



Centro
Centre

Madrid, siete estrellas Madrid, seven stars

Mario Onaindía

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patibles con la fauna propia del centro actual: ancianos, estudiantes, extranjeros, tenderos, etc... y la corriente de abandonar el centro para ir a vivir a zonas más habitables con mejores equipamientos sociales.

Según el primer modelo, Madrid —capital de una nación de naciones— se consolidaría como una ciudad de ciudades, donde cada barrio, cada calle incluso, constituiría un microcosmos del gran Madrid: calles donde convivirían armónicamente pescaderías, carnicerías, restaurantes chinos, boutiques de diseño, restaurantes de lujo, pubs de la farándula, tabernas de barrio, etc.

En caso contrario, se impondría el modelo de abandonar el centro urbano en manos de la prostitución tradicional, la drogadicción y la tercera edad.

Para alguien que viene de fuera, hoy Madrid padece de los inconvenientes de ambos modelos, aparentemente. Se han desarrollado barrios residenciales en la periferia, pero no los transportes públicos ni el acceso cómodo ni el horario laboral que la posibilita. Uno teme que en caso de irse a un barrio de esos que goza de envidiables equipamientos sociales —sean públicos o privados— nunca podrá disfrutar de ellos mientras se someta a comidas de trabajo que duran tres horas y salga de la oficina después de las siete y media. Y si se queda en el centro, podrá quizá disponer de tiempo, pero no de instalaciones que no sean el cine y el teatro.

No creo que haya muchas ciudades en Europa donde a unos pocos metros de lugares como Chicote, donde se celebra un "agasajo postinero con la crema de la intelectualidad" o del Cock, donde trasnocha la farándula y los intelectuales progres, o de Loewe, donde hacen cola los japoneses pudientes, se venda droga dura o se amontonen restos del siniestro ritual del pinchazo: bocas de riego abiertas, jeringuillas, gotas de sangre y mierda (en el sentido más literal que quepa imaginarse).

Nada más alejado, empero, del espíritu y del carácter de los madrileños que ver alguna contradicción entre ambas tendencias.

Parece que el modelo ideal de personaje de los madrileños sigue siendo Lope de Vega, no por lo promíscuo, sino por su capacidad de sentirse tan cómodo entre la cultura popular como entre la más sibarita. Y la mayoría de los madrileños que conozco se muestran satisfechos en esta mezcla y tratan de sacar provecho más que de resolver estas contradicciones.

El resultado es que se imponen un horario y unos sistemas de trabajo poco menos que inhumanos para el resto de los mortales, pero que los madrileños no sólo lo soportan sino que disfrutan de él.

El horario de 8 ó 9 de la mañana con una comida de trabajo de dos o tres horas, difícilmente podría ser aguantado por un anglosajón que necesita ir a su casa a las seis de la tarde para reponer fuerzas, y recuperarse de las repercusiones gástricas de haber engullido una hamburguesa en media hora, con una terapia de un par de horas en zapatillas repantingado en un sillón, haciendo que lee el periódico. Pero los madrileños han descubierto un excelente sustituto de la siesta en los interminables almuerzos a cuenta del erario público o de la empresa, con ingeniosas sobremesas, en las que el

en which the new offices are compatible with the native wildlife of the downtown as it is really is, full of the elderly, of foreign students, of shopkeepers, etc. The other is the aforementioned trend to abandon the center in favour of more livable peripheral zones with better social facilities.

According to the first model, Madrid —the capital of a nation of nations— ought to consolidate itself as a city of cities, where each neighbourhood and even each street would constitute a microcosm of the whole of Madrid: streets where fishmongers, butcher shops, Chinese restaurants, designer boutiques, chic restaurants, pubs buzzing with gossip, local taverns, etc., all co-exist in harmony.

The contrary case proposes that the urban center be left in the hands of traditional prostitution, drug addiction, and senior citizenry.

For someone coming from the outside, Madrid today apparently suffers today from the inconveniences of both models. Residential neighbourhoods have been developed on the periphery, but without the necessary public transport nor easy access nor the working hours that enable suburban life to follow its design. One fears that, should one go to one of those suburbs that enjoy such enviable social facilities —be they public or private— one will never be able to take advantage of them. Instead, one will be subjected to mid-day lunches that last for three hours, and will never leave one's office before 7:30. Whereas, if one continues to live in the center, one can dispose of one's time, but not of any facilities other than the cinema and the theatre.

