HAPPY
THE CHILDREN OF INTRANSCENDENT TIMES

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LLUÍS VECINA RUFIANDIS

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Lluís Vecina Rufiandis, *Feliços els fills dels temps intranscendents*, [Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times], 2024. Multimedia installation, dimensions variable. Fragment of the work, from a postcard by Joan Andreu Puig Farran. Courtesy of the artist

INHERITANCE WITH NO TESTAMENT

NOTES ON "HAPPY THE CHILDREN OF INTRANSCENDENT TIMES" BY LLUÍS VECINA RUFIANDIS

Marta Marín-Dòmine

A single image places us at the origin of the installation *Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times*. It is found on a postcard from the late 1960s whose destiny was altered, since it was never used for correspondence. There is no handwriting on the back, nor any address to be sent to. However, its unique history was such that it arrived to a particular receiver: the child of seven who appears in the image, close to the foreground. The young boy seems to be moving towards the camera, although it does not seem he is aware of the photographer's presence. The postcard, which was originally intended to let others know about someone's holiday, to be a *souvenir* (the ever-present term that went with summer tourism of the time), became a family object, and in that way moved beyond its primary, memory-related function to become a testimony of a period and place.

The young lad walking down the beach at Porto Cristo is the artist's father, and was recognised in the postcard by a family member. This person then bought it and displayed it in a visible place in the family home, thus fulfilling a function halfway between public exhibition and private portrait.

The value the postcard would acquire is demonstrated by its creases and the deterioration of the paper with the passing of time. Despite its deficient state of conservation, what has prevailed has been its emotional value, the fact of observing that the child, the son of the woman who kept the postcard for

so many years, was there when the photographer was on the scene, turning that banal moment of walking amidst bodies lying on the beach into a transition, shifting from anonymity to recognition.

Many years later, the artistic gesture by Lluís Vecina Rufiandis grants the postcard the potential value of a visual reproduction, where collective space and time acquire a greater role: the 1960s, Mallorca, tourism.

As a consequence of the artist's research into the acronym of the agency that produced the postcard (the only text on the back, besides indicating the location), Vecina Rufiandis revived the authorship of photographer Joan Andreu Puig Farran. Working from there, the research task would come to once again alter the postcard's function, giving it a new historical value, as Puig Farran had been a war photographer at Sa Coma, a site just six kilometres from the beach he took a picture of thirty years later.

In this way, various aspects are interwoven, thus adding new functions to the postcard, contributing to the creation of the installation's visual landscape, giving it the semantic depth it features.

The postcard itself, and literally on its reverse, shows us the relationship between generations—the generation of the war, the generation born in the 1960s, and another generation expressed through the artist's eyes which was assumed to be happy, though not without a good dose of irony. A second postcard works in contrast, emerging as the central body of the installation—and the use of the term "body" is not casual here at all. On it we see an image of the Royal Mediterráneo hotel complex, located at Sa Coma, with its invasive armature. The two postcards evidence the transformational process of the spaces as a dramatic period played itself out, both for individuals and for landscapes, constituting the symbolic entry into modernity for a country that began to construct this sort of hotels in absolute connivance with the power spheres

allied with Franco (it is rather suspicious that the majority of hotel complexes from the period have four-star ratings). Invasion and destruction of the territory, abrupt change from a rural and fishing economy, and subjection of the country to a form of tourism that was meant to provide it with a supposedly comfortable.

Lluís Vecina Rufiandis invites us to read the underside of the landscapes, at certain island sites: the message of a hidden history, that of the bodies that lie beneath the vacationers, opening us up to a vacant history, forged by silences, amidst murmurs that have become domestic legends (it has been said, upon occasion, that children playing on Sa Coma beach have found bones of the remains of the bodies buried there in 1936).

The artist tells of how his conversations and walks on the island with Tomeu Miquel Obrador led him to a conceptual proposal that gave shape to what had always been his concern: the relationship between landscape, memory and economic exploitation. Tomeu and Lluís engaged in the art of listening, paying attention to living testimonies of the struggle against fascism on the island, but also listening to the landscape and focusing on the impact of history on Mallorca's eastern coast. In their walks on this part of the island, they discovered what Tomeu Miquel Obrador calls the "poetics" of the line of fortified defence surrounding the island. Poetics not in reference to beauty, but for the verve of a metaphor: a coastline shielded by the memory of those who at the same time orchestrated a new capitalist occupation of it, monopolizing the island by means of the tourist market.

