaza por Madrid, su amplio concepto de familia que le lleva a detallar su genealogía completa… (177)

Torres Begines proceeds to contend that Don José functions as "un espejo deformado del clásico aristócrata del Madrid de la Corte, un héroe que simplemente no tiene un lugar en esta nueva sociedad de la Transición" (177), and that Luis José is presented as a "caricatura de la caricatura del noble en la nueva sociedad, buscando siempre ser lo que era su padre, pero no consiguiéndolo nunca" (178). Although she recognizes the peculiarity of the male family members' antiquated personas in democratic Spain, aside from their obsoleteness, Torres Begines fails to pinpoint the ridiculous elements of their characters. For this reason, Berlanga's description of the Marquis in his interview with Cañeque and Grau is particularly revealing to the father and son's personas. Here the director compares the elder Leguineche to the Marqués de Bradomín from Valle-Inclán's *Sonatas*, referring to him as "un propietario decadentón que ha heredado también una forma de vivir que tiene más que ver con el personaje entrañable del marqués de Bradomín de Valle-Inclán. *Es como un niño caprichoso que quiere que todos los juguetes sigan siendo suyos*" (139, emphasis my own).[39]

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[39] A Don Juan-inspired, aristocratic anti-hero, the Marqués de Bradomín is the protagonist of Valle-Inclán's *Sonatas* tetralogy. Melchor Fernández Almagro notes that one of the main novelties of Bradomín is his obsoleteness: "Si fuese el Marqués de Bradomín un don Juan como otro cualquiera de los muchos que engendró el 'Burlador,' creado a su vez por Tirso, este personaje de Valle-Inclán no ofrecería novedad alguna. La novedad le viene a Bradomín del hecho mismo de pertenecer a una sociedad y a un tiempo sobremanera distintos a los del Don Juan tradicional. Es como si don Juan—el clásico, por romántico que fuese—hubiera seguido viviendo hasta llegar, desde la época teológica e imperial de España, a los días de su decadencia […] Es un mundano *rococó,* galante a la moda del siglo XVIII" (76-7).

Don José is not merely a deformation of the classic aristocrat. As Berlanga suggests, the Marquis expresses an infantile attachment to the material objects of his past, and becomes easily saddened and outraged upon discovering that his surroundings have changed. For example, he transports his chickens from his rural estate to Madrid (towing the animals around like a child carrying a stuffed bear), and gleefully tries on the extravagant heirloom clothing he finds in the attic (mirroring children's dress-up play). Also, while Don José is generally disturbed by the condition of the palace, he is exaggeratingly distraught by the unkempt nature of the garden and stables where he played as a young boy, nearly crying upon discovering them. These instances, combined with his antiquated clothing, way of speaking, and uncomfortable encounters with the public, reveal not only his ridiculous handling of his new surroundings, but also his complete disconnect with society.

Similarly, Luis José is portrayed as an even more ludicrous version of the Marquis. Like his father, he upholds an aggrandized image of the Spanish elite. However, whereas Don José is simply indifferent to the new societal norms, the son's foolish, child-like personality is not due to his resistance to change—it is derived from his overall desire for attention and recognition. His efforts, however, are horribly misguided, and give rise to a ridiculous persona that provides much of the film's comic effect. Berlanga includes a variety of gags related to the younger Leguineche's clothing, which he erroneously views as being fashionable or prestigious. In one scene, he sports an outlandish *zarzuela* costume that he unearths in the palace, and proudly declares that he will wear it during his much-anticipated (yet never realized) visit with Juan Carlos. Luis José's foolish nature is most apparent in his interactions with his parents. He constantly begs his father for a noble title, and in one scene he nearly has a tantrum when he is forced to miss a trip to the bullfight that is to be attended by the King and Queen. Moreover,

though he has a terrible relationship with Eugenia, he constantly vies for her attention, yelling her name, "Mamá," as if he were a toddler each time he speaks with her.

Berlanga situates the grotesque, domineering, and Franco-supporting Eugenia in opposition to this foolish father and son duo, creating a gender disparity in which the matriarch holds the position of superiority within the household. The figure of Eugenia has been the subject of little critical attention, and she is notably absent from Berlanga's interviews on the film. To date, Torres Begines's monograph offers the most-extensive reading of her character, where she observes that Eugenia is depicted as "una deformación de las condesas de la alta sociedad" (185), and that given her personality, physical appearance, and political ideology, her character "funciona como reflejo deformado de […] los nostálgicos franquistas que temían que tras la muerte de Franco su mundo fuera a desmoronarse" (183). Torres Begines also briefly notes the power dynamics within the family—that Berlanga situates the Marquis and his son beneath Eugenia and that she subjects the men to a series of humiliations (185). However, in her study, she does not establish the connection between the matriarch's continued support of the Franco regime and her position of superiority within the family. Additionally, Torres Begines fails to consider the larger significance of the Countess' characterization—Berlanga renders Eugenia grotesque to denounce the presence and continued support of Francoism in Spain's so-called new democratic government.

The representation of women in Berlanga's filmography has been the subject of various studies, yet these critics do not include Eugenia's character in their analyses. Antonio Gómez Rufo, Luisa Briones, and Josefina Molina each address the director's notoriety for "problematic" female characters. Berlanga's treatment of women, Gómez Rufo argues, can be attributed to the fact that he claimed to have suffered from a

terror a las mujeres y, más específicamente, confiesa sufrir lo que él llama "terror vaginal." El universo femenino, como él dice, le da pavor, le estremece. Nadie le quitará nunca de la cabeza que la mujer es un ser superior, tanto biológica como intelectualmente, y para referirse a ellas utiliza siempre el mismo adjetivo: *indestructibles.* Las mujeres son odiosas en tanto en cuanto sobreviven siempre al hombre. (44)

Gómez Rufo and Briones proceed to attribute the absence of positive female protagonists in Berlanga's oeuvre to the director's misogyny. Taking note of the wife who assassinates her husband in *La boutique* (1967) and the imperishable life-size female doll in *Tamaño natural* (1974), Gómez Rufo contends that Berlanga's feminine characters reflect his notion of the woman

> *como un tirano, un ser biológicamente superior que domina y tiraniza y que, como todo dictador sanguinario y cruel, es a la vez objeto de odio y de fascinación; un ser que aterra porque domina, porque impide la libertad con una simple mirada.* Un ser, en definitiva, que Berlanga asegura que no sabe cómo son, que le resulta imposible describirlas porque no hay quién las entienda. La mujer es un ser complicado, extraño, demasiado diferente al hombre. Él es consciente de esto y se disculpa diciendo que no sabe reproducir artísticamente a la mujer, y que no es por desprecio por lo que tiene esa escasa consistencia en su cine, sino más bien por su ignorancia, por desconocimiento. (44, emphasis my own)[40]

[40] Later Gómez Rufo attributes Berlanga's vision of women to the director's childhood, particularly his mother's role within the family. He explains that Berlanga's father "dejó gustoso que su mujer mantuviese el control real del hogar. Y como ella era organizadora, posesiva y enérgica, con una buena educación y con un cierto nivel cultural, poco tolerante y de un aspecto físico que imponía respeto, llevaba la casa con un notable rigor que los hijos sufrieron desde su más tierna infancia y hasta, prácticamente, su muerte. Después, cuando el padre de Berlanga fue encarcelado y condenado a muerte,

Likewise, Briones notes that the women in the director's films

> siempre está[n] a la sombra de su pareja, unas veces su marido y otras su amante, pero casi siempre en compañía de un hombre. La aparición de mujeres sin la presencia del hombre sólo se da en dos casos: *cuando sus cualidades de carácter son negativas,* estas imágenes coinciden con la figura de la esposa; y cuando sus características sexuales se enfatizan, [aparecen] en planos donde se muestra la belleza física femenina. (48, emphasis my own)

Per Gómez Rufo and Briones' arguments, the grotesque figure of Eugenia—who is vulgar, unattractive, and in a position of superiority to the men in her family—corresponds with Berlanga's overall negative representation of women. However, Molina's interpretation of the director's female characters is better suited to the political context of *Patrimonio nacional.* Although she notes that woman are "comparsas necesarias [que] ocupan un lugar secundario" (21) in Berlanga's films, Molina takes issue with the tendency to label the films as misogynist:

> [N]os equivocaríamos si pensáramos que en sus películas trata mal a las mujeres; solo hay que fijarse en los tipos de hombre que las rodean. Obsesivos con el sexo y el dinero, cobardes, débiles mentales, miserables a más no poder… Solo hay una división: las clases dirigentes, además de imbéciles y rijosas, son sinvergüenzas, y los pobres son ingenuos y honrados, tal vez serviles, tal vez pícaros […] Sea cual sea el instante político en que vivan, Berlanga busca, porque así lo percibe su talento, el lado miserable hasta la escatología de lo que en el momento es considerado 'políticamente correcto;' y por la vía del humor pone ante el espejo a la sociedad española, desde los años 50 hasta culminar en

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al finalizar la Guerra Civil, aquel dominio que hasta entonces era *de facto* pasó a serlo también *de iure* […] El dominio que ejerció desde muy pronto marcó profundamente a Berlanga y, por lo que luego se desprende de su proceso intelectual ante el hecho femenino, mucho más de lo que él mismo llega a aceptar y a imaginar" (46).

> *París-Tombuctú*, su última película, en que lanza su crítica a diestro y siniestro. En la que no se salva ni él mismo, sino que se implica de manera evidente en esta especie de testamento en que nos viene a decir: no me gusta nada como van las cosas, esto no puede acabar bien. (20-21)

In this sense, Eugenia's grotesque, domineering character, while "unattractive," fulfills a fundamental political purpose—to denounce the continuity of *franquismo* in the new democratic government.

Eugenia's position of power within the Leguineche family is made apparent from her first "appearance" in the narrative. Before catching sight of her character, we hear her voice during an outrageous exchange with Don José and Luis José, who upon their initial arrival to Madrid realize that she has changed the locks to the front door of the palace. After pleading that Countess let them inside, the father and son are greeted by a walkie-talkie lowered from an upstairs window, from which she yells: "¿Me oye o no me oye este par de degenerados? ¡Viaje en balde y tiempo perdido! ¡En esta casa no volveréis a entrar nunca! ¡Nunca jamás! ¿Está claro, idiotas?" The two men continue their attempt—the elder asserts his ownership of the property and tries to reason with Eugenia, and the son immaturely pleads for his mother's attention. However, she responds by loudly farting over the speaker, grotesquely asserting that the palace is under her domain.

When Eugenia's character eventually appears on screen, we see that she represents a complete degradation of the conventional *dama noble*. The Countess has a ludicrous, even clownish appearance—her body is extremely large, and she wears gaudy kimonos over mismatched clothing, an ill-placed wig, excessively bright lipstick, and poorly drawn-on eyebrows—, which parallels her over-the-top personality and actions. She is a brutish and self-

absorbed woman, and constantly asserts her presence in the palace by screaming at her husband and son, and ordering around the staff. Eugenia's character comically exaggerates the stereotypical extravagance, greed, and sloth of the high aristocracy. Her diet consists mainly of oysters and champagne (like Marlene Dietrich, she flaunts), or olives, and as a testament to her grotesqueness, she frequently spits the pits onto the floor in a dramatic fashion. Furthermore, her submissive, flamboyant manservant Goyo caters to virtually all her needs (even sexual—despite the film's many insinuations that he is gay, the two are engaged in a farcical relationship). She also feigns the inability to walk to coerce her husband and son, and constantly lounges on a wheeled, pillow-laden bed (pushed by Goyo and the various family members) that serves as her mode of transportation.[41]

Through Eugenia, Berlanga links femininity with excess, vulgarity, absurdity, and, most importantly, power. While the Leguineche palace belongs to her husband's family, Eugenia presides over the compound from her "bedridden" position, dictating the staff and family members. A testament to her authoritarian role, her brutish voice looms throughout the compound as she yells orders, invectives, and vulgarities. Yet it is via her interactions with Don José and Luis José that we ascertain the magnitude of her grotesque authoritarian character. In virtually every encounter with the two men, Eugenia aggressively belittles and insults them—she frequently attacks her husband for having cheated on her thirty years prior, and refers to her son as "un aborto," given that he went into exile with his father. She also relegates Don José and Luis José to positions of inferiority by establishing rules about their conduct and which rooms they can and cannot occupy within the house. Eugenia's superiority over the two men is epitomized

[41] Virginia Higginbotham briefly notes the similarities between Eugenia's character and Mamá from Carlos Saura's film *Mamá cumple cien años* (1979): "[In *Patrimonio nacional* t]he mansion is occupied by another daft matriarch. Like Saura's Mamá, the marquise is huge and bedridden" (*Spanish Film* 132).

when she "graciously" invites them to have dinner with her in the palace's formal dining room. In a farce of a bourgeois dinner party, the family sits at a colossal golden table. Per the Countess' request, Don José and Luis José have been provided with chairs that are far too short—only their heads reach the surface, making them bear a striking resemblance to small children. Meanwhile, Eugenia sits in a much taller chair that allows her to tower over the two men. From her literally elevated position, she devours oysters—offering a rotten one to her son—and gulps champagne while barking orders at the two men.

With the revelation that Eugenia still supports the dictatorship, her comically domineering character takes on a deeper meaning. Berlanga discloses the Countess' ideology at various moments in the film. Upon entering the palace for the first time—having gained admittance via a notary, whom they hope will declare the woman legally incapacitated—, Don José comments that his wife is not well: "Mi mujer, señor notario, está un poquito, digamos, desequilibrada. Los años, claro. Y la muerte del General Franco, que le afectó muchísimo." Later Luis José is shocked to see that his mother displays photos of the dictator in the palace rather than of the King, and when Eugenia relegates the father and son to just one floor of the palace, she claims it is due to their anti-Francoist sentiments, and demands that they not infringe upon her personal "Zona Nacional." Though she never explicitly discusses politics, through these sequences, the director reveals that the Countess is a *continuista*, who detests the idea of democratic rule and wishes that the Franco regime would endure. Accordingly, her ridiculous personality and appearance not only signal the absurdity of Spaniards—politicians and civilians alike—who feel nostalgia for the dictatorship and are resistant to change. Because of her prominent status within the household, Eugenia also calls attention to the former Francoist politicians that hold positions of power in Transition-era Spain. By rendering her character

grotesque, Berlanga denounces the continuity of *franquismo,* signaling the paradox between the triumph of democracy that is held up in the Spanish imaginary, and the reality of a democratic government implemented and operated by many inheritors of the Franco regime. In the same vein, Eugenia's treatment of Don José and Luis José also serves to undermine the popular image of King Juan Carlos as a symbol of democratic change. The fact that the film's foolish monarchists occupy a position of mediocrity—as opposed to the tyrannical Francoist Eugenia—gestures to the futility of the Crown in post-Franco society and, moreover, insinuates the subordination of King Juan Carlos to the former dictator.

1.3 *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?*

In his first two feature films—*Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980) and *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982)—Pedro Almodóvar (1949-) provides celebratory visions of the political, social, and cultural changes that occurred in Spain with the end of the Franco dictatorship (Allinson 16; Vernon and Morris 8). In their depictions of youth culture during the initial years of democracy, the two works not only "constitute a chronicle of the *Movida*, [but also] an almost utopian rendering of Madrid as *locus amoenus*, a space of infinite possibilities" (Vernon and Morris 7-8). Given that Almodóvar has mentioned his aspiration to make films as if Franco had not lived—"I never speak of Franco; I hardly acknowledge his existence. I start *after* Franco… The stories unfold as if he never existed" (Besas 216)—, these early narratives suggest a complete rupture with the past in favor of the supposed myriad opportunities presented by the new democratic society (Smith, *Desire Unlimited* 17). However, this euphoria of renewal and political change proved to be short lived, and the disillusionment or "desencanto" that ensued

would be "perfectly captured by […] Almodóvar in his [fourth] film *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984)" (Song 14).

While *¿Qué he hecho yo…* is a collage-like portrait of post-Franco society, its underlying narrative parallels that of José Antonio Nieves Conde's neorealist film *Surcos* (1951)—the trials of a working-class Spanish family that has emigrated to Madrid from a rural *pueblo*.[42] Set in the early 1980s, Almodóvar's work centers on a dysfunctional, financially suffering family that resides in La Concepción neighborhood in the city's periphery. The protagonist, Gloria (Carmen Maura), is a suffering housewife whose mundane life is consumed by cleaning, cooking, and caring for her unappreciative spouse and children, plus her employment as a housekeeper. Gloria's abusive, *machista* husband, Antonio (Ángel de Andrés López) works long hours as a taxi driver. Like his wife, Antonio is miserable and burdened, and he yearns for his former life in Germany (where he spent years abroad as a *gastarbeiter*).[43] Together the couple has two adolescent sons: Toni (Juan Martínez) is a drug-dealer intrigued by life in the family's rural *pueblo*, and Miguel (Miguel Ángel Herranz), who openly engages in sexual relationships with older men. Also residing with the family is Gloria's mother-in-law Blasa (Chus Lampreave), an eccentric widow who detests the city and dotes on her son and grandsons. Mirroring *Surcos, ¿Qué he hecho yo…* culminates in the disintegration of the model family celebrated by *franquismo*. Cash-strapped Gloria sells Miguel to a pedophilic dentist; during an argument, she

[42] Nathan E. Richardson situates *¿Qué he hecho yo…* within the tradition of films treating questions of migration and the city/country tension in Spain, for example *Surcos*, or Pedro Lazaga's *La ciudad no es para mí* (1966). However, in contrast to these works, Almodóvar does not illustrate the family's migration to the city, and it is implied that Gloria and Antonio's children have never lived outside Madrid.

[43] *Gastarbeiter* refers to immigrant guest workers who moved to West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. West Germany's postwar economic recovery resulted in the need for labor, and from 1955-1968, the government signed agreements with Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia, permitting these countries to send workers (Kolinsky 116).

murders Antonio with a *jamón* bone; and in the final scenes, Toni and Blasa depart Madrid for the *pueblo*, leaving Gloria alone until Miguel's unexpected return. Yet whereas Nieves Condes' "falangist thesis drama" is a cautionary tale with a moralizing tone (Hopewell 56), Almodóvar's film is absurdist, tragicomic, and esperpentic.

Per Mark Allinson, one of the most distinguishing features of Almodóvar as an auteur is his "consistent borrowing from genre movies" (141), and in this vein, the director himself classifies *¿Qué he hecho yo…* as a text comprised of several genres: "Most of all, [the film] alludes to a form of narrative I'm particularly fond of: Italian neo-realism […] a sub-genre of melodrama which specifically deals not just with emotions but also with social conscience. It's a genre which takes the artificiality out of melodrama, while retaining its essential elements" (Strauss 44). Fittingly, most scholars of the film comment on its connection with the Spanish black comedies of the 1950s and 1960s and, subsequently, on how it emulates and/or subverts the two generic conventions cited by Almodóvar (neorealism[44] and melodrama[45]).

Nearly all critical studies of the film mention its connection with Italian neorealism—specifically the urban setting and its vivid depiction of the desperation of the working class—, yet most do not go beyond that recognition.[46] Almodóvar, on the other hand, does elaborate on

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[44] As Bert Cardullo describes, neorealist films "reacted not only against the banality that had long been the dominant mode of Italian cinema, but also against prevailing socioeconomic conditions in Italy. With minimal resources, the neorealist filmmakers worked in real locations, using local people as well as professional actors; they improvised their scripts, as need be, on site; and their films conveyed a powerful sense of the plight of ordinary individuals oppressed by political circumstances beyond their control" (19).

[45] In *The Melodramatic Imagination,* Peter Brooks identifies melodrama as a mode of dramatization marked by extravagant representations and "the intensity of moral claim impinging on [the] characters' consciousness" (ix). Per Brooks, "within an apparent context of 'realism' and the ordinary" (ix), melodramatic writers such as Balzac and Henry James created "a heightened and hyperbolic drama, making reference to pure and polar concepts of darkness and light, salvation and damnation" (ix).

[46] See, for example: D'Lugo ("City of Desire"; "El extraño viaje"); Smith (1994); Ballesteros (2001); and Kinder (2009).

the influence of post-war Italian cinema on his oeuvre, and with regards to *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, he maintains that it displays "connotaciones neorrealistas, pero [mezcladas] con otros géneros. Desde luego cuando la rodé pensaba en el cine neorrealista italiano, en De Sica y en *Rocco y sus hermanos* especialmente. Este tipo de películas hechas con todo el corazón, donde las madres están despeinadas y gritan mucho, tipo *Divento matta*" (Cañeque and Grau 155).[47] Various scholars have also scrutinized the film's melodramatic elements, specifically citing its exaggerated, sensationalist nature.[48] For instance, taking note of the genre's origins in late-eighteenth century France,[49] Kathleen M. Vernon contends that in melodrama, Almodóvar finds

> a "new" fictional system for conceiving and representing Spanish society in the aftermath of its own "ancien régime." The death of Franco, the politically and psychically repressive patriarch, "Caudillo por la Gracia de Dios," also marks the final passing of Spain's hierarchically conceived "organic democracy" and the institutional identification of church and state. Melodrama provides the mode for exploring the breakdown of old hierarchies and the resulting dissolution of barriers and boundaries in a post-patriarchal, post-religious Spain. (30)

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[47] Almodóvar also frequently cites his admiration of the Spanish inheritors of neorealism, as seen in his interview with Nuria Vidal: "A mí me gusta mucho el cine neorrealista italiano y el poco que se hizo aquí. *¿Qué he hecho yo…* guarda bastante parentesco con algunas películas neorrealistas españolas que a mí me apasionan. Entre los 50 y los 60 se dio en España un cierto neorrealismo que, a diferencia del italiano, era más feroz, más divertido y menos sentimental. Por ejemplo, las películas de Fernán Gómez: *El extraño viaje*, *La vida por delante*, o las de Ferreri, *El cochecito*, o *Plácido* de Berlanga" (116).

[48] See, for example: Vernon (1993), Smith (1994), Triana-Toribio (1996), Kinder (2009), Ballesteros (2001), and D'Lugo (2006).

[49] Per Brooks, melodrama is rooted in "the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath. 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 the literary forms-tragedy, comedy of manners-that depend on such a society" (14-5).

The abovementioned styles are characterized by misery (neorealism) and exaggeration (melodrama), and these qualities coincide in yet another generic convention that has been linked with the film, Ramón del Valle Inclán's grotesque genre of *esperpento*. The word *esperpento* had previously been used colloquially to denote "a person of abnormal appearance or an absurd or foolish thing" (Johnston 32),[50] yet Valle-Inclán would appropriate the term and equate it with a particularly Spanish form of humor emphasizing violence and the grotesque—initially in his plays (*Luces de bohemia, Los cuernos de don Friolera, Las galas del difunto,* and *La hija del capitán*), and later in novels (*Tirano Banderas* and *El ruedo ibérico* series). The author theorized his new grotesque genre in creative writings and interviews alike. Its first appearance was in *Luces de bohemia*, where in the twelfth act the struggling poet Max Estrella outlines the *esperpento* during a conversation with Don Latino, announcing:

> Los héroes clásicos han ido a pasearse en el callejón del Gato [...] Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el Esperpento. El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada [...] España es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea [...] Las imágenes más bellas en un espejo cóncavo son absurdas [...] La deformación deja de serlo cuando está sujeta a una matemática perfecta. Mi estética actual es transformar con matemática de espejo cóncavo las normas clásicas [...] [D]eformemos la expresión en el mismo espejo que nos deforma las caras y toda la vida miserable de España. (168-9)

[50] The *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española defines "esperpento" as a "persona, cosa o situación grotescas o estrafalarias" or a "concepción literaria creada por Ramón M.ª del Valle-Inclán hacia 1920, en la que se deforma la realidad acentuando sus rasgos grotescos" ("Esperpento").

Valle-Inclán also famously discusses his genre in a 1928 interview with Gregorio Martínez Sierra. After declaring that there are "tres modos de ver el mundo, artística o estéticamente: de rodillas, en pie o levantado en el aire" (394), with respect to the third form, he expounds:

> [H]ay otra tercera manera, que es mirar al mundo desde un plano superior, y considerar a los personajes de la trama como seres inferiores al autor, con un punto de ironía. Los dioses se convierten en personajes de sainete. Esta es una manera muy española, manera de demiurgo, que no se cree en modo alguno hecho del mismo barro que sus muñecos. Quevedo tiene esta manera. Cervantes, también. A pesar de la grandeza de don Quijote, Cervantes se cree más cabal y más cuerdo que él, y jamás se emociona con él. Esta manera es, ya definitiva en Goya. Y esta consideración es la que me movió a dar un cambio en mi literatura y a escribir los "esperpentos." (Martínez Sierra 395)

The *esperpento* genre is a distinctly Spanish mode of grotesque realism characterized by systematic deformation. It uses distortion to overturn the conventions of classical tragedy, rendering "a vast grotesque mural of an absurd Spain overrun by mediocrity and stupidity and flagellated for its wretched abnormality in the context of European life" (Greenfield, "Madrid in the Mirror" 261). [51] This fundamentally grotesque vision of society is achieved via a tragicomic tone, degraded characters and settings, nightmarish scenarios, fusions of human and animal forms, and colloquial language, which evoke feelings of uneasiness and alienation in face of this twisted image of reality. Zahareas comments on this disconcerting sensation in detail in "The Esperpento and the Aesthetics of Commitment," noting that

[51] As Dru Dougherty and Andrew A. Anderson argue, the *esperpento* is "a genre *sui generis* that sets parody, exaggeration, and the grotesque against tragic paradigms. What results is a Goyaesque deconstruction of classic figures (Othello, Don Juan Tenorio), the military hero, and the bohemian seer in plays that eschew the traditional three-act form" (301).

> [t]he world of the esperpentos is an unsettling world: there is tragedy and there is travesty, side by side, while man's anguish and man's blundering are constantly played off against each other. Compared with traditional tragedies and comedies, the esperpentos are neither a purging remedy nor a laughing matter. A harsh and playful tone in them yokes dread with amusement, despair with inanity, and hilarity with consternation; traditional certainties are disparaged while injustices and blunders are simultaneously flayed and burlesqued. And all this is done with an incredible, stupendous style which enhances the view of life as a grotesque panorama. (159)[52]

As Max Estrella declares, the *esperpento* distorts and ridicules the appearance of Spanish society as if it had been reflected in a concave mirror "cuya superficie es irregular y por eso da imágenes sistemáticas como cualquier espejo pero de proporciones anormales" (Greenfield, *Lorca, Valle-Inclán y las estéticas* 63). This carnival mirror-inspired imagery produces an alarming vision of reality, transforming familiar people, places, and actions into absurdist and/or horrifying caricatures (Zahareas, "The Absurd" 79). Valle-Inclán's *espejo cóncavo* deforms the image of traditionally heroic figures by rendering them absurd in the context of the modern world, and in this mirror "una situación grotesca, como en el caso de 'La tragedia española,' no se deforma al buen tuntún sino sistemáticamente" (Cardona and Zahareas 35). David Johnston expands upon this notion of reflection, noting that "unlike naturalism's holding up of a mirror so that a monstrous society may see itself faithfully (i.e., 'realistically') reflected, the 'esperpento' is a looking-glass which is itself distorted and which, in consequence, like a concave fairground

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[52] Similarly, as Rodolfo Cardona and Anthony Zahareas observe, the *esperpento*'s characteristic combination of "lo horripilante y lo perversamente cómico nos inquieta porque la situación se hace radicalmente distinta de aquello a lo que estamos acostumbrados: la alienación o la forma en que ésta nos atormenta tiene poco de lo simplemente cómico, satírico o trágico; estamos ante algo inquietantemente diferente: no sólo ante el absurdo sino ante un tratamiento peculiar y extraño de éste" (46).

mirror, creates an image that is systematic deformation, or satirical caricature, of whatever is revealed within" (32).

Though the concave mirror is one the most striking formal elements of the genre, also fundamental are the concepts of theatricality and puppetry (Speratti-Piñero 89; Lyon 128).[53] In the *esperpento*, Valle-Inclán "hace verosímil la realidad guiñolesca y sugiere que la distorsión de la vida es la forma natural de la vida" (Gullón 41). He distorts the human body to a ludicrous state, or transforms characters into puppet-like beings to further underscore the misery and inanity of society. Zahareas expands upon this idea, commenting:

> One of the most salient characteristics of the esperpento is the deformed appearance and ludicrous traits of the human figure. Monstrosities, buffooneries, nightmares, weird carnivals, mockery, anomaly, *commedia dell'arte* figures, contortion, gargoyles, frightening clowns, freakish persons, midgets, imbecilic faces and more are essential trappings of the grotesque. And puppets, mannequins, marionettes and the like (that is, mechanized toy caricatures) are grotesque figures *par excellence* because they suggest, ludicrously, a radical and disturbing departure from things that are familiar to us. Stunted in physique, the puppet is a telling symbol of man's stuntedness of spirit, the absence of authentic being, the incongruity between what man is said to be and what in fact he is. It

[53] This is particularly evident in *Los cuernos de don Friolera*, where the characters watch puppet shows, and Don Friolera himself evolves into a caricaturesque, puppet-like madman. In this vein, John Lyon observes: "[W]e can see how the emphasis of the *esperpento* has changed from the idea of the transformation by the distorting mirror of society to the idea of manipulation by the strings of collective social myths. In the case of *Los cuernos* it is perhaps more useful to think in terms of the puppet theatre image rather than of the concave mirror" (128).

is nevertheless a question of how an author handles the puppet figure that determines its grotesque impact. (“The Absurd” 83)[54]

Referring to Max Estrella’s declaration that “los héroes clásicos han ido a pasearse en el callejón del Gato,” in his interview with Martínez Sierra, Valle-Inclán remarks that the world of the *esperpento* is as if “los héroes antiguos se hubiesen deformado en los espejos cóncavos de la calle, con un transporte grotesco, pero rigurosamente geométrico. Y estos seres deformados son los héroes llamados a representar una fábula clásica no deformada. Son enanos y patizambos que juegan una tragedia” (395). Whether by means of the concave mirror or the puppet show, one of the main objectives of the *esperpento* is to deform and dismantle the heroic figures, reducing them to a grotesque state of absurdity and/or mediocrity (Greenfield, *Anatomía* 217; Lyon 126). The former heroes of society—typically figures of authority—become “tergiversados […] desmitificados y desvalorizados con una visualidad sistemáticamente caricaturesca. Están hechos, en fin, grotescos” (Greenfield, *Anatomía* 216).

The *esperpento* also has a prominent critical purpose, in that the genre is a contemptuous reaction to historical circumstances. Rodolfo Cardona and Zahareas maintain that Valle-Inclán’s grotesque *esperpentos* are “inspirados directamente en experiencias vivenciales de los períodos caóticos, ya contemporáneos, ya históricos, de la vida española” (28). When Max Estrella and Don Estrafalario describe their new aesthetic, they therefore allude to a modern world “characterized by rage and powerlessness on one hand, and by the hugely disproportionate forces

[54] Furthermore, in the same article Zahareas notes: “More than a parody, the esperpento questions the tragic sense of life and like the theatre of the absurd later re-elaborates it to fit better the temper of modern times. Formally, the central feature of the esperpento is theatricality, but in the full sense of the word. Drama is spectacle, and the manipulation of action on the stage brings about the unmasking of appearances. The stage projects ‘toda la vida miserable de España’ like a spectacle, mingling effectively the grotesque plasticities of Goya, the farcical tone of the puppet-show, the ritual of traditional theatre and the fragmented montage of cinematography” (“The Absurd” 93).

of violence, greed, cowardice and inhumanity on the other" (Johnston 32). Yet as John Lyon argues, the *esperpento* goes beyond deforming reality as a reaction to the artist's surroundings; it also functions "to demolish [collective] myths. To destroy the illusions with which the society deceives itself: the idea of a tragic or heroic destiny, the idea of being the standard-bearer of certain imperishable values, honour, patriotism, heroism, self-sacrifice. The confrontation of these myths with the unheroic reality is perhaps the most consistent unifying feature of the *esperpento*" (150-1).

Given its portrayal of post-Franco Spanish society, various critics have labeled *¿Qué he hecho yo…* as an esperpentic work (Ballesteros [2001]; Forgione [2003]; D'Lugo [2004], Kinder [2009]), yet few have gone beyond merely identifying its use of Valle-Inclán's grotesque genre. For instance, Marsha Kinder maintains that film slides "so fluidly between neorealism and hyperromance" ("All About the Brothers" 279), and she briefly notes that its puppet-like characters and absurd situations evoke the grotesque esperpentic tradition (277).[55] To date, Anna Pasqualina Forgione is the only scholar who has written at length on the legacy of Valle-Inclán in Almodóvar's cinema, and vis-à-vis *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, she argues that the "elementi esperpentici che si possono ritrovare nel film passano continuamente dal piano del contenuto a quello della forma, smascherando un legame conflittuale e ambiguo con la realità" (*Spiando* 104).[56] Forgione centers her analysis on the film's formal elements—in *Spiando Pedro*

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[55] Here Kinder signals a sequence where Blasa helps Toni with a school assignment—identifying canonical writers as Romantics or Realists, yet consistently erring in her selections—as just one of many examples of the blending of neorealism and grotesque melodrama in the film ("All About the Brothers" 279).

[56] Forgione's publications on the *esperpento* in Almodóvar include her monograph *Spiando Pedro Almodóvar: Il regista della distorsione* and her essay "Pedro Almodóvar y el esperpento: hacia una nueva retórica de la imagen." Both are panoramic studies that examine the *esperpento* in Almodóvar's entire corpus, and their treatment of *¿Qué he hecho yo…* is somewhat limited.

Almodóvar: Il regista della distorsione, for instance, she highlights the shots filmed from the position of household appliances or the family's pet lizard as prime examples of esperpentic deformation.[57]

These existing critical studies, however, fail to consider the significance of the film's esperpentic style in relation to the emergent social environment of post-Franco Spain. In *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, Almodóvar employs the conventions of the *esperpento* genre to reveal the insufficiency of the celebratory democratizing narrative of the Transition, as seen in the cultural artifacts produced by the *Movida*. By employing an esperpentic representation of Madrid and a series of grotesque characters, the work discloses how the quotidian life of the urban working class continues to be marked by the legacies of Francoist authoritarianism. Almodóvar's innovation consists of counterbalancing the film's esperpentic elements with another group of anti-heroic figures— the young neighbor, Vanessa; the grandmother, Blasa; the sons Toni and Miguel; and, most notably, Gloria—who confront and attempt to overcome this authoritarian environment. To cope with his/her surroundings, each character relies on a peculiar means of resistance, whose extravagance is perceived as normal within the esperpentic universe of the film.

¿Qué he hecho yo… upholds the tradition of the *esperpento* in its depiction of urban space. Almodóvar's dismal portrait of the city in the 1980s notably mirrors the "Madrid absurdo,

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[57] Here Forgione argues: "La mdp [camera] assume le prospettive degli oggetti, deformando inevitabilmente il personaggio; oppure, assume anche la prospettiva degli animali, come la bella soggettiva del ramarro che corre per casa costringendo la mdp a movimenti rapidi che sconvolgono l'ordine e lo spazio domestico. Senza dimenticare le difficili riprese dall'alto, all'interno della casa […] Per questo, possiamo parlare di un ricorso esperpentizzante che si materializza attraverso singolari prospettive geometriche e cromatiche deformanti che, attraverso la luce proiettata sulle cose e sui corpi dei personaggi o attraverso il movimento della mdp, crea ritratti di luoghi e personaggi trasformati dalla legge della deformazione" (*Spiando* 106-7).

brillante y hambriento" showcased in *Luces de bohemia* (Valle-Inclán 44).[58] In his play, Valle-Inclán envisions the Spanish capital as if its prominent institutions and monumental architecture had been rendered invisible, and its brilliance had become "sickly and muted" (Lonsdale 155). He situates the nocturnal tale in the margins of the metropolis, rendering a network of seedy bohemian locales filled with absurd characters and shadowy streets overcome by social and political unrest.[59] In this sense, *Luces de bohemia*'s urban setting is "more lugubrious and hazy than it is brilliant, distorted by mirrors and smoke and alcohol, a place of troglodytes in caves and booksellers with faces of rancid bacon" (Lonsdale 152-3). It is a grotesque image of Madrid that is "a la vez real y violentamente desfigurada" (Dougherty 135). For Valle-Inclán, Dru Dougherty argues, the most suitable way to "ser fiel a la verdad histórica de esta gran ciudad resulta ser, paradójicamente, su representación dislocada" (135).

Almodóvar provides a similarly unsettling image of the Madrilenian periphery in *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, and in an interview with Borja Casani, he comments on the symbolic weight of the film's setting:

> In *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* the neighborhood of La Concepción is another character. It represents the idea that Mr. Banús and Franco had of comfort, a comfort only worthy of the proletariat. It's a very eloquent symbol of the deceptive comfort to which

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[58] Regarding Almodóvar's use of urban space, Forgione simply contends that the film provides a twisted picture of Madrid contingent upon characters' respective outlooks and desires, in which "el espacio de los alrededores ciudadanos está sometido a la distorsión subjetiva motivada por las insatisfacciones individuales, y así la lente esperpéntica deforma el espacio objetivo […] El elemento deformante presente en cada personaje concurre a crear unos retratos de Madrid totalmente transfigurados por la transposición grotesca" ("Pedro Almodóvar y el esperpento," 212-3).

[59] Indeed, in the stage directions to the play, Valle-Inclán paints the settings with sordid detail, for example: "*Zaguán en el Ministerio de la Gobernación. Estantería con legajos. Bancos al filo de la pared. Mesa con carpetas de bandana mugrienta. Aire de cueva y olor frío de tabaco rancio*" (96).

the Spanish people had access in the 1960s. A grotesque, hellish, unlivable comfort. I was really struck by the aesthetic of the neighborhood. It would be ideal for a horror film, gothic horror… Those endless buildings, veritable cathedrals of monstrous taste. (67-8)[60]

Here the director abandons the modern, liberating, and bacchanalian spaces of the *Movida* depicted in his earlier films for a colorless, mundane, and conspicuously naturalistic representation of the metropolis.[61] Furthermore, he also showcases the architectural legacy of the dictatorship to reveal the vestiges of Francoist authoritarianism in democratic society.

The film is set in an outer-lying neighborhood of Madrid, La Concepción, that is filled with "high-rise cheap housing built in the sixties as a demonstration of Franco's modernization of living conditions in Spain" (D'Lugo, "Almodóvar's City of Desire" 133). Much of the action occurs inside Gloria's home—a cramped, tackily decorated apartment in one of these colossal buildings situated alongside the M-30 highway. The circular motorway is the only discernible Madrilenian location in the work (echoing the absence of urban landmarks in *Luces de bohemia*), and its "emblematic status" spoofs the Franco regime's celebration of it as a feat of modernity

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[60] José and Juan Banús' real estate company was one of the most powerful in Spain during the Franco-era, and is associated with a variety of the regime's construction projects and urban planning initiatives. Most notably, the company spearheaded the building the road of access to El Valle de los Caídos, in which Republican prisoners were employed in the construction. Banús also built La Concepción and El Pilar neighborhoods in Madrid, among many other projects. In *Patty Diphusa and Other Writings,* Almodóvar speaks of his initial arrival to the city in the late 1960s and how it eventually influenced his film: "In Madrid life was not all fun and games. Cities have suburbs and pollution, noise and poverty, but it's in these imperfections that greatness can take root. When I went to work at a telephone company warehouse near the suburb of Fuencarral, every day I drove along the M-30 highway. The enormous buildings shaped like beehives that sprout up along the highway have always made an impression on me. That impression and a certain feeling found this outlet years later in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*" (91).

[61] Per Marvin D'Lugo, the cityscapes of Almodóvar's earliest films "tend to emphasize the concept of physical movement and social mobility underscored in the very word *Movida* (Movement). Characters like Pepi, the heroine of [*Pepi, Luci, Bom*…], and Riza, the hero of [*Laberinto de pasiones*], have come to Madrid looking for a freedom obviously denied them elsewhere. They are able to seek out kindred spirits in an atmosphere that, as both films assert, is socially liberating and the impetus for new artistic creativity" ("Almodóvar's City of Desire" 130).

and as a symbol of urban development (Smith, *Desire Unlimited* 57).[62] Additionally, per Vernon, the fact that Almodóvar situates the characters' tribulations in a Franco-era high-rise—reminiscent of the urban settings of mid-century black comedy films such as Marco Ferreri's *El pisito* (1958), Nieves Condes' *Surcos* (1951) and *El inquilino* (1958), and Berlanga's *El verdugo* (1961)—reveals "the lack of fundamental change [that has occurred in Spanish society] despite the intervening years—years of the so-called economic miracle and the end of [the dictatorship]" (33).

To underscore this lingering Francoist oppression and Gloria and the other characters' subsequent suffering, Almodóvar presents La Concepción as being a dismal, claustrophobic, and dreadful environment. He includes engulfing low angle shots of the concrete high-rises, emphasizing their size and the lack of space between them (Vidal 124; Maroto Camino 336). The film also features extensive shots of the adjacent M-30, which signals the dreariness of La Concepción and contributes to the overall confining sensation within the film. Additionally, while *¿Qué he hecho yo…* is not a nocturnal tale, its exterior scenes—like those of Valle-Inclán's play—are outstandingly dark and colorless. They principally occur beneath a grey winter sky or during rainstorms, and focus on the drab concrete of the buildings, streets, and sidewalks, or on the leafless trees and dead, trash-ridden grass of the nearby park.[63] Almodóvar conveys similar sensations through his depiction of the interior of Gloria's residence. In contrast

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[62] Smith elaborates: "Opened just before the death of the dictator in 1974 […] the right road was the last of the grandiose Francoist projects of modernization, widely seen as part of the 'inauguration syndrome' whose massive social costs went unrecognized. As an ironic symbol of urban development, the M-30 thus suggests not only the shifting space of the modern city, but also a specific historical attempt to impose a monumental vision on a Madrid whose roots remained obstinately provincial" (*Desire Unlimited* 57).

[63] Regarding the park, Almodóvar elaborates: "El parque […] estaba desde el principio. Tal como sale en la película es como es en realidad. En un plano te encuentras con aquel paisaje que parece postnuclear, con el árbol repelado recortándose contra el cielo gris" (Vidal 124).

to other apartments featured in the film—the prostitute Cristal and the dressmaker Juani's homes in the same building—, the family's is poorly-lit, drafty, and teeming with excess. Smith notes that the script refers to the set as being suffocating and *cutre* (*Desire Unlimited* 53)—the space is jam-packed with people and furniture, and grotesquely decorated with kitschy paintings and mismatched floral and striped wallpapers. As in *Luces de bohemia*, the film's distorted representation of exterior and interior urban space serves to reflect the misery and ugliness of the characters' universe (Vidal 120)—a world where Francoist authoritarianism persists.

A bizarre medley of characters populates Almodóvar's dismal capital city. According to Lara Anderson, the film's urban landscape is home to many of the narrative's "dysfunctional relationships, suggesting both a typically naturalist struggle for survival in the face of a hostile environment such as this one, and the influence that the environment can have on human behavior" (304).[64] Paramount to Almodóvar's construction of an esperpentic atmosphere are the film's secondary characters—the absurd individuals whom Gloria encounters in her everyday life, many of which are, in the spirit of the *esperpento*, puppet-like figures. As mentioned, Zahareas studies Valle-Inclán's use of *títeres* at length, noting that the puppet "is a telling symbol of man's stuntedness of spirit, the absence of authentic being, the incongruity between what man is said to be and what in fact he is" ("The Absurd" 83). While Gloria is a complex individual who evolves over the course of the narrative, she is surrounded by absurd, mediocre, and one-dimensional figures—peripheral types that according to David Fauconnier convey the movie's grotesque element and possess "particularidades divertidas, manías singulares o

[64] Similarly, with regards to *Luces de bohemia*, Ugarte maintains: "Most of the characters who populate Valle's fictional Madrid are far removed from the more pristine and showy side of the city. The 'Bohemia' of *Bohemian Lights* represents the adversarial environment for all those who do not fit into the mainstream—not just artists, but beggars, prostitutes, drunkards, swindlers, and 'losers' of all types" (143).

mantienen de una manera risible el culto de la memoria […] En la mayoría de los casos, son a la vez cautivantes y jocosos" (198).[65] These characters do little, if anything, to advance the plot, yet they are essential to the film's portrait of "an absurd Spain overrun by mediocrity" (Greenfield, "Madrid in the Mirror" 261). Virtually every person in the film displays some type of oddity, and/or represents a mockery of a conventional character type. Like Valle-Inclán's *títeres*, most of the secondary characters I describe here do little more than enhance the overall bizarre atmosphere of the narrative.

Some of the work's most remarkable secondary figures include Gloria's prostitute neighbor, Cristal, whose carefree and compassionate nature reminds the spectator of the celebratory female protagonists of the director's previous films. Cristal embodies a stereotypical vision of post-Franco modernity—she purchases comics at El Rastro, wears colorful clothes that match the décor of her apartment, is not troubled by her work as a prostitute, uses cocaine, and is learning English via cassette tapes because she aspires to move to Las Vegas. She is also a caricature of the dumb blonde stereotype—Almodóvar refers to her as a "Barbie Superstar" (Vidal 133)—and exhibits a kitschy, flamboyant vision of femininity (Ballesteros 67). Other discernibly static, puppet-like individuals include an elderly man that Antonio encounters in a bar, who does nothing but imitate the sounds of different car engines. In the opening scene, Gloria meets a man in the locker room of the martial arts studio that she cleans. The two begin to have sex in the shower, yet much to her dismay, he is impotent and unable to perform. This unnamed man reappears later in the narrative—he is one of the police officers that unsuccessfully investigates Antonio's death, and is also a client of Cristal—, and in each instance

[65] David Fauconnier also notes that Almodóvar's use of secondary characters in the film is reminiscent of the ensemble casts of Berlanga's absurdist films: "Este tipo de dispositivo no deja de recordarnos la estructura coral de las películas de Berlanga y su talento para poner en escena con el sentido del ridículo los detalles incongruentes y los personajes anecdóticos" (199).

