Ana Fernández Cebrián. *Fables of Development: Capitalism and Social Imaginaries in Spain (1950-1967)*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023. ISBN: 9781802078053

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The point of departure for Ana Fernández Cebrián's new study is the September 1953 Pact of Madrid: a bilateral agreement between the Franco government and the Eisenhower administration that effectively marked the expansion of NATO into Fascist Europe. The pact exchanged economic aid for the creation of military bases on Spanish soil, together with the realignment of Spain within the western axis in the context of the Cold War. The revisiting of this agreement, the accompanying political and media discourses, and the

recasting of the collective national imaginaries that ensued, all come at a propitious moment, as NATO expansion in Europe continues to be debated and Spain seems poised to inaugurate a new permanent naval base for the NATO fleet in the port of Mahon—the third such base after those in Rota and Cartagena, created as a result of the 1953 pact.

A vast corpus of scholarship has previously dealt with Franco's military agreements with the U.S., the creation of Spanish naval bases, and Spain's controversial incorporation into NATO, but has done so mainly from a historical, military, and political science approach. *Fables of Development: Capitalism and Social Imaginaries in Spain (1950-1967)* offers instead a cultural studies inquiry, focusing simultaneously on public imaginaries, collective constructions of fear (in the shape of flying saucers, science fiction narratives, comic books, or the emerging role of the radio in public discourses), and on the tensions between a push for consumerism, as part of the newly enforced marked economy, and the frustrations of an impoverished majority whose aspirations for social mobility were reduced to games of chance. The book positions its inquiry at that juncture between the international rehabilitation of the Francoist regime—accompanied by some moves in the direction of the industrialization and liberalization of the economy—and a strikingly inward-looking prism for this technocratic move. Spain, in the 1950s, was transitioning from the autarchic policies of the immediate post-Civil War context to a dependency model whose new economic designs were drafted by emerging global financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The regime was progressively replacing the ad hoc militaristic, repressive, vengeful, and ultranationalist politics of the first Francoist decade with a more technocratic (albeit no less repressive or reactionary) political class, still solidly anchored in an anticommunist agenda. Members of Opus Dei occupied key cabinet positions, and the genealogy of processes of capital accumulation centered around the largest economic sectors of the country; meanwhile,

developmentalist agendas lacked a welfare program and gave way instead to the consolidation of new social hierarchies. This paradox is aptly addressed through the examination of the expansive range of collective responses that it generated, and the countercultural artistic manifestations that successfully bypassed the system of repression and censorship.

It is in the tension between the centralized authority of the regime and its dependency on foreign aid and external/global alliances that the four "fables of development" of the book are analyzed, as discursive, interpretative, and collective imaginaries, shaped by the forging of *fabulae* (in its Latin root) and contingent economic needs, formulated as "the staging of fables about capital". The four fables around which the book is structured are the "fables of intervention", the "fables of outer space", the "fables of chance", and the "fables of grace".

Fables of Development states its commitment to engage with "interdisciplinary archives". Archives, both physical and conceptual, and archival matter, are—after all—evasive and resistant to any kind of disciplinary containment. The book unlocks a range of relatively unknown sources, written and especially non-written, both tangible and intangible, by engaging with popular beliefs, myths, visions, and collective illusions, as well as their manifestations in literary texts, films, newsreels, comic books, radio programs, and newspaper covers, spanning from the 1950s to the 1970s. It examines an "unexplored corpus of cultural objects and social practices": the presence of UFOs in popular public imaginaries, the press and mass media, the proliferation of games of chance (including the nationally controlled Lottery, *Cupón de ciegos*, and *quinielas*), and all sorts of raffles, contests, and charity initiatives, including those induced by the Catholic Church itself, that created the illusion of the wealth redistribution that the State purposefully lacked. In this sense, this book deserves special praise for its expansive redefinition of the archive, including its tapping into "informal archives", the ephemeral, and