The research project that Lluís Vecina Rufiandis has carried out since 2020 focuses on the photographic archives that quite precisely combine these two lines of "fortification": military occupation and tourism, with its devasting associated market. Is this not what, in fact, is synthesized in the postcard that Lluís Vecina has made into the installation's

central piece? Is it not this different gaze that invites us to see, on the horizon, the hotels that frame the child's meander, like an invasive claw? In this way, the artist forces our gaze to be detoured, returning us to the eyes of a child who, in the words of Tomeu Miquel Obrador, does not seem pleased by the scenario the previous generation has left for him.

I am also able to see myself in a similar landscape, on another coastline on the same sea. It is in 1967, and I am filling a small bucket to make piles of sand. Surrounded by foreign bodies (transparent white skins beneath an unforgiving sun), feeling observed beneath their gaze. I am about to learn the meaning of expulsion, as they appear to be more beautiful, intelligent and sensible than us. The hotels were built for them, and the private swimming pools as well. Like the young boy in the postcard taken by Joan Andreu Puig Farran, I too was settled on the beach, with a large hotel complex in the background, which fascinated me because we were not allowed in; "exclusive" is what they called it. Early in the morning, a few of its guests would appear on the beach, covered with their satin dressing gowns. Then they would remove their clothes at the shore and take their first and perhaps only swim of the day, completely ignoring us.

Between us and them, silence reigned. They continued to come. We and the entire country, which no one ever imposed a political embargo on, continued to receive them. The dictatorship would be diluted beneath the harsh sun, which contributed to the deceptiveness of that seasonal hedonism that was little interested in the political and social events taking place in the country. Taken altogether, from amongst every Mediterranean coastline of the peninsula, we were the accessible option that a dictatorship had sold as "different": a country of apes that had bent its knee to capital investments, the erosion of landscapes, the sale of the land. The dictatorship dressed for the future and denied the past, sweetening the present in the process.

The past was embarrassing. The country chose to forget; the new generation also forgot. That is how Max Aub described it in *La gallina ciega* [Blind Man's Buff: a Spanish Diary], published in 1971, a decade before the construction of the Royal Mediterráneo hotel. In this book, Aub gathers his impressions from a trip around Spain in 1969, after a thirty-year absence. From that journey, which leads him to re-explore almost every province of the country the author resolves to never return, concluding from his experience that amnesia had expelled both him and the memory of what had taken place:

> "Everything is peaceful. It is odd how this business of twenty-five or thirty years of peace has had its impact . . . There is no memory of the war, not ours, not the world war, they have forgotten the repression or at least have come to accept it. . . . How are those children going to grow up? Even more ignorant of truth than their parents. Because these latter do not want to know, despite knowing; while in contrast, their kids will never know anything."

The following generation also would leave a written record of this, referring to those born in the postwar. In their writings, deep regret and rage are not solely the consequence of forgetfulness, but are derived from the havoc this social amnesia has caused. As Montserrat Roig exclaimed in the prologue to *Els catalans als camps nazis* [Catalans in the Nazi Camps]:

> "Those of us born after 1939 have had to go about clearing the underbrush of our recent past, a past that has left us with too many scars to be able to fully restore our historical health. We are ignorant, consciously or unconsciously. If we are aware of this, we suffer from rancour and moodiness."

The project of modernity the country experienced in the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, required an exercise in amnesia. However much it might nowadays seem to be the precise opposite, the renewal of national identities quite often tends to show disdain for the past, since what is sought is the creation of a new identity where the future gets to play the main role, that is, a situation of emptying narrations.

On the other hand, and focusing on the transformation of Mallorca, we should point out that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, various young writers wrote about what was already being perceived as a threat, deployed in corrupt conditions. The pioneering writer to address the issue was Antònia Vicens, and she was followed by Guillem Frontera, Gabriel Tomàs and Maria Antònia Oliver. In *39º a l'ombra* [39º in the Shade], Vicens writes: "He was a foreigner who had arrived without a cent at La Cala, started with a basic pension, and by that year was exploiting the most astounding hotel in the entire area." Then there was Oliver, in *Crònica d'un mig estiu* [Chronicle of a Half Summer]: "I heard the concierge say that things were not going well, and that they would have to close the hotel because they were deep in debt [...] He also said that they did not have this or that permit, and if the city council knew about it they would close the hotel down, but the city council never knows about things like this, he said, or else pretend they do not see, and that no hotels had the permits."

