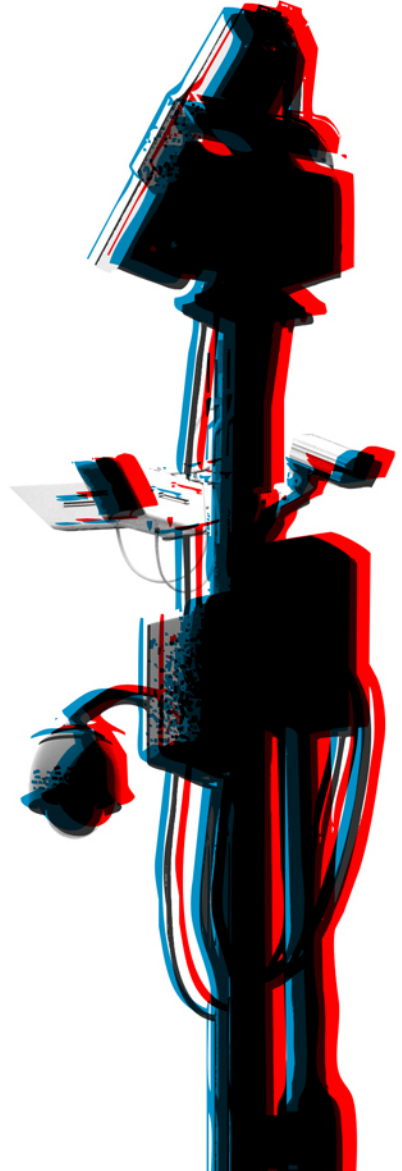


UN PROYECTO DE FUNDACIÓN RODRÍGUEZ + ZEMOS98

# PANEL DE CONTROL

INTERRUPTORES CRÍTICOS

PARA UNA SOCIEDAD VIGILADA



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## DECONSTRUCTING PRIVILEGES. FOR A POLICY OF DISCONTROL

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María José Belbel Bullejos (Granada, 1954) is a secondary school teacher in Vallecas, Madrid. After earning an English degree, she continued her education at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid (Translation), the University of California, Berkeley and Queen Mary College in London (M.A.). She has worked with the women's group Asamblea de Mujeres de Granada since it was founded 1975. She is interested in the points of intersection between sound narrative, visual arts, writing and intergenerational translation of new feminisms.

### Abstract

One text made of two. The first is a response to the two questions posed by the collective Pripublikarrak in their project on *Las Galleteras de Deusto* (the female workers at the biscuit factory in Deusto, in the Basque Country), which can be extended to women's work today: Who would be today's "Galleteras"?

The other text links feminist projects to other activism projects in the fields of culture, theory and visual practices. It points to the need for self-criticism, criticism and a respectful debate in the field of resistance as a way of doing/thinking/being in the world that allows us to make progress with what I consider to be our main opponent: fragmentation within the field of resistance itself.

### Keywords

Gender, precarity, discontrol, cognitariat, feminism, sexism, truth, justice, freedom, sincerity, solidarity, struggle, collective work, self-criticism.

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A response to the questions posed by the collective Pripublikarrak in their project on *Las Galleteras de Deusto* (the female workers at the biscuit factory in Deusto, in the Basque Country)

### What is the status of women in the workforce today?

That's a very broad question, given that women are plural political subjects. The oppression of women can be found at the point where various kinds of class, race and sexual oppressions intersect. It's not the same thing to be a rich woman as to be a poor woman, to be a white woman as to be a black woman, to be a woman in a Western geopolitical context or outside of it, with heteronormative privileges, whether lesbian, transsexual, transgender, intersexual... or, say, with a physical or mental "disability" – even the name is reactionary: all of us are able or un(dis)able to do certain things. And then there's elderly women, women from single families, fat women, hairy women, masculine women or those whose appearance doesn't match or challenges conventional, women's magazine aesthetics. And finally, women from dysfunctional families who are more familiar with gender mandates, for the violence against women exercised in them.

### In what way has the status of women in the workforce changed in today's service society, compared to the industrial era?

### Who would be today's "galleteras"?

To answer this question, we should study reports prepared by the United Nations, Amnesty International in Spain, the Trade Unions' Office of Women's Affairs, feminist, lesbian and queer associations, anti-racism groups and the associations of different employment sectors.

