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

3.3. Arrested Modernities II: Postwar Cultures and Creative Consumption

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

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

Those men who ‘in the tavern no longer told anything but uninteresting stories about their families and their boring jobs’ no doubt remember the young men of Sayago who ‘now only work, talk to their families or watch girls singing in sunny meadows,’ as the informant C. A. told Arguedas. But is this similarity a coincidence? Marsé’s characters have almost always been interpreted as representatives of the Republican working-class world of the groups defeated in the civil war, and no doubt they are. That ‘minimum of hate and rejection needed to keep on living’ to which Marsé returns in almost all his texts has been understood as the reaction to the
overwhelming, annihilating defeat that affects both bodies and collective identities, threatening to completely erase them. But perhaps that emphasis on the Republican memory has tended to blur other cultural elements present in his novels that have to do with those streets that still exude ‘a musty, wet-earth smell like in the days when asphalt wasn’t used yet, and their daily hustle and bustle, their pulse, was different’ (24).

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

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

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

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

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

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

But ‘those poor cardboard ghosts’ serve not only to torment the guilty memory that hides behind the official version: they are also utopian models, and narration, see the works of Walter Ong (1982) and de Certeau. For a sociocultural analysis (based on the French model) of the transformation of urban barrios during the second half of the twentieth century, see ‘The Transition from Neighborhood to Metropolis’ in A History of Private Life (Ariès and Duby 1987). This chapter stresses the importance of orality in the ‘old’ barrios (the ones that did not experience major urban changes). In particular, it shows how access to details of the private lives of the vecinos completely changes the use of ‘conventional wisdom’ and the proverbs used in daily life (107).
the stuff of dreams. The narrative voice talks about ‘the ominous darkness of old Suau’s workshop, with his cardboard imitations of a life more intense than the one we would ever have’ (33). And the desire to appropriate and recreate the fictions of mass culture is one clear and deliberate choice here for a type of discourse that can resist the overwhelming weight that is reality for some people. From among all the voices that circulate through the city, these barrio boys (children of those defeated in the war, poor boys, condemned to witness the humiliation of their elders and to work, themselves, in tedious or grueling jobs) do not choose the ones that celebrate the status quo. They do not choose the proclamations of the regime, nor lessons on the Imperial History of Spain, nor even the promises of social mobility offered by development policy through advertisements. They choose the Hollywood epic, the epic of comic books or of radio adventure programs, because it is the voice most disconnected from the world around them: they can get close to those figurations of a life more intense than they will ever have, while allowing them, as de Certeau would say, to affirm ‘the lack of coincidence between facts and meaning.’

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

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

12 As de Certeau explains, ‘In narration, it is no longer a question of approximating a “reality” (a technical operation, etc.) as closely as possible and making the text acceptable through the “realism” that it exhibits. On the contrary, narrated history creates a fictional space. It moves away from the “real”—or rather it pretends to escape present circumstances: “once upon a time there was ...” (79). That movement, that declarative gesture that restores fiction is parallel to the notion of ‘surprise’ and ‘occasion.’ The narrator gets sidetracked towards that other place with the intention of taking advantage of the occasion offered to him and surprising his listeners (or readers): '(Narration) is a detour by way of a past (“the other day”, “in olden days”) or by way of quotation (a “saying”, a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium taken by surprise’ (79). The power of narration, then, lies in surprising or causing a change through the creation of a fictional space.
lesson the boys learn in *Un día volveré* is not merely a rejection of violence, or of the discourses that support it, but also a lesson of fidelity to that other reality ‘that is not seen,’ and which they reactiviate with their ‘aventis,’ inspired by the epics of mass culture.

