
MARA AND PARACUELLOS.
INTERPRETATIONS OF SPANISH POLITICS
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COMICS

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Within the last 10–15 years, questions about how to handle the recent past have been very present in public debate in Spain. It is no easy subject, as this past includes a Civil War (1936–39) that divided the population and was followed by an almost 40-year-long dictatorship. After the political transition to democracy at the end of the 1970s, throughout the 1980s and most of the 1990s, the past was hardly present at all as a subject for debate. Then it emerged with a vengeance: today all sectors in Spanish society participate in the debate in different ways, including NGOs, the press, political parties, intellectuals, novels, films – and comics.¹

Spaniards do not agree on how the recent past should be remembered. This is a subject with important consequences on many levels, not only for the way in which Spanish history is presented in school textbooks, but also, for example, for the presence in public space of symbols of Francoist authoritarian power; for the state's implication in the opening of mass graves from the Civil War and the post-war years; and for the securing of historical archives. Among many others, these are the memory related issues that have been raised recently. The debates about – and the opening of – mass graves from the Civil War and the postwar have generated much attention since the end of the 1990s, and in 2007, the Spanish Parliament approved a so-called Memory Law that drew up the legal framework for a series of issues related to memory, including those mentioned above (BOE 2007; González-Ruibal 2009; Sanz 2006; Jerez-Farrán 2010). As one of the most recent issues of debate, a series of cases and testimonies about the forced adoption of children during the Francoist years have started to emerge in the public sphere.²

Before these issues emerged in public debate, one specific memory about the recent past had been dominant. According to this memory, the Spanish Civil War was a tragedy that had divided the population, and that had had serious and long lasting consequences for everybody. Also according to this narrative, when the dictator, Francisco Franco, died in 1975, the collective willingness to compromise and work together for democracy healed the divisions among Spaniards within an admirably short period of time and with hardly any conflict (e.g. Hanley and Loughlin 2006, 11; Martin et al. 1998, 497). This period, the political transition, had a key role in the dominant narrative about the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship. On the one hand it was considered the happy end after a long period of division, and on the other, it was seen as the beginning of a bright future of democracy and European cooperation. Apart from the people, the

¹ The comics discussed in the article are all comics for an adult audience. It is impossible to create a clear-cut distinction between comics for children and comics for adults, but the comics referred to treat themes that either do not interest children or that children are not supposed to be interested in. This includes political, intellectual and erotic comics, among others.

² As one example, the newspaper *El País*, runs a special issue on “stolen children”, see <http://www.elpais.com/especial/vidas-robadas> (accessed December 8, 2011).



political transition's heroes were Adolfo Suárez, the Prime Minister from 1976 to 1981, and the new Head of State after Franco, King Juan Carlos (Juliá 2006; Aguilar 2002).

As part of the overall memory about the Civil War and the dictatorship, this dominant interpretation of the political transition is also up for debate in Spanish society. Looking closer at the period of political transition itself, it is apparent that the narrative about it glosses over important divisions and conflicts. It is also clear that at the time of the transition it was seriously questioned along the same lines as it is today: it was criticised for the lack of a real rupture with Francoism and its traditionalist and authoritarian characteristics. Some of the comics of the time were part of the questioning, and these comics are the subject of this article. Change, continuity and the significance of the past were recurrent subjects in the comics then as they are now, and as a context for the understanding of today's memory debates, I discuss how some of the comics of the 1970s participated in the construction and questioning of the political development in Spanish society during the political transition.³

Below I present an analysis of two comics, *Paracuellos* by Carlos Giménez and *Mara* by Enric Sío as examples of comics that interpreted Spanish society in the 1970s, having place and continuity as central features (Giménez 1977a; Sío 1980). As a perspective on the analysis, I will discuss today's questioning of the political transition. The 1970s comics constitute the first wave of Spanish comics *de auteur* and are therefore an important point of departure for the understanding not only of the specific period of time, but also of Spanish comics' history generally. I will start with a short introduction to the historical period and its comics.

