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promoted rural exodus and migration abroad) and on the construction of public works using exploited labour. All of this is instrumental following the recognition, from 1959 onwards, of Spain as a strategic NATO ally, which entails the subsequent productive mobilisation of its economy and resources. At the same time, the regime promotes monopoly and clientelist capitalism, building the foundations for top-down development through tourism and real estate. The benefits of the cycle feed the *XXV Years of Peace* campaign, through which the regime redesigns its founding myths, without modulating its repressive capacity.

BEFORE DEMOCRACY TO COME (1973-1976)

In 1973, the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco - then Prime Minister of Spain - came as a major collective shock. The staging of the attack, claimed by ETA (6th Assembly), fuelled all sorts of fears and fantasies. It also had a strong symbolic impact: heralding the end of a generation of military men who, after having promoted the Civil War and its crimes, knew how to exploit their command of the state in their favour. Thus, in 1975, the dictator Francisco Franco died, but the regime's violence did not end there.

Human rights violations in the last years of the dictatorship lead to an increase in popular protests, and from the international community. From the Burgos Trial in 1970 to the five executions of 27 September 1975, a powerful current of public opinion against summary judicial decisions emerged. In 1976 hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets, held strikes and assemblies, protested and demanded their rights amidst beatings and killings, revealing, in all its intensity, the unresolved conflict between state violence and legitimate claims for human rights.

Before and after Franco's death, the exercise of citizens' freedoms took shape through multiple acts of disobedience and through subtle alliances: trade union networks, neighbourhood associations, professional associations and clandestine parties built a myriad of languages and practices by which the margins of collective freedoms were extended - at a very high price -. Also crucial were the heroic gestures of individuals, such as those of the family of the playwright Lauro Olmo, who resisted the destruction imposed on the Pozas neighbourhood with the support of their neighbours. In these and other actions, democracy was defined as the collective right to the city and to participate in the design of its future, in the face of an authoritarian power where political devices and economic interests became indistinguishable. From 1976 onwards, and through similar actions, a rich fabric of feminist, environmentalist, neighbourhood and counter-cultural citizens would struggle to define from below possible forms for a democracy still to come, in the unresolved tension between citizenship and the violent structures of capital and the state.



José Guerrero García
The Apparition, 1946
Oil on canvas
Colección Centro José Guerrero. Diputación de Granada
Inventory number 61



Juan Genovés
Six young people, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
Universitat de València. Colección Martínez Guerricabeitia, Valencia
Inventory number 47
© Juan Genovés, VEGAP, Madrid, 2023
Universitat de València. Colección Martínez Guerricabeitia. Photo: Miguel Lorenzo

POLITICS OF LIFE AND DEATH
IN THE SPANISH STATE (1868-1976)

DEMOCRATIC SKYLIGHT

“EL TRAGALUZ”: A POETICS FOR MEMORY

In 1967, Antonio Buero Vallejo premiered one of his most celebrated plays, *El tragaluz* (The Skylight), in which he presents a science-fiction journey between two eras, the Spanish post-war period and the 25th century. In the piece, the inhabitants of a remote future are engaged in researching history: they have a “skylight”, a powerful vision machine that allows them to project fragments of the past onto their present. Thus, they reconstruct the lives of those who came before them, to ask themselves how their dramas and demands, their struggles and cruelties also belong to them. Remembering becomes a complex, intimate and uncomfortable activity, which makes us confront the secrets that every past holds, and the violence through which every era is founded, making us its heirs, dissidents or accomplices. Buero was the son of a soldier who was shot by the Republican army and was himself imprisoned and condemned to death by the rebel side, and later censored many times. And yet he publicly argued, against Franco’s dictatorship, that a radical commitment to human dignity must publicly guide the work of memory, even though each era exposes us to our own contradictions and deceptions. Thus, as opposed to any redemptive vision of the past, the historical imagination serves to critically explore the incomplete fragments of yesterday.

