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Expressed desires, (undesired)d desires: Systems and processes for the control of creative strategies of the self in contemporary society

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NOTA DE LA TRADUCTORA:

Es con mucho amor y admiración que participo en este volumen de homenaje ofreciendo una traducción al inglés del último artículo escrito por Ángel. A lo largo de nuestro movido y apasionante periplo juntos durante los últimos cuarenta y dos años, no he podido disponer del tiempo necesario para poder traducir los escritos de Ángel al inglés como se merecían. Espero iniciar así la rectificación de mi imperdonable negligencia con esta traducción y con una genuina promesa de intentar ser más productiva en este campo en el futuro al embarcarnos en nuestro cercano viaje de jubilados. Esta próxima etapa nuestra discurrirá seguramente por nuevos caminos, pero seguirá, sin duda, guiada por el mismo indomable espíritu libre, pasión por la vida, curiosidad por las ideas e imparable impulso de entablar comunicación con su entorno que siempre han caracterizado a Ángel Berenguer. Me considerado enormemente afortunada de formar parte de su vida.

Joan PIERSON BERENGUER

■ Various research projects undertaken by the members of GIAE in recent years focusing on Theater Censorship during General Franco's Dictatorship have allowed us to reflect on its constants and variants¹. The investigation of information and data collection necessarily led us to explore implicit questions about a practice which was contrary to the moral convictions of all the team members. This point committed us to creating a data-base system which would not permit (as far as it was possible to predict) interference of subjective opinions. We endeavored to organize the material according to a data system, transcribing the contents to a digital base and making them available to whomever might be interested in this period of Spanish history and in search of the type of data offered.

Nonetheless, this material contained the expression of a human activity which transcends the mere facts and actors of our particular history. To observe this "passion for silencing" evoked by John Maxwell Coetzee (also recently emerged from a dictatorial system) and to reflect upon a practice that surpasses the temporal and territorial borders of our research material was a foreseeable endeavor. Seeking to explain this phenomenon from the perspective of our group's Theory of Motives and Strategies means not only interpreting the data, but also exploring the areas of power, examining their real powers, and investigating the mechanisms which were designed (with full self-justification) to limit expression of the creative SELF both in the fields of Literature and Arts as well as in Scientific work. The boundaries of this activity exceed historical periods and, in one way or another, can even be detected in the ever more open societies developing in our advanced Democracies².

¹ Since 2005, GIAE (*Grupo de Investigación de Artes Escénicas*) has worked on the following projects: "Recepción durante el siglo XX del teatro en Madrid y censura durante la Era de Franco" (financed by the *Comunidad de Madrid*, 2005); "Recepción, censura y crítica del teatro español del siglo XX en Madrid" (financed by the *Comunidad de Madrid*, 2006); y "Recepción y crítica del teatro español durante la dictadura (1939-1975) en Madrid, Valencia y Buenos Aires: Bases de datos digitales" (financed by the *Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*, 2006-2009).

² Having written this more than a decade ago, I found great pleasure and encouragement in discovering that many of the ideas and concepts explored by us were included in John Maxwell Coetzee's book *Giving Offense. Essays on Censorship*. This title seems particularly appropriate because it focuses on an aspect of the underlying "motives" in the practice of censorship. From this book was drawn the title of this paper:

These projects arose as a consequence of the research undertaken by María Rosario Jurado Latorre for her dissertation (*The Theater of Muñoz Seca and the Criticism of his Times*) during several years prior to her thesis defense in 2000. The playwright's family had spoken to her about how the author had been censored during the immediate post-war period. I suggested she investigate the files pertaining to this author in the Censorship Archives. Extremely interesting materials appeared which revealed the complex system of these processes by which the plays of an author who had been assassinated by the victorious Dictatorship's enemies had, nonetheless, undergone censorship.

The results of this data were so intriguing that I decided to encourage and accept further projects related to the Regime's censorship. My interest was focused on clarifying the true nature of the censorship, differentiating between the Censorship Agency (*Junta de Censura*), a mere instrument for initiating procedures, and the ideological structures sustaining the Franco Regime.