THE 1970S: POLITICAL PROTESTS, CARICATURE AND THE FEAR OF CONTINUITY

In the 1970s, Spanish comics for an adult audience were a new phenomenon, and they more or less followed the development in countries with a strong comics scene at the time, such as France, Belgium and Italy. Among other things, comics from these countries focused on more complex psychological and intellectual questions; they experimented with comics aesthetics and narrative conventions, and they introduced sex and politics as central themes.

Many Spanish comics prioritised a political focus even more than the comics in other countries, which can be explained by the political turmoil of 1970s' Spain. Especially from the 1960s, protests against the Francoist regime gained force and visibility, leading up to the political transition

³ The theoretical framework of this article is based, among other titles, on the following: Glassberg 2001; Jelin 2002; Gillis 1994; Massey 1995.



described above, and many comics artists were active in the increasing protests against the regime. When Franco died in November 1975, the absolute majority of Spaniards wanted political change, but they did not all agree as to how radical this change should be (Powell 2001, 146–192). After almost 40 years of dictatorship, including censorship and repression of criticism of all kinds, Francoism's traditionalist, authoritarian and Catholic values were dominant in political, administrative, judicial, cultural, and educational institutions. Some wanted a complete rupture with Francoist influence, a rupture that should include an institutional clean-out on all levels (Aguilar 2000). Others wanted change to be gradual and from within the existing system and institutions. The latter represented the conservative forces in society, but they were also illustrative of a more general fear of provoking extremist groups or the armed forces by changing too many things too fast (Aguilar Fernández 2006b, 256).

It was the last group that won, and there were no major personnel changes or anything close to a judicial process regarding crimes committed during the Francoist era (Aguilar Fernández 2006a, 283; Juliá 2006; Moral 2001; Sanz 2006, 5). The lack of a judicial process, or a truth commission to investigate human rights crimes during the dictatorship, was due to an explicit political agreement between left and right (Aguilar Fernández 2006a). The negotiated rupture also meant that Spain continued with the monarchy that Franco had reintroduced in 1947, as well as with the Head of State, Juan Carlos, chosen by Franco in 1969 as his future successor (Phillips and Phillips 2010, 274–275). Because of the lack of a judicial process and the maintenance of the monarchy, at least some continuity was secured in terms of both institutions and practices, even though political parties were legalised in 1976, the first free elections were held in 1977, and the people passed a democratic Constitution in 1978 (Powell 2001, 177). Both this continuity and the conflicts during the political transition were, if not completely ignored, at least glossed over in the construction of what became the dominant memory of the political transition as described above.

Many Spanish comics artists took a stand in the conflicts and debates at the time, and most of them supported the proposition of radical change, which included a republic instead of the monarchy, and an institutional clean-out (interview with Alfons Font in Coma 1981, 46). One of the recurrent features in comics and political caricature of the 1970s was to criticise the new democratic order for being only a facade, and to argue that the Francoist regime continued in power (only without Franco) as politicians, police officials, school teachers, etc. were the same as during the Francoist years. The real power in Spain was, according to the critics, still in the hands of the so-called Francoist families, i.e. the Catholic Church, the Armed Forces, the extreme right movement, La Falange, and the big land- and factory owners (Cazorla 2000, 260). This criticism was present in political caricature, but also in comics albums such as the collective work *Tequila Bang* (Font et al. 1977), and Carlos Giménez' and others' *España una...*, *España grande...*, and



España libre!... from 1978 (Altarriba 2002; Giménez et al. 1978; Giménez and Ivá 1978a; 1978b; Lladó 2001, 18–24). When an extreme right group attacked the Barcelona based publishing house Amaika in September 1977, the absolute majority of publishing houses, comics artists and political caricaturists condemned the attack (Colectiva 1977; *El País* 1977). The artists contributed with comics and caricatures to the album *Los profesionales de la historieta, el humor y la ilustración en solidaridad con el Papus*, which represented a concentrated criticism of not only the attack, but also of the insufficient democratisation efforts generally (Colectiva 1977; Magnussen 2004).