The transformation of the island as a consequence of tourist exploitation, in the service to that incipient source of wealth as encouraged by the government, likewise revealed other characteristics of the period. These include the influence of National Catholicism, changes in moral customs with tourism's consolidation on the island and, in parallel, the desolate circumstances of a few tourists who came to enjoy themselves, but were never able to escape from the trauma brought on by the world war. Another was the social transformation of the island due to the massive wave of migrants from other parts

of Spain to work in construction and the hotel industry, which gave rise to abusive working conditions.

The poet René Char, who had joined the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation, described his personal and shared experience of the war in his diary, begun in 1940, and written in short phrases and aphorisms. One of them particularly stands out for its enigmatic character: "Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament."[1]

Although it could seem paradoxical, Char is possibly saying that what happens from generation to generation is not subject to laws or contracts. The inheritance of experience is not imposed; instead, it either flows or turns clumsy in gestures, in the emotions we let out or hold in, in what we are proud of or what makes us ashamed. Our descendants are free to take it or leave it, to invent, gather, value or reconstruct the experience of those who have come before them. Inheritance and transmission are always personal questions. Nothing gets in the way of the transmission of the inheritance, because working against what is ignored means to have already surpassed the barrier of silence.

In this way, besides the visual features, texts and sound components that comprise Vecina Rufiandis' installation, there is a fundamental aspect that the artist deals with, namely transmission between generations. He speaks of it, from the very start, in the title. "Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times" is a phrase that appears in the book *Crematorio*, by Rafael Chirbes. It is spoken by the main character, a man born in the 1940s, upon realizing the broad range of possibilities the generation of sons and daughters coming after him might enjoy, those born in the 1970s. It is yet another enigmatic

1. [Our inheritance was left to us by no testament. (Translator's note)]

phrase that carries with it a paradox, which Vecina Rufiandis subtly picks up on in his work. Once we find ourselves inside the installation, a question arises: is it possible to be happy when liberal democracy turns time into an eventless passing? The artist, by gathering and exhibiting the compacted layers of historical time that emanate from the landscape and from people, also exhibits the goings-on of power, the destructive effects of exploitation and the consequences of historical amnesia. By turning himself into the transmitter of all that, he is able to extract himself from intranscendent times. Lack of transcendence, inconsequentiality, butt up against a barrier, when the ethics of memory are opted for. Lluís Vecina Rufiandis's gesture is thus a valiant one, in a time when some still seek to void memory of all transcendence.

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Joan Andreu Puig Farran, Republican landing at Mallorca with Alberto Bayo in the foreground, August 1936. Courtesy the Antoni Monné Collection

Unknown author, Photograph of Francoist troops bathing on the beach at Porto Cristo, in Mallorca, after their victory over the Republican forces, 1936. Courtesy of the Arxiu Municipal de Manacor

Joan Andreu Puig Farran, Postcard of Porto Cristo, c. 1967. The child appearing in the foreground is the father of Lluís Vecina Rufiandis, at the age of seven. CYP Postales Color. Courtesy of the artist

First journey of the company CYP Postales Color to Mallorca, 1953. From left to right: Antoni Campañà, Maria Capella, Sámara Vicente and Joan Andreu Puig Farran. Courtesy of the Antoni Monné Collection

THE PAST IS NOT:

MEDITATIONS ON AND ABOUT THE WORK OF LLUÍS VECINA RUFIANDIS

Francesc Torres

Some of us, the least favoured amongst us, woke up one day with the realisation that the most important event of our lives had taken place before we came into the world. A logical reaction to this discovery would be rage: "I am a chemically pure product of a determined historical event and yet, I have not had the opportunity to state my case. Those who lived through it, even though they might have been defeated, had that chance, and uphold the dignity of having resisted. I did not. I do not know how or against who to hit back." As what we have said here is not entirely true (there is always some way to hit back), another reaction, which for its neurotic character would be emotionally more complex, would be to obsess over the foundational Big Bang of one's own history and launch oneself into an unending spiral towards its origin, symbolically and intellectually reconstructing it by means of what we do (art, for example), and subconsciously through the key decisions we make in our lives. This is the case when, on the conscious plane, we gradually become more certain that the past, which is something that does not exist, always takes place in the present as a spectral projection, reconstructed each and every time it is invoked.