It seems evident, as present results demonstrate, that the Dictatorship's system applied different measures related to different institutions, which were granted the power to evaluate, approve or reject a given creative proposal.

At heart of the question is found, from our current perspective, a practice of power that grants itself the right to condemn to silence a desire, the proposal of an author, materialized in a creation (act of freedom legitimized by the Declaration of the Human rights based on the ideals of Contemporaneity).

The creative work, therefore, is transformed into an act by which the SELF of the creator exerts his right as a citizen to create an imaginary reality and to reflect in that formalization an artistic strategy. In it, the response of the SELF to his surrounding environment generating a potentially unbearable degree of tension is materialized.

The expression of that tension within the framework of the imaginary reality of the artist's creation could, at the same time, signify a type of aggression for the circles of power. The desire expressed by the creative subject (even only an expressed desire) might incite the powers on hand, who considered themselves legitimately entitled to condemn it to silence. This could happen to such a degree that, in a more or less radical manner, the work of an author could become "(undese)red". Consequently it could be attacked, struck down, despised, and condemned to silence, partially or in its entirety; all of which would, of course, result in injury

"In his [the censor's] lexicon, undesirable means "that ought not to be desired" or even "that may not be desired". The point can be pressed further. What is undesirable is the desire of the desiring subject: the desire of the subject is undesired. If we take the morphological liberty of reading undesired not as un(desired) but as (undese)red, then we can think of undese)red as a verb whose meaning is something like "to curb the desire of X for Y". (Coetzee, 2007: viii)

for the censured subject who would resent the scorn with which what he desired was “undesired”: “the desire of the subject is undesired”. In addition, he was condemned to silence with all the entailing economic, social and judicial corollaries.

The activity of Censorship becomes, from this perspective, an illegitimate activity for any power existing within the framework of Contemporaneity, based on the three pillars and paradigms of individualism: freedom, equality and solidarity. Any attack on these principles loses all legitimacy, and censorship, conceived precisely as the right to silence, is an illegitimate activity although, in exceptional circumstances of great retrogression, it can become legal.

Given these considerations, I deemed it necessary to lend my support to projects undertaken by students of my now extinct Doctorate Program, “Theory, History and Practice of Theater”, interested in the subject. We proceeded to identify the materials that would allow us to formulate the research lines along which we could define the entity, its operations and its various strategies, clearly reflecting the position of power, at each moment, of the Dictatorship’s different factions. It is especially interesting because although the information extracted demonstrates the basic executive procedures of the censorship instrument, from them emerges the amalgamation of values represented in the dictatorial system.

The analysis that follows would not be possible without the contributions of several members of GIAE. Especially noteworthy is the excellent research carried out by Berta Muñoz Cáliz, recognized by the U.A.H.’s Extraordinary Prize she was granted for her doctoral thesis (*Spanish critical theater during the Franco Regime, as seen by its censors*, 2004), already published in several volumes³. Dr. Muñoz Cáliz’s work, is, undoubtedly, the most elaborate and valuable result of the research hypothesis embraced by all members of our team, with greater or lesser enthusiasm, for more than a decade. Censorship and its documentation were providing us with a somewhat different perspective on theater creation during the Dictatorship. From its special perspective, it offered a view into a closed universe within which, to a certain extent, an internal history of Franco’s Spain was being revealed. This body of research, and most notably Dr. Muñoz Cáliz’s, indicated to us that we were treading a dark path in which an absolute power imposed itself directly upon a society, which did not fully identify itself with the ideals of the Regime, and clearly and progressively began questioning it “precisely” through the censured material. From this point of view, our findings have allowed us to identify some

³ *El Teatro Crítico español durante el Franquismo visto por sus censores*, Fundación Universitaria Española, Colección *Tesis Doctorales “Cum Laude”*, n.º 31, Madrid, 2005, 543 pages and *Expedientes de la censura teatral franquista*, Fundación Universitaria Española, 2 vols. (798 pages: Vol. I: 404 pages; Vol. II: 394 pages), Colección *Investigaciones Bibliográficas sobre Autores Españoles*, Madrid, 2006.

aspects of the Regime which expand our understanding of the actual mode in which absolute power was exerted through Censorship.