into the realm of what we could describe as an archaeology of the everyday, to enter the social fabric of the Francoist Spain of this period. Particularly interesting is the reiterated attention to one of the local newspapers that served as mouthpiece of the Francoist regime, *Imperio*: *Diario de Zamora de Falange Española de las JONS*. This newspaper has not been consistently studied before, and it might be noted that it had close connections to the regime's colonial enterprises in Africa, namely, the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco (up to 1958), the Spanish Sahara, and the Spanish Territories on the Gulf of Guinea, all of which constituted important political and economic pillars for the dictatorship and contributed to the developmentalist agenda.

The book rightly acknowledges the significance of the rural exodus of the 1950s (not entirely dissimilar to simultaneous processes in many Latin American countries, including Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico). The agricultural working population, which in 1950 still represented 50% of the total, fell to 28% in 1968, as five to six million inhabitants left their rural communities to seek work in the cities or abroad. This process may have been uneven within the Spanish territory and was more central to some regions (Andalucía or Extremadura for instance) than to others (Galicia or Asturias). One might also ask about the role of alphabetization in the persistence of the "fables of development". One of the Francoist organizations created in 1950, the Junta Nacional contra el Analfabetismo, claims to have dramatically reduced the literacy gap by 20% in the two decades between 1950 and 1970. One concurrent trend, perhaps worthy of further attention, was external migration: Spain saw an unprecedented migratory exodus between 1957 and 1963, especially from the ports of A Coruña, Vigo, Cádiz, and the Canary Islands. The emigration policies of the Franco regime in the 1940s were extremely restrictive, under the pretext of encouraging the birth rate after the war and social reconstruction efforts. But in 1956, migration legislation was revised, including through the creation of the Instituto Español de Migración. Although dependent on the Ministry of

Labor and Presidency, the migratory process remained tightly controlled by the Catholic Church, specifically through the Comisión Católica Española de Migración. This massive migratory wave may well have played a significant role in informing public imaginaries, leaving an imprint on some of the popular media and cultural artifacts which are analyzed in this book. The massive expansion of gambling in the 1950s and 60s (games of chance, contests, and raffles) and, on the other side of the coin, the perverse proliferation of a culture of charity as a form of validating and institutionalizing the uneven redistribution of wealth (the "fables of grace" analyzed in Chapter 4), could perhaps be analyzed in this context, as a kind of local option of the poor—an alternative to emigration, remittances, and the implicit hope of wealth that the migratory experience could afford.

Finally, the book engages with some of the more ideologically charged aspects of the politics embedded in these "fables of development": its providentialism, paternalism, and biopolitical dimension (the status of childhood and orphanhood in this period, for instance, as explored in Chapter 4). This biopolitical aspect, more specifically, is one of the highlights of this study. It also serves as a potential entry point for further discussion on other territorialities of the developmentalist project during these decades; the African colonies, the very sites from which much of this developmentalism unfolded, and from where a set of transient imaginaries was put into motion. The Instituto Nacional de Colonización, a post-Civil War organism dependent on the Ministry of Agriculture, carried out a sustained attempt at reactivating the Spanish economy through the agricultural sector, aimed at maximizing productivity through enforced processes of expropriation and redistribution of land, in what turned out to be a true internal colonization campaign.

Ana Fernández Cebrián is surely correct to imply that nothing either began or ended with the developmentalist projects of Francoist technocracy in the 1950s, and to undercut the exceptionality which a great deal of scholarship

has attributed to the regime. The book's "Afterword" points, instead, to continuities: "Some of the social imaginaries on the circulation and distribution of capital examined in these pages survive in today's Spain, including the country's integration into international economic and military circuits" (p. 180). In short, *Fables of Development* makes for a refreshing and necessary reading in the fields of cultural studies, anthropology, and film studies. Since some of the intricacies of the argument may, inevitably, have been lost in translation, I look forward to seeing it published in its original Spanish version.