

◆ Chapter 8

In the Interest of Full *Dis*-Closure: Miguel Brieva's Illustrations of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *Diccionario del franquismo* and the Unending Process of (Un)Learning Francoism

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In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud explains the centrality of closure to the effective functioning of the sequential art of comics. McCloud defines closure as the reader's mental process of constructing a continuous, unified reality out of the disconnected panels of a comic. Closure, McCloud contends, can be equally at work in a reader's approach to a single panel, where diverse elements have to be connected through the reader's interpretative process, especially "when artists choose to show only a small piece of the picture" (86). He goes so far as to claim that "in a very real sense, comics *is* closure" (67). In this process, the reader, McCloud suggests, becomes "an equal partner in crime" with the author, an active participant in the generation of meaning through the reading process (68). In this chapter, I take this notion of closure as a point of departure, with a twist, for the analysis of the critical intervention at stake in Miguel Brieva's illustrations of the new 2019 edition of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *Diccionario del franquismo* (*Dictionary of Francoism*, referred to hereafter as *Diccionario*), originally published in 1977 (see fig. 1, the book's cover).¹



Fig. 1. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieva. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019. Cover.

While not part of a comic book, Brieva's illustrations of the *Diccionario*, more akin to single-panel cartoons (a characteristic style within Brieva's oeuvre), nevertheless put into play numerous elements that McCloud analyzes as part of the iconography of comics. Brieva, one of Spain's "humoristas críticos más destacados de la España actual" (Torres 49) (most noteworthy critical humorists in today's Spain), regularly plays with the notion of closure in his work, which often presents critical readings, through humor, of the deleterious effects of neoliberalism in contemporary Spain, effects that range from a decimated social welfare state, to growing inequality of all kinds, the creation of an unbridled consumer culture, an increasingly perilous ecological and climate crisis, as well as the perpetuation of the long shadow of Francoism.² In his use of comics or single-panel cartoons to subvert the ideological underpinnings of these contemporary problems, Brieva often highlights a certain kind of closure as the problematic ideological framework, supposedly based on common sense, that undergirds how we understand reality. Breaking our naturalized patterns of ideological closure through confrontation with the denaturalized, and humorous, images of his comics and cartoons becomes an act of political emancipation and subversion for Brieva, an act he is encouraging his readers to take up. In his work, therefore, it is the reader's complicity with

the *breaking* of ideological closure or, as I call it, with the *dis*-closure that his comics and cartoons enact, that becomes the defining feature of his work.³

In one comic strip of *Memorias de la tierra*, for example, the characters literally break open the panel within which they find themselves at the end to escape from their ideological confinement in the “esquemas mentales” (mental frames) engendered by the unfettered development of a “capitalismo global” (global capitalism) as the only way to begin to take the “gran salto revolucionario” (great revolutionary leap) toward the creation of an alternative economy based on “la ecosostenibilidad y la ética de los cuidados” (ecosustainability and an ethics of care) (167) (see fig. 2) This literal breaking open of the panel, what I call its *dis*-closure, becomes a visual metaphor for the critical interpretative work that *Memorias de la tierra* as a whole is inviting the reader to do.⁴



Fig. 2. Miguel Brieva. *Memorias de la tierra. El otro mundo, Volumen 2*. Barcelona: Penguin Random House, 2012, 167.

This *dis*-closure, or breaking open, of the comic’s panel also becomes a vehicle for disclosure in a second, more commonly used meaning of the term: the unveiling or revealing of something hidden.⁵ In Brieva’s case, what is disclosed, or revealed, are the dangerous effects of an unfettered neoliberal ideology, effects, as Brieva’s work so often reminds us, that might be hidden in plain sight. They are obscured by the ideological closure enacted by one of the most pernicious effects of the current neoliberal order: the implicit belief that these effects are simply the way things are, that they are inevitable and that there is, therefore, no real alternative to them. Brieva’s reader becomes

not so much an equal partner in crime, as McCloud stated, but an equal partner in the *dis*-closure, and disclosure, of a number of metaphorical crimes at work in contemporary Spanish society.⁶

Dis-closure, therefore, or the questioning of inherited patterns of ideological closure, is central to Brieva's work, and is, no doubt, one of the reasons why he was chosen to illustrate the new edition of Vázquez Montalbán's *Diccionario*, published jointly by Anagrama and the Town Hall of Barcelona. For Vázquez Montalbán was, himself, an author who continuously sought new ways to make of his readers active accomplices in politically subversive practices of *dis*-closure, and whose work tirelessly sought to disclose the interrelated *crimes* of Francoist repression and the development of what he called a neocapitalist, consumer society. As he never tired of reminding the readers of his novels, essays, poetry or journalistic writing, the two were inextricably intertwined, and could not be fully understood separately. He continually strived to develop a politically transformative creative praxis "en una sociedad no sólo franquista, sino en una sociedad de consumo" (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 40) (in a society that is not only Francoist but also a consumer society). This praxis, in turn, was meant to help his readers critique both "al neoliberalismo globalizado y la erosión de la memoria histórica dominantes" (Colmeiro, "Mensajes" 15) (the dominant globalized neoliberalism and the erosion of historical memory). Significantly, even after the end of the dictatorship, he continued to critique the connection between the repression of the regime and that of the capitalist structures within which the transition to democracy was taking place:

cuando desaparece el franquismo—al menos en lo que se refiere a Franco y al aparato más directo de represión—, la sociedad que se instaura es la que se ha venido preparando desde Franco y nos queda una cierta sensación de que ha cambiado algo, pero nada esencial. Ha cambiado, por ejemplo, que ya no hay represión ideológica directa y la única que existe es la de una economía de mercado y una cultura de mercado. (Padura Fuentes 47)

(when Francoism disappears—at least with respect to Franco and the apparatus of the most direct repression—, the society that is established is the one that has been prepared since Franco and we are left with the sense that something has changed, but nothing essential. There has been a change, for example, in that there is no longer any direct ideological repression and that the only repression that exists is that of a market economy, a market culture.)

In this chapter, I analyze the multiple levels at which various types of *dis*-closure, and disclosure, are present in the old as well as the new edition of *Diccionario*, and the ways in which both author and illustrator highlight the need to address the repressive nature of Francoism and capitalism together.

A first level of *dis*-closure is found in the fact that the recent publication of the book was part of a series of cultural activities organized by the Town Hall of Barcelona called *Desmuntant el franquisme 2019–2020 (Dismantling Francoism 2019–2020)*. The process of dismantling or unlearning Francoism is inherently related to the practice of *dis*-closure that both Montalbán's original dictionary, and Brieva's illustrations of the new edition, enact, each in their own way.⁷ Among these activities, one exhibit, called *Imatges de la memòria democràtica: El comic com a recurs didactic (Images of democratic memory: Comics as didactic resources)*, highlighted the value of comics and graphic novels in reaching a wide audience and in teaching younger generations about the past and lingering effects of Francoist repression in Spain, as well as about the many faces of the opposition to Francoism, both downplayed during the transition to democracy and beyond.⁸

Another level of *dis*-closure at work in the text is that enacted by Vázquez Montalbán's original publication itself, whose effort at defining critical concepts of Francoism in 1977, during the early transition to democracy, was meant to undo Franco's own effort to leave everything perfectly enclosed, "atado y bien atado," (tied and well tied) one of the entries of the *Diccionario*. The dictionary was meant to disclose how the ideological effects of the entries he defined were not solely a part of the past but lingered in the present. In his text, one could say that learning and unlearning Francoism went hand in hand, effectively embodying a critical intervention which required both *learning* what Francoism had been, despite the regime's growing efforts to hide its truly repressive nature, and *unlearning* the effects of the ideological manipulations and instillation of fear through which that concealment had taken place.⁹

Finally, Brieva's illustrations in the 2019 edition bring that critical project up to date, as his images not only provide illustrations of some of the dictionary's entries, but also incorporate new images that underscore the connections of Francoism to today's Spain. The rupture of the image's frame as a form of *dis*-closure is just as present here as it is in Brieva's earlier work, and is enacted through humor and a series of iconographic practices, such as images that hemorrhage beyond the frame, intentional anachronism, parody and satirical recontextualization of iconic images from the past, as well as different levels of cartooning versus realistic character depiction, all of which can be understood to parallel, in interesting ways, the subversive literary strategies of Vázquez Montalbán, showing the continuing relevance of a text written shortly after Franco's death to today's Spain.

In his study of the effective role of comics in presenting to a wide audience a previously marginalized view of the memory and postmemory of the victims of Francoism in Spain today, Samuel Amago has stated that “historical comics in Spain create a relationship of nearness between comics creators, historical witnesses, and contemporary readers” (33) by establishing a strong affective reaction on the part of the reader to the pain being represented. Brieva has a great respect for this literary strategy, and, in fact, with the cover of the *Diccionario*, honors Carlos Giménez as a comic book artist whose work is foundational in the tradition outlined by Amago.¹⁰ The young boy cowering to the left of the old chair on which Franco’s bust rests is, indeed, Carlos Giménez, as he drew himself in *Paracuellos*, the comics series which first appeared in the 1980s and which depicted Giménez’s extreme suffering as an orphan after the Spanish Civil War in one of the regime’s homes for Republican children (see fig. 1).