The first matter that becomes evident is the coexistence within the *Junta de la Censura* (the Censorship Agency) of several often contradictory points of view, varying according to the period and the greater or lesser amount of power granted by the Dictatorship to the different sectors on which the Dictatorship was grounded. These sectors represented conservative values that, at the beginning of the Dictatorship in 1939, were closely bound to the re-establishment of the political order prior to the Second Republic, despite the *Falangist* rhetorical that frequently crops up in these initial decades.

In the following years, however, the Dictator was (not surprisingly) incapable of elaborating a coherent system of values for a conservative state, and in need of new options that sooner or later would clearly result in opening the Franco regime up to an ever greater presence of a capitalist economy. The appearance of growing flexibility in Franco's political system, beginning in the Sixties, leads towards an expectation that the liberalized economic system would eventually imply the development of an increasingly open society. This process is also implicit in the evolution of the character of (undesire)d desires and their growing intensity from the Sixties on.

The Censorship documents demonstrate to us that (as is commonly known) families (or rather clans) coexisted whose predominance was closely bound to one of the leading groups constituting General Franco's pinnacle of power during the Dictatorship, be it political, religious or military. Not only did they coexist but they also fought among themselves to impose criteria, often times not shared by other fractions. These disputes were settled by dictates descending in different forms, from the predominant group holding force at a given moment. The dominant force varied in different periods according to the dictator's criterion of the moment and this force was charged with the elaboration of political strategy, although the ultimate decisions ended up coming from Franco, thus explaining the varying power positions of the various representatives in the *Junta de Censura*.

Consequently (and with full awareness of the censors) their criteria carried more or less weight according to the dictates which descended (as one said then and now) "from above". This marked, to a certain extent, "the divine" nature of those interventions: the "God" of the *National Movement* granted the orders. And the censors submitted to this, attempting to gain small victories in order to justify themselves before the sector they represented in the *Junta de Censura*.

The Dictatorship of General Franco functioned in ways different from other totalitarian dictatorial systems during the different periods of its long duration in power. Other dictatorships design their instruments for silencing supported by a single strategy, the Party's, imposing domination over the armed forces and religion. The way in which Franco's political strategy worked presents certain peculiarities. General Franco's Dictatorship oscillated between different

values at different moments of silencing the (undesire)d proposals by creators who “offended” the “morals” of the official Church, the *Falange*, the Armed Forces... Of course they all shared, each one in its own way, a conservative, authoritarian system of values which excluded anything that could be viewed as falsification or offensive by the Dictatorship. Nevertheless, the dominant criterion was not always the political one; among other reasons, because the political philosophy did not have a clear distinguishing formulation but was rather the result of an amalgamation called the National Movement, where common criteria coincided.⁴

The *Falange/Fascist* base of the *Movement* was evident, but equally clear was the presence of the Armed Forces in the higher decision-making organs, as well as the dominance of the official Catholic Church in the years following the victory of the so-called Crusade, although later more distance would separate it from the Regime, with the appearance of dissenting voices within the Church itself. In addition, the adoption, initiated by the 1959 Plan of Stabilization, of a more open economic system and capitalist modes of production, created a veritable gap between citizens’ daily lives and the dictatorial system.⁵

Upon reviewing the process of Spanish censorship and attempting to place it within its context, questions of theoretical order arise which need to be addressed in an effort to calibrate aspects of past research and propose future research directions.

