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***La Transición* in Spanish Theatre: Memory, Disenchantment, and Critical Reassessment**

ABSTRACT

As the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Transition approaches, it is essential to examine how theatre has engaged with this transformative period in Spain's recent history. While the early years of democracy were marked by an urgent, testimonial approach to dramatising political change, subsequent theatrical representations have increasingly shifted toward critical reassessments, often shaped by memory and disenchantment. This article analyses the portrayal of the Transition in four plays written by playwrights from different generations: Buero Vallejo, Medina Vicario, Alfonso Plou/Julio Salvatierra and María Velasco. Through a comparative analysis, this study explores how these works reflect the evolving perception of the Transition, tracing a trajectory from immediate chronicle to retrospective critique.

KEYWORDS

Spanish Transition; contemporary Spanish theatre; memory; critique

This year, 2025, marks five decades since the beginning of the Spanish Transition, a process initiated after Franco's death in 1975 that signified the shift from dictatorship to democracy, profoundly transforming the country's political and social landscape. This period was characterised by a collective effort towards dialogue and consensus, led by key figures who laid the foundations of the current democratic system. Although the Transition resulted in the consolidation of a parliamentary democracy governed by the rule of law, the process was fraught with tensions and conflicts, including the persistence of Francoist factions, the activities of armed groups, and complex political negotiations. Over the years, this historical phase has been subject to extensive analysis and reassessment across various disciplines – including political and social sciences, literature, and the arts – contributing to deeper understanding of its achievements, contradictions, and unresolved challenges.

On the eve of this anniversary, this study aims to examine how the Transition has been represented in contemporary Spanish theatre and how its stage treatment

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has evolved over time. Drawing on sociocritical theory, which posits that every cultural text encodes the social and acts as a mechanism that selectively absorbs and integrates fragments of social discourse (Angenot, 2015), I argue that theatre, by virtue of its dialogic nature and immediacy, offers a unique space for audiences to engage with their own memory and the political tensions of their time in an especially tangible manner. From this perspective, dramaturgy not only reconstructs the memory of the Transition but also engages in a dialogue with the present, reworking the “extra-textual” and reconfiguring its meaning in relation to contemporary debates. The stage thus becomes a liminal space, where the historical and the fictional coexist in tension, enabling a critical reformulation of hegemonic discourses surrounding the transitional period.

The examination of the Transition’s theatrical representation allows one to observe how different generations of playwrights have engaged with this historical process, whether as a moment of reconciliation, as a complex period marked by both progress and setbacks, or as an episode whose impact remains subject to an ongoing critical reassessment. In line with Angenot’s (2010) assertion that discursive hegemony sets the boundaries of what is thinkable and sayable, thereby shaping the narrative frameworks through which the Transition is interpreted, I argue that theatre, as an artistic practice, has the capacity to challenge these boundaries and generate polyphonic spaces that contest the dominant perspectives.

Rather than attempting an exhaustive survey, this study seeks to analyse how the Transition has been thematized in Spanish theatre through four plays by playwrights from different generations¹. This limited but representative corpus illustrates the diversity of dramatic approaches to the Transition, shaped both by the authors’ personal trajectories and by the sociohistorical context in which the plays emerged². By focusing on these works, I aim to identify patterns in the dramaturgical evolution of this historical episode and assess its representation in relation to public debates at various moments. As Malczynski (1997–1998) suggests with the concept of *monitoring*, every literary text not only absorbs social discourse but also transforms and reintroduces it into circulation, thereby shaping the ways in which a society represents itself. From this perspective, theatre about the Transition operates within a discursive space where memory is continuously

¹ For studies that focus on theatre produced during the Transition and examine its institutional, aesthetic, and cultural dynamics, see García Lorenzo (1978–1980), Ruiz Ramón (1982), Rodríguez Solás (2024), among others. While this line of research is essential for understanding the broader theatrical landscape of the period, it falls outside the scope of the present study.

² It is worth noting that the website *Transición española. Representaciones en cine, literatura, teatro y televisión* [Representations in Film, Literature, Theatre and Television], Alicante, BVMC, (2021) compiles a comprehensive list of 77 plays that deal with this topic. However, this otherwise exhaustive catalogue does not include *La cola del difunto*, which is part of the corpus analysed in this study.

reconfigured, offering insights into how the past remains in dialogue with the present.

