

## “Being *político*” in Spain

### *An Ethnographic Account of Memories, Silences and Public Politics*

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This article focuses on attitudes toward participation in public politics (being *político*) in contemporary Spain and the ways in which they have been affected by the violence and fear generated by the Francoist regime (1939–1975). Social memories and silences are an important part of the processes that produce a social space for public politics today. Strategies and agency regarding basic everyday struggles in the present are deeply embedded in the history of the practices and meanings of being *político* after the Civil War. We will use an ethnographic approach based on fieldwork carried out in 1978–1979 (Gavin Smith) and in 1995–1996 (Gavin Smith and Susana Narotzky) in the area of the Vega Baja del Segura, the irrigated plain in the basin of the Segura River on the southeastern Mediterranean coast.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND REGIONAL WORK RELATIONS

At the turn of the twentieth century the Vega Baja, south of Alicante, presented a mixed pattern of agriculture and manufacturing that was strongly interdependent. Social relations of production in agriculture were structured through a series of links of patronage that articulated

landowners with large tenants, and the latter with landless workers. However, the degree of “dependence” and political submissiveness was very different for “free” labor (i.e. day laborers without land, *jornaleros*) and “dependent” workers who were “favored” with tiny plots of land on informal annual leases. For these, the tension of having to blend personal, affective and work uncertainties and responsibilities was a very important aspect of their everyday livelihood experience and tended to particularize problems and the strategies designed to cope with them. By contrast, “free” day laborers were highly mobile, which made them aware of wider regional and national labor struggles organized around trade unions and the use of public politics to advance their claims.

In the contractual setting of “free” market relations, struggle took place mainly through strikes and revolutionary action, that is through public politics and the use of organized collective confrontation. In the “dependent” relations setting, making a living or forwarding claims took, for laborers, the form of personalized relations, the construction of affective and reciprocal ties of patronage responsibilities. Likewise, these affected employers who chose to rely on household labor organization, kin and friendship networks to secure and control labor and capital. Thus, two very different and overlapping processes were linked in a dialectical tension between security and uncertainty, private vs. public politics, in the social reproduction of this (proto-)regional economy.

With the advent of the Francoist regime in 1939 the National-Catholic organic model of social relations was imposed on all aspects of society, supported by violent repression and a closed and state-administered economy, the *autarquía* (autarky). In this new context corporatist institutions, economic policies and an ideology imposed through fear supported highly personalized networks of social relations of production. This produced a totalitarian closure of the public sphere. In the later years of the regime things began to change in part due to the Cold War and the U.S.’s increasing and open support for the Franco regime. Large-scale industrialization of a “Fordist” type took place especially after 1957, class unions began to organize within the “vertical” corporatist state-unions of the regime, and collective spaces of dissent slowly opened at great personal risk. Then, over the past 30 years the particular mix of agricultural and industrial activities that had characterized making a living in the Vega Baja since the end of the nineteenth century has

strongly tilted toward the industrial sector, particularly shoe manufacturing. During the 1960s and early 1970s large factories were established in the towns of Elche and Crevillente, although home-based piecework remained a complementary device to increase production capacity during peak production seasons.<sup>2</sup>

The present-day structure of industrial production in the area comprises large factories, small family firms, unregulated workshops, middlemen, home-based workers and industrial wage workers. Indeed, middlemen, small-scale entrepreneurs and workers are tightly bound to each other and frequently merge or emerge from one another. There is, locally, a perceived and extremely differentiated network of shifting but necessary alliances expressed in the subjects’ characterization of the region as a coherent space with an “entrepreneurial culture,” meaning by this the continuous movement of emerging (and declining) economic destinies. Moreover, the instrumental weight of personal and affective relations in the construction and maintenance of these hierarchical networks of production has its corollary in the stress produced on these affective relations, induced by the tension of differentiation within the realms of shared belonging; i.e. the family, the community or fellow workers. Issues of equity and equality, of individual as opposed to collectively grounded claims, pervade this thick network of forced solidarities, which is simultaneously a highly differentiated field of closely knit feelings of belonging. But also, very salient is the tension within the self: between competing responsibilities and the differential evaluation of private and public realities.

#### THE PRESENT: THE PLAYTIME OF HISTORY

If we are to share even the most fragmentary and inadequate sense of the everyday world of the people portrayed in this ethnography, we will need to try our best to suspend the kinds of sentiments of security, possibly indifference, that we have about large or small political transitions in our own lives. Indeed it is precisely this kind of thinking that has led to the dominant image of “the new Spain.” The period that followed Franco’s death is often presented as one of almost breathtaking change: Spain shifted from a “totalitarian” regime to a democratic one “without

bloodshed,” managing to condense into just a few years the historical journey to modernity and “development” that had taken other European countries centuries. And it was all (apparently) so perfectly planned right from the start. In this reading, this was above all a series of tectonic adjustments to society made possible, not by selfish class interests and the clamoring insistence of pressure groups, but by intelligent technocrats and the modestly gentle guiding hand of an enlightened monarch: a kind of liberal (but Spanish) version of corporatism already found among the designers of the European Union—a kind of “third way” before anybody had coined the phrase.

This does not fit well with the ordinary experiences of the people we met in Catral. Some twenty years after Franco’s death, we were interviewing elderly rural working women about the socialist sentiments and activities of their youth, when a silence fell upon us as though an angel had passed. The two of us looked at each other, and then one of the women laughed nervously and, hospitably gathering the two anthropologists in with the working women, she said: “We’ll all be in jail again soon anyway,” and everybody laughed as we returned to our earlier conversation. But the allusion infused the atmosphere as we continued our discussions. It was 1996. There had been the transitional years from 1975 to 1979 when the ex-Francoist technocrat Adolfo Suárez had dominated the national political stage. Then there had been the years of PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) rule under Felipe González that had ended as one wave of corruption scandals followed another including the state-backed “dirty war” against the ETA Basque independentist group. And now, as we talked, the right-wing party of José María Aznar, the Partido Popular, had taken office.

None of these periods had been interpreted uniformly by the people of the Vega Baja. While outside Spain the transition was heralded in the press with almost uniform surprise that the Spanish could do things so calmly and so well, the atmosphere in Catral was one of nervousness and unease. For some the transition seemed truly to be the end of an era; for the class of better-off *labradores* the end of *their* era. For those who had been using changes in property relations as opportunities for short- or longer-term gain, the transition seemed to be the public legitimization of practices they were already familiar with. Local and national electoral politics were to expand the arena of their economic

and social practices into formal politics. For many others, the coming years appeared to be contradictory and confused.

With the coming of the Socialist government, after this initial period, the sense of nervous suspicion and marginalization was shared by many, but often for quite different reasons and hence in quite different ways. For the many whose years under Franco had made them almost pre-consciously associate socialism with godlessness, this is hardly surprising. But there were others for whom the coming of socialism had for years seemed an impossible dream, whose suspicion had to do with their sense of what public politics meant, a sense that was subsequently confirmed with the ensuing neoliberal policies of the González governments and the waves of corruption that enveloped the PSOE nationally and provincially. For many in Catral the return of the right to power at the national level in 1996 meant a return to order, but for these latter people it meant all the fears associated with the right in their memories of the past. However, it was also experienced with resignation as the inevitable outcome of Spanish political history, captured nicely by our host that evening who remarked, “That’s the way it is. Like the kids at school, we had a few moments in the play-yard, but the *maestros* (teachers) will be calling us back into class pretty soon.” And, however remote it may seem to us as we read this, we need to remember the retroactive nature of Franco’s Law of Political Responsibilities years earlier, which had made *any* support for the Republic a crime retroactively punishable.<sup>3</sup> It was that which clothed the angel that passed between the women earlier that evening. We need to remember too that, “bloodless” though the reformulation of Spanish society may have been, the technocratic, command nature of it, had the effect of denying the history of those at the bottom of the social ladder (precisely the metaphor used by our host that night) who had struggled and suffered in an earlier generation, thereby delegitimizing their “politics” and the kinds of repression they and their families had endured in the Franco years.

As the fieldwork developed we could perceive the very subtle ways in which memories of the past had changed, as the realities of the present and the expectations for the future gave them a new sense, but also how the present livelihoods of our anthropological subjects were deeply related to the historical opportunities for participation in political

action that they had experienced directly or through the personal memories of their close relations (kin, neighbors, friends).