In effect, it is also evident that Franco’s Regime sought to reinstate the basic principles of social coexistence that were much closer (within the limits of feasibility) to those of the *Ancien Regime*, prior to the bourgeois revolutions, although transformed in its necessity to negotiate, in the global context of Contemporaneity and its fundamental values. It attempts to return to the past, not to define the future. Other regimes that resort to this mechanism use it to assure

⁴ As Dr. Muñoz Cáliz indicated in the conclusions of her dissertation, “There are many conditions that influence the outcome of a play, among others, the prestige and political significance of the author, the play’s topic, and the tone and treatment used.”

⁵ Other conclusions from Dr. Muñoz Cáliz’s dissertation:

“With regards to the members of the Junta de Censura on theater, we’ve seen that it consisted mainly of a series of theater critics from daily papers and magazines close to the regime, among others, *Arriba*, *El Alcázar* o *La Gaceta Literaria*, together with stage directors, dramaturges, poets, journalists- who collaborated in *Informaciones*, *Blanco y Negro*, *Signo*, or the religious publications *Ecclesia* and *Razón y Fé*, among others-, professors, literary essayists, civil servants from the *Junta de Censura* for cinema, the Vice-Secretary of Popular Education and other sections, besides the religious censors. The criteria applied when censoring a play was varied, since the small group in the *Junta* was basically a reflection of the conglomerate of ideological “families” which composed the Franco regime. Consequentially throughout the different periods with different representation of each one there was a flow of *Falange* and Catholic censors, the more reactionary branch of Franco’s regime, together with others more liberal and even, in some cases, the military hierarchy comes into play. However, as occurs in these “families”, the censors share essential aspects of common ideology and therefore common criteria which will be more dominant than the divergences and will permit the censorship mechanism, in much the same fashion as Franco’s regime, to continue functioning to the end; the fact is that censorship of shows did not legally disappear until 1978 (in 1976 plays were still being prohibited), only a few months before the Spanish Constitution was approved.”

the imposition of well defined ideals: Communists, Nazis, Apartheid and Fascists. The Franco Regime extracts models and justifications from all of them, but the driving force is, above all, the imposition of a set of behavioral rules. Since it was not possible to eliminate certain divergent ways of thinking (the individual rights proclaimed by the 18th c. revolutions to liberty, equality and solidarity), this instrument was used to silence their public expression (even, at times, on more intimate levels, invading family privacy). The “offense” is materialized by declaring the desire of the subject as something undesired.

In the context of totalitarian dictatorships’ instruments of censorship are self-justified but never achieve social consensus, as would occur in the Old Regime. There are nations that adopt them, but other that don’t. The contemporary paradigms end up prevailing, sometimes by force, and manage to control the “dissidents” of the democratic system, whose foundation is the individual as a citizen. As such, with the end of World War II and the fall of the Berlin Wall, it seemed as if we had finally arrived at the limits, the end of censorship as an instrument for silencing dissidence. Although some of the dictatorial regimes fall at a later date in Western Europe, such is the case of Portugal and others, like Spain, are transformed through a process of Political Transition into a democratic constitutional system. In effect, the Spanish Democratic Transition, carried out by King Juan Carlos and President Adolfo Suárez, is the first strategy of the Franquist system to adapt to the new reality. Transition means passing from one state to another, from Dictatorship to Democracy, with no confrontation taking place; the Franco regime self-destructs and opens the way to a new Democratic Constitution. This “democracy of transit” needed to be consolidated and, the very same Franco politicians who had initiated it, attempted to be the creators of its consolidation.

The beginning of Spanish Democracy with the elections of 1982 that gave power to the Socialist Party seemed well established and connected to the ideals of Contemporaneity. This, however, is not fundamentally what occurred, and it could be said that the Transition, by avoiding the trauma of a clear break with the past, also permitted the survival of political and social principles that are reminiscent of some of the practices of the Dictatorship. Among these, the most glaring is the continuation of an evident preponderance of the Catholic Church (that still binds the democratic State to a Concordat established during the Dictatorship which recognizes a supposed debt of Spain’s owed to the Catholic Church since the *Desamortización* [seizure of Church property] dating from the mid 19th century). Another tendency that seems to endure in Spain is the political class’s passion for controlling as much power as possible and extending it over the executive, legislative and judicial branches. This results in government actions favoring the ideals of the winning party which, one must keep in mind, might “offend”, in much the same way as censorship, the opposing party or parties. Similarly, with respect to the realm of theater production under State control; the current National Drama Centers follow closely the model of their predecessors, the National Theaters under

