

Sufrir, salir, sobrevivir: Cultural Responses to the 2008 Social and Financial Crisis in Spain

Joanne Elisabeth Britland
Winchester, Virginia

Bachelor of Arts, James Madison University, 2008
Master of Arts, Bowling Green State University, 2010

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese

University of Virginia
May, 2019

Abstract

This dissertation introduces various cultural responses to the 2008 social and financial crisis in Spain. In particular, the project identifies key outcomes of the actual crash and demonstrates how cultural works have depicted the catastrophe. My work underscores other functions of these artistic manifestations ranging from providing catharsis to encouraging protest and activism. The dissertation explores multiple cultural phenomena including novel, theatre, film, television, comic, and street performance. It offers the first critical analysis of many of these texts.

In the Introduction, I highlight the historical background leading up to the 2008 recession and discuss the consequences of the disaster. I point to culture as a means to move beyond numbers and figures in order to illuminate the human suffering and response to the crash. In this chapter, I offer an overview of previous scholarship on the crisis and cultural production and point to the need for an ongoing conversation. I underscore that my dissertation fills a void in the study of these phenomena by providing an analysis of multiple mediums.

Chapter One discusses the first thematic response to the crisis: suffering and marginality. It demonstrates the human dimension of the disaster through analyses of the play *Iphigenia en Vallecas*, Isaac Rosa's comic, *Aquí vivió*, and Icíar Bollaín's film, *El olivo*. Chapter Two centers on the mass Spanish emigration that occurred after the advent of the crisis. The chapter provides an overview of recent Spanish migration patterns and how these are represented through culture. *Venirse arriba* (2014), by Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José, *Blitz* (2015), by David Trueba, the film *Perdiendo el norte* (2015), directed by Nacho Velilla, as well as the television series, *Buscando el norte* (2016),

created by Nacho Velilla, Oriol Capel, David Olivas, and Antonio Sánchez serve as case studies to represent this phenomenon. Chapter Three examines how culture can serve as a mode of protest through an analysis of María Folguera's novel, *Los primeros días de Pompeya* (2016), Alberto San Juan's play, *Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español* (2017), and the Flo6x8 flamenco flash-mob group.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Foreword.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One	
Suffering.....	23
Chapter Two	
La crisis y la risa: Emigration and Humor after the 2008 Crisis.....	76
Chapter Three	
Performance as Protest: Cultural Production as a Form of Denouncement.....	126
Conclusion.....	184
Works Cited.....	188

Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Virginia. I would first like to thank my dissertation advisor, Andrew Anderson. He has been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration throughout my career as a graduate student and during the dissertation process. His attention to detail and personal scholarly rigor set the bar for excellence, and it has been a privilege to work with him. I am grateful to Sam Amago for his motivation and guidance from the outset of his time working with me at UVa. His innovative scholarship on contemporary Spanish cultural production provided much inspiration for this project. An incredible amount of thanks goes to Fernando Operé, who has encouraged me during my academic career in so many ways. Through our time in class, the UVa Spanish Theater Group, the poetry workshop, the “Viajero” Kentucky Conference panel, and working with the Valencia program, he has been a steady source of support and motivation. I am also grateful to Carrie Douglass for generously serving on my committee and for her expertise and scholarship on twentieth-century and contemporary Spain.

Profound thanks also go to Pablo Valdivia. His research blazed the trail for scholarly inquiry into the 2008 financial crash in Spain. His support and assistance greatly aided in the foundation of this project. I am grateful for the opportunity to have spent a research stay with him and the Cultural Narratives of Crisis and Renewal (CRIC) team at the University of Groningen in 2017. His generosity and that of the Department of European Literature and Culture allowed me to have a productive and illuminating experience researching abroad and helped me in the beginning stages of my dissertation.

A special thank you also goes to Randolph Pope, María-Inés Lagos, Eli Carter, Miguel Valladares-Llata, Fernando Valverde, Emily Scida, and Yitna Firdyiwek for their mentorship and support. I feel extremely fortunate for all of my colleagues, friends, and graduate students in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese who have worked alongside me during the past five years. This project would not have been possible without the friendship and support of so many in Charlottesville and in the program. I would also like to thank those who have taught and supported me throughout the years. First, thank you to Sarah Sierra who inspired me to become a Spanish professor when I was her student at JMU. I owe deep gratitude to John Tkac, who, on a 2008 spring day in Keezell Hall, asked me about my future plans and suggested that I pursue my M.A. in Alcalá de Henares. Profound thanks go to Polly Nesselrodt Nelson, who instilled in me a foundation and love for the Spanish language. I would like to thank Jane Perrotta, my aunt, who opened my eyes to the world of travel, culture, and literature. I will never forget our adventures together in New York City.

To my first Spanish teacher, my father, who introduced me to the language as a child. I'm sure that he had no idea at the time that this simple exposure to Spanish would transform into my greatest passion, leading to a lifetime quest to learn more about the peoples, languages, and cultures of this beautiful and diverse world. Finally, I would like to thank my mother. This project would not have been possible without her unwavering support.

Foreword

This project began in May 2008 when I was about to graduate from James Madison University. Although the real fallout of the financial crash had not manifested itself completely, the uncertainty of the future was daunting. Graduating during this time meant that most of us students would leave our comfortable university life without any real prior employment experience and be thrust into a workforce struggling to stay intact in a crumbling economy. My plan made this transition a bit easier because I decided to continue my studies by moving abroad and pursuing my master's degree in Alcalá de Henares. That is where the real inspiration for this project began.

In September 2008 I arrived in Spain. Over the following year, “la crisis” became one of the most common words in my daily conversations along with “hipoteca,” “desempleo,” and “corrupción”. During the time I spent in Alcalá and Madrid between 2008 and 2011, I lived through and witnessed the most difficult years of the social, economic, and political meltdown in Spain. Anxiety, fear, and uncertainty were certainly common emotions that some of my closest friends and host family dealt with. Many of them suffered through employment cuts and layoffs, an inability to achieve their “dream” jobs, and worried about paying their mortgages. The consequences of the crisis were omnipresent: in the streets, on the news, and in daily conversations. In the swirl of this state of catastrophe, what truly struck me was the continued resilience and unparalleled kindness and generosity of all of the Spaniards with whom I grew close during these years, despite their personal and financial strife. Their stories inspired me, and I wanted to do something to remember these difficult moments and contribute in a way that could perhaps help, or at the very least, recognize and honor them.

Although it is impossible to name all of the Spaniards whose presence in my life inspired this project, I would like to recognize a few: My “familia”: Alicia, Emi, Chete, Allen, and Ada; Leandro Sánchez de Medina Alba and the entire Sánchez de Medina Alba family; my “primos”: Emma, Luis, Cintia, Manu, Haritz, Fátima, and Virginia M.; my “vecinos”: Álex, Marta, and Victor; my Alcalá friends: Ana and Rafa, Magda, Susana, and Javier; Sergio, Dani, Marcos, and Rebeca; my colleagues and friends at Colegio Magerit in Parla: Paquí, Virtudes, Cristina, Raquel, Elena M., Elena S., Elisa, and Leticia.

For my parents

In loving memory of Jane Perrotta

Introduction

The worldwide 2008 social and financial crisis impacted Spain more than any other event of the twenty-first century. It exposed a country that was struggling and disillusioned amid soaring rates of unemployment, alarming numbers of evictions, corruption scandals, and a resulting distrust and lack of confidence in the nation's financial and political institutions. It sparked one of the most significant challenges Spain has faced in recent times (Castells, *De la crisis económica* 15). Catalyzed in part by the 2008 economic collapse, the fracturing and questioning of societal and governmental establishments has led to additional conflicts and transformations in Spain, such as the Catalanian crisis, a rise in populist movements, the emergence of new political parties, massive migratory patterns, and a universal clamor for change.

At the time of completion of this dissertation, just over ten years after the crash, it is now possible to step back and examine the conditions that led to the meltdown. More importantly, this time lapse allows us to determine and appreciate how people responded to it. A lens through which we can observe these reactions is cultural production, which in and of itself has also been a direct response to the crisis. A 2018 article in *El País* notes that the 2008 catastrophe provided inspiration to artists and thinkers for an entire decade (“Este sábado en ‘Babelia’”). Works of cultural production that emerged following the crash reveal several of the causes and repercussions of the recession. They also engage with readers and spectators in diverse ways, ranging from providing cathartic support to rousing protest and urging action to diminish government corruption and enact reforms to prevent future disasters.

This dissertation examines these cultural phenomena by taking into account and analyzing a variety of mediums, including novel, theatre, film, television, comic, and street performance. One thing that is unique about this project is that most of these particular cultural works have never before received scholarly attention. This study introduces these key post-crisis works and lays the framework for further investigations, By organizing the chapters according to three main responses to the financial crash: suffering, migration, and protest, this project illustrates how culture also serves as a critical response to the 2008 disaster. Before discussing the specifics of the chapter breakdown, I will first briefly describe the circumstances and complexities leading up to and following the 2008 meltdown.

“La crisis”

The disturbing realities of the recession revealed themselves in 2007 and 2008 when unemployment levels steadily began to rise in Spain, peaking in 2013 and 2014 at 27 percent (Gómez) with youth unemployment levels reaching a catastrophic 53 percent (Bermudez & Bray 85).¹ Economists and theorists throughout the globe have researched and explained the causes of the crash—and responses to it—from political, sociological and economic angles (Bauman & Bordoni; Castells, Caraça and Cardoso; De la Hesa; Fontana; Gago; Harvey; Krugman; Shiller).² Many of their findings emphasize that the

¹ Bermudez & Bray retrieved this data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). The INE separates age groups in the following way: 16-19, 20-24, 25-29. When referring to “youth unemployment”, I have taken the averages for these three age groups; thus “youth unemployment” refers to the 16-29 year old demographic. Please see Figure One for more detailed information regarding unemployment statistics.

² Nick Paumgarten’s article “The Hangover” in the February 25, 2013 issue of the *New Yorker* provides a comprehensive overview of the conditions that brought about the crisis in Spain.

2008 collapse was not merely a financial crisis, but one that involved a lack of trust in political and social institutions. For this reason, it was both a *social* and a *financial* crisis.

Manuel Castells, João Caraça, and Gustavo Cardoso discuss this phenomenon in their study *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*:

The crisis of global capitalism that has unfolded since 2008 is not merely economic. It is structural and multidimensional. The events that took place in its immediate aftermath show that we are entering a world with very different social and economic conditions from those that characterized the rise of global, informational capitalism in the preceding three decades. (1)

Similarly, historian Josep Fontana also proposes that a climate of neoliberal economic policies as well as a polarizing global social and political atmosphere contributed to the crash in 2007-2008. In his book *El futuro es un país extraño: Una reflexión sobre la crisis social de comienzos del siglo XXI*, he, like Castells, Caraça, and Cardoso (5), argues that the disaster originated in the United States, with roots much earlier than 2008. For this reason, the analysis of it must begin in the preceding years.

Diagnosing the source of the crash begins with the United States, where, as in other parts of the world in the years leading up to 2008, big banks and businesses enjoyed much freedom with policies of deregulation and a general lack of oversight (Fontana 14). There was an ever-growing spirit of speculation and risk-taking, and as Jeffrey Friedman notes, this is evident and reflected in the millions of risky mortgages (subprime) that were granted over this period. During this time, two U.S. government-sponsored entities (GSEs), the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Corporation (Freddie Mac) bought forty-one percent of U.S. mortgages. The rest (fifty-nine percent) remained “with the bank of origination or were sold for securitization to investment banks” (Friedman 7). Irresponsible financial practices, such as issuing

mortgage-backed securities (MBSs) and private label mortgage-backed securities (PLMBSs)³ filled with risky, subprime loans added to the precarious condition of the U.S. and global economy. The housing market—and financial sector—was, in essence, propped up by a wobbling house of cards, ready to fall at any moment.

The consequences of these risky practices became apparent between 2006 and 2008 when the housing bubble slowly began to burst. Many of those who had taken out subprime loans to purchase homes defaulted at unexpected rates. In attempts to stave off the crumbling economy and to maintain the solvency of the GSEs that had issued many of these subprime loans and mortgages, the U.S. government came to the rescue of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, with a \$382 billion bailout on September 9, 2008. This was done to prevent the insolvency of the commercial banks, which “held \$852 billion worth of mortgage backed securities issued by Fannie and Freddie” (Friedman 5). Shortly after, on September 15, 2008, Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy causing a worldwide panic; other U.S. banks and brokerage firms such as Bear Stearns suffered losses (Friedman 3-5). In an effort to keep the economy afloat, the U.S. government enacted the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 and bailed out the big banks. The original bailout was \$700 billion, but according to the Special Inspector General for TARP (Troubled Assets Relief Program) Summary, it is actually \$16.8 trillion (Collins).

The impact created a domino effect and became a global contagion with a similar pattern occurring throughout many parts of Europe, including Spain (De la Hesa 27). As in the United States, Spain also experienced high speculation, a construction boom and bust, the rescuing of banks, and growing rates of poverty and unemployment. However,

³ An MBS refers to a security bond issued by agencies such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; a PLMBS is an MBS issued by investment banks like Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, and Bear Stearns (Friedman 5).

Spain suffered even more dire ramifications than the United States; unemployment levels reached roughly 25 percent for the general population (Fontana 59-60) and a crippling 53 percent for the youth population (Bermudez & Bray 85). María Aysa-Lastra and Lorenzo Cachón aptly summarize the situation when they say that the “state of the labor market in Spain can be described as ‘catastrophic’” (25). For a complete overview of unemployment rates from 2007-2014, please see the table below.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
16-19	28.7	39.4	55.2	61.3	64.0	72.6	74.0	68.6
20-24	15.0	20.2	33.3	36.9	42.3	48.9	51.8	50.3
25-29	9.0	13.3	21.7	24.7	26.3	31.5	33.3	30.3
30-44	7.0	9.9	16.2	18.2	19.7	22.7	23.7	22.0
45-54	6.3	8.4	13.4	15.3	17.1	20.5	22.2	21.2
55+	5.7	7.1	11.5	13.5	14.4	17.3	19.4	19.3

Fig. 1: Unemployment rates (%) by age group in Spain (2007-2014) (Source: (Bermudez & Bray 85) taken from the Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA), Institución Nacional de Estadística (INE).)

Also as with the situation in the United States, the government in Spain used public money to bail out entities in the economic sector and major banks such as Bankia (which absorbed several regional banks or “cajas”, notably Caja Madrid)⁴ (Fontana 61).

⁴ Spanish financial and corporate institutions, such as the construction company Martinsa-Fadesa and Caja Madrid (later forming part of Bankia) have been mired in corruption, controversy, and scandal. Former chairmen of Caja Madrid and architects of the Bankia merger, Rodrigo Rato and Miguel Blesa, were both charged and sentenced for fraud. To add to the scandal, Blesa was found dead after committing suicide in his apartment in July of 2017, just five months after his sentencing. These cases of corruption have only fueled indignation among the Spanish population (Minder, “ex chairman”).

However, unlike the United States, Spain relied on external economic support from the European Union to do so, receiving a \$125 billion bailout in 2012 (Minder et al.). Of course, this public money did not come without strings attached. Financial strains increased on the general population due to the resulting austerity measures imposed by the leaders of the European Union, the Troika, comprised of the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. As Manuel Castells writes, several Spaniards have denounced

the dictatorship of the European Commission and of the German government over the Spanish government, at the time led by a Socialist Prime minister. The government bowed to the direct pressure of Angela Merkel, going as far as approving a constitutional amendment, in alliance with the Conservative Partido Popular (PP), to ban public spending beyond certain limits. (*Europe's Crises*, 334-335)

The move proved unpopular among many Spanish citizens who, as a result, had less access to social benefits and increased difficulties in obtaining employment. This left them struggling to find feasible alternatives to alleviate their situation, contributing to an even greater loss of confidence in political and social institutions. High unemployment and the difficulties brought about by the austerity measures severely impacted the already impoverished as well as Spanish youth. Young people who were negatively affected by the massive recession have been called “ni ni’s” (ni estudian, ni trabajan) (Teruel), and referred to as the “generación perdida” (lost generation). A good number of them—many of whom are highly educated—have sought job opportunities elsewhere, resulting in a departure of a skilled and intelligent workforce: a phenomenon known as the “brain drain” (Portes 40).

When thinking about the impact of these difficulties on the Spanish population, it is useful to bear in mind economist Robert Shiller's comments. He emphasizes that this crisis "set in motion fundamental societal changes—changes that affect our consumer habits, our values, our relatedness to each other" (1). The crisis, in essence, brought about a new era ripe with uncertainty, and within a prevailing environment of corruption and disillusionment, a desire for renewal.

The Crisis and Cultural Production

Zygmunt Bauman and Carlo Bordoni propose that this state of uncertainty is called *liquid modernity*: a condition "where everything has become unstable, precarious, temporary and uncertain" (Bordoni, *Interregnum* 8). This means that modernity is in decline, and the term Bauman and Bordoni use to define the concept is *interregnum*, "a period of time and a waiting condition between the end of the power of a sovereign and the assumption of power by another" (*Interregnum* 9). Bordoni writes,

Every moment of crisis, as its etymology reminds us, is an opportunity for choice and change: we must seize this opportunity, which is offered to us just now and which is unlikely to be repeated, to set up the new order according to our aspirations and our needs, without giving up, without surrendering to pessimism and fatalism and, above all, with no regrets for what has been. (*Interregnum* 15)

According to Zygmunt Bauman and Carlo Bordoni in their book *State of Crisis*, one of the original definitions of the word *crisis* is a turning point, a time to make a decision and react to a situation (1). This relationship between crisis and response is evident in the twenty-first century, and more specifically, within the global social and financial meltdown of 2008.

As Bauman and Bordoni point out, the root of the word *crisis* lies in change and provides an opportunity to react. Paul Crosthwaite also emphasizes this notion, citing the fact that crisis evolves from the Greek word *krinein*, which means “to separate, judge, decide” (1). Other critics, such as Pablo Valdivia (“Narrando la crisis” 20), have echoed Crosthwaite’s assertion. Thus, language is essential in determining how to react and take advantage of an opportunity in a period open for renewal. In this line of thinking, a space to examine this response and its outcomes is to be found in cultural production. Although financial analysts can determine the economic causes behind the crisis and its repercussions, cultural production paints portraits that transcend the surface of the financial crash, probing the interior and revealing how the event impacted social spheres on multiple levels. These mediums allow us to unpack the stories and expose both the underlying effects of the crisis and how it inspired possibilities for resistance. They can depict the *human* dimension and explore the ambiguities and uncertainties. In Spain, these texts have been widespread, and when referring to literature even have their own name and genre: *la literatura de la crisis*.⁵ Artistic renditions of the financial disaster pull back the external layer of the collapsing economic institutions to reveal the despair and suffering of many in the Spanish population in the wake of the crash; however, they also depict surprising forms of resistance and human connection in the aftermath. This type of production can perform a broadly mimetic function but can also easily transcend it,

⁵ The term “literatura de la crisis” first appeared in the Spanish newspaper, *El País*, on March 16, 2013 in Javier Rodríguez Marcos’s article “Una crisis de novela: La recesión económica se ha convertido en argumento literario.” Pablo Valdivia notes that this article was not included in the Culture or Literature sections, but rather in the Society page of the newspaper, emphasizing that this issue moved beyond a purely cultural perspective and impacted the population at a more universal level. The two works singled out in the article are Pablo Gutiérrez’s *Democracia* (2013) and Rafael Chirbes’s *En la orilla* (2013) (Valdivia, “Literature, Crisis and Spanish Rural Space” 164).

channeling reactions and even serving instrumentally as a medium of protest or a model of new possibilities.

Why study this crisis?

Language and cultural production help us think about the crisis and consider it from different perspectives. But why study this specific crisis and cultural production? The depressing truth is that the world is often in a state of disaster. Spain, in particular, has a documented history of conflict and struggle from the Reconquest, the Expulsion of the Jews and the Moors, to the Inquisition, the Napoleonic invasion, and the Spanish Civil War. As a result of Spain's seemingly eternal state of crisis, members of the Generation of 1898 such as Miguel de Unamuno and Ángel Ganivet even wrote articles and books crafting philosophies seeking to diagnose and solve the so-called "problema de España". Certainly, both inside and outside Spain, the twentieth century was one of the most violent periods of time in history—so what makes this crisis any different?

