Cultures of Anyone

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

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

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

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