Franco. A point in fact is their location within the Ministry of Culture that assumes, now in more democratic terms, the activities of the old Ministries of Propaganda and Information, through partisan interventions by the government in power, so out of step with the principles of advanced democratic societies.⁶

This helps to explain the continuous confrontation of citizens who do not consider the government of Spain effective, demonstrated in the CIS surveys indicating the political class and the institutions of the State situated among the lowest positions in Spanish citizens' esteem and consideration.⁷ This is not surprising in view of other events such as the fact that despite Western Civilization's seemingly resolved issues at the end of World War II as evident as an end to censorship, and nevertheless it embarks on the Cold War, while maintaining supposedly the ideals of individualism in freedom, equality and solidarity among the citizens. Despite this, evidence demonstrates that in Western democracies, the Cold War would open the door to the use of practices that, to a certain degree, emulated the activities of dictatorships.

The defense of the system imposes upon its citizenry an aggression against individual liberties which in the case of the United States Congress, develops an inquisitorial mechanism (unlike dictatorial censorships, it is at the legislative level and not the executive where censorship strategy is carried out). The McCarthy Commission on "Un-American" Activities is the most visible section. It has been translated generally as Commission of Anti-American Activities although, in fact, it means Non-American (who defined what was non-American and to what extent could it become a danger for the State?). In this process the other legislative house also participated, the Senate, through the Internal Security Subcommittee and the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. According to numbers published between 1949 and 1954, they were more than 100 investigations. The basis of all the investigations was the search for Communist party members and/or supporters. The motivation was suspicion of treason, but the outcome was a brutal attack on freedom not only of expression, but also of thought.

⁶ In the case of Spain, it is interesting to observe after 1982, behavioral changes in certain writers previously silenced by Franco's censorship who drastically modified their attitudes when dealing with the newly democratic state. Among many different writers a desire for prominence and a search for privileged positions could be observed. To this end some authors resorted to self-censorship (among other options) as a way of not alienating the favor of the powerful, represented by the political class that, on the whole and despite party differences, is always in power. Perhaps the most striking cases are found in Alfonso Sastre's evolving institutional and 'centrist' attitudes and Fernando Arrabal's consideration of his own creations when he eliminated *La marcha real* from his *Complete Works*, published by the conservative *Partido Popular* of Melilla. At the same time, other authors censored by Franco continued their confrontation with the powers of the democratic state, such as Lauro Olmo and José María Rodríguez Méndez.

⁷ *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas:*

http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2740_2759/2749/e274900.html

The situation was serious from the perspective of a democratic system and not only in its consequences for the Arts, Thought and Literature, but for all professions related to Mass Communication and the media (periodicals and magazines) or creative works (theater, cinema). It caused true tragedies that remind us of those suffered by Goya hiding some of his works out of fear of the consequences they could incur. But also it affected scientists stretching so far as to touch the organizer of the Manhattan Project and creator of the North American atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, a first class American scientist, German Jew of first and second generation, born in New York and declared a national hero after the success of the Project, who ended up under suspicion of treason when he stood up to the military machine, and tried to limit the destructive power of the new technology, that he had helped to develop. There are, without a doubt, certain reminiscences here of Galileo's trial in the files of his investigation.⁸

Titled *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, the play based on more than 1,000 pages of transcriptions of the trial (contained in a file with this same title in the North American Administration), was written in 1968 by Carl Forsman. Its revival in 2006 at the Connelly Theater of the East Village of New York appeared on the scene as a reminder, in present times, of the way in which the Iraq War had to be accepted "because of patriotism" by North American media, Congress and the Senate. What the revival reminds us is that the practice of censorship still survives and has yet to be resolved. Within this context we can situate the activity of concerned citizens' movements, in many Western democracies, attempting to limit the violence in cinema, as a way to curb the increasingly worrisome growth of social violence.