At first, we had been surprised by the frequent negation of political involvement for the area—"we have never been *políticos*, here"—even as the 1979 municipal elections (the first democratic municipal elections) were giving a public (and legitimate) forum to long-time private or clandestine memories of repression. As the local Comisiones Obreras (communist union, CCOO) leader put it in a pre-electoral meeting:

We have always been humiliated by capital, with very difficult unemployment conditions such as those we suffer now.... Also, not only have the workers been robbed of their pay (*jornal*) but they have been robbed of their right to culture as well [applause]. Because no capitalist government has been interested in us knowing our interests [strong applause]. When they came searching our homes they were not looking for pornographic magazines, because us workers did not know what that was, they were looking for books that could make us get our act together.... In the difficult years, our struggle would take us to prison not to a chair in the Municipality...." (30 March 1979)

An improvised speaker coming from neighboring Callosa de Segura insisted:

No Francoist can say today that he is a democrat ... they now say it in order to deceive the people (*al pueblo*), in order to continue holding power.... To know how to vote is also to know how to defend oneself, it is also to know how to fight... The democracy we watch on our television screens is not democracy yet, we have to take it to neighborhood associations (*asociaciones de vecinos*) and to the schools through parents' associations (*asociaciones de padres*). (30 March 1979)

In a milder tone, the regional PSOE representative said two days later:

In these elections the aim is to throw away all our fear with our votes. About the past, the right says we have to forget, but that doesn't mean the loss of memory, not remembering the exploitation

that workers have been subjected to.... In our ticket there are not many old-timers (*pergaminos*), and many people, following the rightist mentality think that this will make them unable to be influential. We do not want influences! Socialist candidates know through their experience the problems that have to be dealt with. Their body is their program.... (1 April 1979)

Despite these brief public speeches, the general impression Smith received when talking to local Socialists was one of unaggressiveness and disorientation:

The young head of the list [for the municipal elections] seems very unaggressive and seems to have no distinctive idea of tactics or a program. They emphasize that they have never been allowed to see any of the documents in the Ayuntamiento [municipality] and really don't know how it works.... The feeling I get is that they are pretty lost and don't really know what to do.... (Fieldwork notes, 6 March 1979)

What would become more and more salient as the second part of the fieldwork developed (1995–1996) and as we went back to these early notes was a deep-seated ambivalence about what political agency was. For many who held private memories of public confrontation but also of forced silence and repression, this became increasingly disturbing as the democratic regime established itself. Those on the left who told us that people in the area were apolitical, or that it had “always” been a rightist region, were simultaneously denying their identity and the collective memory of a politically active local working class *and* asserting that their idea of politics was different from the one that officials in national parties, the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD), but also the PSOE and Partido Comunista de España (PCE) had considered to be the only possible, responsible and realistic way to democracy. As the hegemonic discourse of pacts insistently had it: confrontational class politics had caused the Civil War, democracy was compromise. On the other hand, for the official left, revolution, the other face of the Civil War, was completely out of the program.<sup>4</sup> Now was the time for a “modern” technocracy of politics, where politics was left to a professional knowl-

edgeable group and was divorced from everyday tensions and claims, and from the dangers of direct political action. This rarefied political atmosphere was the background where our journey into the political reality of our anthropological subjects began. As we started prodding into people's convictions, eliciting memories of the past and consulting archival material we received an extremely complex picture of what "being *político*" meant in the area for different people.

*POLÍTICOS DURING FRANCO: OLD AND NEW CACIQUES*

What remained of public politics during the Franco years was in certain ways reminiscent of turn-of-the-century *caciquismo* ("political bossism") where particular members of the local elite controlled the voting power of local citizens for the governing parties alternating in Madrid during the Restoration period (1874–1923), and, as some sort of compensation, did not suffer much interference in their local politics by state regulatory enforcement. In a classical patronage way, the local *caciques* seem to have used their mediating position in regard to the state to increase their personalistic ties to local people in respect to social relations of production (day laborers, tenants, small landowners) by doing favors relating to administrative issues, such as maneuvering to get particular young people exempted from their military obligations (this was the period of Spain's last colonial wars), for example. And vice versa, their local control of votes increased their power in the personalistic national political networks and their political leverage within the national government in a number of issues that could be of interest to their personal affairs as well as enhancing their access to public resources. Thus, in turn-of-the-century Catral, the Lucas family, who were becoming the largest landowners of the area, had provided the strongest *caciques*. Eduardo Martínez Lucas, a doctor who in his public politics claimed to be close to the Socialists in 1979, spoke of his grandfather José María Lucas as being a power broker (he did not use the word *cacique*) together with his brother Juan Lucas:

Juan Lucas Hernández, the engineer, was more of a "político" but his brother José María had more contacts through his law studies in

Madrid. In practice they took turns as mayors.... José María Lucas had a house in Madrid because of his political contacts and thus he could do lots of favors ... but when his party was displaced (*cesante*) everybody knew that he could do nothing so they got out of the way. (1979)

This description would match any classical depiction of the *cacique* system during the Restoration period<sup>5</sup> and it reveals a sense of *político* that distances ordinary people from public politics through the institutionalization of power brokers. However, we should keep in mind that while this system was active in the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries, the labor movement was organizing through workers’ unions—the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), founded in 1882, and the anarcho-syndacalst Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), founded in 1910—and the Socialist Party (founded in 1879), and a class-based confrontational public politics was becoming increasingly significant.<sup>6</sup>

There were no such counterforces during the Franco period, however, when the *cacique* system was transformed in a way reminiscent of what had taken place during the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera.<sup>7</sup> The old local *caciques* of the Restoration period now tried to maintain their power positions in regard to the New State by becoming members of the fascist Falange party or by having themselves assigned to municipal positions by the higher-up regional representatives of the state. However, during the first years after the end of the war there was much internal strife between old and new *caciques* within the Falange and between the party and nonparty (such as military or just right-wing local politicians) power holders. The ideology of the Falange was one of total unity and total control by the state for the common good through a single party. But, as Miguel Primo de Rivera had experienced himself, this ideology could not be implemented because control at the local level had to rely heavily on the personalized arrangements that local power brokers had institutionalized during the Restoration years. There was, then, a contradiction between ideology and practice that pervaded Falangist politics, and there was also an open confrontation between the different factions that had supported Franco during the war: the right-wing Catholic party, Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas

(CEDA), the Falange, the other right-wing parties, the Monarchists, the economic oligarchy, the church, the military and the local Restoration *caciques*. The general description (in the reports to higher authorities) is one of disorganization of the institutional power structure of the New State, but also a situation where there is new space for carving out social mobility opportunities within different emerging networks of power brokerage such as the Falange.<sup>8</sup> The spectacular increase in party membership in the first postwar years seems to confirm this idea.

On the other hand, the purification ideology of the Falange and, more generally, the instrumental use of the Francoist rhetoric about the spiritual regeneration of Spain,<sup>9</sup> should be read against the background of the generalized corruption of the autarky system. Those in power, who were in a position to use public resources allocated to administrative bodies (such as petrol or transport permits) in their personal interest by directly or indirectly channeling them into *estraperlo* (black market) marketing strategies, were particularly affected. This then created an environment where both corruption and accusations of corruption were an inherent part of the realities of acquiring local power. Thus, old and new local *caciques* had to play in this new, constantly changing arena, highly risk laden for all, as opposed to the relatively stable system during the Restoration of alternating party rule that had relied heavily on *cacique* influence.

Local networks of power in Catral after the war were still basically related to the economic structure, but this also was changing rapidly, with some prewar large tenants buying a great deal of land in the first postwar years, and other smaller but extremely Falangist tenants becoming medium-size land owners. However, the supralocal networks of contacts were changing constantly as different factions within the regime at the provincial and national level came in or out of favor, and the job of weathering these changing landscapes became a time-consuming activity. Knowing the moves beforehand, that is, knowing what was going to happen at the provincial level and at the national level required a very sophisticated information network, which implied having a house in Madrid, but not losing touch with provincial moves either. One had much to gain or lose by entering the game of politics in those years, provided one had the rightist credentials needed to enter it in the first

place, and most of it was related to the managing of corruption policy and practice.

What seems to have changed during these years was the sense in which the economy and public politics were articulated. While in the old *cacique* system local power brokerage was solidly based on local economic control which engendered personalized political loyalties (this is the case of the Lucas family), in the New State control of “outside” political and economic information through flexible and shifting alliance networks became the basis of local power brokerage and of personalized arrangements. This seems to have happened mostly during the first postwar years, those that roughly coincide with the *estraperlo* and autarky years.

Some large tenants who became landowners after the war seem to have preferred to exploit the repressive context to reinforce their workers’ submission and dependency, but without entering the public politics arena which entailed risks they need not take. Theirs was the option to remain local and strengthen the particularist power of personal everyday arrangements in order to get by, without trying to meddle in the New State’s public politics. They voiced their distrust of *políticos* who tried to gain power from “outside” the local conditions of social organization. Some of the largest landowners, who not only supported Franco but benefited greatly from the new regime’s policies, would talk to us of the *políticos* in a disparaging way meaning the people who were actively involved in the public politics of the new regime, the new mayor, the president of the Comunidad de Regantes (Community of Irrigators), and so forth, all those who were the backbone of the new National-Catholic political order.<sup>10</sup> Some of the local power-holders seemed to resent the overwhelming intervention of the New State, which proposed a transcendent ideology of a purified unitary and organic nation directed from above in lieu of the more personalistic politics based on local networks of dependency. They seemed to perceive the day-to-day organization of a strong autocratic state as implying something negative and dirty, even when this situation was clearly beneficial to them in a number of ways. This recalled the classic “Regeneracionista” critique of corrupt official politics that Miguel Primo de Rivera had taken as one of his main targets.<sup>11</sup> *Políticos* were seen as somewhat alien by these local elite people, and also as somewhat profiteering from their new situation as political brokers for the new state. As opposed to the “traditional” power

of landholders, they were perceived as holding a different sort of power, one stemming not so much from their position in the local relations of production but from their connection to specific people in the governing structure of the new regime.