To answer this question, I'd first like to turn to the past and discuss similarities between this crisis and past disasters, focusing on mass culture and its role during one of the worst conflicts the world has seen: World War II. During this era, a flurry of cultural production emerged depicting the war. In Robert McLaughlin and Sally Parry's study on cinema and World War II, they discuss this phenomenon citing the film *Casablanca* (1942) noting that the film was successful

not just because of its high, triumphal emotions, not just because of its important role in the sequence of plot events, but because in its words and images it implicitly plays out several other stories, fundamental narratives about World War II. These narratives, which are enacted within the larger, more specific narrative of *Casablanca*, are intended to explain the war to

American moviegoers: why it was being fought; how it should be fought; how it concerned Americans. (2)

At the time of its release, the film indirectly informed the general population about what was going on in the war; it reached a large audience because during this period going to the cinema was a common leisure activity. Even people tight on money as a result of the 1929 crash and Great Depression (much like the 2008 crisis), chose to go to the cinema as a form of entertainment (McLaughlin and Parry 6). Although people could read newspapers to stay up to date on the conflict, film during this time allowed them to understand deeply and connect with what was going on from intellectual and emotional perspectives. Not only did these cultural works keep the public informed about the war, but they also helped people understand their “sense of self.” Even for those suffering economic plight, film was a point of reference. “Movies at this time, then, were far more than a means of escape: they were the focus of their audience’s fantasies, the generator of their desires, a source of their ideas” (McLaughlin and Parry 8).

Carl Plantinga, like McLaughlin and Parry, emphasizes the important emotional and informational connections that spectators construct when engaging with works of art. He adds that cultural production, and specifically screen stories such as film and television

significantly affect the welfare of people and cultures, and thus they are subject to praise and celebration, questioning, or even condemnation. The sorts of screen stories that circulate contribute to the cultural ecology of a time and place. Through shared attention, they influence what cultures and individuals think and feel. (2)

Like the works released during World War II, post-2008 crisis works provide wide-ranging narratives about the event, help those afflicted understand their predicaments, provide a form of escape or possibly catharsis, and even encourage protest and change.

A New Context

Post-2008 crisis cultural production certainly continues with the trend of art as a response to disaster within Spain, but it has also emerged in a new context. One example, as Castells, Caraça and Cardoso point out, is the growing phenomenon of the network society and the role that technology has played in responding to and spreading narratives—both news-wise and culturally—about this particular crisis. Of course, networks and technology have also influenced other major conflicts in the twentieth century, but in the case of the 2008 crash, they had a particular effect. In this network society (Castells, Grewal, Harvey), technology, and more specifically its contribution to shifts in the way people communicate, holds a unique power (Castells, “Networks” 3). The rethinking of this power organization is based on a scheme of inclusion and exclusion. This dynamic has transformed as a result of digital tools, such as social networks, which have changed who is included and excluded in the network society. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter aided in the organization of protest movements in the wake of the financial crash with the ultimate goal of bolstering and promoting change.⁶ Through these networks, information could easily be distributed to a mass public, not just the elite (Moreno-Caballud, “Desbordamientos” 108). I will discuss these social movements in detail in a chapter dedicated to cultural works and protest, but it is essential to reference them here to demonstrate the transfer of power dynamics in this particular crisis as compared to former catastrophes. These changes also show that cultural production depicting response to crisis holds power in this network society

⁶ The best-known protest movement during the 2008 crisis in the Spanish context is 15-M, which refers to the protest of the *indignados* in Sol, the central Plaza in Madrid on May 15, 2011. Groups gathered there in Madrid, and in several other cities nationwide to protest their discontent with the failed social and financial system, igniting future pushes for change (Castells, *De la crisis económica* 115). I will discuss this movement in detail in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

because it is a prime vehicle of communication. Although literary and artistic works have served this purpose in the past, in the recent crisis their diversity and reachability increased due to dissemination via digital means.

In addition to the shift in power and communication as a result of the network society, some critics have argued that the crisis marks a cultural turning point in Spain. The new network society has facilitated the rupture of what Guillém Martínez and Amador Fernández-Savater coined the CT or “la Cultura de la Transición.” This term refers to Spanish culture in the post-Franco years, a system that arose during the transition to democracy and contributed to the formation of a type of hegemony (Martínez 11). In the transition to democracy and its subsequent development, the CT supported, as Luisa Elena Delgado writes in *La nación singular: Fantasías de la normalidad democrática española (1996-2011)*, “la desproblematización de la realidad, y preocupación obsesiva por la cohesión y la estabilidad” (19). As a means to encourage a peaceful transition to democracy and its survival, the State (unofficially) promoted normalization in cultural production and an appearance of unity to quell anything that could lead to instability (Delgado 19). Guillém Martínez describes the CT and how it set up a barrier of cultural limits:

La CT es la observación de los pentagramas de la cultura española, de sus límites. Unos pentagramas canijos, estrechos, en los que solo es posible escribir determinadas novelas, discursos, artículos, canciones, programas, películas, declaraciones sin salirse de la página, o ser interpretado como un borrón. Son unos pentagramas, por otra parte, formulados para que la cultura española realizara pocas formulaciones. (14)

Martínez posits that in the years following the transition, intellectuals and artists created works that either skirted away from current political problems or aligned with only those topics agreed upon by the State (18). During the years of the transition, Spain, young in

its democracy, was eager to mend the wounds of the Civil War and Franco dictatorship. It was the era of the “pacto del olvido”, a time to unite and avoid bringing up the problems of the past *directly* in order to move forward peacefully. Debates continue over whether the “pacto del olvido” was the correct course of action; the 2007 “Ley de la memoria histórica” has opened up discussion about past trauma, and, as such has also been quite polemic (Labanyi 119, “The Politics of Memory”).⁷

With the advent of the crisis of 2008, Martínez suggests that the CT has come to an end, with cultural production moving away from the vertical, unofficial, “State-encouraged” structure. In his view, the shift away from the CT became markedly visible when people began actively to voice discontent through movements such as 15-M and “Democracia Ya”. Below, he describes his view of the new cultural tradition breaking away from the CT:

Un objeto difícil de explicar, pero que, en todo caso, es otro paradigma cultural, una visión de la cultura y de la democracia no tutelada por la CT. Lo que, a su vez, y visto lo visto, supone un pequeño milagro cultural. Es lo no CT. Es el nacimiento de lo no CT. Lo no CT supone la oportunidad de establecer una cultura no centralizada, que no participe en la estabilidad de ningún proyecto político ni de ningún Estado. Consiste en devolver a la cultura su capacidad de arma de destrucción masiva, de objeto problemático, parcial y combativo, su capacidad de solo ser responsable ante ella misma y no responsable de la estabilidad política de ningún sitio. (23)

⁷ “The Pact of Forgetting” refers to the informal decision made by Spain’s political parties after Franco’s death in 1975 to move forward peacefully instead of grappling with and interrogating the traumatic violence inflicted by both sides during the Civil War. In 2007, with the passing of the “Ley de la memoria histórica” (Law of Historical Memory), Spain has begun to deal with its dark past (Encarnación).

There is no official museum or memorial dedicated to the Spanish Civil War other than Franco’s basilica and memorial, El Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, and the Archivo General de la Guerra Civil in Salamanca, Spain. Continued tensions regarding Spain’s past are quite visible in the present day, with the Spanish government approving the exhumation of Franco and reburial in another location.

I do not agree entirely with the notion that artists completely avoided political issues between the transition and 2008; however Martínez's position is useful because it underscores that post-2008 crisis cultural works freely and directly critique governmental institutions, and it signals an evolving period in Spanish cultural production.

Cultural Production and Consumer Society

At this juncture, it is essential to acknowledge the elephant in the room: the connection between cultural production and capitalism. One must consider that there is perhaps a contradictory relationship between critical post-crisis cultural production and the capitalist, consumer society. Frederic Jameson's essay *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) is useful in addressing this issue. He argues that following World War II, there emerged a "post-industrial society, multinational capitalism, consumer society, media society" (19), which is inextricably linked to a capitalist economy and a culture of consumption, features that appear curious when we come to analyze cultural production critiquing the crash of 2008. Cultural production is indeed part of the very capitalist system that contributed to the existence of the crisis. Popular films, for example, can gross millions of dollars following their release. Spanish-language literary production pertains to a hegemonic structure where major publishing firms in the Hispanic world, such as Seix Barral and Grupo Planeta, often control and decide which works are published and which ones miss the cut (Pope 101). Interestingly, cultural production released during and after the recession relies on this system to continue; however, it simultaneously critiques the very capitalist institution necessary for its survival.

Despite this seemingly contradictory relationship, curiously, the crisis also sparked changes in the publishing industry. For example, it impelled several authors and artists who were not linked with dominant publishing houses to find creative ways to disseminate their work. Pablo Valdivia addresses this phenomenon in the present milieu and discusses the problematic nature of the phrase “la literatura de la crisis” stating that it

is a term that attempted to contextualize and update a pre-existent aesthetic tradition in Hispanic letters for commercial reasons. However, the commercial term paradoxically opened the cultural market to a range of novels also written or conceived in blogs that were later published in digital editions and finally in print. (Valdivia, “Literature, Crisis, and Spanish Rural Space” 165)

As Valdivia points out, works born in digital spaces joined the dialogue in the aftermath of the crash, creating opportunities for previously unknown authors to publish. Two of these novels are Emilio Bueso’s *Cential* (2013) and Antonio Castellote’s *Caballos de Labor* (2012), which began as blogs, were later converted into e-books, and finally made their way into print format (165).

Even certain publishing houses have made it their goal to distribute work by authors who find difficulty obtaining contracts with more mainstream companies. For example, several independent publishers, such as Libros del K.O., began with a mission to circulate works by lesser-known artists, often forming close relationships with local bookshops to help with distribution. Many of these publishing houses became sources of “literary” resistance. For example, a book in the Libros del K.O. collection, Nacho Carretero’s *Fariña* (2015), became a symbol for the freedom of speech and generated a consciousness over political corruption and censorship in an unexpected way. Due to its investigation of the illegal drug trade and the involvement of important individuals, *Fariña* stirred considerable controversy. In January of 2017, José Alfredo Bea Gondar,

the former mayor of O Grove in Pontevedra (Galicia), sued Libros del K.O. and Nacho Carretero for defamation. He accused the author of misrepresenting his connection to the drug trade. Bea Gondar, who served as mayor between 1983 and 1991, demanded 500,000 euros and ordered that his name be removed from the book. Despite the fact that the information about Bea Gondar was factually grounded—he was indeed found guilty of drug smuggling, though later absolved by the court—on February 12, 2018 a judge ordered the sequestration of the book, halting the presses and removing *Fariña* from bookshelves. The sequestration lasted for four months (until June 22, 2018) (Jaboís, *El País*).⁸

In the midst of this changing landscape, smaller presses were not the only groups focusing on publishing in digital formats and promoting new artists and authors; to keep up with the fluctuating market, larger publishing firms also adjusted and adopted models endorsing budding authors and also began to publish both digitally and in print. Some examples include Seix Barral's releases of Jesús Carrasco's *Intemperie* (2013) and *La tierra que pisamos* (2016) (Valdivia 166). Another instance includes Penguin Random House's "Caballo de Troya," a division of the company that publishes works by emerging authors and focuses on an e-book format. Literary cultural production dealing with the crisis, then, originates from two sources: mega publishers, but also from independent publishing houses who distribute work in digital spaces and circulate publications by younger authors eager to share their work and motivate change.

⁸ In July 2018, I conducted an interview with Co-Founder of Libros del K.O., Alberto Sáez Silvestre, in which we discuss the *Fariña* case at length.

Review of Previous Scholarship

In the years after the initial collapse in 2008, significant scholarship began to emerge discussing the literary and cultural works that arose in the aftermath. One of the first studies to address the crisis and cultural production is Luis Moreno-Caballud's article "La imaginación sostenible: culturas y crisis económica en la España actual" that signaled "prophetic works" warning of the housing bubble and the looming crisis, such as Rafael Chirbes' *Crematorio* (2007)⁹ and Fernando León de Aranoa's *Los lunes al sol* (2002). This article brought fundamental works to the forefront of scholarly study and also demonstrated that cultural production cautioned of the impending economic decline years before the actual crash.¹⁰

Other studies have focused on particular "landmark" works of the crisis. Lorraine Ryan, for example, wrote an article on Rafael Chirbes's *En la orilla* (2013), which has been lauded by many as "la novela de la crisis." Significant attention has also been devoted to Antonio Muñoz Molina's essay *Todo lo que era sólido* (2013), with separate studies by Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (2015), Nicholas Manganas (2016), and Olga Bezhanova (2017). Ribeiro de Menezes also includes novels such as Isaac Rosa's *El país del miedo* (2008) and *La mano invisible* (2012), Pablo Gutiérrez's *Democracia* (2012), and José Ovejero's *La invención del amor* (2013) in her 2015 work "From Liquid to Illiquid Modernity? Fear, Anxiety, and the 2008 Crisis in Spanish Narrative of the New Millennium."

⁹ Chirbes' *Crematorio* (2008) was later adapted by Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo in Canal Plus's eponymous television series in 2011. It also began streaming on Netflix in 2016.

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, one hundred years earlier, there was a slew of works published on "el problema de España" during the decade of the 1890s, most of them *before* the "desastre" of '98 including Miguel de Unamuno's *En torno al casticismo* (1895) and Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* (1896).

Substantial criticism has also originated from the “Cultural Narratives of Crisis and Renewal (CRIC)” research project.¹¹ One of the group’s key investigators, Pablo Valdivia, published a 2016 article, “Narrando la crisis financiera de 2008 y sus repercusiones”, that also discusses crisis literature in detail. In this article, he separates the novels into categories: the rural novel, detective novel, comic novel, dystopian novels, and novels that demonstrate the consequences of the crisis, citing works such as *Caballos de labor* (2012), by Antonio Castellote, *Baria City Blues* (2009), by Carmelo Anaya, *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* (2012), by Eduardo Mendoza, *Cenital* (2012), by Emilio Bueso, *Cicatriz* (2015), by Sara Mesa, *La habitación oscura* (2013) by Isaac Rosa, *Diario de campo* (2013) by Rosario Izquierdo Chaparro, *En la orilla* (2013) by Rafael Chirbes, *La trabajadora* (2014) by Elvira Navarro, and *Democracia* (2012), by Pablo Gutiérrez (25-26).

Another vital contribution to the field comes from Olga Bezhanova’s analysis of *Literature of Crisis: Spain’s Engagement with Liquid Capital* (2017). She examines specific modes of cultural production that surfaced in response to the financial meltdown, dividing her book by genre into sections on essay, novel, and poetry. In this study, she concentrates on Muñoz Molina’s essay, *Todo lo que era sólido*; in terms of novelistic production, she discusses Chirbes’ *Crematorio* and *En la orilla*, Luis García Montero’s *No me cuentes tu vida* (2012), Benjamín Prado’s *Ajuste de cuentas* (2013), and Belén Gopegui’s *El comité de la noche* (2014). Her examples for the poetry section include two

¹¹ The project is coordinated by Newcastle University and includes members from the University of Groningen, the Universitat of Valencia, and the Universitat of Lleida, as well as several universities in Latin America, including the Universidad Austral de Chile, the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú, the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, and the Universidad Nacional Tres de Febrero. The organization hosts several scholarly events and seminars related to crisis, including its annual Winter School in Spain. <http://www.culturalnarratives.co.uk>

anthologies: *En legítima defensa. Poetas en tiempos de crisis* (2014), introduced by Antonio Gamoneda, and *Marca(da) España. Retrato poético de una sociedad en crisis* (2014), with a prologue by Santiago Alba Rico. A principal argument that arises from her work is that the crisis is not merely a temporary problem, but instead, a long-term issue that may not be possible to reverse. She notes:

There is every reason to believe that the losses in long-term stable employment, the growing precariousness of work, the increased economic insecurity, the citizens' disillusionment with the capacity of democratic governments to withstand the pressures of global capital, the erosion of the welfare state, and the explosive growth in inequality that have characterized the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century are not likely to disappear any time soon. Spanish artists are exploring the reasons behind Spain's particularly painful experience of the crisis and, at the same time, are placing the suffering that the crisis is causing in Spain within the context of global developments that are ensuring its durability. (xviii)

Consequently, we can see that Bezhanova focuses on the ways in which writers demonstrate the causes and repercussions of the crisis (xv).

New Approaches

My study adds another layer to the conversation and answers the call for a much-needed ongoing discussion. I argue that cultural production does indeed examine the reasons behind the causes of the crisis. However, given that this is a problem that will not disappear, it is essential to consider how to *respond* to it. Artistic interpretations of the disaster can function as a form of protest and help motivate change as well as serve as coping mechanisms for those suffering. Through the analysis of these works, the project opens up a dialogue regarding the untold narrative about the human impact of the crisis, showing how people dealt with the situation and responded in order to overcome the trials and adversity that arose following the recession. The dissertation initiates a

conversation regarding these particular works and their depiction of responses to the financial crash.

Responses to Crisis

How, then, does one respond to this crisis and loss of trust in political and economic institutions? In my analysis of cultural production, I have identified three key consequences and responses to the 2008 catastrophe: suffering, emigration, and protest. Perhaps not coincidentally, these align with economist Albert Hirschman's theory on ways to respond to declining financial institutions. In his study *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, he posits that what he calls exit, voice, and loyalty are the three ways to react. Although the present dissertation on Spain's 2008 crisis and cultural production is not an attempt to implement Hirschman's theory thoroughly, it is useful to compare his categories with the ways in which Spaniards responded to the loss of trust in government, financial, and social institutions. I have equated exit to emigration and voice to protest. However, in my analysis I have chosen to focus on the suffering of the Spanish population in the aftermath of the catastrophe instead of positing that they were "loyal" to the declining social, political, and economic system. These three categories serve as a useful point of departure to organize the responses to the crisis as depicted and mediated in cultural production.

The first chapter "Suffering," describes the fallout of the crisis. It moves beyond the numbers and figures of unemployment, evictions, and poverty in order to delve into the human dimension of the disaster. Different mediums lend themselves to portraying these consequences in several ways. It describes the impact of austerity measures on

impoverished and vulnerable communities through María Hervás' play *Iphigenia en Vallecas*. Later, the chapter moves to an analysis of how the medium of comis sheds light on the high rate of problematic forced evictions following the recession in Isaac Rosa's *Aquí vivió*. It concludes by observing the often eschewed rural milieu of Spain, demonstrating how film, and specifically Icíar Bollain's *El olivo*, reveals the plight of rural workers in the wake of the recession.

In Chapter Two, the dissertation turns to a specific way in which people responded to the suffering caused by the crash: emigration. This was such a widespread consequence that this chapter is devoted to cultural representation of Spanish emigration. The chapter provides an overview of recent Spanish migration patterns and how these are represented through culture. Specifically, it describes Spanish anxieties over the resulting global perception of them, and how this phenomenon has been mediated through comedic cultural works. The works that I analyze include *Venirse arriba* (2014), by Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José, *Blitz* (2015), by David Trueba, the film *Perdiendo el norte* (2015), directed by Nacho Velilla, as well as the television series, *Buscando el norte* (2016), created by Nacho Velilla, Oriol Capel, David Sánchez Olivas, and Antonio Sánchez.

The final chapter demonstrates how cultural works function as arms of protest. In line with the thinking of the protestors at 15-M, *los indignados*, and ¡Democracia Real Ya!”, I show how performance is a mode of protest through an analysis of María Folguera's novel, *Los primeros días de Pompeya* (2016), Alberto San Juan's play, *Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español* (2017), and the Flo6x8 flamenco flash-mob group. Through the invasion of public spaces, informing the public about corruption

and the need for renewal, and reclaiming power and voice for the people, these artistic works encourage reflection on social and political transformation and the need for action. The chapter examines these different channels of performance and protest and interrogates the effectiveness of them.