I don't think that there are many European cities in which, at a few meters from places like "Chicote", where one can share one's "flashy affectations with the cream of the intelligentsia", or the Cock, where the progressive intellectuals pass the twilight and dawning hours of perdition, or the Loewe, where even the well-off Japanese must stand in line, it is so easy to find hard drugs being sold, or to find recent archaeological treasures of the sinister ritual of needle-jabbing: fire hydrants open, syringes, drops of blood and an ample dose of shit (in the most literal form that can be imagined).

Nothing, however, is farther from the spirit and character of the people of Madrid than to see a contradiction between these two tendencies.

It seems that the model of the ideal persona in Madrid remains that of Lope de Vega, not so much as an icon of promiscuity as for his capacity of feeling so at home between popular culture and high Sybaritic opulence. The majority of the people of Madrid that I know seem satisfied with this mix, and seek more to take advantage of rather than to resolve these contradictions. The result entails the imposition of working systems and a timetable that would be scarcely less than inhuman for the rest of our mortal species, but that *los madrileños* not only tolerate but enjoy.

A schedule starting at 8 or 9 in the morning, with a two or three hour lunch starting at 2, is intolerably difficult for an Anglo-Saxon accustomed to going home at six in the afternoon in order to re-collect his wits and energy and recuperate from the gastric repercussions of having gulped down a hamburger in half an hour; he wants therapy —a couple of



único inconveniente consiste en padecer a tecnócratas culinarios que consideran que sus clientes carecen de suficientes conocimientos gastronómicos para decidir qué menú les conviene. Y lo peor es que suelen acertar.

Esta actitud de cierto desprecio de los madrileños hacia su propia ciudad, que se refleja también en su comportamiento hacia las papeleras, (ah, pero ¿hay papeleras en Madrid? preguntará más de un lector) puede derivarse del modo peculiar como se emprendió la transición en Madrid.

En el resto de España, cada Comunidad Autónoma trató de convencer a los demás y de convencerse a sí misma, que era el resultado natural derivado de un proceso histórico, a diferencia del Estado español que sería hija del pacto y del compromiso, y por tanto artificial y fruto de la conveniencia. De modo que se producía un profundo retroceso en la representación que se hacen los ciudadanos de su ciudad o estado, que desde los griegos habían tratado precisamente de acentuar el corte que se produce en la historia de la humanidad entre las relaciones naturales de la familia y la tribu, respecto a las relaciones racionales propias de los ciudadanos con su hábitat.

En pocos sitios se expresa con mayor belleza la idea de este salto cualitativo que en el arte del Museo de Pérgamo, donde todos los dioses griegos, capitaneados por Zeus y Atenea, combaten a gigantes con torso humano alado y piernas de serpiente, a los que atraviesan con sus lanzas y

hours in slippers, sprawled out in a couch, the pretense of reading the newspaper. The people of Madrid, however, have discovered an excellent substitute for the siesta in their interminable meals, charged to the public purse or to that of their business, with ingenuous *tapas* and the single inconvenience of having to suffer culinary technocrats who consider their clients to be so lacking in adequate gastronomic knowledge as to be unable to choose which menu suits them. Worse is that they tend to be right.

This somewhat indifferent attitude towards their own city, reflected again in the attitude towards rubbish bins (ah, but are there any rubbish bins in Madrid?, many readers will ask...), can be traced to the peculiar way in which the transition to democracy was undertaken in Madrid.

In the rest of Spain, each Autonomous Community sought to convince others, as well as themselves, that it was the natural product and outcome of a historical process. The Spanish state, by contrast, was nothing but the child of treaty and compromise, artificial, the fruit of mere convenience. This occurred in such a way as to effect a profound regression in the representation made by citizens of their city or state, which since the Greeks had sought precisely to accentuate the cut in the history of humankind made between the natural relations of the family and tribe the rational relations obtaining between citizens and their environment.

espadas sin que sus rostros expresen ninguna compasión ni temor. Por no hablar de Antígona, donde las leyes de la ciudad resultan contradictorias con las de la tribu, dando origen a una tradición que intenta representar siempre a la ciudad (o al estado) como el mundo de la razón, y por lo tanto más cerca del mundo supralunar de los astros que del variante e inestable sublunar.