From such a starting point, *El tragaluz democrático. Políticas de vida y muerte en el Estado español* [Democratic Skylight. Politics of Life and Death in the Spanish State] (1868-1976) proposes a journey through a constellation of fragments of this collective past. They condense forms of violence developed by states, armies, institutions and markets (e.g. the slavery market), as well as attempts by communities, individuals and collectives to resist and counteract them. Through these works of art, documents, instruments or texts it is possible to reconstruct some areas of common life. Over the course of a century and a half, we come to understand the origins and transformations of the modern Spanish state by studying its ways of politically administering death. Those who are confronted with these necropolitical techniques learn to resist them, imagining alternatives and developing forms of adaptation and survival. This is how the study of violence becomes inseparable from the civic memories of those who suffered, went through and resisted it: this compendium of practices, testimonies and experiences, we call *democratic memory*.

Let’s activate the “skylight”. The images it generates are organised into different flows: a first area examines the history of the citizens’ struggles from the democratic six year interlude from 1930 until 1936; a second module focuses on the civil war; a third part is devoted to the dictatorship, and finally ends with the origins of the transition. It was through these dissidences, revolts and everyday practices that democratic rights were built. It is, in sum, a long tunnel of the past, where the shadows of history and its flashes of illumination are still visible.

CITIZENSHIP AND STATES OF EXCEPTION (1868-1936)

Long before the Civil War, the construction of the modern Spanish state involved legal and para-state forms of violence, which the various attempts at democratic foundation had to contend with since the 19th century. In Spain’s first republican constitution - now a century and a half old - we can identify the basis of today’s democratic freedoms: including the abolition of the death penalty, the end of slavery, calls for women’s rights,

secularism and religious freedom, the rights of association and publication, pacifism and the demilitarisation of society, and active and passive suffrage.

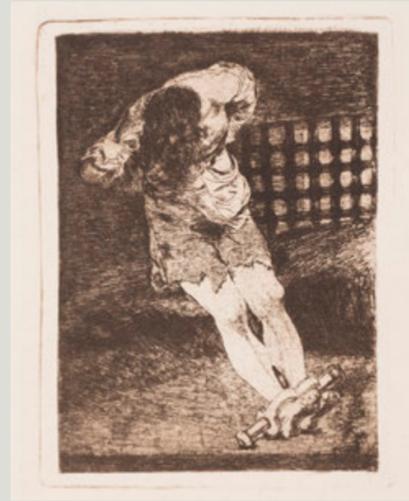
In the face of this democratic agenda, political exceptionality, patriarchal rule, colonial wars and capitalist development shaped a period of much explicit and implicit violence against racial, social and gender-based emancipation struggles, both within and beyond the borders of the Iberian peninsula. The different forms of repression to first maintain and then reinvent the colonial structure of the Restoration State fuelled the exercise of ruthless violence against those excluded from the market and modern liberal dissidents. In the last decades of the 19th century, the construction of a powerful Catholic-framed nationalism operated as an authoritarian device to contain and obfuscate the contradictions that accompanied the expansion of the liberate state. In the process, however, disputes over the form of the nation, citizen participation and collective rights would fuel the tension between a power progressively endowed with modern technologies of control and an insubordinate and actively rebellious population.

Central to this narrative are the pathways of violence and extraction that link the metropolis with Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, on the one hand, and later with the Rif and Guinea, on the other. The anti-colonial imagination that accompanies the struggles for collective emancipation, before and after 1898, is thereby articulated, but at the same time, narratives of domination and empire are recycled. The repressive imaginary of the Spanish nation projects the old discourses of the Reconquista onto the African coast. Thus in the 1920s, the same techniques of extreme violence were attempted outside the peninsula that were later deployed inside it during the Civil War. Thus, the educational and organisational utopias and dreams of justice that underpinned the projects of the Second Republic clashed with the militarisation of the state and the continued combination of a Catholic-shaped authoritarian nationalism with the international rise of fascism, always in defence of the hierarchical structure of property and against the spectre of social revolution that, at that time, were still haunting Europe.

FASCISM OR DEMOCRACY (1936-1939)

Even eighty years later, the effects of the 1936 war on Spanish society still linger on. If the shadows of the conflict continue to be cast over the present, it is because we also perceive today a radical discontinuity with the pre-war world and its horizons of social improvement. The unbearable violence resulting from Franco’s coup d’état had a twofold mission: first, it disrupted the Second Republic’s experiment of citizenship , and secondly it protected the foundation of a dictatorial state, whose legacy, eight decades later, still challenges us. In the Civil War, multiple issues were at stake that go beyond it, both backwards and forwards, and which are connected with the very structure of modern states and the bodies, markets and institutions they administer.