- Material and immaterial work (work that is unpaid if carried out within the home, and paid when it is outsourced)
- The differences in the various Autonomous Communities that make up the Spanish state.
- The feminization of professions (education, health, social services).
- The labour hierarchy - even in feminised professions, power is principally in male hands.
- The situation of pensioners, poor women, young and precariously employed women, middle aged women who "care for" children, husbands/partners – the majority of who exploit their wives or partners-, and the old and infirm, an also have badly paid jobs with a low social status.
- Women who aren't entitled to legal documents or rights, such as "sex" workers who choose to work in the industry and are still subject to paternalistic attempts to redeem them, preventing them from representing themselves to bargain for better working conditions.
- Migrant women employed in domestic work,

agriculture, hospitality, childcare or the care of the elderly or ill, who are paid extremely low wages. The difficulty in getting other professional employment, in spite of being suitably qualified. How many exhibitions of migrant women artists have we been to? Even though we all know quite a few of them.

We can't, and we shouldn't, forget that many of us enjoy privileges – better physical and mental wellbeing, more free time – arising from their exploitation. Either directly, when they care for our relatives, for example, while our mothers had to take their elderly parents and in-laws into their homes; or indirectly, when they provide the materials we consume, as with textile workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Not forgetting women ill with AIDS and their carers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### *Your attention, please*

...thus the terms of the agreement are set,  
the state machinery shall be left intact,  
we will have a free hand with police  
so that the middle classes will be reassured...

[Miguel Benlloch, comrade Vicente in the Communist Movement, MC, Granada 1974 \(talking about the Spanish Communist Party's Agreement for Freedom\)](#)

I'd rather a have a salad than Beethoven or Sinatra

I'd rather have raisins than Vivaldi they give me more calories

Franco Battiato. White Flag, 1981

Let me rest a while in the sun,  
let me live with joy,  
if I've caught enough fish for today,  
tomorrow will be another day,

[Vainica Doble. Déjame vivir con alegría. Contracorriente, 1976](#)

The pages that follow should be read as a homage to Pierre Bourdieu.

(...) Yes, Bourdieu felt "forced", as he expressed it, by the historical situation, to throw himself into the street, throwing his ideas into the streets with him, because he was convinced that knowledge is also a political weapon, especially against politics that is armed with so-called knowledge.

Didier Eribon, *D'une révolution conservatrice et des ses effets sur la gauche française*. Éditions Léo Scheer, 2007

8,000,000 people in Spain currently live in a situation of social vulnerability. The most excluded groups are women, the elderly and migrants, as well as those affected by AIDS or drug dependency and prison inmates. Young people under 25 already make up 44% of the poor, while retirees and the unemployed in the age groups between 25 and

49 or older than 65 account for 33%. The majority are from a Spanish background, although 38% of them are from a country other than Spain. Migrant incomes are 22% below the national average, and one in four families earn less than 9,000 euros a month. There are 86,000 people living in extreme poverty. There are 790,000 homeless people.

[Spanish Red Cross report on poverty in Spain \(18/07/2007\)](#)

Employee: Boss, when are you going to pay me the four months you owe me?

Boss: There you go again, bringing up historical memory.

[Caption for El Roto's cartoon published in El País \(20/07/2007\)](#)

Trabajador. «Jefe, ¿cuándo me va a pagar los cuatro meses que me debe?»

Jefe. «Ya estamos otra vez con la memoria histórica».

[Texto del chiste de El Roto en El País \(20/07/2007\)](#)

67.3% of men do not contribute to household chores. 65.5% of university graduates are women. On any given day, women in Andalucía devote 3 hours and 22 minutes more than men to the family and home. Women in Andalucía earn 5,000 euros per year less than men for doing the same work.

[El País Andalucía \(20/07/2007\)](#)

I feel it's necessary to write a text using basic words that are as free of codification and connotations as possible, or where the codification and connotations can be accepted because they are understood in the first place. So much rhetorical sophistication and multi-use professional jargon often works as a screen that defends privilege, when in reality the only sense of having institutional authority should be to give power to groups who are excluded, which is to make them visible. And when the complexity of theory and action are only on the surface, they just reactionary hot air, provincial or "socialcateta", we'd say in Andalucía.

It's time to stop criticising the right and the ways and methods of "authority" as something outside ourselves. Let's put into practice the self-criticism I mentioned above, question our own reality and construct horizontal discursive practices - isn't that what they're called these days?

Let's try and dis-control hierarchies and their mechanisms as part of what we are - in the worst possible case, just another circuit in the system, which the system needs in order to legitimise itself while we legitimise ourselves: "she who comes and goes, is kept busy on the way"; in the best possible case, the political and radical use of the gaps that exist in the system – our system, because there is no outside – because it's unable to control everything:

“Where there is oppression, there is resistance”  
Mao Tse-Tung

Will the word “authentic” – which we already made fun of/deconstructed in 1971 in response to the cynical rhetoric that tried to domesticate resistance practices – come into use once again?

How do **we** contribute to integrating everything that supposedly can't be assimilated, that is **unconventional** and, therefore, potentially revolutionary?