Este problema lo resolvieron los madrileños a comienzos de la transición no buscando una síntesis, según la cual las relaciones familiares y de tribu no serían menos racionales que las de la ciudad, de la misma manera que éstas no serían menos naturales que las anteriores, sino al contrario, rechazando —con razón— el carácter natural de las relaciones entre ciudadanos con las comunidades políticas que defendía el nacionalismo periférico, pero sin ofrecer ninguna alternativa.

Así, se dieron un himno que costó una peseta y cuya letra no conoce nadie y se inventaron una bandera de siete estrellas que la mayoría de los madrileños cree que hace referencia a las estrellas de los hoteles.

Cuando, curiosamente, tanto el oso que acompaña al madroño como las siete estrellas de la bandera de la Comunidad están relacionados con la idea de la ciudad como espacio cultural, liberado de la naturalidad y de la naturaleza porque para los pueblos que los griegos llaman “hiperbóreos” (los chamanes siberianos) el oso era una representación del eterno retorno, de lo inmutable, como el escarabajo para los egipcios, por la misma razón, porque tras ocultarse en la hibernación vuelve a aparecer con la primavera. Y la misma idea está representada por el número siete, cuya procedencia reside en las siete estrellas de la Osa Polar. Y la idea de relacionar lo inmutable y racional con la estrella polar, el número siete y los osos procede precisamente de los siberianos.

Es una soberana tontería recurrir a tradiciones esotéricas para generar fetichismos de las relaciones humanas, a las que son tan dados los nacionalismos periféricos, pero no es más inteligente pensar que los hombres puedan aguantar los ruidos y la porquería de sus vecinos sin generar algún tipo de compensación cultural. Si el fetichismo es inevitable para convencer a la gente de que ha de sentir cierto apego a su ciudad —no hay otra manera de que mantenga limpia la calle— es mejor que sea un fetichismo controlado, porque conozcamos su engarce con la cultura universal, que dejarlo en manos de magos sin escrúpulos. Los fantasmas no desaparecen, sólo se transforman. Por lo que es mejor cultivarlos.

In few places is the idea of this qualitative jump expressed with greater beauty than in the art of the Museum of Pergamum, where all of the Greek gods, led by Zeus and Athena, do combat against winged giants with human torsos and serpentine legs, against whom they dared to rise with their lances and daggers, their faces showing neither compassion nor fear. Or we might speak of Antigone, in which the laws of the city contradict those of the tribe, giving birth to a tradition that aims always to represent the city (or the state) as the world of reason, and thereby closer to the heavenly world of the stars than the changing and unstable sublunar world.

Madrileños resolved this problem at the beginning of the transition, but not by seeking a synthesis according to which family and tribal relations would be no less rational than those of the city, in the same way that those of the city would not be less natural than those of family and tribe. To the contrary, they rejected —with reason— the natural character of the relations between citizens and the political communities that represented the peripheral nationalisms, but without offering any alternative.

And so they took up an anthem that cost one peseta and whose words nobody knows, and invented a flag with seven stars that the majority of people in Madrid believe is some kind of reference to the stars known from the iconography of hotels. Curiously, both the bear which accompanies the honey tree and the seven stars of the Community flag are related to the idea of the city as a cultural space, a space freed from Nature in either its noun or adjectival forms. For the people that the Greeks called “Hyperboreans” (Siberian shamans), the bear was a symbol of the eternal return, of the immutable, just as the scarab was for the Egyptians —for the same reason, because after hiding away in hibernation, the bear and the scarab return to the scene each spring. The same idea is represented by the number seven, based on the seven stars of the Polar Bear constellation (Ursa Major). And the idea of relating the immutable and the rational with the polar star, the number seven, and with bears, comes directly from the Siberians.

It is a sovereign idiocy to resort to esoteric traditions in order to generate fetishisms about human relations, as the peripheral nationalisms are so wont to do, but it shows no greater intelligence to think that humans can support and tolerate the noise and the slovenliness of their neighbours without generating some type of cultural compensation. If fetishism is inevitable in order to convince people that they ought to feel a certain attachment to their city —for there is no other way to keep the streets clean— it is better that it be a controlled fetishism than to leave it in the hands of unscrupulous wizards, if only because then we know its linkages with universal culture. Specters do not disappear, they only transform themselves —for which reason it is better to cultivate them.