However, Brieva’s own work demonstrates that a different strategy can be equally effective, as his work relies not so much on generating an emotional response of sympathetic and affective nearness, as on the critical distance generated by a radical estrangement that works through a subversive use of humor. As Hannah Arendt famously claimed, “the greatest enemy of authority [...] is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter” (45). We will see how this is, indeed, true in Brieva’s work, and how Brieva’s illustrations of the *Diccionario* demonstrate the valuable role that humor can play within a graphic medium in confronting the legacies of Francoism in today’s Spain.

Before analyzing the illustrations, however, we need to understand the origin and function of Vázquez Montalbán’s text. The author was born in 1939 in the working class, immigrant Barrio Chino of Barcelona to a father from Galicia and a mother from Murcia, both of whom were part of the waves of immigrants from poorer regions of Spain who came to Catalunya in the early 20th century looking for a better life. His father, having belonged to the PSUC (Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya), the Catalan Communist Party, and having worked for the II Spanish Republic, suffered the political repression meted out by the Franco regime to the losing side of the war. He was jailed and sentenced to death, a sentence that was commuted to life in prison, and later reduced to conditional liberty on the stipulation that he report to a police station every month for two decades. The fact that he belonged to a family on the losing side of the Civil War which had suffered Franco’s political repression so directly, and the dire economic conditions that accompanied that repression, were both crucial elements in the author’s intellectual and political development. He himself would become a member of the PSUC, as well as other leftist parties, and always affirmed his left-wing affiliation, even as he self-critically acknowledged the shortcomings of the left at different moments.¹¹ In 1962, he was sentenced to three years in prison when, as a university student, he worked

in support of the miners strike in Asturias. In fact, his first book was written in prison.

This family background is at the heart of one of the most consistent obsessions in Vázquez Montalbán's work: the recovery of the historical memory, on an individual and collective level, of the losing side of the Civil War as a politically subversive act since, after the civil war, "la memoria estaba prohibida, la memoria del vencido, sólo tenían derecho a tener memoria los vencedores" (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 34) (memory was prohibited, the memory of the vanquished, only the victors had the right to memory) as well as the desire to turn that recovery into "un elemento crítico contra el presente" (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 34) (a critical element against the present). His studies on the role of popular culture in the development of personal and collective memory and identity, including its affective and sentimental dimensions, such as *Crónica sentimental de España* (*Sentimental Chronicle of Spain*) and *Crónica sentimental de la transición* (*Sentimental Chronicle of the Transition*), created a new genre unto themselves and reflected his unwavering desire to break down distinctions between high and low culture, to dignify popular culture, and to see in its use by the lower classes creative ways to uphold their dignity and affirm their life experiences, even in the face of a dictatorship bent on narrowly shaping their outlook on life and, in the case of those belonging to the losing side of the Civil War, obliterating it by force. This hybrid nature in much of his work, combining the study of high-brow and popular culture, was thus a reflection of his own life, since he staunchly affirmed his own hybrid, mestizo, *charnego* identity, never losing his connection to the working class from which he came even as he became a member of a highly educated, intellectual elite and a world-renowned author recognized with many of Spain's most prestigious literary prizes.¹²

Vázquez Montalbán was also a pioneer in Spain in the study of mass media and what would later be called cultural studies. He wrote extensively on the subject, from his groundbreaking study *Informe sobre la comunicación* (*A Report on Communication*), used for many years as a classroom textbook, to *Historia y comunicación social* (*History and Social Communication*) and *La palabra libre en la ciudad libre* (*The Free Word in the Free City*). This work showcases another of his obsessions: the need to critically engage with, and analyze, the ideological effects of mass media within a capitalist system imposing its rule, among other things, through the development of a consumer culture whose effects permeate society. He constantly warned that no art form, including literature, can isolate itself from the effects of the mass media: "creo que si el escritor no tiene en cuenta dentro de su conciencia la influencia de la cultura audiovisual, la literatura está condenada a muerte" (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 26) (I believe that if authors do not take into account the influence of audiovisual culture, literature is destined to die).

Furthermore, he believed that literature could not continue to be, as it was in the 19th century, the privileged instrument for the creation of a revolutionary class consciousness or for the transmission of a politically subversive ideological critique, since “no sólo su antigua hegemonía ha sido destruida por otros medios de representación, expresión y comunicación, sino que esos medios han influido muy poderosamente en los códigos de lectura del receptor” (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica 20*) (not only has its old hegemony been destroyed by other media of representation, expression, and communication, but those media have powerfully influenced the receiver’s reading codes) and, thus, any literary project “ya no puede evitar la influencia ejercida por los otros medios, y muy especialmente los de la imagen” (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica 20*) (can no longer avoid the influence of other media, and especially those of the image). Undoubtedly, his acknowledgement of how visual culture generally, and mass media more specifically, were increasingly dominant ideological frameworks imposing the interpretative codes through which readers would approach his work makes the choice of Miguel Brieva to illustrate the new edition of his *Diccionario* so appropriate. As previously mentioned, Brieva’s work has consistently explored the way our modern-day consciousness is inevitably traversed by the discourses of mass media, in particular, those of the advertising industry. A clear affinity in the work of both author and illustrator can be gleaned by the fact that an explanation that Vázquez Montalbán gave for his explicit use of images and strategies from mass media in his poetry (an explanation that could be applied to much of his writing) could equally apply to much of Brieva’s graphic work: “mis motivos iniciales [son] las imágenes de los medios de comunicación. Como soy consciente de que intentan falsear mi necesidad de identidad me vengo de ellas, manipulándolas como me da la gana” (qtd in Cate-Arries 24) (my original motifs are images from mass media. Because I am aware of how they try to falsify my need for an identity, I take revenge on them, manipulating them as I please). As we will see, Brieva’s illustrations of Vázquez Montalbán’s *Diccionario* will also be based on the recognition of the falsifying nature of mass media images and will showcase his subversive process of manipulating them “como [le] da la gana” (as [he] pleases).¹³

Returning now to the practices of *dis*-closure and disclosure that will be analyzed here, it is important to note that they are both at the heart of Vázquez Montalbán’s original text. A short introductory statement at the beginning of the text is especially revealing:

Este es un breve, aproximativo, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Ni está en él todo el franquismo, ni en él aparece el antifranquismo. Se aplica, pues, solo al espacio político escogido por el franquismo, contemplado por un

hombre que nació en 1939 en un barrio de supervivientes ubicado en una ciudad vencida, capital de un país ocupado. (9)

(This is a brief, approximate *Dictionary of Francoism*. Neither is all of Francoism included nor does anti-Francoism appear in it. It is applied, therefore, only to the political space chosen by Francoism, as observed by a man who was born in 1939 in a neighborhood of survivors located in a vanquished city, capital of an occupied nation.)

Here, Vázquez Montalbán inserts himself, and his experience as one of the losers of the Civil War, as a point of departure for the entire dictionary. This, in fact, is a form of disclosure in one of the common English usages of the term, as when one says: “in the interest of full disclosure . . .” to reveal any potential conflicts of interest one may have with regards to the project at hand. The author is here acknowledging his own personal implication in what he is about to present. But this paratextual explanation immediately enacts a more subversive form of *dis*-closure, for it shatters any pretense to an objective, authoritative voice which is traditionally associated with something like a dictionary. When that dictionary is one that defines the people, institutions, events, ideas, slogans and actions of a dictatorial regime bent on controlling society by imposing its own version of reality by force, this *dis*-closure is all the more subversive.

Throughout the dictionary, furthermore, a practice of disclosure, in the sense of revealing a hidden truth, is enacted every time a definition includes not just the regime’s official understanding of a term, but the lived reality for many in society. In constantly highlighting the gap between the two, Vázquez Montalbán’s text, like all of his work, presents a “mirada crítica y desmitificadora” (Colmeiro, *Crónica* 24) (a critical and de-mythifying gaze) that combines a testimonial bent with a “desenmascaramiento de la realidad” (Colmeiro, *Crónica* 24) (unmasking of reality). This, in turn, becomes a clear and unambiguous indictment of the Franco regime. It is evident, for example, in the entry “ESPAÑOLES (El mundo entero al alcance de todos los)” (SPANIARDS (the whole world in the grasp of all)) which reads: “lema del NO-DO muy sorprendente en los años cuarenta, cuando al alcance de los españoles no estaban ni una alimentación adecuada ni la libertad de movimientos más indispensable” (40) (very surprising motto of the NO-DO in the 1940s, when Spaniards had, within their grasp, neither adequate nutrition nor the most basic freedom of movement). By highlighting the discrepancy between Francoism’s official discourse and reality, Vázquez Montalbán’s dictionary is at the same time contributing to people’s learning of what the dictatorship was, as

well as to their *unlearning*, and *unmasking*, of the ideological mystifications of that discourse, whose effects, of course, are not only a part of the past in 1977, but still very much of the present. The irony with which that discrepancy is noted is one more strategy of subversion on the author's part with respect to authority, be it that of the regime, or that of the traditional role of a dictionary.