Nevertheless, even though it does not exist, the past always leaves traces in the form of physical sediments, which work as an anti-personnel charge. It is ready for the trigger to be set off as soon as we put a foot somewhere we should not: rusty objects, dust, paper, smells, images—these are what end up being a veritable peril. Images, and particularly

photographs, are as lethal as an artillery shell that hits a church spire though without actually exploding, waiting for some vibration, some thunderbolt or an innocently thrown stone, to set it off. I have an indelible recollection of a forest fire in the 1980s that took place in an area that had been the setting for the Battle of the Ebro, forty-four years earlier. I saw it live on television. The firemen were unable to put the blaze out, because with the summer heat dozens of artillery warheads, mortar shells and all kinds of unspent live ammunition scattered over the hills began to explode. None of the participants of those tragic events had been in that area for many years, but the theatrical stage of the historical drama that unfolded in that sleepless geography came to life again, without the need for its leading characters. Those images made my hair stand on end. I was watching the Battle of the Ebro from 1938, which took place ten years before I was born, but in the 1980s, when I was already over the age of thirty.

The work of Lluís Vecina being exhibited at Es Baluard Museu goes down similar paths. The project was launched after the chance discovery of a tourist postcard from the 1960s of Porto Cristo Beach in Mallorca, where the artist's father appeared in the photograph, at the age of seven. That discovery opened up an extraordinary Pandora's Box that has been solidified into the project here being presented. But let's take things one at a time. The person writing this text has always thought that art, to a certain degree, is done by itself. It is already there and all you have to do is find it, in the same way that, paraphrasing Michelangelo (which is always risky, although here works quite well) the sculpture is within the marble as pulled from the quarry, and it all comes down to finding it so as to free it from captivity. Or again, if we were to use a political analogy, the success of a revolution, for example, which is ultimately a work of art (a social sculpture, if we were to go along with Lenin, Manuel Azaña or Joseph Beuys), consists of knowing how to identify the moment

when it is possible to make it happen. Once the process has begun (sometimes, as we can see, by chance), the best guarantee of success lies in knowing how to listen to what the work in potential is telling you it needs. To put this another way, and in literary terms, it has to do with identifying the internal coherence of what should be said and what should be. The work is never wrong—the artist might make a mistake, the work does not.

The photograph on the postcard that set off this project was taken by Joan Andreu Puig Farran. A photographer specialised in the postcard business for tourists, together with his partner Antoni Campañà he was able to recognise its potential as a line of business in the early years of the powerful transformation of Spain into a draw for world tourism. This would turn tourism into the country's economic mainstay, as it has been until the present day: a long-term suicide disguised as a great historical opportunity. It so happens that Puig Farran had photographed this same landscape two decades earlier, as a correspondent covering the disembarkation of the expedition of Republican troops led by Alberto Bayo Giroud, a Hispano-Cuban soldier and aviator who ended his days in Cuba, after serving as a military advisor to Fidel Castro during the revolution that overthrew the Batista dictatorship, in 1958. This military operation, which took place in August 1936, was an attempt to take back Mallorca after it had fallen into the hands of the fascists during the coup d'état, and was organised out of Barcelona without knowledge of the central Republican government or the Ministry of War. It ended in defeat due to pure incompetence, and ultimately because of decisive action by the Italian navy and air force. We do not know the exact number of Republican casualties, but it was in the hundreds; many of them were buried at sa Coma Beach in various common graves, dug right up against the beach. Further things were to take place at sa Coma a few decades later.