*POLÍTICOS* DURING FRANCO: WORKERS

One theme recurs constantly: the culture of fear that created extreme uncertainty, where mere existence became a life-threatening experience. This was accomplished by the Francoist state through widespread direct and violent repression and through the extreme regulatory framework of the autarchic economic organization during the first decade after the Civil War. But what made both sheer repression and the administered economy such powerful instruments of control was precisely that in practice, in the *estraperlo* and more generally in the everyday practices of getting by, these formal regulatory instruments were consistently violated. The only way to bypass this constraining framework was by engaging in extremely personalized networks. The practice of using personalized relations in order to advance claims or simply make a living was not new for dependent laborers and small tenants. However, in the New State there was no other space in which to voice even the smallest of claims. Public politics completely collapsed into the dense web of multiplex personal relations, in a way recalling the old *caciquismo*, only heavily burdened with uncertainty.

For those workers who had strongly experienced the force of collective public politics before and during the Civil War, the meaning of being político, of “having ideas,” became part of their structure of feeling in two very different and opposed ways. Some recalled the agency and empowerment that horizontal ties, class ties produced, to the point where, for two years (1936–1938) the revolution had been a reality in Catral as elsewhere, and locally, agricultural management by the unions had been extremely successful.<sup>12</sup> Others recalled repression, the sheer elimination of dissent, and the annihilation of a collective public space. Thus, Francisco Navarro Culiáñez, referring in 1979 to the unions during the war, stated that “[t]he CNT was the same as the UGT, it was of workers, not of politics. But we had to form the leadership [of the CNT]

because they told us to do so from Alicante.” Here Francisco made a significant distinction between “politics” and “workers,” between what political and union representatives did somewhere outside the realm of immediate experience (in Alicante, in Valencia, in Madrid) and what workers did in order to better their situation. This is not simply a distinction between parties and unions. In fact, as in this quote, unions also have a “political” aspect of estrangement when decisions that affect local workers are taken elsewhere, without their participation, in the professionalized realm of institutionalized politics.<sup>13</sup> Francisco Navarro Culiáñez (and he is not an exception) was underscoring the fact that local workers had a common experience as workers and were ready to act according to it, and that this was independent from the political strategic decisions of the unions at the higher organization level. He was talking about direct political action, about class and agency in public politics.

Yet another meaning of *político* in our informants’ accounts has to do with the postwar repression of any political expression that was not part of the Movimiento, the only legal political party. The example of Natalia and her mother is very revealing. Natalia, a widow in her early sixties who had married in the neighboring town of Crevillente and had lived all her life away from Catral,<sup>14</sup> is the daughter of José Cecilia who was the Frente Popular mayor of Catral for a few months at the start of the Civil War. After the war he was imprisoned and sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted and he stayed in prison until the “indulto” (pardon) that coincided with the Eucharistic Year of 1952.<sup>15</sup> He was accused of signing the order to execute a priest during the first months of the outbreak of the war. His brother fought for the Republic and was almost beaten to death when he came back home after the war. People recall that his clothes penetrated his flesh (“la camisa se le incrusto en la piel”) from the beating.<sup>16</sup> Natalia said to us:

My father was put into prison because of his ideas, *but* he was a very good man, *he never beat* his children. In those times some people had very strong ideas, but not anymore. Look at my children, they don’t have ideas and that is better. (Natalia Cecilia Rocamora, 1995, emphasis added)

If we look closely at Natalia's description of her father we can feel the contradiction that has become a part of her identity. On the one hand, compared with the Falangists, whom she just described as people who violently beat other people, her father "was a very good man" because "he never beat his children", implying the Falangists were *not* "good men." On the other hand, she seems to accept that "having ideas" is *not* a good thing, maybe even a reasonable cause for going to prison. Her words imply both support for the hegemonic ideology of the Francoist regime, together with a veiled critique of the Falangist violent procedures of punishment *and* support for the *private* person of her father. For Natalia "having ideas" means having a public political position, but it also means being on the left, that is what being *político* is. Being *político* as her father was is obviously not a good thing for Natalia. But her mother sees things differently. During our interview this old woman all dressed in black interrupted her daughter to say that her husband had been unjustly accused. She recounts how after the war, while her husband was in prison they could not go out in the street. Nobody would talk to them openly, but she says that lots of people came stealthily to their house to see them.

We could not go in the street because they looked at us as if we had all been criminals. We had an awful time. I think everybody can have his own ideas and he is neither worse nor better because of it. It was very unjust to put him in prison because of his ideas. It makes me furious. One can go to mass and another to the cinema, but that doesn't mean one is good and the other bad, maybe even the one who doesn't go to mass is the better one. (María Rocamora, 1995)

Natalia's mother, then has an almost opposite view of the situation: having ideas *should not* be cause for repression and moreover, the hegemonic Francoist National-Catholic ideology may even be followed by the *worst* people. For this old lady then, there is nothing wrong in "having ideas." What is unjust is the repression of the expression of political ideas. In her case, the remembrance and interpretation of the past is not contradictory as in her daughter's case, but coherent, constructing a continuous thread between past experience and present identity. Also, there is no separation between private moral identity and political iden-

tity: “the one who doesn’t go to mass is the better one” and is the one with “ideas” while those who go to mass are unjust. While her husband was in prison, she and her in-laws managed to keep the bakery going that her husband owned, obtaining flour in the black market, going by foot to fetch the sacks from the neighboring train station of Albaterra, suffering from the controls of the Guardia Civil that was on the lookout for the small *estraperlista*.

What this last example shows is that being *político* can be perceived very differently even by people like Natalia and her mother who have had similar experiences of repression. However, for Natalia, who was too young to have participated in what “having ideas” meant before the war, the Francoist discourse constitutes a hegemonic discursive framework in which to think and talk about being *político*.<sup>17</sup> But it also shows that being *político*, participating in public politics on the left, is a social practice whose expression was severely repressed after the Civil War, up to the point where the mere act of autonomous thinking, “having ideas,” became synonymous with political dissent, and therefore a dangerous activity. Simultaneously, repression also supported the memory of injustice and reproduced the feeling of difference, of having been treated differently, but also the knowledge that the differences that made the difference in the first place still existed, even when the hegemonic discourse was a depoliticized, unitary one. During the Franco regime being *político* was not only bad (and sinful) but also dangerous, which is still vividly remembered.

Repression was particularly bad for those whose politics were more visible. Those who had held public office before the war or were union organizers during the Franco years were particularly at risk. The immediate aftermath of the Civil War was a clear expression of this: the concentration camp at Albaterra, only four kilometers away, was one of the most brutal centers of repression during the first six months after the war,<sup>18</sup> as Ronald Fraser has recorded:

Testimony of Narciso Julian: “Designed to hold a few hundred, the camp [at Albaterra] was packed with nearly 10,000 prisoners. Hygiene and shelter were primitive to the point of nonexistence, food and water scarce. Falangists, police, civilians, even priests came from different parts of Spain to look for men they wanted; many

whom they took away at the beginning never reached their home towns or villages. Some prisoners succeeded in escaping; others were executed in front of the camp inmates for trying. On one occasion a temporary second lieutenant inspecting the sentry posts turned a machine gun on the inmates and opened fire.<sup>19</sup>

Those who were released from the camps or prison labor regimes in the first six years after the war were not allowed to return to their own villages. They were to be “exiled.” The fact that most did return, and that it was generally known that they did, simply placed them even further outside the law. Some people who avoided prison remained hidden for months and sometimes years after the war. But for many, especially the women relatives of prisoners, the experience was one of having no public presence at all: not to be spoken to on the street, not to be given a ration card.... In the case of José Cecilia’s wife, she was not even allowed to go to the wedding of her children, not to enter the church nor to stand in the plaza outside.

Her life was silenced then, but there is a collective silence which remains today and which is surely a sign of the experience of suffering not only the consequences of repression directly but of living within a broader setting of repression everywhere. Today, people in Catral do not mention that at Albaterra there was probably the largest concentration camp in Spain, nor do they mention the unofficial executions that must have littered the *saladar* (salt marshes) with common graves.<sup>20</sup> Albaterra is a leisure place where many go to the swimming pool in the summer, or to celebrate weddings or First Communions.

Repression also meant pitting close people against each other, urging them to denounce each other and rewarding those who did so with part of the property taken from those found guilty. For example, the military governor of Valencia published the following announcement in the local press: “Any person that knows about the commission of a crime done during the time of the red dominion, is obliged to denounce the fact to the Jefe de Sector [military official of the area] that corresponds to his residence....”<sup>21</sup> Such announcements were published in all local newspapers in April 1939 and yielded immediate results. But there was more to physical repression than an initial spirit of revenge. People were being sentenced to death and killed in large numbers until well into 1943. In

Callosa del Segura, seven kilometers from Catral, eight people were killed in 1940, thirteen in 1941, twelve in 1942 and two in 1943, and these are just those in the official records;<sup>22</sup> many of these were *rastrilladores* (hemp workers) who had participated in a notable strike in 1928. Indeed, “political responsibilities” were determined *retrospectively* by the Franco regime, so that people involved in the revolutionary strike of 1934 were in effect tried years later. There was therefore a clear class component to repression, one moreover that went beyond physical repression.