Almodóvar highlights his sexual and professional ineptitude. Gloria also cleans the apartment of Lucas, a failed writer who (with Antonio's assistance) makes a vain attempt to publish the forged memoirs of Adolf Hitler, viewing the counterfeit work as a surefire opportunity for fame and fortune. Another secondary figure is a flamboyant pedophilic dentist whose character is a ridiculous play on the stereotype of the lecherous older gay man. Having taken great interest in Gloria's son, Miguel, the grotesque dentist flickers his tongue wildly and makes an assortment of lewd gestures and comments at his young patient. His behavior, however, is normalized, and both Gloria and Miguel are entirely unfazed by his advances. Thus, when he proposes to adopt Miguel as a form of payment, the two accept his offer—the boy is excited by the prospect of living with a wealthy man who will buy him gifts, and she is relieved that she will have one less mouth to feed at home. Later in the film, we encounter Cristal with an exhibitionist client. This ridiculous sequence begins with the man, who represents a grotesque parody of virility, performing a striptease for Cristal and Gloria. Although his body is somewhat scrawny, he flaunts his arms and chest as if he were muscular, and then informs the women that his penis is enormous, and for this reason he can only be intimate with prostitutes. However, Cristal's facial expressions during the sexual act imply the man's sense of self-delusion—he is unable to satisfy her. The exhibitionist's following lines are a testament to Almodóvar's grotesque portrayal of some of these puppet-like characters:

> A primera vista puedo parecerles demasiado delgado, pero son apariencias. Los brazos, por ejemplo, son más musculosos de lo que parecen. Pero un hombre no folla con los brazos. El torso puede parecerles un poco escuálido. Pero un hombre no folla con el torso. Las piernas no son las de un deportista. Pero un hombre no folla con las piernas. ¿Con qué folla un hombre? [Cristal and Gloria: —Con la polla.] Ahí es donde quería ir a parar

yo. Porque tengo un pollón... Cada vez que mi glande irrumpe en la vagina de una mujer, la destrozo. Por eso tengo que ir con prostitutas, que tienen el coño más dado de sí por el uso. A las mujeres corrientes les da miedo ir conmigo... Bueno, y la leche no sabéis lo que es... ¡Qué blancura! ¡Qué espesor! ¡Qué presión! ¡Un géiser parece! Y es buenísimo para el cutis…

While the esperpentic city is populated by cartoonish, humoristic one-dimensional characters, in contrast to them, Almodóvar also presents more-somber puppet figures who personify the social legacies of *franquismo*, specifically authoritarianism: Gloria's husband, Antonio, and Juani, a single mother neighbor who works as a dressmaker. Antonio is the foremost embodiment of authority in the film, and as a Madrid taxi driver, he is a natural extension of this esperpentic urban environment. He is a grotesque caricature of the working-class man. Domineering, misogynistic, and unrefined, he often voices his distaste for his "flawed" wife. From the start of the narrative, it is apparent that Antonio reigns over the household. He demands that Gloria satisfy all his needs—preparing his food, caring for the apartment and his belongings, and pleasing him sexually—, and when her housekeeping does not live up to his expectations, or when she attempts to defy him, he screams at her in protest, for instance: "¡Aquí el que manda soy yo! ¡Si no te interesa eso, ya sabes dónde está la puerta!" During one of the film's earliest scenes, Gloria burns the dinner, and when Antonio demands that she bring him a beer or a glass of wine, she also must inform him that they have neither. In response, he yells: "Estoy todo el día trabajando como un cabrón. Llego a casa. Tengo que comer un pollo medio quemado y ni siquiera puedo tomar un vaso de vino. ¡Joder!" Shortly thereafter, Gloria asks her husband for money to pay for groceries, bus tickets, and Miguel's upcoming trip to the dentist. In exchange for opening his wallet, he forces her to have sex with him—an

impersonal, mechanical act in which Gloria takes little to no pleasure. On top of being overbearing and misogynistic, Antonio's character is also presented as grotesque. He is portrayed as burping and having foot odor, which Blasa describes as being "un olor intenso, fuerte" that nearly prevents her from breathing. As an emblematically aggressive and domineering patriarch, Antonio recalls Luci's fascist husband in *Pepi, Luci, Bom…*. However, unlike the Policeman in Almodóvar's first film—who complains about "tanta democracia"—, Antonio's political ideology is implicit, and related to his past-life in Germany. There he worked as a chauffeur and was engaged in a love affair with a wealthy, Nazi-sympathizing singer, Ingrid Müller (to whom he still harbors feelings). Antonio's nostalgia for his previous life with her in Berlin—epitomized by his constant listening to Nazi-era German music at home and in his taxi—, combined with the fact that he flaunts having forged Hitler's love letters to Ingrid, insinuates that he is indeed Fascist-leaning (Kercher 78). Thus, his grotesque, puppet-like character is emblematic of the endurance of Francoist ideology in democratic society.

While she is not presented as grotesque like Antonio, Juani—the single mother residing upstairs, who relentlessly screams at and criticizes her daughter Vanessa—is another puppet-like figure that embodies authoritarianism. Her character can be interpreted as another extension of the dictatorship—she is controlling, tyrannical, explosive, and violent. In *Usos amorosos de la posguerra española,* Carmen Martín Gaite notes that during *franquismo*, the woman "[r]esponsabilizada sin paliativos del buen funcionamiento de la célula familiar, la mujer orgullosa de saber llevar bien una casa y de mantener la disciplina en ella adquiría modos militares y podía llegar a esclavizar a todos cuantos vivían bajo el mismo techo" (119). Juani is a critical portrayal of this type of ridged, disciplinarian maternal figure. She cannot stand Vanessa because she reminds her of the husband that deserted her. Consequently, she is extremely

resentful of her daughter, and dictates and disparages her in all their interactions. For example, she yells at Vanessa for making silly faces in the mirror while waiting for the elevator, slaps her when she cries that she does not want to attend school, criticizes her appearance, and complains that she wets the bed and does not help with housework. She also gives directions with an air of authority, such as when she demands that the child take the stairs when the elevator stalls, or put her hood up during a rainstorm. Despite her inferior position, Vanessa has a means of rebelling against her tyrannical mother—she has inexplicable supernatural powers, which she uses to move household objects and interfere with appliances to aggravate Juani. This clash between the mother's authority and Vanessa's magic indicates an "improbable fusion of different realms," which Virginia E. Swain notes can lead to the characteristic disharmony or incongruity of the grotesque (11).

One evening, Juani forces Vanessa to help with the laundry. After loading the washing machine, the girl tells her mother that she would like to watch television. Yet she vehemently denies her daughter's request, yelling that because she is spoiled, she must earn her keep in the house and remain seated in the kitchen. A testament to Juani's despotic nature, Cristal—who happens to be in the apartment having a dress made—tells her that she is going to traumatize her daughter with such harsh words and forceful actions. To get back at the "la vieja resentía," here Vanessa uses her powers to knock a vase off the wall near where her mother stands, causing Juani to scream hysterically at her: "¡Me cago en los que cavaron la sepultura del Señor! ¡Mi búcaro!"

These secondary characters are typical of the puppet-like figures of the *esperpento* genre. Alongside them, Almodóvar also presents a smaller group of complex characters, epitomized by the protagonist Gloria. Unlike the film's *títeres* —who are controlled from above by the

demiurge, the director—, they display an unmistakable sense of agency, and seek out different means to cope with the dreadful realities of their everyday life. Like many of the film's figures, Gloria's mother-in-law, Blasa is defined by her peculiarities—she is obsessed with effervescent beverages; she hoards *magdalena* cakes and Vichy Catalan water in a locked cabinet; and she paints tacky figurines to give as gifts to the bank employees. However, there is more to the figure of *la abuela* than her eccentric hobbies. Entirely miserable in Madrid, Blasa longs to return to her past life in the family's *pueblo*. For this reason, she actively seeks out "rural" experiences within the context of the somber urban neighborhood—she collects sticks and branches (that she stores in the cramped apartment with her other possessions); she and Toni take frequent walks in the dismal park near the apartment, and during one such excursion she "adopts" a lizard as a pet. On another afternoon, the two go to the movies, where they see Elia Kazan's rural melodrama *Splendor in the Grass*.

Gloria's sons appear to be juvenile delinquents—Toni is a drug dealer and forges signatures (like his father), and Miguel openly has sexual relations with much-older men. However, they both resort to these behaviors as a means of escaping their surroundings. The brothers are guided by their own self-interests, which drive them away from the family, as a means of survival. For Toni, selling drugs provides him with a steady income and the means to leave the city and pursue his dream of living in the *pueblo* with his grandmother. Knowing that his parents are overburdened with work and financial struggles, Miguel has adopted an exaggerated sense of independence. Exclaiming that he is the "dueño de [su] cuerpo," he willingly seeks out adult male lovers who can support him with food, possessions, and attention (all of which his own overburdened family is unable to provide him). When presented with the option of being adopted by the wealthy pedophilic dentist, Miguel instantly agrees, yet he makes

no mention of the sexual nature of the arrangement. Rather, he views the seemingly shocking setup as an opportunity to have a stereo and a painting studio and lessons, luxuries that would be unfathomable in his own home.

Unlike most of the secondary characters in the film, Gloria not only displays agency—she also evolves throughout the narrative, becoming increasingly more miserable. A housewife who has modeled her life after the appearance of the domestic ideal celebrated by Francoism, she finds herself trapped in a thankless, monotonous existence. As Gloria continues to face her husband's authority and her dismal surroundings, she spirals into an increasingly desperate state. Almodóvar has spoken extensively about his interest in the figure of the housewife. In an interview with a Maruja Torres two years prior to the release of *¿Qué he hecho yo…*, he comments that "[e]l mundo del ama de casa me divierte y me horroriza al mismo tiempo, porque es monstruoso en su alienación, sobre eso sí que me gustaría hacer una película en serio, se podría hacer un buen alegato a favor de las amas de casa" ("La vida es un bolero"). Similarly, in his interview with Vidal, he claims that his film makes "una apología de esta ama de casa, pero la presento tal cual, con sus cualidades y sus defectos. Es una heroína cuyas propias deficiencias son producto del ambiente de donde vive. Ella es víctima de sí misma. En ese sentido, hay una apariencia neorrealista engañosa, y en eso me gusta que la confundan con el neorrealismo" (118).[66]

[66] In the same interview, Almodóvar comments further on the figure of the housewife: "El ama de casa es un personaje absolutamente vinculado a lo que es la cultura de nuestro tiempo. Todo el *pop* no tendría sentido sin ella. La auténtica protagonista de esta estética que ha girado y ha inspirado el *pop art* es la iconografía doméstica. Del ama de casa se pueden hacer cientos de películas distintas. Es un personaje que a lo largo del día tiene posibilidades de estar en contacto con universos completamente distintos, especialmente si es asistenta. Si hubiera hecho esta película hace cinco años, después de *Pepi*… y tomando a Luci como modelo, habría hecho algo más cercano a *Polysester* de John Waters, o a lo mejor una historia rosa tipo Doris Day/Rock Hudson. Pero me decidí por hablar en serio del tema, por mostrar el descenso a los infiernos y la parada de los monstruos de la vida cotidiana de esta mujer. Por eso me salió un ama de casa verdaderamente atribulada" (Vidal 115-6).

During the dictatorship, women were indispensable to Franco's Catholic nationalist platform, and were expected to "serve the *patria* with self-denial [and dedication] to the common-good" (Morcillo 47).[67] Through the Church and the *Sección Femenina* (the women's section of the Falange), the regime regulated their performance of "duties as mothers and daughters of the fatherland" (Morcillo 3) and dictated a model of femininity that exalted domesticity and encouraged them "to become mothers and queens of the home" (Morcillo 47).[68] Having children—the future generations of Spain—was at the center of the national woman's duty and therefore "todo, incluyendo los valores sociales y culturales del franquismo, respondía a una concepción de la mujer, cuya esencia era la maternidad" (Gallego Méndez 161). This maternal vocation, however, was only permitted within the context of marriage, a sacrament that, as María Teresa Gallego Méndez explains, "consagra[ba] eufemísticamente la jerarquía del amor, es decir, la absoluta primacía del varón sobre la mujer y los hijos, o lo que es lo mismo: la diligente sumisión de la mujer y su rendida obediencia" (141).

Some critics have interpreted Gloria's character in the same light as some of the figures that surround her—as a grotesque deformation. Smith maintains that the opening sequences in the apartment suggest "that Gloria represents a grotesque deformation of the Catholic ideal of the married woman" (*Desire Unlimited* 53). Likewise, per Isolina Ballesteros, the protagonist

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[67] For studies of the state of women in Spain during *franquismo*, see: Gallego Méndez (1983), Martín Gaite (1987), and Morcillo (2000).

[68] In *Usos amorosos de la posguerra española,* Martín Gaite also provides a scathing account of Franco's cult of domesticity: "Las hijas estaban mucho más predestinadas que los hijos a convertirse en discípulas de esta 'sabiduría maternal' hecha de Sidol, plumero, naftalina y zapateados sobre el parquet con los pies envueltos en bayetas amarillas. Más adelante, iban aprendiendo también ciertas triquiñuelas y salvedades de aquel código del orden doméstico, que para alcanzar un determinado nivel de perfección requería ser un tanto invisible y secreto. La mujer había de representar a la vez los papeles de Marta y de María, y la primera tenía que estar preparada a esfumarse, es decir, a quitarse la bata y los rizadores en cuanto sonasen los pasos del hombre por el pasillo" (119).

"fluctúa entre ser el calco de las actrices 'gritonas y desmelenadas' (histéricas) del neorrealismo italiano y la deformación grotesca del ideal de esposa católica del franquismo" (61). Contrary to these positions, I do not perceive Gloria's character as a grotesque deformation of the Francoist feminine ideal. Rather, Gloria's frustration and overall desperate state cause her to seek alternative means of self-gratification. The fact that she is confined in this horrifyingly bizarre esperpentic world results in the complete destruction of her character. Rather than being "orgullosa de saber llevar bien una casa" (Martín Gaite 119), she resorts to taking amphetamines and sniffing household detergents to endure her dreaded housework. Because Antonio leaves her completely sexually unsatisfied, she seeks out pleasure and attention from alternative means, such as when she enthusiastically accepts the sexual advances of an anonymous male student in the dressing room shower of the martial arts studio that she cleans, or when she lives vicariously through Cristal, who vividly tells her about her clients' fetishes and desires. Furthermore, although the film's most-climactic scene—when Gloria kills her husband by beating him on the head with a *jamón* bone—could be interpreted as a grotesque farce, it is yet another example of her coping with her surroundings. The murder of Antonio is the ultimate sign of her bizarre exertion of agency, in that it is a reaction to him yelling at and hitting her. In all these instances, Gloria's desperation—domestic, sexual, marital, etc.—leads her to these behaviors.

To close my study of Almodóvar, I would like to revisit Max Estrella's announcement that "España es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea." Given its dismal depiction of urban space and its bizarre secondary characters, *¿Qué he hecho yo…* upholds the miserable, un-modern, and deformed vision of Spain alluded to by Max in *Luces de bohemia*. Here I would like to underscore one final element of the film that reaffirms this idea. In various moments of the narrative, Almodóvar introduces a German motif into his bizarre portrait of post-Franco

Madrid. As mentioned, Antonio's character spent many years working abroad, and subsequently adores Germany, its culture, and, most notably, his former lover Ingrid. The film also contains an absurd subplot in which Antonio, Lucas, and his wife Patricia concoct a dubious plan to falsify and then publish the memoirs of Adolf Hitler. Lucas ultimately travels to Berlin, where he meets Ingrid and attempts to recruit her for the project. With regards to these Germany storylines, Almodóvar comments that

> [m]ucha gente opina que la historia de Berlín sobra, que no funciona y no hace falta. Yo creo que no, el problema para mí son los actores, no la historia. Y si no funcionan es por culpa mía […] Yo lo que buscaba es que a la vez que *¿Qué he hecho yo…* fuera una película entre costumbrista y neorrealista, por ese salón, por ese pasillo pasara también una intriga internacional, pero como un elemento surrealista. (Vidal 141)

I dispute the idea that this German motif is entirely superfluous. Instead, it adds a provocative cultural contrast to the narrative. Whereas *¿Qué he hecho yo…* depicts democratic Spain as a grotesque, miserable environment where Francoist authority endures, Germany and its culture, conversely, are idealized—envisioned as sophisticated and even modern. Antonio glorifies his time spent abroad, constantly complains about the harshness of life in Spain, and compares Gloria to Ingrid. He also nostalgically listens to Zarah Leander's music in the apartment and while driving his taxi, which in addition to signally his nostalgia and Fascist leanings, adds an incongruous hint of elegance to the film's bleak settings.[69] When Lucas travels to meet Ingrid in

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[69] In his interview with Vidal, Almodóvar comments on the idiosyncrasy of Antonio's affinity for Germany: "A este tipo de personas lo que les va es escuchar a Marifé de Triana y las folklóricas, pero como me gusta establecer contrapuntos, en lugar de ponerle una tonadillera, pongo una canción alemana de los años treinta de Zarah Leander, que es una mujer que a mí me gusta muchísimo. Una manera de justificarla puede ser el que el marido haya estado trabajando en Alemania. Conozco muchas personas de este tipo, gentes que han vuelto completamente hundidos, pero que hablan de aquella época dorada en Alemania como si hubiera sido el paraíso, no es otra cosa que mirar al pasado con nostalgia" (139).

Berlin, Almodóvar juxtaposes the German and Spanish capital cities. Unlike the Madrilenian periphery, the German city is colorful, vibrant, and filled with fast cars and contemporary architecture.[70] Therefore, by introducing this seemingly gratuitous European element into the film, Almodóvar reinforces his painstakingly grotesque, esperpentic portrayal of post-Franco Spanish society, a world in which Francoist authority endures.

Patrimonio nacional and *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* are cultural responses to the earliest years of democracy, in which Spain was engulfed by the celebratory narratives of democratization and modernization. Both works take issue with the imaginary of the Transition—that it was a smooth process that resulted in the successful restoration of democracy in Spain after four decades of dictatorship. Berlanga and Almodóvar each resort to the aesthetic of the grotesque to challenge this democratizing myth. Berlanga's film takes issue with government institutions, using the grotesque members of the Leguineche family to condemn the nostalgic supporters of the monarchy and the Francoists who desire to uphold the privileges enjoyed during the dictatorship. In doing, he underscores the continued presence of *franquismo* in the so-called new democratic government. Conversely, *¿Qué he hecho yo…* focuses on the survival of Francoist ideals in everyday life, particularly in the working class in Madrid that does form part of the celebratory discourse of the *Movida*. Thus, I read the film as an example of the *esperpento* genre, in which Almodóvar provides a grotesque vision of the city and its inhabitants to highlight the continued legacy of authoritarianism in the working class. In using the grotesque to reveal the endurance of Francoism in various social stratums—the aristocracy and the lower

[70] Even the film's soundtrack suggests these differences. The exterior shots of La Concepción in Madrid are accompanied by a slow instrumental track reminiscent of music from Italian neorealist cinema. On the contrary, when Almodóvar showcases Berlin, we hear an upbeat, almost futuristic song typical of 1980s music.

class alike—, Berlanga and Almodóvar destabilize the widely vision of post-Franco Spain as paragon of successful democratic transition.

Chapter 2: Grotesque Visions of Catalan Identity during the Pujol Era

In this chapter I examine the representations of Catalan identity in post-Franco Spain as they appear in two works of the 1990s: Juan Marsé's novel *El amante bilingüe* (1990), Josep Joan Bigas i Luna's film *La teta y la luna* (1994), and Albert Boadella's play *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* (2001). These texts resort to the aesthetic of the grotesque to condemn then-President of Catalonia Jordi Pujol's nationalist narrative, addressing the recurring themes of language and cultural normalization and immigration (Marsé), Europeanism (Bigas Luna), as well as the political persona of Pujol himself (Boadella) in relation to Catalan identity. First, I analyze *El amante bilingüe*, considering how Marsé's grotesque portrayal of the protagonist denounces the propagation of the Pujolian Catalan ideal, which is presented as being destructive to the cultural coexistence that defined Catalonia's working-classes. I then focus on *La teta y la luna*, evaluating Bigas Luna's grotesque, scatological depiction of French culture and society as a denunciation of the Pujol government's Europeanist ambitions. Lastly, I examine *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*, analyzing how Boadella uses the conventions of the grotesque *esperpento* genre to dismantle the myth of Pujol as a political figure, and to undermine the influence of his nationalist project on post-Franco Catalan society.

2.1 Catalan Identity during Jordi Pujol's Presidency

Jordi Pujol served as the President of Catalonia for twenty-three years (1980-2003), during which he possessed an enormous influence on the design and implementation of Catalan political, economic, linguistic, social, and cultural institutions in the immediate aftermath of the

Franco era.[71] An iconic nationalistic leader, synonymous with the Catalan nation-building project both during and after the dictatorship (Kleiner-Liebau 71), he embodies a vision of Catalanism rooted in the notion of Catalonia's "very distinct identity […] based on a particular language and culture, social cohesion, a collective consciousness, a community project, and pride in the country" (Guibernau 151), and in the active reassertion of this identity after its suppression during *franquismo*. This ideological position dominates Pujol's political discourse, as well as his personality as a leader. As Ramón Pi writes,

> [s]e siente llamado a protagonizar la regeneración nacional de Cataluña, se sabe eslabón de una cadena temporal que ya dura mil años, tiene la íntima seguridad de que su mayor responsabilidad en este mundo es la de transmitir a las generaciones posteriores una Cataluña mejor, más próspera, más libre, más independiente, en definitiva *más Cataluña*, que la que recibió […] Desde este punto de vista, la personalidad pública de Pujol tiene un cierto componente de espíritu redentor, propio de una especie de paladín histórico. (65-66)

Having participated in anti-Franco activism since his university years, Jordi Pujol became involved in the Catalan political scene in the 1960s. Pujol was a major figure in the Catholic Church-backed nationalist and cultural revival programs of this era (Kleiner-Liebau 71), and together with a group of Catalan businessmen he led a nation-building project known as *Fer País* ("To Make the Country"), which established "a strategy of national reconstruction in economic and cultural terms" in light of Francoist oppression (Dowling 89). Now the face of the growing

[71] Jordi Pujol i Soley (Barcelona, 1930) was elected President in 1980 after his party, *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union, CiU), won the first Catalan parliamentary election of Spain's democratic era. Pujol was re-elected in 1984, 1988, 1992, 1995, and 1999, retiring after his sixth term in 2003.

Catalan nationalist movement, in 1974 he founded the moderate/conservative political organization Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) (Kleiner-Liebau 71). In March of 1980, the newly formed political party Convergència i Unió (CiU)[72] won Catalonia's first parliamentary elections, and therefore Pujol was elected President of the *Generalitat*. This initial victory, combined with his subsequent in 1984, ensured that the Pujolian vision of Catalanism would be promoted institutionally (Dowling 127), enduring until his retirement in 2003.

Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga write that Pujol's *Fer País* initiative encapsulates the nationalist strategy of his presidency, noting: "the Pujolista nation-building project sought the modernization of Catalan economy, the democratization of Spain, and the defense of the Catalan culture" (133). Similarly, Montserrat Guibernau observes how his nationalist discourse stresses "the institutional, political and cultural recognition of Catalonia as a distinctive people, and the reform of the Spanish state, involving both its modernization and Europeanization" (143). In essence, the Pujol government actively promoted a conservative strain of nationalism, which aimed to reverse the systematic oppression of Catalan language, culture, and identity under *franquismo*, and construct "the greatest level of autonomy possible without producing a rupture with Spain" (Dowling 123).[73]

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[72] The CiU party was created in 1978 via a coalition of two political parties: the CDC, and the Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC), which was founded in 1931, and then reformed during the Transition (having operated clandestinely during Franco). Dominating the Catalan political sphere from the 1980s through the early 2000s, the CiU ultimately dissolved in 2015.

[73] Sharon G. Feldman argues that this nationalist vision, of bourgeois origins, "is historically ghosted by the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century nationalist discourse of intellectual figures such as Francesc Cambó and Enric Prat de la Riba, and of the political party that was known as the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya" (66). One of the first advocates of Catalan nationalism, Prat de la Riba stressed that culture and language were the cornerstones of Catalan nationality (Crameri 28). In *La nacionalidad catalana*, Prat de la Riba argues: "Si ser Patria, si ser Nación era tener una lengua, una concepción jurídica, un sentido del arte propio, si era tener espíritu, carácter, pensamiento nacional, la existencia de la Nación o de la Patria era un hecho natural" (*In the Eye of the Storm* 33).

During a 1995 speech entitled "Què representa la llengua a Catalunya?," Pujol affirms: "La identidad de Cataluña es en gran parte lingüística y cultural. Nunca ha sido la reivindicación de Cataluña étnica ni religiosa, ni ha hecho hincapié en la geografía, ni ha sido estrictamente política. Hay muchos componentes en nuestra identidad […] pero la lengua y la cultura son la espina dorsal" (*Cataluña* 176-7). Appropriately, many scholars (Conversi; Crameri; Fernández; Balfour and Quiroga; Kleiner-Liebau; Dowling) have analyzed the centrality of language and culture in Pujolian nationalist discourse. The CiU party's conception of Catalan identity was rooted in linguistic and cultural factors, collective consciousness, and social cohesion rather than race and/or ethnicity (Kleiner-Liebau 75). Of utmost importance were language, high culture, and popular traditions, which functioned to both demonstrate and perpetuate the existence of a distinct Catalan identity within Spain (Conversi 27). Due to this emphasis, the Pujolian understanding of Catalanism became the hegemonic discourse across Catalan politics throughout most of his presidency.[74]

During the 1980s and 1990s, Pujol's government carried out its nationalist vision via a series of linguistic and cultural normalization initiatives, through which it attempted to restore Catalan as the predominant language and culture—one in which Catalonia's citizens would "normally" choose to participate (Crameri 36). Josep-Anton Fernández analyzes the significance of this process in greater detail, arguing that

> [t]he promotion of Catalan culture is inseparable both from the policies of "linguistic normalization" undertaken by the authorities, and from the discourse of political nationalism. "Cultural normalization," the cultural

[74] Balfour and Quiroga note that despite their significant political differences, the other major Catalan political parties—the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC), the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), and the Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (ICV)—also considered Catalonia a nation because of its distinct language, culture, and history (135).

> policy of contemporary Catalan nationalism, aims at constituting Catalonia as a "normal" society: that is, a society in which Catalonia's own language would be hegemonic, in which citizens would share a common sense of (Catalan) national identity based on their cultural traditions, and which would be comparable to any other modern European society in terms of cultural infrastructures, habits of cultural consumption, and the balance between high and mass culture. (343)

These initiatives aimed to restore Catalan as the region's dominant language and culture, develop and maintain Catalonia's distinct identity, and achieve a sense of "*de facto* cultural independence" (343).[75] A subsequent objective was to address the large number of Spanish immigrants who had settled in Catalonia throughout the twentieth-century.

Catalonia, together with Madrid, currently has the highest proportion of non-European Union immigrants within Spain (Kleiner-Liebau 97). Yet immigration is not a recent phenomenon in the region: its position on the Mediterranean coast and between Castile and France historically resulted in its absorption of different cultural influences and movements of people (Conversi 188). During the middle decades of the twentieth-century, Catalonia received a particularly large influx of immigrants from poorer regions of Spain, mainly Andalusia, Murcia, Extremadura, Galicia, Castile and León, and Aragon. This internal migration increased steadily after the Civil War, reaching its peak in the 1960s (Kleiner-Liebau 98),[76] and by the end of the

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[75] Conversely, the CiU party elected to brand itself as a Catalan nationalist party that did not seek or desire independence for Catalonia (Crameri 18).

[76] Kleiner-Liebau notes that more than 1.3 million immigrants from other regions of Spain settled in Catalonia between 1941 and 1975. The largest number—over 700,000—arrived during the 1960s (98).

1970s, about one-third of the population of Catalonia had been born in other regions of Spain (Díez Medrano 120).

Juan Díez Medrano notes that immigration was initially viewed as a threat to Catalan identity, which had already been endangered by *franquismo* (161). In his book, *La immigració, problema i esperança de Catalunya* (1976)*,* Pujol warns against monolingual, working-class immigrants—especially their destructive potential[77]—and subsequently identifies Catalonia's "mission" to take in this population: "La missió de Catalunya—una missió gloriosa i plena de responsabilitat—és la d'acollir i refondre en una nova comunitat catalana tota la massa immigrada. La missió de Catalunya és fer de gresol" (104). Viewing immigration as a problem, he calls for integration to preserve Catalan identity. In a later writing, *Construir Catalunya*, Pujol contends:

> [T]eníamos que reforzar el núcleo esencial de la catalanidad, del ser catalán […] que esta realidad nuestra la teníamos que poner muy en contacto con la gente venida de fuera, para que fuese conocida y hecha propia, aun aceptando que eso comportaría cambios en nuestra catalanidad tradicional y que no podíamos ni debíamos pretender una asimilación de los recién venidos—es decir, una incorporación pasiva—, sino una integración—es decir, su entrada en la realidad catalana aportando

[77] Regarding the Andalusian immigrant, Pujol writes: "[É]s, generalment, un home poc fet. És home que fa centenars d'anys que passa gana i viu en un estat d'ignorància, i de misèria cultural, mental i espiritual. És un home desarrelat, incapaç de tenir un sentit una mica amplia de comunitat. Sovint dóna proves d'una excel·lent fusta humana, i tot ell és una esperança, però, d'entrada, constitueix la mostra de menys valor social i espiritual d'Espanya. Ja ho hem dit abans: és un home destruït i anàrquic. Si por la força del nombre arribés a dominar, sens abans haver superat la seva pròpia perplexitat, destruiria Catalunya. Hi introduiria la seva mentalitat anàrquica I pobríssima, és a dir, la seva manca de mentalitat. El que aquest home, sense tenir-ne consciència, potser, ve a demanar a Catalunya, a més del pa, és la forma espiritual que el seu poble no dóna d'ençà de fa segles" (*Immigració* 120-21).

> elementos importantes de su personalidad de origen y colaborando activamente y con protagonismo en la fundación que se había de producir para ser un solo pueblo—; y que todo eso requería un concepto, una definición de catalán basada en los elementos dinámicos de nuestro vivir colectivo, en el trabajo, en la voluntad de ser catalán y en la perspectiva de las generaciones futuras. Una definición que había de hacer fácil ser catalán a quien lo quisiera ser. […] "Catalán es todo hombre que vive y que trabaja en Cataluña y que lo quiere ser." (*Construir* 19-20)

This final phrase—"Catalán es todo hombre que vive y que trabaja en Cataluña y que lo quiere ser" ("És català tot aquell qui viu i treballa a Catalunya, i qui en vol ser")—appears in various forms throughout Pujol's speeches, and signals the CiU party's nationalist approach to immigration.

Daniele Conversi, Désirée Kleiner-Liebau, and Díez Medrano analyze the *Generalitat's* efforts at "integration," meaning Spanish-speaking immigrants could be considered Catalans upon acquiring the language, culture, and values of Catalonia (accomplished via the normalization initiatives), in addition to their contributions to the economy (Conversi 170; Kleiner-Liebau 123). Conversi describes this as an "inclusive framework" (170), but in reality, the CiU party's aim to acculturate immigrants into Catalan identity to preserve it from Spanish influence (Kleiner-Liebau 123). Its nationalist strategy "combined a desire to protect core cultural traits and a desire to shape society according to the values of the bourgeoisie" (Díez Medrano 161). In this sense, while the government worked to "integrate" immigrants, it did so by completely privileging the autochthonous Catalan identity—perceived as elite—rather than embracing linguistic and cultural diversity.

Europeanism is another recurring feature of Pujol's discourse (Balcells; Guibernau; Kleiner-Liebau; MacLennan; Dowling), evoking Catalonia's historical link with Europe as well as its future as an active participant in the European Union.[78] Albert Balcells argues that "[d]irect contact with Europe and European identity itself was a factor for renovation and emancipation for the Catalan national movement over many years, a factor towards enabling Catalonia to escape from gradual absorption by Spain" (197). Fittingly, the Europeanism in contemporary Catalanism echoes a long tradition of Catalanist discourse, which has historically viewed Catalonia as an integrally European culture (Guibernau 145; McRoberts 67-8; Dowling 126).[79] This European connection has also has been viewed as both a celebration of Catalan modernity and a differentiating factor from Castile and Spain (Guibernau 146; Dowling 136).[80]

Pujol looks to Catalan history—specifically its position as a southern bastion of the Carolingian empire during the Middle Ages (Guibernau 146)—in order to legitimize Catalonia's

[78] To an extent this ideology coincides with the Europeanist sentiments of Transition-era Spanish political discourse, in which Europe was a model for the modernization and democratization of Spain following the dictatorship (Jáuregui 92). The difference, however, is that Catalonia also looked to European identity to validate its difference from the rest of Spain (Guibernau 145).

[79] Benito Giordano and Elisa Roller note that "[f]or [the] CiU, like its early 20th century predecessor the Lliga Regionalista, joining European 'high civility' and becoming European citizens were objectives for Catalonia to aspire to in order to become a modern and democratic society" (104). The *Lliga Regionalista* was a right-wing party formed in Catalonia during the early twentieth-century, marked by its conservative Catalanist ideology.

[80] Dowling argues that this idea echoes the emergent Catalanism of the late nineteenth-century (136). In *La cultura del catalanisme*, Joan-Lluís Marfany describes how foundational Catalanist thinkers—Joan Bardina, Enric Prat de la Riba, Francesc Cambó, Pompeu Gener i Babot, for instance—looked to the history of the Iberian Peninsula to construct a "European" Catalan identity in opposition to the "Arab" or "African" Castile: "[M]entre que els catalans van reconquerir ràpidament el seu territori i van caure aviat sota l'esfera d'influència 'ària' dels francs, els 'castellans' van passar-se set segles dominats pels 'semites' àrabs—o berbers, tant se val. A aquest se n'hi afegeixen d'altres del mateix estil, que contribueixen a reforçar aquest idea d'una Catalunya 'europea' entrant d'una Espanya 'africana'" (199).

distinction from Spain. For example, in a 1986 speech on Catalonia's "European vocation," he contends:

> Cataluña es carolingia. Y la Europa de los Seis[81] es carolingia. España en su conjunto, en cambio, no es carolingia. […] [E]s heredera de una monarquía visigótica que ya era, en su tiempo, aislacionista respecto de Europa. ¿Qué habría ocurrido si Carlomagno hubiera conquistado Zaragoza y si la Marca Hispánica hubiera comprendido todo el territorio entre los Pirineos y el Ebro? Ahora no es momento de hacer utopías. El hecho es que Cataluña, desde su nacimiento, se encuentra en el ámbito de influencia carolingia religiosamente, culturalmente, y, no hace falta decirlo, también políticamente. El resto de la Peninsula, no. (Pujol, *Cataluña* 96)[82]

Emphasizing what he views as an intrinsic link with France and Europe, Pujol subsequently stresses Catalonia's need to modernize itself to fully participate in Spain's process of European integration: its membership in the European Economic Community and later the European Union (Pujol, *Quatre conferències* 36). Consequently, The *Generalitat* attempted a form of Catalan foreign policy—such as sending representatives to major European cities and EU institutions—, aiming to position itself as an "independent actor within the European Union" and therefore pursue the internationalization of Catalonia (Kleiner-Liebau 77; Dowling 136).

Pujol's personality and nationalist pride, however, have also led to accusations of messianic idealism (Pi 68; Novoa and Reixach 91), and to criticism of his Catalan project. In this vein, the two works that I analyze in this chapter are critical responses to how the Pujol government envisioned Catalan language, culture, and identity, not only in relation to the

[81] The Inner Six (or The Six) are the six founding member states of the European Communities: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany.

[82] Conference on "La vacación europea de Cataluña," Sorbonne University, Paris, 28 Jan. 1986.

peninsular context, but, moreover, within the larger European political setting. Each author resorts to the aesthetic of the grotesque to raise and articulate a set of questions regarding the Pujolian conceptualization of Catalan nationalism. Juan Marés's progressive adoption of a *charnego*[83] identity in *El amante bilingüe* is not only a grotesque satire of the *Generalitat*'s aspiration to integrate Catalonia's immigrants: it serves as a forewarning against the potentially destructive force of the Pujolian nationalist ideal. In his illustration of Marés's metamorphosis, the author depicts how the pursuit of Pujol's Catalan imaginary destroys the working-class Catalan identity represented by the protagonist, resulting in his reduction to a grotesque cultural pastiche. *La teta y la luna* centers on Tete, a young Catalan boy who becomes enamored by Estrellita, a French dancer performing at the tent show in his town, and proceeds to "compete" against her other admirers—an Andalusian adolescent, and her older French husband—for her affection. In his telling of this ludicrous contest, Bigas Luna distorts conventional representations of European identity, presenting it as grotesque, bawdy, and scatological, to condemn Pujol's vision of Catalonia as modern and intrinsically European, and to problematize the recurring Europeanist sentiment in Catalanist discourse. Lastly, in *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*, Boadella makes use of the *esperpento* genre to present a grotesque satire of Pujol himself, dismantling the President's mythical status, lofty political ambitions, and aggrandized self-image, and revealing the destructive influence of his nationalist ideology on the future of

[83] Cristina Sánchez-Conejero notes that the term *charnego* "se utiliza en Cataluña de manera peyorativa para referirse a cualquier residente de la comunidad cuya lengua materna no sea el catalán. Se hace uso de él para designar, mayoritariamente, a los inmigrantes procedentes de otras comunidades autónomas—sobre todo el sur—en Cataluña desde las grandes oleadas migratorias de la década de los sesenta. Además, se califica de 'charnego' a los hijos de estos inmigrantes nacidos en la comunidad catalana" (91). Furthermore, Kathryn A. Woolard writes that *charnego* was originally a neutral name used to refer to non-Catalans living in Catalonia, yet later it acquired a derogatory connotation linked with the working-class and monolingualism (42). Joan Ramon Resina indicates that by the novel's publication in 1990, the term had fallen into disuse (160).

Catalonia. By transforming the post-Franco Catalan government's nationalist ideal into a ludicrous, repugnant, vulgar and/or scatological spectacle, *El amante bilingüe, La teta y la luna,* and *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* all call attention to the perceived irrationality and excess of Pujol's discourse.

2.2. *El amante bilingüe*

In *El amante bilingüe*, Juan Marsé (1933-) treats the contact between Catalan and Andalusian identities in Barcelona during and in the aftermath of *franquismo*. The novel begins in November of 1975, when Juan Marés discovers his wife Norma Valentí in bed with another man, resulting in the abrupt end of their marriage. Despite her upper-class status and her steadfast Catalan pride, Norma is sexually attracted to immigrant men—individuals who are pejoratively referred to as *charnegos* (*xarnegos* in Catalan), a term from the early/mid-twentieth-century that was used to describe migrants from other regions of Spain who arrived to Catalonia in search of work, as well as their descendants. As evidenced in the narrative, *charnegos* generally pertained to the working-class and, most notably, did not speak Catalan. Norma's lover, accordingly, is a shoeshiner who speaks *castellano* with a glaring Andalusian accent. From there, the narrative jumps to the mid-1980s: amidst a backdrop of the Pujol government's language and cultural normalization initiatives, the story centers on the degenerate and still-lovesick Marés, now working as a street musician, as he attempts to reconnect with Norma. Knowing his ex-wife's fetish for *charnegos*, he adopts the guise of a childhood friend—an Andalusian man named Juan Faneca, "un charnego fino y peludo, elegante y primario, con guantes y mucha guasa, con ganas de querer liarla" (Marsé 43)—to re-establish contact with her.

Marés's ongoing assumption of this *charnego* identity, however, is not merely a tactic to seduce Norma: it also indicates his deteriorating psychological state due to schizophrenia.[84] .

The existing studies of *El amante bilingüe* coincide in their identification of the novel's criticism of the Pujolian nationalist project, in accordance with comments given by Marsé in a 1990 interview with *El País,* in which he condemns the extent of the *Generalitat*'s efforts to assimilate non-Catalan speaking immigrants: "Me parece perfecto que los *charnegos* aprendan catalán, pero de ahí a exigirles que se conviertan como si fueran infieles, cosa que pedían hace poco unos curas, hay un buen trecho" (de España 20). For instance, Marsé's criticism resounds in Gene Forrest's statement that the novel criticizes the Generalitat's "zeal to impose its culture and language on the large Castilian-speaking population living within the borders of the Catalonian *Autonomía*" (46). In this vein, Stewart King maintains that *El amante bilingüe* "intenta poner en duda la noción de una esencia integral de la cultura catalana al exponer los mitos que constituyen la identidad catalana" ("Desempeñar papeles"). Marta Arana and Carolina Castillo contend that Marsé uses parody and carnivalization to subvert the established order of post-Franco Catalan society, satirizing "las políticas gubernamentales tendientes a la constitución de una única y homogénea identidad catalana" ("Identidades").

Other studies emphasize the notions of fragmentation and tension, specifically in regards to language and culture. For instance, Milton M. Azevedo argues that the novel's depiction of sociolinguistic conflict "functions as a metaphor for cultural—and to some extent ethnic as well—friction" (13) in Catalan society; and William Sherzer asserts that Marés's transformation

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[84] Per the 2013 DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition), published by the American Psychiatric Association, schizophrenia is a disorder "characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behavior and other symptoms that cause social or occupational dysfunction" (Schizophrenia Fact Sheet DSM5.org). Marés exhibits all these symptoms during the narrative.

into a *charnego* can be interpreted as "a statement on Cataluña's potential inability to maintain the distinctions—linguistic, political and sociological—that biculturalism supposedly supports" (408). In response to the uniform vision of Catalan identity promoted by the Pujol government, Andrew J. Deiser argues that the figure of Juan Marés "weave[s] together elements of both Catalan and Castilian [language], as well as elements of both Catalan and Castilian culture, to present himself in public as a multifaceted, living cultural artifact" (75). Rubén Domínguez Quintana, conversely, is less optimistic, contending that Marsé protests monolingualism in Catalonia, and therefore sends "un mensaje de fragmentación cultural" to his public (300). Conversely, Cristina Sánchez-Conejero proposes that the Marés/Faneca character represents a "mestizaje de culturas que supone la nueva identidad [catalana] global" (99).

However, I reject this claim that Juan Marés's metamorphosis into the *charnego* Juan Faneca is a sign of Catalonia's new multifaceted identity, and in this chapter I go beyond the identification of the social tensions that the other critics have studied. *El amante bilingüe* does more than just signal the division or fragmentation within post-Franco Catalan society. Marsé uses the aesthetic of the grotesque to criticize Pujol's nationalist vision, employing the complex relationship between the protagonist Juan Marés and his ex-wife Norma Valentí to highlight the identity tensions within post-Franco Catalan society. Marsé depicts two contrasting images of Catalan identity in the narrative: an inclusive working-class vision personified by Marés, and the exclusive brand propagated by the Pujol government after the death of Franco (satirized via Norma, a staunch *catalanista* with an incongruous fetish for immigrant men). The protagonist's infatuation with his ex-wife leads him to create a *charnego* persona, Juan Faneca, that he uses to reestablish contact with her. I interpret Marés's obsessive pursuit of Norma as a cautionary tale against the Catalan working-classes' potential embracing of the *Generalitat*'s renewed, elitist

image of Catalanism (propagated as being desirable): the novel portrays Pujol's monolingual, traditional vision as being destructive to the bilingual and intercultural Catalan identity represented by the protagonist. Marés's desire for the new Catalan ideal (embodied by the figure of Norma) proves to be alienating, as it causes his unstoppable descent into madness and his adoption of a pastiche-like, grotesque identity. *El amante bilingüe* uses the aesthetic of the grotesque to dispute the homogenizing brand of Catalan nationalism sponsored by the *Generalitat* in the aftermath of the dictatorship, calling for the preservation of the cultural coexistence portrayed as prevalent in the Catalan working-class prior to the normalization campaigns

The novel is comprised of forty chapters (divided between two parts), thirty-seven of which are set in the mid-1980s and are told from a third person omniscient point of view. The remaining three are narrated from Marés's first person perspective via flashback, and highlight different moments of his life during the Franco dictatorship: the final day of his marriage in Part I Chapter 1 (1975), and moments from his youth in Part I Chapter 7 and Part II Chapter 3 (the 1940s). These three chapters are fundamental because they provide an image of the popular Catalan identity—personified by Marés—that thrived in Barcelona prior to the nationalist movements of the democratic era, associated with the working-class and marked by heterogeneity, bilingualism, social horizontality, and tolerance. The novel celebrates this as the genuine Catalan identity, contrary to the homogenous, elitist construction promoted by the Pujol government.

Marés's illustration of his childhood—"en lo alto de la calle Verdi […] con los golfos sin escuela que merodeaban por el parque Güell y el Guinardó en los duros años de la posguerra" (15)—epitomizes this popular Catalan vision. In the three flashback chapters that he narrates, we

learn that the protagonist is the son of performing artists, and was raised in a poor outer-lying area of the city populated by *charnegos* and working-class Catalans alike.[85] Marés's family home served as a gathering place for his mother's decadent artist friends, demonstrating the low-culture nature of the Catalan identity that he represents. For instance, in Part I Chapter 7 he speaks of these lively meetings in which the washed-up musicians sing *zarzuelas* and drink wine:

> Hoy es sábado, y los sábados mi casa se llena de melancólicos ruiseñores y tengo que ir a la taberna de Fermín por una garrafa de vino y unas latas de berberechos. Mi madre fue una cantante lírica bastante conocida y los sábados recibe en la galería a sus viejos amigos de la farándula, retirados ya de la escena o fracasados y olvidados, y juntos cantan zarzuelas y se emborrachan de vino llorando de emoción lírica y de nostalgia alrededor del viejo piano, al que ahora se sienta un tenor regordete y sudoroso con bigotito. ¡Vaya un espectáculo para un niño! (37)

In this description, Marés emphasizes the artists' lyrics sung in Spanish—for example, "*Al pasar el caballero,* canta mi madre con lágrimas en los ojos*, por la puerta del Perdón, de los altos balconajes a sus pies cayó una flor…*" (37)—, indicating that the Catalonia of his childhood is bilingual and intercultural.