Straddling the developmental philosophy of the Franco regime and the leniency of Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism and a life-long democrat (as he himself would tell us two decades later), another paradigmatic character of the Spanish "national shotgun" appears, by name of Jaume Moll. A local smuggler become businessman and hotel magnate, Moll would be responsible for the second disembarkation at sa Coma Beach. This time, however, it would be a resounding success, involving northern Europeans in bathing suits (skimpy ones for the women, to the great pleasure of hungry Iberian machos, causing anguish for the Holy Mother National Catholic Church). Foreign currency would win out over Franco-era morals. And with this we have completed the full composite sketch from this unfortunate country's psychiatric couch. A massacre of history and memory, which are not the same thing, though which go together ineluctably in an ongoing dialectical relationship, where the supposed concretion of the former is always put in doubt by the latter, though without either being fully reliable. The latter, namely memory, is always emotionally the truth; no one lies about how they feel when they remember something, although the memory might be a fictional narrative about a slippery truth, the very experience of what happened. This is how memory is closer to literature, to art, to the invoked truth, than to the objective truth. The same thing could almost be said about history, which is not the same if written by the victors or the vanquished, by the ones on top and the ones at the bottom, by men or women, by whites and non-whites, by Israelis or Palestinians. Despite this, the study of history is an academic field articulated through a scientific methodology based on documentary and material evidence; it is not, however, immune to error or manipulation, but does allow for errors to be corrected and manipulations to be discerned. In Spain, the assault on history in the twentieth century was and continues

to be a spectacular way to sustain the fiction of a model transition to democracy, as well as to hide the deep shame and moral misery of the Civil War and its aftermath. Jaume Moll is not responsible for all that, but he exemplified it in notable fashion by building his Royal Hotel and Apartments complex to host the second disembarkation of Mallorca. In that way, he was to ensure that well-fed bodies of the well-off north might be lying down sunbathing on the same sand that still today covers over innumerable piles of Republican soldier bodies from 1936, without having outlasted the pitiful military defeat to tell about it. It is a terrible image, and anticipates the personal defeat of Moll himself, when his own little sandcastle was to crumble before the courts after being investigated for corruption, in the years of unbridled speculation on the Balearic Islands under the conservative Partido Popular. A *totum revolutum* that corroborates the sinister, dizzying sensation that in this country you can never be sure of what you are walking on, and if by mere chance you end up thinking about it, all you have to do to rid the thought is order another daiquiri and keep on dancing.

In strictly technical terms, "Lluís Vecina Rufiandis: Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times" represents an intergenerational consolidation of the multimedia installation, as we come to the fiftieth anniversary of its existence. In this piece, the artist demonstrates formal maturity, exemplifying a powerful narrative, having perfectly understood the nature of that ever-so-particular beast, which without even trying changed so many things in a flash. Although perhaps the main alteration was to turn the idea of the museum inside out, upsetting the modern concept as developed in the eighteenth century. Amidst a set of historical circumstances that would be difficult to repeat, multimedia installation transformed the museum, until then the receiving box of historical sediment, into an active agent of previously-unseen artistic production based on the project, without the need to have

to eliminate any of the functions that until then had defined the museum's functionality. It was quite a lesson on the art of walking and chewing gum at the same time—if you will excuse the phrase—so entirely absent in the institutions of our day. There still has not been anything written on this seminal period that we all take as normal, without fully comprehending it within its own historical perspective. So that in the context of this extremely complex piece, Lluís Vecina has accomplished a highly potent poetic and visual narrative of the kind that art requires, so that we might be aware of what cannot be explained any other way.

Nil Santiáñez, in his book *The Literature of Absolute War*, explains that absolute war came into being in the twentieth century, and should be understood as one step beyond total war, not being exactly the same. He argues that in the moment it was first seen, it was considered to be so unprecedented in its excess that it was not possible to represent or narrate it within the strategies of realism, as it could not be experienced as a form of reality. What is "real" about the two-year siege of Leningrad, or Stalingrad, or the destruction of Hiroshima? It was necessary to come up with narrative strategies that were closer to the unreality of absolute war, and in this sense a good part of last century's avant-garde literature and art can be understood, as well as the impact World War I had on the Modern Movement. This is despite the fact that absolute war, in its highest expression, did not manifest itself as such, unquestionably, until the next worldwide confrontation broke out. Bridging the distances, the disaster of the Republican army's disembarkation in 1936 is not comparable to the magnitude of the incendiary bombing of Tokyo in 1945, to give an example. They are not comparable in magnitude, but they are in terms of unreality. How might we represent or write about the Spanish Civil War and its postwar using literary or visual language able to do justice to it, avoiding any sort of related, recurring truism?