But this topic is not limited to the United States and appears in countries with well established democracies such as the United Kingdom. I will mention a case that I have been following for years: the case of Howard Brenton's play *The Romans in Brittany*, which suffered attempts to be banned from the stage. The author explained with the following comments:

The show could not be stopped. It was carried out to the end according to schedule. The first thing that happened was the secret police's viewing of the play to see if it were possible to ban it under the Theater Law. They were sent by the general prosecutor. They reported back that there was no possibility of doing so. Miss Mary Whitehouse appeared then and inquired if she could privately file a complaint against the play, under the Theater Law. The authorities responded negatively. At that point we thought that our situation had been resolved, that the Theater Law had protected us. Then there was an attempt to sue us under the 1956 law against sexual abuses which is, in fact, an anti-pimping law, devised to protect against male pimping,

⁸ See the excellent book by Kai Bird y Martin J. Sherwin: *American Prometheus, the Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Knopf, New York, 2006, p. 6. Also pages xi and xii in reference to actions against his image and person.

in the case of male prostitution. Consequentially the stage director was accused of pimping, and the actors were represented in the role of masculine prostitutes.⁹

All of this points to the fact that a democratic Constitution does not guarantee, for the moment, the disappearance of censorship practices that include self-censorship (for political, commercial and/or social reasons) and the intervention of private and public powers in direct ways (preventing what those in power consider to be dangerous) or indirect (subsidizing what the State considers acceptable). However, the commercial, religious, and political centers of the power act in the same way. The creators must be attentive to the interests of the publishing group, the political party or the religious institutions that control the means of expression

Nevertheless, the appearance of Internet begins to push back and limit the practical possibilities of censorship, although states such as China demand control of the system (and the prohibition of transmitting news and images related to Tibet, for example) or, in Cuba, where it had been prohibited until very recently, not only Internet access but also the possession of a computer.

In effect, the question should be considered, in theoretical terms, from a more general perspective within the framework of the system of motives and strategies that we have been developing in the GIAE. If the passion for silencing, as indicated by Coetze, is actually not limited to dictatorial societies (of political, religious and/or racial character), but rather impregnates open democratic societies up to the 21st century (in more or less mitigated fashion, but effective in their outcomes), not to mention naturally the closed societies of the Old Regime, might one say that, in some way, the human species transmits this “passion” with its genetic code? Will communications technologies and education generate a transformation of that passion?

This question has two parts and they should be considered separately.

In the first place, we must recognize the process of implementation of the paradigms of Contemporaneity (Freedom, Equality, Solidarity) since 1776 and 1789. The process of their implementation marks a path towards the rationality of the human species; overcoming animal instincts with reason, stemming back to the ancient Aristotelian binomial distinction of the rational animal. In this sense there is a clear direction, in Western culture and all those that impregnate their economic and social principles (in the new globalized space) with values directed towards the suppression of systems of censorship intervention. And this can be viewed from two perspectives: the technological one offering the means to avoid it and the ideological one which, in increasingly global terms (thanks to the globalization of information), condemns those practices and is nourished by greater, more diverse and more immediate

⁹ “Entrevista de Howard Brenton” by Ángel Berenguer. Published in Ángel Berenguer: *Teatro europeo de los años 80*, Ed. Laia, Barcelona, 1983, p. 81-104)

information within the reach of a greater number of citizens worldwide.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the excellent works by Professor Felipe Fernandez Armesto, in order to establish a line of thought that could, possibly, clarify this documented passion for silencing that certain human groups establish.¹⁰

Fernandez Armesto poses a particular mode of conceiving the concept of *civilization*: the mode and strategies for survival that different human groups develop in order to dominate the circumstances of hostile environments. In effect, we are dealing with a specific form in which human beings understand the surroundings in which they live and wish to transform. Desire is a fundamental question in the history and the prehistory of the human species. Desire has brought us to where we are. It has shown itself to be a very beneficial and effective instrument in proposing transformations, hence its basis and its danger: testing limits, but fleeing from the unknown or, at least, what is not sufficiently proven in a more or less scientist way, by the human group exposed to the transformations that they need to adopt in order to advance in the control of their environment. On the other hand, the constant necessity of responding to their environment and controlling it, generates a growing tension between the individual subject and his/her physical, political, religious, and social surroundings.