In contrast to Pujol's exclusive, monolingual nationalist model, Marés is a Catalan-Spanish bilingual who has contact with Catalan and Spanish speakers alike, signaling the horizontal social relations that define *El amante bilingüe*'s portrayal of Franco-era Barcelona.[86]

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[85] Resina notes that in contrast to his earlier novels, here Marsé does not portray the Franco-era Catalan lower class realistically. Instead he "carnivalizes it pitilessly. Marés's father is the shoddy magician Fu-Ching […] Ruthlessly, Marsé casts the survivors of the war as a bunch of good-for-nothings" (*Barcelona* 151).

[86] During most of the narrative, Marés's knowledge of the vernacular Catalan is implicit, and apart from a handful of phrases and interjections, he uses a form of Spanish presented as standard within the narrative (Azevedo 126).

Though there is a visible economic hierarchy in the city, the protagonist relates to people from different groups, acting as an intermediary between the novel's two social extremes: *charnegos* and upper-class Catalans. Marés's childhood friends were from immigrant families, yet he emphasizes that there were few distinctions among them: "Yo [era catalán], pero todos mis amigos de la calle, los chavales de la pandilla, eran charnegos—sobre todo Faneca, que era de un pueblo de Granada y hablaba con un acento andaluz endiabladamente cerrado—, y con ellos yo siempre me entendía en su lengua" (114). Differing from the depiction of post-Franco Barcelona in the narrative, the protagonist does not indicate the existence of any social or linguistic hierarchy in his childhood neighborhood: here *charnegos* and working-class Catalans coexisted.

In this vein, in Part II Chapter 3 (set prior to Norma's birth), a young Marés randomly enters his future wife's lavish family home, where he has contact with the Barcelona elite. Revealing that the openness of Franco-era Catalan society was not restricted to the popular classes, Norma's father spots the boy on the street, mistakes him for a *charnego*, and invites him inside to do a contortionist act and recite Josep Maria de Segarra's poem "Sant Jordi Gloriós" as part of a clandestine Catalan language *tertulia*. Later, in the early 1970s, the horizontal social nature of pre-democratic Catalonia also permits the romantic union between Marés and Norma despite their different socioeconomic backgrounds. Mirroring scenes from his childhood—in which the protagonist and his friends admire Norma's family home from afar[87]—, in Part I Chapter 1 he indicates that his attraction to his ex-wife, apart from being physical, was a sign of his desire for class ascension. He comments: "desde muy niño soñaba con irme lejos, lejos del

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[87] Here the young Marés observes: "Las cúpulas doradas emergen por encima de los árboles, y a un lado, en una depresión del terreno seco y expoliado, sobrevive un viejo templete gaudiniano con máscaras de metal. Fueron muchas veces que, remontando la calle con patín a hombros, Faneca y yo nos encaramamos a la verja para atisbar, por entre las frondas verdes, la fachada pizarrosa de la torre y los enormes tiestos de cerámica alrededor del estanque de aguas muertas. 'Algún día,' dijo Faneca en cierta ocasión, 'entraré en ese parque y me bañaré en el estanque.' 'Tú sueñas, chaval,' le dije" (112-3).

barrio y de mi casa […] de mi madre y sus rancias canciones zarzueleras, de sus borracheras y de sus astrosos amigos de la farándula. Lo conseguí con Norma" (19). It is the politically charged atmosphere of Catalonia during the early 1970s that brings the odd couple together, a time in which Barcelona's upper and working-classes "were united in their stand against the Franco regime's repressive measures towards Catalunya" (Deiser 70). Effectively, Marés and Norma meet and fall in love during an an anti-Franco hunger strike, and symbolically remain together until the end of *franquismo*.

This vision of Catalan identity, however, is limited to the scenes set prior to democracy, and Franco's death in November of 1975 serves as the fundamental historical mark of the narrative (Domínguez Quintana 294; Deiser 70). In Part I Chapter 1—entitled "El día que Norma me abandonó" (11), recalling "the dramatic reference to which Spaniards traced their new identity in the eighties: 'The day Franco died'" (Resina, *Barcelona* 146)—, Marés describes how he discovered his wife in bed with an immigrant man on "[u]na tarde lluviosa del mes de noviembre de 1975" (11). This date aligns the end of their marriage with the end of the dictatorship. Evident in the chapters set in the mid-1980s, the latter event will result in the obliteration of the popular image of Catalan identity that Marés embodies, in favor of the new Pujolian vision personified by Norma. Therefore, as Joan Ramon Resina argues, the protagonist "is left rootless as soon as the politically promiscuous culture of the sixties and seventies—a *malentendu* that made his conjugal fortune—is blown away by the breezes of political change" (*Barcelona* 146). With the advent of democracy in Spain emerges a new Catalanist discourse: the popular Catalan identity that Marés—a bilingual, working-class man—represents is engulfed by the Pujol government's elitist, homogenizing nationalist project, which promoted a brand of Catalan identity defined by the vernacular language and traditional culture. Without Norma—his

link to the Catalan elite—Marés will be cast aside by the post-Franco Catalanist movements, resulting in his alienation from society and his personal destruction. Appropriately, at the end of the first chapter he laments: “[O]igo la puerta del piso cerrándose por segunda vez, ahora con sigilo. Al mismo tiempo, otra puerta se abre ante mí: la que ha de dar paso a la miseria y al fracaso de mi vida, a mi caída vertiginosa en la soledad y la desesperación” (19).

Marés’s veneration and pursuit of his ex-wife designates the admiration of the Catalan ideal propagated by the Pujol government, revealing the identity tensions within post-Franco Barcelona. The narrator presents Norma as being physically desirable to the lovesick protagonist, and he actively goes after her from the start of the narrative. At the same time, the novel presents her rejection of him, reflecting the exclusivity of her character and of Pujolian Catalanism: Norma “no quería saber nada de él, y mucho menos hablarle o verle” (23). Thus, Norma is associated with Pujol’s new Catalan ideal, whereas Marés represents the popular variety of Catalan identity that became marginalized and obsolete with the advent of democracy. On the contrary, despite their sociocultural differences, and the destruction that she (as well as the nationalist vision that she embodies) has inflicted upon his life, Marés remains “locamente enamorado” (23) with his ex-wife.

The novel contains many depictions of the protagonist’s fantasies about Norma. For example, the narrator describes how Marés often thinks of her in his sleep: “Estas últimas semanas, por otra parte, se sentía su loca pasión por ella con tal intensidad que a menudo se despertaba en la cama a medianoche gritando su nombre con desesperación: ‘¡Norma! ¡Norma!’” (50). Additionally, Marés devises strategies to observe Norma from afar or speak with her indirectly—he often plays his accordion near her workplace in hopes of spotting her during her

lunchbreak.[88] Marés also contacts Norma indirectly by telephoning her office, the *Assessorament lingüístic*, under the guise of *charnego* business owners looking to integrate the Catalan language into their professions (thereby lampooning Pujol's normalization initiative in the process). In one instance, the narrator describes how the protagonist is overcome by the mere sound of Norma's voice as he communicates with her from a phone booth: "'Assessorament lingüístic. Digui?' Su voz de leche caliente se introdujo en sus venas como un dulce veneno. Oía su respiración a través del hilo. Luego escuchó ruidos en la línea. Apartó un poco el teléfono, sosteniéndolo delante de su cara. Miró con ansia el aparato del que salía la voz amada: 'Digui.' Reclinó la frente en el cristal de la cabina y se echó a llorar" (55). These scenes highlight Marés's longing for Norma, as well as his state of desperation. Similarly, through mass media, education, and official initiatives such as language normalization, the *Generalitat* promoted its homogenous vision of Catalan identity as being a desirable model (Fernández 343-4; Gifreu 20; Balfour and Quiroga 136-7).[89] Marés's infatuation with his ex-wife, therefore, mocks the perception that all residents

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[88] In such scenes, the narrator provides detailed descriptions of Norma's body and actions to illustrate the protagonist's voyeuristic infatuation, for example: "Luego, agitando levemente su hermoso pelo castaño, Norma reanudó su camino hacia la puerta del restaurante. Había sacado del bolso un espejito de mano y se miraba la boca pintada, sonriendo. Marés percibió su hálito empañando el espejo, y el fugaz y húmedo destello sobre el grueso labio inferior, siempre un poco ansioso y derramado de carmín. Y vio también, por un brevísimo instante, a través de las lágrimas, la punta rosada y diabólica de su lengua" (31).

[89] With regards to the media, Fernández observes that the "demand for mass media in Catalan headed the cultural agenda in the early years of the democratic regime, and became a priority of the autonomous government (343-4). Josep Gifreu maintains that the creation of a media/audiovisual space in Catalan was vital to the reconstruction of national identity after Franco, and to the process of linguistic normalization (20). Balfour and Quiroga maintain that mass media "are [the Catalan government's] most influential agencies of nationalization" (137). On the topic of education, Balfour and Quiroga note: "Education continued to play a key role in defining the national community, and once the teaching system was transferred to the autonomous government in the 1980s the Generalitat decided to Catalanize schools and turned Catalan into the predominant language at primary, secondary, and university levels. The history curriculum was also drastically altered. From the National-Catholic orthodoxy of late Francoism, it moved to the promotion of Catalan national identity" (136).

of Catalonia (regardless of background) would desire this new model of Catalanism.[90] Furthermore, his movement towards his ex-wife—achieved via his adoption of a *charnego* persona—alludes to the acculturation of the popular classes into this new hegemonic Catalan vision.

Sherzer, Grothe, and Resina (2008) have noted how Norma functions as the emblem of post-Franco Catalan identity in the narrative, and that Marsé uses her character to satirize a hegemonic definition of what it means to be Catalan. Only appearing in the chapters set in the mid-1980s, she acts as a synecdoche for the dominant Catalan society of the Pujol era—Norma is a caricature of the heavily propagated Pujolian nationalist vision.[91] Fittingly, Resina has highlighted that the name "Norma" is an allusion to a cartoon character from the *Generalitat*'s normalization publicity campaign that encouraged Catalan school children "to learn the language correctly, according to the 'norm'" (149). In opposition to Marés, Norma represents a complete exaggeration of the Catalan aristocracy, language, culture, and tradition lauded by the *Generalitat*, and the author renders her as ridiculous to condemn the exacerbation of propagated nationalist values in democratic Catalonia.

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[90] This is especially evident in one of Marés's telephone calls to Norma at *Assessorament Lingüístic*, in which he sarcastically feigns the *charnego*'s admiration for the *Generalitat*. When speaking with Norma about the Catalan translations for different automotive parts, he exclaims to her that Catalan worlds "suena[n] fenomenale[es]" (58). Later in the conversation, Marés's invented persona derisively extols the Catalan people: "Yo solo soy un pobre murciano, un charnego ignorante que l'estoy mu agradecío a los catalanes por haberme dao l'oportunidá de trabajo y de ser digno de vivir en esta Cataluña tan rica y plena […] que por na del mundo ofendería yo una zeñora tan simpática y tan amable y tan amiga de los pobres charnegos ignorantes y paletos como un zervió" (58).

[91] Norma is physically present in Part I Chapter 1, yet she flees the bedroom upon Marés entrance and remains locked inside the bathroom while Marés converses with her *charnego* lover. She then exits the apartment—signaling the end of their marriage—without having spoken during the entire chapter.

Norma's character presents a stark contrast to the working-class vision of Catalan identity that the novel celebrates. The only child of a wealthy Barcelona manufacturing family—she grew up "entre algodones en una fantástica torre del Guinardó rodeada por un inmenso parque" (15), and was raised learning of "el amor a Cataluña y a la senyera" (92).[92] After studying Catalan philology in university, she found work as a sociolinguist for the *Plan de Normalització Lingüística de Catalunya*, a position that links her with the political establishment.[93] A testament to the homogenous nature of Pujol's nationalist vision, Norma only openly associates with the Catalan elite—unlike Marés, who easily connects with people of different social groups. Accordingly, she is engaged in a love affair with the director of the *Plan de Normalització*, Jordi Valls Verdú, an "afamado sociolingüista [y] peligroso activista cultural" (28). [94] Her social circle also consists of Catalan professionals whom the narrator describes with disdain: "[l]os amigos predilectos de Norma, pertenecientes a un selecto gremio de sociólogos y asesores de imagen que [Marés] detestaba. En su momento los había tratado poco y ahora parecían igual de superfluos y dicharacheros" (87). These elements highlight the exclusivity of Norma's character, mocking the Pujol government's promotion of a homogenous Catalan identity rooted in a single language, culture, and tradition. Furthermore, Marsé's portrayal of Norma as a spoof of the archetypical *catalana* goes beyond linguistic and cultural pride: he satirically characterizes her

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[92] The *senyera* is a pattern based on the coat of arms of the Crown of Aragon, consisting of four red strips on a gold background. The Senyera pattern is the flag of Catalonia, and appears—in variation—on the flags of the other Spanish autonomous communities that once comprised the Kingdom of Aragon: Aragon, the Valencian Community, and the Balearic Islands.

[93] During the Congress of Catalan Culture (1975-77), normalization was defined as "consisting in the recuperation of Catalan for certain institutional uses, in a new valorization of this language by its speakers, and in the recovery of the consciousness of the linguistic unity, all of which could be advanced through the attainment of autonomous political powers for the Catalan-speaking lands" (*Congrés de Cultura Catalana. Manifest i documents IV* 73-4).

[94] Resina notes that Valls Verdú mocks the famous Catalan linguist Francesc Vallverdú, a "conspicuous defender of the Catalan language during the dictatorship" (*Barcelona* 149).

using Catalan iconography to overstress her patriotism. For instance, when describing her body and way of being, the narrator refers to her having "una voz colorista y una sugestión ligeramente gaudiniana, como de cerámica troceada" (87), and a "sensible nariz montserratina […], capaz de olfatear la impostura y el serrín del falso charnego" (134).

Norma's position as the emblem of post-Franco Catalanism, however, is undermined by "her own inability to remain exclusively within the Catalan sphere" (Grothe 158). Despite her stereotypically elitist, nationalistic character and her exclusive friends and colleagues, she has a complete weakness for immigrant men "de piel oscura y sólida dentadura. Charnegos de todas clases. Taxistas, camareros, cantaores y tocaores de uñas largas y ojos felinos. Murcianos que huelen a sobaco, a sudor, a calcetín sucio y a vinazo" (13). The narrator illustrates Norma's fetish in a humorous and frank fashion, signaling that her attraction to *charnegos* is a contradiction of her so-called pure Catalan identity. For example, Marés randomly dresses as an immigrant shoeshiner for carnival, and has a chance encounter with Norma that culminates in him cleaning her boots (the couple's first face-to-face contact since 1975). In its portrayal of her affection for the anonymous *limpiabotas* at her feet, the novel mocks her exoticized, sexualized impressions of immigrant men:

> [L]e escuchaba con la boca ligeramente entreabierta y el labio superior perlado de sudor. No podía apartar los ojos de la nuca del limpiabotas, allí donde el pelo ensortijado era ceñido por la cinta negra de goma elástica que sujetaba el parche sobre el ojo. Volvió a sentir la araña del escalofrío subiendo por la tibia hendidura entre sus muslos apretados. (95)

Marsé uses Norma's sexual preferences to dismiss the elitist, homogenous conceptualization of Catalan identity propagated by the *Generalitat*. In doing so, the novel calls attention to the

futility of the Pujol government's extensive efforts to impose the Catalan language and culture and to assimilate Catalonia's immigrant population: even the most fervent *catalanista* like Norma cannot avoid intermingling with the *charnego*. Furthermore, it is Mares' awareness of his ex-wife's incongruous fetish that will facilitate his encounters with her throughout the narrative.

In its depiction of the protagonist in the mid-1980s, the novel underscores the discrepancy between Pujol's exclusive Catalanist vision and the popular classes of Barcelona. Marés now lives an impoverished, withdrawn, and degenerate life as a street musician. With the end of his marriage, he has not had further contact with dominant Catalan society or with Norma. Moreover, as a working-class Catalan man whose identity is rooted in bilingualism and intercultural experiences, he is excluded from the new image of Catalonia celebrated by Pujolian discourse. These circumstances result in Marés's complete alienation from society and the subsequent destruction of his character: he experiences a profound transformation post-1975, and comes to embody a grotesque degradation of Catalan identity. Marsé principally constructs this vision via distorted, unappealing illustrations of the protagonist's body. In its characterization of Marés during the post-Franco period, the novel associates the popular Catalans' desire of a new identity with unattractive images of corporeality and unsightly bodily processes, key elements of Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body (*Rabelais* 316-20).

In this sense, the novel presents Pujol's new Catalanist brand as being destructive to the popular Catalan identity embodied by the protagonist, as it appears when Mares is left with a grotesquely disfigured face after a bombing caused by Catalan nationalist extremists:

> El fuego diseñó en la piel de las mejillas una sonrisa perenne y burlona, una soñadora ironía. Desde entonces no tenía cejas y se las pintaba con lápiz negro de trazo grueso, pero en el entrecejo, al llegar la primavera, le

> crecían unos pelos largos y negros. En días de melancolía y añoranza, para animar una cara sin arrugas y sin pasado, sobre el severo labio superior se pegaba con almaste un bigotito postizo, rubiales y distinguido. (20-1)

Additionally, the sheer misery of losing Norma caused Marés to fall into deep dejection, and he exists in a semi-alcoholic state that results in his frequent vomiting. In one scene, the drunken protagonist vomits multiple times while riding the bus. The narrator describes this ordeal with repulsively vivid detail, emphasizing his grotesque and miserable existence as well as his pining for his ex-wife:

> [S]iente los zarpazos de la náusea y se le extravía el pensamiento, pero reacciona vigorosamente y con la mano temblorosa del recuerdo acaricia la hermosa espalda de Norma sentada al borde de la cama… Después volvió a vomitar […V]omitó por la tercera vez contra el cristal. Viajó por la avinguda de Pedralbes mirando la noche a través del vómito: luces y potaje de lentejas resbalando sobre el cristal. Parece mentira, gruñó el pasajero, deberían hacerle limpiar eso. Tiene usted razón, señor. Se dejó resbalar él también en su rincón y se instaló sobre sus vómitos. Ya no puedo caer más bajo, dijo, ya soy la nauseabunda piltrafa que se revuelca y complace en su propio hedor. El pasajero le observaba con una mezcla de conmiseración y de asco, limpiándose los labios con un pañuelo, como si hubiese arrojado él y no Marés. (59-60)

These gross physical descriptions appear as early as the second chapter of the novel: the narrative begins with a depiction of Marés in 1975, and then quickly jumps to the mid-1980s with an image of his grotesquely-deformed body. Moreover, they are also accompanied by images of the deteriorated lifestyle that ensued with the end of Marés's marriage. For example, in the character's first appearance in the text post-1975, the narrator emphasizes his miserable

vocation as a street musician: "Hoy se sentaba en una esquina mugrienta y helada del Raval, lejos de su barrio, vestido con harapos y tocando el acordeón" (20).[95] Marés's grotesque physical condition is not only a consequence of specific events of the novel's plot, but also serves as a metaphor of the disparity between the upper and popular-classes in post-Franco Barcelona, stressing the destructive force of the transformation of Catalan society during the early years of democracy.

In addition to the character's physically degraded state, the novel chronicles Marés's grotesque plunge into mental illness, another sign of his alienation following the end of his marriage. Meriwynn Grothe's article centers on the protagonist's psychological condition, proposing that his personal "descent into schizophrenia, writ large, reflects the cultural schizophrenia of the city of Barcelona at a political turning point in its history" (158). Moreover, per Grothe, the protagonist's decadent state is the result of two different manifestations of nationalist ideology: the attack by the Catalan extremist group and his obsession with Norma together will be "responsible for the destruction of one identity [Marés] in favor of another [Faneca]" (159). However, while Marés's multiple personalities do parallel the identity conflict within 1980s Catalonia, what interests me is how the novel constructs a cautionary analogy between the grotesque consequences of the character's mental disorder and the dangerous social repercussions of an excessive pursuit of the new Catalan imaginary—Marés's schizophrenia is a direct result of his fixation with Norma, as the damaging of Catalan society is the potential consequence of the *Generalitat*'s normalization campaign.

[95] Furthermore, Marés's neighbor Griselda—whom he later seduces during a run-through of his Faneca persona—frequently calls attention to his drunkenness as a sign of his degraded existence. On one occasion, she exclaims: "¡Otra vez borracho! ¿No le da vergüenza? ¡Quite de ahí, cochino! ¡Usted y su asqueroso acordeón de taberna!" (61).

Marés's illness gives rise to his pursuit of Norma via the Faneca persona. A doppelganger of a childhood friend, Juan Faneca first appears in (what the reader perceives to be) the protagonist's nightmare, and in this scene, the *charnego* character suggests to Marés a strategy for reinitiating contact with Norma: "¿Sigues obsesionao con esa mujé? […] Te conviene hacer una locura, Marés […] Tú déjame a mí, saborío. Hablaré con esa mujé, y esa mujé volverá a tus brazos. Lo juro por mis muertos" (44). Although the emergence of Faneca is a sign of the protagonist's deteriorating psychological condition, nonetheless, early in the novel Marés recognizes the potential of this Andalusian alias. Using his knowledge of Norma's fetish for immigrant men, Marés transforms his working-class Catalan identity into one perceived as even more marginal within post-Franco society.[96] In doing so, he subverts Catalonia's linguistic and social hierarchies, as well as the Pujol government's position on immigration. Amidst the *Generalitat's* normalization initiatives to actively "integrate" immigrants into its new Catalanist model, the protagonist perversely lowers his social standing by becoming a *charnego*.

Marés's quest for the caricaturesque Norma leads to the distortion of his identity into a grotesque, contrived pastiche. As he gets closer to his ex-wife by means of Faneca, the protagonist becomes progressively *acharnegado*, indicating that his obsession with her is the cause of his personal destruction. In *La immigració, problema i esperança de Catalunya*, Pujol stated that Andalusian immigrants possessed the potential to devastate Catalonia—"Ja ho hem dit abans: és un home destruït i anàrquic. Si por la força del nombre arribés a dominar, sens abans haver superat la seva pròpia perplexitat, destruiria Catalunya" (*Immigració* 120-1)—, yet in his novel Marsé twists Pujol's polemical position: instead of the *charnego* being a destructive force,

[96] Throughout the narrative Marés comments on Norma's sexual fetish for immigrant men, yet this quote from later in the text is particularly telling. Marés remarks that he knows "lo que a ella le gusta [es] una lengua charnega lamiendo su cuerpo catalanufo, una lengua caliente, áspera y parsimoniosa como la de un gato, eso es lo que ella secretamente desea" (164).

El amante bilingüe presents a vision of Pujolian Catalanism as capable of obliterating (what the novel celebrates as) the authentic Catalan identity personified by Marés.

El amante bilingüe portrays Marés's degeneration as a process that intensifies alongside his increasing obsession with Norma. At the start of the narrative, the protagonist's adoption of the *charnego* identity is episodic, playful, and, most notably, reveals the agency that he initially has over his personal transformation. Here he imitates *charnegos* for employment motives. Fashioning an assortment of caricaturesque immigrant costumes as part of his street performances, he plays *pasodobles* on his accordion in touristic areas of Barcelona. In doing so, the novel twists the *Generalitat*'s call for immigrants to acculturate themselves into Catalonia by seeking employment and contributing to the local economy: Marés is a Catalan man who lowers himself to the level of the *charnego* to earn a living. For example, in one scene he performs a *pasodoble* and displays a sign reading: "PEDIGÜEÑO CHARNEGO SIN TRABAJO OFRECIENDO EN CATALUNYA UN TRISTE ESPECTÁCULO TERCERMUNDISTA FAVOR DE AYUDAR" (21).[97] By playing stereotypical Spanish music while dressed as an Andalusian character, he purposely internalizes the touristic vision of Spain popularized during *franquismo*—and still held by many visitors—within the context of a Catalonia ignited by nationalism.

Because Marés is in control of his identity at this early point in the novel, he can change his performing aliases ad lib. If the protagonist is not making sufficient money playing *pasodobles*, he intentionally switches to celebrated Catalan songs to attract Barcelona's

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[97] Similarly, shortly thereafter he displays a different sign: "FILL NATURAL DE PAU CASALS BUSCA UNA OPORTUNIDAD" (21). When a Catalan passerby questions him about his background, Marés concocts an elaborate tale of his Andalusian mother who had worked as a maid in the renowned Catalan cellist's home, and proceeded to raise her son in Algeciras.

autochthonous residents, mirroring the Pujol government's veneration of traditional culture. For instance, on one occasion Marés, knowing Norma and Valls Verdú's work schedules, positions himself near their office and plays a Catalan folksong to attract their attention. As the narrator illustrates: "De pronto vio a la pareja salir de la Generalitat y venir hacia él dispuesta a enfilar la calle Ferran. Y pensando una vez más en los gustos de ella, que siempre veneró la música del *mestre*, interrumpió el pasodoble y se arrancó con el *Cant dels ocells*" (29).[98]

Prior to contacting Norma via Faneca, Marés also employs variety of *charnego* disguises to communicate with her indirectly. He intentionally uses immigrant identities for a specific purpose during a fixed amount of time, and, most importantly, he reassumes his Catalan identity after these episodes. In what is referred to as his "estratagema que le permitía hablar con ella" (23-4), on multiple occasions he telephones her at the *Assessorament lingüístic* under the guise of immigrant business owners. Wanting to test his immigrant alias before meeting with Norma in person, Marés poses as a *charnego* survey taker and successfully deceives and seduces his neighbor Griselda. And as I describe earlier, in a scene set during *carnaval*, he coincidentally dresses as a *charnego* shoeshiner. After randomly spotting Norma in a café, he simulates this profession and polishes her boots incognito—a chance encounter "que había de cambiar el rumbo de su vida" (85), inspiring him to reunite with her using the Faneca mask.

In these early scenes, the novel calls attention to Marés's actual fabrication of the immigrant identity, emphasizing that his aliases are performances in which he imitates different *charnegos*. On multiple occasions, the narrator mentions how Marés modifies his voice to emulate an Andalusian accent, and furthermore, several scenes depict his application of the

[98] "El cant dels ocells" ("The Song of the Birds") is a traditional Catalan lullaby and Christmas song. It was made famous outside of Catalonia by renowned Catalan cellist Pau Casals, who performed it in each of his concerts after his exile from Spain in 1939.

distinct clothing, makeup, and hairpieces that form part of his *charnego* guise. In such instances, the narrator portrays the protagonist as if he were a costumed actor preparing for a performance:

> Se puso la peluca rizada, el parche negro en el ojo y ajustó la lentilla en el otro, y además echó mano de un truco que recordaba haber visto hacer a los caricatos amigos de su madre cuando él era un niño: rellenos de algodón en la nariz y en la boca. Con el lápiz negro se pintó las cejas muy finas y altas, con lo que su expresión de suficiencia socarrona se acentuó. El parche en el ojo gravitaba en una cara ahora muy alargada cuya novedad era un rictus de inteligencia. Escogió el anticuado traje marrón a rayas, de americana cruzada, una camisa de seda rosa—la que llevaba el día que Norma lo abandonó, y que no había vuelto a ponerse—y una corbata granate" (63).

With the progression of the narrative, however, Marés's use of the *charnego* persona ceases to be a momentary and intentional disruption of his Catalan identity. In what Marsé refers to as "lo grotesco desemboca[ndo] en tragedia; una tragedia bastante banal y mediocre" ("Escribo" 72),[99] the protagonist loses control of his mind and identity due to schizophrenia—a process the novel links with his physical reencounters with Norma by means of the Faneca persona.[100] Accordingly, there are many references to Marés's mental deterioration, as if another person or being possesses him. The narrator describes how he "[e]xperimentaba la creciente sensación de que alguien que no era él suplantaba y decidía sus actos. Sentía a veces un

[99] Here Marsé comments that his story "[e]s realmente un puro disparate paródico, una situación casi límite que puede desembocar en lo inverosímil. Claro que, a partir de un momento, que coincide con el enloquecimiento total del protagonista, la cosa ya no resulta tan divertida porque lo grotesco desemboca en tragedia; una tragedia bastante banal y mediocre" ("Escribo" 72).

[100] Marés and Norma's first physical reencounter takes place at the end of the first novel's first part: their chance meeting during *carnaval* when he cleans her shoes while dressed as a shoeshiner. The success of this encounter pushes him to contact Norma directly as Faneca, resulting in a series of phone calls and meetings during the second half of the narrative, and culminating in their disheartening sexual encounter at the end of the novel.

descontrol físico, una tendencia muscular al envaramiento y a la chulería, una conformidad nerviosa con otro ritmo mental y con ciertos tics que nunca habían sido suyos" (106).

The onset of Marés's major psychological unrest is a direct consequence of his first unplanned encounter with Norma during *carnaval*, and his symptoms intensify in conjunction with their conversations and meetings during the second part of the novel. Therefore, it is the protagonist's increasing obsession and contact with his ex-wife that causes his madness and self-destruction. The previously comical, strategic, and temporary alterations of his personality progress into a dramatic metamorphosis of his mind and character, and in contrast to the novel's earlier scenes, Marés no longer holds agency over his use of the *charnego* persona. Norma's direct influence on the protagonist's mental state ciphers Marsé's criticism of the dominant Catalan nationalist discourse of the time. The couple's reunions do not reaffirm Marés's Catalan self, but rather instigate his decline into a grotesque pastiche-like persona, destroying his working-class Catalan identity in the process: "El descalabro del monstruo proseguía, y Marés sentía que la vida estaba en otra parte y que él no era nada, una transparencia: que alguien, otro, miraba esa vida a través de él" (151).[101] Hence, his degradation is the result of his renewed contact with Norma, that is, not only with dominant Catalan society, but also with the Pujolian homogenization efforts.

[101] In another example of Marés losing control over his transformation, Marés feels compelled to buy cigarettes—"sintió el impulso inexplicable de hacer algo que luego no iba a recordar con precisión: entró en un bar y compró un paquete de cigarrillos Ducados Internacional" (124)—and then later has no recollection of his purchase: "Al despertar vio los cigarrillos Ducados sobre la mesita de noche y no supo cómo había llegado el paquete hasta allí ni para qué, puesto que él no fumaba" (124). Shortly thereafter, the narrator comments how Marés "[h]izo dos cosas que no tenía previsto hacer, que nunca había pensado que iba a hacer y que en realidad no deseaba hacer, como si una voluntad ajena se hubiese apoderado de él: encendió un cigarrillo—él, que nunca había fumado, salvo cuando era un niño—y se cambió la corbata gris perla por otra granate con arabescos tornasolados, mucho más llamativa" (127).

As his identity begins to disintegrate, first the protagonist acquires subtle characteristics that had formed part of his invented *charnego* persona (for example, permanently adopting the limp he used in his Faneca character). However, Marés's transformation becomes more dramatic with the progression of his reunions with Norma. As the Andalusian persona begins to control him, what was previously an imitation and performance of the *charnego* becomes real. Indicating an inversion of Pujolian immigration discourse—which proclaimed that "Catalán es todo hombre que vive y que trabaja en Cataluña y que lo quiere ser" (Pujol, *Construir* 19-20)—Marés's obsession with Norma results in him gradually living, working, and wanting to be a *charnego*, which not only culminates in his complete metamorphosis into Faneca after his sexual reencounter with Norma, but also in his conversion into a grotesque pastiche of Iberian stereotypes in the final chapter of the novel.

One of the first permanent transformations in Marés's character is his change in living environment. At the start of the novel he resides in the apartment that he had shared with his ex-wife, yet during his first meeting with Norma he realizes that Faneca must live in a distinct location for the alias to be truly convincing. Consequently, Marés rents a room in a *pensión* in his childhood neighborhood—serving as a façade for his encounters with Norma—, but continues to live at his own place. What originated as a pretense, however, gradually becomes a routine when Marés begins spending more and more time in the outer-lying *barrio*—"[E]l personaje empezó a comerle el terreno a la persona: Faneca se dejaba caer por la pensión cada vez más temprano, primero a media tarde y luego, poco a poco, adelantó el horario y finalmente aparecía ya después de comer" (167)—, and ultimately abandons his own apartment in favor of the rudimentary *pensión* on the other side of Barcelona. Deiser views his relocation as nostalgic, arguing: "the solidarity he feels with the community in which he grew up […] lead[s] him to

return to his childhood neighborhood" (74). I do not perceive the same sentimentality in the character's lifestyle change. Although he does express some feelings of nostalgia for the immigrant *barrio,* Marés initially relocates as a practicality for his Andalusian alias, and remains there with the progressive loss of his Catalan identity after reuniting with Norma. I interpret his move as a literal reversal of Pujol's declaration that "Catalán es todo hombre que vive […] en Cataluña." In an effort to entice the novel's most Catalan character, he is ironically pulled away from his "Catalan" apartment to Barcelona's "foreign" zone.[102]

At the end of the novel, the *charnego* identity has completely overtaken Marés's street performances, as well as the rest of his life. His shift in musical repertoire and costuming is no longer a strategic, playful attempt to attract more patrons and earn a larger profit. Instead it is involuntary and even consciously grotesque, as seen in the sign he displays:

> [s]u repertorio musical también se alteró: ahora tocaba pasodobles y coplas andaluzas que años atrás hicieron populares Imperio Argentina y Estrellita Castro, y solía colgarse en el pecho un cartón que llevaba escrito con rotulador rojo: EX SECRETARIO DE POMPEU FABRA CHARNEGO Y TUERTO Y SORDOMUDO SUPLICA AYUDA. (168)

Establishing this change, the narrator begins to refer to the protagonist as Faneca, and describes how he assumes Marés's original performing role: "[E]l músico callejero dejó de acudir a las Ramblas como cada mañana y Faneca pasó a ocupar una esquina en la plaza Lesseps tocando el acordeón vestido de luces y con un antifaz negro […] Había adquirido un maltrecho traje de

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[102] Alternatively, reflecting her incongrous character, Norma is captivated by this marginal neighborhood. During her visit at the end of the narrative she examines her "exotic" surroundings with fascination: "Ella se paró un instante para admirar el espectral decorado que ofrecía la encrucijada de calles en pendiente bajo la luz mortecina del farol, y dijo: 'Así que éste es vuestro barrio. Me gusta,' y en su voz él captó una emoción antigua de niña bien, una bien controlada nostalgia del arrabal y sus peligros" (184).

torero esmeralda y oro una tienda de disfraces del Raval y decidió tomar prestado el acordeón de Marés y ganarse la vida más cerca de la pensión” (172).

Marés’s obsessive pursuit of Norma ultimately results in the destruction of (what the Pujol government celebrated as) the essence of his Catalan identity—his contact with her causes him to lose his Catalan language and ultimately acquire the *charnego*’s distinct way of speaking. Throughout the novel Marsé differentiates the immigrant characters, most notably Faneca, by associating them with the use of highly accented Spanish (representative of the Andalusian dialect), positioned in opposition to the neutral *castellano* and Catalan spoken by Marés and Norma. During most of the narrative the protagonist maintains his Catalan-Spanish bilingualism even though other aspects of his identity are becoming *acharnegados*. A sign of the agency he initially has over his transformation, he speaks with his friends in standard Spanish as Marés, and with Norma and the *pensión* staff in the Andalusian accent as Faneca.[103] Yet by the end of the novel he adopts the *charnego*’s speech as his own and, most notably, begins to lose his ability to function in Catalan. As the narrator remarks: “[Él] sentía desintegrarse día a día su personalidad. Puesto que el astroso músico callejero era también, en el fondo, un personaje inventado, empezó a ser expoliado: algunas mañanas no era capaz de articular una palabra en catalán” (167). Here the use of the word “expoliado,” meaning “plundered” or “despoiled,” implies that the character’s loss of his Catalan language is viewed as a loss of something valuable. However, Marsé uses the word ironically, given that the destruction of the protagonist’s ability to function in the vernacular language is the consequence of his pursuit of the Pujolian Catalan ideal.

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[103] The scenes featuring Marés’s hallucinations, where he converses with his *charnego* alter ego, most-explicitly demonstrate this distinction. Here the dialogue switches between the two dialects of Spanish. For example: “‘Tú, déjame a mí, saborío. Hablaré con esa mujé, y esa mujé volverá a tus brazos. Lo juro por mis muertos.’ ‘¿Me estás pidiendo que te presente a Norma?’” (44).

The protagonist and Norma re-consummate their relationship at the end of the narrative, and this event marks the final moment of his self-recognition prior to his permanent transformation into Faneca. When Norma kisses the disguised Marés for the first time, the narrator comments how "[él] tuvo entonces, quizá por la última vez, conciencia fugaz de quien era y de lo que estaba haciendo, un enmascarado loco de amor que había tramado una falacia disparatada para reconquistar a su mujer" (184). Yet after the couple has intercourse—which they did enjoy in the moment—, Faneca laments that the highly-anticipated encounter was disillusioning. As the narrator reveals:

> Ahora que todo había terminado, Faneca sintió que le invadía un sentimiento de alivio y culpabilidad. ¿Por qué se había embarcado en esa aventura tardía y un poco decepcionante? ¿Qué tenía especial esa mujer, con sus treinta y ocho años, funcionaria de la Generalitat, separada y liada con otro hombre, un pelma monolingüe y celoso? ¿Qué tenía él que ver con toda esa gente? (187)

Marés's disappointment with Norma in the aftermath of their sexual union overturns his idealization of her that drove the narrative. In doing so, the novel affirms that the desirable Catalan imaginary propagated by the *Generalitat* is merely an illusion.

Marsé's cautionary tale against Pujol's Catalanist ideal becomes most apparent in the final chapter of the novel. Jumping ahead to three years into the future, here we observe the protagonist appear in one last street performance, in which the character's transformation has transcended the *charnego*: he is reduced to a grotesque appropriation of different Iberian identities. In this scene, he is referred to by a new performing alias, "El Torero Enmascarado," as he plays Catalan folk songs in front of the Sagrada Familia and sports a stereotypically Spanish

costume (a *traje de luces*) that starkly contrasts with his musical repertoire. The narrator illustrates the character's ensemble vividly, and in doing so emphasizes his alienation:

> El charnego fulero se erguía vivo y auténtico en su traje de luces verde y oro y su acordeón sentimental. Su estilo se había depurado, su repertorio de sardanas y de canciones populares catalanas era infinito. Debajo del antifaz, el parche de terciopelo negro seguía ocultando su ojo derecho y media visión de un mundo al que ya no pertenecía y del que se estaba desentendiendo cada vez más. (192)

When approached by a passerby, "un viandante bajito y calvo" (192) whom as Sherzer and Grothe note matches the physical characteristics of Jordi Pujol, "El Torero Enmascarado" babbles to him in a jumble of Andalusian Spanish and Catalan:

> Pué mirizté, en pimé ugá me'n fotu de menda yaluego de to y de toos i així finson vostè vulgui poque nozotro lo mataore catalane volem toro catalane, digo, que menda s'integra en la Gran Encisera hata onde le dejan y hago con mi jeta lo que buenamente puedo, ora con la barretina ora con la montera, o zea que a mí me guta el mestizaje, zeñó, la barrexa y el combinao, en fin, s'acabat l'explicació i el bròquil, echusté una moneíta, joé, no sigui tan garrapo ni tan roñica, una pezetita, cony, azí me guta, rumbozo, vaya uzté con Dió y passiu-ho bé, senyor. (193)

With his *traje de luces*, Catalan folksongs, and spoken gibberish, the protagonist is neither Catalan nor Spanish, but instead represents a hodgepodge of stereotypical Iberian symbols.

This final sequence has received much critical attention. Sánchez-Conejero mistakenly applauds its multicultural vision, arguing that "El Torero Enmascarado" proves that "[e]n definitiva, se puede ser catalán y al mismo tiempo andaluz, murciano o español" (98). Sherzer comments on how the novel's use of code switching mirrors the end of Juan Goytisolo's *Juan sin*

tierra, and that the protagonist's chaotic discourse is a plea for "the social integration of the *charnego*, and, curiously, through integration a genuine normalization of Catalan culture" (414). Furthermore, Domínguez Quintana argues that the novel fights against "lo inteligible y lo monolingüe y [envía] un mensaje de fragmentación cultural" (300). I, however, interpret the "Torero Enmascarado" figure as Marsé's final attack on the destructive force of Pujolian Catalanism. After his pursuit of Norma transformed him into a fabricated *charnego*, Marés now embodies an even more ridiculous image of cultural imitation: he does not display authentic signs of either Catalan or Spanish identities. In this sense, *El amante bilingüe* does not celebrate multiculturalism in post-Franco Catalonia, or make a case for the assimilation of immigrants. Rather, the novel proposes that the Pujol government's brand of Catalan identity purges society of its sociocultural authenticity, in favor of a piecemeal, artificial, and grotesque nationalist vision.

2.2 *La teta y la luna*

In *La teta y la luna* (the final installment in his *Trilogía ibérica*), Bigas Luna (1946-2013) considers Catalan culture and identity in light of post-Franco Spain's integration into Europe.[104] A Fellini-inspired coming of age tale—with clear references to *La Strada* and *Amarcord*—, the film follows Tete, an eight-year-old Catalan boy obsessed with women's breasts. Jealous that his newborn brother is breastfed by their mother, Tete embarks on a quest to find a pair of breasts of his own, and in the process encounters Maurice and Estrellita, who have recently arrived at the local campground. *Los gabachos* are a husband and wife performance duo from France who tour

[104] *La teta y la luna* is the third film of Bigas Luna's *Trilogía ibérica*, which consists of *Jamón, jamón* (1992), *Huevos de oro* (1993). The first two films mainly treat questions of "Spanish" identity (especially *Jamón, jamón*), whereas *La teta y la luna* focuses on questions of Catalan identity.

Europe with their grotesque flatulence and dance act.[105] Tete quickly becomes smitten by the kind, beautiful, and voluptuous Estrellita, a Portuguese *afrancesada* defined by her steadfast devotion to her husband Maurice and her grotesque sexual perversions.[106] However, he quickly realizes that he is not the only one vying for her affection. Equally enamored with her are his neighbor Miguel (a flamenco-singing Andalusian adolescent), and the much-older Maurice, who is impotent and only able to sexually please his wife through scatological fetishes. The three male characters "compete" for *la gabacha*, and in the telling of this ludicrous contest Bigas Luna plays with images of Catalan, Andalusian, and European identities alike.

Marvin D'Lugo notes that within the *Trilogía ibérica*, *La teta y la luna* is distinctive due to the "emphasis it gives to the complex regional, national, and transnational forces reordering Spanish culture" (*La teta i la lluna* 196). The only film in the series that explicitly treats Catalan themes, it stands out due to its consideration of the diversity of identities within Spain, and the contact between these different groups of people. A testament to Bigas Luna's heritage, the work is, as he describes it, "supercatalán," and contains "un porrón de símbolos catalanes" (Fondevila 29).[107] Mirroring his use of "typical Spanish" iconography in *Jamón, jamón*—which is marked by its images of bullfighting, *el Toro de Osborne*, *jamón serrano*, and *tortilla de patatas*, among others—, in *La teta y la luna* Bigas Luna recycles and parodies traditional Catalan marks of

[105] Per the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española, *gabacho(a)* is colloquial, derogatory term for "francés" ("Gabacho").

[106] The *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española defines *afrancesado* as: "que admira excesivamente o imita a los franceses"; "dicho de una persona: Que a lo largo del siglo XVIII adoptó los valores de la ilustración francesa"; "colaboracionista español en el régimen bonapartista" ("Afrancesado").

[107] A *porrón* (*porró* in Catalan) is a glass wine pitcher, similar in shape to a watering can, that is typical of Catalonia, Aragon, and other regions of Spain.

identity such as *castells*,[108] *la senyera, porrons*, and *pa amb tomàquet*.[109] Correspondingly, one of the most recurrent critical observations of *La teta y la luna* is how the director unites Catalan identity with images of different migrant identities within Catalonia: Andalusian and French (representing Spain and Europe, respectively). During an interview with *El País*, Bigas Luna describes his work as being "una película de fin de siglo, de mezclas como las que hay en Cataluña" (Palou), insinuating the diversity of groups and cultural references he portrays in his confessedly "supercatalán" tale.[110] In the same way, Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas explain that the film parades "a wide-angled, inclusive form of nationalism" (181), one in which Catalan, Andalusian, and French identities blend and coexist.

Though most scholars of the film (D'Lugo (1997); Sánchez-Conejero; Smith (2000); Martínez Expósito; Wharton) cite its multiculturalism, few treat its representation of European identity. Furthermore, the existing studies do not problematize (or in some instances even acknowledge) Bigas Luna's grotesque portrayal of the European, and instead focus on the

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[108] The *castell* ("castle") is a human tower built during festivals in Catalonia, originating in the municipal festivals of the Tarragona region during the eighteenth-century. As Dorothy Noyes describes, the *castell* consists of "'pillars' of single men [and women] stacked up on one another's shoulders, becoming 'towers' of two, and 'castles' of three or four interlocked. As they [rise] skywards they diminish to a single small [child] standing at the top [the *enxaneta*], supported from below by an intricately ordered *pinya* (pinecone) of men [and women], hands to backs, dissolving ultimately into the surrounding crowd" (207-8). By the 1980s the *castell* became "a sign of the nation's power to renew itself" (Noyes 207). In the film Tete is the *enxaneta* in his *castell* team.

[109] An emblematic food of Catalan culture, *pa amb tomàquet* is bread rubbed with tomato, then topped with olive oil and salt.