We can see the gradual accumulation of repression from one year to the next. In October 1936 the new regime eliminated all political and union activities in the areas it controlled; in April 1937 the single party, the Movimiento Nacional, was formed out of the unification of the two fascist parties, Falange Española Tradicionalista and Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista. In 1938 the *Fuero del Trabajo* (Labor Code), regulating labor relations in a corporatist fashion was promulgated. In April 1939 (after the end of the war) a law controlling the press was issued, and in July the death penalty was reinstated. In February 1939 the Law of Political Responsibilities, the main repressive instrument of the postwar years, was promulgated. From a legal point of view this law was entirely indefensible since it punished people for crimes committed when the law was not in effect. People were not only punished for their political affinities in the prewar and war years, but they lost their civil rights and could also lose their property. Most of those judged under this law were accused of rebellion against the state and tried by the military courts. Many other repressive laws and decrees were issued.<sup>23</sup> It was not until 1969 that Franco decreed the ending of war crimes. The worst years of repression lasted until the mid-1950s, but a culture of fear had been instilled through the unforgiving and exemplary repression of all those who had fought for the Republic and participated in the revolutionary years of the war. Moreover, until the end of the Francoist regime all political crimes were tried by military courts following the Decree on Banditry and Terrorism (21 September 1960) or by a special court, the Tribunal de Orden Público (TOP), following the Law of Public Order (30 July 1959). Gregorio Peces-Barba, a socialist professor of law, states that the TOP tended to substitute for the military courts and for the special court for crimes of “Freemasonry and communism,” but that it also substituted for the regional courts that were acting as subsidiary

in cases not directly referable to the special courts. Therefore the TOP in fact reinforced the centralized control of punishment for political dissent. But also, in August 1968, the Decree on Banditry and Terrorism was reinstated in all its force (following ETA's first actions).<sup>24</sup>

One of the most effective and distinctive aspects of repression during the dictatorship was its vagueness and apparent randomness, combined with the fact that laws that were too strict to be followed universally were an especially effective repressive instrument when applied selectively and arbitrarily. The very vagueness of the terms in which criminal offenses were defined left the judge with the arbitrary power to decide.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, responsibility for illegal collective actions could be extended pretty much to whoever happened to be caught, in the event that those directly responsible had slipped away.<sup>26</sup> The very selective way in which the black market controlled people was also a factor in this uncertainty. As we have pointed out elsewhere, the economic regime of autarky, combined with the fact that "Reds" were often forced into petty black-market operations because of their inability to get local employers to hire them, gave rise to a destabilizing form of social regulation.<sup>27</sup> Essentially diffuse and ubiquitous illegality was a repressive force precisely because of the permanent uncertainty it provoked.

The control of movement was also one of the main expressions of power during those years, but again in such a way as to reinforce the sense of arbitrary power left to the whims of power-holders at various levels. Thus even when people did move without a permit, the risk they incurred was in itself a form of repression. It is quite clear from all our evidence that people moved all the time without the right permits, and that they transported commodities without the *conduces* (permits) necessary to move controlled goods even for the shortest distance. It is obvious too that the authorities knew that this was happening but would not and could not control illegal movements thoroughly. Generally speaking everyone, including the authorities and the Guardia Civil, knew what was happening, yet sanctions would not be used systematically but rather as an example—some were more prone to be chosen as targets than others. Everyday life was thus immersed in illegality and risk of repression was constant, but precisely because repression was not used in a formal and systematic way, the risk perception was much higher. This generated a culture of fear, which had an almost "everyday"

and local character to it and which continued well beyond the end of that period. After all, many of the individuals involved—both those invested with such arbitrary and personalized power, and those who had suffered directly from it—are still alive, bearing in their bodies, their gestures, their mannerisms and the aura that surrounds them echoes of the past.

#### POLITICAL IDENTITY

We have already seen how these kinds of echoes from the past produce quite personal valuations and judgments within a family, when we discussed Natalia’s and her mother’s comments about “having ideas.” But these shadows also extend well beyond the privacy of the family into the arena of local politics, as we see when we speak to Victoria Navarro and Hipólito Guerrero, a working-class couple in their early sixties. Victoria is the daughter of Pedro Navarro Peñalva, who was the Socialist mayor of Catral during most of the Civil War. One evening we were sitting in the front room talking to Hipólito about his life as a factory worker and about political “ideas” and agency. Hipólito is one of the few union members in Catral, long a member of the UGT. However he insists that: “Young people nowadays all go together, play together, there are no differences between right and left. There is no ‘política.’” But Victoria intervenes to oppose: “It is not true!” she says. “Rightist parents don’t let their children go with those on the left. And my children know there is a difference. They have ideas” (1995).

After the war, Victoria’s father was in hiding for a time, first in the Cuban consulate in Alicante, then near Catral in a relative’s house until a sister-in-law denounced him to the authorities. Then he was paraded through the village and publicly vilified.<sup>28</sup> After a trial he was sent to prison and later exiled. When he returned nobody would give him a job. Because he was a teacher, he went from house to house, teaching the young *jornaleros* working in the fields.<sup>29</sup> She recalls that they had a very bad time after the war when her father was imprisoned and exiled for many years. Her older brother and her mother carried the family through those years. The effect of this personal history has produced in Victoria a very different response to the echoes and shadows of the past than in many others. For her the need to recover continuities is expressed in terms

of inheritance. “Ideas are hereditary,” she says. “My sons Hipólito and Pedro are very *político*. Pedro is a fanatic. Javier is more moderate. But they have their ideas” (1995). Both her sons work in the shoe factories in Catral and have a history of confronting their employers on salary and working conditions. In fact they have had to change workplace several times.

For Victoria the need to preserve these socialist political inclinations is expressed in the notion that they are hereditary,<sup>30</sup> but even here, heredity seems to imply that the ideas themselves do not need to be discussed; rather they are transmitted in some way that avoids any agency on the part of the transmitter or any relationship with wider structural forces. Moreover, this hereditary discourse may echo the same culture of repression that it opposes. Indeed, because of the organic, unitary and spiritual idea of Spain held by Franco, political opponents on the left during the Republic were conceived as a poisonous substance for the body politic, infused by foreign malignant powers and part of the anti-Spain. As Franco put it:

It is not possible, without due precaution, to return to society, or we could say to the stream of social circulation, harmful elements, morally and politically perverted, because their return to the normal and free community of Spaniards, just like that (*sin más ni más*), would represent a danger of corruption and contagion for all.<sup>31</sup>

The bloodstream metaphor was not idle. “Reds” were the poison of the blood of Spain but they were also, through their own blood, carriers of the poisonous germ of Marxism, and this was particularly relevant to the repression suffered by women. During the worst repression years after the war, the discourse of the “innate revolutionary” biopsychic constitution of the “Reds” and thus the impossibility of reeducation and integration in the New State, was an important part of the scientific justification of massive repression practices. In Franco’s words:

As I understand it, there is in the present case of Spain, two types of delinquent: those whom we would call inveterate criminals, without possible redemption in the human order, and those capable of

sincere repentance, those who can be redeemed, those who can adapt to the social life of Patriotism.<sup>32</sup>

The military psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nágera provided the “scientific” basis for the hereditary transmission of political depravation.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Victoria might be unwittingly adopting the Francoist discourse on political heredity or she might simply be influenced by a more general romantic populist reference to “heart” and “essence” found in folklore.<sup>34</sup>

The hereditary discourse also refers to the experienced reality of Francoist political participation. It was precisely the closure of the public space for political action, and thus the inability to construct collective identity through situated and shared practices of public participation (citizenship, class struggle, etc.), that resulted in the retreat into private space and individual identity for the construction of a political identity. This is then limited to private, personal and particular memories of the past, and to the political filiation through lineages, all of which render ahistorical and essential the realities of political identity production. However, as Victoria Navarro’s case shows us clearly, political identity is not just hereditary: of her three sons, the two who are wage workers in the local shoe industry are more *políticos* (driven into unionized political action, one of them even described by his mother as “fanático”!), while the third son, Javier, an agricultural engineer living in the city is not so *político* although he has “ideas” (meaning a socialist leaning).

What we glean from the above narratives is the permanent split that our informants in 1995–1996 had regarding their social memory. On the one hand, there is a constant contradiction between the continuity and active maintenance of a private memory of the past within the home, among close family and friends, and the discontinuity, the void, the silence of the public memory of what happened collectively, to them, the “Reds,” Republicans, workers, Socialists, etc. during the war and the Franco regime.<sup>35</sup> Also, there is sometimes a kind of shame in public (for example in front of the two anthropologists) at having been the victims, a sort of acceptance of the official discourse of sin, as we find in Natalia’s attitude; at other times, as in Victoria’s case, there is a kind of self-justified pride at having resisted the official memory, at having

transmitted the “ideas” to the next generation, endowing them with the right elements for forming their political identity.