Pointing out the real-life effects of words, or the gap between real life *and* words, makes of Vázquez Montalbán's dictionary an example of the kind of text he once defined, created by authors and artists who, like him, "hicieron del rechazo de la mentira franquista la razón fundamental de su verdad estética" (*La literatura* 68) (made of the rejection of the Francoist lie the fundamental reason of their aesthetic truth). He continues to explain that

aquellos tiempos fueron odiosos, crueles y peligrosos, no olvidemos nunca. Las palabras que podemos emplear para connotarlos son terror, miedo, prudencia o cobardía, no son abstracciones, sino palabras que se correspondían a vivencias de lo cotidiano; el miedo era algo físico, el terror era real, como la indefensión ante la potencia de la represión, prácticamente intacta desde el final de la guerra civil. (*Ibid.* 68)

(those were odious times, cruel and dangerous, let us never forget. The words we can use to define them are terror, fear, prudence or cowardice, they are not abstractions, but words that corresponded to daily experiences: the fear was something physical, the terror was real, just like the impotence in the face of repression, a repression which has been maintained practically intact since the end of the Civil War.)

"No olvidemos nunca" (let us never forget) is precisely the imperative driving his need to create the *Diccionario*, a unique dictionary indeed, since it not only provides definitions, but points out the insufficient nature of those very definitions, incapable as they are of truly portraying the experience of living during that time. If a dictionary is supposed to define, and, in that sense, settle the meaning of words, this dictionary questions as much as it defines, interrogates as much as it delimits, unsettles rather than settles the meaning of what it presents.

An ironic subversion of authority is likewise at the heart of Vázquez Montalbán's habit of relentlessly underscoring how the regime whitewashed the reality of its repressive nature, trying to cleanse its image. The entry

“CAUDILLO (Discursos del),” (CAUDILLO [Speeches of the]) for example, ends with the clarification:

los investigadores han podido comprobar que en las reediciones o en los volúmenes compendiadores de varios años los editores han podido los discursos de Franco de afirmaciones desafortunadas. Se han desnazificado los discursos de los años cuarenta y se han cortado las profecías políticas apresuradas a las que tan aficionado fue Franco durante los primeros veinte años de su mandato. (27)

(researchers have been able to demonstrate that in re-editions or yearly collections of speeches editors have pruned Franco’s speeches and eliminated unfortunate statements. The speeches of the 1940s have been de-Nazified and the hasty political prophesies to which Franco was so prone in the first twenty years of his rule have been cut.)

The ideological manipulations of the regime, which could very well have made it more palatable to the readers of the *Diccionario* in 1977 by obscuring its most repressive origins, are highlighted. Its criminal nature is thus never allowed to be forgotten.

In a similar vein, the entry “FRANQUISMO” (FRANCOISM) inserts into the explanation of what the regime understood itself to be an oppositional perspective that underscores the falsehood of that official discourse. Thus, the entry includes:

Los exégetas del franquismo dicen que el Régimen trajo la prosperidad a España, olvidando que, durante veinte años de dictadura, España vivió por debajo de los índices de desarrollo vigentes durante la Segunda República. Según ellos, el franquismo instauró una paz octaviana, olvidando que esa paz fue un efecto óptico y acústico conseguido por el amordazamiento de los más capacitados para relatar la verdad sobre la represión de los años cuarenta e igualmente de los años cincuenta, sesenta y setenta. (53)

(The exegetes of Francoism say the Regime brought prosperity to Spain, forgetting that, during twenty years of dictatorship, Spain lived with

development indices lower than those reached during Second Republic. According to them, Francoism established an Octavian peace, forgetting that this peace was an optical and acoustic effect achieved via the gagging of those most capable of speaking the truth about the repression of the 1940s as well as of the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s.)

Here, again, the authoritative quality of a dictionary is subverted, as the entry itself, by incorporating diverging definitions, becomes what Bakhtin called a “double-voiced discourse” (324), a practice which undermines the very nature of a dictionary as an example of what the Russian critic understood as “the one language of truth” (271).

Finally, as a last example of the subversive, unsettling, double-voiced practice at the heart of the *Diccionario*, under “BÚNKER” (BUNKER), Vázquez Montalbán does not just enumerate the members of Franco’s inner circle, such as Girón de Velasco, Blas Piñar, etc., who are the bunker in the most traditional sense of the term, but he also highlights a less visible but perhaps more pernicious bunker whose influence can be felt at the time of the book’s publication. Of the list of Franco’s inner circle, the dictionary entry explains “Ese es el búnker que se ve” (23) (that is the bunker you can see) (23). But it adds: “El que no se ve está constituido por las fuerzas sociales más inmovilistas del Régimen, básicamente funcionarios de la burocracia franquista, idealistas bunkerianos de convicción integrista y aprovechados que temen cualquier solución democrática como el principio del fin de sus prebendas” (23) (the one you can’t see is made up of the most immobilist social forces of the Regime, basically functionaries of the Francoist bureaucracy, bunkerian idealists of integrationist convictions and opportunists who fear that any democratic solution will bring an end to their privileges). Vázquez Montalbán is here disclosing, revealing, *desenmascarando* (unmasking) the force of what will come to be called a *franquismo sociológico* (sociological Francoism) and, by so doing, he is disclosing the legacies of Francoism in the transition period. He is showing, in fact, that the content of his *Diccionario* is not a thing of the past, but just as much of the present. In this way, the temporal boundaries of the dictionary are also *dis*-closed, opened up, as the dividing line between the Francoist past and the emerging democracy in the present are blurred. It is worth highlighting that in this entry, Vázquez Montalbán inserts himself, as he had done in the introductory statement, for he notes that, among the early appearances of the term in Spain: “la palabra ‘búnker’ fue empleada en ‘La Capilla Sixtina’, sección habitual de la revista *Triunfo* firmada por Sixto Cámara, seudónimo de Manuel Vázquez Montalbán” (23) (the term ‘bunker’ was used in ‘The Sixteenth Chapel,’ a regular section of the magazine *Triunfo* signed by Sixto Cámara, pseudonym of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán).

The Franco regime may have tried to erase from Spain's official memory the experience of those on the losing side of the Civil War, but Vázquez Montalbán ensures, from his personal introductory statement to his cameo appearances in entries such as this one, that those experiences are forever saved from oblivion, at least in this text.¹⁴

Ultimately, the political motivation behind writing the *Diccionario* reflects what Vázquez Montalbán has explained regarding his novels, many written years after the *Diccionario*, in which he continues to recover the memory of the vanquished. Although in the *Diccionario* this task is not presented in novelistic form, clearly the effect is the same: “intento de quitarle la memoria histórica a los historiadores objetivos e imparciales para que los novelistas pudiéramos aplicar el tribunal popular contra los asesinos, contra los verdugos” (*La literatura* 147) (the attempt to wrest historical memory from the objective and impartial historians so that novelists could establish a popular tribunal against the assassins, against the executioners). In holding the regime accountable for its crimes, Vázquez Montalbán is doing, with his *Diccionario* and other writings, what Spanish society failed to do.¹⁵ He is likewise rejecting, at the very moment of its inception, what would come to be called CT, or the Cultura de la Transición (Culture of the Transition) whose effects are still with us today, and which is based on a hierarchical and consensus-oriented approach to politics, one which established a series of what Guillem Martínez has called “reglas-tapón” (stopper-ideas) to limit what was deemed possible within the world of cultural production and which effectively short-circuited any real political rupture with the regime by establishing reformism as the only viable option (1).¹⁶

Many similar subversive strategies of *dis*-closure and disclosure can be found in Brieva's illustrations of the text. One of the images in the book is a new entry that Brieva adds to the dictionary, entitled “NEOFRANQUISMO” (NEOFRANCOISM) (see fig. 3). The very act of adding new entries to the dictionary is already a kind of *dis*-closure, a breaking down of the very frame of the dictionary itself, opening it up to the present, blurring the boundary between past and present. In the image, Franco is represented as an android or a cyborg (part man, part machine), whose face gazes beyond the frame of the page to the left while a series of tubes emerge from the back of his head and disappear beyond the frame of the page to the right.¹⁷ While some of the tubes are labeled with the names of current political parties that are, to greater or lesser degrees, ideologically indebted to Francoism (PP, VOX, etc.), other labels allude to institutions, ideas, practices, and ideological constructs that are sites of continuity between the present and a Francoist past: “Mística Ibérica Ultradefasada,” “Corruptrón XL-9000,” “Iglesia,” “Prejuicios,” “Válvula Tecnócrata Capitalista” (Superobsolete Iberian Mysticism, Corruptron XL-9000, Church, Prejudices, Capitalist Technocratic Valve). The fact that these

tubes are shown to continue *beyond* the frame of the book is a metaphor for how elements of Francoism survive in today's Spain, beyond the historical frame of the Franco regime itself. In visually going beyond the frame of the book, or bleeding, this illustration invites readers, as McCloud has explained, to provide closure by having to imagine the full extent of the image. McCloud explains that there is a “lingering timeless presence” and “unresolved nature” to the mood or the effect of an image that “bleeds,” or “runs off the edge of the page” (102–03).