[110] In an interview with *ABC* released upon the film's premiere, Bigas Luna comments how his film is "muy catalán," yet it also represents other identities: "aunque es un filme muy catalán, […] puede emocionar a un chulo de Chamberí" (Güell 93). By mentioning that *La teta y la luna* "puede emocionar un chulo de Chamberí," Bigas Luna implies that his Catalan film would interest even the most *castizo* ("genuine" or "born-and-bread") *madrileño* audience.

symbolic weight of Catalonia's burgeoning association with Europe.[111] Of particular note is Barrie Wharton's essay, in which he reads the inflated, scatological characters of Maurice and Estrellita as a standard sign of French cultural superiority in Spain. Wharton fails to consider the criticism behind their vulgar characterization, arguing: "[C]ontemporary Spain and contemporary Spanish cultural values are also openly attacked throughout the film. The French circus couple are [sic] constantly portrayed as superior. They eat better, make love better and they even fart better which earns them a living" (138). Additionally, Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas argue that the film is "Euro-friendly" simply because of its references to Federico Fellini and its mixture of Catalan, Spanish, French, and English dialogue (174).

Sánchez-Conejero and D'Lugo's essays treat the subject of European identity in *La teta y la luna* with the greatest amount of detail, yet both scholars celebrate Catalonia's affiliation with Europe in *La teta y la luna* without taking into consideration Bigas Luna's grotesque depiction of Maurice and Estrellita. Sánchez-Conejero examines how the director distances Catalan identity from "lo español," and subsequently presents "una identidad catalana más identificada con lo europeo" (105-106). She also lauds the exchange between Catalan, *charnego*, and French identities in the film as an indicator of a new globalized Catalonia that challenges the "identidad 'catalana' que la Generalitat trata de imponer" (103). Furthermore, Sánchez-Conejero argues that the contact between the Catalan and French characters signals "la Cataluña europea [que] no se contrapone […] a la cultura local catalana, ya que el nuevo paradigma cultural de la globalización va mucho más allá de las barreras nacionalistas y se basa en la integración y diálogo entre culturas" (110). Similarly, D'Lugo contends that because of Catalonia's geographic

[111] Martínez Expósito does acknowledge Estrellita's grotesque sexual fetishes, but does not analyze their significance beyond the fact that they please Maurice, meaning he can sexually satisfy her through alternative means (181).

location within the Iberian Peninsula, it acts as a mediator between Spain and Europe, as well as a model of the "economic and cultural modernization [necessary] for Spain's shift towards Europe" (*La teta i la lluna* 199).[112] Per D'Lugo, Tete's "migration" away from his mother's breasts and towards Estrellita "restates the larger paradigm of the shift from the static forms of Iberian identity (the patriarchal, phallic world symbolized by the Catalan family), to the alluring images of a Europeanized future" (*La teta i la lluna* 210). He also signals that the film's final scenes—which quickly jump from Catalonia (where Tete finally reaches the top of the *castell* and is rewarded by both Estrellita and his mother's breasts) to France (where Estrellita, Maurice, and Miguel perform together)—effectively "transform the child's story of a sexual and communal quest into the narrative of a larger communal enterprise: the integration of Spain into Europe" (*La teta i la lluna* 212).

In this sense, the existing criticism has overlooked how Bigas Luna's depiction of cultural contact problematizes the Catalan nationalist discourse actively promoted by the Pujol government. These studies also neglect to observe and analyze how Bigas Luna's portrayal of Maurice's flatulence and Estrellita's bawdy sexual fetishes distorts the conventional image of European identity in the Iberian Peninsula as culturally elite. Furthermore, the abovementioned critics do not contemplate the absurdity of the Catalan characters' embracing of this grotesque vision of Europe, and fail to consider the significance of Estrellita, who is Portuguese yet is given a French identity due to her admiration of Maurice and all things French (however grotesque they may be). *La teta y la luna* is not a celebration of post-Franco Catalonia's economic and cultural modernization, or of its Europeanized future, but rather a parody of the

[112] D'Lugo describes Catalonia as being "the locus of a sensual Mediterranean culture that tacitly opposes the austere elements of a Castilianized Spain while connecting the peninsula with Europe" (*La teta i la lluna* 209).

glorification of Europe that recurs in Pujol-era nationalist discourse. In contrast to what other scholars (D'Lugo 1997); Sánchez-Conejero) have specified as Bigas Luna's celebration of a Catalonia connected to the European Union, the film associates the European with the scatological and the perverse. Using France as a microcosm for the continent, the director provides a grotesque vision of French identity—esteemed by Catalanist discourse both historically and during the Pujol era to distinguish Catalonia from Castile, and to embrace Catalonia's progressive "European vocation"—via Maurice and Estrellita's characters, whose scatological behaviors overturn the conventional association of Europe with high culture and sophistication. In doing so, *La teta y la luna* also satirizes the official discourse of Catalan identity and its desire for modernity. Bigas Luna directs his censure at the Catalan characters that esteem these grotesque French visitors—evidenced by the audience's enthusiastic response to Maurice and Estrellita's performance and, conversely, Tete's repugnance for it—, presenting an exaggerated portrayal of the veneration of Europe in Catalan nationalism, alongside an ironic vision of Catalonia as being peripheral, pre-modern, chauvinistic, and unsophisticated.

The film offers a portrait of the Catalan periphery, and absent from it are monumental, touristic visions of Barcelona and characters who pertain to the Catalan social and/or political elite (central to Marsé and Boadella's works). Instead Bigas Luna predominantly features outlying locations to portray Catalonia as an idyllic, even pre-modern milieu: the working-class neighborhood where Tete lives, the rudimentary campground that houses Maurice and Estrellita, the tent show where they perform, and an assortment of deserted beaches and roadways. The only extraordinary spaces that he depicts are the Roman ruins of Tarragona, which Tete's father and the *castells* team visit to connect with (what he views as) the Roman essence of the Catalan

people. The ruins represent a glorification of Catalonia's distant past, twisting the preoccupation with modernization that is present in Pujolian discourse.

Throughout the film Tete addresses the spectators directly through voiceover, and Bigas Luna benefits from his position as narrator to present this peripheral vision of a Catalonia from an external perspective. He uses Tete's point of view as a child—who is still learning about Catalan culture and society, and therefore able to view them with a critical eye—to convey the grotesque elements of Catalan and European identities, as well as the contact between them. Evident in his naiveté, imaginative outlook, and unrestrained judgment, Tete embodies youthful innocence. The film is laden with fantastic, at times even surreal imagery (especially in its representation of Tete's father) that can be attributed to his youthful point of view.[113] Yet what is most striking about Tete's perspective is his inherent distance from Catalan society. As a child, he holds a peripheral position in the film's social order, demonstrated by the many scenes in which he snoops on the adult characters and is reprimanded for his behavior. Also, he has not yet internalized Catalan identity, meaning that he is still being educated about its culture and history. In this sense, Tete does not form part of the film's Catalan cultural center (epitomized by his father), and is an outsider with regards to the French (evidenced by his curious, ethnographic-like observations of *los gabachos*). As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas note, these factors introduce a critical distance into the narrative (142), which Bigas-Luna uses to critique Catalan and French identities alike. Positioned outside of these two cultural orders, Tete is "ideally suited to interrogate" them (D'Lugo, *La teta i la lluna* 207).

[113] For example, he is particularly naïve regarding human anatomy and sexuality—he believes that all women's breasts contain milk (filled by men during sexual intercourse), and fantasizes about milk spurting from Estrellita's breasts as if she were a fountain.

Tete's critical voice is most apparent in his commentaries on Catalonia. In conjunction with what Bigas Luna refers to as its "porrón de símbolos catalanes," the film presents a grotesque caricature of the region, associating it with hypermasculinity (an exaggeration of stereotypical masculine character and behaviors marked by strength, power, and virility) and pre-modernity. The result is a comically inflated "macho catalán" identity—a variation on the traditional *macho ibérico*—that is exemplified by the figure of Tete's father (Sánchez Conejero 104-5). In *La cultura del catalanisme*, Joan-Lluís Marfany argues that contemporary Catalan national discourse is built on the existence of a trans-historical essence of Catalan identity, in addition to rituals and invented traditions such as *la sardana*, popular festivals such as *La Diada,* and the national hymn (1995).[114] Building on Marfany's study, Martínez Expósito explains that these are symbols "de todo tipo donde esa esencia se ponga en escena, se representen por y para el pueblo" (179).[115] Through his representation of El Padre—and of Tete's responses to him—Bigas Luna mocks this magnificent vision of Catalan identity perpetuated by Pujolian nationalist discourse, particularly its emphasis on strength and its glorification of tradition.

El Padre is a rough and vulgar individual with a comically exaggerated sense of national pride, and his imposing presence causes his son to view him with terror, disgust, and skepticism (as heard in voiceover remarks). This is evident from the film's opening scene, which depicts the construction of the traditional Catalan human towers. As a fear-stricken Tete ascends the *castell*,

[114] The national dance of Catalonia, *la sardana* is a popular circle dance originating in the Empordà region, set to music played by a *cobla* (a woodwind band). Dorothy Noyes states that the *sardana* "was made an emblem of Catalan tenacity from the *Renaixença* through the post-Franco Transition" (207). *La Diada* is the National Day of Catalonia, commemorating the defeat of Catalonia following the end of the Spanish War of Succession. It is celebrated annually on September 11.

[115] On the contrary, Dowling describes this as being a "limited and limiting conception of Catalan culture, one that was often mocked by metropolitan intellectuals as one of *cantaires* and *sardanas* (singing and folk dances)" (131).

El Padre, who serves as the coach of the *colla castellera* (the *castell* team) yells: “Va Tete, ya tienes que estar arriba, coño. No te pares, vas muy bien. ¡Con dos cojones! ¡Con dos cojones!”—signaling that reaching the top of the tower is a sign of masculinity (Sánchez-Conejero 104). In response, Tete comments via voiceover: “A veces no me atrevo a bajar. Porque abajo está el bestia de mi padre. No sé qué es peor, caer o aguantar sus broncas. Y todo lo de los cojones y Cataluña y lo del honor de la colla y todos esos rollos.” Here Bigas Luna indicates that Tete has not yet internalized El Padre’s Catalan pride. Repelled by his father’s temper, virility, and overwhelming patriotism, he describes him as animal-like and fanatical, and condemns his Catalanism as excessive.

Tete’s censure becomes increasingly apparent over the progression of the film, particularly as the spectator learns of his father’s fixation with the Roman Empire. In a distortion of the emphasis on modernization and Carolingian lineage that pervades Pujolian discourse, El Padre celebrates the legacy of Rome in Catalonia. Instead of viewing the region as modern and European, he steadfastly believes that the essence of the Catalan people is Roman. Here Bigas Luna hyperbolizes the father’s already inflated sense of Catalan pride, illustrating him in an overstated, caricaturesque fashion amidst Roman ruins and as a gladiator within present-day Catalonia. As coach of the *colla castellera*, he leads Tete and the other *castellers* on excursions to the Roman monuments of Tarragona. In one scene, the team leans against a massive ruin for hours in the pouring rain, and this shot is accompanied by the sound of El Padre’s voice screaming: “¡Apretar fuerte! [...] ¡Que la fuerza de la roca os llegue al corazón! ¡Y a los brazos! ¡Y a los cojones!” Later he marches them across an aqueduct, during which the entire group is envisioned as Roman warriors in full military attire.

Because Tete has not yet embraced Catalan nationalism (as parodied in the figure of El Padre), he recognizes the absurdity of his father's glorification of the Romans and interprets his nationalist fervor as ludicrous and hyperbolic. During another voiceover, he gripes: "Él siempre con sus manías de que éramos romanos, decía que todo le debíamos a ellos. Estaba como una cabra." In sum, Bigas Luna employs Tete to underscore his grotesque vision of Catalan identity. Tete's critical voice calls attention to the absurdity of the Catalan nationalism that El Padre personifies, indicating that his behaviors and ideology are not conventional, but rather a grotesque distortion of established nationalist discourse—his "macho catalán" identity aggrandizes and defiles the triumphant vision of Catalan tradition and history perpetuated by Pujol's government. Furthermore, the film humorously associates Catalonia with pre-modernity via its glorification of the Roman Empire, reversing the celebration of Europeanized Catalan modernity—in opposition to Castilian backwardness—found in both historical and Pujol-era Catalanist discourse alike.

In opposition to this vision of Catalonia, Bigas Luna positions a multilayered European identity via his depiction of Maurice and Estrellita, as well as his prominent use of European symbols (mirroring the appearance of Catalan iconography in the film). *La teta y la luna* is rife with references to assorted European countries—mainly France—and to the newly established European Union: Maurice is French; Estrellita is Portuguese; Tete's schoolteacher is English; their traveling show is overtly French; at the conclusion of the film Estrellita, Maurice, and Miguel leave Catalonia to perform throughout Europe; the flags of various European countries fly outside of Maurice and Estrellita's campground; and images of the EU flag recur throughout the narrative.[116]

[116] The European Union flag appears in one of Tete's dreams (in which he travels to the moon, and plants the Catalan flag on its surface next to that of the EU), at the campground, and, most notably, during

While Bigas Luna plays with a wide variety of European symbols, French is the most prevalent national identity in the film, and France acts as a microcosm for the greater European continent.[117] He portrays Maurice (*el gabacho*) as being French to an exaggerated state.[118] Conversely, Estrellita (*la gabacha*) is introduced as being from Portugal, yet she displays absolutely no indication of her Portuguese heritage, and is given a French persona due to her association with Maurice. In this sense, her character is an *afrancesada*, meaning she has been "frenchified" because of her fervent admiration of France. This is evident in her obsession with, even fetish for, French cuisine and culture (such as Perrier water and Roquefort cheese), and, most dramatically, in her unwavering love and acceptance of Maurice despite his impotency, aggressiveness, and jealousy.

Deviating from conventional visions of European culture and society in the Iberian Peninsula, and satirizing the Pujol government's esteem for both France and the greater European continent, Maurice and Estrellita are not presented in an elitist fashion. Rather they are gross, bawdy characters that indicate a grotesque reduction of the traditionally elevated status of Europe. Since the eighteenth-century French culture "[ha poseído] un gran prestigio en toda Europa, [de manera] que sus modas se extendían por los países vecinos, o, lo que es lo mismo, que Francia monopolizaba el concepto de 'modernidad'" (Torrecilla 23). Moreover, Pujolian

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Maurice and Estrellita's performance (the Catalan audience waves miniature versions of the EU flag during the act's finale).

[117] Bigas Luna's portrayal of Maurice and Estrellita also indicates a parody of conventional French symbolism (Martínez Expósito 180): *Los gabachos* eat baguettes with Roquefort and are on a constant pursuit of *Perrier* water in the Catalan markets; they constantly listen to songs by Edith Piaf (and the soundtrack to their routine includes "Les mots de l'amour" and "L'homme à la moto"); and the backdrop for their traveling show is painted with images of the Eiffel Tower and the French flag, among others.

[118] For example, when Tete introduces Maurice, he remarks: "Era tan gabacho que lo primero que hizo al llegar al camping fue quitar la bandera francesa. No le gustaba que estuviera tan sucia." His voiceover is accompanied by a shot of Maurice, in full biker attire, meticulously folding the French flag as if it were a precious cloth (while "La Marseillaise" plays in the background).

discourse consistently celebrated the "la vocación europea de Cataluña," viewing its historical link with the Carolingian Empire as a sign of its modernity (Pujol, *Cataluña* 96). Maurice and Estrellita's roles as traveling performers are enough to problematize any hint of European cultural prestige in the film. They do not belong to an established theater company, but rather comprise a two-person show that performs in peripheral locations (epitomized by the beachfront tent show in the film). Yet the fact that their act showcases flatulence and other scatological humor—which also carries over into their everyday lives—completely lampoons their supposed elitism, and undermines the Catalan desire for Europeanization. In the spirit of Bakhtin's carnival, *La teta y la luna* presents a grotesque degradation of European identity: Bigas Luna's characterization of *los gabachos* lowers the "high" culture of Europe to the lower stratum of the body (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 21). His depiction of Maurice and Estrellita is not refined or idealized, but rather carnal, vulgarly comic, and scatological.

Presenting an inherent contrast to the film's hypermasculine vision of Catalan identity (as well as the Andalusian Miguel, who eventually sexually conquers Estrellita), Maurice is impotent.[119] To compensate for the character's lack of virility, Bigas Luna provides *el gabacho* with a variety of other overstated masculine characteristics: he is aggressive, overbearing, and possessive (due to his jealously of Miguel); he rides a motorcycle and exclusively wears biking attire; and he demands that his wife partake in sexual games.[120] The most striking aspect of Maurice's overstated character, however, is his body, particularly his flatulence. Possessing an

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[119] This is made clear from his very first appearance in the narrative—before he is introduced by Tete—in which he unsuccessfully attempts intercourse with his wife and then laments: "¡No puedo!"

[120] The most significant sexual game is "comer el baguette." In a twisted vision of male sexuality and French iconography, each evening Maurice forces Estrellita to eat a hardened baguette that he juts out from his pants.

extraordinary ability to pass gas on command, Maurice personifies Bakhtin's grotesque body concept. While his body is not sexually powerful, it exhibits a different sort of vigor through his flatulence, and he uses this capacity to woo both audiences and his wife.

Maurice's stage name is *El Pedoman* ("The Fartman"), and his act consists of a series of skits in which he releases tremendous farts to a soundtrack of classical music and Edith Piaf's songs (while Estrellita dances alongside him). His performance pays homage to the French vaudeville entertainer *Le Pétomane*, the pseudonym of Joseph Pujol (1857-1945). Born to Catalan parents in France, as a young man Pujol learned of his ability to inhale tremendous amounts of air through his rectum and release them by manipulating his anal sphincter muscles. Realizing the entertainment value of his scatological talent, he started a stage show in Marseilles and later moved to Paris to perform at the Moulin Rouge.[121] *Le Pétomane*'s act became immensely popular—he would ultimately be one of the highest paid French performers of his era—and he subsequently toured throughout Europe and North Africa, where he was also received with great enthusiasm.[122]

[121] Like Maurice, Joseph Pujol passed gas to the melody of classical music. He also did "fart impressions," in which he mimicked the flatulence of different individuals. The most legendary was "The Wedding Night." Pujol would emit a small fart, referring to it as "the bride on her wedding night," followed by an enormous one ("the morning after") (L. Pujol, qtd. in Nohain and Caradec 18).

[122] The one location where Joseph Pujol was reportedly not a raging success was Spain, particularly Madrid. His son Louis Pujol tells of a "sprightly impresario, of the toreador type" (Nohain and Caradec 27) who traveled to the Moulin Rouge and offered *Le Pétomane* a large sum of money to perform a month-long series in Madrid. During his first rehearsal in the Spanish capital, the orchestra director became outraged by his scatological act, screaming: "A foreigner! A Frenchman! A mountebank! And he comes here to insult and outrage the Spaniards! Arrest him!" (27). Pujol had no desire to lose his salary, thus he replaced his farting number with a clown routine. When recalling this occasion, his son comments how "[t]he improvised act amused the Spanish and the contract was fully honored. But the Madrid public never knew that it was the famous Le Pétomane who had been announced with such a surge of publicity" (27).

Robert Hughes notes that Catalan culture is rife with references to the scatological: they appear in folk sayings,[123] songs, poetry, and paintings,[124] as well as in Catalonia's celebrated traditions of the *caganer* and the *Tió de Nadal*[125] (26-9). Of Catalan parentage, the actual nineteenth-century performer known as *Le Pétomane* has been interpreted by the contemporary Catalan humorist Peyu as another example of a typically Catalan phenomenon. Peyu remarks that he is "el primer catalán que, en el siglo XIX, exportó al extranjero la tradición, tan nostra, de tirarse pedos" (Monegal). While the real-life *Pétomane* was popular throughout Europe yet scandalized a theater company in Madrid (see note 122), in *La teta y la luna* Maurice travels to Catalonia, where he wows audiences with a similar farting act. Seeing that Bigas Luna is Catalan, it is safe to assume that he knew Maurice's performance would be successful in Catalonia due to the traditional Catalan affinity for the scatological, and that he would not be deemed an "insult and outrage [to] the Spaniards" (L. Pujol, qtd. in Nohain and Caradec 27), as was the real *Le Pétomane* in Madrid.

Early in the film is an extended depiction of Maurice and Estrellita's performance at the tent show, which showcases both the grotesqueness of Maurice's character as well as the Catalan public's fondness for it. As in other moments, here Bigas Luna employs a variety of folkloric symbols in his depiction of the tent show: the venue is known as "Cava Park," and inside the

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[123] One famous example, as Hughes notes, is the folk saying: "Menjar be i cagar fort/I no tingues por de la mort," or "Eat well, shit strongly, and do not be afraid of death."

[124] Such paintings include Salvador Dalí's *The Lugubrious Game* (1929) and Joan Miró's *Man and Woman in Front of a Pile of Excrement* (1935).

[125] A *caganer* ("shitter") is a figurine of a person in the act of defecation that is displayed in nativity scenes throughout Catalonia and other parts of Spain. Its origins are unknown, yet it is commonly understood as symbol of the fertilization of the earth (Hughes 27). The *Tió de Nadal* ("Christmas Log") is a figure of Catalan and Aragonese mythology, appearing in Catalan homes in early December. Children "feed" the *tió* and cover it with a blanket so that it will defecate on Christmas. On Christmas Day, adults place candies, nuts, and small gifts under the blanket. Children then sing songs and strike the *tió* with sticks, instructing it to "shit" the presents.

audience members eat *calçots*, drink from *porrons*, and wear bibs decorated with the *senyera*.[126] In doing so, he categorizes the space as Catalan, as well as the spectators inside. This is a fundamental detail in the film's criticism of Catalonia: Bigas Luna overemphasizes that the audience is Catalan as he represents their enthusiasm for the scatological spectacle. The sequence begins with Estrellita, who performs a classical ballet routine to Edith Piaf's "Les mots d'amour" (another sign of her *afrancesamiento*). Although she assists her husband during his various skits, *El Pedoman* is the main attraction of the *gabachos'* show. Bigas Luna highlights the public's reactions to Maurice and, conversely, minimizes their reception of Estrellita.

In the featured sketch, he "ignites" a cannon with his flatulence to launch an arrow onto a target.[127] Unlike the real-life *Pétomane*'s experience in Madrid, Bigas Luna's fictional *Pedoman* does not scandalize the patrons in Catalonia. The opposite—the audience members express a great affinity for Maurice's performance, laughing hysterically and cheering with gusto as he farts into the cannon. Here Bigas Luna depicts the Catalan characters as boorish and pre-modern, and in doing so he mocks the conventional discourse of Catalonia as being the civilized, progressive superior to the primitive Castilian other. The Catalans are not cultured and sophisticated, but precisely the kind of people who would find Maurice's bawdy and scatological routine to be hilarious.[128]

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[126] A typical Catalan food, *calçots* are a giant variety of scallion, prepared grilled. To eat the *calçot*, one tilts his/her head back and then lowers it into his/her mouth from above.

[127] On Maurice's first two attempts the arrow misses the target and strikes Estrellita, breaking her tutu and exposing her breast (much to Tete's delight).

[128] It is also worth noting the visible connection between Maurice and the real-life *Pétomane*, and the fact that Joseph Pujol and the then-President of the *Generalitat* share a surname. In his depiction of the audience's reaction to this "Pujol-inspired" entertainer, Bigas Luna also sneers at the Catalan people's steadfast enthusiasm for Jordi Pujol, however outlandish his policies or personality may be.

The finale to the *gabachos*' performance ridicules European and Catalan identities alike. In this sequence, Maurice passes gas while Estrellita instructs the audience members, who have been given miniature EU flags, to mimic her husband's flatulence. The resulting shot features the hysterically laughing Catalans—still sporting their *senyera* bibs—making farting noises while waving the flags, with Estrellita acting as their "conductor." Bigas Luna uses the grotesque to satirize conventional visions of Europe as culturally elite, exemplified by *El Pedoman*. His depiction of the Catalan audience, who is highly entertained by the entire scatological spectacle, enhances his ironic vision of Catalonia as a pre-modern, unsophisticated society. Yet what I find to be most telling about this scene is its derision of the newly formed European Union. By having the Catalans wave EU flags while making farting noises, Bigas Luna dismisses the organization as well as Catalonia's Europeanist ambitions. Whereas the Pujol government viewed its participation in the European Union as a sign of its progressiveness and a celebration of its European identity, the film reduces the politico-economic union to a scatological gag and ridicules Catalonia's Europeanized self-image.

Tete is the one Catalan character that does not embrace *El Pedoman*. It is the opposite: he despises Maurice because he views him as a competitor for Estrellita's breasts. This dislike, combined with his young age, causes Tete to examine Maurice with the same censure with which he views his father. Although he attends their performance (having snuck in to see Estrellita dance), he does not see the humor in *el gabacho*'s grotesque act. As a child who has not yet internalized Catalan cultural attitudes (the affinity for the scatological), he does not laugh along with the audience—he merely observes *El Pedoman* with an objective curiosity. Because Tete is not instantly charmed by Maurice's grotesque performance, his view of *el gabacho* deteriorates with the progression of the film. He becomes increasingly critical of Maurice's personality and

behaviors, and ultimately informs the spectator via voiceover that he is a "bestia como [su] padre." In doing so, Tete underscores the repulsive nature of Maurice's grotesque character and, most notably, the primitiveness of the Catalans who cannot comprehend it.

Estrellita also embodies a grotesque vision of Europe, yet unlike Maurice, she does not have a grotesque body. On the contrary—since the film is presented from the smitten Tete's perspective, Bigas Luna presents *la gabacha* in an idealized, eroticized manner, emphasizing her beauty and large breasts. Instead, what defines Estrellita are her bizarre sexual fetishes. Whereas Maurice personifies the grotesque body, she is attracted to it, and takes great pleasure in the vulgar, unappealing aspects of corporeality. This attraction signals her overstated devotion to her husband and, subsequently, to the French. As mentioned, Estrellita is a Portuguese *afrancesada*, having been "turned-French" due to her admiration of the country (symbolized here by Maurice). Miguel Artola argues that there existed different types of *afrancesamiento*: intellectual, ideological, and political (37-40). Beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth-century, France served as an aesthetic and intellectual archetype in the Iberian Peninsula, "como si el prestigio que posee Francia en toda Europa dotara a sus veredictos de una autoridad intimidante" (Torrecilla 13), and those who imitated this foreign model were labeled as *afrancesados.* In light of the Napoleonic invasion, the term referred to "las gentes que, cuando la dominación francesa, ocuparon cargos, juraron fidelidad al intruso o colaboraron con los ocupantes con fines diversos" (Artola 38). In this sense, the *afrancesado* does not just consider France as a political and cultural model, but also judges the value of something based on French standards.[129] Estrellita's

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[129] Often the *afrancesados* were labeled traitors by those who supported the Spanish cause and tradition. Julio Crespo MacLennan explains: "This association of some Spanish reformers with the French invaders gave their conservative opponents the convenient propaganda weapon of calling them traitors and *afrancesados* […] warning that all modernizing projects were foreign and anti-Spanish" (11). Furthermore, Jesús Torrecilla comments on the defense of Spanish tradition in opposition to this French influence: "A los que siguen los nuevos modelos, siempre sospechosos de extranjerizantes, por más que

regard for the French is evident in her love of its cuisine and culture, yet it is most apparent—to an exaggerated state—in her relationship with her husband. Her support and veneration of France is so strong that even the country's most appalling facets do not repulse her. Accordingly, Estrellita fetishizes Maurice's grotesque body, and views him as her ideal partner despite his impotence, jealousy, and aggressive personality.

Like the Catalan audience members at their show, Estrellita is also captivated by her husband's flatulence, yet she, on the contrary, does not find it humorous—she becomes visibly aroused and enamored by it. Throughout the narrative, she repeatedly requests that he "hacer el cañón," implying that he perform his *Pedoman* act just for her, and asks him to fart during deep conversations and intimate encounters. Each time the sound of Maurice's body transports Estrellita into a state of euphoria, signaling her unwavering admiration of her husband and, moreover, Bigas Luna's satirical vision of the European. It is also worth noting that Estrellita's grotesque perversions go well beyond flatulence—she fetishizes foot odor and crying. In her sexual encounters with Maurice and Miguel alike, she can be seen smelling the men's shoes, licking their toes and crying faces, and collecting their tears to drink, all of which signal her attraction to unsightly bodily elements.[130]

In one scene, Estrellita praises her husband's scatological abilities, commending him: "Cuando alguien se tira un pedo se avergüenza. Tú de eso has hecho un arte."[131] While the

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proclamen a los cuatro vientos su patriotismo, se oponen los que defienden la superioridad de su propia tradición y menosprecian las modas del día como algo superficial y caprichoso" (13).

[130] When Tete spots Estrellita in bed with Miguel, he becomes overtaken with jealousy and exclaims: "¡Mierda! Este charnego, entre las lágrimas y el olor a pies y las canciones es capaz de reventarla."

[131] Louis Pujol describes *Le Pètomane*'s talent in an almost identical manner: "The word 'fart' is somewhat vulgar. But my father had transformed this action into an art since having taking in air that way he used it to make music or, if you prefer it, to modulate sound from the smallest and almost inaudible to

enamored Estrellita views his flatulence as an art form, the spectator realizes the absurdity of her perspective. With the character of Maurice, Bigas Luna lowers European art and culture to the level of the body, reducing it to his scatological talent. In doing so, he concurrently distorts the traditional conception of the *afrancesado*: Estrellita's veneration of France is so strong that she is even in awe of the grotesque vision of French culture that Maurice embodies. Furthermore, when faced with the option of two men—Maurice and Miguel—she consistently compares the virile, romantic Andalusian adolescent to her impotent, overbearing, and repulsive French husband (whom she chooses at the end of the narrative). Though Miguel is able sexually satisfy Estrellita via intercourse (something she yearns for during the entire film), her devotion to Maurice ultimately outweighs this satisfaction. Regardless of his impotence, temper, and grotesque body, she ultimately remains loyal to her French husband, as the *afrancesados* consistently remained loyal to France.

As a grotesque *afrancesada*, Estrellita lampoons the French and European aspirations that pervade Pujolian nationalist discourse, which lauded Catalonia's historical association with the Carolingian Empire as a sign of its modernity, cultural elitism, and Europeanism within Spain. In his depiction of the Catalan characters' affinity for Maurice's performance, Bigas Luna mocks this steadfast admiration of Europe promoted by the Pujol government. However, his strongest criticism of Catalonia stems from his depiction of Estrellita's *afrancesamiento*. By illustrating her adoption of a French identity and her devotion to France as entirely grotesque, Bigas Luna problematizes post-Franco Catalonia's preoccupation with Europeanization. He signals the excess of such rhetoric in Pujol's political and nationalist discourse, distorting and exaggerating it to underscore its irrationality.

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the sharpest and most prolonged, simply according to the contraction of muscles" (Nohain and Caradec 15).

To conclude, Bigas Luna' condemnation of Pujol's Catalanist vision is reinforced by the film's final scene, which jumps from the Iberian Peninsula to a French theater where Maurice, Estrellita, and Miguel now appear as a trio. In a stark contrast to the depiction of their show in Catalonia, in France they perform in a formal theater in front of a refined audience. Maurice is not portrayed as farting, and Estrellita does not lust after his grotesque body. Instead, Bigas Luna normalizes the three individuals: together they dance and sing Edith Piaf's song "Les mots d'amour." In France, the formerly grotesque *gabachos* are re-envisioned as conventional stage performers—they no longer embody a grotesque vision of the French and the European. By using Maurice and Estrellita's grotesque, scatological characters exclusively within the context of Catalonia, Bigas Luna undermines Catalonia's Europeanist ambitions., and challenges the modernization rhetoric that pervades post-Franco Catalanist discourse. The film's Catalan characters—minus Tete, whose youth permits him to view Catalan society with a critical eye—are captivated by this entirely grotesque vision of French culture, indicating the perceived excessiveness and absurdity of the *Generalitat*'s admiration of Europe. Hence, *La teta y la luna* also challenges the modernization rhetoric that pervades post-Franco Catalanist discourse. Unlike Pujol, Bigas Luna does not flaunt the modernity and sophistication of Catalonia, but rather looks to tradition and folklore, presenting Catalans as precisely the type of people amused by flatulence.

2.3 *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*

In his memoir *Memorias de un bufón*, playwright Albert Boadella (1943-) voices his frustration towards the Catalan nationalist zeal that predominated during Pujol's government. Regarding the former President, he writes: "Su manera de proceder tiene muchos antecedentes,

pues como tantas otras de carácter nacionalista, está basada en la apropiación indebida de los sentimientos populares, manipulados para convertirlos en política, mediante una exaltación de las inclinaciones ancestrales que todo ciudadano siente por su tribu" (*Memorias* 392-3). It was precisely this displeasure with Pujol's "excessive brand of nationalist politics" (Feldman, *In the Eye of the Storm* 62) that led Boadella to pen his *Ubú* series, which consists of three interconnected Jarryesque plays that satirize Pujol and his vision of Catalan identity during distinct moments of his presidency: the initial months in *Operació Ubú* (1981), Barcelona's post-Olympic heyday in *Ubú president* (1995), and the final years—following his decision not to seek reelection—in *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* (2001).[132] Each work centers on the deeply patriotic Catalan President Excels (Boadella's tongue-in-cheek nickname for Pujol) as he undergoes specialized psychiatric treatment for anxiety and speaking difficulties. Encouraged by his spouse, Excelsa (representative of Pujol's wife Marta Ferrusola), he seeks the advice of the famed psychiatrist Dr. Oriol, who diagnoses him with repressed personality issues, and suggests treatment via psychodrama—a psychotherapeutic method in which patients gain insight into their lives by means of guided dramatization. Using Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi* (1896) as a medium, Dr. Oriol has Excels portray the power-hungry, cruel, and vulgar antihero Padre Ubú ("Père Ubu" in the original French) in a series of performances that function to liberate the inhibited features of his character. Yet what begins as a comical therapeutic activity accelerates into a "real-life" esperpentic ordeal, as in the three plays Excels begins to emulate the grotesque Padre Ubú in his everyday life.

[132] Although their plots vary given the circumstances of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the works coincide in their basic premises, their mocking, farcical tones, their shrewdly premonitory visions of Catalan politics, and their grotesque portrayals of Pujol, his nationalist discourse, and the Catalan political sphere during their decades of publication.

Boadella's independent theater group, Els Joglars, originally formed as a comic mime troupe in Barcelona in 1962, and since its genesis has produced different forms of comic theater that "[satirize] and [comment] on a world that the vast majority of their audience could recognize" (Breden 64)—Catalonia's political and cultural life.[133] After the dictatorship, many Franco-era Catalan independent theater troupes suffered identity crises, finding themselves "impulsados hacia un examen introspectivo de su propia *raison d'être* cuando, de repente, su mayor causa de rebelión había dejado de existir" (Feldman, "Performance Theory" 172). Thus, with the advent of democracy, Els Joglars shifted their thematic content towards the evolving state of Catalanism in Spain, taking their most critical stand against Catalonia's political establishment. As Jill Lane argues, the main object of Boadella's censure became "the system through which the Catalan community itself might seek to anoint, legitimize, and dictate its integrity. No friend to culture under Franco, [Boadella] has been no more a friend to attempts by the Catalan government to institutionalize its culture" (82). During the Pujol era, the group's performances acted as a resistance to "the institutionalization and monolithic view of Catalan culture that Pujol's autonomous government appeared to encourage" (Feldman, *In the Eye of the Storm* 59-60), and even confronted the politician himself. In this vein, upon the premiere of *Ubú president* in 1995, Boadella revealed that he penned his *Ubú* series

> por saturación, porque estoy harto del mundo de empalagosa autocomplacencia y mitificación que ha creado el pujolismo. Cuando ves a un personaje cinco veces al día por

[133] Els Joglars—"the jesters, the minstrels, the buffoons, or the jongleurs" (Breden 63)—originally formed as an independent comic mime troupe after its founders—Antoni Font, Carlota Soldevilla, and Boadella—coincided in a pantomime course in Barcelona. Boadella would become the front man of the group by the end of the 1960s, and remain its director until his departure in 2012. Due to Franco's prohibition of the Catalan language, the group initially opted for a silent art form as a political statement, yet as Sharon Feldman notes, throughout their history they have "gradually modified their aesthetic values, adjusting their point of attack according to the most ardent political issues of any given moment" (*In the Eye of the Storm* 46).

televisión riñéndote, diciéndote cómo tienes que ser para que te consideren buen catalán, cuando tienes siempre encima a esa especie de rector de pueblo que te sermonea, revolverte es una cuestión higiénica. El espectáculo tiene una función terapéutica. Hay necesidad de catarsis, lo noto en la atmósfera. (Antón)

Boadella transports the conventions of the *esperpento* to contemporary Catalonia in *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* (2001). The author offers a grotesque, satirical caricature of then-President Jordi Pujol via the figure of President Excels, who participates in a custom psychiatric rehabilitation that takes the form of a Jarryesque psychodrama. In its depiction of the President's ludicrous treatment and its repercussions, the play progressively employs Valle-Inclán's characteristic style to denounce Pujol's tyranny, delusions of grandeur, and the Catalan nationalist discourse that defined his presidency. I focus my study on how the work's aesthetic evolution into the *esperpento* is the product of Excels's psychiatrist, Dr. Oriol, whose psychodrama manipulates his patient's subconscious feelings of aggression and megalomania. In this sense, Dr. Oriol—who also represents Excels's socialist political rival—assumes the role of the puppeteer that generates the *esperpento* in the play, and, subsequently, in Catalan society.

Fundamental to Boadella's *Ubú* series is its intertextuality with *Ubu Roi,* Alfred Jarry's theatrical spoof of *Macbeth* and other canonical tragedies that caused a riot during its Parisian premiere in 1896. Jarry's work centers on Père Ubu: a grotesque Everyman personifying "the greed, the gluttony, the treachery, the cowardice and the stupidity of Mankind as a whole" (Beaumont 114). Provoked by his wife Mère Ubu, Père Ubu leads a revolution to invade Poland, assassinate the Polish royal family, and usurp the throne. As the self-appointed king, he is despotic and tyrannical, ultimately killing the residents of Poland and stealing their money.

Amidst this storyline of political corruption, Jarry's work is also rife with slang, profanity, ludicrous images, and vulgar and scatological humor. Furthermore, adding to the play's overall grotesque aesthetic are Père and Mère Ubu's now-notorious costumes—fat suits and masks with grossly elongated noses—which, combined with Jarry's simplistic set and cardboard props, completely upended the traditional aesthetics of French theatre.[134] Given *Ubu Roi*'s depiction of "un abuso de poder y una apariencia cómica, más bien grotesca, del detentador repentino de esos poderes" (Haro Tecglen), the name "Ubu" has subsequently become synonymous with megalomania, avarice, cruelty, and other similar sentiments. Hence, in the program of his first Jarryesque Catalan satire, *Operació Ubú*, Boadella comments on the timeless, universal nature of the Ubu character, which permitted him to make use of it in all three of his own Jarry-inspired plays. He writes that Jarry's original character "ha seguido una larga carrera de prostitución en manos de las intenciones más diversas. Quizá porque Ubú lo es todo y no es nada en concreto, porque no tiene época, porque no tiene lugar, porque no tiene historia […] Ubú no ha dejado de existir. Quizá la mayoría de la humanidad es Ubú en potencia… De vez en cuando uno de estos pequeños hombres se desinhibe, saca fuera su Ubú particular, monta aparatos judiciales, ministerios, ejércitos, etc. ¡y la bailamos!" (*Els Joglars* 50).

In *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*, Excels is nearing the end of his presidency, which parallels final years of Pujol's rule (after announcing that he would not pursue a seventh term in office).[135] In contrast to the earlier incarnations of the character, which satirize

[134] A precursor to Dada, Surrealism, and the Theater of the Absurd, *Ubu Roi*'s absurdist plot and irreverent style horrified its Parisian audience: the play rebelled against the conventions of realism and scandalized the world of French bourgeois theatre, and consequently closed on the same evening of its premiere (Beaumont 86-7).

[135] After announcing that he would step down after his seventh term, Pujol designated *Conseller en cap* (equivalent of Vice President) Artur Mas as the CiU party successor for the 2003 Catalan parliamentary

Pujol's grandiose political ambitions, here Excels in complete state of decadence as he reaches the end of his political career, replacing the "símbolo fuerte y enérgico de la nación catalana por la imagen de un presidente deprimido que luchaba por aceptar su retirada inminente del escenario político catalán" (Buckenham 15). Even prior to beginning his psychiatric treatment, the President is a grotesque degradation of the archetypal politician, the "classical hero" of Catalonia. He is characterized in a deteriorated, disheveled fashion that echoes his declining power, evident in the stage directions that accompany his first entrance, which describe his as "*muy despeinado y tiene muy mal aspecto*" (95). Contrary to Boadella's earlier *Ubú* works (where he donned a suit), here Excels wears pajamas, bedroom slippers, and a sport coat, which gives his unkempt look an ironically professional touch. In an exaggeration of Pujol's real-life mannerisms, he suffers from facial tics and muscle twitches.[136] He also has significant problems speaking: he is repetitive (particularly when discussing Catalanism, a clear jibe at Pujol's nationalist pride) and has difficulty finding words and forming sentences. When faced with stress or public criticism, Excels's speech turns into an indecipherable babble as if he were a monster, indicating a grotesque fusion of human and non-human elements in his character.

Boadella's degraded vision of Excels is also made apparent in the character's disposition. Facing the end of his career, he suffers from depression and paranoia, which he attempts to conceal through aggrandized, narcissistic statements. These issues come together in the

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election. Center-left candidate Pasqual Maragall of the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC), would ultimately win the election.

[136] Javier Tussell describes Pujol's gestures and speaking in an almost identical fashion: "Es bajo y calvo; además, se acompaña a menudo de un curioso y residual desorden capilar. Tiene tics faciales y a la hora de expresarse en las entrevistas carraspea demasiado y tose. En sus intervenciones públicas, nunca banales y siempre guiadas por un pensamiento nítido, tiende a prolongarse demasiado" ("Elogio de Jordi Pujol").

following monologue, where we witness Excels's speaking issues and behaviors alongside his exaggerated self-image. During a television interview, he comments:

> En España, España, y ahora cuando digo España quiero decir, fuera de Cataluña, se han de plantear, los españoles no catalanes, se han de plantear, qué quieren hacer con Cataluña, cómo la quieren considerar y para qué la quieren hacer server Cataluña, ¿no?... porque fíjese bien en algo de lo que ha pasado, resulta que yo, ahora hace unos años, me decían aquello: 'Excels enano, habla en castellano'… y ahora, ahora… porque me necesitan, me dicen aquello: 'Excels, guaperas, habla como quieras'. Ahora resulta que soy guapo […] que soy el Paul Newman catalán. (100)[137]

In sum, Excels's cornucopia of problems is attributed to the uncertainty he feels at the end of his presidency and his fear that his Catalanist vision will become obsolete. For this reason, he seeks the assistance of Dr. Oriol, under whose attention he experiences a profound personal transformation.

Dr. Oriol is the driving force behind Excels's psychiatric treatment, and consequently the character that possesses the greatest amount of power in the text. [138] By leading the President in a controlled staging of *Ubu Roi* that functions to exorcise his inner frustrations, Dr. Oriol facilitates a series of circumstances that transform his patient into an *ubuesque* ruler, thereby echoing the uncontrollable forces that destroy the hero in the *esperpento* genre (Cardona and

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[137] This is framed by stage directions that insinuate Excels's declining speech and mental state. As Excels speaks with the reporter, Boadella interjects: "*(Su respuesta va adquiriendo los tintes de un largo monólogo)* […] *(Sus ideas fluyen más rápidas que sus palabras y empieza a hablar de forma atropellada.)*" […] "*La entrevista ha terminado, aunque el Excels sigue balbuceando una respuesta inacabable e incomprensible*" (101).

[138] The character Dr. Oriol is a reference to the Catalan psychiatrist Joan Obiols i Vié (1919-1980), who famously practiced psychodrama with his patients. During the 1970s, Boadella collaborated with Obiols, participating as an actor in his psychodramas.

Zahareas 34). Excels is not cured by the psychodrama, but he assumes the Padre Ubú persona that was intended to remain within the confines of the clinic. This reveals how Dr. Oriol takes possession of his mind and diminishes his agency, resulting in both Excels's grotesque metamorphosis and the play's progression into *esperpento*. In his study of Valle-Inclán, Lyon maintains "the characteristic humor of the *esperpento* focuses precisely on the discrepancy between man's heroic self-image and his essentially manipulated condition" (7). *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* features a similar incongruity between Excels's inner sense of self-importance as President of Catalonia and his controlled state under the psychiatrist's supervision. Lyon also proposes that in the *esperpento*, "the forces that manipulate the individual are external, social, and historical" (109). Similarly, the play's major grotesque comic effect arises from Dr. Oriol's use of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* to maneuver the President's subconscious demons. Upon seeking treatment, the already-degraded Catalan "hero" is completely "destroyed" by the external forces of his psychiatrist. After numerous sessions, Boadella's grotesque vision of Excels spirals out of control, as Dr. Oriol's therapeutic treatment causes him to personify the comically overstated brutality, megalomania, and grandiosity of the fictional Padre Ubú. Having been manipulated by the strings of his psychiatrist, Excels is physically and psychologically transformed into a monstrous *ubuesque* being—a dehumanized puppet.

Dr. Oriol's character has a direct connection with Pasqual Maremàgnum: the President's rival from the Socialist Party.[139] Maremàgnum only appears in Boadella's third *Ubú* play—in light of the impending change of ruler in Catalonia (Feldman, *In the Eye of the Storm* 72)—, and

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[139] "Maremàgnum" refers to Barcelona's massive oceanfront shopping center with the same name, built during Maragall's tenure as mayor. Feldman notes that "Maremàgnum" also suggests Pasqual Maragall's political discourse, which emphasizes Mediterranean identity over Catalan nationalism (*In the Eye of the Storm* 72).

he is a clear allusion to Pasqual Maragall, the former Mayor of Barcelona and member of the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC) who would in fact succeed Pujol as President.[140] Because of his political ideology and ambition, Excels views his adversary as a complete threat to his Catalan vision, and hence he is one of the primary triggers of his emotional distress. In the play, the same actor plays the roles of Dr. Oriol and Maremàgnum, and his character emerges in Excels's hallucinations and dreams, enabling a series of incidents in which the delusional President insists that his psychiatrist has transformed into his rival. On stage this is accomplished by the actor modifying his voice and removing his eyeglasses.[141] Conversely, the audience observes the actor alters his appearance, confirming that the metamorphosis is a sign of Excels's paranoia.