On the other hand, from the transition period onwards (1975–1978) there is a contradiction between the expectations of being able to publicly recuperate the suppressed memory as soon as Franco disappeared, and with it the legitimacy of a particular mode of political action, and the enforced reality of the “pact for democracy” that definitively silenced the public validity of this past for official history. As in the case of the old-time Communists of Terni that Portelli studies, the turn of the Socialist and Communist parties to “realistic” politics in the 1970s produced a collective sense of disappointment, but also a public discrediting of the Spanish working class’s experience of greater empowerment: the revolution that took place during the Civil War.<sup>36</sup> As Naredo has very clearly analyzed in his works on the transition, one of the main requisites of the process was “the compromise of making nobody accountable for his past, starting from the Francoist politicians who now appeared as the champions of democracy, and followed by the extortionists who acted under the cover of that regime and its guardians directly implicated in tortures and crimes.”<sup>37</sup> This has created a renewed distrust in the public sphere of politics and in the reliability of professional politicians. For these people who were forcefully silenced and repressed over 40 years, the time has not yet come to speak out. This is partly because the space of public politics remains *de facto* closed through the politics of compromise and silence; but it is also because the current practices of those who presume to represent the continuity with a past of political action on the left, the PSOE, PCE, UGT and CCOO, have consistently betrayed the memories of what they used to stand for.<sup>38</sup> At the local level, for example, it is noticeable that the owners of the two most important shoe factories in the town, who are responsible for the low salaries, poor health conditions and precarious job market of many local workers, were themselves both shop stewards for the communist union in big factories in Elche, during the “agitated” transition years. This makes sense, however, in the context of the general guidelines of the PCE during those years, preferring pacts and increasingly shunning direct political action in favor of professionalizing union representatives in order to facilitate compromise with employers.<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising that the union

representatives often learned from their opponents (the employers) and changed sides.<sup>40</sup>

#### PUBLIC POLITICS, MEMORIES OF THE PAST, AND THE TRANSITION PERIOD

During the transition period the contradictions between political action, professional politics and political identity became extremely sharp for those on the left, mostly day laborers who had kept alive a history of empowerment through private memories and some political action mainly in terms of voicing labor claims.<sup>41</sup> They had been able to preserve a collective sense of belonging, a moral code of personal honesty and horizontal solidarity that came from sharing similar experiences of work in a particular place, and from suffering from the same negation of their memories and their identities during the repression.<sup>42</sup> For these people, the transition exposed in practice the split realities of public and private memories of the past that we have encountered previously.

Such was the case for Juan Gelardo Jr. Coming to power in the 1979 national elections, the Unión de Centro Democrático was not the long-lasting “solution” for the new Spain that many may have anticipated, and by 1982 the PSOE came to power, a change that the next year was also reflected in Catral’s municipal government. The effect was to pull Juan across the threshold of his small house in Sta Agueda (the day laborers’ neighborhood) into the limelight of municipal politics. His father Juan Gelardo Sr. was a big man, a strong worker, frequently a *mayoral* (foreman) whose small cohort of workers were reputed to be the best and most enduring but in all senses the toughest *jornaleros* in the area. Yet an outsider could have wandered the streets of Catral throughout 1978 in search of the key political players and not known that what made Juan Gelardo Sr. especially well known, among some people notorious, was that throughout his adulthood he had been a Socialist, eventually a discrete member of the UGT and then openly its local representative. Perhaps as a result of the long-standing discretion of the past though, it would be a long time before you were brought to Juan Sr.’s door. His growing influence as the figurehead of the *jornaleros*, made especially manifest when he negotiated the raise of the day wage to 1,500 pesetas,

was in many ways an inwardly focused matter. Juan made no attempt to address himself to any other but the day laborers. That did not only mean dismissal of the opinions traders, shopkeepers or *labradores* may have had of him; it also meant a sharp disdain for the broader arena of politics.

Yet with such a father, it is not hard to see how Juan Jr. found himself running on the PSOE ticket in 1983. It was a distressing period of his life, as he recounted to us in 1995.

We had been working and talking with other people in other villages [about organizing a workers' party] for a long time even before Franco's death. We finally decided we wanted to constitute ourselves as a political party within the ranks of the PSOE, and we did so, and in the first municipal elections [1979] we won but with a simple majority. We were eight founders, four of them were old timers, amongst them my father.

When Franco died, my greatest desire was to install a democracy, but to go from a dictatorship to a democracy without firing guns as we did here is very difficult ... not so much for people my age [he was born in 1940] but for older people. On either side they still had open wounds ... but we started to work in order to bring the rest of them over to our way ... it was difficult but the fight for democracy was my job.... We had this fight with older persons.... I had these terrible discussions with my father and often we didn't speak to each other for several days.... I wanted them to see the way of realism.... What we could not have is a situation where if twenty years ago you threw a stone at me, now I throw it back at you. I couldn't understand that.... We had to think of a way ... but it was very hard because he [his father] had suffered and endured a lot in those years and he couldn't forget it.... But nowadays things have changed a lot and one has to recognize it ... what I allow my daughters he didn't allow me to do ... we all give in and the Socialists have done the same because if they hadn't given in they would have got nothing.... And one has to be democratic. (1995)

Juan Jr.'s view that a genuine transition to democracy was occurring and that it could only occur so long as the past was put aside (buried?

silenced?) was not simply his own personal view, it was the hegemonic program of those at the centers of power who had managed the “transition.” In this agenda, “democracy” could only be attained by keeping the practices of the old regime off the agenda of public discussion. If the figure of a person is at least partly, if not mainly, the stuff of his past, then this forgetting of history made what Juan Sr. was in the town of Catral essentially invisible. This seeing and not seeing from one generation to the other—Juan Jr. insisting on not “seeing” the historical figure of his father, and then Juan Sr. refusing to “see” the potential of his son—was voiced across a second element of the hegemonic program for the new democratic Spain. This was the notion, not that compromises were a necessary preliminary for entry into democratic ways, but rather that democracy *was* compromise. This contrasts sharply with Juan Sr.’s position, which is based on the need to come to terms with issues of class that during the Francoist regime had been repressed both physically and through the discourse of fascist corporatism, and were now to be further obscured in the discourse of the new technocratic and democratic corporatism.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, collective strategies became progressively a thing of the past as did direct political action, the preserve of “old” Socialists like Juan Sr., while individual commitments and professional politics were both inscribed in the rules for the new political game and invoked an older kind of *políticos*, the personalized ways of corrupt power brokers.

This contradiction comes out clearly when Juan Sr. wants his son to inform the local party section of everything that happens in the municipality after Juan Jr. was appointed mayor. Yet Juan Jr. refuses to inform him on the grounds that he has taken an oath that binds him to secrecy when accepting his public charge:

Gavin: “Did your father have any political ambition for you or your brother?”

Juan Jr.: “*He always thought in terms of a whole, a bloc....* He never opposed me or favored me within the party by saying “my son should be candidate,” his hope was not that his son would be candidate and that’s it ... no, he wanted a situation where the candidate who was chosen could find solutions.... Aside from that he liked to be in control.... But it is very clear in the oath “*jura o promete*

guardar secreto”... I couldn’t tell anybody neither you nor a neighbor nor my father what happened. Things that could not be talked about ... my father wanted me to inform him about all the movements, but I only did up to a point. When I said I couldn’t anymore, he was furious because he liked to control a lot, and in a democracy you cannot play that way because if democracy was about being in control (*poder dominar*).... No, in a democracy you cannot play thus.... *A person, because of his honesty, can be the candidate* of a municipality or a *diputación* [local council] or a parliament, but not just because he drags (*arrastra*) other people along, no, no, no.”(1995, emphasis added)

Juan Jr., who subsequently left municipal politics has, for some young Socialists in Catral, assumed the symbolic position held by his father (who died in 1989), but for most people his trajectory into politics and then out again has a kind of fatefulness about it. The tensions he felt between the personal self-respect of a worker with honor and the urge to engage with the political currents of the area may in his case be especially acute, but they are felt very broadly across Catral. They surface occasionally in a variety of ways.<sup>44</sup> Between father and son, both Socialists and active in politics, we can feel the contradictions arising at the heart of “hereditary” political ideas. While Juan Sr. sees political action “in terms of a whole, a bloc,” that is in terms of collective politics, Juan Jr. sees it as a personal attribute linked to honesty, “a person, because of his honesty, can be the candidate....” The individualized aspect of the new political arena fits people into institutional positions that imply receding from collective politics, keeping municipal politics a secret, a professional oath that estranges ordinary people from public politics. In the new socialist politics one has to act in terms of individual positions and secret responsibilities, while for local union activists like Juan Sr. the old socialist politics was about sharing information in order to better act collectively. For both Juan Jr. and Sr. ideas might be heredity, but actual practice makes them so different that it becomes difficult even for them to feel the continuity and the lineage.

Above all we need to understand political culture as the outcome of a historical trajectory in which few groups were clearly drawn and praxis was always felt in terms of awful tension and personal inner conflict, a

paralysis that we feel has fall-out for the collective identity of the region as a whole.

#### THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

Clearly then, as in many other parts of Europe (consider, for example, Margaret Thatcher’s war on the unions in Britain, very much continued, though with a velvet glove, by Tony Blair), the public space for political action during the Franco regime gave way to an institutionalized form of political representation that delegitimated direct collective action. But the public political sphere is curtailed in a much more insidious manner than just that. Even individual participation has been limited to the casting of votes to elect representatives who have already been previously appointed by the higher-level professional politicians in the parties and unions.<sup>45</sup> In such a context distrust of the public sphere of politics resulted for many leftists—*jornaleros*, shoe industry wage workers, etc.—in a retreat from public politics. Actions of protest—claims for salary raises or better working conditions, for example—become personal, individual struggles, in the same way that political identity has become a personal, individual and private affair. Collective identity cannot be construed through political praxis, as it was before the Civil War and even during the Franco regime, through strikes and public demonstrations of opposition (however repressed they were).<sup>46</sup> Here too we sense the tension between public and private political expression when the memory of a collective identity becomes private and loses its force as a culture, a shared space of communication. For some people, such as Juan Jr., this means a retreat into a moral honesty regarding his everyday responsibilities: work and family; an honesty based on memories of the past, of being a Socialist and a son of a Socialist and having “ideas,” but geared not to collective transformation but to personal commitment.

So, more generally, a distaste for public politics translates into an inarticulate collective culture. In a sense this might be seen as a kind of failure of civil society—a kind of disenchanting cultural vacuum. This, at any rate was what brought Paco Illán reluctantly into the arena of public politics. Hitherto he had shown no interest in political discussion and, as a young married man in 1979, had been entirely disdainful of

the elections and the issues raised there. By 1995, however, we found him occupying the position of Vice Mayor in charge of cultural affairs, a position he had apparently more or less invented for himself.<sup>47</sup>

Paco says that he was drawn into the political arena precisely because of the alienation from any kind of political collectivity that he perceived as characterizing the region and which he had felt himself. He had watched with dismay as he saw the hopes that he had pinned on Juan Jr.'s entry into municipal politics shattered when Juan retreated to his home. What Paco thought he saw were a few socialist *políticos* possibly with authentic socialistic (if not actually quite socialist) principles but with very limited interest in changing the convictions of ordinary people. Meanwhile by turning their backs on even the minor issues of local politics the ordinary people themselves were both relinquishing even the smallest hold they may have on their future and also themselves sinking into a world that Paco described as "inculto."

In 1979, during the municipal election campaign, the regional PSOE representative participating in the local meeting had also emphasized the need for "culture," but not "high culture," a culture emerging from the sharing of experience through public interaction:

We have been told that culture is theater, painting, sculpture and that a particular sensibility was needed in order to understand it ... but culture is not only that, that's only a parcel of culture that the dominant class shows us in order to make us feel how difficult it is ... to reach, they say you need four generations.... Workers have been given a subculture, in a corner of your home with the television, not sharing with others our experience.... That is a passive culture....

We need to use spaces that we already have, such as schools after hours, as forums, as a workers' library, a place to speak about the problems that affect us, so that we can develop our critical capacity ... because culture is understanding ... we have to develop a culture that is not repressive, that takes us toward equality and justice, a culture of freedom and responsibility. Culture is like a ferment that can germinate and transform society. (1 April 1979)

Here he was speaking of culture as a space for communicating experience, that is, a space that would give workers the collective ability to

transform society “toward equality and justice.” He was also speaking of a culture that was mainly information and debate about real and concrete problems “that affect us,” not “theater, painting, sculpture.” As an older generation of Socialists had thought of education, he saw culture as politics, part of building class politics.

In 1995, Paco, from the perspective of his municipal responsibility for culture, had a somewhat different idea of his objectives. His solution was to persuade the municipal council to provide money for him to carry out a cultural renewal campaign in the area. Since this could easily be packaged into the national PSOE cultural programs, money was relatively easily found. But what kind of “culture” did Paco envisage? During his tenure a municipal sports center was built with a large swimming pool, tennis courts and other facilities, including a bar and café. He also began screening old films—from Buñuel to Fellini—in the plaza on weekend evenings. He set up a theater group for young people and had the municipality finance trips to regional historical sites. For Paco too, “culture” was a means to bring people out of their houses into the public sphere. There they would find a new kind of space—a kind of liberal, European cultural space that would fill the vacuum left by the personalized and hierarchical politics of the past. His was an attempt at locally creating a space for public interaction around “culture.” But he was completely co-opted by the official definition of culture as art and sports. He did not seem to think that culture could emerge from local people just talking about their experiences in the school building. His cultural project for Catral, echoed directly the policies of the PSOE government in power but also, unacknowledged by him, older policies that had been adopted by Manuel Fraga Iribarne during his appointment as Minister of Information and Tourism in the 1960s (1962–1969) when he actively endorsed “modern” abstract expressionist art, and moderate sexual liberation as two forms of *apertura* (openness), of cultural expression of political dissent. During the transition, again, when Fraga was Home Secretary (*Ministro de Gobernación*) (1975–1976), he insisted that his aim was to “strengthen authority” while he simultaneously would “broaden freedom.”<sup>48</sup>

This recapturing of some public action in order to create some civic involvement was now focused on *styles of consumption* for the production of some form of collective identity: while those on the “right” became

involved in the “Moros y Cristianos” festivities (also of recent introduction locally, but referring to a more “traditional” local culture),<sup>49</sup> those on the “left” went to the public high-culture film sessions and theater festivals that Paco organized. However, this was a much looser expression of the situated self, one that in fact seemed to be autonomous both from the realities of present-day livelihoods as expressed in a strongly informalized and exploitive regional economy, and from the memories of a past of collective political action and collective suffering from repression. In fact, the politics of “culture” becomes an ersatz of collective identity and of culture as politics, a mere aggregate of individual consumption tastes, one, moreover, that effectively voids of political intent the sharing and communicating of experience. When politics becomes a politics of “culture” it effectively separates sign from signified in a manner that makes most people relatively comfortable. These manifestations of new civic engagement have little connection to the lived histories or memories of those that are called to participate in them, and, also, little connection to the everyday duress of their lives. If collective political action is situated in shared everyday experiences, these cultural expressions of difference and even mild confrontation are many times removed from what motivates people to patronize one cultural activity rather than another. They express, in fact, the actual closure of the public space for “real” political action.

Paco’s cultural project fits well with the European Union’s politics of culture expressed through the Culture 2000 program’s aim “to improve the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, to conserve and safeguard cultural heritage of European significance, to support cultural exchanges and artistic and literary creation.”<sup>50</sup> The process of creation of a “selective tradition” for European history is designed to deal with unproblematic points of connection (Art with a capital *A*) or to musealize and reify conflictive memories of the common past, so that it becomes definitively situated in the past. Although Paco’s intervention deals with the more aseptic and unproblematic “cultural heritage,” the museification of conflictive memories emerges in such well-meaning projects as the one that Florencio Dimas proposed to the Socialist mayor of Albatera in 1999: to create a cultural heritage site of the Francoist repression at the location of the concentration camp. But transferring memory into the museum also deprives it

of its force as something that is part of the present lived experience of ordinary people.

#### CONCLUSION

We have exposed the terrible ambivalence within many people's experience of what politics or being *político* involves in their present lives, and how this can be better understood if we try to connect it with the different strands of their memories about the past and how these have endured and been transformed by the immediate realities experienced by the subjects at different historical moments. The ambivalence of the present seems to be grounded in the split between a private and a public social memory, and between the unvoiced memories of political empowerment based on a working-class collective identity in the distant pre-Civil War past, and the present betrayed hopes for a similar empowerment in the future that made these people endure the long years of the Franco regime. Smith has pointed to the importance memories of the past have for powerless people to enable endurance during the forced silences of repression and to facilitate the link between visible, acknowledged dots of their history “from week to week, year to year, decade to decade, through years of oppression to the capturing of the advantage of a correctly judged conjuncture...”<sup>51</sup> The impression we receive in the context of our ethnography, however, is that the ability to link those dots is increasingly difficult, as if the long-term, forced privatization of past memories is progressively eroding the “social” aspect of those memories, and thus their capacity to link past and present public history and to create a framework for political agency. What emerges instead is, once again, the retreat into privacy and silence, the feeling of having misjudged the conjuncture of the new democratic regime as a rupture instead of what it was, a mere continuity, but also the feeling that this is now a permanent situation.

For many, the present appears as the resolution of the class conflicts of the past through apoliticism: not having ideas. In this utopian present it is not so much that the younger generation participates in a unitary political culture; rather it is hoped that they do not have any political culture. Everyday life and everyday realities should emphatically not

become the basis for political action. This wish, by parents such as Natalia or Hipólito, is meant to protect their children in case of war and repression such as they experienced. But this apoliticism is based on the confiscation of memories, their privatization and individualization or, alternatively, musealization, their transformation into something definitively settled, with its place in the past, not in the present. For others, the present appears as a parenthesis in a repressive continuum. The disappointment of hopes that had been set in the time-after-Franco and democracy has resulted in a dystopian imagining of the future and in the permanence of latent fear and persistent insecurity. We do not find “uchronic dreams” as Portelli did, maybe because there is a real sense of the total loss of political agency that is based both in the unvoiced memory of collective empowerment through class action that accompanied the years of the Republic and the war, and in the public mistrust of that experience for relevant political agency in the present. Portelli interpreted uchronic dreams as a way for working-class people to maintain hope for change in the face of the compromising tactics of the left, and to keep agency on their side: “Blaming the ‘wrongness’ of history on ‘our’ side means, for one thing, that it is still our side that makes history.”<sup>52</sup>

In the case we have presented it would seem that forty years of Franco and twenty-five years of monarchy have succeeded in convincing ordinary people that they better not do history themselves, that they better leave it to professionals because when they do it, it always goes wrong. Collective political agency leads to violence and rupture of the organic and unitary political community. Therefore, apoliticism, the loss of faith in political agency, is a result of the active silencing of past memories by the official history of the new democratic regime, the active occlusion of a space for publicly sharing these memories and constructing the bases for a collective memory, the active co-option of the few spaces where workers could share their problems by experts who “know best,” the active production of an ersatz to political activity through a consumable politics of culture.