Chapter One

Suffering

*Busco entre la sangre
 alguna lógica, entre el humo
 de la especie, la mano rota del niño.
 Escribo entre las ruinas
 y railes torcidos. Humo
 otra vez de España
 que parece regresar del olvido. Esta
 vez sin aviones,
 espadas o guadañas.
 Inocencia en blanco que esconde
 el beso de la muerte. Póstumo
 misterio del dolor y el frío.*

-Fernando Operé, “Nombrando la incordura” (2007)

The 2008 meltdown caused more than just a plunge in the financial market; for many of those that it impacted the most, it was a downright catastrophe. Many people faced the traumatic consequences of the recession, such as losing jobs, not being able to provide for their families, and even being physically removed from their homes. Worsening the situation, the austerity policies implemented after the crisis made it even more difficult for the government to address issues of inequality, social exclusion, and unemployment (Schmidt 173), exacerbating already existing tensions within unequal social structures. As Henry Giroux explains, instead of diagnosing the roots of the crash—such as high speculation, deregulation, and the irresponsibility of the financial and government institutions, it became “more socially acceptable to blame the destitute, homeless, uninsured, jobless, poor minority youth, and other disadvantaged individuals and groups for their plight, while reinforcing the merging of the market state with the

punishing state” (90). Essentially, the neoliberal culture of “disposability” has discarded those most affected by the crisis (Giroux 91).¹²

Many cultural depictions of the 2008 crisis focus on the hardship and suffering that occurred. To borrow Germán Labrador Méndez’s term, “subprime” life histories (563), these works illuminate the human dimension of the crisis. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which cultural production portrays the plights of the excluded and marginalized during and after the crash. Artistic works provide a voice and platform to these disparaged groups. To illustrate these phenomena, I draw upon works that depict a variety of consequences of the financial disaster. Negative effects include mass unemployment, especially for the younger generation of Spaniards, forced evictions of those who defaulted on their mortgages, and the struggles of the often-forgotten populations in the rural communities of Spain.

When studying the discourse of inclusion and exclusion of specific groups in cultural production, as Stephen Harold Riggins points out, one must determine which social groups benefit from the texts (3). I argue that in these cases, art provides the marginalized population with an ideological platform to depict the negative fallout of the crash and demonstrate their resilience. The works I analyze as case studies include María Hervás’s theatrical adaptation of Gary Owen’s play, *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015), titled *Iphigenia en Vallecas* (2017), Isaac Rosa’s comic, *Aquí vivió* (2016), and Iciar Bollain’s film, *El olivo* (2016).

¹² See Samuel Amago, “Basura, cultura, democracia en el Madrid del siglo veintiuno” for more information on culture and waste.

Iphigenia en Vallecas

Statistics about the negative impacts of the crisis, such as high unemployment rates and the rising number of evictions make headlines in newspapers, but what are the real consequences of these social, political, and financial tragedies? As mentioned in the introduction, after the 2012 European Union bailout of the Spanish banks, average citizens were disproportionately penalized through the implementation of severe austerity measures. As a result, many Spaniards, and especially the impoverished and youth of the “generación perdida”, were unable to access the social services they needed to get ahead. Instead, the policies benefited institutions of power, such as the banks, government, and individuals who had reaped the benefits of the bailout (Fontana; Castells, “De la crisis”).

The ninety-minute monologue by Spanish actress and playwright, María Hervás (b. 1986)¹³, *Iphigenia en Vallecas* (2017), centers on the harmful effects of austerity on Spanish *jóvenes* and marginalized communities. At the Edinburgh Theatre Festival, Hervás discovered the original version of the play, *Iphigenia in Splott* (2015),¹⁴ created by Welsh playwright, Gary Owen (b. 1972). The play’s theme, poetics, and symbolism resonated with Hervás and she decided to bring the performance to the Spanish theatre scene. She translated it into Spanish and adapted the play’s geography from Cardiff’s

¹³ María Hervás is a Spanish actress and playwright. Recently, she has starred in plays such as *Confesiones a Alá* (2014) by Saphia Azzedine in the Teatro Lara; *Amnesia* (2015) by Matías Umpiérrez in the Teatro María Guerrero; *Pingüinas* (2015), by Fernando Arrabal in the Teatro Español in the Naves del Matadero; and *Los Gondra* (2017), by Borja Ortiz de Gondra in the Teatro Valle-Inclán (López Rejas). She has also appeared in several films, such as *Call TV* (2017) and *Cómo sobrevivir a una despedida* (2015), and television series, such as *Paquita Salas* (2016), *Gym Tony* (2015-2016), and *La pecera de Eva* (2010-2011). Her most recent television project includes Telecinco’s new comedy, *El pueblo* (2018).

¹⁴ Gary Owen has won numerous awards for his plays, including the George Devine, Meyer Whitworth and Pearson Best Play Awards. For *Iphigenia in Splott* he won the UK Theatre Award for best new play in 2015. The performance, starring Sophie Melville, highlights the negative effects of austerity in Britain and especially the deleterious impacts on lower-income areas, centering on Splott, a neighborhood of Cardiff (Love).

peripheral neighborhood of Splott to Madrid's Vallecas (López Rejas). Hervás not only translated and adapted the play, but she also co-produced it with Antonio Castro Guijosa and stars as Iphigenia in the performance.¹⁵

Iphigenia en Vallecas premiered in the Teatro Pavón Kamikaze in Madrid (Lavapiés) on April 19, 2017 and was extremely well received by critics and the public in its initial year, returning to the stage in 2018. Sergio Fanjul of *El País* praised the performance for its representation of the working class. Julio Bravo of *ABC* referred to it as “uno de los ‘fenómenos’ de la escena madrileña de los últimos años.” Aldo Ruíz called it “una de las grandes sensaciones de la temporada teatral” and “uno de los mejores montajes de 2017.” Not only did the play itself receive high accolades, but María Hervás's performance was widely celebrated, earning her the XXVII Premio Unión de Actores prize for best protagonist in a theatrical work and a nomination for the Premio Valle-Inclán Theatre award. In November 2018, *El Mundo* named her one of the 500 most important women in Spain, and one of “las mujeres más influyentes del mundo de la cultura”, citing her theatrical work and *Iphigenia en Vallecas* (Donat).

The play is based on Euripides' Greek tragedy, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, written between 408 and 406 BC. In the original tragedy, after being offended by Iphigenia's father, the goddess Artemis halted the winds necessary for the Greek ships to voyage forth and wage battle against Troy. Seeking the advice of a local seer, Agamemnon, Iphigenia's father, is presented with a choice: abandon his fleet and the war against Troy, or sacrifice his eldest daughter, Iphigenia. Consequently, Iphigenia becomes a martyr for the common good of her nation (Euripides). An excerpt from the tragedy on the *Iphigenia*

¹⁵ There are no textual versions of the play available to the public. In this chapter, quotes and references are taken from María Hervás's personal copy of the script, which she generously provided for the purposes of this study.

en *Vallecas* promotional website highlights her sacrificial role using a quote from Euripides' version:

Toda nuestra patria tiene su mirada puesta en mí. Si muero, evitaré todas estas atrocidades y mi fama por haber liberado Grecia será dichosa. Padre, aquí me tienes. Por el bien de mi patria y por el bien de toda la tierra helena, me entrego de buen grado a quienes me conduzcan al altar para el sacrificio. Y, por lo que a mí respecta, ojalá alcancéis el éxito, triunféis con lanza victoriosa y regreséis a la tierra patria. Así las cosas, que ninguno de los argivos roce mi cuerpo, porque voy a entregar mi cuello en silencio con resuelta voluntad.

María Hervás's adaptation of Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott* portrays a modern-day Iphigenia living in the outskirts of Madrid.¹⁶ Her home of Vallecas has the highest rate of unemployment in Madrid, along with other cities in the southern neighborhoods of the autonomous community (González Pérez et al. 161). Her sacrifice, like that of the original Iphigenia, is a direct result of the decaying society around her; she is the martyr who must suffer at her own expense to benefit the rest. Iphigenia is indeed a tragic figure; however, differing from Euripides' Iphigenia, Vallecas's heroine is not a beloved princess.¹⁷ Known as a *ni ni*, *cani*, and *choni*, "Efi" has no idea what to do with her life.

¹⁶ Vallecas is a neighborhood in the southeast region of Madrid across the Manzanares River. Until 1950, it was its own municipality, but was annexed by the city of Madrid in 1950. It is known as a working-class and immigrant neighborhood, a place full of left wing, counter-culture movements. Its reputation as a rough area perhaps began during the Spanish Civil War. Its location, a gateway to Valencia, made it a key target of Franco's army, and the city was the site of several attacks during the war, known as a site of Republican resistance. Today, it has a reputation as one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Madrid. Its residents are proud of their neighborhood, and many unite in camaraderie with their beloved soccer team, el Rayo Vallecano (Madridnofrills).

¹⁷ Northrop Frye defines a low mimetic or domestic tragedy using pathos, which appeals to the emotions in the audience. As Frye writes, "The root idea of pathos is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong. Hence the central tradition of sophisticated pathos is the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves is, broken by a conflict between the inner and outer world, between imaginative reality and the sort of reality which is established by a social consensus" (39).

¹⁸ Instead of studying or working, her days are consumed by sleep and binge-watching reality TV, a temporary respite from the previous night's debauchery. Nobody cares about her. Nobody worries about her. Only her grandmother, "Yaya," bothers to caution her and give her advice, encouraging her to focus on improving her life and to stop partying with her deadbeat boyfriend, Rike. But with few resources for a poor *ni ni* in Vallecas, Iphigenia continues in a downward spiral.

The performance, written in free verse and consisting of eleven acts, begins as the audience enters the theatre. Iphigenia is already positioned on the stage. She is motionless, silent, and slumped over a bench in a hooded sweatshirt. Only the most perceptive members of the audience will notice that she is there at all, gesturing to her status as a marginalized and forgotten figure. Once the entire public is seated, Iphigenia swivels around, breaks the fourth wall, stares directly at the audience, and declares:

Vosotros ahí.
 Sentados, relajados, esperando a que yo
 ¿Qué? ¿os impresione? ¿os sorprenda?
 ¿os enseñe lo que sé?
 Pues señoras y señores, damas y caballeros—me temo que no
 Os habéis colado de pies a cabeza, de cabo a rabo, y de vellón.
 Está claro. Ya sé lo que pensáis.
 Cuando me veis ciega por la mañana dando vueltas.
 Pensáis pedazo de guarra.
 Quinqui de mierda.
 ¿Pero sabéis qué? Esta noche
 estáis todos aquí para darme las gracias
 a mí.
 Sí, ya sé que estáis flipando

¹⁸ The words *choni* and *cani* are popular in Spanish colloquial speech. According to the Real Academia Española (RAE), the definition of a *choni* is: 1. Mujer joven que pretende ser elegante e ir a la moda, aunque resulta vulgar. 2. Chabacano, vulgar.

The RAE does not officially recognize the word *cani*. According to Lasexta.com, it is linked to the word *chav* and *choni*, and is used "para denominar de lo que queda de la clase trabajadora y que en España puede traducirse como 'la choni' o 'el cani'".
https://www.lasexta.com/programas/salvados/mejores-momentos/que-cani-choni_20151122572426ad4beb28d4460076f1.html

Pero amigos cada uno de vosotros
estáis en deuda conmigo.
Y esta noche—señoras y señores, damas y caballeros—
He venido a cobrar lo que es mío. (1)

Far from a docile, weak, sacrificial lamb like the Greek Iphigenia, “Efi” begins her tale with a roar. At this juncture, the audience is unsure of the debt to which she refers. She is angry for being a neglected citizen. Iphigenia is conscious of others’ disparaging view of her.

Todos me conocéis.
Me cruzo por la calle y bajáis los ojos al suelo
de cara os cuesta demasiado sostenerme la mirada. (1)

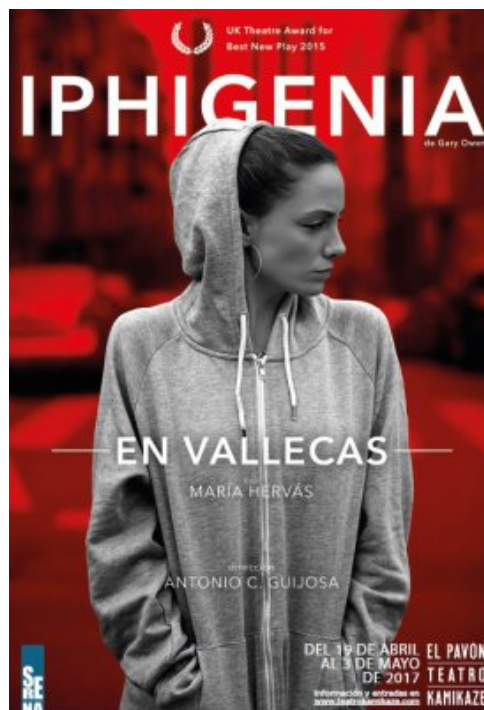


Fig. 2: A promotional poster for *Iphigenia en Vallecas* with “Efi” in her hooded sweatshirt. (Teatrokamikaze.com)

Iphigenia’s sacrifice is rooted in one of the primary motifs of the play: the negative social consequences of austerity. Spain’s implementation of austerity measures involved cutting social spending and reducing public salaries (Cabrera de León et al.

1091). The decreases in welfare support came at a time when the destitute and unemployed needed it the most. Following the cuts in spending, services provided by public hospitals decreased substantially and many schools even closed. Beginning in 2011, mortality rates in Spain spiked, and suicide rates also began to rise. “These strict fiscal austerity policies prolonged the economic recession, and the Spanish national health system has become stretched beyond capacity because of budget cuts that have undermined the extent of social protection it is able to provide” (Cabrera de León et al. 1095). The play reflects the consequences of cuts in public services, which lead to Iphigenia’s eventual downfall.

Iphigenia embodies the suffering engendered by these cuts. Living in Vallecas, on the outskirts of Madrid and in an area in which many people rely on public services, she is a direct victim of poverty and social cuts. She has little education and lacks purpose. As Iphigenia puts it, she drinks herself into oblivion because, “La única manera que tengo de soportar la semana es un bucle de resacas” (2). Her greatest misfortune begins during one of her nights partying when she meets Fer, a young man who served in the military in Afghanistan.

Tumbada allí enrollada en Fer
me siento nueva. Bueno, lo nuevo es
“no estar sola”. No estoy sola.
Y es como si ya no fuera
a sentirme sola nunca. (17)

Fer lost his legs in the war; his disability evokes feelings of understanding and compassion in Iphigenia. She allows herself to be vulnerable through her identification with his marginalized status. Her empathic tenderness provides a stark contrast to the hostile and fierce Iphigenia that the audience encounters in the first scene of the

performance. Her desire to overcome loneliness underscores her status as Other, and conjures an emotive response from the audience.

Iphigenia discovers that Fer is married and lives in Parla with his wife and daughter.¹⁹ To make matters worse, Iphigenia finds out that she is pregnant with Fer's baby. She contemplates having an abortion. "Yo no puedo tener un bebé. Tengo problemas con la bebida y con las drogas...y, estoy loca—pregunta a cualquiera" (29). One of her friends tries to convince her otherwise, suggesting that the government will give her money if she has a child: "Si tienes un niño te dan el subsidio por maternidad, ¡tía! ¡te dan un montón de movidas!" (30) Paradoxically, the presence of a baby inside of her makes her feel even more isolated. Iphigenia decides, despite it all, that she will have the child. She says:

No tengo curro. No tengo novio.
No tengo sitio donde vivir.
Estoy más sola que la una.
¿Y sabes qué?
Voy a tener un bebé. (35)

At week twenty-nine of her pregnancy, Iphigenia goes into premature labor. She explains to the audience that due to the aforementioned cuts in social services, the hospital is unable to accommodate her, as there is no room in the special care unit. Instead, the facility's staff decides to transport her to another hospital, unaccompanied by a medical professional and in treacherous driving conditions as the city is enveloped in a large

¹⁹ Parla is another peripheral city in the south of Madrid, known for its working class and immigrant population. During the 2008 financial crisis, it received media attention for a scandal involving the construction of the city's *tranvía* (light rail) system (Marcos and Núñez). Its location in the south of Madrid gives it the reputation of being distant and far outside of the city. This idea is reflected in the popular phrase "Está en Parla" a colloquial idiom referencing a place that is very far away. Iphigenia acknowledges this when she says "Fer vive en Parla ¡el puto culo del mundo! Pero en el cercanías sólo se tarda unos cincuenta minutos" (25).

snowstorm. Iphigenia knows that she should protest, but hesitates because she believes no one will take her seriously. She does not have a voice that matters:

...sé que debería quejarme, ya
pero el dolor vuelve, no puedo hablar.
Y aquí no hay nadie para hablar por mí. (41)

Her lack of voice and inability to stand up for herself results in tragedy; the ambulance is involved in an accident on the way to the hospital, careening off the road. Iphigenia gives birth on the highway, and her daughter dies, too premature to survive without proper medical assistance.

In an effort to fight and stand up for her rights, she hires a lawyer and learns that the hospital is willing to pay her a monetary settlement. They offer her 277,000 Euros, a considerable amount of money that would drastically improve her economic situation. However, Iphigenia is reminded that her devastating loss is due to austerity cuts and that if she accepts the payment, it will come from the health-care budget:

lo que tu niña necesitaba
era haber nacido en un hospital.
En una unidad de cuidados especiales
donde habríamos tenido las facilidades
para cuidar de ella.
Tú ibas sola en esa ambulancia
porque no había libre ni una cama
en cuidados intensivos.
Y no tenemos tantas camas
como solíamos en cuidados intensivos
por todos los recortes.
¿Y qué crees que va a pasar si te tenemos que pagar?
Le digo que vas a aprender
la puta lección, cariño.
Y dice: si te pagamos, vamos a tener que recortar más.
Y mucha gente mayor morirá antes de lo que debería.
Y mucha gente no tendrá una oportunidad de vida.
Y muchas madres, como tú, perderán. (46)

These words convince Iphigenia, and she decides not to accept the money. She speaks directly to the audience about how those who are in the most despair receive the brunt of the negative consequences of austerity. How much more can they take? In the powerful final scene, she slowly looks into the eyes of each member of the audience and declares:

Y yo me pregunto sólo: ¿cuánto tiempo
vamos a tener que soportar esto?
Me pregunto:
¿Y qué va a pasar
cuando no podamos soportarlo más? (49)

Despite her role as a victim, these ending words point to a shift in attitude. She has been given the platform to speak to a public who can facilitate change. The play ends with a challenge to the audience to do something in order to shift the power dynamics at play.

Within this line of thought, I will now examine aspects of the play that underscore Iphigenia's position as a marginalized figure, yet simultaneously give her voice.

Language

One of Iphigenia's most notable characteristics is her form of speaking. The use of colloquial street language and slang makes Iphigenia a realistic character and emphasizes her position as Other. Critics such as Anthony Pasero-O'Malley have commented on the importance of language in contemporary Spanish theatre. Pasero-O'Malley points out that Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and language in novels

[h]ave been increasingly adopted and applied to the field of contemporary theatre, particularly in the semiotic study of those dramatic texts framed around conflicting voices and languages. This is increasingly important in the face of growing globalization, which finds its expression in the theatre partly through the interactions of characters representing different nationalities, cultures and viewpoints. (219)

Pasero O'Malley's argument is useful because it stresses that language is a primary tool in character formation. In the context of this particular play, language is one of the most important factors that defines and shapes Iphigenia's identity.

Marvin Carlson discusses how dialect in theatre is an example of heteroglossic production.²⁰ He argues that in theatre, non-standard varieties of a language create disruption when performed in a location where the spectators assume that the language spoken will reflect that of the culture of the audience (62).²¹ *Iphigenia en Vallecas* was performed in the center of Madrid at the Teatro Pavón Kamikaze, most likely to an upper-middle class audience. Although Vallecas is only a few kilometers from the location of the theatre, Iphigenia's accent and profane vocabulary distinguish her from the spectators and categorize her as someone that belongs to an inferior social class.

According to disciplines such as sociolinguistics, non-standard varieties of language are frequently not perceived to be part of the "official" language and are consequently pushed to inferior positions in the social sphere (Milroy & Milroy 2). In theatre, a character who speaks in a different dialect than that of speakers of the "official" language "appears as a site of otherness, to provide exotic coloring, or a threat, or comic entertainment" (Carlson 64). Clare Mar-Molinero adds that in Spain, "[t]he central

²⁰ Carlson (2006) defines dialect using David Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. According to Crystal, a dialect is "a regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. Spoken dialects are usually associated with a distinctive pronunciation, or accent. Any language with a reasonably large number of speakers will develop dialects, especially if there are geographical barriers separating groups of people from each other, or if there are divisions of social class. One dialect may predominate as the official or standard form of the language, and this is the variety which may come to be written down. The distinction between 'dialect' and 'language' seems obvious: dialects are subdivisions of languages" (102-3).