What is most striking about these bizarre encounters is their dialogue—Dr. Oriol begins by reprimanding his patient, yet with what Excels perceives as his transformation into Maremàgnum, the psychiatrist's words acquire a new connotation. He does not perceive this criticism to be his doctor's scrutiny, but rather projects onto psychiatrist the image of his political counterpart. In an early scene, Dr. Oriol attempts to address the President's fear of public criticism by insulting him with a variety of derogatory names. Excels becomes increasingly

[140] Dowling explains that the consistent failure of the PSC to win a Catalan election in the 1980s and early 1990s led to a leadership crisis within the party. The PSC's poor performance against Pujol in the 1995 election was due to its inability to distance itself from Prime Minister Felipe González and the PSOE, marred by corruption and scandal. "The search for a candidate that could beat Pujol," he notes, "resulted in the choice of Pasqual Maragall, former mayor of Barcelona and the architect of the city's hosting of the 1992 Olympics. Maragall had been a key rival to Pujol through his alternative power base in Barcelona city council. Thus began a new phase in the construction of political Catalanism" (139).

[141] For example, as indicated in the stage directions: "*El Excels sigue atentamente el diagnóstico del Dr. Oriol y observa aterrorizado cómo el psiquiatra va adquiriendo los rasgos físicos y el tono de voz de su más directo rival político: Pasqual Maremàgnum* [...] *El doctor se levanta y cuando se quita las gafas es la viva estampa de Maremàgnum*" (124).

agitated by these attacks, and after being called *polaco* ("inhabitant of Poland")—a common slur used to disparage non-Spanish speakers, particularly Catalans[142]—, he suddenly hallucinates that he is facing Maremàgnum rather than Dr. Oriol, listening in horror as his rival (Dr. Oriol) justifies the insult:

> Sí, polaco…, porque Cataluña será mestizo o no será, ¿no?..., nosotros venimos a hacer limpieza de las actitudes racistas. Somos tolerantes y solidarios. Y esta nueva Cataluña, esta nueva Cataluña…, la vamos a construir desde los barrios. ¿Y los protagonistas quiénes serán?..., en primer lugar los catalanes, después los castellanos […], los franceses, los árabes…, la lengua no tiene por qué ser un impedimento (128).

When Dr. Oriol later advises Excels to care more for his public image, he once again hallucinates that he is being scolded by his opponent, panicking as the psychiatrist warns that he will become: "el payaso del país… Has dejado a Cataluña exhausta, la has convertido en una Cataluña de tercera regional y te has doblegado a las imposiciones de las derechas españolistas" (146-7).[143] In both instances, Excels believes that his rival is denouncing his presidency, and detects the paradigm shift that a Maremàgnum government would represent—a pluralistic vision of Catalonia that contradicts his aspiration for linguistic and cultural purity. The significance of these encounters stems from Excels's imagination of his adversary. Though they unquestionably highlight his mental instability, there is also considerable symbolic weight in the perceived

[142] While its origins are unclear, "polaco" is generally interpreted as an allusion to both the Catalan people and language as differing from a Castilian vision of Spain. It is also unknown as to why Poland was chosen to emphasize the different language of the Catalan people, and why "polaco" is not used to refer to Basques or Galicians. The slur has also found its way into Spanish soccer, as Real Madrid fans commonly yell "Es polaco el que no bote" at their FC Barça opponents.

[143] Here Boadella refers to the Pacto del Majestic, a 1996 deal between the PP and the CiU, in which Pujol supported the inauguration of José María Aznar as President of Spain and Aznar in return gave more capacities to Catalonia and support to the CiU.

double identity of the psychiatrist. Because Dr. Oriol creates the circumstances that transform the President into a grotesque incarnate of Jarry's Père Ubu character, Excels's metamorphosis is ultimately the work of the Catalan political opposition.

During the President's initial consultation, Dr. Oriol takes note his emotional and psychological state, and quickly identifies the disorder from which he suffers. Per the doctor's diagnosis, Excels believes that he is destined go down in history and is exceedingly concerned about his personal and political legacy: "Mira, estas crisis, este estado de ansiedad, esto tiene un nombre. Se llama síndrome de inmortalidad…, y acostumbra a sucederles a grandes personajes de la historia… Mira, cuando Napoleón estaba en la isla de Santa Helena, dicen que le sucedía exactamente lo mismo" (130). Dr. Oriol then suggests that he can remedy the President's flaws through psychodrama, a treatment that involves acting (under the guidance of a psychiatrist) to address emotional concerns and personality issues. He explains that this would allow Excels to "representar, al menos en el terreno de la ficción [. . .] todas [s]us frustraciones. Tienen que salir los fantasmas, los demonios" (132). Likewise, Cardona and Zahareas argue that theatricality is one of most characteristic elements of the *esperpento* genre, as the combination of characters, dialogue, scenery, and stage directions provides the necessary "proporciones de espectáculo" to project "el dolor y la risa de la condición humana" (31). After stating that *Ubu Roi* would be an intriguing medium for the therapy, Dr. Oriol "casts" Excels and Excelsa in the roles of Padre Ubú and Madre Ubú. The drama's secondary parts are played by actors with no connection to the President and his wife, and by the psychiatrist on occasion. Dr. Oriol's most significant participation, however, is his role as director—he devises the scenes, gives instructions to Excels, and coaches him on his performance. From this position of power, he is the puppet

master and proceeds to manipulate the circumstances that engender Excels's grotesque metamorphosis.

Dr. Oriol's selection of *Ubu Roi* is not haphazard. After the initial consultation, he tells the other participants in the psychodrama that he intentionally chose Jarry's play because works such as *Macbeth* or Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* would not give him "el suficiente nivel de agresividad, de violencia, de megalomanía y, sobre todo, de brutalidad" that would be necessary to tackle Excels's self-image (136).[144] By stating that the only remedy for the President is for him to personify an exaggeratedly violent, cruel, and despotic character like Jarry's Père Ubu—who invaded Poland, assassinated its royal family, usurped the throne, and murdered much of its population—Dr. Oriol maintains that his patient harbors aggression, tyrannical feelings, and delusions of grandeur in his subconscious. While he is outwardly depressed about the end of his presidency, inside Excels is haunted by his desire for eternal, absolute power, and it is the function of the psychodrama to release such sentiments.

To better illustrate these feelings, Dr. Oriol has Excels and Excelsa wear grotesque costumes modeled after those from Jarry's play, asserting that the outfits will allow the President to remove himself from everyday life and connect with his subconscious. Both Excels and Excelsa's costumes are absurdly distorted visions of the body that transgress human form and temporarily transform them into ugly nonsensical creatures, and they insinuate the characteristic animalization of the *esperpento* genre. The pair wears formless white suits with exaggeratingly

[144] In the program of his first *Ubú* play, *Operació Ubú*, Boadella writes: "Éste debía ser el razonamiento seguido por el Dr. Oriol al basar su terapéutica psicodramática en este amplio personaje: Sacar la gran cantidad de Ubú inconsciente que el Excels llevaba dentro para que, desahogándolo en la clínica o en la escena, nos ahorráramos de sufrirlo en la realidad. Es, sin duda, una labor de civismo" (Racionero and Bartomeus 148). In the tradition of classical Greek theatre, his *Ubú* series provides a sense of catharsis. Watching Excels purge his inner Père Ubu thus allows Catalan audiences to laugh at the reality of their government rather than suffer.

oversized abdominal regions, and deformed leather masks with protruding beaks, and Excelsa's outfit also has massive naked breasts. In his analysis of Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Ralf Remshardt stresses that Père Ubu's ludicrous costume is central to his identification as a "degenerate monster-king" (179), and that the massive stomach symbolizes the character's divinity, monstrosity, despotism, and violent, morally bankrupt nature (178). Remshardt's reading of Jarry can also be applied to Boadella's adaptation of the original Ubu character. Though Excels is initially reluctant to wear the grotesque costume, Dr. Oriol convinces him otherwise, proclaiming that "[a]l ser un vestido así, te aísla un poco de la imagen que tienes de ti mismo" (142). This assertion is entirely ironic; while the monstrous white suit and mask do provide a sense of escapism, the outfit does not isolate Excels from the impression that he has of himself. Rather it ridiculously visualizes his inflated political ambition—the costume ridiculously signals the disparity between Excels's heightened opinion of himself and his fading power. Furthermore, the link between the grotesque Père Ubu suit and Excels's nationalist vision is illustrated by the way that the President ultimately decides to sport the outfit, exclaiming: "Y si lo hago, lo hago por el país. ¡Lo hago por Cataluña!, ¡por Cataluña!" (142).

At the start of the first psychodrama session depicted in the play, Dr. Oriol makes two of the participating actors show Excels and Excelsa how to perform their roles as if they were puppets. Here Boadella indicates the characters' temporary puppet-like state in the stage directions, in which Actors 2 and 3 grab hold of the ridiculously costumed President and his wife, move their arms, and recite their Jarry-inspired lines for them in caricaturesque voices. [145] By manipulating the President and his wife's inanimate bodies and voices, the actors transform

[145] In the stage directions, Boadella details the logistics of the transformation of Excels and Excelsa into puppets: "*El Dr. Oriol da una palmada al aire para indicar que empiece el psicodrama. Los Actores 2 y 3 se sitúan detrás de la Excelsa y el Excels, respectivamente* […] *El Actor 2 mueve los brazos de la Excelsa y hablará con voz aflautada. El Actor 3 sostiene los brazos del Excels y hablará con voz grave*" (143).

the two into living puppets. At this point, their transformation is only temporary—they are quickly released from the actors' grasps and resume reciting their own lines—, yet it is a precursor to the control that Dr. Oriol will hold over Excels.

As I describe in Chapter 1, puppets and puppet-like characters are essential to the grotesque element of the *esperpento*. Similarly, Virginia Higginbotham notes that tradition of puppet theater is characterized by its "appeal of primitive make-believe" (*The Comic Spirit* 71), and for dramatists such as Jarry and Valle-Inclán, "puppetry was a technique by which the deceptions of a corrupt society were stripped away to reveal its fundamental crudity and baseness" (73). She also argues that the use of puppets and puppet-like characters provided these playwrights with "limitless possibilities for satire of the rank primitiveness of so-called civilized man" (74).[146] In this sense, Excels and Excelsa's puppet-like portrayals of Padre Ubú and Madre Ubú denote crude, primitive, and one-dimensional representations of wickedness (just like Jarry's Père Ubu). By means of Actors 2 and 3, Dr. Oriol transforms Excels into a dehumanized puppet—an "unrestrained portrayal of villainy" (Higginbotham, *The Comic Spirit* 71)—even before the President begins to embody the grotesque Padre Ubú persona.

Immediately after this puppet-like performance, Dr. Oriol has Excels reenact Père Ubu's seizure of Poland, instructing him that "alimenta[ando] tus deseos de matar al rey, con la ayuda de los militares y usurpar su lugar, esto te ayudará a limpiar los rincones de violencia que te quedan por ahí dentro" (148). Here Boadella capitalizes upon Jarry's storyline to mock Catalan/Spanish relations, playing with the derogatory connotation of the slur *polaco* by

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[146] In *Ubu Roi*, Jarry directed his actors to mimic the rigid movements of wooden dolls, and looked to the abusive characters of French *guignol* shows for his own "unrestrained portrayal of villainy" (Higginbotham, *The Comic Spirit* 71-2). Described as a Spanish inheritor of Jarry's theater (71-2), Valle-Inclán reported that his *esperpentos* were intended to be performed by puppets as to bring out the comic aspects of tragic situations (Lyon 105).

associating it with Spanish rather than Catalan. When Dr. Oriol summons the *polacos*, he refers to them as "El rey Juan Carnaval," "La reina Sofea," and "El príncipe Feliz" (148-9), clearly alluding to Juan Carlos, Sofía, and Felipe. Thus, when Excels feigns overthrowing and assassinating the "Polish Royal Family," this simulates his conquest of the Spanish monarchy and his assumption of the most emblematically powerful position in Spain.[147] By obliterating the "Polish Royal Family"—an allegorically Spanish institution—Excels eliminates the sole obstacle that impedes him from achieving absolute power in Spain. Interestingly, Boadella later reverts to the conventional association between Catalan and *polaco*. After Excels Padre Ubú becomes King, "Poland" suddenly exhibits Catalan characteristics—for example, the *himno nacional de Polonia* is a modified version of the FC Barcelona anthem—that bitingly indicate the President's excessive nationalism, sweeping rule, and even tyranny.

In the second psychodrama session depicted in the play, Dr. Oriol prompts Excels to do away with his opponents (mimicking Père Ubu's murdering of the Polish population), and what follows is a ludicrous act in which he simulates their assassinations. Each representative of the opposition is given a name alluding to political parties and trade unions—from both Catalonia and other parts of Spain—that differ ideologically from Pujol's CiU: Ezquerra repuritana de Polonia, the Izquierda "hundida," Coalición banana, Peligro popular, Pepesoe, Sindicato camisones horteras, and Frente de liberación guay. This detail demonstrates Excels's narcissism—even at this late stage of his presidency, he still believes that his nationalist and

[147] When it is time to "kill" the Polish monarchy, Dr. Oriol informs Excels that this will permit him to "terminar de descargar toda la represión que [lleva] dentro" (155). What follows is an absurd encounter in which Excels assassinates El rey Juan Carnaval, La reina Sofea, and El príncipe Feliz by shooting them as if he were playing a carnival shootout game. Boadella describes this setup in the stage directions: "*El Rey, la Reina y el Príncipe aparecen detrás de la mesa. Sus movimientos son mecánicos cual si se tratara de muñecos de feria*" (156). Excels's reaction is that of a child who has won a game, exclaiming: "¡Bieeen!, ¡los he tocado!, ¡los he tocado!, ¡los he tocado!..., ¡quiero el premio!, ¡quiero el premio!" (156).

political discourses triumph over all other factions within the country. Here Dr. Oriol characterizes Excels as sadistic tyrant and aggrandizes his inner ambitions, yet he does so in a sardonic manner given the truly ridiculous way he tries to murder his opponents. Then, he "kills" the opposition in an absurdist fashion by impaling them one-by-one with a broomstick to create "*un gigantesco pincho moruno*" (172-3) of his enemies, and then maneuvering the broomstick in a way that mimics sexual intercourse. They clearly take pleasure from this bizarre act, which Boadella indicates in the stage directions: "*El Excels, con un empujón, extrae el largo mango de la escoba y libera a los empalados. Pero éstos vuelven a ofrecerle sus culos para gozar de nuevo con otro 'penetrante' escobazo*" (173). The sadomasochistic undertones of this incident provide a satirical vision of Excels's ideal relationship with his enemies—they enthusiastically submit to his dominance. This image could not differ more from his perceived encounters with Maremàgnum, during which he is struck with fear and anxiety.

At this point, Excels's transformation into an *ubuesque* figure begins to transcend the parameters of Dr. Oriol's therapy. Boadella hints at this idea in earlier scenes, when the President nervously confesses that he had an erection as he simulated the execution of the Polish royal family. Later, he remarks that his dreams have started to parallel the content of the psychodrama: "Desde que hago estas sesiones, paso malas noches. Sueño que soy el rey, que mato a la oposición y me levanto sudado y angustiado" (165). Yet in the abovementioned scene with the broomstick, Excels, acting independently, strays from Dr. Oriol's directions by eagerly overdramatizing the act, revealing that he has begun to internalize Père Ubu's personality, and that his mind is being manipulated by Dr. Oriol's therapeutic practice. While confronting one member of the opposition, Excels strangles him and screams: "¡[M]uere, guarro, asqueroso, infame, fuera!" (171)—to the point that the actor comments Excels is hurting him. He also hits

Excelsa with the broomstick used to impale the opposition, and when left alone a few lines later—after the therapy session has concluded—, Excels puts on his wife's Ubu mask and modifies his voice to caustically imitate her (175).

Dr. Oriol has a decreased presence in the play's final psychodrama session, and does not give nearly as many directions to Excels as in previous scenes. Accordingly, at this point Boadella gives the impression that the President's absurdist actions during his therapy are now of his own device, and that the psychiatrist and actors have begun to follow his lead (in contrast to the earlier sessions, in which he carefully abided by Dr. Oriol's directions). In this scene, Excels's aspirations for power surpass the position of King and he simulates being elected Pope. Sporting a bed sheet as if it were a vestment, he exclaims: "Después de reinar amorosa y pacíficamente he decidido abandonar los bienes polacos y las pompas terrenales, para dedicarme a la vida y gloria espirituales" (207). What follows is an outlandish sequence in which the psychiatrist and the actors dress as Cardinals and pretend to declare him Pope "Jordi Bonsái Primero" (a name chosen by Excels himself, and a humorous allusion to Jordi Pujol's short physical stature). Dr. Oriol plays along with Excels's ambition, and proceeding with the papal "inauguration," he climbs onto a table to place a crown on his patient.

At this point, Boadella designates in the stage directions that Excels removes his Ubú mask just prior to his coronation (210). By doing so he symbolically halts the psychodrama, indicating that Dr. Oriol rests the papal crown on Excels himself rather than his Padre Ubú character. Consequently, the President quickly transforms into a ridiculous clerical figure, describing his desire to communicate with "la humanidad entera desde el balcón de la plaza de San Pedro, en catalán…, y en latín" (speaking in Latin while he departs the stage, as if he were a priest) (211). In this sense, Excels does not return to the realm of his everyday life prior to his

exit, and for the remainder of the play he remains in Dr. Oriol's fictional world of *Ubu Roi*. In her study of Boadella's second *Ubú* play, *Ubú president*, Feldman maintains that by the end of that work Excels's "alucinaciones ficticias empiezan a permear y contaminar la realidad y viceversa, difuminando así la distinción entre *performance* y vida real. […] La terapia del presidente, por lo tanto, sólo produce más confusión y vergüenza" (*In the Eye of the Storm* 182). Similarly, at this point in *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya*, the esperpentic nature of the psychodrama becomes fused with reality. Dr. Oriol's therapy does not remedy Excels's psychological issues, but instead causes the grotesque figure of Padre Ubú to completely take over his consciousness.

We perceive the extent of this transformation in the two scenes that follow. During the first, Excels receives a visit from three fictitious Catalan business owners (played by the actors) claiming to represent *La Confederación Catalana d'Empresarios de las Gomas y el Látex*, who present him with an inflatable globe that shows the breadth of the Catalan latex industry worldwide.[148] What follows is an absurd dream-like encounter: Excels sees a replica of himself playing with the globe, bouncing and kicking it as if he were a child playing with a ball (mirroring a similar scene from Charlie Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator*). Here the President himself remains frozen as he watches his double in awe. When his replica disappears, he attempts to hug the globe, yet it bursts and throws him to the floor. This outcome contrasts with the image of power personified by Excels's double, whose playfulness is a ludicrous, grandiose illustration of the President's megalomaniac nature and self-image. The real Excels, conversely, is unable to play with the globe as he wishes, which suggests his rapidly diminishing power.

[148] Here the "businessmen" describe that the globe is covered with "pequeñas banderas catalanas [en] todos los lugares del mundo donde hay ubicadas empresas dedicadas a las gomas y látex catalanes. Como puede ver son numerosos en los cinco continentes. Se podría decir que gracias a la economía productiva catalana, en Cataluña nunca se pone el sol" (214).

Although the audience has the impression that Excels will finally become conscious of his decadence, immediately thereafter he speaks with his bodyguards in the modified voice of Padre Ubú, signaling the irreversible state of his evolution.

The play's penultimate scene illustrates this grotesque transformation even further. Acting autonomously, Excels puts on his Padre Ubú mask and climbs onto his "lámpara de Gaudí"—a modernist-style lamp with the form of a giant swing—that descends from his office ceiling. Believing he is God, from his literally elevated position he comments: "Soy Dios y quiero que me adoren [...] Soy Dios omnipotente y padre de todos los catalanes" (218). Excels then removes his mask and continues the ridiculous charade by instructing his staff: "Sería conveniente que adoraseis a Dios vuestro señor, que soy yo concretamente [...] creo que delante del Señor tendríais que estar de rodillas" (219). He directs his First Minister Arturito Mas[149] to push him on the swing, and his advisors to sing to and glorify him—all of whom comply with his commands. This absurd scene portrays Excels's most dramatic embodiment of the *ubuesque* character. Convinced that has transcended from the realm of humanity into the divine, he is now a living caricature of the all-encompassing power that he aspired for during his presidency. Furthermore, here Boadella criticizes Catalonia's steadfast admiration of its leader: all Excels's devotees encourage his manias, satirizing the Catalan people's continuous high regard for Pujol. Because of Dr. Oriol's previous manipulation of his agency, Excels is out of control and remains in the *ubuesque* state, revealing his authentic grotesque self.

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[149] A reference to Artur Mas, who would not win the 2003 election due to the CiU's failure to receive an absolute majority. Mas would eventually hold the office of President of Catalonia from 2006-2010.

The play's concluding scene transports the action to the mountain of Montserrat.[150] Surrounded by icons from Catalan culture—Montserrat Caballé, Pau Casals,[151] FC Barça football players, a monk from Santa Maria de Montserrat, a *caganer*, etc.—Excels begins a speech, intending to outline his current political agenda. He states:

> Estamos aquí, entre estas montañas sagradas de Montserrat, en un acto de adhesión inquebrantable, no tan sólo a mi persona, sino a Cataluña entera… Señores conciudadanos, ¿qué hemos de hacer?, ¿qué hemos de hacer? Contra las campañas de desprestigio y deformación de la imagen de Cataluña y de mi persona, lo subrayo, lo subrayo…, ¡mantenernos firmes y seguros! […] Porque yo, personalmente, y nuestro partido tenemos un punto, sólo un punto… (226-7)

Excels, however, is unable to share his plan with his admiring public, for the arrival of Maremàgnum abruptly halts his discourse.[152] Entering on a scooter—which indicates his "fresh" outlook in comparison to Excels's tired one—he continues the speech where the President left off: "…Un punto. Un punto que nos ha costado mucho conseguir, pero que finalmente hemos logrado. Catalanes, ya estoy aquí. Y vengo para deciros que mi socialismo os promete casa, huerto y patinete […] Y es que tal como decía Pujol […] ¡Por Cataluña! Vamos a poner en marcha este país con modernidad del siglo XXI" (227).

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[150] Montserrat is a mountain outside of Barcelona with great spiritual and cultural significance to the Catalan people. It is home to the Benedictine monastery Santa Maria de Montserrat, which houses the Virgin of Montserrat.

[151] Caballé is a famous opera singer and Casals was a renowned cellist (both from Catalonia).

[152] Boadella indicates in the stage directions that Excels's public kneels in a quasi-religious act of admiration: "*Los personajes típicos anteriormente señalados se arrodillan ante el Excels en actitud devota*" (226).

Boadella, however, not just declare Maremàgnum as the new President of Catalonia—he also suggests that the new President will not differ from Excels despite his contrasting political ideology. Referring to him as "*el nuevo Excels*" (227), he recycles elements from his characterization of the former President in his presentation of the new ruler. Maremàgnum is repetitive and speaks in an undecipherable gibberish, has an adoring public, and by the work's final lines swings from the "lámpara de Gaudí" as he proclaims his plans for Catalonia (227-8). In this sense, *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* indicates that the grotesque nature of Excels's presidency will persist during the new socialist regime. Adapting Valle-Inclán's characteristic aesthetic to the conditions of post-Franco Catalonia, here Boadella maintains that the tragic sense of Catalan life "solo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada" (Valle-Inclán 168). Having been incidentally associated with Excels's conversion into a grotesque ubuesque ruler (via the President's hallucinations), as well as the play's aesthetic transformation into *esperpento*, Maremàgnum assumes Excels's position after his destruction, suggesting that the esperpentic cycle of Catalan life will indeed continue.

Juan Marsé's *El amante bilingüe,* Bigas Luna's *La teta y la luna*, and Albert Boadella's *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* coincide in their grotesque visions of the Catalan national discourse of Jordi Pujol's government—rooted in the vernacular language, cultural tradition, and bourgeois values. In his novel, Marsé challenges the propagation of the Pujolian Catalan imaginary: *El amante bilingüe* presents the renewed nationalist vision as being destructive to the city's popular classes, celebrated in the novel for their bilingualism, social horizontality, and interculturalism. The working-class protagonist's absurd search for his ex-wife—a satire of Catalan nationalism—serves to caution against the pursuit of the new Catalan

imaginary: Juan Marés's obsessive chase of Norma Valentí via a fabricated *charnego* persona results in both his madness and the disintegration of his character into a grotesque pastiche of Iberian identities. Bigas Luna also resorts to the aesthetic of the grotesque in his film, but to condemn the Europeanist ambitions that dominate Pujol's political discourse. In *La teta y la luna*, he distorts the conventional visions of European and French sophistication via the scatological figures of Maurice and Estrellita, and uses the film's Catalan characters' unwavering admiration of the grotesque performers to problematize the celebration of Catalonia as a modern and intrinsically European civilization. Lastly, in *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya,* Boadella makes use of the *esperpento* genre to undermine (what he perceives as) Pujol's inflated sense of self-importance, and to insinuate that the nationalist fervor of the Pujol era would continue despite the impending regime change in Catalonia. In employing the aesthetic of the grotesque to confront the Pujolian Catalanist vision, Marsé, Bigas Luna, and Boadella dismantle the construction of the Catalan national identity that was fundamental to the innovation of Catalonia in the aftermath of the Franco dictatorship.

Chapter 3: The Grotesque and Historical Memory

In the previous sections, I have elucidated two different grotesque narratives that contended official discourses of the Transition and its aftermath. In the first chapter, I studied how a series of grotesque cultural artifacts made between 1975 and 1984 criticized the presumed modernization and democratization of the period. Against the grain, their authors presented as grotesque the survival and continuity of traditional Spain and Francoism. In the second chapter, I explicated how a set of texts produced between 1990 and 2001 subverted the official narrative of Catalan identity instituted after Franco's death via grotesque satires of cultural normalization initiatives, Europeanist ambitions, and the political persona of Jordi Pujol.

In this third section, I examine how Laila Ripoll's theater play *Santa Perpetua* (2010), Álex de la Iglesia's film *Balada triste de trompeta* (2010), and Hernán Migoya's novel *Una, grande y zombi* (2011) address the deliberate suppression of historical memory that defined the Transition. In these works, the grotesque is the key element employed to question and denounce the negative social and political impact of the Pact of Forgetting in twenty-first century Spain. In my analysis of *Santa Perpetua*, I study how Ripoll's grotesque characterization of the three protagonist siblings dismantles the belief that the intentional silencing of the past was fundamental to post-Franco Spain's leap into modernity. In *Balada triste de trompeta*, De la Iglesia employs grotesque circus imagery—a pair of deformed, antagonistic clowns, symbolic of the dictatorship and the Second Republic—to question the declaration of political amnesty for both sides of the Civil War. Whereas the Francoist clown, Sergio, is presented as malicious by nature, his Republican counterpart, Javier, undergoes an evil, grotesque metamorphosis because of the trauma inflicted on him by the Franco regime. De la Iglesia's grotesque representation of

this exacerbated confrontation, which ultimately enables Sergio and Javier's mutual destruction, and scorns the unjust nature of the 1977 *Ley de Amnistía*. I conclude this chapter with a reading of *Una, grande y zombi*, a novel set amidst the widespread polarization of José Luis Zapatero-era Spain. I interpret the depiction of a massive Francoist zombie apocalypse as evidence of the failure of the Transition's reconciliatory aims and its option for oblivion. Migoya critiques the Transition's narrative by portraying Franco as the mastermind of the zombie invasion and Manuel Fraga as the original living-dead, who remained loyal to the dictator for decades despite the arrival of democracy, and plotted his resurrection and the subsequent return of his tyranny. Therefore, behind the discourse of forgetting to move on lies a hidden Francoist agenda and the potential danger of the spread of ultranationalist sentiments.

3.1 The Role of Historical Memory in the Transition to Democracy

In the aftermath of a violent, authoritarian government in which human rights violations have been committed, there is an unresolved matter—how to address the legacy of the recent past. In this vein, Patrizia Violi has argued that any transition to democracy presents

> inevitable 'memory management' problems, given the complicity with and even active support for the past regime among many members of society. There is always a clash between opposing and contrasting memories of different groups of social agents, not only victims and persecutors but also supporters of the regime who simply kept silent. Transition requires the ability to reconstruct a shared national narrative as a basis for the establishment of a new society. (117)

During the Spanish Transition, however, the objective was to avoid these "memory management problems," and instead concentrate on the future of the nation. This does not imply that the

traumatic legacies of the Civil War and *franquismo* did not play a crucial role in the design and execution of the Transition, as Paloma Aguilar Fernández has noted:

> La presencia de la memoria de la guerra durante la transición fue abrumadora, lo cual es sumamente comprensible; por un lado, se evocaba con un fin aleccionador, como aquello que nunca debía repetirse; por otro, también ocurría que el recuerdo de los vencedores, silenciado durante tantos años, comenzaba a abrirse paso tras la muerte de Franco. La dictadura, sin embargo, estaba demasiado próxima como para que fuera posible articular una reflexión serena sobre la misma; además, *se anticipaba que no se alcanzaría un consenso equivalente en torno a ella*. En cualquier caso, el carácter traumático de ambos recuerdos […] aconsejaba la máxima prudencia. ("Presencia" 253-4, emphasis my own)[153]

Following a military dictatorship, an autocracy led by a strongman, or a one-party totalitarian regime, it is not unusual for a rising government, in an exercise of realpolitik that ensures the viability of the new administration, to maintain members of the previous order and even preserve certain institutions. In the case of Spain, a perceived need for prudence and accord—rooted in the fear of a renewed fratricidal conflict and in the desire to promote political reconciliation and stability—shaped the government's approach to historical memory in the immediate aftermath of the Franco regime (Colomer 174-5; Aguilar Fernández, *Memoria y olvido* 56).[154] Consequently,

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[153] For more on the role of memory in Spain's Transition, see: Colomer; Aguilar Fernández ("Justice" and *Memory and Amnesia*); Medina Domínguez; Song.

[154] Per Aguilar Fernández, the term "historical memory" is used when a memory "atañe a un acontecimiento cuya relevancia excede la que pueda tener para un individuo particular, o para su entorno más próximo, o, dicho de otra forma, cuando se trata de un hecho que tiene un transcendencia pública incuestionable para quienes comparten una identidad común o están adscritos a un mismo grupo" ("Memoria histórica" 768-9). In the case of Spain, she argues, historical memory "ha estado siempre ligado a acontecimientos como la Guerra Civil o el franquismo, y su uso ha tenido a adquirir tientes reivindicativos" ("Memoria histórica" 769).

the principal players of the Transition aimed to establish a consensus about the past based on deliberate forgetting. As I will outline in this section, their intentions came to fruition in the *Pacto del Olvido* ("Pact of Forgetting")—the unwritten political decision to avoid and disremember the legacies of the Civil War and the Franco regime in the interest of consolidating Spain's democratic future—, and the *Ley de Amnistía*—the 1977 law that prohibited criminal investigation of crimes committed during the Civil War and the dictatorship.[155] Both measures, which were agreed upon by left and right-wing factions alike, were conceived with the objective of reconciling the nation and with "pointing Spaniards firmly towards the making of history, not the reliving of it" (Golob 127).

The nature of the Transition conditioned how Spain addressed its past during the early years of democracy (Colomer 9-23; Aguilar Fernández, "Justice" 94-9; Humlebæk, "Pacto de Olvido" 186-9). As I delineate in Chapter 1, the Transition was carried out by reformers from within the Franco regime in tandem with members of the democratic opposition. Despite their political differences, the main actors of the Transition did agree that the Civil War was a national tragedy for which all Spaniards were to blame, and that was never to be repeated (Aguilar, "Presencia" 251; Richards 29). However, they did not share a common memory of *franquismo* and were therefore unable to subscribe to a universal interpretation of the period (Humlebæk, "Pacto de Olvido" 188; de Diego 198).[156] It also must be noted that the Spanish democratization

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[155] The 1977 Amnesty Law was the third and most important measure on amnesty enacted after Franco's death. On November 25, 1975, King Juan Carlos I issued a decree with a general pardon ("Decreto 2940/1975, de 25 de noviembre, por el que se concede indulto general con motivo de proclamación de Su Majestad Don Juan Carlos de Borbón como Rey de España," *BOE*-A-1975-24188). On July 30, 1976, Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez issued a decree giving amnesty to political prisoners ("Real Decreto-Ley 10/1976, de 30 de julio, sobre amnistía," *BOE*-A-1976-14963). Lastly, On October 14, 1977, Parliament passed the Amnesty Law ("Ley 46/1977, de 15 de octubre, de Amnistía," *BOE*-A-1977-24937).
[156] Along these lines, Estrella de Diego affirms: "Neither the left nor the right "seemed to accept [Franco] as an essential part of their respective narratives. The Left agreed not to mention his repression and war

process unfolded amidst a backdrop of civil unrest (Aguilar Fernández, "Justice" 94-9; Encarnación, "Reconciliation" 439-40; Humlebæk, *Inventing the Nation* 158-9). Although this era has been venerated as "the peaceful transition *par excellence*," over 460 violent deaths for political purposes were registered between the years 1975 and 1990, and nearly 400 people died in terrorist acts committed by right and left wing groups alike (Aguilar Fernández, "Justice" 97).[157] These incidents evoked the traumatic memories of the Civil War as well as the conflict-ridden Republic, and generated anxieties that the restoration of democracy would spark a return to the pre-war scenario of violence and polarization (Humlebæk, *Inventing the Nation* 158).[158] Because of this ideological division and internal conflict, the issue of historical memory was handled with trepidation (Colomer 174-5). The government sought to avoid turning the past into a political weapon, an act that many feared would make "peaceful dialogue impossible among

crimes, while the Right felt that he had nothing to do with their renewed conservative project. One has the impression that in the need to rewrite the 'new Spain,' Franco was always part of someone else's narrative" (198).

[157] Omar Encarnación expands upon this idea, explaining: "[T]he very violent context in which democratization unfolded in Spain [belies] the country's reputation as a case study of moderation during the transition to democracy. In fact, violence was more pervasive in post-Franco Spain than in revolutionary Portugal, where the transition to democracy […] witnessed workers' rebellions and land seizures not seen in Western Europe since the Spanish Civil War. The opening salvo of the violence that engulfed the Spanish transition was the [1973] murder of […] Prime Minister Carrero Blanco […], which unleashed a rash of political assassinations that eerily mirrored the one that triggered the Civil War in 1936 […] A direct consequence of this political mayhem was El Tejerazo, the failed military coup of February 1981 led by Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero, which sought to undo the democratic transition" ("Reconciliation" 440).

[158] Helen Graham expands on this idea, noting that the anxieties at the governmental level were accompanied by the widespread fears of "ordinary Spaniards" who had been complicit in the repression of the Franco regime: "not only the civilian militia, or local priests across Spain, but hundreds of thousands of people who for political reasons and many other sorts of reasons, had responded to the regime's enthusiastic encouragement to denounce their neighbors, acquaintances and often even family members—denunciations for which no corroboration was either sought or required. So, it was widespread social fear that underlay the 'pact of silence': the fears of those who were complicit, the fear and guilt of the families and heirs of those who were denounced and murdered, as well as those who were denounced and murdered. Fear, in short, of the consequences of reopening old wounds that the social and cultural policies of Francoism had, decade on decade, expressly and explicitly prevented from healing" (324).

the heirs of the ideological opponents in the Civil War" (Aguilar Fernández, *Memory and Amnesia* 269).

Rather than confronting the legacies of the war and *franquismo* directly, Spain opted to prioritize national reconciliation—the restoration of friendly relations, or the making of one view or belief compatible with another.[159] During the Transition, principles such as consensus, fraternity, and dialogue came to occupy "un lugar fundamental en la construcción y el asentamiento de una democracia sólida, donde aparentemente no hay vencedores ni vencidos" (Yeste 7). Political leaders recognized the weight of history, yet they addressed it "en términos de borrarlo, enterrarlo, superarlo. Borrar el pasado para posibilitar la reconciliación fue la sustancia de aquel debate" (Juliá, "Echar el olvido" [2002]). Humlebæk argues that in the end, the legacies of the war and *franquismo* were "secondary to the superior goal of reconciling the nation and establishing democracy" ("Pacto de Olvido" 186-87). Wanting to overcome the fraternal division, polarization, and confrontation that had defined the previous decades, the new regime attempted to create a consensus about the past based on voluntary forgetting (Cebrián 14; Juliá, "Echar el olvido" [2002]; Desfor Edles 44; Encarnación, "Reconciliation" 439).

The Spanish Transition's approach to historical memory was encapsulated in the Pact of Forgetting, an unwritten political decision through which all political factions informally agreed to "forget" the legacy of the war and the dictatorship in hope of securing a pluralistic government, preventing the repetition of history, and focusing on the future.[160] As Jo Labanyi explains, the Pact of Forgetting allowed Spain to paint the Transition as a "break from the past," which would permit all involved parties "to claim that Spain was freeing itself from nearly forty

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[159] For studies of national reconciliation during the Transition, see: Cebrián; Desfor Edles; Yeste.

[160] For studies of the Pact of Forgetting, see: Aguilar Fernández *(Memory and Amnesia*); Alonso and Muro*;* Labanyi ("Modernity"); Humlebæk *("*Pacto de Olvido").

years of dictatorship, [and] that the country was making a 'leap' into modernity—something which […] is conventionally seen as requiring a rupture with the past" ("Modernity" 94). Similarly, Vilarós maintains that this act "surgió no como explicitación de una estrategia sociopolítica, sino como gesto a la vez visceral y necesario que […] permitió a la sociedad española pasar por una brutal dictadura lateralmente moderna y, por tanto, políticamente aislada y obsoleta, al circuito económico, cultural y político que caracteriza al paradigma posmoderno que nos ha tocado vivir" (16). The Pact of Forgetting did not presuppose "the extinction of memory but rather a denial of its relevance in a situation conditioned by political will" (Resina, *Ghost* 15). Critics believe that the agreement subsequently established a culture of amnesia in democratic Spanish society, through which the Civil War and the Franco regime "effectively became taboo" (Ferrán 23; Encarnación, "Reconciliation" 436-7). On the contrary, Santos Juliá has famously noted the paradox of this idea, and contends that the Spanish expression "echar al olvido"—meaning "[o]lvidar voluntariamente, mandar al olvido" ("Echar el olvido" [2003] 110)—better describes the Transition's handling of the past.[161] In this sense, Spain did not truly forget the war and *franquismo*, but rather opted to cast those traumatic memories into oblivion, and prevent them from shaping the future (Juliá, "Echar el olvido" [2003] 109-110; Labanyi, "Modernity" 93; Faber 207).[162]

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[161] Questioning the use of the word "amnesia" vis-à-vis post-Franco Spanish society, Juliá posits: "Alguien que sufre amnesia no recuerda y se dice de él que ha olvidado; en este sentido, olvidar es dejar de tener en la memoria o en el afecto algo previamente registrado […] Pero cuando uno quiere olvidar conscientemente es porque el recuerdo sigue vivo, porque conserva el registro de lo sucedido: nadie quiere olvidar aquello de lo que efectivamente se ha olvidado" ("Echar el olvido" [2003] 109-110).

[162] In this vein, an October 15, 1977 editorial article in *El País* asserts that "[l]a España democrática debe, desde ahora, mirar hacia adelante, olvidar las responsabilidades y los hechos de la guerra civil, hacer abstracción de los cuarenta años de dictadura. La mirada hacia el pasado sólo debe tener como propósito la reflexión sobre las causas de la catástrofe y la forma de impedir su repetición. Un pueblo ni puede ni debe carecer de memoria histórica; pero ésta debe servirle para alimentar proyectos pacíficos de convivencia hacia el futuro y no para nutrir rencores hacia el pasado" ("Amnistía al fin").

In October 1977, the Pact of Forgetting was given a legal basis under the *Ley de Amnistía*.[163] This official measure granted amnesty to "[t]odos los actos de intencionalidad política, cualquiera que fuese su resultado, tipificados como delitos y faltas realizados con anterioridad al día quince de diciembre de mil novecientos setenta y seis" ("Ley 46/1977, de 15 de octubre, de Amnistía").[164] Although the Amnesty Law resulted in the release of imprisoned anti-Franco activists (one of the most important demands of the opposition) and allowed for the return of exiles from the Civil War, it also led to impunity of human rights violations committed during *franquismo*, and thereby protected the perpetrators of the dictatorship against prosecution (Aguilar Fernández, "Justice, Politics, and Memory" 102-05; Jimeno 72-8; Escudero Alday 174-5). In this sense, no retroactive judicial measures were taken against the Franco regime and there was no transitional justice during Spain's passage from dictatorship to democracy (Aguilar Fernández, "Justice, Politics, and Memory" 102-5; Humlebæk, "Pacto de Olvido" 188-9; Escudero Alday 174-5).[165] Rather, as Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink describe, the Amnesty Law became the ultimate "guarantor of the transition's consensus not to look back" (2). Within the

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[163] For studies of the Amnesty Law, see, for example: Encarnación ("Reconciliation"); Humlebæk ("Pacto de Olvido"); Escudero Alday; Jimeno.

[164] The second article of the Amnesty Law details these crimes: "En todo caso están comprendidos en la amnistía: a) Los delitos de rebelión y sedición, así como los delitos y faltas cometidos con ocasión o motivo de ellos, tipificados en el Código de Justicia Militar. b) La objeción de conciencia a la prestación del servicio militar, por motivos éticos o religiosos. c) Los delitos de denegación de auxilio a la Justicia por la negativa a revelar hechos de naturaleza política, conocidos en el ejercicio profesional. d) Los actos de expresión de opinión, realizados a través de prensa, imprenta o cualquier otro medio de comunicación. e) Los delitos y faltas que pudieran haber cometido las autoridades, funcionarios y agentes del orden público, con motivo u ocasión de la investigación y persecución de los actos incluidos en esta Ley. f) Los delitos cometidos por los funcionarios y agentes del orden público contra el ejercicio de los derechos de las personas" ("Ley 46/1977, de 15 de octubre, de Amnistía," *BOE*-A-1977-24937).

[165] Rafael Escudero Alday describes "transitional justice" as the "measures which, legally articulating the rights to truth, justice, and compensation, are to be adopted in processes of political transition from dictatorships where human rights were seriously breached to democracies that are the guarantors of international law and human rights" (174) For more on transitional justice, see Arthur (321-67).

context of the Transition, however, the declaration was celebrated “como un pacto de reconciliación entre los bandos enfrentados en la guerra civil” (Juliá, “Echar el olvido” [2003] 106). The law was well-supported by the Spanish public and government alike—after Franco’s death, 61% of Spaniards had approved of the idea of “blanket amnesty” (Wert Ortega 74-5; Encarnación, “Reconciliation” 442). An editorial article published in *El País* on October 15, 1977 famously commended it as “un acto excepcional, justificado por la razón de Estado y por la necesidad de hacer borrón y cuenta nueva de acontecimientos tan cruentos y dolorosos para un pueblo como es una guerra civil—una guerra entre hermanos—y una larga dictadura” (“Amnistía al fin”). Likewise, in Parliament, the Amnesty Law received 296 votes in favor, 2 against, and 18 abstentions, with nearly all parties praising the measure as “an instrument of national reconciliation, intended to ‘close the past,’ ‘forget,’ and ‘start a new phase’” (Aguilar Fernández, “Justice, Politics, and Memory” 103).[166]

Because of the repressive character of the dictatorship and the future-oriented focus of the Transition, the traumatic memories of the Civil War and the Franco regime remained private matters for the duration of the twentieth century (Labanyi, “Politics of Memory” 120). It was not until after the year 2000 that Spain began to openly challenge the terms of the Pact of Forgetting, and gradually push the issue of historical memory into the public sphere (Labanyi, “Politics of Memory” 120; Alonso and Muro 5; Song 29). This change originally stemmed from civic groups

[166] During the voting on the Amnesty Law, Marcelino Camacho Abad (Partido Comunista de España) remarked: “Queremos abrir la vía a la paz y a la libertad. Queremos cerrar una etapa; queremos abrir otra. Nosotros, precisamente, los comunistas, que tantas heridas tenemos, que tanto hemos sufrido, hemos enterrado nuestros muertos y nuestros rencores” (Congreso de los Diputados, 1977: 960). Deputy José María Benegas (PSOE) stated: “[N]uestra mirada está orientada hacia el futuro,” and that the widespread support for the bill demonstrates “la voluntad de enterrar un pasado triste para la Historia de España y de construir otro diferente sobre presupuestos distintos, superando la división que ha sufrido el pueblo español en los últimos cuarenta años” (Congreso de los Diputados, 1977: 966). Deputy Xabier Arzalluz Antia (Minoría Vasco-Catalana) followed suit: “la amnistía es un camino de reconciliación, pero también de credibilidad democrática y de cambio de procederes” (Congreso de los Diputados, 1977: 969).

founded by grandchildren of war victims—such as the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (ARMH)—who demanded "moral and economic compensation for the death and repression of their relatives" (Alonso and Muro 5). Zapatero prioritized the recovery of historical memory upon entering office in 2004 (Encarnación, "Reconciliation" 452). The same year, the PSOE introduced a measure that would come to be known as the *Ley de Memoria Histórica* (Law of Historical Memory), which sought to recognize the victims of both sides of the Civil War, provide compensation to their descendants, condemn the Francoist government, finance the tracing and exhumation of mass graves, remove Francoist iconography from public spaces, and grant the right to return to the relatives of war exiles, among other initiatives (*BOE*-A-2007-22296).[167] As stated in its First Article, the Law of Historical Memory's objective was to

> reconocer y ampliar derechos a favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia, por razones políticas, ideológicas, o de creencia religiosa, durante la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura, promover su reparación moral y la recuperación de su memoria personal y familiar, y adoptar medidas complementarias destinadas a suprimir elementos de división entre los ciudadanos, todo ello con el fin de fomentar la cohesión y solidaridad entre las diversas generaciones de españoles en torno a los principios, valores y libertades constitucionales. (*BOE*-A-2007-22296)

The law, however, was met with great debate in the Spanish public and government alike, and in Parliament it faced particular resistance from the PP and the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya

[167] The official name of the measure is "Ley 52/2007, de 26 diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura" (*BOE*-A-2007-22296). For studies on the Law of Historical Memory and the responses to it, see: Encarnación, "Reconciliation" (451-3); Golob (136-8); Labanyi, "Politics of Memory" (119-24); Escudero Alday 174-98.