What has been confiscated through the privatization of memories of the past is the ability for this past to become a history, alive in the present and guiding action toward the future. The inability to create any sense of relationship between memories, present-day experience and

political agency, or even personal political identity, creates irresolvable tensions that often transfer conflict into the private domain (between mother and daughter, husband and wife, father and son). It is the sense of continuity that has been annihilated for many people in Catral, historical, political but also personal continuity. Raymond Williams pointed to the powerful force of the “selective tradition” in creating “a sense of predisposed continuity”:

From a whole possible area of the past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are neglected or excluded. Yet within a particular hegemony, and as one of its decisive processes, this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as “the tradition,” “the significant past.” What has then to be said about any tradition is that it is in this sense an aspect of contemporary social and cultural organization, in the interest of the dominance of a specific class. It is a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of predisposed continuity.<sup>53</sup>

In the present, only private memories still resist the hegemonic selective tradition of contemporary Spanish history. However, in order to become the bases for political agency, they need to become collective public memories and to be shaped in the present. And it is probably through the institutional fostering of alternative spaces for the emergence of different collective memories and political cultures that this could take place.<sup>54</sup> Silenced memories have to be transformed into points of connection in a different version of the past, one that can be coherently used as a guide to the future. Williams has noted that history “*teaches* or *shows* us most kinds of knowable past and almost every kind of imaginable future.”<sup>55</sup> But it may be that if there is no imaginable future, there is no need for a knowable past.

NOTES

1. Dates of interviews and fieldwork notes will be given after quotations in the text.

2. Josep M. Bernabé Mestre, *Indústria i subdesenvolupament al País Valencià* (Mallorca, 1975).

3. The law of February 1939 was specifically designed to include all those workers who had participated in the 1934 October revolution in the mining region of Asturias. In theory, the agricultural day laborers' uprising in June 1934 was excluded from the reach of the retroactive bill, but in practice the bill simply opened the door—in the usual vague terms—to retroactive political responsibility of any on the left or even just liberal republicans before 1936. However, the Law of Political Responsibilities was particularly aimed at the politically organized (and united) working class that predated the 1936 revolution. See also below, p. 205.

4. See José Manuel Naredo, *Por una oposición que se oponga* (1976; Barcelona, 2001).

5. Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez, "Dictatorship from Below: Local Politics in the Making of the Francoist State, 1937–1948," *The Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 4 (Dec. 1999): 882–901; Antonio Robles Egea, ed., *Política en penumbra: Patronazgo y clientelismo políticos en la España contemporánea* (Madrid, 1996).

6. In Catral the Catholic agricultural union founded in 1903 was completely overrun by the socialist union Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra (FNTT) in 1909. In 1905 the Círculo Obrero (Catholic) had 185 members and the Sociedad de Trabajadores Agrícolas (socialist), 54 members. In 1909 the Círculo Obrero had 194 members and the Sociedad de Trabajadores Agrícolas, 270 members. Municipal Archive of Catral (unnumbered file).

7. Cazorla-Sánchez, "Dictatorship from Below," 886; Antonio Robles Egea, "Sistemas políticos, mutaciones y modelos de las relaciones de patronazgo y clientelismo en la España del siglo XX," and Miguel Jerez Mir, "El régimen de Franco: élite política central y redes clientelares (1938-1957)," both in Robles Egea, ed., *Política en penumbra*, 229–52 and 253–74, respectively.

8. Cazorla-Sánchez, "Dictatorship from Below"; Robles Egea, ed., *Política en penumbra*.

9. Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936–1945* (Cambridge, 1998), 26–66; Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios familiares de Franco* (Barcelona, 1978).

10. Most of them had been large tenants for absentee owners before the Civil War and had acquired the land just after the war, when absentee owners

decided to sell their property, in part scared by the collectivization experience of the revolution during the war. See Antonio Gil Olcina and Gregorio Canales Martínez, *Residuos de propiedad señorial en España* (Alicante, 1988).

11. See Joaquín Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo: Colectivismo agrario y otros escritos* (Madrid, 1967); María Carmen García-Nieto, Javier M. Donezar and Luis López Puerta, eds., *La dictadura 1923–1930* (Madrid, 1973); Shlomo Ben-Ami, *La dictadura de Primo de Rivera, 1923–1930* (Barcelona, 1983).

12. During the revolution, Catral, originally an UGT town, organized production through a local Consejo de Administración de las Fincas, managed by unionized workers. Some large properties were collectivized and were then managed directly by a union *encargado* (foreman) who decided how many workers he needed to work the land. But other large properties were parceled to small tenants and left for them to work. In general, the lands managed by the CNT tended to be collectivized, while those managed by the UGT tended to be divided into small parcels to be distributed to peasants without land. In Catral, the unions constituted a “Colectividad Cooperativa Unificada de Trabajadores Campesinos” which seems to have been extremely well managed. See Fernando Quilis Tauriz, *Revolución y guerra civil: Las colectividades obreras en la provincia de Alicante, 1936–1939* (Alicante, 1992), 123.

13. In a conversation with the Asturian miners who had been on strike in 1963 and 1964, Manuel Castells reported that the Comisiones Obreras were something that concerned workers of all political leanings. A worker told him: “They are all there. There is unity (*unidad*). It’s the *comisiones* [elected directly by the workers as their representatives] that count.” To Castells’ question: “Then the term Union Opposition (*Oposición Sindical*) rather than being an organization refers to action, the action of the *comisiones obreras* where all organizations participate?” the worker answers: “Yes, that’s it. And everyone is in the *comisiones*. All those that are really with the worker. Because we workers are not idiots...” Jordi Blanc (Manuel Castells), “Asturias: Minas, huelgas y comisiones obreras (Transcripción de una charla de café),” *Cuadernos de Ruedo Ibérico* (Paris), no. 1 (June–July 1965): 70–74.

14. This pattern of permanent emigration was a recurrent aspect in many of the vanquished lineages. Cf. George Collier, *Socialists of Rural Andalusia: Unacknowledged Revolutionaries of the Second Republic* (Stanford, 1987).

15. An emphasis on the religious aspect of repression and pardon was ubiquitous: during the first years after the war, prisoners recall that death sentences were executed at dawn on Sundays or on important festivities, highlighting the sacrificial aspect of the execution, its purifying function. See Ángel Suárez and Colectivo 36, *Libro blanco sobre las cárceles franquistas: Ruedo Ibérico* (Paris, 1976). A

memorable beating of Reds that took place in Catral in 1945 occurred on the first day of Easter, Holy Thursday.

16. This story was recounted to us many times as an example of the repressive practices in the aftermath of the war. Hence, it was not just a personal memory but a collective memory for the local “Reds.” This particular beating is reported by different informants as having taken place at different moments: (a) at the very end of the war; (b) in 1942 or 1943 simultaneously with a round-up of “communist” organizers in the village; (c) in 1947 for the previous reason. In fact the round-up of 15–20 people in Catral probably took place in 1945 when some 800 alleged communist militants were detained in the area between Crevillente, Elche and Alicante. See Antoni Furió, *Historia del País Valencia* (Valencia, 1995), 619.

17. William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, 1994).

18. Gabarda speaks of some 30,000 detainees in the first months, others speak of between 8,000 and 17,000. Vicente Gabarda, *Els afusellaments al País Valencia: 1938–1956*, (Valencia, 1993); Juan Llarch, *Campes de concentració en la Espanya de Franco* (Barcelona, 1978); Suárez and Colectivo 36, *Libro blanco*; Cipriano Damiano and Carlos Enrique Bayo “Sólo dejaron los huesos: Albaterra (Alicante), ensayo general para el exterminio,” *Interviú*, no. 105 (May 1978): 40–42. In any case all the testimonies are agreed on the arbitrary executions, the terrible health conditions (72 people are reported to have died in one month of hunger). Typhus was so widespread that it began claiming victims among the guards so that the Albaterra camp was closed in December 1939 and prisoners transferred to other detention centers.

19. Ronald Fraser, *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a otros: Historia oral de la guerra civil española*, vol. 2 (1979; Barcelona, 1997), 298.

20. Damiano and Bayo, “Sólo dejaron los huesos,” 40–42. In 1999, Florencio Dimas, a local historian working at the Centro de Documentación de la Guerra Civil—Lorca (Murcia) and doing research on the Francoist concentration camps, e-mailed the Socialist mayor of Albaterra, suggesting that the municipality rehabilitate the memory of the camp where so many had suffered and died. He even suggested a “consumable” touristic cultural itinerary of repression linked to the Albaterra camp. He received no answer ([http://www.fut.es/mllestes/gce/September\\_2001/msg00241.html](http://www.fut.es/mllestes/gce/September_2001/msg00241.html)).

21. *Avance*, 31 April 1939.