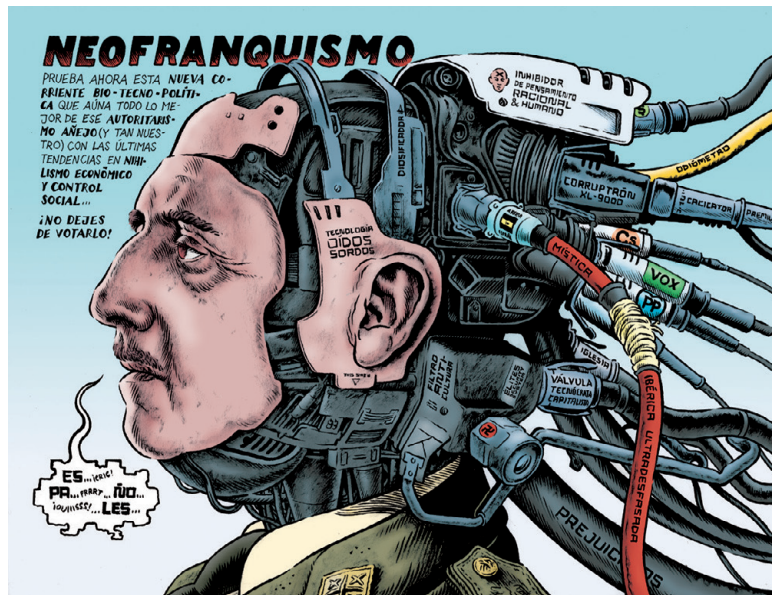


Fig. 3. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieve. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 32–33.

One must assume it is no coincidence that all the illustrations in the book share this characteristic. The bleeding of these illustrations (in some cases, literally bleeding, since it is pools of blood that sometimes run off the edge of the page) turns readers into accomplices with Brieve, and, by extension, with Vázquez Montalbán, in their parallel projects of critical *dis*-closure with regards to Francoism. Both the entries in the original book and the newer illustrations attempt to show, respectively, how elements of Francoism were still alive in 1977 and continue to be present in 2019. One could say, paraphrasing McCloud, that in Brieve's illustrations of Montalbán's dictionary, the reader becomes an accomplice, through this practice of *dis*-closure, not just to a metaphorical crime in the present (the co-creation, through creative interpretation, of the meaning of the text or image) but in seeking accountability for the real crimes of the past (those

depicted *in* the book, which, in some cases, produce that blood literally bleeding off the page), whose effects, like the tubes emerging from Franco's cyborg head, linger in the present, unresolved, beyond any supposed closure.

The fact that Franco is presented as an android or cyborg has important implications, given the fact that such hybrid figures, since Donna Haraway's seminal *Cyborg Manifesto*, are connected to practices that break down established binaries and boundaries between entities traditionally understood as opposite, such as nature/culture, human/machine, organic/inorganic. She famously coined the term 'cyborg politics,' which is based on interrogating such binaries and includes, among its subversive strategies, "the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly" (142). This, of course, brings to mind the subversive elements of Vázquez Montalbán's *Diccionario* and its recurrent use of a Bakhtinian double-voiced discourse against the repressive elements of the one language of truth. Even if the figure created by Brieva is considered an android, the concept of cyborg politics would still apply, given the hybrid nature of the creature (and the fact that it very well may be a cyborg after all). The fact that the valve emerging from Franco's head with the image of a Nazi swastika has no tube connected to it (insinuating that such a tube has been eliminated at some point), also evokes Vázquez Montalbán's strategy, mentioned above, of highlighting how Francoism systematically whitewashed, or erased, elements of its repressive nature when they became less palatable in changing historical circumstances, such as the gradual de-Nazification of the Caudillo's speeches.

Brieva's use of an android or cyborg image is particularly effective, since younger readers will have been especially susceptible to the long-term effects of this ideological whitewashing of the regime's image, given their lack of personal knowledge, or even historical education, regarding the most repressive elements of the regime. The image of Franco as an android or cyborg is also a way in which Brieva uses elements of popular culture with which younger readers will be familiar to educate them about the ways that elements of today's social-political reality in Spain are connected to Francoism. The android or cyborg is a perfect image to show that, just like one needs to look underneath its human face to see the machine beneath, one needs to learn to look beneath the surface of today's Spain to see the lingering effects of a repressive dictatorship, and even of a repressive conservatism that long predates Francoism (the "autoritarismo añejo" (vintage authoritarianism) celebrated by the advertisement). Brieva explains that he intentionally sought to create an estrangement effect through the incongruent juxtaposition of the technology so prevalent in contemporary society and the old, decrepit image of a stuttering Franco, a subversive juxtaposition that is at the heart of many of the illustrations in the book:

Buscaba el mismo contraste que en el resto de los dibujos, un diálogo entre lo viejo del Franquismo y la tecnología omnipresente de nuestra actualidad, algo que hiciera saltar chispas mentales al verse (Hay un efecto potente en emparejar la “modernidad” con algo tan arcaico como el régimen franquista y el propio Franco, que pertenecen a otra época completamente diferente). El nexos que las une son las mismas élites ignorantes y viciadas, y una inercia cultural oscurantista y prejuiciosa que es incluso anterior al franquismo y que este país arrastra como una losa. (personal email to the author)

(I was seeking the same contrast as in the rest of the illustrations, a dialogue between the old feel of Francoism and the omnipresent technology of today, something that would make mental sparks fly when you saw it [there is a strong effect when you combine “modernity” with something as archaic as the Franco regime, and Franco himself, which belong to a completely different era]. The nexus that joins them is the same flawed and ignorant elites and an obscurantist and prejudiced cultural inertia that even antedates Francoism and that weighs on this country like a tombstone.)

Brieva is here referencing one of the traditional definitions of humor, that of a response to an incongruity or, as he has stated “la respuesta que tiene nuestro cerebro ante cosas que no se resuelven fácilmente, cosas confusas” (*Personal Interview*) (the response our brain has when faced with things that cannot be reconciled easily, things that are confusing). In this capacity, humor, Brieva notes, “es un mecanismo de demolición, porque es un detector natural de contradicciones [...] y en su raíz está la subversión” (*Personal Interview*) (is a mechanism for demolition, because it is a natural detector of contradictions [...] and at its root is subversion). Brieva has explained that the idea of publishing the new edition of the *Diccionario* grew out of a concern over the rise of the new far-right political party, VOX, that is in large part based on nostalgia for the Franco regime, and, in particular, with the worrisome popularity of VOX with certain sectors of Spanish youth. Not long after the publication of the book, in fact, a national poll showed that 21 percent of VOX voters believed that a dictatorship would be preferable to a democracy “in certain circumstances” (“El 21%”). Brieva has explained that, when asked to illustrate the book:

Cuando estaba el primer auge de VOX y de una reivindicación del franquismo, era como que ese anacronismo fue mi recurso fundamental para decir “ah, ¿a vosotros de ahora os gusta el franquismo? Bueno, pues, vamos a juntarlos [la realidad del franquismo y la de hoy], a ver si esto marida bien, a ver si esto casa bien”. Claro, te das cuenta de que son ya dos mundos . . . o sea, los españoles de hoy y sobre todo las generaciones más jóvenes que la mía, pues son ya españoles crecidos en un sistema global capitalista de hiper-consumo, de hiper-distracción, de hedonismo, de espectáculo, de resortes tecnológicos, de adicciones compulsivas, entonces nada de eso es compatible con cómo se vivió en el franquismo, que era una vida como de pueblo, como de cuartel. [. . .] Yo lo hice todo tratando de desactivar que el franquismo pudiera ser esgrimido como algo bueno, desde el recuerdo, desde la nostalgia. Al juntarlo con nuestra época, poner más de manifiesto lo miserable que fue en toda su extensión y en todo su planteamiento. [. . .] Mi trabajo ha sido mucho más ya de demolición. Lo que explica Vázquez Montalbán ya está, ¿yo qué más puedo decir? Yo, lo que puedo es jugar con eso y combinarlo con nuestra actualidad y decir “Mira, esto es una locura, porque es insostenible que se pueda hacer una reivindicación de aquello desde aquí, o sea, es que no, no tiene sentido”. (*Personal Interview*)

(When the first surge of VOX, and of a vindication of Francoism, occurred it was like that anachronism was my strategy to say “ok, you guys now, you like Francoism? Well, then, let’s combine them [the realities of Francoism and today] and see if they mix well, if they ‘marry’ well.” Of course, you realize that they are by now two completely different worlds . . . I mean, the Spaniards of today, and especially the generations younger than mine, well, they are Spaniards who have grown up in a global capitalist system of hyper-consumption, hyper-distraction, hedonism, spectacle, tech gadgets, compulsive actions, and none of that is compatible with what life was like under Francoism, which was like a small-town life, a barracks life [. . .] I did everything trying to deactivate the possibility that Francoism could be wielded as something good, through memory, through nostalgia. By joining it with our current reality, [I wanted] to make evident how miserable it was in all its extension and in its nature. [. . .] My work has been much more a task of demolition. What Vázquez Montalbán explains is there, what can I add to that? What I can do is play with that, and combine

it with our current reality, and say: “look, this is crazy, it is impossible to celebrate that from here, I mean, no, that makes no sense.”)