During the Spanish political Transition, few playwrights sought to depict on stage the instability and social tension that characterised that period, offering an immediate commentary on the political conflicts of the time. Antonio Buero Vallejo stands out as a notable exception, with *Jueces en la noche: Misterio profano en dos partes* [Judges in the Night: A Profane Mystery in Two Parts] (the Teatro Lara in Madrid, 1979) emerging as one of the first theatrical pieces to address the contemporary political situation directly and without euphemism. Despite receiving a predominantly unfavourable critical reception³, the play deserves particular attention for its ability to capture the climate of ideological conflicts, pervasive tension, and the persistent threat of political violence that defined the Transition. In this sense, the theatrical stage functions as a space for reflection on the contradictions of regime change. Given the timing of its composition and premiere, the play possesses an immediate topicality. As Sánchez (2003, p. 323) observes, within the sociopolitical context of the time, the political dimension of the piece abandons the metaphorical or distanced concealment characteristic of Buero's earlier works, opting instead for direct expression. However, this shift towards a more direct dramaturgy does not entail an abandonment of the playwright's poetics. As Trecca (2016, p. 150) notes, in the democratic era, Buero Vallejo's work evolves towards a poetics of memory in which the past, reinterpreted through individual subjectivity, becomes a permanent presence in all possible futures, since the future cannot be imagined from oblivion.

The action of *Jueces en la noche* is set in the early years of the Transition, in a Madrid marked by latent violence, where radicalised youth, armed security forces, and a society in search of political reorganization coexist. The play presents a mosaic of characters representing various spheres of power – politicians, clergy, military figures, financiers, and extremists – whose interactions reveal the ideological tensions of the period. Their dialogues reference key historical events, including protests against Spain's entry into NATO, terrorist attacks, and the persistence of immovable sectors within power structures. What occurs particularly significant is the portrayal of far-right groups who, through violence, sought to justify the possibility of authoritarian restoration, thus evoking fears of a coup d'état.

Within this atmosphere of uncertainty and conflict, the personal story of Juan Luis Palacios unfolds, who embodies the phenomenon of political defection,

³ Cf. De Paco 2018, who analyses the critical reception of Buero Vallejo's play. The study highlights both the negative reviews – which accuse the author of failing to renew himself or of reverting to the past – and the positive appraisals, which value his ethical consistency, commitment to social reality, and expressive boldness in a context free from censorship.

a hallmark of the Transition. A former Francoist minister, he successfully reinvents himself as a deputy in the new democratic system. However, his past continues to haunt him through remorse and nightmares that destabilize his apparent adaptation. The play's dramatic structure reinforces this internal struggle through a non-linear composition in which dreamlike sequences, memories, and real events intertwine, generating a fragmented perception of time that underscores the weight of historical memory on the protagonists. As Ricoeur (2000) explains, memory is not merely an act of recollection but a narrative construction that imbues the present with meaning through the reinterpretation of the past. In this sense, the play not only illustrates how memory and guilt shape individual identity but also serves as a critique of Spanish society, which faces the challenge of coming to terms with its past without having undergone a comprehensive process of truth, memory, and justice.

In this regard, a central symbolic element is the presence of three musicians who embody the victims of Francoist repression and act as metaphorical judges, confronting the protagonist with the reality of his actions. Their metatheatrical function introduces a critical dimension regarding the politics of silence and oblivion that characterised the Transition. As Azcue (2002, pp. 85–86) notes, their presence underscores the ongoing struggle between memory and historical amnesia, a key debate in post-Francoist Spain. The play thus highlights the impossibility of constructing a democracy on the foundations of forgetfulness and the denial of historical accountability.

Beyond its engagement with personal and collective trauma, *Jueces en la noche* also encodes the strategies of tension employed by certain sectors to justify an authoritarian regression. Violence is not merely presented as a latent threat but as a deliberate mechanism of destabilization. In this regard, the play aligns with studies that emphasize the manipulation of fear as a tactic to influence the trajectory of democratic evolution. As Narcisi (2024, p. 180) argues, the Transition was not merely a process of institutional change but also a period in which the fragility of the new system became evident. Far from endorsing an idyllic reconciliation narrative, Buero's play reveals how past perpetrators were not only exonerated but, in many cases, remained in power, while terrorism exploited the prevailing instability to assert its presence.