Little by little political violence and fear of military takeovers died down, and after a failed military coup in 1981 and the socialist party PSOE's victory in the national elections in 1982, Spanish society seemed to be on a stable track towards democracy and modernisation on all levels. From the 1980s, the Civil War and the Francoist regime were considered to be part of an embarrassing past, and the absolute majority – politicians and civilians alike – preferred to look forward to a hopefully bright future as part of democratic Europe. After the Francoist repression of regional cultures, especially those of the Basque Country and Catalonia, regional identities became central to the new democratic Spain. In this sense, a European focus on the one hand, and a regional one on the other, almost overshadowed the idea of Spain as a nation, which for many was related to the authoritarian Francoist past (Sanz 2006).

As part of this focus away from the Spanish past and immediate national politics, the emergence of a new generation of comics artists and magazines replaced the politically explicit comics. It was no longer politics, but the parent generation's middle class norms and (post)modern urban life that were under fire, although in different ways and inspired by such different sources as the US underground comics and the Franco-Belgian *ligne claire* (Lladó 2001; Magnussen 2001). These comics were part of the new Spain and hardly any of them referred explicitly to politics or to the past – recent or remote.

The 1980s represented a virtual comics boom in terms of number of magazines, albums and readers, and many very interesting comics and comics artists came out of this decade and the succeeding 1990s (Lara 1996; Lladó 2001; Magnussen 2001). Within Spanish comics history, the 1970s comics do not have the pronounced position, as they are often considered to focus very specifically on the political situation at the time. As with much political caricature and commentary, many of the comics became outdated because of their references to specific political conflicts and actors, or because the efforts to communicate a particular political message meant that aesthetic or narrative reflections were considered secondary at best. However, some comics proved valid also beyond the limited scope of the particular political context. This was due to the comics' originality in aesthetics, argument and/or thematic focus, and *Paracuellos* by Carlos



Giménez and *Mara* by Enric Sío are excellent – but also very different – examples of this category. Below I analyse these two comics as commentaries on Francoist Spain and its involvement in the political transition.

CONTINUITY AND PLACE IN *PARACUELLOS* AND *MARA*

In terms of perspectives and themes, the two comics *Paracuellos* and *Mara* present similar interpretations of Spain in the 1970s. When it comes to publication history, popularity and aesthetics, however, they are very different. For one, *Paracuellos* was first published in Spain, and *Mara* in Italy, although both comics were published in some of the new comics magazines *de auteur*.⁴ This meant that *Paracuellos* and Giménez were more closely connected to Spain in the 1970s than Sío and *Mara*, also because Giménez published other works within the same period of time (e.g. Giménez 1977b; 1979; Giménez et al. 1978; Giménez and Ivá 1978a; 1978b). There is no doubt either that *Paracuellos* became much more popular in Spain in the 1970s and beyond than *Mara* ever did. The *Paracuellos* stories were first printed as an album series from 1977 and reprinted four times between 1979 and 1988, and again in 1997 and in 2007. There are three *Paracuellos* albums of approximately 50 pages each. In Spain, *Mara* only came in one album edition, in 1980, and consists of 14 chapters, 111 pages in total (Cuadrado 1997; Saura 1980). Whereas Giménez is a household name in Spain also beyond the comics world, Sío is probably only recognised as a comics artist among specialists and fans. Part of the explanation of this difference is due to the transparency of *Paracuellos* compared to the opacity and complexity of *Mara* both in terms of narrative argument and aesthetics, which will become apparent below.

Paracuellos consists of two-page stories about life in Catholic boys' orphanages at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. The title of the album series is the name of one of the orphanages, and the stories are partially built on Giménez' own childhood, as he was born in 1941 and lived in different orphanages from when he was six years old until he was 14 (Quintana 1977, 8). The stories represent different conflicts or situations within the orphanage, for example when the children are forced to sleep the siesta in the sun, or when family members visit on Sundays (Giménez 1977a, 26–27, 20–21). Nuns run the orphanages, and almost all the stories include examples of their cruelty towards the boys. The boys either stick together, or they “learn” from the nuns and turn on each other. Some boys appear in several stories, but the stories are independent in the sense that there is no narrative development from one story to the next.