The strategy of an intentional anachronism is thus at the heart of Brieua’s *demolición* (demolition) of any potential vindication of Francoism in the present. The *chispas mentales* (mental sparks) he strives to create, and the subversive thrust of the anachronistic illustration, are sparked by the humor of its very form, as much as by the incongruent juxtaposition of the old and new mentioned above. It is significant that in this illustration Brieua replaces the form of the dictionary entry that Vázquez Montalbán had used in the original text with that of a commercial/advertisement/political campaign: “Prueba ahora . . . ¡No dejes de votarlo!” (32–33) (Try it now . . . Vote for it!). As mentioned before, such a parody of the language of advertisement is something that Brieua has long played with, as part of his larger deconstruction of the alienating effects of neoliberalism and its creation of an unfettered consumer culture. In an image of his book *Atentos a sus pantallas*, for example (see fig. 4) he presents a satirical parody of an advertisement for diamonds, sold as the best way for a man to show a woman he loves her. Here, however, the diamond is replaced by a *pelusa* (piece of lint, or fuzz). The estrangement effect of replacing a diamond for a useless bit of lint or fuzz (even if it is, as the woman happily exclaims an “imported,” “golden luxury model!”), makes one question not only the very value of diamonds for supposedly showing one’s love, but an entire industry that manages to disguise, under a supposed veneer of glamour and eternal happiness, its sexist, patriarchal view of gender relations and its extreme extractivist nature based on the systematic human rights abuses of people made to mine for diamonds under inhuman conditions. None of this is explicitly in the cartoon, of course, but once the estrangement effect of the substitution of a piece of lint for a diamond has opened the door for a reader to question the very idea of a diamond’s true worth (once those *chispas mentales* (mental sparks) have been generated), that questioning can eventually extend to the whole industry that makes diamonds as well as to the one that markets them. Like many a cyborg, the language of advertisement hides, beneath a human face, an ugly and dangerous machine.

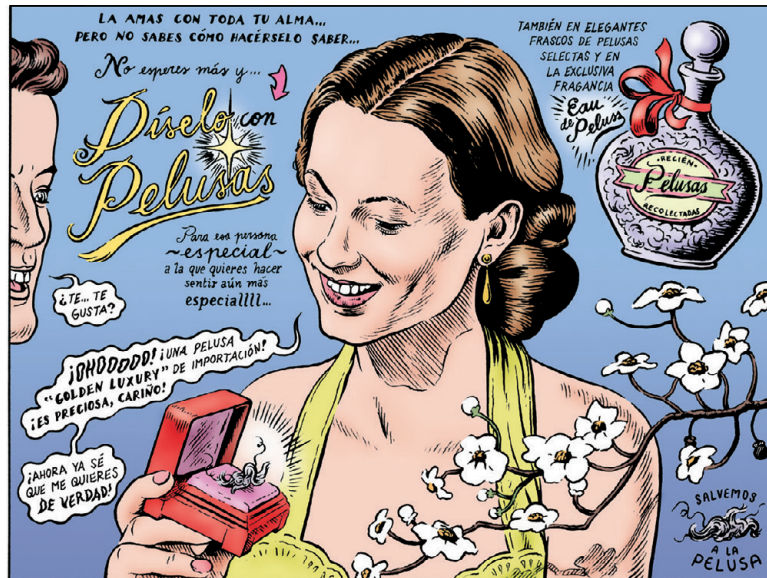


Fig. 4. Brieva, Miguel. *Atentos a sus pantallas. El otro mundo, Volumen 1*. Barcelona: Penguin Random House, 2009.

Finally, Franco's own words in this illustration, hesitant and continually interrupted by creaking sounds, are intentionally reminiscent of Franco's last public interventions shortly before his death, when the effects of the Alzheimer's he had been suffering for a long time, but which the regime had been carefully hiding, were evident. Just like during those final public speeches, when the reality of the human frailty of the Caudillo could potentially undermine the regime's desire to live long past the dictator himself, the creaking voice of the cyborg in Brieva's illustration is at odds with the hyperbolic optimism of the advertisement promoting the (new and improved!) NEOFRANQUISMO being sold. The speech bubble in this image is thus multivalent, and its significance highlights a point made by the great cartoonist Will Eisner, who stressed that lettering, in comics, "functions as an extension of the image" (2). The very nature of the speech bubble, with its sharp edges, block lettering, and hesitant, creaking quality, points in two directions at once: to the mechanical nature of the cyborg Franco on the page, and to the human frailty of the real-life Franco at the end of his life. A double direction shared by the image itself, with the cyborg looking one way and the tubes emanating from his head extending in the other. A double direction shared, also, by the *Diccionario* as a whole, pointing to the past as well as the present and future. As in all great cartoons and graphic novels, all the elements on the page are interconnected and reinforce each other.

Although probably not intentional, the image can also evoke, at least for some readers, the photos, made public only a decade after his demise, of the real-life cyborg that Franco became on his death bed, as members of the *búnker* tried to keep him alive artificially as long as possible through numerous connections to machines.¹⁸ When those images were finally made public, they showed a shell of a human being connected to endless tubes and wires coming out of his head and body and bleeding past the picture frames, just as the tubes of Brieva's android or cyborg bleed past the pages of the *Diccionario*. Nancy Berthier has suggestively analyzed those photos according to Kantorowicz's concept of the Medieval King's two bodies, a natural body of the human being, which could suffer decomposition and degradation over time, and a political body, the nation that was incarnated in the King, which was supposedly eternal and impervious to the ravages of time. The Franco regime had hidden those macabre photos from public view following "un principio de desmaterialización destinado a borrar su condición 'natural' para poner de realce el 'cuerpo político'" (qtd. in Prieto) (a de-materialization principle intent on erasing its 'natural' condition in order to emphasize the 'political body'). The only images they did allow people to see at the time were those of the carefully embalmed Franco in a luxurious coffin, stately and all-powerful, even in death. The images made public at the time had to erase the previous reality of the hospital scene, that of the Franco cyborg, which had to be carefully hidden behind a recovered and carefully reconstituted and embalmed human form in which the two bodies of the dictator could once again be reconciled. Brieva's illustration, even if unwittingly, evokes the real Franco cyborg once again, and, as it unsettles what had tried to be settled once and for all, it shows that those two bodies of Franco, and of Francoism, were as unnatural as the new cyborg we are looking at in the *Diccionario*.

This deliberate creation of a subversive and humorous incongruity is used in many of the illustrations in the book. It is also combined with an intentional strategy of anachronism, an element that Brieva uses as a weapon of *demolición* as seen earlier, in the illustration to which I turn now (see fig. 5). The satirical use of the language of advertisement is again present. Here it is surrounding the figure of the *torero* (bullfighter) and the *futbolista* (soccer player), both of whom seem rather unhappy and weighed down by the very advertising signs they are carrying on their shoulders (although the money falling out of the briefcase being held by the *futbolista* points to the lucrative soccer industry which was strategically used to entertain and keep people from focusing on the injustices imposed on them by the regime). The image evokes the use of the *españolada* (Spanish-kitsch) by the regime, the selling of a supposedly authentic Spanish essence to the outside world in exchange, at least from the 1960s on, for money in the form of tourist income. This

income would, eventually, allow for the regime to claim it was modernizing Spain (maybe some of those bills in the *futbolista*'s briefcase are from that very tourism). But the incongruity between the bright lights and colors of the signs containing the slogans selling this *españolada* and the sullen faces and less-than-enthusiastic language of the slogans themselves (“Lo sentimos, esto es lo que hay” (We’re sorry, this is all there is) “al menos hace sol” (“at least it’s sunny”)) belie the less-than-ideal reality behind the hype (45). Just as Vázquez Montalbán’s dictionary entries had done, the difference between what the regime was selling and the reality of what people were living is highlighted here to very dramatic effect. The false culture of the *españolada* is, in fact, trampling over the Republican cultural production rejected by the regime, as a book by Machado lies broken on the ground, about to be stepped on by the *futbolista*. Even one of the old women sighs disapprovingly with resignation and disbelief at having to endure this farce: “Ofú ... ya estamos aquí otra vez” (44) (Yikes . . . here we are again).



Fig. 5. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieua. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 44–45.