Authentic: deconstructed/reconstructed/constructed/questioned, along with terms like democracy, freedom, justice, solidarity, words that nobody trusts any longer but which we must not abandon. We shouldn't forget them just because they're used by capitalists, exploiters and the Spanish Popular Party. They're our heritage. Or was it the Spanish right that fought for and continues to fight for freedom, equality and fraternity? If not, why should we give them these words, with their history, in a contemporary context? And why should we keep legalising contemporary terms by using them, if they become much more **conventional** through the routine ways in which we use and abuse them and when their contextual nature is forgotten? And that's apart from the terms that are used without knowing what they mean, as happens now with the word “performative”. It would be a good idea to subject the words we use to a certain process of Brechtian distancing.

When we abandon sexist and homophobic Stalinist-style communism, not to mention Marxism, we question terms like: militancy, the vanguard, the masses, the idea of power as something merely external, the working class, major and secondary contradictions. The counterculture, psychoanalysis, feminism and anti-authoritarian movements have also helped us in the past to question terms that were negative in terms of communist terminology: hedonism, narcissism, cosmopolitanism and everything that came under the umbrella-term “petit-bourgeoisie”, so fashionable then. Along with a certain praise of cowardice, dandyism and laziness.

Our respect is due to particular terms in all their complexity, contemporaneity and historicity. It's also right and necessary to respect basic concepts, and the their coinage as terminology, for their element of resistance in the face of patriarchal, white, Western, heterosexual nihilism that only experiences the death instinct (how to endure life while continuing a genealogy that goes from the promise of religious Heaven to the creation of One's Work for Prosperity and how to fight Anxiety through Productivist Bulimia).

We defend terms such as the idea of justice, goodness, wisdom, hope and care of the fragile, weak and most needy – which is a way of looking after ourselves, because the way to learn most and achieve more parcels of happiness is a combination of knowing to

give and knowing how to receive.

Is it possible to fight for justice? It is and we should.

Is it possible, based on respect, to discuss and criticise our own competitiveness, jealousy and envy, starting with our thoughts, bodies and hearts, virtues, fears and faults? Is it possible to fight for an idea of truth that's plural, dis-controlled, complex and difficult? Under our full names, availing ourselves of the freedom of expression that was conquered in the past and we're no longer prepared to give up. Or under a pseudonym, when what we want or need to - if we're like a Litvinenko for example, and have to face a Putin - but not as a cover for insults, a lack of respect, revenge, etc.

Or is truth the last refuge of Western individualism, which we're not brave enough to confront even to ourselves, sometimes confessing to ourselves as to a fellow-traveller, as foolish instruments of ourselves? “I talk to the man who is always with me”, as the poet said.

In the past, as Catholic believers, we had the act of confession. Then came psychoanalysts as “hired ears” (in Foucault's words), the last refuge of an idea of truth that was intimate and private, but subject to market laws. The person we trusted most to help us, who was theoretician, intellectual, father, mother, sister, confessor, master, promising disciple, friend, partner, accomplice in conspiracy... of the secular world. Because we don't trust the spouse who can divorce us, the theoretician who is proto-reactionary, with fashionable, mix-and-match ideas, the master who doesn't want to let us scale up and the disciple who wants us to leave so he can take our place, the friend who bores us because he's not on our wavelength, the accomplice who conspires with us today but may cross to the other side tomorrow; that which we lack and becomes our worst nightmare, what we call old-fashioned “progre”, post-Fordian capitalism's “pink mafia”... old, bratty... the spectacle...

The spectacle is what we're generating through our short-sighted outlook, our victimism, our pride and our ambition.

We have more than enough texts and analyses and repetitive projects. We're lacking collective ethics, we need to dis-control control and self-control, to find ways to overcome, negotiate and gradually achieve a reality based on **ending the dynamic of fragmentation**.

Sometimes our most hated rivals are those in the same field, as per the principle of **market competition**, than people or collectives that share a broad political affinity with us. **If we go back to history we'll find this recurring over and over**. Let's take parties on the republican side of the Civil War and parties in the struggle against Franco's regime in the Post-war period, for example.

Remember POUM. I've never forgotten how a student leader of the PCE at the University of Granada (1973) wanted to convince me that a PTE leader at the same university was a policeman, just because he was very popular and a competitor to be eliminated as candidate to the post of Delegate of the Faculty of Medicine. And everyone knows everything's allowed in war.... ugh.

We've replaced transcendent religion with a secular transcendence idea of power on earth – the power of prestige and of work. In Spain, we're synthesising the worst aspects of the catholic and protestant worlds, not to mention the nationalist fundamentalist we carry within.

Once again, as Rubén Darío said:

"... and the fairest damsel smiles at the fiercest of the victors"

...or the smartest or the most smart-arse, the most uncompromising, the most Stalinist, the hardest working, the shrewdest...