²¹ *Juan José* (1895) by Joaquín Dicenta is an example of nineteenth-century Spanish theatre that employs use of "lower class" speech.

variety of Castilian, originating in the Burgos area and commonly heard in Madrid, has been considered the standard norm to which all educated Spaniards should aspire” (90).

The politicization of language is a mechanism for exclusion that has been utilized by populations and governments throughout history.²² Hervás’s brilliant portrayal and imitation of Iphigenia’s speech reinforces the idea that “Efi” belongs on the margins of society. Iphigenia’s linguistic patterns do not mirror the prestigious variety of the aforementioned Burgos/Castilian Spanish that is found in Madrid. As Iphigenia points out, she is a *choni*. She speaks a stigmatized variety of Spanish, using phrases such as *estáis flipando*²³ and *quinqui*.²⁴ The popular cultural references that she employs allude to her societal position and lack of manners and education. For example, when describing a painful hangover after a night of debauchery, she discusses sitting at a McDonald’s and graphically describes burping and vomiting, not leaving out any details, including the grotesque smells and colors. In another instance, she notes:

²² Language politics is a topic that has garnered much study. Regarding the use of Spanish, language has been used as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion both in Spain and in the Americas. In Spain, language has often been a source of conflict. Once the kingdom of Castile became the hegemonic power of Iberia, Castilian became the dominant variety of Spanish spoken in the peninsula (Mar-Molinero 21). Language is inextricably linked to regional identity and pride, and speakers of other languages in Spain, such as Catalan, Galician, and Euskera, strongly connect language to their community and identity. During the Franco dictatorship, the use of language to exclude those that challenged the “Spanish” identity increased, and measures were taken to limit non-Castilian languages. (Mar-Molinero 85). Article 3 of the Constitution of 1978 declared that Castilian was the official language of Spain, but includes a clause granting rights to communities who speak minority languages (Mar-Molinero 90). Similar exclusionary tactics tied to language have occurred elsewhere in the world. In the United States, for example, the “English Only” movement emerged in the 1980s as a way to make English the official U.S. language and eliminate bilingual services, including education (Mar-Molinero 181).

²³ Spanish colloquialism that means “You all are flipping out” (My translation).

²⁴ *Quinqui* refers to the form of speaking of a nomadic group known as *mercheros* in northern Spain. “This said, many Spaniards are unaware of the existence of a separate ethnic group of persons known as *quinquis* or *mercheros*, and simply associate the word with marginality and delinquency” (Iberianature.com).

Tirada en el sofá el segundo día, dentro de tu manta sudando
Comiendo chino y viendo a Paquirrín, en Gran Hermano VIP (3)

Iphigenia mentions eating Chinese food, watching the popular “Big Brother” reality series, and even alludes to a specific character and famous celebrity, Kiko Rivera, known as Paquirrín on the show.²⁵ Her familiarity with these popular figures emphasizes that she is part of a subculture that engages with low-brow reality TV, further separating her from the educated elite of Spain.

Iphigenia’s monologue is intended for a Spanish audience and might be difficult to follow for anyone not familiar with the colloquialisms or geography of Madrid. Popular cultural references layered throughout the text make her story relevant to the Spanish population. It is for this reason that language is even more important in the monologue. Iphigenia does not interact with other characters on stage. It is primarily through her words that the spectator observes and constructs her identity. Language also reveals the multiple dimensions of Iphigenia. Her words express one idea and define her as a rough city girl, but her performance allows the audience to see beneath the exterior layers she had created to protect herself. Iphigenia shows herself for who she really is: a vulnerable member on the periphery of Spanish society.

Stereotyping the “Other”

Iphigenia’s slang, her apparent lack of education, and her morally questionable actions in relation to societal norms certainly position her as Other vis-à-vis the audience.

²⁵ Kiko Rivera is a familiar figure in the *prensa rosa* and tabloid and celebrity news in Spain. He is the son of singer Isabel Pantoja and the bullfighter, Paquirri. Iphigenia’s reference to him is another example of *choni* culture. Another popular figure from *Gran Hermano VIP* is Belén Esteban, known as “la princesa del pueblo” and the host of Telecinco’s daytime talk show program *Salvame*.

The performance is based on behavioral stereotypes of people living in peripheral neighborhoods. Stuart Hall notes that stereotyping is prevalent when an unbalanced power structure is present, normally targeting the subordinate group. He argues that stereotyping establishes order by classifying people into groups, creating boundaries between “the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’, the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’, the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, Us and Them” (“Representation” 247-248).

Iphigenia’s behavior and speech position her as the weaker end of the binary. Although the practice of stereotyping her as an impoverished, uneducated *choni* from Vallecas could be viewed as problematic because of its reinforcement of these representations, it is also helpful for that exact reason. The play acknowledges that this marginalized population is so ubiquitous that it *is* a stereotype. She is the “Other”, the opposite of the upper-middle class and elite Spain. Yet, she is the one on stage, and her voice dominates the presentation.

Iphigenia’s portrayal is couched in a tragic light, and although it relies on exaggerated representations, it reveals another layer to her personality: a suffering human being. Her performance is meant to be part of an exchange with the audience. Drawing on Bakhtin’s theory that meaning relies on an interaction between two entities (12), in the communicative process of Iphigenia’s monologue there is an interchange between herself and the audience. The spectators do not verbally communicate with Iphigenia, but she engages with them through multiple breakings of the fourth wall and directly challenges them at the beginning and end of the play. The performance offers the spectators a

glimpse into an Other's suffering, constructing a platform on which Iphigenia can demonstrate the dire situation that much of Spain's population faces.



Fig. 3: Iphigenia stares directly at the audience, breaking the fourth wall. (Teatrokamikaze.com)

Inverting the Tragedy

Iphigenia's tragic ending and sacrifice underscore her position as Other. According to Northrop Frye, although the mood of tragedies is generally somber, most always end in serenity (207). Iphigenia maintains her marginalized position at the end of the play, but her story does not end in defeat, but rather as a call to arms. In the final words of her performance, she questions the power structures that have created this vast inequality:

Lo que me hace seguir
adelante es saber que
aguanté ese dolor y salvé
a cada uno de vosotros
de sufrir lo mismo. Tu bebé
se pone malita, se pone buena

gracias a mí. Tu madre cae enferma,
 se recupera gracias a mí y aun así:
 mírame colega:
 borracha, camino de casa,
 y todo lo que se te pasa por
 la cabeza es pedazo de guarra,
 quinqui de mierda.
 Cuando lo que deberías estar pensando es:
 Dios Efi, gracias. Te has comido
 los recortes por nosotros.
 Y voy hacia casa, paso
 los pubs que chaparon, la biblioteca que cerraron,
 el bingo que se quemó,
 el polideportivo que derribaron
 para poder convertir en pisos.
 Más y más gente amontonada
 en este pequeño puntito de tierra
 mientras ellos van cortando
 todo lo que necesitamos
 para poder vivir. Y lo soportamos.
 El militar lisiado cojeando hasta su niña.
 La mamá-foca levantando su carro
 a pulso bajo la lluvia.
 La pensionista haciendo turnos en el Día.
 otra vez: a los 70.
 Podemos soportarlo porque nos enseñan,
 a todos.
 Pero aquí está la puta trampa:
 Parece que siempre pasa en sitios como éste
 y que siempre es gente como nosotros
 los que tienen que aguantarse cuando viene
 “la etapa” de recortes.
 y yo me pregunto sólo: cuánto tiempo
 vamos a tener que soportar esto?
 Me pregunto:
 ¿Y qué va a pasar
 cuando no podamos soportarlo más? (48-49)

During the performance I attended in July of 2018, Iphigenia proclaimed these
 concluding remarks and then remained on the stage for at least one minute in silence,
 staring directly at the audience. Upon exiting the stage, the lights faded and attendees
 remained seated in shock. Iphigenia’s impassioned challenge certainly forced the

spectators to ponder and question their role in facilitating change. Undoubtedly, many of the audience members would have been affected by the crisis and austerity measures. Nevertheless, it is also likely that most of the spectators do not live in a degree of poverty like Iphigenia and are educated people with the means to attend cultural and artistic activities in Madrid.

Thus, we may interpret Iphigenia's final words in multiple ways. Perhaps the aggressive conclusion highlights the threatening representation of the Other. She is both a hero and a villain. Stuart Hall describes this phenomenon:

People who are in any way significantly different from the majority—'them' rather than 'us'—are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes—good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because different/compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be *both things at the same time!* ("Representation", 219)

Iphigenia fits this paradigm. She is a martyr of society, a mother who has lost her child, and an impoverished woman trying to overcome adversity in Vallecas. At the same time, her call to arms posits her as a threat to the status quo. Hall's argument is reinforced in the play through the actor/audience/auditorium dichotomy. Aside from the breaking of the fourth wall, neither occupies the other's space or language.

On the other hand, the theatrical manifestation of her internal struggles allows the audience to empathize with her situation. It also puts them in an uncomfortable position. Her powerful words force the audience to reflect on the starkly imbalanced system. What matters, then, is what the audience does with this information. Despite an ostensive stereotypical depiction of the Other, the play provides a platform for the Other to speak,

and, in turn demonstrates a need to reevaluate and transform the unequal power structures in Spain that were widened as a result of the 2008 meltdown.

Aquí vivió: Documenting Eviction

Artists also represent crisis and trauma through the comic medium. This section analyzes Isaac Rosa's comic, *Aquí vivió: historia de un desahucio* (2016), illustrated by Cristina Bueno, as an example of the use of cartoon art to depict marginality and suffering. Building on Hillary Chute's assertions that comics represent history and bear witness to trauma, I will discuss how the medium portrays the suffering of marginalized groups, and more specifically, those who were evicted from their homes following the 2008 crash. Before entering into an analysis of *Aquí vivió*, I must point out that this is a brief study of one specific work and does not attempt to encompass the vast and emergent study of comics. It is a point of departure intended to provide material to expand upon in a future project.²⁶

In recent years, many comic productions in Spain have depicted, examined, and explained the 2008 crisis. Some notable examples include Aleix Saló's *Españistán: Este país se va a la mierda* (2011) and *Simiocracia: Crónica de la gran resaca económica* (2012); Manel Fontdevila's *¡Esto es importantísimo!* (2011), *La crisis está siendo un éxito!* (2011), *No os indignéis tanto* (2013), and of importance to this chapter, Isaac Rosa's *Aquí vivió* and *Tu futuro empieza aquí* (2017), illustrated by Mikko.

Correspondingly, studies have analyzed representations of the 2008 crisis in Spain, including scholarship such as Christine Martínez's article *Memorias de la tierra* (2012),

²⁶ See The Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction, Vermont for more information. The academy is dedicated exclusively to the study of graphic novels and comics with courses on art, graphic design, and literature. <https://www.cartoonstudies.org>

Matthew Marr's research on Aleix Saló's *Españistán*, Samuel Amago's work on Isaac Rosa's *Aquí vivió*, and Samuel Amago and Matthew Marr's forthcoming volume, *Consequential Art: Comics Culture in Contemporary Spain* (2019).

Given this section's focus on the 2008 crisis and the comic medium, it is first necessary to understand the context of the financial turmoil in Spain, and more specifically the crisis's impact on increased evictions and social exclusion. As discussed in the introduction, the bursting of the housing bubble was one of the primary factors that triggered Spain's economic crisis. Before the crisis hit, housing prices increased, and the banks approved mortgages easily and readily for most people (Friedman 3). There was also a major construction boom with high rises and new buildings popping up throughout the country. However, after the crash, unemployment rose, and many of those who had taken out mortgages were unable to pay them. Evictions skyrocketed: between 2006 and 2013, there were 523,740 mortgage-related evictions—an average of 205 per day. This was a 592 percent increase in evictions from the period between 2001 and 2006, which only had 88,414 mortgage evictions (Méndez et al. 85).

Many of the evicted were left homeless and in need of social services that they were unable to access. The increased rate of evictions and foreclosures revealed societal fissures and highlighted the crisis's exacerbation of marginality and exclusion. Concentrating on Spain's largest cities, Madrid and Barcelona, González Pérez et al. examine expanded geographical areas of social vulnerability by focusing on unemployment rates and foreclosures. Unsurprisingly, peripheral areas such as Vallecas, and cities in the south of Madrid such as Fuenlabrada, Getafe, and Parla, have the highest rates. The authors note the distinction in a polarized map, contrasting these regions with

vastly lower levels of unemployment and foreclosures in the north of Madrid, namely Majadahonda, Colmenar, and El Escorial. Barcelona demonstrates a similar pattern, with the majority of foreclosures and high unemployment in the northeast and industrial regions of the city such as L'Hospitalet, Badalona, and Sabadell (162).

In response to the drastic polarization, organizations emerged to combat the marginalization and suffering. I will discuss these initiatives at length in a later chapter dedicated to protest; at this juncture it is worth mentioning their existence and projects devoted to impeding evictions. One of these, the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) aims to stop evictions and was a key organization involved in the 15-M movement that grew following the May 2011 protests. Its members strategically gather at the site of an impending tenant removal and create disruptions in order to prevent the agents from carrying out the eviction process. According to its website, the group has halted over 2,000 evictions in Spain.²⁷ Visitors to the website may download graphics that they can use to spread awareness about the problematic forced expulsions occurring at alarming rates in Spain. The organization's dissemination of art online is an example of raising consciousness through social networks, underscoring the significance of culture and art in protest movements.

²⁷ afectadosporlahipoteca.com



Fig. 4: This graphic design is one of many recognizable logos from the PAH. (Source: afectadosporlahipoteca.com)

The impact of forced evictions has also been represented in several artistic mediums. Novels such as Doménico Chiappe's *Tiempo de encierro* (2013) and Cristina Fallarás's *A la puta calle* (2013), as well as the films *Cinco metros cuadrados* (2011), directed by Max Lemcke, *Techo y comida* (2015) directed by Juan Miguel del Castillo, and Eduardo Cortés's *Cerca de tu casa* (2016), demonstrate the horrific consequences of evictions.

Isaac Rosa's trajectory as a comic author suggests that he believes that the comic medium is well suited to provide a powerful tool to document upheaval and misfortune. Rosa, born in Seville in 1974, began his career as a columnist in *La marea*, *Ediario.es*, and as a novelist. His most famous novels include *¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil!* (2007) and *El vano ayer* (2005), for which he won the Premio Rómulo Gallegos. In his most recent novels, *La habitación oscura* (2013), *Compro oro* (2013), *La mano invisible* (2011), and *El país del miedo* (2008), Rosa addresses the numerous post-crisis outcomes and the resulting difficulties of living in contemporary Spain. For example, in his dystopian novel *La habitación oscura*, the protagonists escape their grim reality by seeking refuge in a designated "dark room" in a shared apartment. In this space, they

partake in activities to avoid the oppressive reality of the world: studying, drinking, partying, chatting with friends, and engaging in sexual encounters. The room is a non-space where they can flee from their hopeless lives of unemployment, forced evictions, and an ever-increasing social inequality.

Rosa began his comic career with *Aquí vivió* and continued to write about the crisis in his latest comic publication, *Tu futuro empieza aquí* (2017), in which he crafts a story surrounding the 2008 disaster from the perspective of the “ni ni” youth in Spain. Rosa’s transition to comic work signals, perhaps, that he considers the medium more conducive to representing crisis than other genres. It also suggests that it is an engaging form of art for the youth population, more easily reaching them. For example, in the United States, until recently the average age of comic readers was people in their forties, but that number has steadily encompassed a younger audience and now includes twenty to thirty-year-olds (Rogers). Correspondingly, in Spain, the sector in their twenties and thirties were among the hardest-hit demographics following the recession.

Rosa’s use of the comic because of its versatile aesthetic and thematic functions have been echoed by other artists and literary scholars. Comics are apt vehicles to represent marginality because, as Chute writes, “they intervene against a culture of invisibility by taking what I think of as the risk of representation” (*Disaster Drawn* 5). Although Chute engages with works that deal with comics after World War II and the Holocaust, her argument regarding the comic’s role in representing disaster directly applies to those rendered “invisible” by the neoliberal system and failed social and political policies in Spain following the economic collapse.

The comic is a testimony of disaster. Chute emphasizes that visual images have historically been used to document and represent wartime atrocities. An example in the context of Spain is the work of Francisco Goya (d. 1828). As Chute writes, Goya's images illustrate the violence that occurred during the French invasion of Spain by "eliciting responsiveness, by assaulting the viewer, by inviting one to look while signaling the difficulty of looking" ("Disaster" 28). Although Goya's art is not a comic, Chute's example underscores the power of images to document and depict trauma, which is heightened in the comic through the combination of text and image (Chute 34). Goya's case is even more relevant to the theme of this chapter, demonstrating a legacy of the use of images as a response to disaster in the Spanish milieu.

Aquí vivió's schoolgirl protagonist, Alicia, narrates the tale. She recounts her difficulties with overcoming the separation of her parents and subsequent relocation to a new apartment with her mother. Shortly after her move, Alicia learns that her new home previously belonged to a family that had been expelled from the apartment because of a mortgage eviction. In attempts to find out the truth about what happened to the former tenants, Alicia embarks on an investigative journey and uncovers clues about the vacated home. She discovers the identity of the previous dwellers: a woman named Carmen who resided there with her son and granddaughter, also named Alicia.

The narrative exposes the consequences of crisis and austerity, revealing the impact on society's most vulnerable. It also demonstrates that evictions were not the only problematic results related to the bursting of the housing bubble. Even Alicia's personal circumstances reflect the challenge in finding a new home due to family turmoil, such as separation or divorce. The comic reveals other outcomes of trying financial situations,

such as the common phenomenon of adults living with their older relatives and parents because of unemployment and economic limitations. Carmen's son, for example, moved in with her when he was unable to financially support himself or his daughter, Alicia.

One way in which *Aquí vivió* lends itself to describing the trauma of evictions is through the physical layout of the comic, which creates a unique storytelling pace and actively involves the reader in the construction of the narrative. Its form provides “a participatory mode of agency that film, for instance, structurally eschews” (Chute *Disaster* 37). Static pictures often become fluid images via the gutters, the blank spaces between panels, which require the reader to fill in the gaps. In other instances, the combination of text and image plunges the reader into the story. An early frame illustrates this concept, as the reader peers through a peephole to find an eviction squad aggressively waiting outside the door. To add to the hostility of the “invasion,” in a large, black, capitalized font, the text evokes the shrill of the doorbell with
 ¡¡¡DRRRRRRIING!!! (5).



Fig. 5: The image is from the reader's perspective, heightening the connection between reader and page. The font and onomatopoeia create a sensation of invasion and aggression (5).

The active engagement thrusts the reader into the scene to vicariously endure trauma and violence alongside the protagonists. Later, a series of panels depicts the physical removal of a family from their home (116). Agents cover the girl's mouth as she screams, "¡Soltadme! Esta es mi casa! ¡Soltadme!" The daggered shape of the text balloon, the dialogue, and the picture itself intertwine to express and enhance the feelings of fear in a situation of violence. As the reader's eyes move further down the page, the scene reveals the family desolately exiting the home. A final panel depicts Alicia and her mother gripped by the visualization of the eviction that occurred prior to their entry into the home. The grey shadows and the shaft of light mark the difference in temporal periods. This, along with the combination of pacing, image, and text recreate the

traumatic experience for the reader in a manner that distinguishes the storytelling from other literature.



Fig. 6: The series of panels depicts the aggression and trauma of the eviction, and the haunting sensation afterwards (116).

Self-mirroring in *Aquí vivió* can be a result of the reader's familiarity with evictions.

However, as Scott McCloud notes, this phenomenon is also due to the graphic image:

"We see ourselves in everything. We assign identities and emotions where none exist.

And we make the world over in our image" (33). In contrast to visual depictions in film

or photography, the comic is able to convey an unrealistic or exaggerated picture. The brain, when processing these images, converts them into a recognizable feature in which the reader visualizes a familiar person. The lack of realism of the comic, ironically, renders it a medium that creates a more “real” or authentic experience for the reader who, in a self-reflexive exercise, simulates the happenings in the narrative (McCloud 44). This means that in a work such as Rosa’s, the eviction process—whether the reader has personally experienced it or not—becomes more real and recognizable for him or her.