As mentioned above, there is an intentional anachronism in the illustration. The radio and the dress of the female characters situate the image temporally in the postwar era, where such current elements as the Starbucks and Airbnb signs, the punk hairdo of one of the old men, the cell phone held by one of the old women, as well as the touristic advertising of Spain (from the 1960s

and 1970s), are totally out of place. In the midst of this incongruous, farcical, and completely anachronistic scene, a little boy, who stands out from the rest of the characters for his clean, light colored clothes and blond hair, looks out beyond the page, directly at us. Brieva has explained:

Para mí los niños son siempre como los elementos incontaminados, ¿no? Porque lo son, realmente. A veces, en algunos dibujos sí que he utilizado a los niños para mostrar el nivel de alienación que hay en una sociedad porque dices, si un niño de siete años está así de alienado, es que estamos ya locos, estamos perdidos. Pero en general, yo lo suelo utilizar más como un elemento de extrañamiento, es decir, como el personaje que busca la complicidad con el lector de decir “mira, yo estoy aquí dentro, pero esto es un sinsentido.” [. . .] Yo siempre los muestro como la víctima o el elemento de extrañamiento dentro de la alienación. (*Personal Interview*)

(For me, children are always uncontaminated elements, no? Because they are, really. Sometimes, in my drawings, I have used them to show the level of alienation in society because you think, if a seven-year-old is this alienated, then we must all be crazy, we are lost. But, in general, I tend to use them more as an element of estrangement, that is to say, a character who is looking for complicity on the part of the reader by saying “look, I am in here, but this all makes no sense.” [. . .] I always show them as a victim or an element of estrangement within alienation.)

The very style of rendering this young character (in a slightly less realistic manner, if we look at his face), encourages this identification that Brieva wants the boy to establish with the reader. McCloud explains how, in comics and cartoons, rendering a character in a more simplified, cartoon-like style, instead of a more detailed, realistic style, allows for greater “viewer-identification” (42) since “the cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled . . . an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in another realm” (36). By being drawn into identifying with this little boy, an incongruous figure in an even more incongruous scene, Brieva is hoping his readers will feel the estrangement of this illustration, and thus question any vindication of Francoism in today’s Spain. The little boy, effectively, breaks the frame of the image, as he looks directly at the readers, enacting a form of

dis-closure we have seen Brieva perform in other comics. The exclamation of the old woman, supposedly from the postwar era, could equally well be that of anyone looking at the image today, not believing how so many people are falling for the nostalgic image of Francoism that parties such as VOX are selling. Indeed, that reader could sigh along with the old woman, in disbelief: “Ofú . . . Ya estamos aquí otra vez . . .” (Yikes . . . here we are again).

Anachronism and the contrast between a more cartoon-like style and a realistic style are equally at play in the next illustration I want to discuss (see fig. 6). Franco and Hitler are walking down a red carpet together, an image that evokes Guy Debord’s notion of the society of spectacle, a recurrent reference found in Brieva’s work. The dangerous effects of all reality becoming spectacle had been, in effect, explicitly analyzed by Vázquez Montalbán too, in his analysis of the ideological effects of mass media in the suffocation of critical thought and political consciousness, for

la labor lenta de estos medios de comunicación se dirige al centro mismo de la capacidad de elección humana. Tienden a crear una técnica de comportamiento mecánico, reflexológico y anticalificador. Tanto la radio como la TV han convertido los hechos históricos en *espectáculo* a veces sorprendente, pero tan común y reiterado que no invita a la participación. La aparente información aséptica que proporcionan la radio o la TV es profundamente irreal, pese a la fidelidad de la imagen y del sonido. (qtd. in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 25)

(the slow work of these mass media is directed against the human capacity to choose. They tend to create a mechanical, reflex, anti-qualifying behavior. Radio and TV have transformed historical events into *spectacle*, sometimes surprising, but in such a common and repeated manner that it does not invite any participation. The apparently aseptic information provided by radio and TV is profoundly unreal, despite the high fidelity of the image and sound.)



Fig. 6. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieva. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 56.

The spectacle here is highlighted by the fact that the image is portrayed as the cover of a magazine called ¡MOLA!, an obvious reference to the glossy magazine ¡HOLA!, dedicated to portraying Spain's world of high society and the stars of the entertainment industry, both of whom provide the same kind of hypnotizing and dummifying effect that the *torero* and *futbolista* provided in the earlier illustration.¹⁹ The polysemy of the parodic name ¡MOLA! is effective, combining, as it does, an allusion to one of the generals on Franco's side of the Civil War (General Emilio Mola) and the slang term for "this is cool, this is fun." The unsettling incongruity of combining the historical repression of fascism with frivolous entertainment ("Hola, majetes, ¡que empiece la fiesta"

(“Hi, guys, let the party begin!”) Franco cries out as he enacts the fascist salute next to his buddy Hitler) is equaled by the unsettling anachronism of the cell phones held by the laughing spectators and the date on the magazine cover: May 21, 2019. The cartoonish dimension of the spectators’ faces is even greater than that of the little boy’s visage in the previous image, and so we, the spectators of these spectators, are drawn into the image as we identify with them. McCloud explains that not only do more cartoon-like renderings of images allow for more “viewer-identification,” as noted above, but they contrast with realistic renderings by encouraging the reader to *be* and not just *see* the image. In effect, as McCloud explains, cartoons will often juxtapose “One set of lines to see. Another set of lines to be” (43). The readers are thus pulled into the scene, being in it, as well as observing it. In this *mise-en-abîme*, however, we are aware of something the cartoon spectators are not: the grotesque nature of this spectacle, and by, extension, of the fascist regimes represented within it. But perhaps at least one spectator is also aware of this, since what appears on his/her cellphone as it records the scene is a presumably smelly fart (the screen is greenish) coming from a hairy, naked butt. That spectator remains beyond the edge of the image and we are thus encouraged to imagine her/him. We are invited, therefore, to provide the closure that makes of us accomplices in the completion of the grotesque scene depicted, and that effort, in turn, makes us accomplices in the *dis*-closure that this unsettlingly anachronistic, incongruent image puts into play. Can we not, almost, smell the flatulence depicted on the cell phone?



Fig. 7. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieva. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 94–95.

Figure 7 also depicts an image of Franco quite at odds with the official one that Franco himself, and the regime, carefully created. It presents a caricature of the famous painting by Bolivian artist Arturo Reque Meruvia *Cruzados del siglo XX* (*Crusaders of the XX Century*) in which Franco is heroically depicted as El Cid, the medieval hero of the Christian Reconquest on whom Franco liked to model himself, and whose Cruzada (Crusade) the Caudillo believed he was continuing. The humorous, ideological *demolición* of the mythification of Franco as modern-day crusader that Brieve enacts in this illustration includes the sausage so heroically traversed by Franco/El Cid's giant sword. It likewise includes the dollar sign superimposed on the cross held by Franco, an allusion to the Caudillo's selling of his anti-Communism as a way to establish an economically beneficial alliance with the United States, made official in the 1953 Tratado de Madrid (Treaty of Madrid). That treaty gave the regime, along with its Concordato (Concordat) with the Vatican of the same year, an important level of international support despite the regime's continuing brutal repression of its own people. The fact that the Dollar sign/Cross is surrounded by a cartoon speech/sound bubble that one could imagine containing the POW! or BAM! sound of a typical comic book fight is an essential part of the de-mythification of the caricature of Franco-as-El-Cid. Eisner has noted how these kinds of bubbles with jagged outlines imply emotionally explosive actions (48), and its presence here is one more way in which the image jumps out of the page, almost hitting the reader with the force of its subversive humor.

The dollars brought in by the various alliances that the Franco regime established over time were essential in the regime's achievement of a certain level of economic development in the 1960s and 1970s, referenced by the rows of dark buildings in the background of the image, just like those created in working-class neighborhoods in Spain during those years. These buildings are as grey and sullen as the *hombres grises* (grey men) in front of them. The verticality of the hands held high in the fascist salute by these grey men in the foreground echoes the verticality of the buildings in the background, and they both extend beyond the right edge of the page. The iconographic similarity between the two establishes them as inextricable, and this, in turn, is a critique of the argument that the Franco regime ushered in a beneficial economic development, in those years of *desarrollismo* (developmentalism) as it was called, that supposedly helped Spaniards achieve respectable levels of economic livelihood and that should have made them forget any excesses committed by the regime in the early postwar years. Any such economic development, the illustration reminds us, cannot be separated from that excessive repression meted out by the regime, as Christ himself reminds everyone from above by referencing those excesses, and as the incongruent juxtaposition of his cherubic angels riding bombs and carrying guns makes clear.