(ERC) (Encarnación, "Reconciliation" 453-4).[168] The fact that the Law of Historical Memory was debated so extensively, H. Rosi Song contends,

> confirmed the unresolved nature of the legacy of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship in Spanish society [… and] revealed a political impasse within which questioning of the past had become synonymous with criticising democracy in Spain: recognising the failure to address injustices committed in the past was seen as akin to admitting that the nation's political transformation was deficient (31).

The three works that I analyze in this chapter were released in the aftermath of the Law of the Historical Memory. I read Ripoll, De la Iglesia, and Migoya's texts within the context of the political debates that the law generated and as cultural responses to them. In this sense, I interpret *Santa Perpetua, Balada triste de trompeta*, and *Una, grande y zombi* as disruptive discourses, part of a new reality in which the long-standing, dominant narrative of the Pact of Forgetting was finally challenged and a variety of memory discourses entered into contention.

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[168] In a December 2006 *El País* article entitled "El proyecto de la Ley de Memoria Histórica divide al Congreso," PSOE senator and spokesperson Diego López Garrido supports the law that proposed by his party, and is quoted as stating: "La Ley significará sencillamente un paso más de nuestra democracia para proporcionar la reparación a las víctimas de una situación injusta […] La transición tuvo en la Ley de Amnistía -la primera ley de la democracia- un pilar fundamental. Pero no solucionó ni compensó todos los daños de personas que fueron objeto de sanciones radicalmente injustas y de quienes lucharon por la libertad contra la dictadura. Restañar esas heridas no va contra el espíritu de la Transición, sino justamente en esa misma línea de concordia y solidaridad" (Díez). The PP, on the other hand, was fervently opposed to the measure, viewing it as detrimental to the concordance achieved during the Transition. In the same article, PP senator and spokesperson Manuel Atencia is quoted as arguing: "Lo que se está haciendo es utilizar la historia como arma política. Esta ley es un golpe en la línea de flotación de la Transición. No hubo pacto de olvido, hubo olvido consciente, no se quería repetir los elementos que hicieron fracasar a España. Nuestro país pasó de la dictadura a la democracia con un pacto ejemplar. […] Las heridas ya quedaron cicatrizadas en la Transición. Chile encontró su propia fórmula de transición, pero nosotros hemos llegado mucho más lejos. En España el proceso ha fructificado bien, nos ha permitido progresar. Hicimos una mezcla de reforma y ruptura, reforma en lo jurídico y ruptura en lo político, y ha funcionado muy bien" (Díez).

3.2 *Santa Perpetua*

In *Santa Perpetua* (2010)—the final play in her *Trilogía de la memoria* series—Laila Ripoll (1964-) tells the story of an elderly clairvoyant, Perpetua, and her buffoonish brothers, Plácido and Pacífico, as they are forced to address their family's involvement in a Falangist mass execution during the Civil War.[169] At the behest of the domineering sister, the three siblings have sequestered themselves in a dilapidated rural mansion, where they live in an archaic "mundo de beatería y superstición" (Avilés Diz 347) and have virtually no contact with contemporary society. For years, the trio has masqueraded Perpetua as a "saint" who possesses visionary and healing powers, surviving off the profits from her visitors—women who are unable to become pregnant or find a husband, and devotees who want to "besar[le] el hábito y que les [bendiga] unas peladillas" (Ripoll 196). However, the three characters' routine lives abruptly change with Zoilo's arrival to the house. A mysterious man with an appearance reminiscent of Antonio Machado, Zoilo comes in pursuit of an ancient bicycle—a symbol for historical memory—that originally belonged to his family but has fallen into the female protagonist's hands. For reasons unclear to Plácido, Pacífico, and the audience alike, Perpetua adamantly refuses to return the object to its rightful owner. Her obstinacy—combined with Zoilo's determination to recover his family's property—leads to a series of disputes between the two characters, during which the significance of the bicycle is eventually revealed. As a young woman during the Civil War, Perpetua was enamored with Zoilo's father, who was already engaged to be married and did not return the sentiment. Determined to eliminate her rival and win over her love interest, she denounced the fiancé (Zoilo's mother) as a Republican sympathizer. Her ploy, however, was

[169] Ripoll's *Trilogía de la memoria* consists of three plays—conceived and represented individually—that treat questions of historical memory in Spain: *Atra Bilis (Cuando estemos más tranquilas)* (2001), *Los niños perdidos* (2005), and *Santa Perpetua* (2011).

unsuccessful—the couple fled the town after being tipped off by a neighbor, and instead the fiancé's brother was assassinated by the Falange (and buried in a mass grave on the property). Perpetua's love for Zoilo's father would never be requited, yet as a reward for having served Franco's army, she took possession of his family's house and belongings (the bicycle included). In this sense, Zoilo's arrival not only brings to light the female protagonist's deeply-guarded secret—it destabilizes the insular, unmodern world that she controls and, moreover, underscores the need to address the silenced traumas of the Civil War and *franquismo*.

The granddaughter of Civil War exiles, Ripoll asserts that nowadays, "[n]osotros, los nietos de aquella guerra civil somos a los que nos ha tocado contarlo, porque hemos perdido el miedo" (Díaz Sande).[170] Since co-founding the Micomicón theater troupe in 1991, the playwright has treated the subject of historical memory in Spain from a wide variety of perspectives, consistently addressing "la lucha contra el olvido y la reivindicación de la memoria del pasado reciente" (García Martínez 422-3).[171] At the same time, Isabelle Reck and Jorge Avilés Diz observe that one of the most-salient characteristics of Ripoll's writing is her use of the aesthetic of the grotesque.[172] The playwright describes herself as pertaining to "una tradición, a una línea recta que se inicia, posiblemente, con Quevedo, con el Lazarillo, con don Quijote, una tradición a

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[170] In an interview with Nacho Abad Andújar, Ripoll comments on how her family background shaped her "hasta el punto de que mi madre tiene tal desarraigo que no sabe de dónde es. Ella creció en Tánger, donde llegaron sus padres en 1946. Mi abuelo, que pasó dos años en un campo de concentración en Medinacelli y en la cárcel de Porlier, fue represaliado. Al salir de prisión se encontró con cuatro hijos y sin trabajo. Un amigo le ofreció empleo en Tánger. De donde, de nuevo, tuvieron que exiliarse en los años sesenta tras la independencia de Marruecos. Ese pasado marca. De pequeña, mi abuela me contaba todas esas historias" ("'Santa Perpetua' de Laila Ripoll: teatro con ética").

[171] Ripoll's plays have focused on Republican exiles in Mexico and Morocco (*La frontera* [2003] and *Que nos quiten lo bailao* [2004]), children in state-run orphanages (*Auxilios Sociales*) during the Franco regime (*Los niños perdidos* [2005]), the rural elderly tortured by their memories of the past (*Atra Bilis* [2001] and *Santa Perpetua* [2010]), and Republican prisoners inside the Mauthausen concentration camp (*El triángulo azul* [2015]), among other topics.

[172] See: Reck (61-80); Avilés Diz (344-48).

la que pertenecen Goya, Picasso, Valle-Inclán, Buñuel, Azcona, Berlanga, El Roto… una tradición de humor negro, de grotesco, de denuncia a través del humor, la mueca, lo fantasmal" (Humanes), and fittingly, her plays are filled with

> carcamales y estafermos en papel, de alegorías de la muerte, de tarascas barrocas en el centro de rituales sacramentales y brujeriles y de plantos, de ancianos como máscaras caídas de los infiernos o aterrados y corriendo como perseguidos por un enjambre de demonios […de] personajes de niños muertos y de ancianos a los que ronda la muerte, y aparecen grotescos personajes híbridos. (67)

In this vein, Reck—whose article analyzes the grotesque in Ripoll's oeuvre—maintains that because her work habitually tackles the "untouchable" topics such as the Civil War and the dictatorship, "[ella] no podía sino decantarse por lo grotesco, la única estética capaz de ofrecer el distanciamiento necesario para abordar a la vez de soslayo y directamente lo insostenible, lo indecible, 'lo trágico absoluto' de un mundo que ha 'bestializado la humanidad,' sin caer en el sentimentalismo o el patetismo, para salvaguardar la eficacia de un teatro de denuncia" (61). Indeed, in *Santa Perpetua,* Ripoll resorts to the grotesque to denounce the treatment of the legacies of the Civil War and the dictatorship during the Transition and afterwards.

Santa Perpetua has not attracted much attention from literary scholars, and in keeping with the playwright's declaration that her work addresses "la memoria en un país de desmemoriados […d]e desaparecidos, pero no sólo de España, sino en todo el mundo. Y de la cantidad de gente a la que fueron a buscar, no vuelve nunca y parece que no han existido" (Abad Andújar), the few existing studies of the play examine how it tackles the suppression of memory. To date, Avilés Diz's article "*La Trilogía de la memoria*: un acercamiento al teatro de Laila Ripoll" offers the most-complete reading. He observes that as a whole, Ripoll's treatment of

historical memory “no radica tanto en su simple objetivo de revelar episodios más o menos conocidos de la represión franquista, sino en la denuncia de la pervivencia de los efectos de la guerra civil en la actualidad” (352). Regarding *Santa Perpetua*, he focuses his analysis on Zoilo, maintaining that the character’s fight to “recuperar la bicicleta y por sacar a la luz las verdades del pasado es en realidad la lucha por la defensa de la legitimidad democrática en la conciencia colectiva de nuestro presente” (351-2). Reck’s interpretation of the play follows suit. She categorizes *Santa Perpetua* as an esperpentic farce that “[planea] las sombras de Valle-Inclán y de Solana, [y] también el espectro de Hamlet” (67), and argues that Ripoll resorts to the grotesque to unmask the “tragic world” of

> [la] España contemporánea que quiere seguir silenciando a los muertos y desaparecidos de la Guerra Civil […] Y la risa específica con la que parece querer despertar las conciencias, abrir la caja de Pandora, es la risa grotesca que invita al espectador/lector primero a abandonarse a la carcajada franca, para dejarle atragantarse de pronto, de manera desprevenida, y conducirle al final a una risa crispada, una risa que lo desestabiliza, lo deja perplejo, lo compromete y le hace sentirse incómodo. (77)

Nonetheless, I find these critical readings of the play to be incomplete. *Santa Perpetua* does not merely shed light on Spain’s need to confront its traumatic past (Avilés Diz), or expose those who wish to continue overlooking history (Reck). The work also problematizes the official handling of historical memory during the Transition and the repercussions of this decision into the present day. In its depiction of the siblings’ insular, obsolete world, *Santa Perpetua* establishes a clear dichotomy between the rational, modern outsider Zoilo—who acts as a synecdoche for the descendants of the victims of the Franco regime searching for their family members—and the grotesque, antiquated sister and brothers. Physically decrepit, domineering,

and monstrous, Perpetua's character—representative of "el pasado, el olvido, la pervivencia del odio y el rencor y la nostalgia del pasado" (351)—is a grotesque distortion of the Francoist Catholic feminine ideal. Conversely, Plácido and Pacífico, who have lived under their sister's control for years, are depicted as childish, buffoonish, and scatological. Ripoll uses the three grotesque siblings to dismantle the Transition-era belief that intentionally silencing history was fundamental to post-Franco Spain's modernization. Having been directly involved in a Falangist mass killing, Perpetua has spent the rest of her life obscuring the circumstances of her past and, consequently, rebuffs Zoilo's arrival and his request for the bicycle. In this sense, her character condemns the perpetrators of *franquismo* that refuse to address the crimes of the regime, and were protected during the Transition. Moreover, while Plácido and Pacífico have no connection to the death of Zoilo's uncle, they have complied with their sister's desire to ignore the incident before realizing that her demands are unreasonable. In contrast to Perpetua, the brothers' characters lampoon the democratic opposition's compliance with the terms of the Pact of Forgetting.

In my analysis of *Santa Perpetua*, I consider its intertextuality with Federico García Lorca's play *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936) and with Fernando Fernán Gómez's film *El extraño viaje* (1964). Reck and Avilés Diz have acknowledged the Lorcan elements of Ripoll's oeuvre, yet they do not examine the undeniable parallels between these two specific theater works.[173] Lorca's play centers on the authoritarian, hyper-traditional matriarch Bernarda as she imposes an eight-year mourning period onto her household following the death of her second husband. She sequesters her five unmarried adult daughters inside their rural home, prohibiting them from any type of relationship. The already hostile environment intensifies when the eldest

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[173] See: Reck (75); Avilés Diz (342).

daughter, Angustias becomes engaged to Pepe el Romano, for whom the other sisters harbor feelings. After it is revealed that the youngest daughter, Adela, is also engaged in a secret affair with Pepe, tensions explode, ultimately leading to Adela's tragic suicide.

Like *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, *Santa Perpetua* is set exclusively within a rural Spanish mansion and features a domineering, conservative matriarch who imposes her traditionalist ways onto her family. Furthermore, the principal source of dramatic tension in both works arrives in the form of a male outsider who undermines the female protagonist's supremacy. The link between Ripoll's play and *El extraño viaje* has not yet been identified by critics. Fernán Gómez's dark comedy is an ensemble narrative whose principal storyline centers on the wealthiest family of a rural Spanish village. The Vidal siblings are comprised of the domineering *soltera* Ignacia and the infantile Paquita and Venancio, whom she bullies and disparages. Despite her puritan façade, Ignacia initiates a secret "relationship" with a traveling musician, Fernando, and concocts a plan to abandon her family and flee the town with him. When Paquita and Venancio confront their sister about her mysterious visitor, she fills with rage and attacks them, causing Venancio to kill her. Like *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, *El extraño viaje* resonates with *Santa Perpetua* in that it showcases a repressed, moralist matriarchal figure who reigns over her rural household. Moreover, Ripoll and Fernán Gómez's narratives particularly coincide in their deceptions of a buffoonish, childish sibling pair, one of whom accidently murders the female protagonist.

Ripoll establishes the grotesque, antiquated nature of Perpetua, Plácido, and Pacífico's characters significantly prior to introducing the topic of historical memory. Although the trio's encounter with Zoilo does not occur until nearly one-third of the way into the play, the author subverts the future-oriented narrative of the Transition from the outset, beginning with the representation of space. The siblings are echoes of their removed, ramshackle, and garishly

traditional surroundings—a “casona provinciana” (Ripoll 187) that particularly recalls the setting of *La casa de Bernarda Alba.* Like Lorca’s text, *Santa Perpetua* is a narrative of confinement, in which the action occurs exclusively within the walls of rural home that has been cut-off from outside influence.[174] Perpetua does not police her residence like Bernarda (Plácido and Pacífico are not prohibited from leaving). Nonetheless, she has completely distanced her household from contemporary society—it is a completely obsolete environment that visualizes (what Ripoll signals as) the siblings’ backwardness. Although the play is set in the present day, the siblings’ house is isolated and lacks modern technology. The trio receives visitors, yet all such guests (apart from Zoilo) are devotees of “La Santa” that uphold her hyper-traditional beliefs. Moreover, Perpetua prefers to use candles for light, and when Pacífico asks his sister for a simple portable radio, she vehemently denies his request, claiming that it will interfere with her visions and cause her to “[perder] santidad” (205).

The most remarkable feature of the siblings’ home is its dilapidated condition and tacky, traditionalist décor, and here lies the greatest difference between the domestic environments in Ripoll and Lorca’s works. Whereas Bernarda’s house is severe and void of color, Perpetua’s residence lacks this austerity.[175] Rather, it is a rundown, excessively ornamented locale that

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[174] In *La casa de Bernarda Alba,* Bernarda secludes her five daughters, maid, and elderly mother inside her home for a mourning period of eight years, during which “no ha de entrar en esta casa el viento de la calle” (Lorca 11).

[175] In the initial stage directions to his play, Lorca illustrates the setting—an interior room within Bernarda’s residence—as being “*blanquísima*” with “[*m*]*uros gruesos. Puertas con cortinas de yute rematadas con madroños y volantes. Sillas de anea. Cuadros con paisajes inverosímiles de ninfas o reyes de leyenda*” (2). The remarkable whiteness of the walls, as Sumner Greenfield notes, symbolizes the “superficial veneer of perfection which Bernarda Alba imperiously demands be spread over her house. It is […] a spotless coating of whitewash applied expressly to conceal whatever stains may lie in the substance beneath (“Poetry and Stagecraft” 457).

transports the audience to "[una] España oscura y rancia" (Avilés Diz 348). Ripoll vividly illustrates this setting in the stage directions before the brothers' first entrance. It has

> [u]*nas cortinas con bolillos amarillentos ocultan el interior. Algún hueco en el emplomado se cubre con cartón, celofán y esparadrapo. Una mesa camilla con hule y tapetito de crochet, la jaula de un loro vacía, sillas desencoladas, una estufa, paisajes de lejanos lugares recortados de revistas en las paredes. Todo tiene un aire descuidado y no muy pulcro, una pátina de añeja y pringosa mugre*. (187)

With the progression of the play, the audience also takes in the abundance of religious and folkloric decorations inside of the house, such as the "*santos, lazos, banderas, vírgenes y exvotos*" that surround Perpetua's bed (194) and a large photograph of a patio in the Alhambra that adorns one of the walls. As the three siblings appear on stage, it quickly becomes apparent that they are reflections of this environment. Perpetua, Plácido, and Pacífico are depicted as grotesque fools and, like their decadent and obsolete house, they are completely removed from modernity.

Santa Perpetua's eponymous character is an ancient, self-professed "saint" who constantly recites prayers, domineers her family, openly glorifies Franco, and, most notably, refuses to acknowledge the assassination of Zoilo's uncle. For this reason, Avilés Diz argues that Perpetua personifies "el pasado, el olvido, la pervivencia del odio y el rencor y la nostalgia del pasado" (351), as well as "los valores religiosos, sociales y políticos del régimen franquista, una ideología que, a pesar del tiempo transcurrido, sigue manteniendo en el presente del espectador y que se manifestará tanto en sus acciones como en su discurso" (349). However, I view her as more than a mere emblem of the dictatorship—given Perpetua's physically decrepit state, comically overstated Catholic identity, and demonic visions, I interpret her as a grotesque

distortion of *franquismo*. Both Reck and Avilés Diz identify the grotesque elements of her character, yet neither scholar has considered them alongside her ideology.[176] Thus, Ripoll uses the grotesque figure of Perpetua to ridicule the persistence of Francoist ideals in democratic society and, most notably, to denounce the inheritors of the regime's approach to historical memory.

There are explicit parallels between Perpetua and the female protagonists of Lorca and Fernán Gómez's works. All three characters are unwed, patriarchal women that govern their rural household and typify traditional social and religious morals (which the authors visualize through their conservative black dresses). In *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Bernarda, having been freed from her late husband, transforms into a completely "power-crazed individual who […] enjoys flexing her power and inflicts hardship, without reason, on her daughters" (Wright 59-60). A caricature of the conventional rural woman (Johnson 54), she has modeled her life on a rigid, even puritanical moral code that she twists into an "instrument of repression" and imposes it upon her entire household (Higginbotham, *The Comic Spirit* 111).[177] In *El extraño viaje*, Ignacia's character displays similar traits. Mirroring Bernarda, she "exemplifies intolerance and hypocritical orthodoxy in Spain […] appear[ing] as a stern, disciplined, repressed, authoritarian presence who makes decisions and imposes her point of view" (Mira 122). Ignacia is menacing,

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[176] In their readings of Perpetua, Reck and Avilés Diz both describe her grotesque characteristics and actions without taking into consideration the larger implications of this characterization. Reck signals Perpetua's distorted speech and convulsions (69-70; 74). Avilés Diz indicates her "phantasmal" physical appearance and decadent religious clothing and accessories (348).

[177] See: Wright (2010) and Higginbotham (2014). Along these lines, Bernarda's malicious personality, as Higginbotham notes, displays a notable element of farce, "which suggest[s] that [she] derives not only from Lorca's earlier puppet figures but also from the caricatures of the *esperpentos*. Bernarda represents and upholds the strict moral code of Spanish rural society; yet she has become a distorted reflection of that society" (*The Comic Spirit* 132).

violent, despotic, and disturbs gender norms by exercising total disciplinary and financial control over Paquita and Venancio (Marsh 179; Egea 105). Furthermore, like Perpetua, she is secretive, and shields the details of her personal life from her sister and brother.[178]

Because of their personalities and ideologies, Bernarda and Ignacia have been interpreted as emblems of Spain's authoritarian regime, and like her predecessors, Perpetua is the domineering figure within her family.[179] Before the arrival of Zoilo, her brothers fear and revere her, and conform to her rules and politics because she is "la mayor, es mujer y es santa" (189). In the play's opening sequence, Ripoll gives the impression that her female protagonist will be a tyrannical figure in the likes of Lorca's and Fernán Gómez's. Here Plácido and Pacífico frantically run through the mansion to relight candles during a rainstorm. Appalled that her house has gone dark, Perpetua screams to them from aside "*como las locas*": "¡La candela! ¡La candela! ¡¡LA CANDELA!!!! ¡Se ha apagado la candela!" (190). Shortly thereafter, the brothers suspect that she is sleeping and perceive a strange sound that they believe is her breathing. Perpetua quells their suspicions by yelling: "Error. Yo no duermo nunca. Y como se os vuelva a apagar la candela ya podéis escarbar un hoyo bien profundo para esconderos" (193). In both instances, her voice resounds from offstage as if she were a forceful and omnipotent being and,

[178] In contrast to Bernarda, Ignacia's orthodox appearance is a façade—she is, as Steven Marsh aptly describes her, a "closeted female dandy" who covertly purchases provocative lingerie and yearns for male attention (175).

[179] Carolyn Galerstein proposes that Bernarda is an inherently dictatorial figure. She asks: "Is not Bernarda's repression of her servants and the townspeople's propensities, and of her daughters' normal physical and emotional desires representative of repressive government? Is not her tyranny over everyone and her suppression of what might have been *her own* normal needs, symbolic of a totalitarian state?" (184). Alberto Mira presents a similar argument regarding Ignacia. She represents tradition and authority, and is "a counterpart of General Franco, whereas her brother and sister suggest the people he rules over are scared and childish, sexually castrated and always dreaming of something exciting that lies outside the house walls" (125).

because the men are terrorized by their sister, the audience assumes that her character will be a harsh, imposing, and powerful matriarch in the same vein as Bernarda and Ignacia.[180]

Quite the contrary—when Perpetua physically appears on stage a few moments later, it becomes apparent that despite her commanding presence, she exists in a complete state of decadence. Unlike the rigid, imposing figures of Bernarda and Ignacia, Perpetua is decrepit, antiquated, and grotesque. In the stage directions that accompany her first entrance, Ripoll characterizes her in a Solanesque fashion, emphasizing her old age and deteriorating physical condition: "*Perpetua es vieja, tan vieja como la injusticia. Tiene los ojos apagados y las manos y la cara transparentes. Va vestida con un hábito pardo, del Carmen*" (194).[181] Unable to walk with ease, for most of the play she—like the Countess in *Patrimonio nacional*—reclines in a gaudy bed "*decorada hasta el delirio con santos, lazos, banderas, vírgenes y exvotos*" (194). Avilés Diz notes that while Perpetua's ideology (specifically her resistance to Zoilo) aligns with that of the victors of the Civil War, her invalid state "impide de alguna manera que este discurso vaya acompañado de acciones directas" (349). However, in his essay, he does not consider the greater symbolic weight of her physical condition. Perpetua's age and enfeebled state function, in part, as a lampoon of the persistence of Francoism in contemporary Spanish society. Though her repressive and zealously Catholic character is emblematic of the regime, Ripoll portrays her

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[180] This sequence mirrors the introduction of Paquita, Venancio, and Ignacia's characters in *El extraño viaje*. Having mistaken the Fernando for a burglar, Paquita and Venancio nervously explore their dark house during an evening thunderstorm. In contrast to Perpetua, in the film Ignacia appears as harsh and controlling. She scolds her siblings as if they were misbehaving children, reprimanding them for being out of bed and for inquiring about her mysterious visitor.

[181] In *La España negra*, José Gutiérrez Solana refers to a group of elderly women participating in a religious procession in a similar manner. He observes that they are "viejas amarillentas con el pañuelo anudado al estilo de la montaña, llevando cirios para ofrecérselos a la santa imagen […] con la cara de cera y con ojos que parecen de vidrio" (95).

as ancient and debilitated to indicate that within the context of democracy, Francoist ideals have become antediluvian.

Perpetua is not tyrannical to the same extent as Bernarda and Ignacia, yet she uses her "sacred" status to command authority within her household and impose her politics upon her siblings. As a self-made female saint, her character resonates with the dictatorship's view of women as defenders and disseminators of "los valores religiosos y morales del nacionalcatolicismo" (Avilés Diz 348). Under *franquismo*, Aurora Morcillo Gómez notes, Catholicism was "un elemento intrínsecamente ligado a la definición […] de la femineidad de la española," and for this reason, the regime "aspiraba a forjar esa auténtica femineidad católica apelando a la tradición histórica de España. En primer lugar, la dictadura trataría de recuperar la peculiar devoción del siglo XVI por los perfiles hagiográficos—como los de Santa Teresa de Jesús o la Virgen del Pilar" (69-70).[182] Perpetua's character is a grotesque distortion of this consecrated feminine ideal. "La Santa" maintains a devout façade—she wears religious attire, lounges in her bed decorated with Catholic iconography, and is constantly reciting prayers—, and is revered by her brothers and the public for her supposed curative and visionary capacities, and knowing this gives her an air of dominance and authority.[183] However, the reality of her

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[182] Similarly, Giuliana Di Febo describes that during the dictatorship, Teresa of Ávila (as well as Isabella I of Castile) was transformed into a "modelo-guía" for women (100). She argues: "la función de modelo-guía de las mujeres ejercida por Teresa e Isabel […] está relacionada con la gran y específica marginación a que el franquismo relegó a las mujeres. Ya desde los años 30, Teresa e Isabel fueron utilizadas en contra de las tendencias emancipadoras que iban emergiendo en los años de la Segunda República y como encarnación de ese 'feminismo cristiano,' entendido sobre todo como modelo antagonista del 'feminismo laico'" (102).

[183] Perpetua's public image is verified when Pacífico lists her upcoming appointments with devotees. He relates: "A primera hora viene una de Espeja, para que le palpes el vientre, que parece que la cuitada no se empreña y tiene miedo de estar mañera […] Luego viene una pareja de novios del otro lado de la raya para hacerse fotografía contigo […] Una fotografía con una niña que toma su Primera Comunión con fondo de campos de Castilla, una de Villar a ver si le encuentras novio, un grupo de señoras de la capital para besarte el hábito y que le bendigas unas peladillas" (195-6). The actual engagements, however, are notably absent from the work—the only visitor who enters the house during the play is Zoilo.

“powers” undermines her sacrosanct image. Whenever Perpetua has a prophecy, she metamorphosizes into a completely monstrous being. Her voice transforms dramatically and she suffers from terrible convulsions—appearing to be under influence of “una fuerza exterior, autónoma [y] demoniaca” (Reck 70)—that, in conjunction with her decrepit character and exaggeratingly Catholic image, make her appear completely ludicrous. Despite her religious persona, her visions are not divine—they comically mimic a news broadcast. For instance, in her first of many prophetic episodes in the play, she reports:

> (*Presa de convulsiones terribles*) Madrid multará hasta con 750 euros a mendigos y clientes de prostitutas…Dos muertos al estrellarse una avioneta… (*Truenos, relámpagos, rayos y centellas. Perpetua convulsiona ferozmente, mientas Plácido intenta sujetarla*) Exposición de arte turco contemporáneo… un hombre fallece en un vuelco… Secuestrado un ex candidato presidencial… Fuencarral, chalet tres dormitorios, dos baños, para entrar… (201).

In rendering Franco’s National Catholic feminine ideal antiquated and grotesque, Ripoll ultimately invalidates the belief that ignoring the past was vital to Spain’s rejuvenation.

Through Plácido and Pacífico, we observe the extent of Perpetua’s power in the play. Whereas Perpetua represents a distortion of Francoist values, Ripoll uses her grotesque siblings to denounce the effects of this persistent ideology. Plácido and Pacífico are under the complete domain of their sister—they are confined to her traditionalist house, uphold her Catholic lifestyle, and, most notably, have been made oblivious to her connection with Zoilo’s family. Having been reduced to grotesque fools under Perpetua’s dominance, the brothers resemble the puppet characters of the *esperpento,* with Perpetua serving as the “puppeteer” in this bizarre, insular world. Moreover, there is an undeniable connection between the two men and the sibling

duo from *El extraño viaje*. In contrast to their imposing, authoritarian sister, Paquita and Venancio are buffoonish, sexless figures with "short, dumpy, and vivacious" bodies (Marsh 179).[184] Like "forty-year-old infants" (Marsh 179), they are terrified of Ignacia, evidenced by Paquita's exaggerated fits of hysteria, and Venancio's constantly trembling voice and hands.

Echoing Fernán Gómez's siblings, Plácido and Pacífico live under the domain of their sister—they cater to Perpetua's every need, and comply with her traditionalist and religious ways. Thus, as reflection of their entirely compliant existence, Ripoll presents Plácido and Pacífico as being juvenile and comically effeminate, stressing their idiotic and infantile personalities, submissive natures, and (in the case of Pacífico) scatological tendencies. The pair's natures are best-explained by Pacífico, who describes their feminine and foolish characters to Zoilo:

> Mi madre siempre nos quiso mujeres. Decía que las mujeres mantenían la familia y las tradiciones, que los hombres necesitaban a las mujeres porque eran las únicas que estaban en contacto con Dios. Así siempre nos trató como tales y ya ve usted el panorama. Qué tres estafermos que hemos quedado hechos. Plácido se le quedó a medio camino y yo, como soy tonto, nací desbaratado, aunque meo sentado y duermo en camisón, no se vaya usted a creer. (230-1)

[184] Mira discusses Paquita and Venancio's bodies in greater detail. He describes the duo's first appearance in the film, as they search their house after hearing Ignacia's secret visitor: "[A] grotesque woman cautiously opens a door, to be followed by her brother. The couple are terrified, but their comic demeanor seems to belie the sinister appearance of the [house]. Both [Paquita and Venancio] are perfectly characterised in terms of appearance, gestures, and language. It was important for Fernán Gómez that they looked similar. Aparicio (one of the best-known character actresses in Spanish cinema) is a dumpy lady with mannered gestures recalling the acting traditions of popular theatre. [Jess] Franco (who had a prolific career as a film director) is also short and plump, and with a round baby face that recalls Peter Lorre" (122).

Indeed, for much of the play the two wear "*camisones de mujer*" (187) as they scamper around like overgrown children. For example, in the work's first sequence, Plácido and Pacífico run through their dark house as if they were "*perseguidos por un demonio invisible*" (187), chanting a prayer to Saint Barbara (protector against lightening and storms) in sing-song voices and collapsing in fear with the sounds of thunder and Perpetua's voice. The brothers also make absurd, childish comments throughout the work. For instance, when Perpetua dies at the end of the play, Pacífico raises her dress to examine "[s]i tiene cola" (262). Pacífico is also particularly scatological, which enhances the duo's overall buffoonish characterization. He can often be heard passing gas, as Ripoll signals in the stage directions: "*Sale Pacífico canturreando aquello de: 'Acusica, acusica, el culo te pica, por fea y por mala, porque no vales nada…' y durante la siguiente escena—y posteriores—escucharemos claramente la retahíla de pedos y de distintos tonos y timbres que anuncian el cambio de tiempo*" (199-200). Plácido and Pacífico's characters serve to denounce the influence of Perpetua's Francoist ideology within society—having spent their lives enclosed in her premodern world, they have been reduced to a grotesque, foolish state of existence.

Ripoll situates Zoilo in opposition to the grotesque, antiquated sibling trio. Zoilo, whose name means "full of life," represents the present, memory and rationality (Avilés Diz 351). From the start of the play, it is apparent that his pursuit of the bicycle will completely disrupt "el universo escatológico, estrafalario y demoniaco" (Reck 73) that Perpetua has constructed. For this reason, his character resonates with Pepe el Romano from *La casa de Bernarda Alba*—both men are outsiders whose "arrival" to the rural home attempts to destabilize the authority and moral code previously held in place by the family's matriarch. While Pepe never appears on stage, he acts as a "fantasy image" in Lorca's play, "one that threatens to become so large as to

absorb all meaning within the house" (Wright 60). Along these lines, C. Christopher Soufas notes that Bernarda's ability to dictate her household is "steadily undermined by the discourse on [Pepe] that erupts from the very space designated to embody her authority. Bernarda's pretensions to control are thus discredited almost from the outset, since the spectator clearly understands that something more powerful ('una cosa muy grande') is making its uninvited presence felt in her private scene" (238).

Like Perpetua's entrance at the start of the play, Zoilo's arrival is foreshadowed through sounds and dialogue prior to his first appearance on stage. Reck notes that the constant "*truenos delirantes*" (187) in the work warn of an imminent apocalypse (71)—the unearthing of Perpetua's secret, and the subsequent collapse of her traditional world. Later, Plácido informs the family of Zoilo's presence—after hearing the music playing from the visitor's radio, he matter-of-factly states, "[y]a está aquí ése otra vez" (205). It is Perpetua, however, who communicates the true implications of his arrival. When her siblings inquire if they should allow Zoilo to enter the house, she first becomes altered, and then transforms into a monstrous being:

> PLÁCIDO: ¿Qué hacemos?
>
> PERPETUA: Ay, qué desazón, pero que desazón más grande. Se me quiebra el pecho, se me hace triste el alma.
>
> PACÍFICO: ¿Abro?
>
> PERPETUA: (*Transformada, sin transición, en tarasca iracunda que echa fuego por la boca*) ¡Nunca! (210)

Shortly thereafter, she also bemoans: "Se acaba, se acaba el mundo. Es el mal, que se acantona nuestra puerta […] Ya están aquí otra vez las hordas, las hordas de demonios que vienen a remover la tierra y a quitarnos lo que es nuestro. Se acaba el mundo, hijos…" (209-10). Evident

by these passages, once Zoilo enters the story, Perpetua's character ceases to simply be a grotesque distortion of Francoist ideals—she also serves to denounce the perpetrators of *franquismo* that refuse to address the crimes of the regime, and that were protected under the measures enacted during the Transition.

When Zoilo arrives to the property, he notably brings with him a transistor radio that he uses to play music throughout the play. Not only is this the exact object that Pacífico desires and that his sister prohibits him from having. The radio the single "modern" item within the work and it symbolizes the transmission of "unas ideas y unos valores que no tienen cabida dentro del reducido y controlado mundo de la casa de Perpetua" (Avilés Diz 352). In contrast to Perpetua (and, subsequently, to Plácido and Pacífico). Zoilo's character represents modernity and pertains to "una nueva generación de españoles que mira el silencio de sus antepasados como resultado de un miedo que ellos ya no comparten y que no tiene ni cabida ni sentido en sus vidas" (Avilés Diz 351). "Cansado de tanto silencio" (Ripoll 219) and driven by his "lealtad a sus antepasados […] y un deseo de búsqueda de verdad" (Avilés Diz 351), Zoilo has full knowledge of the details of his uncle's assassination (in contrast to Plácido and Pacífico, who have been left in the dark by their sister). Crucially, he longs to address the truth of the incident, unlike Perpetua, who prefers to live in a different era yet simultaneously evade the past. Because she spent decades obscuring the details of her life during the Civil War, she consistently denies Zoilo's requests for the bicycle, as evident in the initial conversation between the two characters:

PERPETUA: ¿Qué quieres?

ZOILO: Lo sabe usted de sobra.

PERPETUA: No sé de qué estás hablando, así que ya puedes coger la puerta y lárgate con viento fresco, que estoy esperando una visita.

ZOILO: No, señora.

PERPETUA: ¿Cómo que no, impertinente?

ZOILO: Usted perdone, pero yo no me marcho de aquí sin la bicicleta. (213)

This exchange is the first of many similar ones in the play, in which Zoilo approaches the issue of his family history rationally and with courtesy and Perpetua is resistant and increasingly vulgar. Signalling her grotesque character and violent opposition to the subject of historical memory, she will respond to her visitor's requests with harsh phrases such as: "¿Qué es lo que te debo a ti, estiércol? ¿Eh? Dime, pécora, ¿qué te debo?" (213). In a particularly revealing altercation, Perpetua insults Zoilo by insinuating the 1977 Amnesty Law and, critically, the more-recent Law of Historical Memory:

> PERPETUA: Muy bien, pedazo de hijo de mala madre. No pienso darte esa bicicleta ni en mil años que vivas ¿me escuchas? […] Pues sigue, sigue provocando y haciendo méritos, que eres carne de muladar, que te la estás buscando. Desaparece de esta casa si no quieres que te desaparezca yo del mapa, que ya sabes que bien puedo.
>
> ZOILO: Devuélvame la bicicleta.
>
> PERPETUA: Pero, ¿tú qué te has creído, cochambre? *Encima, encima de que les hemos perdonado, vienen aquí a molestar y a remover la mierda*. Si quieres la bicicleta, te la vas a tener que llevar por las bravas, muertodehambre, gañán, palurdo… (218-9, emphasis my own)

Indeed, Perpetua's resistance to Zoilo's efforts stems from her own culpability. Aware that she was directly involved in the death of his uncle, she, like the perpetrators of the Franco regime and their political descendants, is against revisiting the incident in the present. Rather, she prefers to live her life as is and to continue casting memory into oblivion by denying Zoilo's

requests and snubbing his presence. In this sense, the grotesque, antiquated Perpetua serves to dismantle the Transition-era belief that ignoring the legacies of the Civil War and the dictatorship were fundamental to Spain's budding future. As evidenced by her character, Ripoll contends that disregarding the past has instead thwarted post-Franco Spain's process of modernization.

Plácido and Pacífico, on the other hand, have no connection to the death of Zoilo's uncle and, under the resolution of the action, they are completely ignorant to the circumstances of the incident. This is evident from the brothers' frequent questions and inquisitive statements about their visitor. For example, upon Zoilo's entrance, Pacífico asks his sister: "¿Por qué nunca podemos hablar del hombre? ¿Por qué cada vez que pregunto sales por la tangente? ¿Por qué sólo se puede arar una parte de la dehesa? ¿Por qué enciendes la luminaria? ¿Por qué nunca puedes ver al hombre? ¿Por qué…?" (209). Likewise, Plácido later remarks: "Qué obsesión tiene este hombre con la puñetera bicicleta. Dígame usted para qué quiere ese trasto roñoso que ya no debe ni funcionar" (231-2). Given their submissive relationship with Perpetua, the brothers have long complied with her desire to conceal the past. Having never been informed of the Falangist assassination, they have not cared to inquire about Zoilo's character beyond asking innocent rhetorical questions (that their sister never responds) and they even reject his presence as she does. For example, after first spotting Zoilo on the property, Plácido comments: "Le voy a escachar el casco a ese bestia" (209). Here he recycles the same rhetoric that Perpetua uses in the play, yet without understanding the rationale to her violent resistance. In this sense, Ripoll uses the brothers to scorn the democratic opposition's agreement with the terms of the Pact of Forgetting during the Transition. Unlike Perpetua, Plácido and Pacífico were not responsible for the death of Zoilo's uncle. However, they have willing remained in the dark about the incident

for decades and, despite their curiosity, they have overlooked the truth. Similarly, during the Transition, the democratic opposition was willing to cast aside the traumatic legacies of the Civil War and the Franco regime in the interest of reconciling the nation and establishing democracy (Humlebæk, "Pacto de Olvido" 186-87).

The ending of *Santa Perpetua*, however, dismantles the conservative political environment upheld by Perpetua throughout the play. Mirroring Ignacia's death in *El extraño viaje*, Perpetua dies in an accidental shooting at the hands of Plácido, who was attempting to threaten Zoilo off the property. The death of Perpetua signals the conclusion of the universe that she has created—Zoilo leaves the house with the bicycle and, just before his exit, Pacífico asks: "También se va a llevar usted el transistor? […] ¿Me lo podría regalar? Me gusta mucho esa música" (263). Given the play's 2010 publication date, this final line signals that Ripoll is optimistic about the gradual shift away from forgetting in Spain and the more-recent measures to facilitate the recovery of historical memory. With Perpetua's death, the brothers will no longer be under her grotesque domination and Ripoll gives the impression that they, unlike their sister, will be open to changing their politics.

3.3 *Balada triste de trompeta*

In *Balada triste de trompeta* (2010), Álex de la Iglesia (1965-) offers grotesque portrait of Francoist Spain that fuses comedy with tragedy, naturalism with gore, farce with documentary, and realism with fantasy.[185] It links perverse, grotesque elements with historical events and figures—inserting group of freaks into the Spanish Civil War, Franco's hunting

[185] The film's title is a direct reference to the Spanish singer Raphael's song "Balada triste de trompeta," which he performs in clown face in the 1970 film *Sin un adios* (directed by Vicente Escrivá).

exhibitions, and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, among others—, and creates a world where "la estética de los tebeos, los monstruos de Tod Browning, el Joker batmaniano, la Bella y la Bestia, el Fantasma de la Ópera [y] las baladas de Raphael" coexist (Boyero). The narrative opens in 1937, with a young Javier watching his father (Santiago Segura) perform as the Happy Clown in the circus.[186] In a scene reminiscent of Carlos Saura's film *¡Ay Carmela!* (1990), Republican commanders disrupt the show and send Javier's father to the frontline, where he is eventually captured by Nationalist forces.[187] The Happy Clown survives the war, yet he is sentenced to hard labor at the construction site of the Valle de los Caídos. In one of the film's pivotal scenes, the adolescent Javier visits his imprisoned father, who provides his son with two orders—avenge his arrest, and dedicate his life to being a Sad Clown. Javier proceeds to sneak into the monument and attempts to liberate the Happy Clown by setting off dynamite in one of the crypts, a well-intentioned act that instead generates panic amongst the prisoners and results in his father's death at the hands of a Francoist Colonel.[188]

From there, the narrative jumps to 1973, when the adult Javier begins performing as the Sad Clown per his late father's insistence. Shortly after arriving to the circus, the protagonist

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[186] The character of Javier is played by three actors: as a child is played by Sasha Di Bendetto, as an adolescent by Jorge Clemente, and as an adult by Carlos Areces. Most of the film, however, is set during the 1970s, when Javier is an adult.

[187] In Saura's film *¡Ay Carmela!*, a trio of Republican-leaning vaudeville entertainers are detained while traveling through Nationalist territory. Instead of being sentenced to death, they are forced to perform a show—a burlesque of the Republic—for the Nationalist troops.

[188] In this sequence, Javier enters one of the underground crypts and tosses a stick of dynamite into the area where his father is working. As the prisoners flee the explosion on foot, they are followed by the Colonel on horseback and in the chaos of the incident, Javier's father is brutally trampled to death by the horse (while his son watches in terror). Attempting to stop the damage, Javier pushes the Colonel away, yet this only worsens the situation. The Francoist officer falls off the animal and lands on a knife, gauging his eye out in the process. After Javier escapes, we see that the Colonel stole a photograph of the father and son off the man's corpse. This will allow him to recognize Javier when their paths cross again in 1973.

falls in love with the beautiful aerialist Natalia (Carolina Bang), who symbolizes liberty and the Spanish nation. However, he quickly learns that she is in an abusive relationship with Sergio (Antonio de la Torre)—the Happy Clown, and the protagonist's artistic counterpart, who tyrannically rules over the troupe. In contrast to Javier, who stands for the Republic, Sergio is representative of the Franco regime. As Javier observes how Sergio torments the entire group of performers and develops increasingly strong feelings for Natalia, he begins to challenge the power dynamic of the circus. Yet his efforts do nothing more than unleash Sergio's jealous rage and this, along with his persistent inability to cope with his father's death, leads Javier to a state of madness. The two men proceed to battle each other for the aerialist's affection—in a dispute that echoes the ideological division of the Civil War—, ultimately metamorphosizing into mutilated, ferocious versions of their former selves. Meanwhile, Natalia finds herself torn between Sergio and Javier, unable to decide which of the grotesque clowns she prefers.