⁴ *Paracuellos* was published in *Muchas gracias* from 1976, and *Yes* and *Comix Internacional 1a* from 1980 (Cuadrado 1997, 334). As an album series it was first published from 1977. *Mara* was published from 1971 as a serial in the Italian comics magazine *Linus* (Buono 1983, 667–671; Gaumer and Moliterni 1994, 395), and as an album in 1980.

Aesthetically, the *Paracuellos* stories stand out for the uniform style of equally sized, small panels. The round faces and eyes of the children are conspicuously ‘Giménez-style’, and because of the great popularity of this comic and other comics by the same author, they fast became easily recognisable. The stories and their sad or cruel punch lines should be immediately understandable for most readers. The fact that the stories are short and without continuity in terms of a story line renders the collection repetitive. When reading one story after the other, the reader is left with the impression of a place, of the orphanage, rather than of a coherent narrative argument with a clear beginning and end.



Figure 1. Giménez, Carlos, *Paracuellos I*, Ediciones de la Torre, 1977. © Carlos Giménez.

The orphanage as a place is described in opposition to the outside, and the two worlds seldom interact. When they do, the nuns make an effort to create a respectable front, for example when they give the children a glass of milk only because the national delegate of the orphanages visits



the home, or when they intend to cancel a mother's visit to her son because they have beaten him up and it still shows (Giménez 1977a, 14–15, 28–29).

Although the respectable front is only explicitly present in some of the stories, it is nevertheless implied globally in the activation of societal norms that are violently distorted within the orphanage as a place. It is deeply ironic that the orphanages are referred to as homes (*hogares* in Spanish), while the reality is very far from the safe and loving environment that ought to define the (admittedly ideal) home. The staff has no empathy with the boys and seems to find pleasure in humiliating them. The family as an institution is in this sense represented as one of arbitrary violence and punishment and devoid of any humanity or protection.

In Spain during the Francoist years, both the Catholic Church and the Spanish fascist movement, La Falange, were involved in the running of the orphanages, the latter through its women's section (Preston 2000, 111–140). Both institutions are present in *Paracuellos*; the latter through indices such as the Falange symbol at the entrance of the orphanages and the national Falange delegate coming to visit, and the former through recurrent prayer, crucifixes, and of course, the nuns. The nuns consistently use violence against the boys with the overriding objective of maintaining power by any possible means. The homes are "true paramilitary centres, where sadism, psychological and physical torture, repression, and alienation seriously damage the children" (Quintana 1977, 8; my translation). This damage points to the issue of continuity: the values that the nuns pass on to the children, irrational violence as valid behaviour, shape them and in some cases turn them into small monsters themselves (fig.1; Giménez 1977a, 3–4, 46–47). The repetitiveness of the stories described above further underlines this sense of continuity, representing a violent and distorted place that could continue endlessly with the advent of new children, and without being detected because of its respectable institutional front.

Mara also has children as its protagonists, and the 14 chapters narrate the story of an upper-class family consisting of a grandmother and her three grandchildren – Mara, David and Sita – that all live in a mansion. Once a week the family members perform a dark ritual, and the comic both begins and ends with this ritual (fig. 2). Its only purpose seems to be to decide who will be in command of the following week's ritual, and it involves fire, symbols such as the Swastika and wax figurines, old-fashioned clothing, chance and apparently irrational pain and violence (e.g. Sío 1980, 6–10, 72–74). The family has very little contact with the outside world. Once a week, the people from a circus turn up at the mansion to look at the family through the gates, and on two occasions the family goes on trips, once to mass and once to Lourdes (Sío 1980, 16–17; 10; 31). When they go to mass, they act and dress as a conventional family, and in this sense the story establishes two spaces – as does *Paracuellos* – although with the circus people as a strange link.