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

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

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

In his much-quoted *Crónica sentimental de España*, Montalbán called attention to the popular appropriations of another product of basic consumption in postwar Francoism: the so-called ‘national song.’ In principle, this type of popular song emerged as a pro-Spain reaction in the face of the arrival of the *cuplé*, the tango, jazz, and other ‘foreign’ sounds. The national song was constructed from two traditions, the *tonadilla* (a popular Spanish ditty) and traditional lyric poetry, and was anticipated by the Generation of ’27. But in the forties, the Francoist autarchy took advantage of those roots to move it towards what was considered ‘typically Spanish,’ according to Montalbán: ‘individualism, peculiar historical destiny, women, wine, music.’ Interestingly, these songs also revealed two great contradictions: on the one hand, the immorality of the female characters, who articulated the possibility of a rebellious reading, and, on the other, the background sadness of a people who had just suffered through a war.
Montalbán chose some key songs as examples of both contradictions. Thus, the ‘Romance de la otra’ was for him particularly interesting because its protagonist is a wicked woman, the ‘lover’ who breaks with social conventions, who feels mistreated by them and therefore questions them: ‘I am the other, the other / and I have no right to anything / because I don’t wear a ring / with a date on the inside / I don’t have a law that supports me, nor a door to knock on.’ The song ‘No te mires en el río’ also expresses a type of sadness and frustration that could be reinterpreted as protest, but in this case it wasn’t centered on a female character of dubious morality, but on what Vázquez Montalbán called a kind of sense of the absurd that resonated with violence and misfortunes. ‘This song was a crowd-pleaser,’ affirmed Montalbán:

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

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

What we have here is, again, an understanding not only of aesthetics and epics, but of the entire symbolic universe in general, like one more dimension integrated into the material universe, with both constituting a single system of reproduction of a life and a ‘sentimentality’ that are perceived as collective. But unlike what happened in the rural cultures of survival, in these postwar popular cultures portrayed by Marsé and Montalbán, the symbolic universe
has begun to fill up with ‘products’ offered for individual consumption, which are slowly replacing the traditional communal properties entrusted to memory and orality to guarantee the reproduction of collective life. This does not assume that those ‘products’ are not constantly reappropriated on a daily basis by communities that reintegrate them into their collective systems (typically oral) of symbolic reproduction, particularly into their systems of epic and aesthetic reproduction.

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

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

Dance, music, and, again, song are, in fact, the central thread of this novel which features a Catalan pianist and composer, Albert Rosell, who returns to Spain when the civil war breaks out, instead of remaining in Paris among the avant-garde circles to which he has risen. This effectively cuts short his career and almost his life; he ends up in jail and later in poverty and anonymity, until finally finishing out his days playing banal pieces in a nightclub in the Barcelona of the transition to democracy. Or rather, in the Barcelona of *desencanto* (disenchantment, disillusion), because that feeling, which became the name for an entire era, is what gives consistency and force to the novel *El pianista*, no less than to *Un día volveré*, and to that time to which, directly or indirectly, both of them contribute.
In *El pianista*, the 1982 transition to democracy commanded by the triumphal Social Democratic party is portrayed explicitly and extensively as a betrayal. The war and the dictatorship took bread from the mouths of the defeated Republicans, and very nearly took their lives; but the transition, as the novel tells it, ‘robbed [them of] their song.’ The pianist Rosell had a companion, Luis Doria, during his avant-garde days Paris. Luis is a figure that embodies betrayal, because he decided to remain in Paris and subordinate politics to his personal artistic career, which continued to flourish during Francoism and reached its zenith during the democracy, surrounded by the halo of a revolutionary tradition to which others like Rosell were sacrificed.