This does not put into practice the old republican slogan from the Civil War, in the best communist tradition, in the words of president Negrín, against giving in to the fascists in 1939:

"To resist is to win"

If winning means becoming a celebrity artist, something that's referred to with the now-ugly term "counter hegemonic", shamelessly forgetting that Gramsci coined it in jail. If winning means "every man for himself" in order to make one's name in History and the Archive, which camouflages and conceals how one got there, how one became an acclaimed international artist, Ministerial candidate or director of a Documenta or internationally recognised museum... a bit of Marxism here, a bit of whatever's fashionable abroad there, a bit of don't let them see the harsh Iberian spirit seasoning postmodernist notes, a bit of postcolonial art where migrants who live in Spain aren't the ones representing the Other, a bit of feminism and queer theory, not too much, and all the better if the curators are men.

To pretend and make it look like:

"I've got ballads, I've got modern"  
Chico y Chica

Because some oppressions that are increasingly visible/invisibilised are not, contrary to what Negri says, "First World academics" or, as Lenin said "hedonists, narcissists", or as Stalin said to justify the purges, "cosmopolitans". And unlike Agamben, they know who is the Teresa de Lauretis of queer politics, excentric subjects and gender technologies, and the Eve K. Sedgwick who talks about Buddhism and Melanie

Klein's psychoanalytic teachings.

And if it turns out we are (narcissists, hedonists, First World – with a room of our own—cosmopolitans), we should be thankful. In the face of the Judaeo-Christian religious-secular instinct for death, pain, feelings of guilt and provincialism.

"We are here"  
Fiesta

As an early television ad said:

"War on vulgarity"

It makes me think of Manuel Machado and his poem Adelfos.

"My willpower has died one moonlit night,  
on which it was very beautiful not to think nor love,  
my ideal is to lay myself down, with no dreams at all  
from time to time a kiss and a woman's name.  
(...)

Ambition! I have none Love! I have not felt  
I've never burnt with the fire of faith or gratitude  
I once had a vague thirst for art... I've lost it now  
vice doesn't seduce me, nor do I adore virtue.  
(...)

Kisses, but without giving them! Glory! that which is owed me!"

"Mi voluntad se ha muerto una noche de luna,  
en que era muy hermoso no pensar ni querer,  
mi ideal es tenderme, sin ilusión alguna  
de cuando en cuando un beso y un nombre de mujer.  
(...)

¡Ambición! No la tengo ¡Amor! No lo he sentido,  
No ardi nunca en un fuego de fe ni gratitud,  
Un vago afán de arte tuve... ya lo he perdido  
ni el vicio me seduce, ni adoro la virtud.  
(...)

Besos ¡pero no darlos! Gloria, ¡la que me deben!"

"It's harder to get away from money than from the police", wrote Isidoro Valcárcel - who I quote because he's a master of consensus – in an article published in El País on July 10, 2007. And Isidoro continued, in words that Esther Ferrer, another master of consensus, might have said:

"Now power takes in everything, pays for it and files it away for overall peace of mind (...) there are protest professionals who thrive and advance. In the past, if you wrote "Franco is ugly" on a banner you were taken to the police station. Now if you write "The mayor is ugly", the City Council buys the banner." And the interviewer, Javier Rodríguez Marcos adds, echoing Isidoro's words:

even so, “there are always gaps, power doesn’t absorb everything”.

Debate, respect, ethics. Maybe it’s time to question so much emphasis on working from within. The lack of means has always been substituted by joy, creativity urgency, fun, goodness, ideas, energy, knowledge and sharing. Let’s look towards migrants in our own world, the inhabitants of this worldly world. Let’s once fill simple words with meanings once more, because they are the ones that can contribute to dis-control: truth, justice, freedom, sincerity and struggle, collective work. We’ve become richer at the expense of being very poor – poor victims and executioners of fragmentation and fear. Who use most wretched defence mechanisms of their very wretched condition... so wretched that, like everything wretched and pessimistic, is understandable, logical and realistic.

Voltaire’s *Candide* already said it: we live in the best of all possible worlds.

And Goethe already alluded to it in *Conversations with Eckermann* when he talked about the difficulty of knowledge, the idea of truth and change: “young people are usually (were usually/pre-Freud) ignorant, but they don’t usually have created interests, old people aren’t ignorant but they only care about their own interests”.

Footprints of children and wise men

**Madmen and children are those who tell the truth**

**The king isn’t wearing his shirt**

Only fools think their too smart, or the smartest.

With modesty and affection, let’s try to wake up, while leaving a place for laziness. We need each other, to deconstruct, reconstruct and **construct**... what are now called precisely coalition policies. To get the best out of ourselves and others.

We have to try and get away from money and the police. Specially the police that is paid with our money and the money that generates our own – individual, collective and therefore personal – police.