As opposed to *Paracuellos*, the panel sequence in *Mara* is difficult to follow because of consistently heterogeneous panel sizes and unclear distinctions between them. Aesthetically, Sío uses a wide range of styles, including both near-photographic images and simple line drawings. These features destabilise one of the basic narrative conventions of comics, i.e. that the panel sequence usually indicates the linearity of the narrative argument. Sío further plays with this convention by using the full page and the double page as representations of specific moods, situations or places (Sío 1980, 10; 78–79). Both features draw attention to the environment and place, that of the mansion, and away from the passage of time and sequences of activity. Although constructed with different means, the representation of place rather than a narrative argument is similar to what happens in *Paracuellos*.

The complexity of *Mara*'s aesthetics and the difficulties of establishing clear narrative sequences in the story furthermore draw the reader's attention to the aesthetic and comics conventions themselves by destabilising and continuously undermining them. This refers explicitly to the comics experiments of the time in Italy and France, but it also creates an extra dimension in *Mara*'s interpretation of the family and mansion as an unstable and strange place where nothing is what it seems to be. Again with different means, the same characteristics are present here as in *Paracuellos*: a perverted and dark place, hidden behind a respectable front consisting of family and religious values, which at the same time define the distorted and violent activities.

The relationship between the members of the family in *Mara* is highly complex, and includes changing roles and not least the ritual that involves physical violence between the family members as well as the use of arbitrary power. Statements of love between the family members are continuously undermined or contradicted, and the fact that the grandmother is in a wheelchair is used as a (not exactly politically correct) metaphor of the disabled or crippled relationship between the family members (Sío 1980, 47–48).

When the family leaves for church, they dress up as a traditional family, and in this sense, church related activities come to represent normality and the image of the family that is visible to the rest of the world. Compared to *Paracuellos* that the Catholic Church plays a smaller role in *Mara*, although religious symbols are part of the dark family rituals, in combination with swastikas and other symbols.

The role of the circus people is intriguing. The fact that the family is the spectacle and the conventional performers the spectators, turns another convention on its head, making the circus into representatives of ordinary people, while the family in the mansion becomes the extraordinary act. When seen as a comment on Spanish society in the 1970s, it is tempting to see

the representation of the authoritarian regime and the politicians who orchestrated the political transition as freaks watched by the people.



Figure 2. Sío, Enric. *Mara*, Editorial Nueva Frontera, 1980. © Enric Sío.

There are many repetitions in *Mara*, not only in the ritualistic activities, but also in the representation of individuals through a network of doubles, mirrors, wax figurines, replacement of pets etc. These doubles are closely related to another feature that strengthens the sense of continuity in the story, namely the fact that three generations are present – in terms of age, not blood ties – namely the grandmother, Mara and Sita. There are furthermore references to past family history as far back as the 18th century (Sío 1980, 59–61), and it is clear that Mara is to take over the grandmother's place in the wheelchair, and after her, Sita (Sío 1980, 8; 33; 80; 107; 110–111).



Repetitions are central in *Mara*, as they are in *Paracuellos*, but there is also a clear development. In the last three chapters, the distinction between the hidden life inside the mansion and the outside world is challenged. First the circus people break down the gates and enter the gardens. At one point, doubt arises as to whether the grandmother is actually still alive or if she is played by women whom Mara rents in the village (Sío 1980, 90). Until then, the family has managed to keep the circus people out of the clearly privileged grounds of the mansion garden, but when doubts arise as to the grandmother's true identity, the spectacle turns out to be a fraud, and the circus group reacts (Sío 1980, 92–94). A group of monks who live on the back of the mansion manage to stop them (Sío 1980, 93). However, the circus people's attack seems to have made a first dent in the family's and the place's invulnerability, and it is soon followed by a second. This time, the monks attack by pulling on the mansion's crossbeams with an elaborate system of strings (Sío 1980, 99–100). This attack represents a bigger threat to the family, as the monks are physically much closer to the mansion, as opposed to the circus people who did not come much closer than just through the front gates. The monks furthermore constitute a former ally who protected the family against the circus people.

A third challenge comes from within the family and mansion when Sita protests against her role in the family in the last chapter (Sío 1980, 111). This attack comes from within the family itself, and even though the family repeats the ritual at the end of the comic, the three attacks represent different ways of questioning the family's power, and as they foreground the family's vulnerability, they question its ability to continue in control.