Eliciting Emotions

Aesthetic components of *Aquí vivió* also connect the reader to the narrative by provoking certain moods and emotional attachments. Of immediate note is the color scheme; cool blue and green tones evoke sadness and despair. At times these colors mesh with gray, black, and white hues, all of which point to the dismal and somber environment surrounding the theme of evictions and misfortune.

Aquí vivió also expresses emotion through the text balloons. Different fonts convey specific moods. Typefaces can emulate certain sounds, providing the reader with additional stimuli to imagine the scene and tone (McCloud). Even the absence of text portrays emotion. For example, the lack of dialogue in the image below constructs a scene filled with silence devoid of human contact. The vacant street conveys an eerie setting, with Alicia almost invading the space that had once been inhabited by people. The graphics underscore the neighborhood as a desolate, empty, ghost-like place. Like a contemporary Spanish version of Juan Rulfo’s “Comala,” it is a ghost town, uninhabited and vacated by residents who were evicted. The absence of human life in the streets

creates a haunting sensation and reinforces the notion of emptiness and destruction after an eviction.²⁸

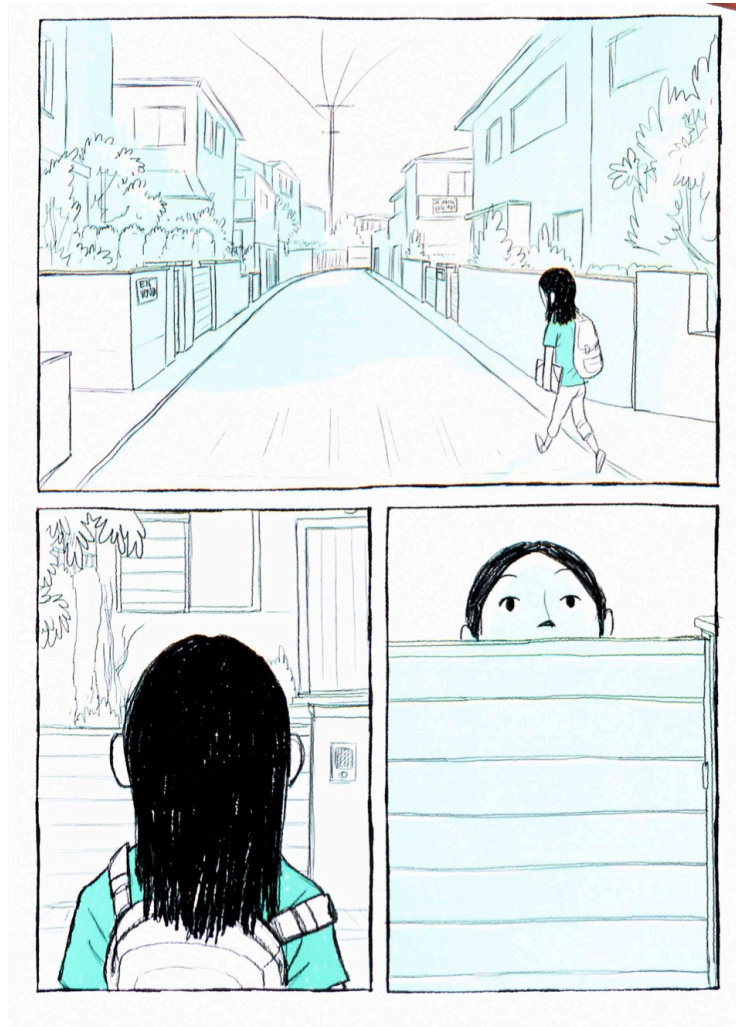


Fig. 7: Alicia wanders through a neighborhood that had been impacted by eviction. The absence of dialogue or other people reverberates emptiness and desolation (23).

Aquí vivió evokes the themes of haunting and emptiness through more than aesthetics. In addition to the comic's form, thematic elements reference suffering and marginality by acknowledging Spain's past. Through references to earlier traumatic events, such as the Spanish Civil War, the work underscores the familiar theme of

²⁸ Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) contains desolation, haunting, and ghosts as a central motif in the context of post-revolution Mexico.

historical memory in Spain, revealing the ghosts of earlier times. Like some of the other texts we will see in this project, *Aquí vivió* compares the 2008 crash to the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship via allusions to government corruption, societal divisions, and violence. The parallel reinforces the concept I proposed in the Introduction; in Spain, history continues to repeat itself. References to the past in contemporary Spanish works are part of the recent trend in recovering memory and acknowledging the past, especially following the 2007 Ley de la Memoria Histórica. As Alison Ribeiro de Menezes points out, memory is essential in the present because it is “concerned as much with the present and the future as it is with the past” (883). She adds that

Contemporary entanglements of memory and protest in post-crisis Spain offer an excellent illustration of the ways in which an opening up of discussions of historical memory has brought with it an opening up of discussions about the nature of Spanish democracy and the future of the society it serves. (884)

The production of cultural works that examine Spain’s past reflects this contemporary trend. Between 2001 and 2018, 1,248 novels were published on the Spanish Civil War, averaging to 70 novels per year (Morales). One of these novels is Rosa’s own *¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil!* (2014).

By using the past to explain the present, Rosa’s comic utilizes memory to reflect the contemporary conflict in Spain. During a dinner conversation, Alicia tells her father and grandmother about the evicted family she discovered. Her grandmother responds by linking the eviction to other brutal occurrences in Spain, saying “Pobre gente. Me recuerda a una vieja historia...Lo que vivió un primo de mi madre hace muchos años...” (118). She goes on to recount the repression of Republican soldiers after the Civil War, and suggests to Alicia that the youth of Spain are not as cognizant of the war as they

should be. She says “Pobre Emilio. Lo que tuvo que pasar y toda la familia con él. A los jóvenes os parecerá una historia de película. Es de cuando acabó la guerra. La guerra en España. ¿Habéis estudiado la guerra en el instituto?” (119). Alicia responds, “Bueno, no mucho” (119), adding to theme of the tendency to ignore Spain’s past, reinforcing the necessity of education and remembrance.



Fig. 8: A flashback to Republican soldiers after the Spanish Civil War (119).

In addition to allusions to historical periods in Spain, metafictional components interwoven throughout the narrative thread, such as Alicia's interaction with journals and diaries, strengthen the connection to previous traumas and the disaster of 2008. Much in the same vein as Latin American testimonial literature, these texts serve as a means to document tragedy and conflict.

For example, Alicia learns about the eviction that occurred in her home after she discovers the diary of Carmen's granddaughter, "Ali", in her bedroom. Ali's writings detail the process of her family's eviction, describing her fears in detail. Alicia, the protagonist, also reads Anne Frank's diary, another testimony of witness and suffering. The comic juxtaposes images of the two journals, providing a side-by-side comparison and revealing disconcerting similarities. Both authors, Alicia and Anne, chronicle the emotions that they experience when hearing the doorbell ring and describe the constant state of anxiety in the home. Alicia's likening of "Ali's" fear of eviction to Anne Frank's distress while hiding from the Nazis ties the two situations to tragedy. Although Anne Frank's heartbreaking situation during the Holocaust had a considerably more violent end than Alicia's eviction, the two incidents share common threads: both girls were removed from their homes by oppressive forces and suffered existential consequences. The text's connection to past historical events reinforces the importance of memory, but also ties the current situation in Spain to tragedy in the past, suggesting that history continues to repeat itself in different iterations. Furthermore, the meta-textual reference points to the comic, *Aquí vivió* itself as a form of diary and testimony. Like the journals it alludes to, the text documents a tragedy and serves as a cultural object that can function as both a visual and verbal record of the evictions that occurred in the aftermath of 2008.



Fig. 9: Anne Frank's diary set beside Alicia's diary (38-39).

A Didactic Function

Comics such as *Aquí vivió* are part of a growing corpus of cultural works that teach contemporary Spanish readers about the financial crash. Matthew Marr, in his study of Aleix Saló's *Españistan*, argues that Saló's comic, in conjunction with the accompanying online short, serves to simultaneously educate, critique, and entertain (13). When considering the comic medium and adding to its instructional purpose, the reader receives multiple forms of input via visual stimuli and words. The reader must piece this information together as he/she moves through the frames. Thus, the reader not only involves him/herself in the narrative, but also learns about the conditions that created the

crisis through the comic, heightening the connection between the text and the actual trauma of the crash.²⁹

Aquí vivió also involves the reader in the narrative by teaching about the problem of post-crash evictions related to mortgage defaults. The image below, for example, explains the trajectory of risky lending and the consequences after the crash when many were unable to pay their mortgages. In the panels of this page alone there are multiple types of input. Each panel features a different image explaining the irresponsible, risky mortgages, such as “hipoteca joven”, “hipoteca libre”. In addition to the informative dialogue between the banker and Alicia, the comic provides a visual panorama, combining multiple sources of visual input.

²⁹ Although not set in the Spanish context, other post-crisis works, such as Adam McKay’s film *The Big Short* (2015) employ similar didactic techniques. For example, in the Oscar-nominated film, there are several moments of pauses in the narrative when characters break the fourth wall and explain issues related to the financial meltdown and the banking world. These mini “lessons” feature celebrities such as the late Anthony Bourdain, Selena Gómez, and Margot Robbie. In these scenes, the celebrities explain industry terminology for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the nuances of the banking world. McKay also utilizes similar strategies in his recent film depicting Dick Cheney’s rise to power, *Vice* (2018).



Fig. 10: The series of panels explains terminology related to the housing crisis and evictions (137).

Another didactic aspect of the work deals with space. Space is a visible marker that distinguishes social classes, as we have seen in previous analyses of work such as *Iphigenia en Vallecas*. In the case of *Aquí vivió*, the comic's balance of image and text strengthens the spatial component of the narrative. Thus, space is a central piece of the narrative both in its form and theme. On a basic level, an eviction is the forced removal of people from their home—from one space to another. Those who were evicted tended to reside in marginalized neighborhoods, and *Aquí vivió* reflects the spatial aspect of social exclusion and marginality in the storyline and images. Through mapping eviction sites and the signs such as the “Villa de desahucios” (200), the comic indicates geographical barriers between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, laying out for the reader the geographical element in social exclusion. As Alicia's friend in the PAH says, “Este barrio, por ejemplo, es uno de los más afectados” (200).

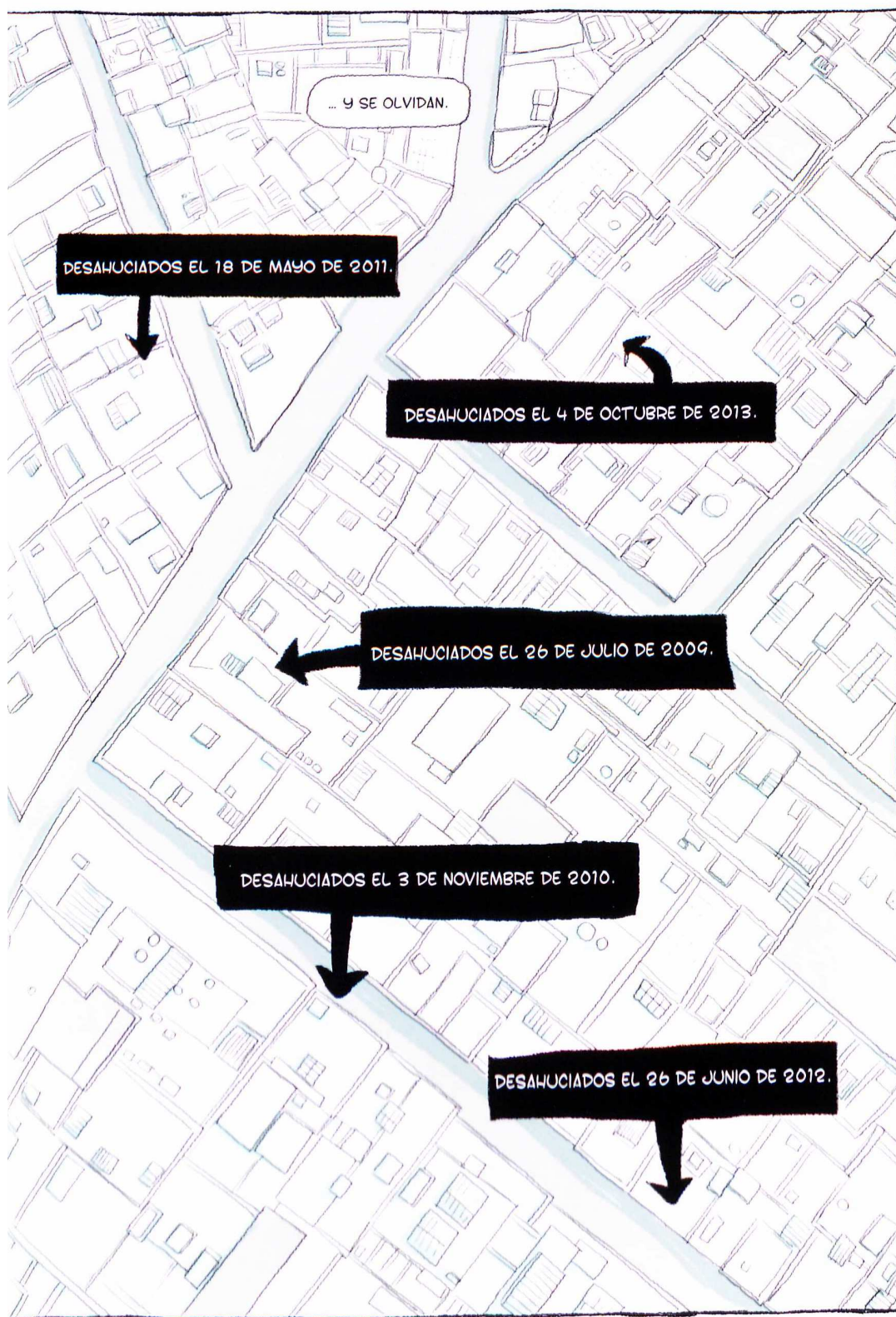


Fig. 11: A map of evictions in a section of the city (203).

Aquí vivió breaks down the complexities of the crash in an accessible way for informed and uninformed readers alike. As Henry Giroux argues, “Pedagogy is central to politics in that it is involved in the construction of critical agents and provides the formative culture that is indispensable to a democratic society” (4). Cultural works—and specifically comics—function as a resource to educate and develop engaged global citizens.

Activism and Social Media

Aquí vivió directly references social protest and activism in relation to forced evictions.³⁰ The comic medium, as Christine Martínez points out, “participates in an atmosphere of contemporary socio-ecological and political critique that *necessitates* the creation of alternative cultural imaginaries based upon a fundamental rethinking of community, redefinition of well-being and revalorization of the social” (192). The book not only actively involves the reader in the construction of the narrative, but the cultural object itself becomes involved in activism. The comic, in relation to the financial crisis points to avenues for renewal and demonstrates means to achieve it.

Aquí vivió illuminates the problem of evictions and housing in Spain by allowing the reader to piece together and discern its consequences. It also emphasizes the role that on-the-ground and local activists play in the prevention of evictions and social exclusion, such as Alicia’s involvement with members of the PAH. Her interactions with them, juxtaposed with the images of activists rejoicing and optimistic about creating change as they protest, highlights the momentum and impact they have created. One of Alicia’s

³⁰ Protest and social activism are recurring themes in post-crisis works as part of the greater socio-historical context and response to the meltdown. The last chapter of the dissertation is devoted entirely to protest movements and their manifestation within cultural production.

friends in the PAH notes, “Políticamente es algo muy potente. Esa gente ya no volverá a ser los que era antes. Pero no es solo un tema político. Es humano, Emociones. Como te he dicho, me ha cambiado la vida” (211).

The PAH and the work of the organization play a central role in the narrative and help Alicia discover the truth about the family who had once lived in her apartment. The comic’s emphasis on the PAH’s activism elevates its visibility, providing a certain type of marketing for the organization by targeting the readers of the comic. The story concludes with Alicia and Carmen’s granddaughter, Ali, standing together in solidarity as members of the PAH place a commemorative plaque on the Alicias’ apartment in honor and remembrance of Carmen.

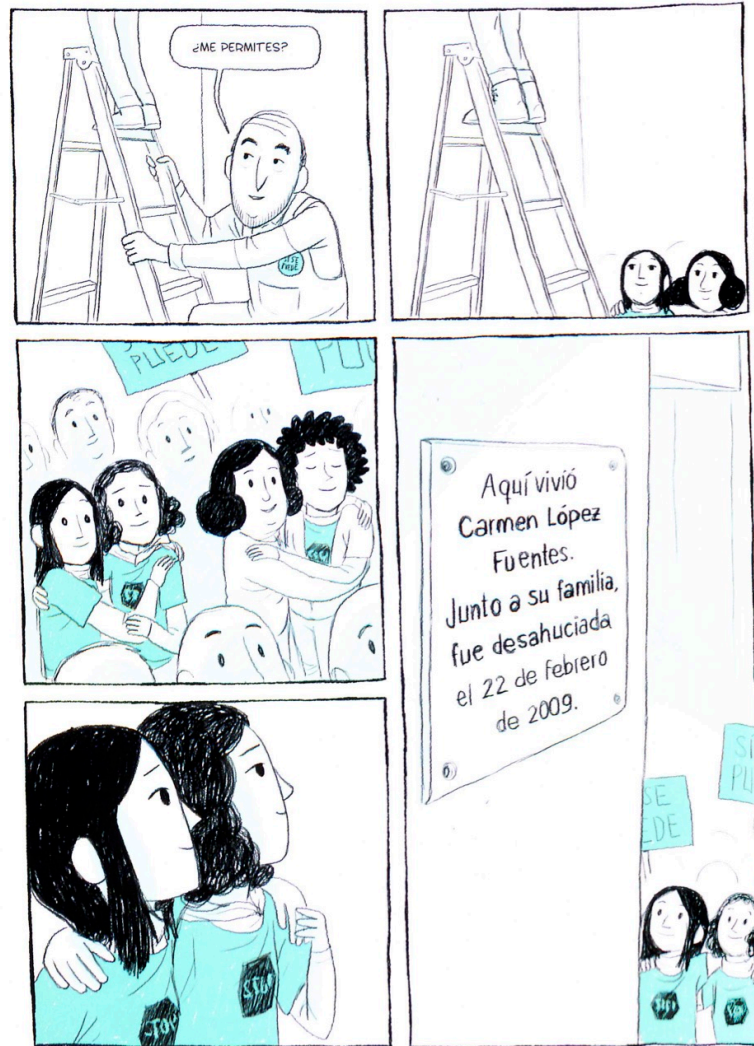


Fig. 12: The two Alicias, along with members of the PAH dedicate a plaque to Carmen in remembrance of her eviction and of all those who suffered a similar fate (254).

The image of the two girls embracing each other while gazing at the sign detailing the eviction underscores the value of memory, the power of protest, and the importance of solidarity. The comic medium allows for this effective channel of emotions and testimony to serve as an emblem of memory; it gives the reader a picture of what that might look like. *Aquí vivió* is an example of how the comic demonstrates the plight of the marginalized evictees after the 2008 collapse. Through its active engagement with the reader and its ability to mirror the reader's experience and involving him or her in the

narrative, the comic brings the situation to life through drawn images. This interaction lends itself to a heightened didactic experience that utilizes culture to educate and draw awareness to the problem of mortgage evictions after the 2008 crash.

El olivo: The Crisis in a Rural Context

Until now, this chapter has examined cultural representations of marginalized groups during the 2008 crash in an urban milieu through two mediums. The next section will shift to an area of study that has often been neglected when analyzing cultural representations of the 2008 crash: Spain's rural zones. Unemployment rates skyrocketed in metropolitan centers but rose exponentially in the agricultural regions of Spain. Pablo Valdivia has drawn attention to the lack of scholarship concerning Spanish crisis narratives in a rustic setting ("Literature, Crisis, and Spanish Rural Space" 169). Building on Valdivia's study of the crisis and rural spaces, as a way to conclude this chapter on the cultural depiction of marginality and suffering after the 2008 crash, the final section of this chapter will analyze Iciar Bollain's (b. 1967) 2016 film, *El olivo* for its portrayal of the meltdown from a rural lens. It will focus on how symbolic elements in the film's *mise en scène* alert the viewers to the plight of Spain's rural population after the crash.