In sum, *Jueces en la noche* not only offers a dramatic portrayal of Spain's political Transition but also exposes the inherent contradictions of the process through a theatrical discourse that oscillates between the testimonial and the symbolic. Buero Vallejo's play stands as a theatrical testimony to the political and social discourses of the era, encompassing perspectives from the far-right to anarchists, as well as more moderate voices and those aligned with the interests of the Church and financial power. Moreover, the play sheds light on the resistance strategies, the attempts to perpetuate the old regime, and the moral

dilemmas associated with historical memory in the new democratic context. His work interrogates the hegemony of the official narrative, creating space for the silenced voices of history. As Narcisi (2024, p. 180) observes, this is not simply a bipartisan view of the conflict but an intermediate stance that denounces both the impunity of the past and the instrumentalization of memory in the present. In this sense, *Jueces en la noche* develops a poetics of memory as an open-ended process, where the uncertainties of the present become a contested space. The play ultimately raises a fundamental question for the future: Is democracy possible without justice?

Theatrical works that revisit the Spanish Transition from a temporal and generational distance offer even more varied interpretations of the process. This is evident in the work of playwrights whose youth coincided with that period of socio-political change. Among them, Miguel Medina Vicario stands out, as he was only 29 years old at the time of Franco's death—considerably younger than playwrights such as Antonio Buero Vallejo, who was 59. Seventeen years later, in 1992, Medina Vicario wrote and premiered (under the auspices of the Instituto del Teatro y de las Artes Escénicas in Gijón) *La cola del difunto: Auto premonitorio y algo sacramental* [The Tail of the Deceased: A Premonitory and Somewhat Sacramental Auto], a play that revisits the historical moment of the Transition and the socio-cultural processes it set in motion.

The dramatic construction of *La cola del difunto* shares notable similarities with *Jueces en la noche*. While Buero Vallejo's play alternates between reality and dreamlike sequences, blending concrete characters with abstract and symbolic figures such as the musicians, *La cola del difunto* intertwines the political and social with the fantastic, the allegorical, and the metatheatrical. In both works, temporal structure plays a crucial role in shaping meaning. However, whereas *Jueces en la noche* juxtaposes past and present—where characters interpret their present in light of their past—*La cola del difunto* introduces a premonitory dream that, from the perspective of the present, projects the protagonists' future.

The play's action unfolds on the day of Franco's death, and its title alludes to the long queue of citizens who came to bid farewell to the dictator's corpse. The protagonist, Concha, has been raised in a conservative environment, unlike her friends—Domingo, a painter; Mario, a journalist with literary ambitions; Amelia, a labour lawyer; and Rosa, a leftist party member—who celebrate Franco's death and the onset of the Transition. In this setting, where mourning and jubilation coexist, the fantastic element disrupts the narrative: through computer-generated effects or perhaps a miracle, the action leaps across different time periods.

The first of these temporal jumps transports one to the 1980s, amid the *Movida madrileña* [Madrid scene]. In a bar, the friends attend a performance of a play by Mario, featuring a dialogue between two puppets. This marionette exchange provides an ironic lens on Spain's recent history, explicitly referencing key events

of the Transition: the Moncloa Pacts, the legalization of the Communist Party, Spain's international opening, the 1981 coup attempt, and Felipe González's 1982 electoral victory. Subsequent time jumps fragmentarily portray episodes from the protagonists' lives, embedding their personal trajectories within the broader socio-cultural shifts of 1980s and early 1990s Spain. The premonitory dream extends into 1992, the year *La cola del difunto* premiered, coinciding with Spain's international rise: Madrid was named European Capital of Culture, Seville hosted the Universal Exposition, Barcelona held the Olympic Games, and the fifth centenary of the Discovery of America was commemorated. Medina Vicario's play explicitly references the latter two events, which serve as a backdrop for the characters' evolving realities. These moments encapsulate the transition from modern to postmodern cultural logic, as Spain, in just a few years, moved from an era of political struggle to one marked by depoliticization and consumerist spectacle. While the early years of democracy inspired collective enthusiasm, the rapid transformation soon bred disillusionment. This process aligns with Jameson's (1991) analysis that the shift from modernity to postmodernity entails a loss of historical depth, an inclination toward simulation, and the erosion of political commitment – elements Medina Vicario poignantly reflects through his characters.

The play illustrates how the revolutionary ideals of the young protagonists – Domingo, Mario, Rosa, and Amelia, former clandestine Communist Party militants – are quickly supplanted by the values of the new *episteme*: the erosion of political convictions, the rise of consumerism, the pursuit of individual success, and hedonism. Mario, who adapts to this new reality faster than the others, encapsulates this transformation, declaring: “Luchamos para lograr eso... y ahora tenemos derecho a disfrutarlo” [We fought for this... and now we have the right to enjoy it] (Medina Vicario, 1993, p. 89)⁴. This inclination to reclaim the lost years fosters moral and ideological disarmament, enabling statements like Domingo's at his exhibition's opening: “Los hombres no pertenecen a ningún dios, ni la sociedad pertenece a ninguna política, afortunadamente” [Men belong to no god, nor does society belong to any politics, fortunately] (p. 100). This political, social, and even existential nihilism emerges as the culmination of a process in which aspirations for structural transformation have dissolved into a logic of pragmatism and complacency.