It cannot be done by means of realism, there is no question about that. Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, for example, is by far the best film about Vietnam, precisely because it is not realist, but rather a dreamlike delirium, an acid trip with bombs. That is why it is so true to the story it is telling. The same thing happens with this piece by Lluís Vecina. It addresses the recent history of Spain from outside the orthodox frame of reference, in this way coming as close as possible to the experience of the event referred to, making full use of the symbolic, metaphorical and non-linear language of historical modernity, where what is real is less tangible than what is unreal (insisting on the contradiction in terms). It is thus able to provide for us a version of what Luis de Zulueta said of the work of Velázquez (which would also be applicable to the work of Goya, and perhaps even more so): "It is truth, not painting." If you were to ask me about "Lluís Vecina Rufiandis: Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times", I would have to say: it is truth, and it is art.

CYP Postales Color, Hotel Royal Mediterráneo, Sa Coma, Mallorca, no date. Courtesy of the Arxiu Municipal de Manacor

Feliços els fills dels temps intranscendents [Happy the Children of Intranscendent Times], 2024. Set of 500 postcards with the names of the soldiers disappeared during the Civil War in Mallorca (fragment of the reverse side of the work). Courtesy of the artist

José Luis Rodríguez Díaz, Tourists, 1970s. Image for the magazine *Perlas y Cuevas*. Courtesy of the Arxiu Municipal de Manacor

HAPPY THE CHILDREN OF INTRANSCENDENT TIMES

Lluís Vecina Rufiandis

To be able to narrate ourselves with certain coherency, whether individually or collectively, we need to put the material that history throws out in order, relating the pieces to each other and establishing affinities that might enable us to create a narrative acceptable for our own understanding. In my case, the discovery of a simple tourist postcard in my grandmother's densely decorated kitchen set off a series of unforeseen recollections. This small object, which would be quite irrelevant a priori, was able to activate a kind of temporal game, run through by latencies and crisis; it ended up revealing itself as a testimony from the past—to not say *from that past*—which has been preserved more for its cancellation than its recognition.

As I was saying, hidden amongst the insignificant objects accumulated in that kitchen was the tourist postcard I refer to. The postcard framed a partial view of the beach at Porto Cristo, a small town on the eastern shore of the island of Mallorca; it is also the place I come from, to offer a small autobiographical note. The reason that justified that postcard having a place in the lay reliquary of my grandmother's home was a rather charming, anecdotic detail: my father appears in the image, staring at the camera at the age of seven or so. What is odd about the picture, where my father became part of a souvenir, is the fact that the company that produced the photograph was run by two photojournalists with relatively significant careers, so that perhaps you will be familiar with them: Joan Andreu Puig Farran and Antoni Campañà.

Their collaboration, as they strived to forge successful careers as photographers, took place in the context of the

Spanish post-war, when tourism began to be a concern of the Spanish state (though rather timidly, if we were to compare it with what came afterwards). Photography for tourist postcards became a fertile ground for senior photography professionals who needed to urgently shed certain personal details from their resumes, or conceal political connections from before 1939 that could be taken as suspicious or potentially compromising. It was the price you had to pay to be able to work, or simply to be able to survive: accepting the loss of one world, a world that had defended itself, pushing any recollection of it into the most inaccessible, recondite corner of memory. Once the peremptory conditions that defined the guidelines of the period had been set out, in 1952 the two partners took advantage of the celebration in Barcelona of the 35th International Eucharistic Congress, to found the company CYP Postales Color that very year. From that point on, the subject of postcards took on greater importance for them. For this reason, in their attempt to have a broader presence to favour the company's bottom line, they began to mark out the geographical sites that would become part of their catalogue, ever aware of growing competition in that particular market niche.

Without wishing to downplay the role of Campañà, the main character in this story is Joan Andreu Puig Farran, who as destiny would have it, was the one who photographed my father on that beach in the summer of 1967. Yet before we get into the picture's importance, and to better organise this stream of events, I would like to mention something that took place earlier, in 1953, when the two photographers, accompanied by Sámara Vicente and Maria Capella, made their first trip to Mallorca as postcard photographers. We could stop for a moment at that year. Without wishing to force the coincidence, it was not until 1953 that Spain was able to project itself into the future, thanks to the beginnings of Transatlantic relations between Franco's Spain and the

United States. It was the year when the Cooperation and Friendship Agreement (known as the Pact of Madrid) was signed with the Americans, and although the analogy could seem baseless, I think of how certain historical facts can end up resonating on a personal level. I am not saying that the pact had a direct influence on the life of Puig Farran, but it is stimulating to think—and especially when looking at the photographs of the entire trip, where the four travellers are smiling and relaxed—that sometimes, thanks to a whimsical twist of history, the motivations of power and the desires of private lives can tend to converge. At a single, exact point. In a precise year. And for a mysterious incongruency. In the same way that the early period of the Franco regime made it possible to catch a glimpse of the end of autarchy, from that point on Puig Farran began to leave behind the ghosts of the past that had tormented him for so long.