De la Iglesia is widely regarded as one of the greatest contemporary inheritors of the grotesque tradition in Spain.[189] Renowned for dark comedies that combine gross-out humor with horror elements, he has asserted that "[l]o grotesco es lo único que sirve hoy para hablar de la realidad. La única forma de hablar del mundo desde un punto de vista realista es lo grotesco. Todo lo demás es farsa y da miedo" (Piña). He has also explicitly acknowledged his debt to the masters of the grotesque in Spanish art, literature, and film. "Hay una larga tradición de lo grotesco en nuestra cultura," De la Iglesia explains, "Quevedo, Goya, Valle-Inclán… El cine de Berlanga y Azcona no es que me haya influido, es que me ha construido" (Estrada). Mirroring his predecessors, De la Iglesia is celebrated for his baroque, outrageous style, his ferociously sarcastic (even cannibalistic) sense of humor (de Prada). Likewise, he is renowned for his

[189] See, for example, Cerdán (241); Egea (25); Buse, Triana Toribio, and Willis (63).

notoriously antiheroic protagonists, and his films are "populated by the grotesque, the ugly, the moronic, [and] the morally deficient" (Buse, Triana Toribio, and Willis 135-6), including the disabled band of terrorists in *Acción mutante* (1993), the criminal priest in *El día de la bestia* (1995), the crazed apartment building residents in *La comunidad* (2000), and, as I analyze in this section, the violent, outrageously disfigured circus clowns of *Balada triste de trompeta*.[190]

When asked about his inspiration for this film, De la Iglesia describes his need to speak about "[el] pasado, de 1973, cuando tenía ocho años y vivíamos aparentemente tranquilos en un entorno de gran hostilidad y violencia" (Landa). However, he explains that *Balada triste de trompeta* is not simply a story of the Civil War and the dictatorship, but also "[d]e cómo el pasado nos influye, perpetuando las heridas, la intransigencia y el deseo de venganza, y el resultado siempre son esas dos Españas irreconciliables que me exasperan" (Llopart). The director maintains that Spain has a terribly painful history that continues to condition the present (Velázquez), and that he feels "ridículo, horrorosamente mutilado por [este] pasado maravilloso y triste, ahogado por una nostalgia de algo que no ocurrió, una pesadilla informe que [l]e impide ser feliz" ("Algunos apuntes que escribí"). For these reasons, De la Iglesia contends that *Balada triste de trompeta* is an exorcism of Spain's past, and with it he aims to

> saca[r] la basura que llevamos enquistada en el alma y [ponerla] encima de la mesa en un entorno grotesco […] Quiero aniquilar la rabia y el dolor con un chiste grotesco que haga reír y llorar a la vez. Quiero quemar con ácido las heridas que me escuecen por la noche,

[190] In *The cinema of Álex de la Iglesia*—released in 2007, prior to the production of *Balada triste de trompeta*—, Peter Buse, Núria Triana Toribio, and Andy Willis note that although "many of [his] films adopt plotting strategies from thrillers and suspense movies (*Acción mutante*, *El día de la bestia*, *Perdita Durango*, *La comunidad*), their protagonists are drawn from comedy. The structure of thrillers demands bravery, resolution, decisiveness from the characters" (136).

cuando la angustia es insoportable y los demonios que viven a mi lado, susurrándome al oído, se vuelven dolorosamente reales. (“Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente”)

Echoing the director’s statements, the existing critical readings of *Balada triste de trompeta* scrutinize the film’s condemnation of the Franco regime and its continued influence on Spanish society today. Reading the work alongside Guillermo del Toro’s 2006 film *El laberinto del fauno*, Gina Sherriff focuses on how its representation of childhood “serves as a painful reminder of the past, graphically illustrating the ways in which the past can wound and mark its victims indefinitely” (127). In contrast to del Toro’s work, which “conforms to a very standard reading of the child as the embodiment of humanity’s hope for the future” (128), Sherriff argues that De la Iglesia “underscores the traumatic nature of [the Civil War and the dictatorship] and its lasting effect on the current generation of Spaniards [… and marks] the future as unstable through the image of a child figure [Javier] that cannot come to terms with the horrors of the past, nor control his response to it” (128). Per Verónica Martínez Monferrer, the film is a “callejón sin salida trágico y absurdo” (128) that reveals how the absurdity of “la Guerra Civil y su violencia salpica y transforma el alegre mundo del circo y a todos los que a él pertenecen” (127). Alluding to Valle-Inclán’s characteristic concave mirrors, she argues that the director sheds light on the internalized horrors of the past, showing us “como un espejo deformante aquello que ve y que ha visto en nuestra propia España y en nosotros mismos[,] como herederos de esas formas de actuar tan poco válidas una como otra para sobrevivir humanamente en comunidad” (Martínez Monferrer 128).

In this vein, some scholars have examined De la Iglesia’s use of the grotesque in relation to historical memory. Per Ana Luengo, *Balada triste de trompeta*’s “estética violenta mezclada con lo más cómico, simbolizado en este caso por el payaso” (129) serves to challenge the

Transition's narrative of "una nueva España sin herencia del pasado, en la que todo es nuevo y por estrenar" (129). Alison Ribeiro de Menezes reads the film within the *esperpento* tradition, proposing that despite its 2010 release date, it postulates the need to

> expose buried, concealed and disguised aspects of the past that have not begun to receive proper recognition. It is as if the consensus of the Transition […] is still too solidly in place in 2010 for Spanish history to be anything other than a horror story for De la Iglesia, a horror story full of the esperpentic monsters that Spanish society was too anxious to confront during the period of the Transition, […] and that Spain remains too cowed to confront properly. (251)

Similarly, in her film review, Martínez Monferrer contends that Javier and Sergio's grotesque characters allow the viewer to

> identificar[se] con lo que resuena de [sí] mismos en los personajes [y hacerse] conscientes de ello viendo en estas figuras no sólo a dos payasos patéticos y autodestructivos sino a dos formas paradigmáticas de ser que pueden coincidir con las dos Españas, *que de forma exagerada y grotescamente presentadas nos muestran la incapacidad de ambas de reparar el daño, restaurar su humanidad y reanudar la relación con el otro desde la dignidad, el respeto y el amor*. (128, emphasis my own)

While the existing studies of *Balada triste de trompeta* treat its condemnation of the unresolved state of historical memory in post-Franco Spain, they do not adequately consider how De la Iglesia denounces the Transition's official narrative of the past. The director uses the confrontation between Javier and Sergio—representative of the Republic and the dictatorship—to denounce the terms of the 1977 Amnesty Law. Although the Sad and Happy Clowns' violent actions mirror the popularly-held assumption that both involved parties were equally guilty for

the horrors of the Civil War (Aguilar Fernández, *Memory and Amnesia* 18), De la Iglesia uses Javier's grotesque physical and psychological transformation to censure the granting of impunity for all Franco-era crimes during the Transition. In its depiction of Javier and Sergio's battle for Natalia, the film portrays a clear distinction between the two clowns' atrocious behaviors. Whereas Sergio is undoubtedly malicious by nature, the protagonist is presented as being inherently upright, yet driven to madness, violence, and grotesque self-destruction by the traumas of *franquismo*—his father's death and the maltreatment by his rival. In doing so, *Balada triste de trompeta* not only condemns Spain's failure to adequately assess the crimes of the Franco regime (Sherriff; Ribeiro de Menezes; Luengo)—but, more precisely, it is constructed to problematize the indiscriminate nature of the Amnesty Law.

De la Iglesia pertains to a long line of visual artists, writers, and filmmakers who have been inspired by the circus—from Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Georges Seurat, and Pablo Picasso's paintings, to Ramón Gómez de la Serna's chronicle *El circo* (1917) and Franz Kafka's story "Up in the Gallery" (1919), to films such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928), Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), Max Ophüls' *Lola Montès* (1955), Federico Fellini's *La Strada* (1954), and Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre* (1989), among others. A "travelling and organized display of animals and skilled performances within one or more circular stages known as 'rings' before an audience encircling these activities" (Truzzi 315), the traditional circus—like the one featured in *Balada triste de trompeta*—was first popularized by Philip Astley in mid-late eighteenth century England.[191] Since its inception, it has been a "vehicle for the demonstration and taunting of danger" (Stoddart 4), by which clowns, aerialists, tightrope walkers, and other

[191] Peta Tait distinguishes between the traditional and the contemporary circus, which emerged as a radical art form in 1970s. The contemporary circus "expanded the places and spaces in which circus arts could be found," and is marked by an absence of animals (2).

artists use their bodies to perform "grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable and heroic" feats (Assael 8).[192] Because the circus was originally a marginal art—that occupied liminal spaces at the edges of cities and towns, and served as a refuge for misfits and outcasts (Bouissac 12)—, it has consistently had the potential "to provoke and challenge public perceptions of norms as well as entertain" (Allain and Harvie 165). Bakhtin suggests that its "jugglers, acrobats, vendors of panaceas, magicians, clowns, trainers of monkeys" preserve the grotesque character of carnival (*Rabelais* 353), and, like its medieval predecessor, it "brings together, unifies, weds and combines the sacred and the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (*Problems* 123).[193] In this vein, Gómez de la Serna proclaims in his chronicle: "convencido de que la vida es una cosa grotesca, [entiendo] que donde se exhibe mejor es donde lo grotesco se armoniza y adquiere expresión artística, arrebatadora: en el circo" (525).

The clown has consistently been an integral part of the circus and De la Iglesia has commented on his enthusiasm for the figure. "Me interesa el payaso como símbolo," he remarks, "[porque es] una figura terrorífica fuera de contexto, que tiene un 'link' con el sacerdote y el torero. Los tres llevan trajes de luces, los tres participan en un ritual de iniciación en el que hay

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[192] Antony Coxe contends that because these exhilarating acts are performed live and in a circular venue, the circus is a "spectacle of actuality." He explains: "You can walk round it. It can be seen from all sides. There can be no illusion, for there are eyes all round to prove that there is no deception" (25). In *Balada triste de trompeta*, De la Iglesia sporadically juxtaposes images of the circus with documentary footage of historical events—Franco's victory parade, the inauguration of the Valle de los Caídos, and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, among many others—to, in my opinion, stress that there is a link between these historical facts and the clown's grotesque performances, which can be seen as "spectacles of actuality."

[193] However, Bakhtin also emphasizes that carnival is not a performance and does not have an audience. In contrast to the circus, carnival is a "pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival, everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants *live* in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect" (*Problems* 122).

un sacrificio" ("Álex de la Iglesia: 'Balada triste de trompeta' es el film del que más orgulloso me siento"). While De la Iglesia views the clown in traditional, even ritualistic terms, analogous to the Catholic priest and the bullfighter, William J. Free views it as a symbol of modernity. He argues that this "grotesque little man with the red nose epitomizes a reality which cannot be explicated in terms of the logical schemes, definitions, and labels [, … he] represents the modern world most of our literature describes—absurd, grotesque, meaningless, chaotic, suited only for the blackest of comedies or the most ironic of tragedies" (214). Both De la Iglesia and Free's perspectives resonate with Louise Peacock's understanding of the clowns are a comic performer who uses play to connect with its public (14). However, the comic face of a Happy Clown is not the definitive feature of this art form. There is also always something "other" about clowns: their makeup and clothing set them apart from ordinary people, they may be freakish or deformed, and they ignore the laws of nature (Free 218; McManus 15).[194] As De la Iglesia understands them, clowns are terrifying figures out of context.

Renowned for his fascination with the circus, Federico Fellini view the clown a reflection of the irrationality of the common man. He views it as:

> an incarnation of a fantastic creature who expresses the irrational aspect of man; he stands for the instinct, for whatever is rebellious in each one of us and whatever stands up to the established order of things. He is a caricature of man's childish and animal aspects, the

[194] In his study of clowns in Fellini's oeuvre, Free expands upon this idea: "The clown, wherever he appears, has three identifying traits: his mask and costume, his comic actions, and his rebellion. The mask and costume set him apart from the rest of mankind by making his physical appearance grotesque […] They identify the style of comedy in which he is privileged to act. The nature of his privilege lies in his ability to destroy our usual concept of reality by creating a world in which there exists a grotesque disparity between cause and effect" (218).

mocker and the mocked. The clown is a mirror in which man sees himself in a grotesque, deformed, ridiculous image. (123)

Although Fellini has also emphasized that the clown is a "caricature of a well-established, ordered, peaceful society" (Free 214), *Balada triste de trompeta* presents the opposite scenario—the grotesque Sad and Happy Clowns do not serve as caricatures of a pacific and coherent society, but rather are reflections of the traumatic nature of the Franco regime and its continued influence on Spanish society.

Throughout the film, De la Iglesia employs circus imagery to articulate the evolving political climate in Spain at different moments during the twentieth century (Sherriff 134; Luengo 132-3). The first scene, set in 1937, offers a conventional portrait of the circus as a joyous space of entertainment. Here a young Javier and other children laugh uproariously while they watch his father perform as the Happy Clown. At this point, the circus is a "lugar de libertad" (Luengo 133), emblematic of the freedom and progress of the Second Republic and, consequently, of Javier's youthful innocence.[195] This happiness, however, proves to be fleeting—the sudden arrival of Republican soldiers brings the exuberant show to a halt, the circus artists are recruited for battle, and the course of the protagonist's life changes forever. Therefore, as Luengo argues, the Civil War not only disrupts the performance, but also the Republic and Javier's childhood (132).[196] From there, the narrative jumps to the frontline, and

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[195] Despite this date—one year after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936—, here De la Iglesia presents the circus as an idyllic space that is completely removed from the conflict until the arrival of the Republican soldiers.

[196] After the first scene—featuring Javier and the other children at the circus, and the arrival of the Republican soldiers—, De la Iglesia cuts to the film's opening credits, which he refers to as a "parada de los monstruos, una mezcla de todos mis monstruos, los que admiro y los que temo: Franco, Hitler, Fraga, Frankenstein, [Paul] Naschy, Tonetti…" ("Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente"). In his review of film, Manuel Yañez-Murillo describes the credits in detail: "Set to a military march adorned with flamenco flourishes, the title sequence unfurls a collage of snapshots in which dictators [, …] Basque

with this change in milieu, the representation of the circus shifts dramatically. Now that the Republic is threatened by *franquismo*, the once festive art form undergoes its first grotesque transformation. Javier's father continues to wear his clown costume as he fights against and is later captured by the Nationalist army, which presents a glaring juxtaposition between the "light frivolity of [the circus and] the grotesque violence of mortal combat" (Sherriff 134).

The exuberant vision of the circus depicted in the first scenes vanishes with the end of the Civil War. A testament to the severity of the dictatorship during the 1940s, the film's next sequence—set during Javier's adolescence in the postwar period, when his father has been condemned to forced labor at the Valle de los Caídos—is entirely void of circus iconography. When the protagonist visits his imprisoned father, for the first time the latter sports normal clothing and does not wear face paint. The only mention of the circus in this postwar scene occurs during a brief conversation between the child and parent (just prior to his death). As the two characters discuss the difficult circumstances of Javier's life, the father poignantly instructs his son not to follow in his footsteps as a Happy Clown—he must be a Sad Clown due to the hardships he has experienced in his short lifetime. It also must be noted that here Javier's father gives his son the piece of advice that will guide his fate: "Hay una manera de ser feliz, de burlarse del destino, venganza. Alivia tu dolor con la venganza. ¡Venganza! ¡Venganza!" This conversation underscores the magnitude of the change that has taken place in Spain with Franco's victory and presents a dismal outlook for the future. The circus will no longer be a

terrorists, and priests, coexist with figures from horror movies […] and Spanish popular culture […] It's an audiovisual bombardment in which [De la Iglesia] plants the seeds for a very special exorcism of History, recalling the wounds of a nation that spent nearly half a century under a tragic cloak of repression, a bold and visceral exercise in memory" ("Review: The Last Circus"). Immediately after the credits, the film cuts to an image of the Javier's father fighting in the Civil War frontline.

source of happiness, but rather anguish and rancor. Similarly, Javier will never overcome the traumas of his childhood and will continue to be haunted by his violent past (Sherriff 134).

Because the protagonist sees clowning as a connection to his family and to his joyful childhood during the Republic, when the narrative jumps to the 1970s, he views the circus with nostalgic idealism. Not only that, Javier also perceives it as a refuge from the dictatorship (Sherriff 134). Sherriff's observation resonates with the historic fact that the circus arose as "a strategy of ephemeral acceptance and precarious survival devised by ethnic minorities that were not allowed to settle for business in villages and towns" (Bouissac 12). In this sense, it has consistently been viewed as a sanctuary for individuals and groups that, like Javier, do not conform to mainstream or national culture (Sherriff 134). Traumatized by the war and by his father's imprisonment and death, the protagonist innocently believes that he can shield himself from the cruelty of the Franco regime by taking shelter in (what he presumes to be) a bastion of the Republic. As Tait affirms, the peripheral nature of the circus evokes "a social fantasy of liberation from regulatory systems of order" (27). However, upon arriving to the show, Javier realizes that the circus of his youth is no longer a reality. To start, the performance takes place in a bombed-out wasteland on the outskirts of Madrid—a dreary, peripheral setting that Luengo interprets as symbolizing "la democracia republicana destrozada por la guerra y la dictadura" (133)—, and comes off as quaint in comparison to the new televised clown programs of early 1970s Spain.[197] Most notably, the formerly cheerful and liberated setting has been infiltrated by

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[197] De la Iglesia includes numerous clips of the televised clown shows of the 1970s, highlighting the evolution of the circus in Spanish society and insinuating the perceived arrival of modernity with the end of the dictatorship (Luengo 129). In the first scene set during the 1970s, Javier applies a traditional clown costume and face makeup—echoing what his father wore in the 1930s—in preparation for his audition as the Sad Clown. While doing so, he watches the clown troupe "Los payasos de la tele" perform on the new television program *El Gran Circo de TVE*. Regarding the clowns on television, the elephant trainer, Ramiro, exclaims: "¡Son buenísimos! ¡Y no se maquillan!" insinuating that Javier's choice of clown attire is antiquated.

the hegemonic power dynamics of the dictatorship. De la Iglesia presents a scenario in which the circus does not provide Javier with a refuge from the dictatorship, since it has fallen under the control of Sergio, who plays the Happy Clown and at the same time personifies the authority and violence of *franquismo* that has haunted the protagonist since childhood.

From the onset of the 1970s sequence, De la Iglesia establishes a clear contrast between Sergio and Javier. Not only are they artistic counterparts, but they have opposing personalities, and treat Natalia completely differently. The men are representative of the two emblematic modern clown types—Javier is the Whiteface (*clown blanc*), or Sad Clown, whereas Sergio is the Auguste, or Happy Clown. Per clowning tradition, the "elegant" Whiteface symbolizes the existing power structure within society, whereas the "grotesque" Auguste denotes anti-authoritarian and class-conscious values (Fo 172; McManus 16). The film twists this dichotomy, associating Sergio with the political establishment (the Franco regime) and Javier with anti-authoritarianism (the Republic). Per the director, Sergio is "brutalmente maltratador, superdotado sexualmente, bruto [e] irracional" ("Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente"). He is also prone to explode in jealous and/or alcoholic rages, particularly in his encounters with Natalia and with Javier after he begins to challenge his authority. Regardless, the Happy Clown is the group's most popular performer (the only one who makes children laugh) and because he knows that the show would be a failure without him, he exercises dictatorial power over the entire cast (Sheriff 135-6). Although Sergio is not the proprietor, he refers to the circus as being "his," orders around the performers, and becomes enraged when anyone confronts him. For example, during Javier's first dinner with the group, Sergio tells a misogynistic joke to the table. After Natalia admits that she did not find it funny, he hurls her to the ground and hits and kicks her while yelling: "¿No te gusta? ¿Es desagradable? ¡Pues a mí sí me hace gracia! ¡Yo digo qué tiene

gracia aquí! ¡Yo soy el payaso! ¡Los niños vienen por mí! ¡Yo doy de comer gilipollas! ¡Yo! ¡Yo digo aquí qué tiene gracia! ¡Me cago en Dios! ¡Joder!" On the contrary, De la Iglesia refers to Javier as naturally "débil, buenazo, inteligente, terriblemente romántico [y] nacido para sufrir" ("Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente"). He comes off as mentally stuck in childhood because of the traumatic events of his youth and for this reason, the other performers frequently describe him as boyish. Furthermore, he is initially docile, especially in his interactions with Sergio. When the troupe's animal trainer, Ramiro, applauds Javier after his first performance as the Sad Clown, he signals how the Happy Clown torments him in their duet, exclaiming: "¡Qué estilo aguantando la mirada cuando él te tiraba las tartas! Y cuando tú hablabas con los niños y por detrás te prendía fuego al culo, tú ardiendo y sin inmutarte. ¡Esa pasividad estudiada me recuerda a Buster Keaton!"

Natalia is the troupe's kind, beautiful, and talented aerialist, and she is described by the director as being the "único rayo de luz en esta pesadilla infernal y grotesca" ("Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente"). She proves to be the common denominator between the two rival clowns. Sergio and Natalia are engaged in an abusive relationship—he is domineering, volatile, and physically and sexually batters her. Natalia recognizes that her boyfriend maltreats her, yet she is aroused by his vicious personality and actions, and finds herself "atrapada por un deseo brutal que sabe que la lleva a la destrucción" ("Álex de la Iglesia: la mirada del presidente"). Conversely, Javier falls in love with the aerialist the moment he first sees her—as she performs a spectacular acrobatics act while hanging from silks—and cannot comprehend why she would stay with the abusive Sergio. Much to his dismay, she perceives him as kind, inoffensive, and child-like, viewing him as just a friend for much of the narrative. However, she comes to revere Javier for being the only performer with the audacity to challenge her boyfriend.

Film critics (Llopart; Fernández) have observed that Natalia is a symbol of the Spanish nation that Republican Javier and Francoist Sergio fight to possess. However, I view these readings as incomplete: her chosen artistry also carries immense symbolic weight. Natalia pertains to a long line of cinematic female aerialists, who are often portrayed as the romantic interest between two male characters in circus narratives such as Cleopatra in *Freaks,* Holly in *The Greatest Show on Earth,* Lola in *Lola Montès*, or Concha in *Santa Sangre*, among others (Tait 91-92). In the traditional circus, the female aerialist "performed tricks which amazed and dazzled audiences [through which] the female body became momentarily unclassifiable when the aerialist undertook near-impossible feats. Flying out from the trapeze and falling through space demonstrated *a spectacle of unrestricted if unattainable physical freedom*" (Tait 33, emphasis my own). For Javier, the beautiful Natalia, like the aerialist mid-flight, is dazzling yet inaccessible because of her relationship with Sergio. Furthermore, as Helen Stoddart has observed, the aerialist's fantastic high-flying act is the epitome of the "suspension of place, time, and social relations" that the circus embodied (176). Accordingly, Javier quixotically views Natalia as a no-time/no-place—a liberating interruption of the Francoist continuum.

Because of his feelings for Natalia and his indignation towards the abuse that she endures, Javier begins to challenges the circus' power structure, which until his arrival had "supported [the Happy Clown's] desire for totalitarian rule: his fellow performers feared him, while Natalia was sexually aroused by his abusive treatment" (Sherriff 136). In this sense, Javier's docile personality is short-lived. After witnessing Sergio's Franco-esque tyranny, he begins to shed his passive personality, the first in a series changes to his disposition that we observe during the film. Javier initially disrupts the order of the circus by refusing to laugh at Sergio's jokes, spending time alone with Natalia (despite Sergio's insistence that he not), and

trying to convince her to leave her boyfriend. These acts infuriate his rival, who previously had never been defied by the other performers. One evening, Javier and Natalia secretly visit a funfair in Madrid, only to cross paths with Sergio, who brutally hits his girlfriend upon discovering whom she is with. When Javier intervenes, Sergio turns on him, mauling the Sad Clown and leaving him for dead. This incident marks the breaking point in the rivalry between the two clowns. Previously, Javier's resistance to the Happy Clown was non-violent and arose from his desire to liberate Natalia from her abusive relationship. However, after being beaten himself, the protagonist also begins to associate Sergio with the traumas of his childhood. While hospitalized for his extensive injuries, Javier has a nightmare in which he grotesquely reimagines the circumstances of his father's assassination—here the Happy Clown gruesomely slashes his father's throat, who yells "¡Hijo! Acuérdate de tu padre!" just prior to dying.

This disturbing dream allows Javier to grasp the connection between Sergio and the regime that imprisoned and killed his father. Consequently, his character shifts once again (this time far more dramatically). He begins to transform into a grotesque, psychotic, and violent figure, completely leaving behind his gentle and timid disposition for a new persona that mirrors his rival's. Sherriff argues that in his characterization of the Happy Clown and the Sad Clown, De la Iglesia "eschews the traditional hero-villain dialectic, opting instead to question the morality of all of the characters" (132). Although Javier's actions come to mimic Sergio's, that there is an undeniable distinction between the two men. Javier does not evolve into a grotesque persona because he is inherently malicious. Unlike his naturally malevolent counterpart, Javier's evil actions and later process of self-destruction are the result of him being the victim of Francoist violence and oppression. We first observe the change in Javier's disposition when escapes from the hospital and returns to the circus in pursuit of Natalia, whom he finds having

wild sexual intercourse with Sergio. Here De la Iglesia explicitly inverts the assailant-victim dynamic from earlier. Having recalled his father's advice ("Alivia tu dolor con la venganza"), Javier bursts into their tent and attempts to kill his rival by slashing him with a meat hook and beating him with a trumpet—an act that will leave Sergio permanently disfigured with a Glasgow smile, a grotesque visualization of his Auguste clown identity.[198]

In this scene, De la Iglesia makes a distinction between the protagonist's use of violence and Sergio's brutal acts from earlier in the film. Javier's vicious attack of the Happy Clown after hearing his father's voice in the dream posits a central question to the interpretation of *Balada triste de trompeta*—is his violent reaction ethical? Contrary to Martínez Monferrer and Luengo's view that the work perpetuates the belief that both sides were equally at fault for the atrocities of the Civil War (in accordance with the narrative of the Transition, and at the root of the Pact of Forgetting and the Amnesty Law), Javier's brutal behavior and desire for vengeance is in fact a logical consequence of the accumulation of traumatic events he has experienced during his lifetime. Thus, the director presents revenge as an acceptable response to abuse and tyranny and, in opposition to the innocuous oblivion championed by the Transition, as an expected aftermath of fascist oppression. In this sense, the film portrays vengeance and violence as ethical reactions, yet at the same time, De la Iglesia also makes it clear that this highly polarized political scenario is a chaotic, grotesque setting that can lead to Spain's demise.

After attacking Sergio, Javier flees the circus and takes shelter in the forest. In a sequence that grotesquely alludes to the *maquis*'s resistance to *franquismo*, we start to observe the extent of the degradation of his character (Luengo 129).[199] Javier has not merely transformed into a

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[198] A Glasgow smile is a wound caused by cutting someone's face from the mouth to the ears, resulting in a scar in the shape of an exaggerated smile.
[199] Per Luengo, this sequence "retoma un elemento de la propaganda franquista en la que se equiparaba al maquis con un perro salvaje, es decir, un perro que no permitía ser amaestrado" (129).

violent persona. The trauma has made the protagonist animal-like—he strips himself of his clothing, lives off the land, and fights with other creatures. Later, in a fateful turn of events, he is captured by a pair of hunters (one of them being the Colonel who killed his father) and is taken to Franco's country estate, where he is further animalized. The Colonel forces him to take part in the dictator's hunting expedition by retrieving the spoils with his mouth and, after returning to the group with one of the dead birds, he savagely bites Franco's hand.[200] This, however, is not an act of political defiance—it is an uncontrollable, animalistic reaction, which signals that the protagonist's grotesque transformation is nearing completion (Sherriff 137).

Javier is subsequently detained in a church storeroom within Franco's estate and, while awaiting execution, he has a vision of Natalia dressed as the Virgin Mary, who announces: "El día de la ira ha llegado. Serás mi ángel de la muerte. Sálvame del mal y cumple tu destino, amado mío." Following this prophecy, he embarks upon his final and by far most grotesque transformation: he permanently applies "clown makeup" to his own body via a horrific process of self-mutilation. De la Iglesia creates a drastic contrast between this disturbing sequence and the film's first scene set in the 1970s, where the protagonist makes himself over for his audition with the circus. Previously, Javier's transformation into the Sad Clown was conventional and temporary. He colored his face using paint—white with exaggerated black eyebrows—and then appeared in normal clothing and without makeup outside the context of the performance. When Javier transforms himself into a clown after his psychotic breakdown, De la Iglesia grossly distorts the makeover sequence from earlier in the narrative. First, Javier sews together a

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[200] After stumbling upon Javier in the forest, the Colonel recognizes him due to his Virgin Mary medallion—the same one he is wearing as a child in the photograph that he stole off his father's body. Wanting to seek revenge on the person who caused him to lose his eye decades ago, it is the Colonel's idea to transport Javier to Franco's estate and force him to play the part of the dog in the hunting expedition.

mishmash clown costume, using purple, red, and gold vestments found in the storage room. He then splashes himself with lye solution and, as the chemical violently eats away at his skin, it leaves him with blistered snow-white scars on his face and hands. He also scorches his face with an iron—leaving red welts on his cheeks and lips—and slashes his forehand with a knife, resulting in bloody gashes that mimic dramatic eyebrows. The outcome of Javier's "makeover" is a twisted vision of his Whiteface appearance from earlier in the film that is notably reminiscent of the clowns in José Gutiérrez Solana's 1920 painting *Payasos* (particularly the uneven whiteness of his skin, the severe red triangular markings, and the gold detailing on his outfit). Like Sergio, whose body has taken on a distorted Happy Clown appearance by means of his Glasgow smile, Javier now permanently bears the monstrous marks of the Sad Clown.

Ribeiro de Menezes argues that when Javier disfigures his face and body, he asserts agency, which would allow him finally to "confront life, something which Sergio had previously told him he was unable to do because '[l]e da[ba] miedo la vida'" (251). Similarly, per Sherriff, the protagonist's scars are "the mask of injustice that must be worn on the body because it can no longer be repressed" (138) and his grotesque makeover therefore "denotes a significant turning point in Javier's understanding of himself [… He] cannot end his own pain; instead, he chooses to control it by becoming the aggressor and inflicting violence on himself and others" (137). Although Javier's self-mutilation does have an element of catharsis, this sequence is not empowering as Ribeiro de Menezes and Sherriff suggest. At this point in the narrative, the protagonist is clearly mentally incompetent, having been reduced to a state of madness by Sergio and his childhood traumas alike (evidenced by the sequences set in the forest and at Franco's hunting expedition). Furthermore, since the makeover scene occurs immediately after his vision of Natalia instructing him to rescue her (from Sergio) and to fulfill his destiny (avenging his

father's death), I read Javier's self-mutilation as the ultimate act in the series of grotesque incidents that he is driven to suffer because of Francoist oppression.

After murdering the Colonel, the now-grotesquely disfigured Javier flees Franco's estate and escapes to Madrid. Against a backdrop of the assassination of Carrero Blanco, he goes on a violent rampage through the city. After meeting Sergio and Natalia, he kidnaps the aerialist and travels to the Valle de los Caídos. Here De la Iglesia carnivalizes the Francoist monument. Like the big-top shows from earlier in the film, it too has become a circus, filled with animals, trampolines, twinkle lights, and music that clash with the macabre nature of the skeleton-filled crypts.[201] It is within this grotesque shrine to the dictatorship that the narrative culminates. The two demented clowns battle each other to take possession of Natalia, first in the subterranean tomb where Javier's father died, and later—in an homage to the climax of Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), where Thornhill and Kendall climb the face of Mount Rushmore—at the top of the monument's massive cross. When Natalia is finally presented with the option to choose between the two deformed men—the domineering Sergio and the now-crazed Javier—she opts for neither, dramatically leaping to her death instead. The two clowns proceed to be captured by the police. Battered, covered in blood, and without their beloved aerialist, their only solution is to look at each other and laugh, meditating their cruel fates.

The conclusion of *Balada triste de trompeta*—in which the Francoist Sergio and the Republican Javier have been transformed into grotesquely deformed assassins and both lose out on Natalia—has been wrongly interpreted as an allegory for the Transition's approach to national

[201] In an interview with Nancy Berthier, De la Iglesia refers to the monument as "un emblema arquitectónico, terrorífico y cruel, donde se expresa todo el horror de la guerra y el fantasma de la megalomanía, de un hombre que estaba en realidad construyendo su propia tumba. No es más que una pirámide el Valle de los Caídos, y la cruz de los caídos disfrazada de una especie de una basílica en honor a los muertos en la guerra esconde la tumba de un Faraón" (7).

reconciliation, which condemns the actions of both sides of the Civil War in the same manner (Luengo; Sherriff; Martínez Monferrer). Prior to scaling the cross, Javier walks through the bone-filled crypt with the terrified Natalia and playfully kicks one of the skulls off the ground. He then points to a mountain of bones and reflects: “Uno de estos tiene que ser mi padre. Unos fachas, otros rojos, y al final han acabado aquí todos juntos.” Luengo, on one hand, interprets Javier’s first action as a violation of the “tabú central de la reivindicación de la recuperación de la memoria de las víctimas.” On the other hand, she maintains that the protagonist’s statement about his father’s final resting place “retoma de forma provocadora el discurso de reconciliación de la Transición, en que se iguala a vencedores y vencidos, con toda la ironía necesaria y macabra de ese puntapié certero al cráneo de un cadáver sin identificar” (134). Indeed, Javier oversteps both discourses—the silencing, reconciliatory aim of the Transition and the new narrative of those pursuing the unearthing of Spain’s past. However, what Luengo sees as provocative and ironic words and actions, I read in a different manner. Given that Javier is a synecdoche for the Spaniards oppressed by the Franco regime and their trauma, the fact that he equates perpetrators and victims can only be understood as the consequence of his mental insanity and his inability to distinguish the difference between right and wrong. In this vein, Sherriff argues that in Sergio and Javier’s final confrontation, the “distinction between good and evil is unclear, and the protagonists have all but lost their minds. This is a battle between two disfigured, grotesque monsters for the love of a woman that wants nothing to do with either of them” (137). Likewise, per Martínez Monferrer, the two “payasos patéticos y autodestructivos” signify “dos formas paradigmáticas de ser que pueden coincidir con las dos Españas, que de forma exagerada y grotescamente presentadas nos muestran la incapacidad de ambas de reparar el daño” (128). I, however, find these interpretations to be fallacious. Javier’s auto-destruction

and resort to violence are not equivalent to Sergio's—the former is a victim who was driven to madness, whereas the latter was evil from the start. Moreover, it corresponds to the perpetrators, not to victims, to repair the damage. In sum, *Balada triste de trompeta* undermines the institutional position that Francoist and oppositional crimes should be judged in the same light, as they were during the Transition under the Amnesty Law.

3.3 *Una, grande y zombi*

Set against a backdrop of economic crisis, widespread unemployment, political turmoil and corruption, and escalating nationalist movements, in *Una, grande y zombi* (2011),[202] Hernán Migoya (1971-) proposes a grotesque "solution" to twenty-first century Spain's problems: a zombie apocalypse that will rid Spanish society of all internal divisions by converting the entirety of the population into a new race of living-dead, *Los Rabiosos.*[203] Using an omniscient narrator, Migoya relates this catastrophic scenario from the perspectives of three men—then-Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero; Jacin, a young ultra-nationalist Andalusian; and Eva (short for Evaristo), a naïve aspiring film director who resides in Barcelona.[204] Most of the novel is related from the point of view of Eva, who at the start of the novel begins a passionate

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[202] The title of *Una, grande y zombi* is a play on the Francoist motto: "Una, grande y libre." Typically chanted at the end of speeches, it encapsulated the regime's nationalistic vision of Spain: "['Una'] referred to the absence of all peripheral nationalist demands and to the centralist administrative structure. ['grande'] contained the heroic connotations of the imperial age [...'free'] did not mean liberty in a democratic sense, but rather national sovereignty in reference to the resistance against attempts of foreign powers to intrude into Spanish politics" (Humlebæk, *Inventing the Nation* 81).

[203] The *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española defines "rabioso" as: "Que padece rabia," "Colérico, enojado, airado," or "Vehemente, excesivo, violento" ("Rabioso").

[204] In his scenes, Zapatero appears in conversation with the Leader of the Opposition Mariano Rajoy, the First Deputy Prime Minister Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, and the unnamed President of Catalonia, among other political figures.

relationship with Luz (a Catalan woman adopted from Equatorial Guinea). Shortly into their affair, the couple attends a soccer match at Camp Nou between the Spanish and Catalan national teams. During this politically-heated game, Luz, Jacin, and the referee are transformed into *Rabiosos* after they are drenched with wine from a bottle decorated with Franco's portrait. This incident marks the genesis of a zombie invasion that will gradually unfold across Barcelona and Madrid, wreaking havoc on the already-troubled nation. Driven by his unfaltering love for his new girlfriend, and assisted by his friend Pere (a complete aficionado of zombie cinema), Eva attempts to comprehend and prevent the spread of the monstrous creatures. With the progression of the narrative, it is revealed that the incursion of the *Rabiosos* is not a fluke incident, but rather the culmination of an elaborate plan devised by Franco in the 1960s and commanded by Manuel Fraga, who has actually been a *Rabioso* since the aftermath of the 1966 Palomares Incident.[205] Their objective: "unify" the divided Spanish people by converting them into Francoist living dead and resurrect the former dictator, thereby returning imperial glory.

Migoya is a prolific author of novels, short stories, graphic novels, comics, and film scripts, and prides himself on writing "CONTRA el lector" and on not producing "literatura amable" ("Yo siempre escribe contra el lector, no hago literatura amable").[206] His pulp works are

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[205] On January 17, 1966, a US B-52 bomber collided with a refueling tanker off the coast of southern Spain, destroying both planes and killing seven crew members. The B-52 broke apart upon impact, unleashing the four thermonuclear bombs it carried. Three of the bombs were found on land near the beachside village of Palomares (Almería), whereas the fourth was recovered from the Mediterranean a few months later. Of the three bombs that made landfall, two detonated upon impact, emitting radioactive material and polluting a nearly two-square kilometer area of the town. To quell fears of contamination (which would threaten tourist activity), Fraga, then Spanish Minister of Information and Tourism, and U.S. Ambassador to Spain Angier Biddle Duke (plus other officials) would later be photographed by the press while swimming in a few of the area's beaches, including the Quitapellejos beach in Palomares.

[206] Migoya explains: "A mí, como lector, me gusta que los libros me reten y remuevan por dentro, sea placentera o dolorosamente, porque eso significa que lo que leo me está afectando y tal vez me haga evolucionar. Eso es lo que yo intento como escritor, aunque sea a costa de la estima de algún lector complaciente, que sólo busca alimentar su idea preconcebida en aquello que lee. Está en su derecho. Pero yo no escribo para ese lector que espera unas palmaditas en el lomo como si fuera un perro amaestrado.

filled with grotesque humor, political incorrectness, and deliberately perturbing depictions of sex and violence (such rape, pedophilia, and fictional incidents involving politicians and celebrities), and have received little attention from literary scholars.[207] *Una, grande, y zombi* is no exception: to date, the only critical study that examines the text is David R. Castillo's essay "Monsters for the Age of the Post-Human," which briefly considers it as part of his overview of the zombie genre in Spain.[208] Migoya, however, has given various interviews that provide us with insight into his living-dead narrative. In speaking with Ernest Alós, he comments that he felt compelled to write "una novela *pulp*, literatura popular, de género fantástico, en la que el lector se lo pase muy bien leyendo situaciones límite de terror y acción, que sea al mismo tiempo un homenaje a Richard Matheson y a José Mallorquí, Armando Matías Guiu y Víctor Mora, en que la mala leche pueda ir por la vía del humor" ("El universo zombi").[209] A voracious reader of science

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Para ese lector sobran escritores. Yo escribo para un lector que quiere conocer y está dispuesto a que una obra le transforme. Por eso me dejo el alma en mi obra" ("Yo siempre escribe contra el lector, no hago literatura amable").

[207] Migoya is most notorious for his 2003 short story collection *Todas putas*, which contains multiple stories in which the male protagonists make apologies for rape and pedophilia. The anthology provoked extensive controversy—not only for its subject matter, but also because its editor, Miriam Tey, was the director of the *Instituto de la mujer.* Regarding the polemic, Migoya recalls: "Perdí amigos, la gente me retiraba el saludo, incluso notaba miedo en los periodistas cuando me presentaban. Me daban la mano y se echaban para atrás al descubrir que yo era el de *Todas putas*" (Del Molino).

[208] Castillo briefly mentions the novel in his article, mainly commenting on its Cervantine elements—such as how Eva and Pere deliberate the conventions of zombie cinema as they fight off the *Rabiosos* (mirroring the discussions of chivalric romances and pastoral literature in *Don Quijote*) (174). A subsequent version of this essay appears under the title "Zombie Masses: Monsters for the Age of Global Capitalism" in the book *Zombie Talk: Culture, History, Politics* (Ed. David R. Castillo, David Schmid, and David A. Riley).

[209] Richard Matheson was an American horror and science fiction writer, renowned for his novels *I Am Legend* (1954) (see Note 214) and *The Shrinking Man* (1956), which Migoya has mentioned being his childhood favorites. Spanish writer José Mallorquí created El Coyote, a Zorro-inspired character who starred in his series of pulp Western novels (*Novelas de oeste*). Armando Matías Guiu was a Spanish humorist, most famous for his children's radio program *Tambor* and his humor column *Diálogos para besugos*. Víctor Moro was a Spanish comic book writer, creator of the highly successful *El Capitán Trueno* comic series.

fiction since childhood, Migoya realized the potential of the zombie genre within the Spanish context. In an interview with Manu Riquelme, the author explains:

> Pensé que me gustaría crear una parábola fantástica como las de [Matheson] para retratar este mi pintoresco país: lo que me permitía el subgénero zombi era coger a los principales políticos españoles y parodiarlos, hundirlos, humillarlos, cagarme en ellos y destrozarlos, poniéndoles en situaciones demoledoras, o sea, hacer con ellos lo que a todos nos gustaría en la vida real y nos es imposible: ajustar cuentas… ("Entrevista en cadena: Hernán Migoya")

I interpret the invasion of the *Rabiosos* as the pivotal point in *Una, grande y zombi*'s proposal that the Transition-era decision to silence the legacies of the Civil War and the dictatorship was unsuccessful. By portraying an ideologically polarized nation ridden by economic crisis and plagued by nationalist separatist movements, Migoya claims that Spanish society has not settled its long-standing differences and unveils the failure of the Transition's reconciliatory aims. When these turbulent conditions bring about a zombie outbreak—masterminded by Franco, and accomplished the original *Rabioso*, Manuel Fraga—, the author offers a grotesque satire of the narratives of the Transition. In the novel, Fraga (a synecdoche for the inheritors of the regime) did not opt to ignore Spain's past for the sake of its democratic future. He instead remained loyal to Franco for decades, preparing for the dictator's grotesque resurrection as a *Rabioso* and his subsequent return to dominance as the climax of an invasion of Francoist zombies. Thus, *Una, grande y zombi* proposes that behind the Transition's discourse of forgetting to move on lies a hidden Francoist agenda and, subsequently, lies the risk of the spread of ultranationalist sentiments.

Zombies are one of the few monstrous creatures that originated in a non-European tradition and that passed directly from folklore into popular culture without first being established in literature (Dendle 1-2; McIntosh 1-2). The zombie narratives of today—apocalyptic tales of mindless, cannibalistic living dead, first popularized by George Romero and reproduced here by Migoya—have their roots in Haitian voudou.[210] According to Haitian tradition, a zombie is a creature of living death said "to have no will of his own, but can be made to perform slave labor" (Anderson 121).[211] They are believed to be the creation of a voudou sorcerer, a *bokor*, who "takes [a] living body and destroys the soul within it, making a living dead who endlessly obeys his will" (Inglis 42-3).[212] With the United States military occupation of Haiti (1915-34), legends of voudou rituals and zombie practices entered mainstream U.S. culture and were quickly popularized by William B. Seabrook's sensationalist travelogue *The Magic Island* (1929) and Victor Halperin's film *White Zombie* (1932). These foundational narratives adhere to the Haitian understanding of the zombie—a soulless body controlled by an evil master (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 47; McIntosh 5)—and it is because of them that the monster "fell irrevocably under the auspices of the entertainment industry" (Dendle 2).[213]

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[210] Wade Davis' *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* (1988) provides one of the most-detailed histories of the zombie tradition in Haiti. See also: Bishop (*American Zombie Gothic* 37-63); Kordas (15-30); Inglis (42-59).

[211] In this vein, Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry describe the Haitian *zombi* as "a body raised from the dead [by voudou priests] to labor in the fields, [with] a deep association of having played a role in the Haitian Revolution" (87).

[212] As Davis explains, zombification is dependent on the abilities of the *bokor,* who "gains power by capturing the victim's *ti bon ange*—that component of the Vodoun soul that creates personality, character, and willpower […] Robbed of the soul, the body is but an empty vessel subject to the commands o an alien force" (8). Subsequently, Davis emphasizes that "the fear in Haiti is not *of* zombies, but rather of *becoming* a zombie […] Both the threat and the fact of zombification confer on the bokor a potent means of social control" (9).

[213] Peter Dendle describes early zombie narratives as "robotic." The living dead "exhibit no passions or drives, bearing little resemblance to the increasingly animalistic zombies of recent decades. In fact, their

This Haitian-inspired zombie narrative would be completely revamped several decades later, first by Richard Matheson in his novel *I Am Legend* (1954),[214] and later—and most notably—by George Romero in his low-budget film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Romero inaugurated the modern genre by solidifying a new narrative formula—he eliminated the *bokor* figure (the zombies were born of contamination) and spotlighted a group of survivors facing an invasion of cannibalistic living dead driven by hunger (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 13-14). The film's violence, gore, and grotesque images were also unprecedented and became fundamental to the pantheon (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 13-14). *Night of the Living Dead* would proceed to inspire generations of horror filmmakers worldwide, including Amado de Ossorio, who transported the zombie genre to the Iberian Peninsula in 1972 with his Spanish-Portuguese co-production *La noche del terror ciego*—a pulp film depicting an invasion of zombie Knights Templar (Schlegel 65-7).[215] With his subsequent hit *Dawn of the Dead* (1979), Romero solidified the zombie craze in international cinema. The genre experienced a lull during the 1980s and 1990s, yet it underwent a renaissance after 9/11—beginning with Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) and followed by films such as Paul W.S. Anderson's *Resident Evil* franchise, Edward Wright's spoof *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and Marc Forster's *World War Z* (2013), plus Frank

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utter lack of concern for humans, or for anything at all, was what initially made zombies frightening" (3). Directed at a Western audience, the source of fear in these foundational texts lied "in the prospect of a Westerner becoming dominated, subjugated, symbolically raped, and effectively 'colonized' by pagan representatives" (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 66-7).

[214] Though Matheson calls his assailants "vampires," John Edgar Browning describes how the novel "banished the Vodou zombie nearly to obscurity" and broke from the Victorian and Romantic monster narratives by creating "(zombie-like) vampire/revenant en masse" (368).