In this sense, *La cola del difunto* functions as a generational testimony that expose the contradictions of the Spanish Transition: the initial utopian drive versus subsequent political disaffection, the struggle for systemic change versus the consolidation of a neoliberal order rooted in individualism, and the imperative of historical memory versus the amnesia imposed by the whirlwind of the present.

⁴ All English translations are by the author, unless otherwise specified.

Thus, *La cola del difunto* serves as a critical reflection on the Transition, exposing its unresolved tensions and questioning the extent of genuine transformation. With an ironic and disenchanted gaze, Medina Vicario interrogates the nature of the political shift, revealing how old power structures, rather than disappearing, have merely adapted to new circumstances. Ultimately, the play leaves the audience with a fundamental question: Was the Transition a true break with the past, or merely a reconfiguration of power in different forms?

Questions concerning the fate of the revolutionaries of the 1970s and the enduring myth of the Transition as the foundational moment of Spanish democracy have been revisited by playwrights from younger generations. Among them, those who experienced the Transition during childhood or adolescence occupy a distinctive position – having intuited the significance of events yet lacking the capacity to fully grasp their implications. Others, born into an already consolidated democratic system, have only encountered this period through external narratives and testimonies.

Within this framework, *Transición* [Transition] (2013) by Alfonso Plou and Julio Salvatierra constitutes a paradigmatic case. Premiered by the Teatro María Guerrero more than three decades after the events it portrays, the play dramatizes the passage from dictatorship to democracy, with particular emphasis on the figure of Adolfo Suárez, Spain's Prime Minister from 1976 to 1981. However, the authors do not seek to produce documentary or biographical theatre. According to the play's director, Santiago Sánchez, *Transición* offers a contemporary reflection on that political process, leaving open the question of whether the Transition was an exemplary model or, conversely, whether the concessions made during its development have contributed to present-day crises. Through its reconstruction of the past, the play endeavours to reinterpret historical events in order to comprehend the present – a purpose encapsulated in one character's observation: "Igual lo que tenemos ahora es consecuencia de lo que se hizo, ¿no?" [Perhaps what we have now is a consequence of what was done, isn't it?] (Plou & Salvatierra, 2013, p. 95).

Formally, the play unfolds with rapid shifts between temporal and spatial settings, alternating between realism and psychological introspection. The audience is presented with key episodes of the Transition, recreated through dialogue, audiovisual projections, and period songs. These historical reenactments are juxtaposed with a contemporary televised debate, in which apologetic and critical perspectives on Spain's sociopolitical transformation are placed in dialogue. Finally, some scenes take place in a psychiatric clinic, where a patient named Adolfo believes himself to be the former Prime Minister. His memory loss – an allusion to Adolfo Suárez's battle with Alzheimer's in the later years of his life – serves as a powerful metaphor for Spain's collective amnesia: an allegory of the forgotten agreements and renunciations that shaped the Transition.

From Jameson's (1991) perspective, this historical forgetfulness is not merely an accidental consequence but a structural effect of postmodernity, wherein the fragmentation of historical time and the saturation of competing narratives erode the critical consciousness of the past.

In this sense, *Transición* does not merely revisit history but invites audiences to interrogate the legacy of the Transition within the context of contemporary political crises. Through humour and satire, the play challenges spectators to rethink the Transition's impact on present-day reality, avoiding unambiguous conclusions while raising pressing questions about the nature and consequences of Spain's democratic process. Its metatheatrical dimension further reinforces its critical stance. As in other theatrical works addressing this period, the stage becomes a space for reflection, in which history is presented as an open and ongoing process, subject to multiple interpretations and resignifications.

Ultimately, *Transición* illustrates how new generations of playwrights have approached Spain's democratic transition not as a closed chapter but as a process that continues to shape contemporary reality. By problematising the memory of that period and its political legacy, the play situates itself at the intersection of history and the present, prompting audiences to examine the nature of Spain's democratic system and the persistence of structures inherited from Francoism. The fundamental question it poses is not merely whether the Transition was exemplary or flawed, but rather to what extent its limitations and contradictions continue to shape contemporary Spain.