Nevertheless, before that, history had been quite different. Puig Farran's life was marked by the enthusiasm and misfortune of the period, which is why he plays such a key role in this story. He participated in the Civil War, and was also the author of the most iconic photographs of the Republican landing in Mallorca the summer of 1936. The battle began on 16th August, when the Republican army, under the orders of Alberto Bayo, landed on Sa Coma beach. The fighting lasted until the night of 3-4th September, as the incursion of Republican militias took place all along the eastern coast of the island, from Cala Anguila to Cala Millor. In this particular case, Porto Cristo and Sa Coma were the sites of the heaviest fighting. Thus the gaze of a single person, Puig Farran, would involuntarily end up capturing two antithetical realities in a single space: a setting of the war, which later becomes a setting for tourists. It is at this point where the postcard with my father, taken in Porto Cristo, turns into an unusual container of memory. The postcard, like all the others done of the area by Puig Farran after CYP was founded,

is unusually rich in detail. They are not innocuous images, but rather mementos of survival, able to revive inaudible tones of voice whose vibrations reverb to the present day. Joan Andreu Puig Farran disembarked twice at Sa Coma: in 1936, to bear witness to what took place during the war; and from 1953 on, to sell us the phenomenon of tourism that arrived in the post-war.

As I have noted earlier, the beach at Sa Coma was one of the main battle sites on the island during the war. Nevertheless, no one visiting the area nowadays will find a single trace of all that. Since the 1980s, more or less, the beach is a focal-point for mass tourism, but the most significant piece of data, and at the same time the most perturbing, is hidden in the sand. Beneath the current setting of tourist infrastructure and hypertrophic development, the largest mass-grave on the island remains unseen on the northernmost part of the beach and dotted over various nearby locations. The number of bodies buried there has been a point of discussion and controversy for quite some time, although it is purported that the gravesite could hold the remains of some 500 Republican soldiers who died in the battle.

Yet it does not end here. I am not sure if I warned you at the start, that this story is fired by implausible coincidences. One of the main protagonists of the conversion of Sa Coma into an international tourist attraction was the hotelier Jaume Moll, the other main character in this tale. As many others during the democratic transition—Moll was not an anomaly—he found a way to affirm that he had all the virtues of a "good democrat" showing himself open to the possibilities that were emerging with the immanent regime change, aware of the right strategy to adopt. To ensure the rapid ascent of the kind he was seeking, a good dose of cynicism was needed above all. And as a condition to obtain the benefits of the moment, you were encouraged to develop that great ability of not revealing the shameful face of past activities.

Moll followed this axiom to the letter. When it comes to that part of his past that he might have wanted to leave out, we find he had an exotic resume as an experienced smuggler, a profession he was able to begin and perfect (before setting off on a successful solo career) with the finest group of smugglers in the country: the Companyia de sa Vall (namely, Joan March). Packs of Winston cigarettes, bottles of Jack Daniel's or penicillin. Who knows what else was being moved. The point is, thanks to those fruitful years moving contraband, he accumulated a large enough fortune to be able to leave that profession and rebaptise himself without excessive difficulty as a hotelier. Thus, with the instauration of democracy (that prosperous form of government when it comes to doing business), Jaume Moll deployed his finest business sense and forged what would be his new empire: Royaltur S.A. Even though its trail was short-lived, its activity was brisk, as he opened hotels in Andalusia (in Chiclana for example), and received the concession for all hotel rooms approved for the 1992 Expo in Seville, thanks to the invaluable support of Fernando Palao, the person in charge of ports and coasts at the Ministry of Public Works during the Felipe González government. Despite all this, Sa Coma was the *sancta sanctorum* of his ambition; his drive, or business acumen, found form with the most noble material of the period, cement, as seen with the construction of the monumental Hotel Royal Mediterráneo and the Apartamentos Royal Mediterráneo. This exhibition of *royalty*—here I suspect the use of the term "royal" was meant as an indicator of the value given to his accomplishments—was the pioneering step in that setting's metamorphosis, given that it stretched out across the entire beachfront, giving new value to an area that until then had remained untouched. I doubt Jaume Moll was unaware of the wartime episode that had taken place on that valuable piece of coastline—or maybe he was. Those were the years when socialist minister Carlos