PARACUELLOS AND MARA OF 1970S' SPAIN

Paracuellos and *Mara* share a series of characteristics as they both represent their respective place as distorted and perverse, mainly through their interpretations of traditional values related to the family and the Catholic Church. At the same time, these values function as respectable fronts, hiding a dark and violent world. Both comics also include explicit references to Spanish society. The title, *Paracuellos*, refers to a historical place and orphanage, and in *Mara*, the family has roots in historically recognisable 18th century Spain (Sío 1980, 59–63).

Within the context of the political changes and insecurity of the 1970s, it is not difficult to see the comics as a strong critique of the political and social state of affairs. In the introduction to *Paracuellos*, Manuel G. Quintana (1977, 9; my translation) describes the orphanages as “small totalitarian states within a totalitarian state” and argues that they represent “Spain on a small scale”.



The places – the orphanage and the mansion – function as relatively clear-cut metaphors of Spanish society during the Francoist regime, and the focus on continuity between past, present and future norms and values, can be interpreted as fear of a lack of change after Franco's death. In this sense, *Paracuellos* and *Mara* fit very well into the highly politically charged comics scene of the 1970s. As in *Paracuellos* and *Mara*, it was commonplace also in film at the time to liken the Francoist regime to a –perverted and distorted – family, or in the words of Morgan-Tamosunas and Jordan (1998, 39), as “repressive, dysfunctional and anachronistic”.

Together with the Spanish fascist movement La Falange, the Catholic Church defined Francoist ideology. Especially after the Second World War, the Catholic Church gained the upper hand and functioned as the respectable front of the Francoist regime, making it easier for the rest of Europe and the US to justify the fact of a dictatorship as part of Western Europe. Francoist ideology is often referred to as National Catholicism (Cazorla 2000, 262–263). The two comics' distinction between a perverted, cruel and hidden world behind a seemingly respectable front was therefore easy to grasp in 1970s' Spain at least among critics of Francoism. The family as a core value further emphasises the Francoist idea of patriarchy, with the dictator himself as the head of family and the ultimate authority. The comics' distorted representations of family can in this sense be seen as explicit commentaries on the nature of Francoism and its heritage.

Giménez, Sío and their generation were children in the 1940s and 1950s, during part of the harshest repression, and adults in the 1970s, where their generation became important actors in the transition to democracy. In *Paracuellos* and *Mara*, the passing on of the authoritarian values of Francoism to the children, the new generation, questions the validity of the contemporary democratisation process, implying that there was a risk that the children who were brought up during the Francoist years would reproduce Francoist ideology and relationships of power.

At the same time, both comics also open up the possibility of change through information and knowledge. In *Mara* the family's power is first questioned when others (the circus people) gain knowledge about the true identity of the family. The three attacks on the mansion and the family could rather easily be interpreted as the growing opposition to the Francoist regime, starting with the people (here represented by the circus). The Catholic Church, one of Franco's close allies, first protected the regime, and then at least some representatives of the Church started criticizing it and became part of the growing opposition (Fusi and Palafox 1998, 322). In *Mara*, the monks represent this opposition, when they start pulling the crossbeams. The opposition at some point started turning up among the closest allies and in *Mara*, Sita is an example in point. It could be argued that the fact that Franco's parliament abolished itself in 1976 represented such a letdown from within the regime itself.



Paracuellos does not include a similar development, but the fact that *Paracuellos* is (semi)autobiographical means that it functions as a testimony to past repression, bringing it out into the open for possible scrutiny of the present. *Paracuellos* and *Mara* present in this way the 1970s readers with representations of the past, its possible influence on the present and its potential power also for the future.