We come from a long trajectory of tensions.

-We humans form part of Nature: the relationship between the species and the rest of Nature (**natural tension**, the species protects itself from Nature's inclemency).

-Gradually we establish a "re-organized" environment in order to accommodate human needs (**tension induced** by the existence of objectives and their achievement); the human species has controlled all types of ecosystems of which it has formed part.

-Civilizations grow better when the environments overlap and are sprinkled with different microclimates and different lands, relief and resources, which brings to mind the Hegelian theories about the Greek world, clearly alluding to the growing activity of the executive brain.

-Culture is constructed independently of the environment: some emigrants conserve it tenaciously in climates and environments totally foreign to their origins.

-The proximity of cultures can provoke effects among them, transforming and informing social life.

Could it be said the culture is civilization expanded by human vectors in spite of the environment? At any rate, it represents a solid edifice which houses human desires that have induced changes produced in different human groups throughout the ages; some of whose new strategies had already been adopted by the group. It also provides a mode of viewing and judging the way in which Western Civilization has been evolving, and at the same time

¹⁰ Felipe Fernández Armesto: *Civilizaciones*, Taurus, Madrid, 2002 y *Pathfinders. A Global History of Exploration*. Norton & co. New York & London, 2006.

transforming its environment to its benefit. Here lies the power of desires and their danger: the code of the human group that remembers this danger is set in motion, in multiple manners, to expel the expression of the undesire(d) object, that which in the end is not approved by the group.

This leads us to the functioning of the group that Fernández Armesto, in his latest book, explores from an interesting perspective: the history of how the human group originating in Africa scatters and dominates the planet, and secondly, the way in which these human groups and their dispersed desires re-connect and initiate the current history of globalization. In this work, the historian stresses the role of the pathfinders, the explorers of new routes. And these new routes that initiate different civilizations in order to find one another, are based primarily on commerce and precisely the way in which each one defines commerce is what will impregnate the development of very different social models.

In our Western model, the process tends clearly towards the rationality of the political system resulting from the capitalist economy. This, in view of the censorship employed systematically by different political regimes, clearly demonstrates that the passion for silencing the desires of the “other” is visibly present. And, perhaps, it is operating under very old and well established tensions in the different human groups.

This question brings up the need to confront the reality of Western political democratic systems and, particularly European and those countries where there exists a strong, consolidated, centralized tradition. In effect, the consolidation of national political classes and of a supra-national political class, has become a reality that constantly generates disagreement and even scandal among citizens who contemplate how their political classes (regardless of their political and much less their ideology entity) are building a new “aristocratic” social class, which increasingly reminds one of the system of privileges functioning in the *Ancien Regime*.

The political class reaffirms itself, defines and defends its prerogatives in front of the citizens whose organizations encounter more and more difficulties in criticizing power and promoting their interests faced with a State controlled by the political class of the moment. The fact is that Spanish democracy has ended up reconstructing the period of the Restoration and its pacific political system of turn-taking, as it has been generally described. Let’s not forget that the Canova system of the Spanish Restoration of 1874 (which finally led to the 1936 Civil War) was really an attempt to maintain all the privileges of the Ancien Regime for the traditional classes of power and for the new political class constituted in the midst of the “restoration revolution” (which inevitably brings to mind many aspects of our recent “political transition”) in which “all should change so that all remains the same”.¹¹

¹¹ The phrase links the reality constructed by Cánovas del Castillo’s Project and the desires expressed by the *Leopard* of Lampedusa