Thematic and cinematographic aspects of the film point to the importance of family ties, honoring regional traditions, and uniting in solidarity to overcome adversity.

The plot of *El olivo* centers on the family of the twenty-year-old protagonist, Alma (Anna Castillo), in Castellón (Comunidad Valenciana). Like much of the population in rural Spain, the family based its livelihood on the agricultural industry and the construction boom prior to the economic meltdown ("Retrato de España",

elEconomista.es). After the financial collapse, Alma's father, Luis (Miguel Ángel Aladren), loses his job and moves his family back to his father's house. Alma's uncle, Alcachofa, is also mired in struggles: unemployed and in the process of a divorce. Aggravating the grim situation, the family's patriarch, *Yayo* (Manuel Cucala), is dying and refuses to eat or talk. Alma believes that the key to invigorating her grandfather is finding the whereabouts of the most important thing in his life: the two-thousand year old olive tree that her father and uncles uprooted and sold against his will nearly twelve years earlier. She learns that the tree farm that removed the *olivo* from their land sold it to an energy company in Germany. Even worse, her family sold the tree as part of a bribe for the mayor to allow them to build a restaurant on beachfront property—a reference to the corruption and greed of the government and corporations before and after the crash. In an effort to do whatever it takes to return the tree to her grandfather, Alma tricks her uncle, Alcachofa (Javier Gutiérrez), and crush, Rafa (Pep Ambròs), into joining her on a road trip. She tells them a German pastor owns the tree and would be delighted to return it, convincing the two men to accompany her to Dusseldorf.

Rural Spain and the Crash

As previously discussed, subprime lending, high speculation, and the real estate and construction boom were primary causes of the crash (Friedman 2). With the financial backing of both Spanish and international banks, developers built much more than Spaniards could use or afford. When the recession hit, many of these construction projects were left unfinished, with numerous abandoned buildings. As Nick Paumgarten points out, “The country is now a museum of doomed developments—a white-elephant

safari. Vacant villas and towers glut the coasts and ring cities and towns” (3). Less populated parts of Spain, and specifically the coasts, were particularly susceptible to the consequences of the real estate market’s boom and bust. The provinces of Castellón, Guadalajara, Murcia, and Lleida were the most vulnerable (Méndez et al. 240-241), fraught with massive rates of unemployment.

Another outcome of the crash was increased inequality between urban and rural zones (“La crisis ha aumentado”). Consequently, a mass exodus of rural workers began to make their way to Spain’s urban centers in a trend that continues today. In fact, a December 2018 article in *El País* revealed that within the year, 139,566 workers moved to a different autonomous community for work-related reasons: an 11.2 percent increase compared to 2017. Madrid absorbed the bulk of the population, with 41,369 people moving to the city in 2018 alone. Other autonomous communities, such as the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, and Cataluña, documented higher rates of workers entering than leaving. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the regions with the most laborers fleeing to find employment in other autonomous communities included Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, and Valencia (Sérvulo González).

Narotzky and Smith’s ethnographic study, *Immediate Struggles: People, Power, and Place in Rural Spain*, illuminates the different economic and social realities of rural Spain, and particularly the autonomous community of Valencia, which happens to be the setting of *El olivo*. The researchers argue that many of the challenges facing rural Spain lie in tensions that arose as the country modernized and began to shift from a historically agricultural economy to an industrial one (8).

Social exclusion is another aspect to consider when examining the Spanish rural milieu. Class divisions have an ingrained history in agrarian areas, stemming from earlier periods when traditional rural practices were based on the dominance of the rich landowners over the land-working peasants. Even into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, family and social connections continue to hold significance for one seeking employment in rural areas (Narotzky and Smith 18-20). *El olivo* depicts these realities of the Spanish rural context, underscoring tradition, family ties, and the population's connection to the land as a way of life and mode of survival.

In commercial terms, *El olivo* was exceptionally well received. During its opening weekend in Spain on May 6, it earned 375,432 Euros, and in total made 1.9 million Euros (IMDB). We can attribute part of the film's success to the prominence of its director, Icíar Bollain, a prolific Spanish actress, director and screenwriter. She has been nominated for multiple Goya awards as a performer, director, and writer.³¹ *El olivo* also won numerous awards; Anna Castillo earned the Goya for Best New Actress,³² and the film's screenplay and score were each nominated for the Goya, as was Javier Gutiérrez

³¹ Bollain's 2003 film, *Te doy mis ojos* won seven Goyas, including Best Film and Best Director. Her 2010 film *También la lluvia* was chosen as the Spanish entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd Academy Awards. Some of her other widely-recognized work includes the films *Hola, ¿estás sola?*, *Flores de otro mundo*, and *En tierra extraña*. Bollain employs film as a magnifying glass for the social issues that impact everyday citizens. As she notes in an *ABC* interview, "Hacer cine es muy costoso humana y económicamente, por eso hago el que me interesa, el que me habla de cosas y de personas porque ya existe mucho de consumo que no te dice nada y te deja vacío" ("Icíar Bollain"). In response to her socially charged productions, people have often labeled her work as "cine social". Bollain rejects this description, asserting that "Después de todo, todo el cine es social y político. Los 'blockbusters' de Hollywood, por ejemplo, no son mero entretenimiento; la mayoría de ellos promocionan valores como el materialismo, o el patriotismo" (Salvà).

³² Anna Castillo's success in *El olivo* is part of her rise to fame in the Spanish film, television, and theatre scene. In collaboration with Javier Ambrossi and Javier Calvo, "los Javis", she starred in their musical *La llamada* (2013-2015) and its eponymous film adaptation in 2017. She has also made appearances in their Netflix series, *Paquita Salas* from 2016-2018 (IMDB).

for his role as Alcachofa (IMDB). It was one of three films in the running for the Spanish submission to the Oscars, along with Pedro Almodóvar's *Julieta* (2016) and Paula Ortiz's *La novia* (2016) (Gil Grande), with *Julieta* ultimately winning out.

Bollaín exposes the crisis's impact on rural Spain, including the varied effects on all generations. Other critics have also begun to examine *El olivo* as a cultural work that gives voice to those who are often overlooked when discussing the impact of the crash, specifically members of agrarian communities (Serra de Renobales). One of those groups includes the youth population, seen in the film through Alma and her friends. Due to the lack of jobs, many of the young characters spend their time drinking and partying (00:10:42). The constant precarity and disillusion of their situation amplifies anxiety and depression and ultimately manifests in negative psychological effects. Alma displays several nervous ticks, such as fidgeting and pulling out her own hair (00:13:12). Her despair blinds her to the consequences of her actions and how they affect those around her; she deceives her uncle and Rafa into traveling with her to Germany, jeopardizes Rafa's employment by using his boss's truck, and causes Alcachofa to miss a critical opportunity to reconcile with his wife on their anniversary weekend.

The situations of Alma's father, Luis, and uncle, Alcachofa, also reveal the crash's ramifications on rural workers. Both Luis and Alcachofa gambled their funds during the construction boom by building their restaurant on beachfront property. Afterwards, they lost everything—their business, their jobs, their money, and their wives. Alcachofa's case in particular highlights the tragic consequences of the construction boom and bust. For example, during the trip to Germany, Alcachofa abruptly pulls off of the highway and stops at the residence of a former client who never paid him the ninety-

thousand Euros owed to him for his construction services. The frame depicting Alcachofa's client's now abandoned mansion and luxurious pool echoes the emptiness and suffering caused by high speculation and greed. At first glance, the setting looks like a vacation resort with palm trees, sparkling water and rays of the glistening, Spanish sun. However, the scene heightens the crisis's connections to capitalism through props and objects such as the kitschy statue of liberty, a symbol that has historically represented freedom and opportunity. This cheap replica emphasizes the effects of neoliberalism, globalization, and a consumer society on the post-crisis world, transforming Lady Liberty into a bitter reminder of the *lack* of opportunity for the rural, working class in Spain.



Fig. 13: Alcachofa arrives at his former client's home and demands the money owed to him (00:50:36).

The statue's significance continues throughout the narrative as Alcachofa attaches it to the truck and brings it with them to Germany. Several shots of the journey to Dusseldorf depict the large truck trailing the statue behind it, visually illustrating the weight of the neoliberal system on the working-class protagonists. Later, the statue becomes the target of Alcachofa's frustration upon arrival in Dusseldorf when he discovers that Alma had lied about the true owners of the olive tree. In a rage, he violently destroys the statue. He

has been fooled and let down by his clients, his business, the Spanish political and economic system, and now, his own niece. Alcachofa's literal obliteration of the statue illustrates the brokenness of the capitalist system as a whole, and his personal denouncement of it. He has been crushed time and again, unable to rise above the difficult climate of the recession. However, in the below shot, Alcachofa is not the only victim. The statue of liberty, too, lies helplessly on the bed of his truck as Alcachofa demolishes it. The arm holding the flame is tied, like a hostage unable to prevent the massacre around it. Not only has Alcachofa been deceived by the capitalist system, but the ideals of freedom and inclusion that the statue of liberty symbolizes have also been betrayed.



Fig. 14: Alcachofa destroys the Statue of Liberty in a wrath of frustration (1:13:23).

While the statue represents the failure of the neoliberal, capitalist system, the central symbolic object and primary motif of the film is undoubtedly the olive tree. The olive tree symbolizes peace, strength, and friendship; it is a sacred tree that appears in mythological and Biblical texts. It also connotes a strong connection to the land (Abufarha 352), a theme that predominates in *El olivo*. However, the olive tree in *El olivo*

is even more significant considering the plant's connection to Spain, which is said to be home to over three hundred million olive trees ("Olive oil production in the Mediterranean").³³

The olive tree's connection to Spanish tradition is most clearly manifested in Alma's *Yayo*. His foresight into the problems of greed serves as a warning to his sons even before they decide to sell the tree. *Yayo*'s silence and struggle after the sale of the tree reflect his disillusion with the crumbling environment around them. His sons' sale of the sacred tree as part of a bribe is all too representative of pre-recession Spain, riding a wave of high speculation and irresponsible spending, fraught with corruption. Recurring flashbacks in the film transport the spectator to the past, and show how Alma's grandfather adamantly opposed the sale of the tree:

Pues pienso en que no pienso vender. Porque ese árbol no es nuestro. Se ha heredado de los bisabuelos de los abuelos de los abuelos de los padres y los padres y los hijos y así. Si os vendo el árbol os doy el dinero a vosotros y a la semana no tenéis ni olivo ni dinero ni restaurante. Este árbol no tiene precio. Ese olivo es sagrado, Ese árbol es mi vida y vosotros queréis quitarme la vida. (18:20)

He adds that, "Ese árbol es de la vida, de la historia." Despite his objections, his sons betray him, arguing that their father is stuck in the past, and proceed to sell the sacred tree. In *Yayo*'s opinion, the tree is not their property; it belongs to nature and the world. He warns them that any money earned from the sale will be lost eventually and that they will be left with nothing. Tragically, his prediction becomes reality. Alcachofa

³³ Olive trees can live for an average of three hundred to six hundred years, with Spain being home to some of the oldest documented trees. The Museo del Arión in Tarragona, for example, is a museum that contains trees that are over one thousand years old (Catalunya.com). In addition to symbolic motifs, on a purely economic level, Spain produces more olive oil than any country in the world, almost half of the global supply. It also produces three times more olive oil than Italy, Greece, and Tunisia (Howard).

acknowledges the painful truth about his personal situation and Spain's economic predicament: "El país entero se está engañando a sí mismo" (0:47:20)

The uprooting of the olive tree ultimately destabilizes *Yayo*, leaving him weak and leading to his eventual death, which occurs when Alma reaches Dusseldorf. His bond to the tree connects him to the essence of Spain, as well as the land itself. The olive tree's entrapment inside the energy company epitomizes the tree's link to post-crisis Spain. The tree is imprisoned in an artificial environment far from its natural habitat in the olive groves of Castellón. Like Spain, the *olivo* is indebted to and held hostage by other European entities: the tree in its relation with a company in Germany, and Spain, with the European Union and arguably Germany for the 2012 bailout. This unequal power dynamic likely fuels Spanish sensitivities over perceptions abroad. For instance, a negative reference to Spain used by the international press following the crash is the common acronym that denotes the countries most afflicted by the crisis: PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain) (Quiroga 131). PIIGS is not specifically mentioned in the film, but it alludes to these countries in a negative context due to their economic plight.

Likewise, the common motif of a Spanish inferiority and beholdenness to Germany also appears in the film. Alcachofa describes himself as smaller and less intelligent than the tall Germans who speak perfect English. In Germany he says, "siento el doble de tonto" (1:04:01). Paralleling Alcachofa's lack of belonging, the tree, located in the RRR Energy corporate headquarters in Berlin, appears to be an exotic object in a zoo, a foreign location for such a regal and sacred plant native to the Mediterranean. The tree, with its bright green hues radiating life does not belong captive in the sterile, white corporate building. It is in a man-made land, underscored by the straight lines and

geometric shapes. Even the glass rooms throughout the space are in rectangular form: everything planned and measured. The lines and bars surrounding the tree allude to its position as a prisoner inside the firm.



Fig. 15: The olive tree trapped inside RRR Energy in Dusseldorf, Germany (1:06:05).

Even more humiliating than being captive, the tree's identity and essence has been "stolen" by the German company, as it is now the logo of the RRR Energy. In a publicity campaign, the firm, which aims to project an image of environmental sustainability, attempts to strengthen the appearance of its connection to nature through the olive tree. Spain's resources do not serve to help Spain itself, but rather other institutions of power. Alma also determines that the company is not as environmentally conscientious as its public relations campaign suggests. The company creates a façade of sustainability, corporate justice, and responsibility, but in reality exploits the land and underdeveloped countries through mining, clear-cutting forests, and forcefully destroying villages (0:55:45). The tree as the company's logo, then, also underscores the deceit, greed, manipulation, and destruction caused by the neoliberal system. The olive tree is another victim caught in the throes of twenty-first century corruption.

The images of *El olivo* provide the unique opportunity to demonstrate to the public ways to combat the corruption that led to the crash. Outraged over RRR Energy's corrupt business practices, Alma's Spanish contact living in Munich and her German friends create a Facebook page to garner support to remove the tree from the corporation's building and return it to Spain. Throughout the narrative, Alma sends the girls photos of her journey to Germany for them to post on the page, and they garner enough support to host a large rally outside the company headquarters in Dusseldorf. *El olivo* underscores the role of technology as a tool for denouncement. The juxtaposition of the film shots with snippets of Whatsapp text messages emphasizes the emerging role that technology has held for social movements following the crash. Instead of merely referring to the messages, the viewer sees them throughout the film, not only including the text, but also other means to communicate, such as emojis. This technique reinforces the role of technology in protest movements following the crash (see Chapter Three).³⁴

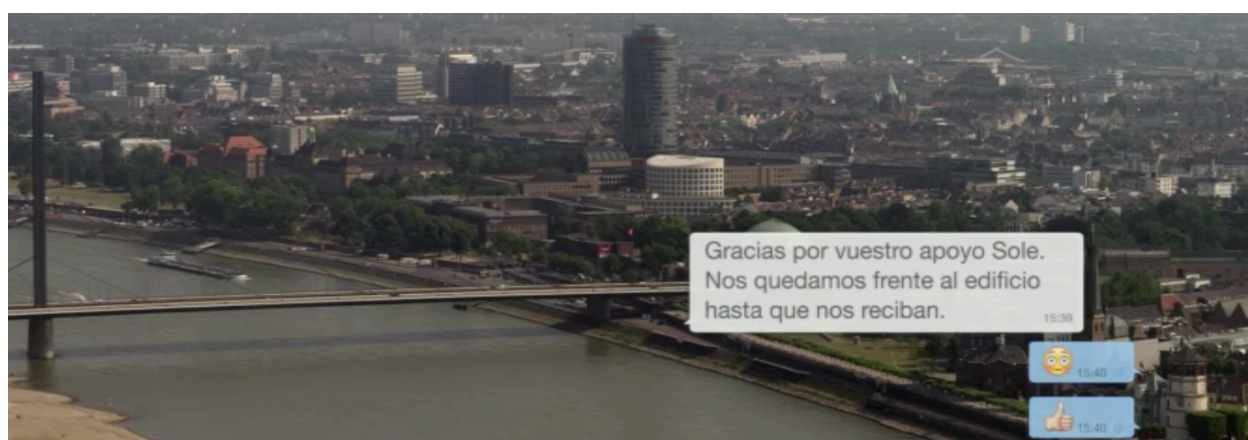


Fig. 16: An example of shots with WhatsApp text messages interposed (1:17:19).

Although Alma is unable to bring the entire tree back to Spain, she manages to retrieve a branch and transport it to Castellón. As the family unites to replant the olive

³⁴ See Fátima Serra de Renobales for an analysis on *El olivo* and its portrayal of resistance to the neoliberal system.

branch in its former space, Alma declares: ¿Os imagináis cómo será en dos mil años? A ver si esta vez lo hacemos un poquito mejor” (1:29:00). The final scene of the film, pictured below, points to the essence of tradition and solidarity to overcome periods of crisis and disaster. The protagonists gather together to return the recovered fragment of the olive tree to the grove, a scene that emphasizes the necessity to let old wounds heal, to forgive, and to plant seeds for renewal for a better future. The tree has returned home, to Spain. The soil and green flora around it diverge from the *olivo*’s former cell of captivity at RRR Energy. The tree is just a small plant now, but the roots will spread and flourish. The scene points to solidarity and tradition, as well as the youth as the solution to the rural zone’s suffering in the crisis. Increasing the emphasis on the role of Spain’s youth, Alma, as her name suggests, possesses the soul necessary to move forward. Her bleak present is transformed with the planting of the tree, indicating an optimistic future for her generations and for those to come.



Fig. 17: Alma replants the tree with her uncle and father (1:29:00).

Conclusions

The three works analyzed in this chapter depict the consequences of the 2008 crash by providing a panorama of the different marginalized groups affected. As we will see, artists have deployed an array of representations to comprehend, critique, and engage with the ramifications of the crisis. The play, *Iphigenia en Vallecas* demonstrates the problems of austerity measures and the resulting limitation of social services for those in need. Iphigenia's monologue challenges the audience to reflect and to enact change. *Aquí vivió* depicts the trauma created by mortgage evictions following the crash. The comic medium enables the reader to actively participate in the construction of the narrative, going through the suffering alongside the characters. It also reaches specific demographics afflicted by the crash, namely the youth population. Finally, *El olivo* provides a view of the recession's impact on the rural communities of Spain, a topic often overlooked by scholarship. Through the power of moving images, film sheds light on symbols and motifs that point to the causes of the 2008 crash, as well as ways to overcome it. The success of the film and the medium's ability to reach large groups of people makes it a platform that spreads awareness and provides catharsis to those viewing it. Each medium contains unique capabilities to empower and reach spectators; each of these works depict the plight of marginalized groups following the crash. In the next chapter, we will turn to another negative outcome of the crisis: mass Spanish emigration and its representation in cultural works.

Chapter Two

La crisis y la risa: Emigration and Humor after the 2008 Crisis

*Necesito un país que sonría,
 necesito un país que se arranque ese grís que oscurece sus días,
 Un país sin derecha ni izquierda
 ni cuerdas que tensan rivales.
 Sin peleles que vendan en teles sus intimidades.
 Un país sin Rajoys, Rubalcabas ni Aguirres,
 Donde criemos a niños sensibles sabiendo que aquí serán libres,
 Un país con más libros y menos partidos del siglo.
 Un país sin peligros ni líderes tan inservibles.
 Un país sin deshaucios, mentiras ni estafas, donde se acepten todos los credos, los
 sexos, ideas y razas.*

-Marwan, “Necesito un país” (2017)

During moments of crisis, one way to react is to create *physical* distance from the conflict. Separating from an institution or a nation can be an individual decision; however, in recent times, it has also been a collective response taken by several countries following the global crisis. The United Kingdom, for example, voted to exit the European Union in the 2016 Brexit referendum (Castells, “Europe’s Crises” 2).³⁵ In Spain, there are ongoing calls for Catalanian independence, and in 2017 this movement gained momentum with an illegal referendum to secede.³⁶ Although this chapter does not discuss these particular examples, they are useful to reference as recent instances in which the

³⁵ The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on June 23, 2016. It will have a transition period until the permanent exit planned for March 2019 (Erlanger). At the time of writing this dissertation, negotiations are currently underway to extend this deadline (“Rees-Mogg”, *BBC*).