The comics offer a perspective on the political transition that questions that which became the dominant narrative; i.e. that what took place was a true transition to democracy. They point to the idea that a respectable front, made up of Church and family values – or of a democratic ideal – might hide a continuation of the traditionalist and authoritarian framework of Francoist times. For many years it seemed that the fears of continuity as expressed in the comics, as well as in other contexts, turned out to be unfounded. However, since the past has become a subject for debate since the end of the 1990s, it could be argued that the existence, for example, of mass graves is a sign that the otherwise modern and democratic Spanish society literally continues to include a dark side. The recent focus on opening the graves and on listening to individual stories about repression and violence can be seen as efforts to lay open the dark side, and as part of the process, rewrite the dominant narrative about the Civil War and Francoism. Such rewriting necessarily has consequences for understanding the political transition as the process that definitively reconciled the divisions among Spaniards and pointed toward a bright, democratic future with no need to look back.

THE POLITICAL TRANSITION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TODAY

The rewriting of the role of the political transition in Spanish history is far from a conflict free process. According to el Partido Popular, the center-right party in government from 2011, there is no reason to start discussing the significance of the political transition. On the contrary, they assert that it will only rip open already healed wounds (*El País* 2007). The center-left party, the social democratic PSOE, was behind the law about historical memory and supports the opening of mass graves and the development of historical archives, but they do not seem to acknowledge the full consequences of this for the understanding of the political transition. This is apparent in the introduction to the memory law that begins with the following:

The spirit of reconciliation and concord, as well as the respect for pluralism and for the peaceful defense of all ideas [...] guided the Transition, [and] made it possible for us to create a Constitution, that of 1978, which turned the Spaniards' willingness to come together into a judicial framework [...]. (BOE 2007)



According to the text, the new legal initiative does not question the role of the transition; it is rather the natural continuation of a process that was started with the political transition.

While the law does not, at least not in words, question the dominant interpretation of the political transition, other contemporary voices have started doing exactly this. One example is Javier Cercas' chronicle, *Anatomía de un instante* from 2009. Another example is a recent comics anthology published in relation to the protests against how democracy functions in Spain, which took place on Plaza del Sol in May 2011 (Plaza, Pinya and Mejan 2011, 11–22; 29–30). The anthology includes several short comics that compare the movement's demands for "true democracy" (*democracia real*) with the political transition, among them a two-page comic by Pepo Pérez (Plaza, Pinya and Mejan 2011, 11–12). Another contribution explicitly argues that the political situation of 2011 is a direct consequence of the political transition, and not in a positive way (Plaza, Pinya and Mejan 2011, 31–32). Iñigo Sáenz de Urugarte argues that because of the vulnerability and the need for stability during the political transition, the citizens resigned and accepted a political model that did not offer any illusions. When they realised this, it had already been institutionalised (ibid.). Even more interestingly, the anthology also includes two short comics by Giménez, originally published during the political transition as part of the albums *España Una...*, *España Grande...*, and *España libre!*... (Plaza, Pinya and Mejan 2011, 29; 92). The first is about how a science fiction community destroys the idol that they had been worshipping. As a priest reacts with horror, another calmly states that the community will have a new idol when the rains return, indicating that they will not lose control over the community, it will only be in the name of another idol – the need for preachers will be the same (Giménez 2011 reprinted from Giménez et al. 1978, 24–25). The parallel to the fear of continuity of Francoist values during the political transition as described in the analysis of *Mara* and *Paracuellos* is clear. As part of the 2011 anthology, it likens the new protests with those of the political transition and represents a similar fear of political and societal corruption. The other reprinted Giménez comic, "Diccionario básico elemental", narrates how workers are exploited and how apparently democratic politicians are corrupt, sending huge amounts of money out of the country (in Plaza, Pinya and Mejan 2011, 92–93 and in Giménez et al. 1978, 24–25). The short story ends with pictures of a demonstration, police violence and a glass that is about to overflow with a dead man's blood. Although somewhat dramatic in the context of 2011, its reprinting nevertheless creates a parallel between protests during the political transition and those of Plaza del Sol in Madrid. In this way, the comics of the political transition not only questioned the democratic process of the 1970s, but are recycled to criticise present day politics; in questioning the dominant narrative of the political transition, they are thereby part of the general debates about memory as part of Spanish society.



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