[215] Other pioneering Spanish zombie narratives—mainly pulp films—include de Ossorio's *El buque maldito* (1974) and *La noche de las gaviotas* (1975), José Luis Merino's *La orgía de los muertos* (1973), Jorge Grau's *No profanar el sueño de los muertos* (1974), and prolific horror director Jess Franco's *Christina, princesse de l'érotisme* (1973), *L'Abîme des morts vivants* (1975), and *La mansión de los muertos vivientes* (1985).

Darabont's television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-present) (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 15).[216] During this time, Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza's hit *REC* (2007)—a found footage film portraying a zombie pandemic in Barcelona—brought the genre to mainstream popularity in Spain. Based on a hit blog of the same name, Manel Loreiro's novel *Apocalipsis Z* (2007) instigated a boom in Spanish zombie literature, which has also proliferated during the past decade.[217]

As a ludicrous and terrifying deformation of the human form, the zombie is a grotesque being by nature (Badley 35; Hubner, Leaning, and Manning 6). Linda Badley characterizes them as "ridiculous, disgusting, pathetic and absurd—at the same time *and for the same reasons* that they are horrifying" (35). In the same vein, Laura Hubner, Marcus Leaning, and Paul Manning suggest that the distorted character of the living dead "[violates] our 'normal' boundaries of taste" by evoking revulsion, fear, and the pleasures of carnival (6), and simultaneously invites us to be disgusted and to "revel in a carnival which not only inverts the social conventions of the body (and bodily fluids) [but also] disrupts and threatens the social order" (6). Because they are creatures "that [were] once familiar but now [return] in a more distant, often decomposed but still recognizable form," zombies generate an uncanny effect (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 110).[218] In this sense, a zombie "par excellence," as Slavoj Žižek notes, "is always someone

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[216] Bishop argues that the conventions of zombie cinema matched the post-9/11 cultural conscious: "Because the after effects of war, terrorism, and natural disasters so closely resemble the scenarios of zombie cinema, such images of death and destruction [now] have all the more power to shock and terrify" ("Dead Man Still Walking" 17-18).

[217] Other notable contributions include Carlos Sisí's series *Los Caminantes,* Victor Conde's *Naturaleza muerta* (2009), and Házel G. González's *La muerte negra*: *El triunfo de los no-muertos* (2010), *Quijote Z* (2010), and *Lazarillo Z: Matar zombis nunca fue pan comido* (2010). For an overview of Spanish zombie literature, see: Castillo (170-5).

[218] Per Bishop, all "cinematic monsters that essentially resemble humans must be considered uncanny on some level, but those that are fundamentally "dead" take the idea of the *Unheimlich* to a powerful extreme [… Zombies] clearly look dead—pale skin, vacant stares, hideous wounds, and decaying flesh—and have lost the power of speech, which makes them even less human and more terrifying [… B]ecause [it] can

whom we knew before, when he was still normally alive—the shock for a character in a zombie-movie is to recognize the former best neighbor in the creeping figure tracking him persistently" (100). Jerrold E. Hogle takes this idea one step further, suggesting that they are uncanny because they are reflections of society. Conjuring up an image of Valle-Inclán's *espejo cóncavo*, he explains that when facing zombies on film (and in literature), "we look at ourselves, albeit in a kind of distortion mirror [...W]e struggle to deal with the contradictory emotions of being potentially mindless participants in [... a] world unable to resolve its ongoing conflicts over gender, race, class, sex, economics, personal freedom vs. public order, and [the relationship between] death and life" (Hogle 3). Given its grotesque and uncanny character, the zombie is a "convenient boogeyman" for contemporary anxieties (Lauro and Embry 87), in that it has consistently served a repository for social, political, and cultural concerns that were not all projected into the original Haitian creature (Hogle 3). Fittingly, in *Una, grande y zombi*, Migoya uses the living dead to condemn post-Franco Spain's treatment of historical memory and to problematize the endurance of Francoism in democratic society.

Migoya situates his zombie apocalypse during the final moments of the Zapatero government (2004-2011). From the initial pages of the novel (prior to the arrival of the invasive creatures), we receive a doomed portrait of a nation burdened with economic and political troubles: widespread unemployment, mounting tensions between the PSOE, PP, and other political groups, and the escalating Catalan independence movement. The author principally employs Zapatero's character to convey this tumultuous atmosphere. In the prologue (presented

move, it is even less familiar than a corpse, which, for all its repulsion, is nonetheless a natural thing" (*American Zombie Gothic* 110).

through the Prime Minister's point of view), the narrator indicates that Spain is currently experiencing its

> peor momento desde que gozaba de un régimen democrático (¡hacía casi cuarenta años ya de su instauración!), y que había hundido a su población en las simas más deprimentes del desempleo, la pobreza y la desesperación, disparando el porcentaje de afiliados al subsidio de paro, servicio público cuyos fondos estatales ya estaban también a punto de colapsarse, y ampliando la capa de indignados y descontentos sociales hasta llevarlos a las puertas de la insurrección civil. (10)

Eva and Jacin's characters later personify the effects of this economic crisis. Both men are unemployed—Eva after working on a failed film project and then in a shuttered video rental store in Barcelona, and Jacin after being fired from his position as a foreman in a commercial greenhouse in Almería—and describe the precarious circumstances of their professional lives.

As the narrative progresses, we receive additional insight into the state of Spanish society through Zapatero's conversations with Rajoy. The ideologically-opposed politicians debate Spain's fraught relationship with Catalonia, epitomized in the novel as a soccer match between the Spanish and Catalan national teams held at Camp Nou. Whereas Zapatero views the upcoming game as means of appeasing his Catalan allies, "para que sigan pechando y cooperando con sus empresas y sus impuestos hasta sacar a España del agujero" (93), Rajoy vehemently objects to its greater political implications. Convinced that the symbolic match will further impede national unity, he exclaims: "¡Un partido que pone sobre el tablero la independencia de Cataluña! […] ¡España está a punto de romperse por tu culpa, justo cuando necesitamos más que nunca que todos nos sintamos unidos!" (93). The Opposition Leader's comment foreshadows the grotesque vision of unity proposed by the novel: the conversion of

Spain's population, regardless of political and national identity, into living dead. Upon hearing Rajoy's concern, Zapatero lays the cards on the table, explaining to his opponent:

> Marianín […] Tú sabes que España no va a durar cien años más. Desde 1898 llevamos una espiral de decepción nacional y de desarraigo de la gente para con sus señas de identidad que terminará con seguridad el concepto de España en no demasiado tiempo. También sabes que los catalanes no se independizarían si España tuviera un proyecto de prosperidad conjunta. España, España… ¡España se acabó! ¿Qué importa acelerar un poquito su deceso si hacemos más felices a nuestros ciudadanos? (93-4)

Migoya uses this extended conversation between the politicians, along with the narrator's observations in the prologue, to problematize the Transition's objective of achieving national reconciliation and a thriving, modern state via the forgetting of the past (Cebrián 14; Labanyi, "Modernity" 94; Humlebæk "Pacto de Olvido" 186-87). As the novel proposes, nearly forty years after the advent of democracy, Spain is not the reunited, prosperous nation to which the players of the Transition had aspired. Rather, it is ridden by economic crisis, and plagued by nationalist separatist movements and political polarization. The escalating Catalan independence campaign also gestures to the *Generalitat*'s eventual abandonment of Jordi Pujol's nationalist project, which famously did not seek Catalonia's separation from Spain (Crameri 18). However, *Una, grande y zombi* does not merely indicate that national reconciliation not been achieved. Because these circumstances give rise to the attack of the *Los Rabiosos*, the novel also condemns the concealed Francoist intentions behind the Transition's treatment of historical memory, and forewarns against the potential resurgence of ultra-nationalism in the present day.

Although he is only the focus of two chapters, Jacin—a xenophobic, homophobic, and ultra-nationalist native of El Ejido[219]—is central to Migoya's apocalyptic vision of Spanish society. He also occupies a principal role in the genesis of the zombie invasion, in that he purchases the bottles of contaminated wine that produce the first *Rabiosos*. A caricature of the extreme right-wing, Jacin is precisely the type of person needed by Franco and Fraga to instigate the invasion: horrified by the divided state of the nation, and nostalgic for Spain's bygone imperial glory. Hence, Jacin stands for the persistence of *franquismo* in contemporary society. He was born of democracy, yet is a staunch supporter of Francoist ideals and celebrates the dictatorship as a prosperous era during which "Franco (el gran matador de moros) devolvía la autoestima y el desarrollo económico a España" (80). Because of his tendency to exalt the past, he views the politically, nationally, and racially diverse Spain of today with complete disdain and feels he has been victimized by these circumstances. Horrified by the number of immigrants in El Ejido, Jacin blames them for having been dismissed from his position at the greenhouse and for having tainted "con sus genes la pureza de los españoles" (79).[220] He is also convinced that

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[219] The beachside city of El Ejido (Almería) is a center for commercial fruit and vegetable production in Spain, and the city's massive greenhouses are principally manned by migrant workers from Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa. In February 2000, the town was the site of a massive outbreak of violent racist attacks after a young Spanish woman was stabbed to death by a Moroccan man. What proceeded were nearly three days of looting and burning of immigrant-owned houses, businesses, and mosques. Jacin recalls this incident with enthusiasm, having participated in the riots with his father: "Diez años atrás, apenas hecho un adolescente casi impúber, bien que había acompañado a su padre a dar una lección a aquella morería asquerosa que ya invadía la ciudad. Recordaba que por una vez todo El Ejido fue a una, como Fuenteovejuna: a cazar moros apestosos" (74).

[220] Jacin's portrayal of his work experience and of his rationale for being fired, is particularly telling of his personality. After describing his hatred of the Moroccan employees and his desire to set fire to the greenhouse, he claims that he was dismissed because one of "los moromierdas de la cuadrilla debió de chivarse de sus sueños pirómanos y el jefe se creyó que sus baladronadas tantas veces proclamadas ante lo compis iban en serio. O simplemente el jefe le echo por ser español: porque al ser natural del país, a él no era tan fácil engañarle, ni podían abusar de sus condiciones de trabajo o apretarle el salario hasta la tacañería" (73-4).

the root of his (and Spain's) problems is the crisis, which he feels transcends the economic despair of the Zapatero era, having begun

> mucho antes de la de los demás países civilizados, antes de que él naciera […] El declive había empezado, por lo menos, con la pérdida de las colonias españolas en 1898. Aquél fue el peor año de todos, peor que el peor de los años que Jacin hubiera vivido. Su padre siempre lo decía cuando él era crío: "¡Qué se puede esperar de una nación que una vez fue un imperio! Sólo decadencia, agonía y muerte." (78)

Longing for the country to relive its imperial glory, Jacin believes that the Spaniards have been destined to fail because of the crisis in national pride that came with the defeat of the empire. Since 1898, he remarks: "España llevaba más de un siglo menospreciándose a sí misma. Los españoles eran los primeros en renegar de su propia nacionalidad, en criticarse, en odiarse y mortificarse por lo que eran y habían sido. ¿Qué futuro le espera a un pueblo que se insulta a sí mismo, que considera una vergüenza hacer gala de su pasado y de su bandera?" (78-9).

For Jacin, the greatest problem facing Spain is the Catalan independence movement, Condemning Catalonia for its lack of comradeship and solidarity with Spain during the current period of economic hardship, he complains that the "catalanitos" were "los primeros en quejarse y lloriquear que ya estaban hartos de sacrificarse por el resto del país […] En vez de bregar por todos, como buenos camaradas, ellos querían ir por libre" (80). Jacin is, above all, appalled by the upcoming contest between the Spanish and Catalan national soccer teams, which he views as an assertion of an emancipated Catalonia and, consequently, as a "hundimiento de los principios españoles" (81). Asking himself how such as "cataclysm" was possible, he speculates:

> [L]os izquierdistas necesitaban el apoyo de los catalanistas para que los derechistas no tomasen el poder. ¿Por qué? […] Igual que los catalanufos parecían todos maricones

> cuando se expresaban en su propia lengua, estaba convencido de que el Partido Populista, la otrora orgullosa derecha fascista—¡sí, fascista!—que heredara los altos ideales del Generalísimo al fallecer éste, se encontraba asimismo en pleno proceso de corrupción y desintegración… ¡al hallarse en manos de un líder tonto del culo y maricón! (81)

This musing not only elucidates Jacin's condemnation of the Catalan nationalist movement—it provides crucial insight into his overall understanding of Spanish politics and society and, most importantly, offers the basis for his role in the Francoist zombie invasion. While he objects to Catalonia's independence—regarding it as a complete betrayal of the "orgullo de la raza española" (79)—he also opposes Spain's left and right wing factions alike. Jacin's hatred of the left is no surprise. However, I find his contempt for the right to be extremely telling. He reveres the PP for being the "otrora orgullosa derecha fascista," yet condemns its current state and direction. By using homophobic slurs to belittle Rajoy's party, Jacin maintains that the right is weak, having turned its back on its former Francoist glory. He also alludes to how the inheritors of the dictatorship "set aside" their "glorious" past during the Transition in the interest of reconciliation. In sum, Jacin's political views align seamlessly with Franco's plan to resuscitate his regime. Adamantly against the division within Spanish society and nostalgic for the magnificence of the dictatorship and of Spain's bygone empire, he is just the person to set off the zombie incursion, which will "reunite" all Spaniards as *Rabiosos*.

Jacin determines that the ideologically-charged soccer match is the opportune moment to "hacer algo para impedir una nueva debacle del imperio español… o de las cuatro migajas que quedaban de aquel imperio" (81). Thus, he departs El Ejido for Barcelona, with no plan in mind, and completely oblivious to the grotesque catastrophe that will await him. It is no coincidence that while driving through the Tabernas Desert, Jacin makes a sudden stop at what appears to be

a crumbling roadside store—claiming that the Spanish flag displayed on the exterior "llamó directamente a su corazón" and caused him to "respond[er] automáticamente frenando de golpe" (82). Aptly named "El Valle de los Recaídos," this "bazar cañí" (85) is filled with folkloric souvenirs and knickknacks decorated with the Francoist flag.[221] Its sole employee is "[un] anciano […] alto y desgalichado, muy chupado en carnes y casi cadavérico" (84)—later revealed to be the founder of the Spanish Legion, José Millán Astray (1879-1954), who was resurrected by Fraga "como prueba […] para no cagarla con el Caudillo" (299). Inside the store, Jacin is magnetically drawn to a display of wine bottles emblazoned with the dictator's portrait, which the ancient shopkeeper explains contain "[v]ino de Almería, de unos viñedos muy cercanos a aquí, a Tabernas… El Caudillo ordenó en 1966 embotellar de esta manera tan conmemorativa la mínima cosecha de ese año, como celebración de un evento muy especial…" (86). However, at this point neither the reader nor Jacin realize that the wine is noxious—made from grapes planted by Franco in the radioactive soil of nearby Palomares—and that it will transform anyone who touches it into the living dead. Enthused by the appearance of the bottles and the reported history of their contents, Jacin purchases three, to which the employee responds: "Tengo entendido que te diriges a Barcelona con una misión…" (86). For the reader, it becomes clear that the young Almeriense did not enter the curious store by his own volition and that he was predetermined to acquire the wine given his political views and his desire to "impedir una nueva debacle del imperio español." Jacin, however, is startled by the *anciano*'s omniscient comment, yet quickly becomes inspired by its implication, realizing he can use the Francoist bottles in his (still to be

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[221] Here Jacin describes the "diferentes objetos de cuestionable valor turístico, cuyo único elemento en común era una bandera española preconstitucional impresa en todos ellos: mecheros, ceniceros, llaveros, cuencos, vasijas, silbatos…, ¡hasta preservativos con el águila fascista campando en medio del emplasto amarillo y sanguino!" (85). Given its Francoist contents and roadside location, the locale is likely inspired by Casa Pepe, a restaurant and store in the Ciudad Real province (alongside the Autovía del Sur), that is decorated with and sells a wide assortment of Falangist memorabilia.

determined) nationalist plot in Barcelona. He thus departs the shop in euphoria, convinced he is accompanied by Franco, who is supporting him "desde el Más Allá con todas sus posibilidades de espectro, para garantizar que resultase vencedor en su cruzada personal contra los enemigos de España. ¡Se sentía el nuevo Cid Campeador regresando desde el otro lado de la muerte para poner orden en aquel país invadido y contaminado por razas inferiores y con una raza propia desconfiada de su propia valía!" (88).

Migoya uses the Spain-Catalonia soccer match to visualize, even hyperbolize, the division and polarization within Spanish society. When Jacin arrives to Barcelona, he finds the city to be "una fiesta… y un campo de batalla" (103). As the narrator explains, the event is a union of two fanaticisms: "el sentimiento de pertenencia con el aún más arraigado fervor futbolero. Era un espectáculo que tenía todas las papeletas para triunfar. El país entero […] estaba más que pendiente de lo que sucediera esa tarde en el Nou Camp" (104). Given this charged atmosphere, Jacin anticipates high security at the stadium and empties the contents of one bottle into balloons (that he hides in the seat of his baggy pants). He keeps another bottle in his backpack (removing the Francoist label as to not alarm the security guards), and the third he leaves intact, concealing it in his pants along with the balloons by inserting the neck into his anal cavity. Jacin eventually determines that his "mission" will be to toss this third bottle at the President of Catalonia when enters the field before the game. However, his throw misses the politician and, crucially, the Francoist relic does not break upon hitting the ground.[222] Frustrated

[222] After the Catalan President is nearly hit with the Francoist bottle, he uses the incident as an opportunity to make a political statement and humiliate Jacin in the process. As the narrator tells: "Sonriente, tomó la botella de tal manera que el rostro de Franco quedara expuesto al público y, elevándola como un trofeo de guerra […,] la esgrimió triunfal ante las masas y toda España a través de la televisión" (117). The fact that the bottle does not break is also a major detail in the spread of the *Rabiosos*. The Catalan President takes the "trofeo de guerra" home, where it will remain unopened until he gives it to Zapatero much later in the narrative.

by his failed attempt, Jacin sits down to take in the match—forgetting about the wine-filled balloons in his pants, which promptly break and spill liquid onto his legs and the ground below. Concurrently, the *mossos d'esquadra* search for the person who attempted to injure the President, and it is Luz who informs them that Jacin is the culprit. The Almeriense is infuriated that "su misión había sido un fiasco y encima una negra le traicionaba a la policía catalana. ¡Una negra! 'Hija de la gran puta de todas las leches españolas que mamaron las zorras africanas…'" (119), and instinctively hurls one of the remaining balloons at Luz's face before being detained. It is under these circumstances that we witness the genesis of the zombie invasion. Jacin and Luz have been soaked with the contaminated wine, which has also flown through cracks in the floor and into the stadium's interior corridor. There it drips from the ceiling and into the mouth of Gian Nögler, a referee who had momentarily exited the field to treat a headache. Having touched the contaminated Francoist wine, Jacin, Luz, and Nögler fall into cardiac arrest, and in the ensuing minutes they are "resurrected" as cannibalistic *Rabiosos*.

Up until this point, the incidents at Camp Nou appear to be happenstance: Jacin had been unaware of the transformative powers of the liquid; the bottle he throws onto the field does not shatter; the balloons in his pants break accidentally; Luz and Nögler are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nonetheless, these proceedings form part of an elaborate plan originally conspired by Franco (with Fraga acting as commander) and carried out by Jacin on account of his political views. Jacin is "predestined" to stop at the *Valle de los Recaídos* during his trip, where he purchases the wine due to his fascination with its Francoist label. Once in Barcelona, he tosses the bottle at the President as an anti-Catalan statement and throws the balloon at Luz because he incorrectly perceives her to be an African immigrant. In this sense, the onset of the *Rabiosos* is not a fluke occurrence, but rather the result of enduring ultra-nationalist sentiments.

Per *Una, grande y zombi*, the Transition did simply yield an unreconciled nation. Its failure to adequately address the past via the Pact of Forgetting and the 1977 Amnesty Law also facilitated the persistence of *franquismo* (initially personified here by Jacin, and later by Fraga) in democratic society. Thus, in representing a resurrection of the Franco regime that takes the form of a zombie invasion; the author does not simply condemn the buried right-wing agenda of the Transition's handling of memory. The grotesque outbreak of Francoist *Rabiosos* also serves to caution against the resurgence of ultra-nationalism in Spain today—per Migoya's novel, a highly-polarized, economically struggling society that has not properly dealt with its past is a potential breeding ground for neo-Fascism.

The initial clash between humans and zombies takes place on the field of the stadium, where the rival players of the Spanish and Catalan teams violently devour each other alive.[223] Jacin's transformation occurs while he is detained by the *mossos d'esquadra*, yet he manages to escape custody and is not seen again until much later in the narrative (reappearing in Madrid). Upon being splashed with the wine, Luz is whisked away by Eva, who will spend the rest of the novel satisfying his girlfriend's insatiable appetite and attempting to deter the spread of the creatures. Nögler, however, returns to the field after ingesting the drop of the poisonous liquid, and it is here that he transforms into a *Rabioso*. First he collapses and then he resuscitates as a cannibalistic monster. He then immediately attacks the captain of the Catalan team by grabbing the player's ankle with his mouth, pulling him down to the ground, and devouring his penis.[224]

[223] Although the initial attack of the *Rabiosos* occurs during the soccer match, this is not the first incident that Migoya depicts in the novel. The prologue takes place out of sequence and features a zombified Zapatero as he devours other politicians during a press conference.

[224] The narrator graphically describes this attack, as well as all such scenes in the novel. He notes how the referee jumped on the Catalan captain, who "cayó derribado de espaldas, cuan fortachón era, aullando de rabioso dolor. Nögler se le echó encima, intentando cazar con su mandíbula batiente lo primero que sobresaliera del cuerpo del jugador, bajo la ropa: y lo primero, evidentemente, era su pene, bien conocido

Horrified, the Spanish captain attempts to rescue his Catalan counterpart from the crazed referee, which causes Nögler to begin eating his leg instead. Seeing that being bit by a *Rabioso* results in a person's conversion, the two rivals quickly metamorphosize into zombies.[225] When the Catalan and Spanish captains begin gnawing at the other players, it triggers a catastrophic chain of attacks between the two teams, as the narrator relates: "Aquella cruzada entre España y Cataluña se estaba plasmando de modo mucho más cruento de lo que ni el más violento fanático hubiera podido soñar. Cuando los periodistas vaticinaban que los jugadores locales se 'comerían vivos a los visitantes,' no se referían precisamente a aquella devastación" (131). This initial outbreak on the field epitomizes the grotesque ideological objective of the *Rabioso* invasion—to rid Spain of all division and reunite the country under Francoist ideology. While Spanish and Catalan teams were originally defined by their different athletic and national affiliations, here they succumb to the same grotesque fate. Because the zombies do not discriminate against their prey, all the players (regardless of origin) are transformed into living dead, as will be entirety of the Spanish population by the end of the novel. In this sense, the *Rabioso* invasion satirizes the Franco regime's conception of Spain as united under a single national and political identity. As the title affirms, Migoya grotesquely envisions the country as being "one," "great," and "zombie."

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por todos sus compañeros de vestuario debido a la notoriedad de sus proporciones y su ánimo juguetón. El árbitro atrapó el miembro en cuestión con una mordedura letal de sus incisivos, rasgándolo de cuajo. El alarido de su víctima fue tal que a buen seguro podrían haberle oído desde Madrid, aunque quizá lo hubieran confundido con un entusiasta grito de 'gol!' debido al oído viciado" (126).

[225] In an effort to comprehend the *Rabioso* species, Eva will enlist the assistance of his friend Pere, a complete aficionado of zombie cinema, who uses his expertise in the genre to help Eva combat the invasive creatures. Regarding their contagious nature, Pere scientifically explains: "[E]n este caso la mera saliva o quizás hasta el contacto de la carne Rabiosa con la herida de la víctima le transforma en uno más de los afectados. Realmente eso hace que las posibilidades de diseminación de la enfermedad sean tremendas" (193).

Following the incident at Camp Nou, Migoya focuses much of the narrative on Eva as he attends to Luz and attempts to understand the circumstances of the *Rabioso* invasion. Eva understands the catastrophic potential of the creatures, yet he is under the impression that the outbreak has been contained given that the zombified soccer players were shot and killed by the *mossos d'esquadra* and therefore never left the stadium.[226] Initially unaware that Jacin too was infected, and that the Francoist bottle recovered by the Catalan President contains the source of the outbreak, he believes Luz—who, in contrast to the other creatures, is capable of showing affection and never attempts to harm her boyfriend—to be the lone living dead that escaped the match. Accordingly, he sets off on a mission to keep her secluded from society, satisfy her voracious appetite for human flesh, and most notably, attempt to maintain their love affair.

Although their relationship began just prior to the outbreak of the zombies, Eva's feelings for Luz are unconditional. Given that her character is exclusively presented through the eyes of her enamored boyfriend, the reader perceives his love for her both before and after her transforming into a *Rabioso*. Eva's infatuation with Luz is evident from the first time he sees her from afar in a nightclub. Here the narrator situates her as the object of an exaggerated, even caricaturesque male gaze, emphasizing her "exotic" beauty and the protagonist's attraction to her.[227] The couple's first sexual experience solidifies his feelings, particularly when Luz allows

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[226] In *The Zombie Survival Guide*, Max Brooks explains that the only way to kill a living dead is by destroying its brain: "[Z]ombies require none of the physiological functions that humans need to survive. Destruction or severe damage of the circulatory, digestive, or respiratory system would do nothing to a member of the walking dead, as these functions no longer support the brain. Simply put, there are thousands of ways to kill a human—and only one way to kill a zombie. The brain must be obliterated, by any means possible" (18-9).

[227] Here the narrator describes Luz from the smitten Eva's perspective: "La muchacha era alta y espigada, más alta que él. Tenía una facha agresiva, debido a sus botas militares y sus pantalones de cuero negro. El torso sólo lo cubría una camiseta blanca, bajo la que se modelaban dos tetas pequeñas de enormes pezones. Su piel resplandecía por el sudor que a buen seguro había secretado un bailoteo continuo, pues aún jadeaba ligeramente. La cabeza relucía de humedad corporal: una cabeza redonda y cuidadosamente rasurada, punteada por una nariz chata y carnosa, sobre una boca grande y risueña, elástica, como de amante italiana […] Ah, se me olvidaba añadir que era negra" (33).

him to rest his head on her chest, an act that "[é]l jamás olvidará […] y toda su existencia girará de ahora en torno de ese acto de amor puro. Luz ya [era] para él una mujer santa y él será desde esa noche su más devoto fiel" (50). These encounters not only highlight Eva's fascination with his new girlfriend—they provide us with an idealized, sexualized vision of Luz's character that will ultimately be rendered grotesque once she becomes a living dead. As mentioned, one of the key characteristics of the zombie is its uncanny nature—it is a previously familiar creature that rematerializes in a grotesque yet still somewhat recognizable form (Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* 110; Žižek 100). Because of these early descriptions of Luz, we immediately recognize the shocking shift in her appearance and character after she is doused with the contaminated wine. For example, when Eva brings her catatonic body to his house after the game, the narrator describes it as resembling "una momia […] Seguía siendo un cuerpo hermoso el suyo, excepto por el rictus animal de la faz" (146).

With the progression of the narrative, Eva's feelings for Luz venture into absurdity. He remains faithful to her in the aftermath of her monstrous conversion and even falls more deeply in love with her. In her newfound state as a *Rabioso*, Luz symbolizes a resurgence of Francoism within Spanish society. Thus, Eva's astounding devotion to his zombified girlfriend serves to ridicule individuals who unconditionally support ultra-nationalist movements. During the first extensive scene showcasing Luz after her resurrection as a living dead, she flees her boyfriend's apartment for her family's home, where she ferociously attacks her abusive adoptive parents. Eventually locating her, Eva watches her tear apart her now-infected family members, proceeds to destroy their brains, and then takes in the "dantesco panorama" (163) before him. The narrator notes: "Luz había terminado de devorar a su madrastra. Incluso había rescatado la mitad motriz

inferior y una de las piernas resplandecía literalmente en los huesos. Luz, que había desayunado como una niña buena, mostraba sus sabrosos morros rebosantes de restos de comida: en este caso, de abundante y espesa sangre, pedacitos crudos y pellejos colgantes" (163). Although Eva is initially horrorstruck by the entire scenario—he even vomits in disgust and fear—, he quickly reassesses his girlfriend's new grotesque look and identity:

> Estéticamente, había que admitir que el contraste del rojo hemoglobínico con el moreno de su piel aportaba una imagen muy ponderosa y audaz, casi sexy. Alguna molleja mal masticada sobresalía brillante de saliva y bilis bajo el tajo del cuello [...] Ahora Eva solamente sentía una cosa: que se había enamorado de una bestia. Porque si algo tenía claro era el hecho de que seguía enamorado de Luz. Quizá más que nunca. (163)

Eva's steadfast devotion to his girlfriend also leads him to complete ridiculous tasks to accommodate her zombified condition. For example, to satiate her appetite for human flesh without contributing to the spread of the contagion, he steals frozen fetuses from the abortion clinic where Luz was employed as a nurse.[228] Seemingly anti-abortion, Eva is initially horrified

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[228] The novel includes an extended sequence of Eva entering the medical clinic where Luz worked and observing the frozen fetuses prior to stealing them. Migoya describes the fetuses in graphic, grotesque detail, for example: "El primer bebé muerto sonreía, ajeno a su destino de capricho roto… Sonreía como sonreía Luz, ignorantes ambos de su cualidad de monstruos para la sociedad humana del siglo XXI. Aquella sonrisa que calaba impresa en la carita aún no cincelada del todo, una sonrisa beata que persistía pese al anómalo detalle de estar dibujada sobre una cabeza que ya no sustentaba cuello alguno… y esas manitas y piececitos que deberían haber tenido derecho a ser tomados con cariño por las manos de una madre… Todo ello contribuía a detonar una avalancha de horror en cualquier espectador humano" (177). I interpret this plotline as a grotesque response to the resistance toward the liberalization of abortion laws under the Organic Law 2/2010 (which became active in July 2010, shortly before the novel's publication). Under the Organic Law 2/2010, abortion was decriminalized during the first fourteen weeks of pregnancy and the woman was free to make decisions regarding her pregnancy without a third-party intervention. It also legalized abortion through the twenty-second week of pregnancy if the health/life of the mother or fetus is at risk ("Ley Orgánica 2/2010, de 3 de marzo, de salud sexual y reproductiva y de la interrupción voluntaria del embarazo," *BOE*-A-2010-3514). The law was contentious, (passing with 184 votes in favor and 158 against in the Congress of Deputies, and 132 in favor and 126 against in Senate), and received significant resistance from the PP, who objected to its constitutionality ("El PP llevará al Constitucional la futura ley de plazos del aborto"). For instance, upon its enactment, Fraga referred to it as "una grosería jurídica, política y moral insoportable [...] Por desgracia, la sociedad española se ha vuelto muy súper

by this act—he suffers an anxiety attack upon seeing the fetuses for the first time—, yet he is willing to do virtually anything to appease his beloved. Later, he watches Luz in amazement and admiration as she rips apart "los pechitos prenatales con sus dientes, los abr[e], part[e] en jirones y [mastica] con fruición" (180). Here the narrator relates:

> Y, pese a sus esfuerzos, mirando cómo la mujer que él quería, que él adoraba, que él idolatraba ahora con más motivo que antes por lo trágico de su sino […,] Eva se puso a llorar. Aquélla era la prueba más vivida de que no elegimos a la persona a la que queremos: uno no puede decidir qué rasgos morales y qué actos éticos la caracterizarán. Uno debe aceptar unos y otros como parte del amor. Su llanto duró todo lo que se prolongó la comida. Al terminar, Luz se permitió un eructo satisfecho. (180-1)

Despite Luz's monstrous appearance and behavior, Eva continues to find her sexually attractive and is willing to do virtually anything (even going against his moral beliefs) to make her happy. He recognizes the destructive potential of the zombie race, yet regardless, he remains faithful to his girlfriend—putting his own life in danger and accommodating her newfound existence by any means necessary. Given that Migoya employs the Francoist *Rabiosos*—epitomized by Luz—as a grotesque warning against the perils of neo-fascism in a polarized society, Eva's character serves to condemn individuals that are blindly drawn to such ideology.

Because much of the novel's action is centered around the grotesque circumstances of Eva and Luz's relationship, we have the impression that the zombie invasion is contained—Eva has kept her secluded from society, fed her with aborted fetuses, and successfully killed the few humans Luz has infected. However, Migoya eventually introduces two plotlines that signal the overall catastrophe that awaits Spanish society. First, nearly one-hundred pages after the attacks

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moderna en el sentido malo de la palabra y ha avanzado en direcciones que no debería" ("Fraga dice que la Ley del aborto es una grosería jurídica, política y moral insoportable").

at Camp Nou, we learn that Jacin somehow escaped to Madrid, insinuating that he has been gradually infecting the population across the capital city. Moreover, we discover that the Catalan President not only held onto the bottle of Francoist wine that Jacin threw at him, but eventually gave it to Zapatero. With the revelation of these two details, the novel reaches a climax, in which the entirety of the Spanish population will be progressively converted into *Rabiosos*.[229]

Zapatero's transformation into a zombie is what ultimately escalates the rate of the outbreak and Migoya uses his character to solidify the political agenda of the invasive species. Following the incident at Camp Nou, the Prime Minister travels to the Catalan President's house in Barcelona. There he spots the recovered bottle and, finding its Francoist label to be ironic, even humorous, he jokingly requests: "¿Me la regalas? Algo me dice que *en esta botella hallaré una respuesta que disipará mis apuros actuales*" (205, emphasis my own). For the reader, who is aware of its contents (unlike Zapatero), his statement offers a sardonic premonition of the events to come: the mass invasion of the *Rabiosos* will indeed "eliminate" the nation of all its problems by converting the population into zombies. The Prime Minister opens the wine upon returning to Madrid the same evening, and as he sips the toxic liquid, the reader quickly perceives his fate.[230]

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[229] Eva finally comprehends the magnitude of the catastrophe after observing an outbreak of *Rabiosos* while on the bus from Madrid to Barcelona. Here the narrator vividly portrays the severity of the situation: "Ni Goya ni El Bosco aunados hubieran podido representar una metáfora tan despiadada y aberrante del destino lógico de la humanidad: comerse unos a otros, en un rito imparable donde se proclamaba, en suma, la supremacía de una raza inferior, una raza degenerada en la que primaban, por fin, sin velos ni eufemismos, los más bajos instintos que siempre habían caracterizado a los humanos: por eso, despojados ahora de toda apariencia y artificio de evolución, aquellos subseres ser coronaban triunfadores" (272).

[230] Just prior to opening the bottle of wine, Zapatero sits alone in his house, pondering the failure of his political career: "Esa noche, José Luis se encontraba solo en el salón rococó de su residencia oficial, pensando para qué coño perseguía uno los sueños de su adolescencia, si cuando los cumplía no hacía sino ratificar su sentimiento de derrota. Así es: el presidente del Gobierno se sentía un fracasado y, pero aún, un estafador" (260). These reflections are especially telling given the ultra-nationalist discourse he adopts upon becoming a zombie.

In the immediate aftermath of his transformation into a *Rabioso*, we do not perceive shocking changes in his physical appearance (as is the case with Luz). Nonetheless, his metamorphosis is equally grotesque and uncanny, as the contagion comically distorts the familiar political figure's ideology. After Zapatero consumes the wine, we witness an exaggerated shift in his belief system. The zombified politician abandons his socialist ideals and adopts "un discurso supremacista más propio de tiempos pasados, conceptos caducos y dictadores afortunadamente muertos" (15) as he transforms into "un instrumento más del Destino Último que una extraña pero longeva conspiración invasora había determinado para trocar el sino del país!" (261).[231] With Zapatero's metamorphosis, the Franco regime's grotesque homogenizing mission—insinuated by the zombification of the Spanish and Catalan soccer teams earlier in the novel—finally comes to fruition. It is the conversion of the Prime Minister into a zombie and his subsequent devouring of members of all political factions, that will facilitate the species' overall takeover of Spanish society.

Migoya uses the space of a press conference (depicted in the prologue) to concretize the shift in Zapatero's political ideology and, subsequently, the grotesque evolution in his character. Here the politician convenes the press to inform the public that he has found the solution to Spain's crisis, declaring:

> Os estoy comunicando que los propios españoles, a partir de ahora, seremos autosuficientes. ¡No necesitaremos para sobrevivir nada más que nuestra propia especie! ¡Nos valdremos solos para salir adelante y tendremos tanto plus de energía y tanta superioridad física que, pese a nuestro déficit intelectual, volveremos a ser capaces de invadir al resto de países! […] ¡¡¡Vamos a tener tanto remanente de energía que

[231] Zapatero's transformation into a *Rabioso* occurs within the sequence of the narrative, yet Migoya uses the prologue to illustrate his newfound physical state and ultranationalist politics.

conquistaremos el mundo con nuestra Nueva Raza!!! […] ¡Yo terminaré con la crisis… gracias a la carne de los españoles! ¿Cómo no? ¡SI AQUÍ LO QUE SOBRA ES CARNE!" (14-6)

Alongside this ultranationalist speech, the narrator illustrates the physical effects of the Prime Minister's zombified state. As Zapatero announces his plans for the future of Spain, he foams at the mouth and eats his own fingers, and when Deputy Prime Minister Rubalcaba attempts to take control of the situation, the enraged leader turns on his associate and devours his nose.[232] Echoing the incident at Camp Nou, this act triggers the spread of the contagion. The narrator describes how "[l]os ojos de Alfredo comenzaron a adquirir un tinte rojo" (17), followed by a chain of grotesque attacks between the politicians.[233] In juxtaposing Zapatero's ultranationalist discourse with the grotesque imagery of the *Rabioso* outbreak, Migoya not only illustrates the mission of the invasive species. By converting the politicians of different parties into grotesque, cannibalistic zombies, *Una, grande y zombi* ridicules the homogenizing discourse of *franquismo* and, moreover, cautions against the resurgence of such ideology in the present day. Indeed, in the

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[232] Here the narrator describes: "De repente, con imprevisto ímpetu, José Luis fintó el placaje de su heredero animal, le miró con unos ojos que ya destilaban lágrimas de sangre: 'Nunca me caíste bien, Alfredo.' El vicepresidente no tuvo ni tiempo de titubear alguna réplica oportuna. José Luis se le lanzó a la cara y, sin mayor miramiento, cerró el cepo de su dentadura sobre la nariz de Alfredo, arrancándosela de cuajo" (16).

[233] Of special note is Zapatero's grotesque attack on the PSOE minister Leire Pajín, whom he entraps as she attempts to escape the scene: "'¡Leireeee!' bramó el presidente […] Terminó por plantarse frente a Leire, que seguía gritando como si le acabaran de retirar el carné del partido. José Luis se la quedó mirando fijamente: la piel blanca de la moza, plagada de incitantes venillas azules que latían de pavor, le excitaba y enternecía a un tiempo. 'Siempre quise hacer esto!' aulló el president. Y sin esperar, hundió su testa sobre el escote de la secretaria, que no atinó a defenderse, pues en su lugar optó por alzar las palmas y lanzar un vibrante alarido, como si fuera miembro (o, mejor dicho, *miembra*) de un voluntarioso grupo de gospel. 'AAAAAAAAAAH!' rugió con voz mediocre al sentir el lacerante dolor en sus pechos: José Luis reapareció a su altura con los dos pezones de Leire ensartados entre sus dientes. Los había extirpado, a base de pura dentellada, a través de la tela del vaporoso vestido de la joven, por el que ahora asomaban dos senos con la corola amputada, rezumando sangre como una fuente de vino y ofreciendo pura carne viva a la vista, donde antes sólo había areolas color cacao" (17-18).

next scene featuring the politicians, Migoya emphasizes the mutual destruction between the two parties.[234] The narrator relates: "Tanto José Luis como Mariano entornaron los ojos en un reto mudo hasta que sólo fueron franjas de odio carmesí… Los músculos de todos los Rabiosos, de uno y otro bando, se crisparon y tensaron, como vehículos destartalados aspirando a una puesta a punto para la competición final: la masacre mutua" (290).

Santa Perpetua, Balada triste de trompeta, and *Una, grande y zombi* were each produced in light of the Law of Historical Memory (2007) and are cultural responses to the political debates and memory discourses that emerged with this measure, in which the dominant narrative of Spain's past was finally challenged from an official standpoint. In Ripoll, De la Iglesia, and Migoya's texts, the grotesque is the principal element employed to question and denounce the longstanding social and political impact of the Pact of Forgetting during the Transition and its repercussions into the twenty-first century and beyond. *Santa Perpetua* uses the aesthetic of the grotesque to destabilize the belief that the silencing of the past during the Transition was fundamental to the modernization of Post-Franco Spain. In *Balada triste de trompeta*, De la Iglesia employs the grotesque confrontation between the two clowns to reject the biased terms of the 1977 Amnesty Law, which for forty years was the extent of Spain's treatment of the legacies of the Civil War and *franquismo*. Lastly, in *Una, grande y zombi*, Migoya satirizes what he views as the hidden Francoist agenda of the Transition's emphasis on forgetting the past and warns of the perils of such discourses: the resurgence of ultra-nationalist movements in the present day. In using the grotesque to condemn the treatment of Spanish historical memory,

[234] This scene occurs within the sequence of the novel, yet in the aftermath of the press conference that Migoya depicts in the prologue. After Zapatero attacks the politicians in front of the press, his storyline resumes with this scene.

Ripoll, De la Iglesia, and Migoya ultimately aim to dismantle one of the fundamental myths of the Transition—that avoiding history was the key to democratic Spain's prosperity.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have analyzed the use of the grotesque in Spanish films, novels, and theater plays produced in the aftermath of *franquismo*. In short, I proposed that Luis García Berlanga's film *Patrimonio nacional* (1981) and Pedro Almodóvar's film *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984) employ the grotesque to contest the perceived arrival of modernity and the predominance of Franco-era ideologies and institutions in the new democratic society. I then demonstrated that Juan Marsé's novel *El amante bilingüe* (1990), Bigas Luna's film *La teta y la luna* (1994), and Albert Boadella's theater play *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* (2001) resort to the grotesque to condemn the nationalist agenda of Catalan President Jordi Pujol (1980-2003), who spearheaded the revitalization of Catalonia's political and linguistic institutions after their suppression during the dictatorship. Lastly, I studied how Laila Ripoll's theater play *Santa Perpetua* (2010), Álex de la Iglesia's film *Balada triste de trompeta* (2010), and Hernán Migoya's novel *Una, grande y zombi* (2011) use the grotesque to challenge the terms of the Pact of Forgetting about the Civil War and the Franco regime, and its projection into the present day.

I have maintained that in the case of post-Franco Spain, writers and film directors use the grotesque to unveil the contradictions of the political narratives of the Transition to Democracy in order to destabilize them. With this study, I provide the first comprehensive analysis of a fundamental element for the understanding of Peninsular culture today: how the aesthetic of the grotesque was not only important in the past for artists such as Goya or Valle Inclán, but has been and continues to be one of the most relevant instruments of social criticism in Spanish cultural production. From Berlanga to De la Iglesia and Migoya, passing by Almodóvar, Marsé, Boadella,

Ripoll, or Bigas Luna, contemporary intellectuals and artists continue to appeal to the grotesque to satirize Spanish society and, in doing so, keep reaffirming an imaginary of a Spain that is particularly inclined to dark humor, the absurd, the shocking, and the scatological—in sum, the grotesque.

The revelation of the current and recurring relevance of the grotesque for the understanding of Spanish culture poses a series of research opportunities for the future. The most pressing ones involve the necessary expansion of the texts and topics treated in this project. The corpus of my dissertation is ample and includes films, novels, and theater plays by canonical and lesser-known authors alike. Yet despite this broad spectrum, there have been unavoidable absences in my analysis. Because the principal focus of my investigation is the political discourses and debates linked to the Transition to Democracy and its aftermath, additional research is needed to address in detail the disencounters between tradition and modernization in post-Franco society or the cultural products of the *Movida* in Madrid and Vigo. For the future development of this study, and for the overall advancement of research on the grotesque in contemporary Spain, it will be of the utmost importance to incorporate texts such as Cristina García Rodero's Spanish Festival photographs (taken between 1975 and 1992) and Carlos Giménez's comic collection *España: Una, Grande y Libre* (1976-77).

The richness of the works already included in this project also allows for greater development. For instance, a deeper investigation of the portrayal of women in *Patrimonio nacional* is pending, and could be enriched by establishing links between the film's grotesque matriarch and other female characters from Berlanga's filmography, specifically the antagonists in *La boutique* (1967) and *La escopeta nacional* (1977). My studies of *Ubú president o Los últimos días de Pompeya* and *Santa Perpetua* could also be supplemented with other works from

Boadella and Ripoll's expansive oeuvres, as both dramaturges have numerous other plays that employ the grotesque as a social critique of Spanish and Catalan politics—for example, *La torna* (Boadella 1977)—and historical memory—such as *El triángulo azul* (Ripoll 2014).

The sociopolitical issues that I analyze in this dissertation—the grotesque as a means of challenging the celebratory discourses of democratization, the reconstruction of national and political identity in Catalonia, and the silencing of historical memory—are just a few of many questions that can be addressed under the umbrella of the study of the grotesque in contemporary Spain. For instance, the topic of Iberian nationalisms is another direction to explore. To complement my existing study of Catalan national identity, a pending task is to study the aesthetic of the grotesque in post-Franco Basque cultural production.[235] Another possible direction to explore is the grotesque in relation to other sociopolitical phenomena beyond the scope of the Transition to Democracy, for example, how authors use the aesthetic to condemn the 2008 financial crisis and Rajoy-era political corruption. This would allow for the consideration of more-recent works such as Pilar P. González's theater play *Banqueros vs. zombis* (2014), Victor García de León's film *Selfie* (2017), and De la Iglesia's film *El bar* (2017). Given the continued relevance of this aesthetic as a means of social criticism, the field of grotesque studies is potentially fecund.

[235] In a study of the grotesque in post-Franco Basque culture, possible works to examine would include Alonso Sastre's theater play *Jenofa Juncal: La roja gitana del Monte Jaizkibel* (1983) and de la Iglesia's film *Las brujas de Zugarramurdi* (2013).

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