³⁶ Spain has a documented history of separation among its autonomous communities, each with a unique heritage, culture, language, and identity. Economic troubles, political corruption, and cultural divisions have contributed to the surge in calls for secession (Baquero).

decision to leave a “failing” union or country prevailed. This chapter explores “leaving” as a response to the 2008 meltdown by focusing on Spanish emigration after the crash and its depictions in cultural production, through humor.

The massive migration during the crisis and post-crisis years was primarily stimulated by economic motives of seeking employment. Contemporary cultural works portray the decision made by thousands of Spaniards to emigrate following the recession, depicting their experiences before leaving and after arriving in their new country. Past studies have already examined migration in Hispanic cultural production in the aftermath of the crisis (Deveney [2012], Mejón and Santos [2017]). However, to date, there is no comprehensive analysis of this theme in a variety of mediums as a response to the catastrophe. This chapter addresses this lacuna in research and provides an extensive analysis of films, television series, and novels in order to establish a nexus between these works and post-crisis emigration. The works that will be examined in this chapter include the novels *Venirse arriba* (2014), by Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José, *Blitz* (2015), by David Trueba, the film *Perdiendo el norte* (2015), directed by Nacho Velilla, as well as the television series, *Buscando el norte* (2016), created by Nacho Velilla, Oriol Capel, David Olivas, and Antonio Sánchez.³⁷ Although these creative works depict migration as a response to the challenges of the crash, the characters in each narrative experience differing outcomes; some achieve relative success and happiness abroad, while others fail miserably. This chapter also demonstrates that comedy serves as a mechanism to express the underlying anxieties of the Spanish population regarding the crisis and emigration;

³⁷ *Volveremos* (2016), by Noemí López Trujillo and Estefanía Vasconcellos and the documentary *En tierra extraña* (2014), directed by Iciar Bollain offer excellent portrayals of Spanish emigration in the post-crisis context.

popular comedic works create awareness about social, economic, and political concerns and also provide a cathartic medium to help people cope with the catastrophic effects of the financial collapse.³⁸

The socio-historical context

Before embarking on a textual analysis, it would first be useful to explore the socio-historical conditions that led to the massive emigration as a result of the 2008 crisis. Information available regarding Spanish migration is extensive; however, historical anecdotes from David Corkill (2010), María Aysa-Lastra and Lorenzo Cachón (2015), Birgit Glorius and Josefina Domínguez-Mujica (2017), as well as the analysis of cultural production and emigration by Thomas Deveney (2012), provide a point of departure to trace briefly past migration in Spain leading up to the 2008 disaster.

Although the latest major recession was a catalyst for the most recent wave of emigration of Spaniards, it is important to note that this is not the first time that they have left in large numbers. The nation has a storied past of migration (immigration and emigration) from the beginning of its recorded history, “being a crossroads where over the millennia many civilizations have come to leave their mark: Iberians, Celts, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, Arabs and Berbers” (Deveney 1). At the height of the Spanish empire, Spaniards parted for the New World to conquer the Americas and reap the treasures of their domain. In more recent times beginning in the nineteenth century, transatlantic migration rose, with many Spaniards moving to Latin America. In fact, an estimated 3.5 million departed for South America between 1850 and

³⁸ Additional Spanish comedic works focusing on the topic of the crisis but not treated here include the films *Requisitos para ser una persona normal* (2015) and *Selfie* (2017).

1950 (Corkhill 138). Of particular note, Galicia and Argentina, especially Buenos Aires, share a strong connection with 1,180,000 *gallegos* emigrating there since the nineteenth century (Cué and Centenera). After the Spanish Civil War, both because of political exile and for economic motives, migration to other parts of Europe increased again, and during this time Latin America was also a key destination (Deveney ix-2).

By the end of the Franco dictatorship and during the transition period in the 1980s and through the 1990s, Spain became a country of immigration.³⁹ Significant numbers of Latin Americans arrived in Spain and, according to Aysa-Lastra and Cachón, the crisis of 2008 began during a time when Latin Americans comprised 38 percent of the total immigrant population (1).⁴⁰ Like the Spanish emigration to Latin America that preceded it, the considerable Latin American immigration to Spain was more frequent due to shared linguistic and cultural connections, thus easing assimilation (Corkhill 143).

In addition to the Latin American population, other substantial immigrant communities arrived in Spain during this time. Below, David Corkhill gives a comprehensive list of the most significant groups of immigrants following the transition:

The migrant flows can be subdivided by continent and migrant-sending countries. From Africa, migrants came from the Maghreb, principally Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, accompanied by smaller numbers from sub-Saharan Africa, including Senegal, Nigeria, and the Gambia. The principal source countries in Latin America were Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. Smaller numbers originated in Asia, the leading sender countries including China, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The most recent and increasingly substantial

³⁹ See Isabel Santaolalla's book on otherness in Spain, *Los 'otros': etnicidad y raza en el cine español contemporáneo* (2005) for an analysis of depictions of immigrants in Spanish cinema.

⁴⁰ Films that examine Latin American immigration to Spain include: "Manuel Gutiérrez Aragon's *Cosas que dejé en la Habana* (1997), Iciar Bollain's *Flores de otro mundo* (1999), Fernando León de Aranoa's *Princesas* (2005), Pedro Pérez Rosado's *Agua con sal* (2005), and Ariadna Pujol's *Aguaviva* (2005)" (Deveney 3).

source of supply has come from Eastern Europe, principally Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus. (141)⁴¹

The immigration pattern continued to increase at the turn of the twenty-first century with an influx of migrants entering the country, leading to the European refugee crisis.⁴² Due to the recession, job scarcity, and decreased social benefits as a result of austerity measures, both Spaniards and immigrants became more vulnerable and had fewer opportunities for employment and social services. Consequently, some immigrants who had previously moved to Spain seeking employment began to return to their home countries (Aysa-Lastra and Cachón 15).

A New Wave of Spanish Emigration

Another considerable effect of the 2008 social and economic crisis was a new wave of Spanish emigration (Domingo et al. 39). Between the years of 2010 and 2014, Spain experienced higher levels of emigration than immigration, with many of its educated youth leaving to find work elsewhere (INE 2016). Spanish emigration significantly increased beginning in 2010, and return migration of Spanish nationals

⁴¹ African immigration to Spain is also represented in many films: Montxo Armendáriz's *Cartas de Alou* (1990), Imanol Uribe's *Bwana* (1996), Antonio Chavarrías's *Susanna* (1996), Carlos Saura's *Taxi* (1996), Llorenç Soler's *Saïd* (1998), Isabel Gardela's *Tomando té* (2000), José Luis Guerín's *En construcción* (2001), Carlos Molinero's *Salvajes* (2001), Alberto Rodríguez's *El traje* (2002), Chus Guitérrez's *Poniente* (2002), José Luis Tirado's *Paralelo 36* (2004), and Gerardo Olivares's *14 kilómetros* (2007). Immigration from Romania is depicted in Manuel Coteló's *El sudor de los ruseñores* (1998) and José Luis Borau's *Leo* (2000) (Deveney 2-3).

⁴² An NPR report from September 2018 notes that Spain now receives more migrants than any other European country and by the time of the article had received 35,000 migrants by land and sea. This was due, in part, to Italy closing off its borders in the summer of 2018 (Benavides). A related, high profile case was the *Aquarius*, a boat of migrants from Libya that was stranded at sea until President Sánchez allowed it to dock in Valencia (Cué et al.). Mar Gómez Glez's play *Cifras* (2012) centers on the refugee crisis and Spain's role in offering support. The Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese Theater Group presented the first Spanish performance of this play at the University of Virginia at Helms Theater on February 15, 2019.

residing abroad decreased. In 2012, the phenomenon became more visible when reports emerged underscoring that emigration as a result of the crisis had become a serious issue (López-Sala 268).

Emigration statistics during this period vary depending on the source. In 2012, the INE (Instituto Nacional de la Estadística) stated that since 2008, 225,000 Spaniards had emigrated. However, an alternative 2013 study conducted by CSIC's Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales investigator, Amparo González-Ferrer, suggests that closer to 700,000 Spaniards emigrated between 2008 and 2012 (11). She highlights that:

los datos oficiales sobre emigración española están basados exclusivamente en las bajas padronales, que se producen solo si los emigrados se dan de alta en los consulados de España en el exterior. Y sabemos que esta inscripción muchas veces no llega a producirse aunque la persona pase años viviendo fuera. (4)

Regardless of the exact statistics or the motivations for revealing or concealing figures, it is undeniable that Spanish emigration reached alarming heights after 2008. The migratory destinations of these Spaniards also varied. From 2007-2011, native Spanish emigration to Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela all rose by over 100 percent. Emigration to Brazil, the largest Latin American economy rose by 227 percent (Stargardter and Day, *Reuters*). The period following the start of the recession was the first time since the Franco dictatorship that migration from Spain to Latin America increased so drastically.

Moreover, extensive numbers of Spaniards migrated to other western European countries (Díaz-Hernández & Parreño-Castellano 247), facilitated by the free-movement policies within the Schengen Zone. Domínguez-Mujica and Tanausú Pérez-García describe the most common destinations for Spanish-born emigrants. Using data from the INE in 2013, the authors highlight the fact that Spanish-born emigrants migrated “first of

all to Ecuador (12.5 percent of the 72, 449 emigrants in 2013), United Kingdom (10.2 percent), France (9.9 percent), Germany (8.8 percent), USA (7.2 percent) and Switzerland (4.6 percent)” (36). The four countries with the largest net populations of Spaniards residing outside Spain include: France (118,072), Argentina (92,453), Venezuela (55,850), and Germany (54,358) (36-37).

Who exactly are the people who decided to leave Spain after the crisis? Did the decision to emigrate yield positive results? In most instances, migration was a decision taken out of necessity. Many people viewed their choice to emigrate as a decision forced upon them because they had no other options. This sentiment was evident as various emigrant groups formed organizations to express anger and frustration with the policies and conditions that obligated them to migrate as a last resort.

A prime example is *Marea Granate* (Maroon Wave).⁴³ Marea Granate was formed in 2013 after the 15-M protests and consists of satellite divisions of Spanish emigrants residing in different parts of the world. Its members hold regular meetings to inform each other about the developments in Spain, as well as to determine ways to activate change that would allow them to return home and lead a life of dignity. As their mission statement underscores, they aim “to combat the causes of the social and economic crisis that have forced us to emigrate.” The organization is an example of solidarity among *indignados* both residing in Spain and abroad.

⁴³ See the official website for more information about Marea Granate: <http://mareagranate.org/en/>



Fig. 18: The logo of Marea Granate. Its design with the suitcase surrounded by the words “No nos vamos, nos echan” resembles the image in the opening credits of the television series *Buscando el norte*. (Source: mareagranate.org).

The logo for the group employs a suitcase surrounded by the following words:

“No nos vamos, nos echan,” underscoring that Spaniards left because they were “forced” to as they had few, if any, alternatives. I will explore these protest movements and their depictions in cultural production in a later chapter dedicated to that topic, but it is essential to recognize that these groups emerged within Spain and in countries to which Spaniards had emigrated.

Works of popular culture are designed to reach a large population and allow people to relate their own lives to the storylines. Given the vast number of individuals that emigrated from Spain during the crisis years, it is no surprise, then, that migration has been depicted in artistic enactments through a variety of media and from a variety of perspectives. These points of view extend from the lenses of the youth population, highly-educated Spaniards, members of both the upper and lower classes, as well as immigrants residing in Spain. The next part of this chapter examines specific cultural works that detail emigration as a response to the crisis and what they reveal about the outcomes.

Types of Emigrants in Cultural Production

Before beginning the textual analysis, as an interpretative tool to help better understand the significance of Spanish migration I have taken note of recurring motifs and created a typology of emigrant characters that appear consistently in these texts. The frequent appearance of similar characters suggests that these specific groups represent the actual pattern of emigrants who left Spain. Furthermore, it is telling that many of the artistic productions analyzed in this chapter—film, television, and novel—have a similar narrative structure, containing storylines that jump from character to character in a *Colmena*-esque fashion,⁴⁴ demonstrating the plethora of migrants affected by the crisis. To describe these types of emigrants adequately, they have been divided into the following groups: the youth population, the Erasmus student, middle-aged adults, and emigrants from the previous moments in Spain's history. After the categorical explanation, the chapter will move to a close textual reading of the works, focusing on how humor arises from the depiction of the migrants' journeys as a means to provide coping and catharsis for the actual population reeling from the crisis.

The Youth Population

In the opening scene of Nacho Velilla's film, *Perdiendo el norte* (2015), its Spanish protagonist, 27 year-old Hugo, laments: "Pertenece a la generación mejor preparada de la historia, la que iba a poner a España en la Champions de la economía

⁴⁴ Camilo José Cela's novel, *La colmena* (1950) portrays a microcosm of Madrid in post-Civil War Spain interweaving narratives of numerous characters. In total, there are over 300. Due to censorship in Franco's Spain, the novel was first published in Buenos Aires. Several of the works that I analyze in this chapter employ a similar narrative technique with stories of multiple characters. These various threads emphasize how individual responses to catastrophe blend together to demonstrate a collective crisis.

mundial, la que iba a vivir mejor que sus padres, pero que ha acabado viviendo como sus abuelos, emigrando y pagando los platos rotos de Europa” (00:02:03). His reference to José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s 2007 analogy between the elite soccer league and Spain’s position as an economic powerhouse reflects the drastic turn of events from pre- to post-crisis Spain: hopeful and naive, yet now facing a tragic twist after the financial collapse.⁴⁵ As discussed in the introduction, youth unemployment reaching an unprecedented level of fifty percent and an overwhelming twenty-five percent for the general population (Bermudez & Bray 85). The aforementioned young Spaniards known as “ni ni”s and the generación pérdida were unable to find employment at home, and were forced to seek it elsewhere.

As such, many films, television series, and novels have emerged to represent this new emigration phenomenon.⁴⁶ Namely, the film *Perdiendo el norte* (2015) by Nacho Velilla and his television spin-off of the movie, an Antena Tres series, *Buscando el norte* (2016), as well as David Trueba’s *Blitz* (2015), examine Spanish emigration to Germany, focusing on the youth exodus from Spain. Playing on past depictions of Spanish migration to Germany, the young Spaniards in these works migrate with hopes of finding employment abroad.

It is worth noting that three of the four works in this chapter focus on Spanish migration to Germany: Berlin and Munich, with *Venirse arriba* as the only exception,

⁴⁵ On September 11, 2007, President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero announced in front of Congress that Spain’s economy was stronger than ever, suggesting that they belonged to the “Champions League” of the global economy (“Zapatero afirma”, *El País*).

⁴⁶ This chapter focuses on Spanish *emigration* because of the word’s emphasis on leaving Spain. However, I must point out that in the works I analyze, the majority of the characters are also *immigrants* because they live in a new country. For consistency and to underscore the theme of the chapter, I will refer to the characters as *emigrants* even though both words adequately describe them. The only time I will employ *immigrant* is to refer to the “immigrant other”.

occurring in the Netherlands. The ties to Germany reveal underlying political, economic, and cultural tensions regarding Spain's precarious situation and perceived reliance on countries from Northern Europe. It is also key to point out that the 2008 crash is not the first moment in which Spaniards have emigrated to Germany. Spaniards who fled to France after the Civil War were detained by the Nazis and sent to work camps in Germany. Even Franco sent Republican prisoners to Germany in the immediate post-war years (Rodríguez Jiménez). Later, bleak employment opportunities also stimulated migration in the 1960s (Godenau 192).

Perdiendo el norte centers on the story of two young Spaniards who epitomize the "lost generation" and the "brain drain." One of the protagonists, Hugo (Yon González), has completed two bachelor's degrees and holds a master's degree in business administration; Braulio (Julián López), is a scientific researcher with a master's degree in biology. Hugo sends his resume to every major finance and business firm in Spain and jokes that his name should be "*Hugo ya te llamaremos*," for he has heard that phrase too many times with no resulting job offers. He eventually lands a position at his girlfriend's father's financial firm, but on his first day discovers that executives in the company have been accused of fraud; consequently, the firm will close, forcing Hugo back into unemployment. Although depicted in a comedic light in an exaggerated scene with dozens of police officers shuffling top executives out of the building in handcuffs, Hugo's unpleasant experience at the company highlights the corruption and greed all too prevalent in Spain leading up to, during, and after the time of the crisis (Fontana 60).

Braulio suffers a similar dilemma. He is a brilliant scientific researcher, but the institution for which he works runs out of money due to budget cuts, thus severing the

funds necessary for his research. After viewing an episode of *Españoles alrededor del mundo* (a parodic reference to the real TV show *Españoles en el mundo*), an interview with a young Spaniard who boasts of newfound success and happiness after emigrating to Germany impels Hugo and Braulio to do the same and try their own luck outside Spain, in Berlin.

Like the film that inspired it, Nacho Velilla's Antena Tres television series, *Buscando el norte* (2016), also explores the younger Spanish demographic that moves to Berlin for a better life. In addition, the television series offers a more panoramic view of the types of emigrants who arrive in Germany following the 2008 crisis. For example, some of the characters emigrated well before the crisis and are well established there; others were forced to displace as a result of the financial crash and experience the difficulties of moving to a new country. The narrative portrays a microcosm of Spanish emigrants in Berlin whose lives, although drastically different, intertwine as they adjust to their new reality abroad.

One of the principal storylines in the series centers on the sibling protagonists, Álex and Carol, two young, educated Spaniards who leave Spain for Berlin. Álex has a degree in nursing, but his lack of German language skills limits his job prospects to working as an auxiliary aid in a nursing home. Likewise, his sister, Carol, holds a master's degree and works as a housekeeper in a hotel. In Berlin, the two meet other Spaniards who have moved there for similar reasons. One of these characters, Salva, also struggles to find a job. He invents creative forms of employment, going to such lengths as to deceiving Spanish visitors and running an illegitimate tour company. The below scene depicts the characters' arrival in Berlin. Aside from the dreary rain, the bright yellows,

earthy greens and blooming spring flowers all suggest a hopeful outlook for the young emigrants. However, by the end of the first—and only—season of the series, the characters fail to achieve careers that match their high levels of education.⁴⁷



Fig. 19: Álex, Carol, and Salva arrive in their new neighborhood in Berlin, eager to begin their adventure as emigrants. (Source: *Buscando el norte*, episode 3, 00:01:27)

Another character that fits this typology is Beto from David Trueba's novel, *Blitz*. Although Beto does not permanently relocate to Germany—in this case, Munich—it is his time abroad that leads to his ultimate success. Beto is a thirty-year-old landscape architect trying to find stable employment, as his professional services are nonessential during the economic recession. He travels to different conferences in an attempt to secure contracts and find positions in the landscape architecture field. While attending a

⁴⁷ Despite the series' initial success, Antena 3 did not renew *Buscando el norte* for a second season. A news report from *El País* notes that the series had a strong start but lost steam as it faced stiff competition from other popular shows during prime time. I would like to highlight this "failure" of the television series as a parallel to emigration following the crash. In my view, several of these works emphasize that emigration might not be the "answer" for everyone, as I shall demonstrate by the end of this chapter. It also suggests that a series depicting constant failure rather than success begins to lose its entertainment value ("*Buscando el norte*").

conference in Munich, Beto discovers that his girlfriend, Marta, plans on leaving him for her ex-boyfriend, a Uruguayan musician. This revelation, coupled with his dismal job prospects in Spain, plunges Beto into a multi-layered crisis: emotional and professional. However, while in Munich, he finds solace in Helga, his sixty-year-old German interpreter. The two form a romantic connection; he stays with her for a number of days and even considers relocating there permanently. Through this surprising, unconventional, and often comically portrayed relationship, Beto gains the confidence to continue through his period of crisis. He eventually returns to Spain and secures employment at a firm in Barcelona. He differs from the young characters in *Perdiendo el norte* and *Buscando el norte* because he attains a job in his field in Spain; however, he only does so through his reliance on Helga, which will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.