Seen, then, as both a place of arrival and departure, all forms of modern life and death intersect in the Civil War. It discusses the radical meaning of solidarity and the capability of collective organisation in a general context of fascist violence against the civilian population and the deployment of new technologies of destruction and propaganda. The more or less tacit support of the main world powers for Franco’s side radically unbalanced the conflict from the outset, making the “civilian” character usually attributed to it questionable and underlining its geopolitical dimension. It was not for nothing that, at the time, there was talk of the “war in Spain”. In any case, the



Valerian Von Loga
(copy from a work by Francisco de Goya)
The custody of a criminal does not call for torture, 1907
Heliogravure
Museo de Zaragoza
Inventory number 54936



José Luis Bardasano
Evacuation, circa 1937
Oil on wood
Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
Inventory number 145150-000



Alfonso R. Castelao
Children round dancing, 1943
Gouache on paper
Museo de Pontevedra
Inventory number 005171

democratic evocation of that war speaks to us today of experiences of resistance, of mutual care and support, always within the general framework of a democratic memory.

Thus, we will pay particular attention to forms of experimentation in which the defence of vulnerable life can be placed at the centre, beyond the logic of militarisation that runs - very unevenly - through both sides. In war, multiple citizen laboratories emerge and democratic institutions emerge (air-raid shelters, schools, canteens, reception networks for displaced people, literacy campaigns, etc.), while art and language seek to represent these other threatened ways of living together, in which women take on a leading role and hierarchies between races and peoples, trades and languages, between centres and peripheries dissolve. In the face of such schemes of help and resistance, fascism exercises indiscriminate and appalling violence. It is of a disciplining nature: it wants to show the fragility of a human body, the unbearable smallness of life in the face of the power exercised in the merciless infliction of death. Franco’s dictatorship knew how to manage the duration of the traumatic violence based on terror, often spectacularised or staged by the regime. But in the face of it, forms of dignity and resistance also clandestinely persist.

LONG NIGHT OF STONE (1939-1973)

The consequences of Franco’s victory in the Civil War produced a regime that was to last for decades. The victors show their dominance over the production of different forms of death and their ability to control corpses by disappearing them in mass graves or exalting them in mausoleums. Thus, the disciplining of the dead and the defeated is at the basis of the dictatorship’s political and symbolic strategies. Post-1959 economic development stems from the regime’s skills in administering repression as a culture, extending from the organisation of labour to propaganda. However, spaces of resistance and secrecy also emerge. From Francoism’s “long night of stone”, to use the expression of the poet Celso Emilio Ferreiro, nightmares proliferate, but also dreams of emancipation that artists and writers give shape to.

In 1939, the exile of almost 500,000 people opened a shared event that has never been resolved. Modern stateless people, refugees, are born as tragic representatives of the contemporary condition. The republican diaspora passed through concentration camps (and extermination camps in the Nazi context), but also through spaces of encounter and refuge, on both sides of the Atlantic, and through forms of solidarity and memory. At the same time, the world of camps that many exiles experience grows within their former homeland, as Francoism is established through concentration and labour camps, prisons and walls, factories, schools and convents, in a galaxy of worlds of terror that generates its documents of resistance. In the face of such an outpouring of pain and submission, the forms of celebration of the victorious side, the codes of remembrance through which the cruelty of their triumph is recounted and idealised and the organisation of an incessant death cult, are unbearable. Against this state memory, the defeated elaborate their secret rituals of mourning, in the form of allegories and symbols, which allow them to appraise themselves in defeat, while maintaining their dignity and memory.

The post-war experience of misery, disease and hunger constitutes another, even more extensive, form of collective discipline. In the 1940s, the ideological institutions of national Catholicism were reorganised and a model of vertical modernisation was set in motion. It is based on the forced displacement of large sections of the population (generated through seizures, colonisation strategies, imposed or