The same year that *Transición* premiered, the same Teatro María Guerrero staged *La ceremonia de la confusión* [The Ceremony of Confusion], a play by María Velasco, a young playwright born in 1984. Unlike Plou and Salvatierra's approach, which centres on key events and historical figures of the Transition, Velasco adopts a fictionalised perspective that critically revisits this period, posing a central question: what became of the revolutionaries of the 1970s and 1980s? One of the play's most striking aspects is its hybrid structure, in which theatre merges with other genres, abandoning formal rigidity. The piece oscillates between comedy and drama, irony and reflection, incorporating elements of *esperpento* [grotesque] within a contemporary framework. Additionally, the integration of 1980s music – featuring emblematic songs of the era – infuses the production with a musical dimension that resonates across generations, appealing both to those who directly experienced *La Movida* and to younger audiences fascinated by its aesthetic and cultural legacy.

La ceremonia de la confusión establishes a dialogue between contemporary Spain and the late 1970s, a time of hope and change. The narrative begins with the death of a musician who embodied the spirit of a generation, prompting a reunion of former friends, survivors of *La Movida madrileña*, who confront their own contradictions. In this funeral parlour that turned the stage into the place

of confrontation, various perspectives emerge: Olga clings to a time that is fading away; Fabio has changed so much that he barely recognises himself; Roberta, a trans woman in constant search of identity, continues to redefine herself. Amid old quarrels and forgotten romances, the characters decide to transform the funeral into an irreverent event that defies convention, turning it into a true “ceremony of confusion”. The farewell to the deceased becomes a farewell to an entire era, a ceremony where solemnity dissolves into the grotesque.

Far from being a mere nostalgic evocation, *La ceremonia de la confusión* critically reexamines the Transition and its aftermath. While the end of Francoism ushered in an era of newfound freedoms, the play suggests that this legacy has not been effectively safeguarded and that it is now imperative to reassess it. Velasco dismantles the mythologizing narratives surrounding *La Movida*, rejecting its romanticization as a movement of political resistance. As Fabio ironically remarks: “Sexo, droga y rock and roll, pero... [...] El Generalísimo murió de viejo. Así que no me vengas con que si la lucha y las libertades... [...] Se fumaron miles de canutos, nos corrimos juergas pantagruélicas. Eso es todo”. [Sex, drugs, and rock and roll, but... [...] The Generalissimo died of old age. So don’t come at me with talk of struggle and freedoms... [...] We smoked thousands of joints, we had epic parties. That’s all.]. Roberta, in an even more caustic tone, reduces her participation in the movement to “mucho botellón” [a lot of drinking sessions] (Velasco, 2013a, pp. 64–65).

This critique is also embodied in Pau, the young partner of the deceased. His position is that of both witness and generational bridge. Initially captivated by the rebellious ethos of those who lived through *La Movida*, he soon realises that he must forge his own path. Pau represents Velasco’s generation – a cohort that, as he states, feels condemned to “militar en la nada” [militate in nothingness] (p. 67). His coming-of-age trajectory distances him from inherited myths, prompting him to seek new horizons: “¿Para cuándo el próximo deshielo? [...] Tengo la esperanza de ver el próximo gran cambio climático; la caída de las torres quintillizas; la extinción de los dinosaurios de nuestra era, los de dos patas, quiero decir. [...] ¿Para cuándo otra Movida?” [When will the next thaw come? [...] I hope to witness the next great climate change; the fall of the quintuple towers; the extinction of the dinosaurs of our era – the two-legged ones, I mean. [...] When will we have another *Movida*?] (p. 109). His words encapsulate the dialectic between the imposition of official memory and the emergence of narratives that seek to contest its meaning. His yearning for a “next thaw” and “another *Movida*” is not merely nostalgic; rather, it expresses an awareness that the dominant discourses of the past no longer suffice in the present.

Velasco (2013b, p. 23) herself acknowledges this ambivalence: “En la obra hay pinceladas de gerontofilia, incluso mitomanía (cualquier tiempo nos parece mejor, al igual que el país donde no se vive), pero también hay un reproche

zigzagueante a nuestros predecesores” [There are hints of gerontophilia in the play, even a kind of mythomania (we always think the past was better, just as we idealize countries we have never lived in), but there is also a zigzagging reproach towards our predecessors]. This reproach stems from a generational distance: the playwright did not experience *La Movida* firsthand but reconstructs it through *postmemory*, a concept that describes how subsequent generations engage with historical events they did not directly witness. Through this mechanism, *La ceremonia de la confusión* reveals the dissonance between mythical narratives and contemporary perceptions, a phenomenon that, following Angenot, is inscribed within the broader struggle for meaning in the discursive field.