The rendering of Christ here is, as Brieva has explained, “quizás un poco influida por los hippies fumetas de Robert Crumb” (“Re: preguntas de las imágenes”) (perhaps influenced a bit by the pot-smoking hippies of Robert Crumb), alluding to the American cartoonist whose dark, satirical style and mordant underground aesthetics have had a great influence on Brieva. This hippie Christ, of course, becomes one more element, along with the sausage and dollar sign, of the demythification and *demolición* of Franco’s heroic self-image, and highlights, as well, the Catholic Church’s complicity with the crimes of the regime. Just like the double-voiced discourse of so many of Vázquez Montalbán’s entries in his *Diccionario*, and akin to the double nature of the Franco-cyborg in the first illustration discussed above, here Brieva is disclosing the grey, oppressive, and repressive reality under the hero’s cape, under the saintly religious discourse. The pervasiveness of the color grey in the image is part of an intentional use of color in all of Brieva’s images in the *Diccionario*. It is connected to his use of anachronism and contrasts a somber and gloomy depiction of the reality of the Franco regime with the colors in certain details in the images which indicate either the contemporary world or an aspect of the regime that somehow escapes its control. All the images, in one way or another, incorporate a contrast between dark, grey elements and more colorful ones. As Brieva explains,

Quería que hubiera un diálogo entre esa tristeza que se ve en gran parte de las imágenes del franquismo, esa cosa como rancia, apagada, con muy poca vitalidad, y contrastarlo y que jugara con el mundo actual este tan colorido, tan de nuevas tecnologías, [y ver] cómo sería ese maridaje que es un poco indigesto, y se ve en las imágenes. Me parecía que podía ser sugerente ese contraste. (Otra Vuelta de Tuerka)

(I wanted to establish a dialogue between that sadness that you see in so many images of Francoism, that rancid, dull, and lifeless quality, and contrast it, make it play off, today’s world, so colorful, so full of new technologies, [and see] how that combination would work, which is not easily digestible, and which is present in so many of the images [of the dictionary]. I felt that such a contrast could be very suggestive.)

Finally, we are again faced, here, with a little boy looking directly at us, as in the previous illustration of the *torero* and *futbolista*. He, too, is calling out for

us to identify with him. There is a significant ambiguity, however, surrounding his hand lifted in the air like that of the grey men behind him in an apparent fascist salute. Is he, in fact, performing this salute? This interpretation would be in consonance with his blue shirt, slightly darker than the one worn by the previous little boy in the image with the *torero* and *futbolista*. The color of this shirt is, in fact, that of the falangists' *camisa azul* (blue shirt). And yet, the yoyo with which he is playing could explain the raised hand differently, since its gesture would, in that case, be no more than part of an innocent child's game. This undecidability leaves the image disquietingly unsettled, open to both the readers' closure and *dis*-closure. This irresolvable ambiguity, and the interconnectedness of all the elements in the illustration, which continually play off each other in multiple ways, encourage the reader to experience a sense of "unflattening" (Sousanis 32). Nick Sousanis uses this term to talk about the critical potential of comics, and cartoons such as this one, which can be read in multiple ways by making one's eyes follow many different paths, thus creating multiple connections between individual elements. Unflattening is an interpretative experience based on "a simultaneous engagement of multiple vantage points from which to engender new ways of seeing" (32). The new ways of seeing made possible by the unflattening generated by this image will hopefully include a new critical perspective capable of ironically deconstructing the carefully orchestrated myths of the Franco regime.

The complete rejection of a benevolent reading of late Francoism is taken up by another illustration (see fig. 8). Here, an elderly Caudillo is woken up by nightmares populated by what Vázquez Montalbán called *Los demonios familiares de Franco* (*Franco's familiar demons*) in a book by that title that was akin, in intention, to the *Diccionario*, and which explained the obsessions that guided Franco's rule. Caricatured images, depicted at the top left, of the famous axis of evil repeatedly upheld by Franco as justification for his repression of the Spanish people (the "conjura comunista judeo-masónica" (the communist and judeo-masonic conspiracy) as he liked to call it) do not allow him to sleep. His wife Carmencita calms him and asks "¿por qué no te tomas una lechecita y firmas unas penas de muerte y así te quedas más tranquilo?" (why don't you have a glass of milk and sign some death sentences? You'll feel much better). The fact that Franco was signing death sentences up to the very end of his life is made clear, and the banality of this evil, to paraphrase Hannah Arendt, is highlighted by equating it to taking a glass of milk in order to be able to sleep calmly. Brieva here assumes the same duty that Vázquez Montalbán had explained that opposition authors, like him, took up in their work when he hoped that "los novelistas pudiéramos aplicar el tribunal popular contra los asesinos, contra los verdugos" (*La literatura* 147) (novelists could establish a popular tribunal against the assassins, against the executioners). For here,

in part anachronistically as in so many of his other images, Brieva surrounds Franco and Carmencita's beds with images of the victims of Franco's repression, evidence of his crimes: stolen Republican babies, Republicans killed during the Civil War and postwar era, and the skeletons of many of those same Republicans as they have been exhumed from mass graves since the beginning of the 21st century by civic organizations. The image literally bleeds, as the blood of these crimes oozes off the page. Thus, the need to use art as a kind of popular tribunal against the murderer-in-chief of the Franco regime is taken up by Brieva, as it had been by Vázquez Montalbán, and is also, again, symbolically passed on to his readers.

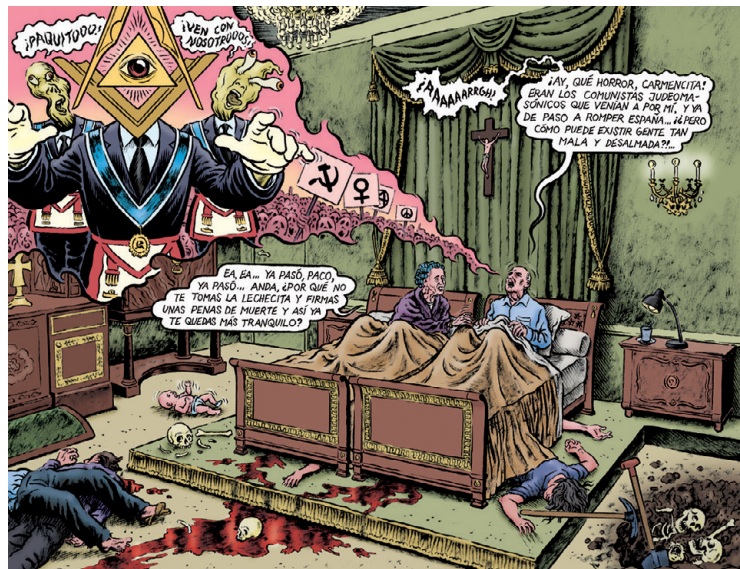


Fig. 8. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieva. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 82–83.

If readers are here invited to be the jury in a kind of trial of Franco's literal crimes, they are invited, in Figure 9, to condemn two other, more symbolic, "crimes." These include the complete ignorance about the Franco regime's human rights abuses that characterizes so many young people in today's Spain, and, also, the entire educational system and political structure that have created, and capitalized on, such ignorance. Politics as spectacle is again present, as it was in the image of Hitler and Franco on the red carpet, in the theme park behind the two young people being interviewed. *Bienvenidos a Franquilandia* (Welcome to Francoland) reads the entrance to the park. It includes an ominous *Túnel de la desmemoria* (Tunnel of dis-memory) and a roller coaster ride

called *Charca España* (Spanish Pond), an ironic reference to the *Marca España* (Spanish Brand) campaign initiated by the conservative government of Mariano Rajoy in 2012 as a way to commodify and sell the image of Spain internally as well as abroad, a quintessential symbol of neoliberalism's supreme reign in contemporary culture. The recent national promotional campaign echoes in interesting ways the Franco regime's pro-tourism campaign "Spain is different" in the 1960s and 1970s (referenced indirectly in fig. 5, and, also in fig. 1, the book's cover, where part of a poster for that campaign is shown in which a smiling sun beams down, incongruously, on an image of brutal political repression).



Fig. 9. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del franquismo*. Illustrated by Miguel Brieva. Barcelona: Anagrama/Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019, 104–105.

The stultifying, stupefying effect of this spectacle is evidenced by the combination, in the two young Spaniards' answers to the interviewer's questions, of a complete ignorance as to the reality of Francoism and an unquestioning repetition of many of its slogans. These are the young Spaniards that Brieva had in mind when thinking about how to illustrate the *Diccionario*. As he explains of people like these: "tú puedes usar como reclamo el franquismo siempre y cuando nadie sepa lo que es el franquismo, ni tú lo expliques, y se convierta en una palabra vacía, entonces se ha convertido en un referente vacío" (*Personal Interview*) (one can use an appeal to Francoism only if nobody knows what Francoism is, and you don't explain it, and it becomes an empty word, so it then becomes an empty reference). These young Spaniards desperately

need to both *learn* about Francoism and *unlearn* its discursive and ideological manipulations. They are in desperate need of this *Diccionario*. They are in desperate need of reading Vázquez Montalbán's entries and of confronting themselves as reflected in Brieva's illustrations if they are going to resist being part of the process through which "está asegurado que este país reviva en bucle su historia" (it is assured that this country will re-live, in an endless loop, its history), as the invisible interviewer says.