Solchaga dared to state that Spain was the European country where it was easiest to get rich in the shortest period of time, no doubt protected by the insolence of the time. Such was the state of things. On top of all that, it was a time when references to the past were not overly profitable, while furthermore being in confrontation with the ideal of progress.

It would be very naïve to comprehend these two life experiences through a Manichean conception of history, where the good guys and the not-so-good guys were on different sides; any sort of binary reading of the events would make it hard for us to read the respective biographies of Moll and Puig Farran with adequate accuracy. If we were to go a bit further with this, we would see the intense frictions that appear in the same setting, the memory it contains and the fragile framework of our immediate reality. It is truly chilling to think about how just two decades separate images of armed soldiers from pictures of other bodies covered in suntan lotion. From all this, the suspicion arises that tourism, in that part of the world, has fulfilled the grand function of washing things over, sweetening landscapes and memories alike. Rather than being the omen of an "economic miracle" and a phenomenon always presented with a veil of innocence, tourism reveals itself as an operation of political engineering to create an attractive image of the fascist regime for those on the outside, given the Franco regime's urge to affirm its own process of modernisation and international recognition.

Once success had been confirmed and celebrated, it was necessary to begin the vital process of preserving it. But here too, there are right ways and wrong ways, and the responsibility for ensuring that everything went as it should fell on a regime that was not overly given to measure. Swedes, Americans, Germans, French and British, along with a generous cast of other nationalities, came to Spain with the idea of getting a tan and ridding themselves of the residues left on their skin by the European war, attracted by

the slogan of "enter without knocking". A safe destination where the word "Franco", in an odd twist of the tongue, came to sound like "peace".

Getting this message of openness and friendly receptiveness to foreigners was not particularly hard. For their part, assuming the contradiction of being a tourist in a dictatorial nation depended upon the ethical laxity of each individual, although it was an easy moral dilemma to overcome if what was promised was a holiday beside the sea, lovely weather and attentive staff everywhere you looked. Another sort of problem was to convince your own population that charter flights, hammocks and hydro-pedals were signs of prosperity and guarantee of a better future. It was fully predictable that historian Ricardo de la Cierva would end up frustrated in his manuals upon seeing—as he expressed it—how tourism had fully incorporated itself into Spanish national life without making in-ways into our collective consciousness. Another representative who was uncomfortable with what was happening was Manuel Fraga Iribarne, who in belligerent tones (attributable to his Falangist background) complained of how unenthusiastically Spanish citizens embraced this "common task" that tourism had become, which for him was a responsibility of all Spaniards, without exception. Not taking on the role of the perfect host had consequences, dramatically compromising the aspirations many representatives of the Franco regime had for greater openness. This is why they would insist, over and over again, with dulling insistency, on the need to create "tourist awareness" (the term they used), which was understood, in case of any doubt, as a "national mission".

Quite apart from ecumenical or national missions, the experience of Sa Coma could be just an excuse for us, since places like it are more common than we might imagine amongst Spain's most familiar landscapes. We must ask ourselves about the meaning enlivening them, the vision we have inherited and what has been left out of the story. I have read somewhere

about an idea that perfectly summarises the impulse behind this project, which consists of pointing out how after defeat, an even more subtle and irreversible loss will always take place: that which involves the interpretation of the territory and its history, as well as the loss of memory and its exclusive delivery into the hands of a few others. This feeling seems to rise like a swelling sea on a day when the easterly winds drive in hard. So that if any response is possible, it would be the one where we refuse to accept that, lacking the whole story, it is perfectly fine to stick parasols into the sand above buried bones.

To Jeroni Mira, *in memoriam*.
Barcelona, 11th July 2024

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Lluís Vecina Rufiandis
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