From this perspective, Velasco does not idealise the past but problematises it. Her play exposes the tension between the aspirations of a generation and its contradictions, illustrating the impossibility to indefinitely cling to a bygone era. As Fox (2016, p. 131) observes, the work invites reflection on “el desajuste entre lo que esperábamos de nuestra vida y lo que hemos logrado, sobre lo irremediable del paso del tiempo y lo patético (en sentido etimológico) de quedarse vinculados a un pasado que juzgamos glorioso” [the discrepancy between what we expected from life and what we have actually achieved, on the inevitability of the passage of time, and on the *pathetic* (in the etymological sense) nature of remaining attached to a past we consider glorious]. In this sense, the play also serves as a meditation on decline and the transience of life. It is no coincidence that the characters gather in a funeral parlour – a space that symbolises not only the death of a friend but also the twilight of a generation. As one character wryly remarks, the funeral parlour is “el bar que nunca Cierra” [the bar that never closes] (Velasco, 2013a, p. 33) a striking image of a time frozen within its own mythology. However, through Roberta – whose search for identity remains open-ended – the play underscores the fluidity of selfhood and the necessity of continual reinvention. Pau, as the youngest character, embodies a paradoxical nostalgia: he is drawn to a vibrant era but resists succumbing to its self-destructive spiral.

In this sense, *La ceremonia de la confusión* does not merely revisit the past but gestures toward a future in which it is possible to transcend outdated structures and forge new forms of dissent. Pau’s question – “When will we have another *Movida*?” – is not merely a melancholic evocation but an open challenge to the present. The play, therefore, projects an alternative horizon, operating as a laboratory of imaginaries in constant transformation. Through its deconstruction and reconfiguration of past discourses, Velasco maps the ideological and symbolic tensions that define our time.

The analysis of these four theatrical works highlights the diverse approaches through which different playwrights have represented the Spanish Transition over the past decades. These variations stem both from the historical moment of the texts’ production and reception – which shapes the critical distance from the events

depicted – and from the generational background of their authors, whose collective experiences have influenced their perception of the period. As sociocriticism asserts, every cultural text constitutes a site of negotiation between *the given* and *the created* (Chicharro Chamorro, 2004). In the case of theatre addressing the Transition, this tension materializes in a continual reconfiguration of narratives about the past.

Plays written during the Transition itself, such as *Jueces en la noche* by Buero Vallejo, convey the urgency of immediate commentary on the prevailing climate of social unrest, addressing the threats of terrorism and the risk of a coup d'état. In these texts, theatre functions as a direct intervention in public debate, assuming an active role in shaping the ideological landscape of the time. Over the years, this representation has evolved: *La cola del difunto* by Medina Vicario, written in the 1990s, encapsulates the generational disillusionment provoked by the abrupt and radical nature of the changes – a sentiment often referred to as *mono de la transición* (“Transition withdrawal”), which serves as a counterpoint to the hegemonic discourse that established the Transition as an exemplary and model process. Following Angenot (2010), hegemonic discourse delineates the boundaries of what can be expressed, yet subsequent theatrical productions demonstrate that these limits are not static but subject to contestation and continuous resignification.

In the 21st century, theatrical representations of the Transition adopt a more distanced perspective and, in some cases, a greater degree of indulgence, though without abandoning critical reassessment. *Transición* and *La ceremonia de la confusión* intertwine inquiry, scepticism, and homage, employing a bittersweet tone that fuses humour with nostalgia. Both plays draw upon collective and emotional memory, incorporating musical and metafictional elements that not only revisit the period but also reinterpret it in the light of contemporary political, economic, and social conditions. In this regard, theatre depicting the Spanish Transition does not merely reactivate past discourses but also reconfigures them, contributing to the circulation of narratives within a given social space (Malczuzynski, 1997–1998, p. 192).

This dramaturgical trajectory underscores that theatre has served not only as testimony to political change but also as a forum for critical reflection on the legacies of the Transition. In a context of institutional crisis and ongoing debates about historical memory, these plays underscore that the Transition remains a contested terrain – both politically and theatrically. Echoing the assertion that literature and arts partake in social conflict as a discursive practice (Angenot, 2015), it can be argued that theatre about the Transition continues to expand the limits of the thinkable, challenging accepted narratives and recuperating voices that have remained at the margins of the official account.

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