As in all the illustrations of the *Diccionario*, this one extends beyond the page. The cell phone that we can assume is being held up by the young man to take a selfie with his female friend remains unseen, strategically placed where we, the readers are. What image does this selfie show? Is it as malodorous as the one on the cell phone in the illustration of the spectacle of power of Hitler and Franco on the red carpet? This spectacle of power, of the power of ignorance, is certainly just as grotesque as that previous one. This ignorance must be combatted, and the new edition of the *Diccionario* is a great weapon in that battle. Walter Benjamin defines what he calls the "operative writer," a term that certainly applies to Vázquez Montalbán but that could be tweaked as the "operative artist" to also include Brieva, whose "mission is not to report but to struggle; he does not play the role of spectator, but actively intervenes" ("The author as producer" 86). In this form of art as intervention, Benjamin highlights the use of humor to create an alienation effect, following Brecht's formulation of the concept. We have seen how Brieva masterfully employs this effect in his artistic interventions. In this combat, Benjamin asserts, "there is no better starting point for thought than laughter" (95). The subversive humor and resulting laughter that characterizes Brieva's work can, indeed, be added to the arsenal of strategies through which all kinds of graphic works, be they cartoons or comics, intervene in contemporary Spain to *dis*-close the dominant narratives and attitudes to the repressive past of Francoism as well as to disclose the reality of that past that still affects the present. Brieva's illustrations are examples of what Vázquez Montalbán himself called the function of humor, through irony and caricature among other strategies, as an "anti-toxina" (qtd in Colmeiro, *Crónica* 30) (anti-toxin), a most effective medicine against spectacles of power and ignorance such as those depicted in Brieva's illustrations. Learning and unlearning here must go hand in hand, in a process that may possibly allow us to imagine that the image in the selfie just beyond the frame of the last illustration discussed may, someday, show the two young Spaniards transformed. We can imagine, why not, that after having read the unquestionably necessary and timely *Diccionario*, they no longer conceive of Francoism as a *palabra vacía* (empty word) but as a political reality to be condemned in order for it not to be assured that Spain "reviva en bucle su historia" (will re-live, in an endless loop, its history).

Notes

1. All illustrations from the *Diccionario* are used here with permission from the publisher, Anagrama, and the illustrator, Miguel Brieva, both of whom hold the copyright to the images. I would like to thank both of them for this permission. I would also like to thank Miguel Brieva for his generosity, time, and patience in answering the many questions I asked him while writing this chapter.
2. All translations to English are my own.
3. Brieva has published several collections of individual cartoons, such as his first book, *Dinero* and *Atentos a sus pantallas. El otro mundo, Volumen 1*. He has sometimes brought such disparate images together in the playful format of pseudo-encyclopedias, such as *Enciclopedia Universal Clismón. Bienvenido al mundo* and *La gran aventura humana. Pasado, presente y futuro del mono desnudo*. In *Memorias de la tierra*, he gives a collection of individual cartoons a thematic frame, presenting them as the memories of an extraterrestrial being, Zuth Egbedius Mö from the planet Zutón, of his visit to Earth. He has published one comic book with the kind of full-fledged plot one expects in a graphic novel, *Lo que (me) está pasando*. Many of his cartoons have appeared in newspapers and magazines such as *El País*, *El Jueves*, *Rolling Stone*, *Diagonal*, *La Vanguardia*, and *Ajoblanco*. He has also illustrated books, like the *Diccionario* studied here, and the children's book *Al final* as well as a recent version of *The Odyssey*, translated into Spanish by Brieva's mother, Carmen Estrada.
4. Brieva has noted that this kind of breaking of the panel has been present since the very origins of comics, as a “juego conceptual, de la retórica del propio cómic” (*Personal Interview*) (conceptual game within the rhetoric of comics). He often references a comic strip by the American cartoonist Winsor McCay who, in 1905, drew a strip of one of his most famous characters, Sammy Sneeze. When little Sammy, as he always did, sneezes at the end, the panel falls down all around him. What is not present in McCay's comic, of course, is the politically subversive message Brieva adds to this *juego* (game) in his own comics (See “Graphic Narrative” for a reproduction of McCay's comic strip).
5. Throughout this chapter, I maintain these two distinct meanings of the word, using the term I coin here, *dis-closure*, to mean the breaking open of a frame (in a literal or metaphorical sense) and disclosure to mean the unveiling or revealing of a previously unacknowledged or hidden reality or element of reality.
6. Christine M. Martínez, while not commenting on the literal breaking of the panel in the comic strip mentioned here, has also effectively studied how Brieva, in *Memorias de la tierra*, unveils the adverse effects on society of many assumptions underlying neoliberalism such as the conflation of the citizen and the consumer and the narrow definition of the latter as a supposedly rational, competitive individual always seeking to maximize his own economic self-interest.
7. This can be understood to be part of a larger process that Francisco Ferrándiz equates with a “desaprendizaje del franquismo” (unlearning of Francoism) which implies a

“desarme o desmantelamiento significativo de la estructura represiva del franquismo y de su arquitectura de propaganda” (37) (significant disarming or dismantling of the repressive structure of Francoism and of its propaganda architecture). This process brings together actions such as legislative initiatives at the national and regional levels, such as the 2007 Law of Historical Memory, the exhumations of mass graves organized by civic groups such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory), popular protests, historical research and its publication in books and essays, art projects, exhibits, and a wide variety of literary and filmic creations.

8. See “Desmontando el franquismo” for an overview of the exhibit. See the edited volumes by Amago and Marr, and by McKinney and Richter for more on the growing prestige of comics within the world of cultural production generally as well as their specific contributions to the recovery of the history of the victims of Francoism.
9. Surprisingly, Vázquez Montalbán’s *Diccionario* has received very little critical attention, perhaps due to being seen as a relatively straightforward and minor text within the author’s extensive oeuvre. I hope to show that it deserves a much more detailed analysis. Undoubtedly, the new edition, with its excellent illustrations, will help to get more people to engage with it.
10. Brieva, *Personal interview*.
11. See Balibrea for more on the connection of Vázquez Montalbán’s work to the development of the left in Spain.
12. *Charnego* is a pejorative term referring to individuals in Catalunya whose families are originally from other non-Catalan speaking regions of Spain. Vázquez Montalbán defiantly uses the term in a positive way, thus affirming his mixed, supposedly impure background. His radical rejection, and deconstruction, of any and all discourses of purity, be they national, cultural, religious, political, etc, is another characteristic of his work.
13. Brieva has expressed the importance of using the strategies of advertising to deconstruct its ideological effects: “cuando hablamos de romper marcos, el marco de nuestro tiempo lo marca la publicidad, prácticamente es publicidad, o es espectáculo, pues entonces, ¿cuál es el primer ‘target’ al que uno puede atacar, o puede deconstruir, pues obviamente es éste, que es el que está construyendo los mitos de nuestro tiempo. Los mitos de nuestro tiempo los está construyendo la publicidad y el espectáculo, y derribarlos implica usar esas mismas herramientas” (*Personal Interview*) (when we speak of breaking frames, the frame of our time is provided by advertising, it practically is advertising, or it is spectacle, so then, what is the main target one can attack, or deconstruct? well it is obviously that one, the one that is constructing the myths of our time. The myths of our time are being constructed by advertising and spectacle, and debunking them necessitates using those same tools).
14. He does something similar in his later novel *Autobiografía del general Franco*, where a Republican ghost writer, who has suffered Franco’s repression just as Vázquez Montalbán had, is asked to ghost-write an autobiography of Franco, and inserts his own

- story into his re-creation of the Caudillo's life. For more on this novel, see Ferrán and Colmeiro, *Crónica*.
15. Brieva has expressed his admiration and affinity for the way in which Vázquez Montalbán retained his critical stance throughout his life and has expressed that, for this reason, the author of the *Diccionario*, whose work he believes remains critically relevant today, has always been “un referente” (a reference) for him, (*Personal Interview*).
 16. An example of the continuing force of these stopper ideas in limiting cultural production in Spain is the fact that, as I write this article, a Spanish rapper, Pablo Hasél, has been sentenced to prison for his lyrics and tweets supposedly exalting terrorism and critiquing the Spanish Royal Family. He is just the last in a string of artists facing charges under a 2015 law of public security, known as the Ley Mordaza (Gag Law), passed by the conservative Rajoy government that has severely curtailed freedom of expression. Thousands have taken to the streets condemning Hasél's sentence. For more on this, see “Spain: Jailing of rapper” and “Spain: Tweet... if you dare.”
 17. There is no absolute consensus on how to differentiate between an android and a cyborg and, in fact, the two terms are at times used interchangeably. Many definitions stress the need for there to be some organic material in a cyborg, which is combined (to a greater or lesser degree) with some cybernetic, robotic, or otherwise synthetic component(s). An android is generally considered a robot with the appearance (to a greater or lesser degree) of a human. The image here could be either (given the fact that we cannot tell if the face is made of organic material or not and that we do not see the entire being, and thus there could potentially be a human body below the robotic head), but perhaps android might be a more accurate depiction. In any case, I am interested in highlighting the hybrid nature of the figure. I would like to thank Marit Hanson for her input on this matter.
 18. See Prieto for a discussion of one of these images.
 19. Although the image included in this article presents the title as ¡HOLA!, in the actual *Diccionario* illustrated by Brieva the title appears as ¡MOLA!. It was, unfortunately, impossible to find the image, as it appears in the book, for the present chapter.

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