It was, and is, finally, a matter of generating a new system of tensions affecting the citizen and that could be expressed through sequences which materialize some of these tensions. In such a sequence, one might contemplate, like a television viewer, the duels between barons, of not such distant feudal evocations, who dispute castles and privileges. The sequence of tensions can continue demonstrating how the astonished citizens keep losing their past faith in a system, founded in order to defend their interests and rights, reconverted by the machinations of the new “aristocracy”, in a political space for the exercise of adhesion and not the free expression of expectations and rights. This matter is grave (it can generate dangerous tensions among the citizens) because the new “aristocrats” are not detained by anything. They endlessly manipulate the judicial power and unashamedly control the legislative power (where Congressmen and Senators represent their party not their constituencies who elected them) and the executive power where they carry out the policies that best serve their personal, political, economic and class interests, among which predominates above all else, the need to remain in power and continue to reap the benefits provided by these privileges.

In this context one can situate the question of censorship, self-censorship and the more or less subtle machinery, which the political class can manipulate in order to silence, squelch and show repulsion for the expressed desires of free citizens who wish to express them in any of the creative languages of their culture. Not outside this practice is found the consolidation of the Spanish university system as a area of influence (and scant power) in which political parties of all tendencies have rushed in to ‘shelve’ the unemployed, unusable members of the political class no longer suitable for the political arena. Naturally any criteria expressed by “dissident” professionals in the academic world leads to their ostracism. In the same way, in the field of artistic creation, the political class awards and supports its own followers blatantly and unabashedly makes use of public funds towards these ends. In this way, in the case of Spain, a system of privileges once thought extinct has been recovered amidst general applause: a group of individuals have consolidated themselves as the “natural representatives” of Spanish society.

Since the earliest periods of the human species, over the many millennia that preceded History, the premises of the group prevailed over those of the individual (whose existence took thousands of years to be intuited). The action of the individual, (undesire)d by the group, could break the concerted action and destroy the superiority of human hunters, whose success, as a species, was clearly linked to the functioning of their executive brain, capable of concerting and imagining the appropriate knowledge in order to subsist in so many different natural environments. An interesting tension is created between valuing the proven, undesiring the new strategies, but needing them as an essential part of group progress. This tension comes from the insecurity of the group and generates the passion for silencing, as well as disintegrating the desires of the SELF, undesire(d) by the group.

In this manner, we should concede that the study of censorship under Franco is also an exploration of primitive instincts that survive or survived in those times.

But this instinct or passion for silencing is not foreign to our Western democratic societies and can present itself in many diverse forms as we have indicated: both state and private. One with interests in the image to be desired and the other with a supreme norm: selling a desire can also be beneficial for business.

This might be the new tension of humanity: the tension generated by the capitalist economic model itself, which has no limits, propelled by the force of its expansion. In it, censorship has no place and its future is limited by the globalization of a well educated, well informed citizenry who can judge by themselves and decide. We seem to be attempting a new strategy, to construct a society where the individual SELF could, in the long term, express his/her desires and not be (because it would make no sense) silenced as undesire(d).¹²

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¹² "The fiction of dignity helps to define humanity and the status of humanity help to define human rights. There is thus a real sense in which an affront to our dignity strikes at our rights. Yet when, outraged at such affront, we stand on our rights and demand redress, we would do well to remember how insubstantial the dignity is on which those rights are based. Forgetting where our dignity comes from, we may fall into a posture as comical as that of the irritable censor.

Life, says Erasmus's Folly is theatre: we each have lines to say and a part to play. One kind of actor, recognizing that he is in a play, will go on playing nevertheless; another kind of actor, shocked to find he is participating in an illusion, will try to step off the stage and out of the play. The second actor is mistaken. For there is nothing outside the theatre, no alternative life one can join instead. The show is, so to speak, the only show in town. All one can do is to go on playing one's part, though perhaps with a new awareness, a comic awareness." J.M. Coetzee: *Giving Offense, Essays on Censorship*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, p.14-15.