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

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

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13 Santos Alonso emphasizes the demystifying aspect of the novel, based on the undoubtedly central issue of the divergence between Jan Julivert’s behavior and what his legend expects of him: ‘that’s why, and herein lies Marsé’s realist lesson, [Jan Julivert] doesn’t enjoy being a myth of political idealism committed to the barrio. What’s more, he rejects it, and only aspires, in what remains of his life, to become a person, something that in the novel he achieves through all the realistic characteristics of his personality’ (123). Nevertheless, I insist on the sweeping defense of the capacity to invent stories that runs through the novel (and which doesn’t exclude a clear look at the dangers involved in that invention). With regard to the question of memory, clearly it is not separate from the utopian tension: having ‘one’s finger on the trigger of memory’ assumes the same insurrection in the face of the reality imposed by the powers that be as inventing legends about other possible worlds. To reject the myth, as Alonso suggests, would also be to reject the memory. Rafael Chirbes reflects on these themes in relation to novelistic practice in *El novelista perplejo*: ‘Every era produces its own injustice and needs its own investigation, its own laws,’ he asserts. ‘Walter Benjamin knew that legitimacy lies in the permanence of the resentment of an injustice that was committed in the past, and that the struggle for legitimacy is the struggle to appropriate the injustice of the past’ (35).
peasant cultures were falling due to ‘capitalist progress.’ In the same way, Marsé and those who worried about Republican memory in the early eighties faced the decaffeinated reappropriation that built the triumphant social democracy from that tradition, in the era of *desencanto*. But unlike Díez and colleagues, who wove their program to recuperate those past traditions into the framework of the foundational civic cultures of the transition, Marsé and Montalbán acted more like memory ‘snipers,’ working those subjects on their own in times when they still were far from fashionable. In fact, this would only happen later when, as Chirbes—another of those few pioneer snipers of ‘historical memory’—writes, the PSOE found itself in opposition and decided it was an opportune moment to revitalize those subjects (in a new and unexpected ‘theft of the song’ of the defeated Republicans) to reap electoral ‘profits.’

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

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

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

The biographies of these ‘writer-workers’ are simultaneously atypical and characteristic. They all include new arrivals to fiction writing from unsuspected places, never from a position of the subject agent who sits down to a blank page to say what he wants to say, always from collective flows
of appropriation (or, as de Certeau would say, of ‘secondary production’) of discourses and symbols used to reproduce a community’s universe of meanings.

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

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

Candel’s case is perhaps even stranger. Completely lacking contacts or any kind of access to literary circles, he spent years trying to publish his first novel. Later he wrote another one that specifically dealt with young writers ignored by the publishing industry, *Hay una juventud que aguarda*, and submitted it for the Editorial Destino prize. No writer had come from Candel’s barrio before, but there was a soccer player, Eduardo Machón from
Barça, who hooked Candel up with the famous publisher Janés, of the publishing house Plaza y Janés, whom he knew because Janés was a big soccer fan. Surprisingly, Janés liked Candel’s novel precisely because it was controversial in the publishing world, and so he published it. Later, Candel became relatively famous due to his exceptional status as a writer from a marginal barrio, notably with his novel *Donde la ciudad cambia su nombre* (1957) and his chronicles on emigration *Los otros catalanes* (1965).

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

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

Artist, work, and public were the three distinct instances in the process of production of aesthetics as understood by this ‘modernity’ that developed in parallel with industrial capitalism and its disciplined ‘community of money.’ Remember that this was outlined increasingly as the only possible way to organize social wealth, promoting the production of exchange value that
could be appropriated by isolated individuals instead of the reproduction of the uses necessary for the survival of interdependent communities. In the Spain of the transition, given the renewed strength of the modernizing, pro-European ideal as a driving social force, both capitalist modernity and aesthetic modernity prevailed decisively, displacing those other possible alternative modernities that might have been constructed in dialogue with the heritage of the rural cultures of survival and popular working-class cultures.

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

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

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

On the other hand, as I will explain in detail in the second part of this book, in a contradictory relationship of continuity and separation relative to the omnipresent commercializing logics of neoliberalism, recent decades have seen the emergence of other forms of production and maintenance of culture that are more reliant on interdependence and collaboration than on the value of the ‘big names.’ Forged from the convergence of multiple factors, among them the relative democratization of access to technologies of written and audiovisual culture, along with a certain depletion of the
modern models of cultural authority I have been examining, these cultures of collaboration and interdependence have proliferated, mainly in the wake of the neoliberal crisis that began around 2008, partly because their value as possible alternatives to that neoliberal model in crisis has been perceived.

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