22. Gabarda, *Els afusellaments*.

23. 1940: *Ley para reprimir la Masonería y el comunismo*; 1941: *Ley de Seguridad del Estado*; *Salvoconducto Especial para desplazarse a la zona de frontera* (until 1955) and more generally within Spain (up to 1948); 1945: *Fuero de los Españoles*; 1946: creation of the corporatist unions; 1947: *Ley para la represión del banditaje y el terrorismo*. In 1946 and 1947 there were the first nonpolitical strikes in Catalonia and the Basque Country in demand of better salaries.

24. Suárez and Colectivo 36, *Libro blanco*, 32–33.

25. See, for example, the sweeping formulation of Article 2 of the Decree on Banditry and Terrorism: “Will be considered convicted of the offense of military rebellion.... (1) Those who spread false or tendentious information with the object of provoking disruptions in public order, international conflicts or discrediting the State, its institutions, the government, the army or the authorities. (2) Those who in any way associate, plot or participate in reunions, conferences or demonstrations with the above-mentioned objectives. This can also apply to plans, strikes, sabotage and any such acts when they have a political aim and disrupt public order.” Amnesty International, *Situación actual de las cárceles españolas* (n.d.[1973]).

26. “On 22 March 1957—that is, a month after the new government [the first technocratic government of the Opus Dei]—a law appears that ascribes collective responsibilities in case of a strike, noting that if the individuals responsible for the strike are not found, the most prominent among the culprits or ... the oldest will be considered as such.” Naredo, *Por una oposición que se esponga*, 91.

27. Susana Narotzky and Gavin Smith, *Real Life: Conflicting Histories in a Regional Economy* (forthcoming).

28. Francisco Navarro Culiáñez (not a relative) told Smith in 1979: “Pedro Navarro Peñalva saved many people in the village. He controlled the extremists with words, there was no other way.... The Mayor deserved to have a statue put up in his honor and instead they dragged him through the village, having announced it beforehand, and everybody insulted him calling him an assassin.”

29. This was also a form of reproducing a particular socialist memory of the past among the young *jornaleros* who were born after the war. For example, Juan Gelardo Jr. (see below, 211) was taught by such a teacher instead of attending school, for which he and his father were summoned and harassed by the local authorities and finally had to give in.

30. Luisa Passerini, *Torino Operaia e Fascismo* (Rome, 1984), mentions an informant, Maddalena, forcefully saying: “we were born socialist. And we were born socialist! My father was like that!” (17).

31. Franco to Manuel Aznar, 31 Dec. 1938, in Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios familiares de Franco*, 146; cf. Richards, *A Time of Silence*, 26–66.

32. Franco to Manuel Aznar, 31 Dec.1938, in Vázquez Montalbán, *Los demonios familiares de Franco*, 147; cf. Richards, *A Time of Silence*, 26–66.

33. Psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nágera, who was appointed chief of the Psychiatric Services of Franco's Army in 1938, and whose office conducted between 1938 and 1939 a series of research projects on war prisoners under the general title of "Biopsiquismo del Fanatismo Marxista," including a "Psychological Research on Female Marxist Delinquents"—conducted in the prison of Málaga among 50 women sentenced to death (66%), life imprisonment (20%), 20 years (6%) and 12 years (8%)—concluded that the motivations impelling them to political action were (1) environmental suggestion (38%), (2) antisocial psychopathy (24%) and (3) innate revolutionary tendencies (36%). See Antonio Vallejo and Eduardo M. Martínez, "Psiquismo del fanatismo Marxista: Investigación psicológica en Marxistas femeninos delincuentes," *Revista Española de Medicina y Cirugía de Guerra* 9 (1939): 398–413, cited in Javier Bandrés and Rafael Llavona, "Psychology in Franco's Concentration Camps," *Psychology in Spain* 1, no. 1 (1997): 3–9.

34. Passerini, *Torino Operaia*, 20–21.

35. For a similar situation see Gabriella Gribaudi, "Napoli 1943: Memoria individuale e memoria collettiva," *Quaderni Storici* 101/a.XXXIV, no. 2 (1999): 507–37. Gribaudi points to the occlusion from collective memory of the particularly violent retreat of the German troops from Naples in 1943, while a collective memory of cunning and resourcefulness in the black market with the American troops is supported by a highly visible popular culture. The memory of the massacre of Ponticelli remains an individual memory because there has been no public space for constructing a collective memory.

36. Alessandro Portelli, "Uchronic Dreams: Working Class Memory and Possible Worlds," *Oral History Journal* 16, no. 2 (1988): 46–55.

37. Naredo, *Por una oposición que se oponga*. See also Jesús Ibáñez, "Nada para el pueblo, pero sin el pueblo," *Archipiélago*, no. 9 (1992): 59–67; Xavier Bermúdez, "Abstención ¿Para qué?" *ibid.*, 68–70.

38. For an excellent account of the neoliberal practices of the Socialist (PSOE) years (1982–1996), see James Petras, "Spanish Socialism: The Politics of Neo-Liberalism," in James Kurth and James Petras, *Mediterranean Paradoxes: The Politics and Social Structure of Southern Europe* (Oxford, 1993). See also Naredo, *Por una oposición que se oponga*.

39. Naredo, *Por una oposición que se oponga*, 78–106, especially 105–6; Santiago Míguez González, *La preparación de la transición a la democracia en España* (Zaragoza, 1990), 230–380.

40. The recurrent aspect of this phenomenon, locally, was confirmed to us in interviews with the local union representatives in Elche and Crevillente.

41. Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs, *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas: Clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista* (Madrid, 1998).

42. Cf. Joan Frigolé, “‘Ser cacique’ y ‘ser hombre’ o la negación de las relaciones de patronazgo en un pueblo de la Vega Alta del Segura,” in Joan Prat et al., eds., *Antropología de los Pueblos de España* (Madrid, 1991), 556–73.

43. Joan Martínez Alier, “Velles ideologies i noves realitats corporativistes,” *Papers. Revista de Sociologia*, no. 24 (1985): 25–51. Alier defines the new political regime as “liberal parliamentary corporatism” (32–35). For a more general discussion of organic forms of “democracy,” see Michael Mann, “The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing,” *New Left Review*, no. 235 (2000): 28–45; and Verena Stolcke, “Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe,” *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 1 (1995): 1–24.

44. In 1995 the Socialist mayor José Rodríguez (tío Martínez), who, as a local representative of the official Socialist policies of industrial restructuring, flexible labor market policies, etc. that had given the area its present-day structure of informal and decentralized shoe production, supported the neoliberal discourse of growth and productivity, as a private citizen experienced and complained about the bad health conditions that his wife, an *aparadora* (home worker in the shoe industry) had to endure. He also suffered from the split public/private political identity that seems to have become widespread among Socialists holding public office locally.

45. “When one votes one signs a contract renouncing political action in its strongest sense: that of confronting conflicts and reaching agreements in a continuous and communitarian way. . . . Through this democratic contract one yields the prerogative of action . . . to a political caste.” Bermúdez, “Abstención ¿Para qué?” The issue of the journal *Archipiélago* in which this article appeared was titled *La ilusión democrática* and appeared as the radical left felt totally betrayed by the Socialist government which was being tried for corruption and for organizing paramilitary actions in the dirty war against the ETA. But Article 6 of the 1978 Constitution is very clear: “political parties express political pluralism, they contribute to the formation and manifestation of the popular will and are the main instrument of political participation.”

46. During the transition period and the beginning of the new democratic regime there was a saying that captures the left’s sense of loss of the ability to generate collective identity through political action: “Contra Franco vivíamos mejor” (Against Franco we lived better).

47. Paco uses very much the same kind of language as Juan Gelardo Jr. to describe his reluctance to become “political.” Paco visits Juan Jr. in his home in the evenings at least once a month. He appears to see these visits as a kind of reciprocal arrangement in which he absorbs political aura from Juan and his socialist heritage while assuring the older man that he, Paco, seeks to bring Catal to a more enlightened socialist condition, despite itself.

48. Cited in Naredo, *Por una oposición que se oponga*, 57.

49. “Moros y Cristianos” is a folk festival of the Valencia region, in which local people join “Moor” or “Christian” associations, dress up in traditional costumes and stage on the streets the medieval confrontation between Arabs and Christians at the time of the *Reconquista* (the seven-centuries struggle to expel the Arabs from the Iberian Peninsula ending in the conquest of Granada by the Catholic Kings in 1492). See Antoni Ariño, *Temes d’Etnografia Valenciana*, vol. 4, *Festes Rituals i Creences* (Valencia, 1988), 30–66.

50. See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/overview\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/overview_en.html). It is particularly revealing to look at the 2002 call for proposals within the “Culture 2000” program. The main sectors addressed are visual arts (2002), performing arts (2003) and cultural heritage (2004). In this last sector, actions should involve the following: virtual cultural itineraries, the implementation of touring exhibitions and conservation/safeguarding of monuments or objects. See *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 15 Aug. 2001.

51. Gavin Smith, “Pandora’s History: Central Peruvian Peasants and the Recovering of the Past,” in Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith, eds. *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations* (Toronto, 1997), 86.

52. Portelli, “Uchronic Dreams,” 53.

53. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 115–16 (original emphasis).

54. Gribaudi, “Napoli 1943,” 534, also voices a similar need.

55. Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London, 1983), 148 (original emphasis).