The Erasmus Student

Another young, Spanish demographic that appears in these post-crisis works is the Erasmus student.⁴⁸ The portrayals of the Erasmus student in these works stem from a comedic source, depicting them in a carefree university term abroad. One example of this type of character appears in *Buscando el norte* manifested in Lucas's nephew, Kiko. Belonging to a privileged family, Kiko is unique among the other Spaniards his age because his financial stability allows him to enjoy a more luxurious lifestyle, despite being unemployed. He attempts to hide his frivolous party habits from his aunt and uncle,

⁴⁸ The Erasmus program, founded in 1987, is part of the European initiative to facilitate international study of European students within the continent. Through this program, students travel and study at other European academic institutions outside of their home countries (Teichler 395).

but they soon realize that he spends most of his time drinking and wasting money in Berlin bars.

The Erasmus character is perhaps most observable in Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José's novel, *Venirse arriba* (2014). The novel, like its creators' widely-recognized films *Ocho apellidos vascos* (2014) and *Fe de etarras* (2017), is full of wit and comedy, playing on a father's escapades during his son's Erasmus year abroad. Through humor and hyperbole, it presents the protagonists in a ridiculous light, but highlights the troubles of those living through the crisis and the attempts of some to find opportunities elsewhere. At the beginning of the novel, Miguel, a college-aged Spaniard who travels to the Netherlands to study on an Erasmus scholarship, receives a surprise and unwelcome visit from his father, Jesús Miguel, a broke and recently unemployed miner from Mieres, Asturias.

Miguel, like the aforementioned Kiko, does not outwardly suffer as much as the other Spaniards who move abroad seeking any available source of employment. He receives a constant flow of funds from his mother and stepfather and, like Kiko in *Buscando el norte*, engages in the Erasmus party atmosphere. The portrayal of the Erasmus student during the crisis indicates a dichotomy between members of the privileged class who move abroad to study and those less fortunate who emigrate for economic reasons.

Furthermore, the depictions of the Erasmus student suggest that perhaps the best way to survive the crisis, if financially possible, is to prolong university studies. Sociological trends also reflect a tendency of continuing education during economic recessions. According to Olga Sanmartín in *El Mundo*, in Spain there was a forty percent

increase in doctoral theses between 2008 and 2013. If one could not find employment, enrolling in university programs was another option, and achieving a master's or doctoral degree certainly embellishes a resumé. However, the spike of students returning to or staying in school to attain post-graduate degrees contributed to an even greater number of highly-educated Spaniards unable to achieve a stable career afterward. Nevertheless, through the Erasmus character, these works point to education as a preferable alternative to unemployment.

These particular protagonists in *Buscando el norte* and *Venirse arriba* exude an apathetic attitude with respect to their education and future, much like characters in earlier Spanish novels such as Carlos in José Ángel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen* (1994). They connect to recent criticism concerning Spanish youth and more specifically, the term “ni ni”. Although the characters in these particular works *do* study—even if it rarely occurs in these films or novels—their (self-)indulgence in a general environment of austerity highlights a difference between the young generation of the crisis and those from the past. For example, Miguel's father, Jesús Miguel, belongs to a generation that grew up during the late-Franco years, isolated from much of the rest of the world, and most likely would not have had the opportunity to spend a year abroad. Miguel's generation, on the other hand, until the crisis, experienced relative luxuries and lived in a much freer and different Spain than that of the youth of the 1960s and 1970s. According to the novel's creators, “En el libro estábamos obsesionados con eso y también con el cambio que ha habido entre ser joven ahora y ser joven en los 70 o los 80. No tiene nada que ver. El padre es de una generación que no ha disfrutado de una beca Erasmus ni de una etapa sabática o de fiesta en su vida, incluso que ha viajado muy poco” (Vilá, *El*

Periódico). The novel emphasizes the generational differences through humor but also demonstrates that although the younger group has experienced new privileges and freedoms, the crisis presented the “generación pérdida” with new challenges.

Adults in the Lower-Middle Class

The next type of character that appears in many of these works is the middle-aged adult. This character’s situation is fraught with challenges due to recent unemployment, subsequent poverty, and threats of evictions. The married couple, Chus and Jaime in *Buscando el norte*, exemplifies the precarious situation of emigrants and the resulting exploitation of them. Jaime initially leaves Spain after losing his job to provide economic support for his family. While alone in Berlin, he leads a life of poverty, resides in a communal home for immigrants, and sends all of the money that he earns to his family in Spain. Later, his wife Chus joins him to earn more money after discovering that the family is going to be evicted from their home, leaving her children behind with extended family members. When she first encounters her husband begging for money in a metro station, she discovers that his employment situation in Berlin is not as favorable as he had previously described. Fortunately, as the series progresses, the couple’s job prospects improve slightly; the two find employment in Berlin, with Jaime working as a delivery boy for a Turkish restaurant, and Chus as a nanny. Nevertheless, they continue to struggle monetarily. Their unstable situation also makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. Jaime works without a contract and receives no benefits. His boss, Iskander, takes advantage of him and blackmails him, forcing him to participate in illegal activities such as drug distribution.

In a similar vein, Jesús Miguel in *Venirse arriba* also fits this character type. Jesús Miguel, a broke and recently unemployed miner from Mieres, Asturias, finds himself in a state of abandonment financially and emotionally; he has hit rock bottom after his divorce from his wife, Rosario, and is in utter poverty after losing most of his savings following his dismissal from the mine. As a solution, Jesús Miguel decides to leave Spain, live in his son Miguel's shared student apartment in Amsterdam, and subsist on his son's Erasmus scholarship funds. Although depicted through a comical, hyperbolic lens, Jesús Miguel is another fictional example of a middle-aged adult emigrating following the repercussions of the 2008 crash. I will return to Jesús Miguel in more detail later in the chapter, but at this juncture, it is important to introduce him as an example of this character type.

Successful Emigrants

As evident from the character breakdown thus far, common threads include difficulties in finding employment and adapting abroad. However, rare as they may be, there are depictions of successful emigrants. This character type departs from the motif of the deprived Spanish emigrant in the recession and shows that although many did indeed suffer as a result of the crisis, not everyone did. This character type is most apparent in *Buscando el norte* through Flor and Lucas, a young couple with financial stability living in Berlin. Flor already had an esteemed career in Spain, but the two moved to Germany after she received a promotion in her company. They reside in a luxurious apartment, frequent lavish restaurants, and can even afford a nanny. Their central conflict is not financial, but social, and the two struggle to adjust to life away from Spain and have

difficulties forming relationships with Germans. Additionally, Lucas, the “stay-at-home dad”, faces internal challenges. He grapples with his masculine role, as his wife is the primary breadwinner of the family, and also struggles with boredom because he has difficulty leaving the house to meet friends. As a way to overcome his isolation, he creates a blog that describes his experiences as an emigrant.

Through his blog, Lucas is the central narrative voice of the series because each episode begins and ends with him reading snippets of his writing. Based on specific themes related to emigration, the storyline of each episode explores how individual characters deal with the challenges and joys of moving abroad. It is primarily through Lucas’s perspective that the viewer observes the story. Lucas’s role as narrator is another example of the power and advantages that he holds when compared to the other protagonists. His privileges are twofold: as narrator, as well as a Spaniard who emigrated without financial issues. Therefore, this lack of economic challenges separates Flor and Lucas from their peers. Awkward moments and jealousy arise when other Spaniards recognize the socioeconomic disparities between them. For instance, when Carol laments about troubles finding an affordable home, Flor, oblivious to Carol’s plight, insensitively responds that her apartment costs “Tres mil Euros al mes. Y como lo paga la empresa, hemos cogido lo de cuatro habitaciones” (episode 3, 00:55:00). After realizing that Flor and Lucas live in a plush apartment, the other characters comically attempt to take advantage of their affluence. Salva, for example, offers to babysit their daughter, Valentina, so that he can relax in their plush apartment for hours watching television. Ultimately, Flor and Lucas’s situation demonstrates that emigration—when an option and

not a forced necessity—can be a positive response to the crisis, but also underscores that it generally leads to a successful outcome only for the most privileged.

Past Waves of Emigration

The final recurring emigrant type that this chapter analyzes embodies past waves of Spanish emigration. Many of these individuals emigrated following the Civil War in the mid-twentieth century when jobs were hard to come by in Spain. One example of a character representing past emigration during the post-Civil War period is *Perdiendo el norte*'s Andrés (José Sacristán), an elderly Spanish man living in the same building in Berlin as the younger Spanish emigrants. Andrés emblemizes the importance of historical memory, which is reinforced through his struggle with Alzheimer's disease. He enlightens the younger Spaniards with tales of trying times in Germany during the post-war years, emphasizing the phrase made famous by George Santayana: "El que olvida su historia está condenado a repetirla." Andrés stresses that one must "emigrar por necesidad," and sacrifice much to survive abroad. His story bridges the 2008 emigration to Germany with the past. Many Spaniards emigrated to Germany after the Civil War (Bermudez and Brey 88), as depicted in earlier films such as *Vente a Alemania Pepe* (1971). José Sacristán also performs the role of one of the protagonists in this 1970's portrayal of emigration to Germany. Thus, his character in *Perdiendo el norte* serves as a paradoxical reference to past representations of Spanish migration to Germany and strengthens the connection between these two periods of crisis. His presence echoes Alison Ribeiro de Menezes and Stuart King's discussion on the importance of memory and studying Spain's past in order to build a better future (796). Andrés reminds the

young protagonists of past crises, and he serves as a mechanism to warn of the consequences that can arise if history is forgotten.



Fig. 20: Andrés gives newly-arrived Hugo a lesson about the difficulties of emigration. (Source: *Perdiendo el norte*, 00:15:43)

Marcelino in *Buscando el norte* also serves as a reference to past emigration. He moved to Germany in the 1970s, married a German (Anke), had a child (Ulrike), and opened up a Spanish bar with his family. Although never specifically mentioning exactly why Marcelino left Spain, his character is important because as the owner of the Spanish restaurant, he becomes a stabilizing influence for the other characters. Marcelino's locale serves as a point of encounter for the Spanish emigrants. It is where they discuss their trials, what they miss about Spain, and the hardships of being an emigrant in Germany. The relationships and connections that the characters make help them to find jobs and adapt abroad. Similarly, in specific reference to Germany, past migration from Spain (namely the 1960s) is a major factor in motivating people to relocate there. According to Godenau:

First, collective memory in Spain sees the former Spanish emigration to Germany as a success; the message remains that when you work hard you can prosper, problems with cultural integration notwithstanding. Second,

family networks of former migrants are rudimentary but can still play a role when it comes to obtaining and channeling information on job opportunities. (194)

Likewise, Marcelino and his family help many of the Spaniards in the show, including his niece and nephew. Marcelino's wife, Anke, often complains to him that the majority of their Spanish clientele do not pay, and the couple ends up financially and emotionally supporting many of those who frequent their bar. Marcelino notes that his restaurant even helps him cope with homesickness. "Es mi pequeño trocito de España en tierras alemanas," he says (episode 3, 00:15:23). His previous emigration experience and restaurant as a metaphorical Spain provides the newer arrivals with support as they navigate their way through Berlin in a time of crisis.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, these references to past migration movements to Germany demonstrate that although migration has risen following the 2008 crisis, it is not a completely new phenomenon. Furthermore, comparing the 2008 crisis emigration to migration following the Civil War, arguably one of the biggest tragedies in Spanish history, underscores the severity of the more recent catastrophe. It also urges the importance of memory in order to avoid future disasters.

Emigration Outcomes and Comedy

Bridging these artistic representations of Spanish emigration with humor, the production of comedic works during times of upheaval is also a phenomenon that has occurred during other moments in Spanish history. As Stuart Green points out in his article on 1940s comedy in post-war Spain, that particular time of crisis "made possible the commercial success of the sophisticated comedy at a time when demand was high for

something to help forget—even if only for an hour or so—the dreary reality of the immediate post-war period” (71). Not only does comedy help the affected cope with traumatic events, but it has even been argued that it has the power to transform political situations. When focusing specifically on satire, Sophia McClennen and Remy Maisel write that it is “increasingly attracting citizens to find ways to develop and act on political ideas while enjoying themselves” (12). Comedy is an integral part of how people view news events, with late night Spanish talk shows such as laSexta’s *El Intermedio* and Antena 3’s *El Hormiguero 3.0*. It serves as a mechanism to respond to global events, informing the population and urging change. As McClennen and Maisel note,

Satire speaks truth to power and it does so in a way that demands critical thinking and creates community, while entertaining and inspiring us. Its wit allows us to avoid falling into cynical apathy or downright depression; its exposure of social flaws helps us open our eyes and become more aware; and its style can coax a broad audience to question the status quo. (190)

Miqui Otero also postulates that laughter serves as a response to crisis situations. Using his home country of Spain as an example, he argues that many comedians often address social and political situations in the nation by demonstrating their absurdity. A prime example, as Otero notes, is Borja Cobeaga’s work. As the creator of *Venirse arriba*, the film *Ocho apellidos vascos* (2014), and most recently, the Netflix original film, *Fe de etarras* (2017), Cobeaga tackles sensitive topics like ETA, Spanish nationalism, and the crisis, examining them with humor (181). This notion is important because it emphasizes that comedy often connects with a type of “national” humor. In a separate study on Spanish film and dark comedy, Juan Egea notes that “Film genres seem especially conducive to being read in connection with social or national anxieties and hence treated as the expression of a particular Zeitgeist” (10). Comedy, he argues, stems from a type of

struggle and provides a channel to respond to it.⁴⁹ Some examples include dark comedies from the 1950s and 1960s by José Luis Berlanga, such as *Plácido* (1961) and *El verdugo* (1963), as well as Marco Ferreri's *El pisito* (1959) and *El cochecito* (1960) (Egea 1; Kinder).

In a similar vein, Luisa Elena Delgado emphasizes that in Spanish works there exists a strong presence of a national critique through humor, most often found in popular culture. Pointing to the difficult moments of the 2008 social and economic crisis, she writes that irony, satire, and humor treating difficult moments are often found in mass culture, citing theatrical and cinematic works such *Yes, we Spain*, by Jordi Casonovas and Carlos Latre, which premiered in 2011 and ran through 2012, some of the most critical years of the crisis (201).

The present study draws on the various assertions of Otero, Egea, McClennen and Maisel, and Delgado about comedy manifested in popular culture during times of crisis. What is of interest is that the works I analyze not only serve as a response to crisis, but they also reveal an ongoing concern of the Spanish population regarding their unstable situation and decision to emigrate.

⁴⁹ According to Neale and Krutnik, "As a genre, comedy is often concerned with the lives of 'ordinary' classes and people, and thus with what is, from a ruling-class point of view, the *indecorum* of the speech, behavior, actions, and manners of those of a lower social rank" (85). This idea appears as far back as Horace's theory of *decorum* in his *Ars Poetica*, where he emphasizes that a genre should be appropriate to its audience and subject (Horace 138). The assertion, then, that comedy frequently depicts the lives of ordinary people is pertinent when linking comedic cultural representations to the financial crisis in Spain. Those most affected by the failed economic system were young people from the lower and middle classes. Therefore, comedy allows members of this population to relate more directly to the storylines in narratives about the crisis. It provides them with a means of coping—through comic relief—with the difficulties that arose following the financial crash.

Cultural Adaptation and Dependence on the European Union

After emigrating, negotiating cultural differences such as language barriers and social norms is one of the most visible challenges that these characters confront. Often playing on comedy, the narratives studied in this chapter frequently employ humorous clichés referencing Spaniards and their European counterparts, reflecting an underlying Spanish anxiety over their precarious position.

The theme of overcoming cultural differences is such a fundamental motif in *Buscando el norte* that it is even highlighted in the show's opening credits. The credits commence with a graphic image of a suitcase, an allusion to packing up one's belongings and moving to a new land. As the scene continues, the typographical Spanish letter "ñ" emerges from the suitcase and is exchanged for a German "ä". In the next shots, a bright sun appears and is replaced by a rain cloud. These moving images within the frame scrupulously underscore the changes and adjustments that come with emigration, encompassing linguistic challenges as well as climatic differences: a sunny, Mediterranean Spain juxtaposed with gray, rainy Germany. They emphasize before the show begins that the central theme of the series involves the challenges of migrating, and, although relying on stereotypes of the two nations, they point to the complications that a Spaniard may have in adapting to German culture.

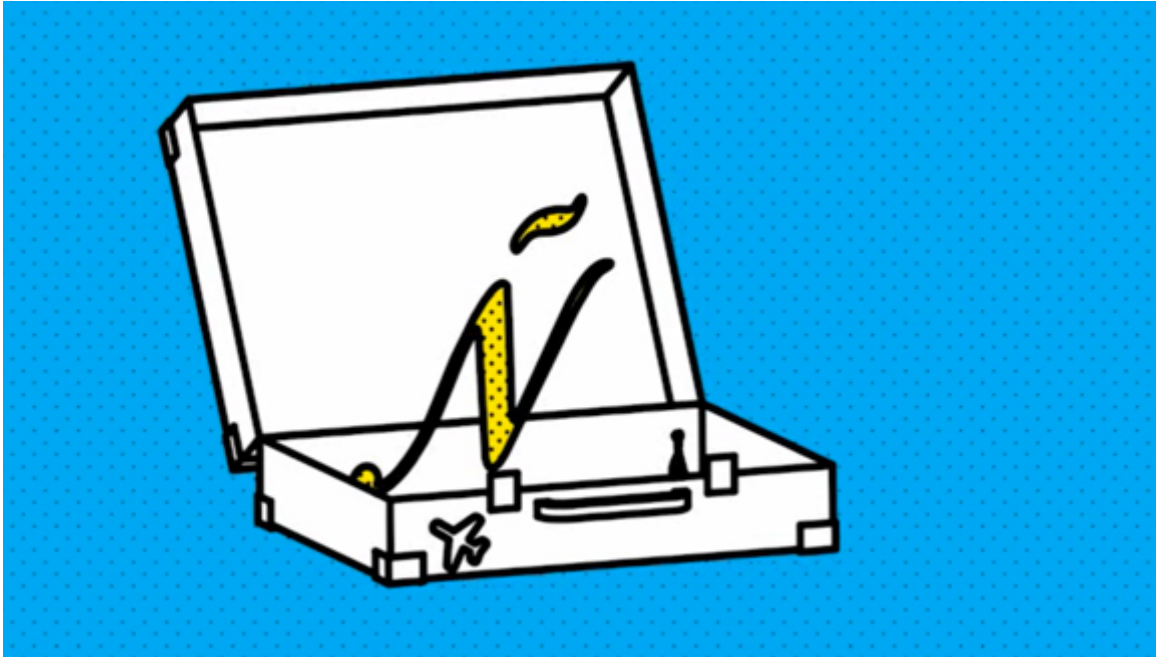


Fig. 21: The opening credits and cultural differences in *Buscando el norte*. (Source: *Buscando el norte* (00:03:44))

Clichés about characteristics of Spain and Germany and Spanish difficulties adjusting to German culture are also predominant themes in *Perdiendo el norte*. Expecting to reach Germany and find dream jobs in a prestigious company or scientific lab, the formerly privileged Hugo and Braulio instead face obstacles that many emigrants encounter abroad. These challenges underscore cultural differences that complicate their prospects of obtaining a good job. Stereotypical assertions about Spaniards and Germans pervade these moments, highlighted by a series of intercutting scenes exemplifying the protagonists' futile attempts to get hired. In one case, an employer rejects Hugo's job application because he arrives five minutes late for an interview. Hugo jokingly brushes it off, referring to the unspoken rule in Spain that a slight tardiness is acceptable. Braulio is rejected repeatedly due to his inability to speak German; furthermore, he offends a potential employer by greeting her with the Spanish "double kiss," a faux pas in Germany

when interacting with others in the workplace.⁵⁰ The characters' body language in the below shot shows the stiff, uncomfortable German woman in response to Braulio's Spanish greeting. Braulio, in his brown suit, stands out amongst the white background, clothing, and sterile laboratory equipment in the rest of the frame. He seems to contaminate the aseptic, German laboratory; he is an outsider.



Fig. 22: Braulio gives a “Spanish” greeting to a potential German employer. (Source: *Perdiendo el norte*, 00:21:04)

This sequence of scenes suggests that the characters' “Spanishness” impedes them from obtaining employment (Corbalán 64). Despite the comic use of stereotypes, the situation does shed light on tensions that the Spanish people may experience when dealing with their economic challenges (Quiroga 129), and more specifically, Spanish worries about the resulting global opinion of them. These situations echo the aforementioned 2012 E.U. bailout and PIIGS acronym. The film references the Spanish economic reliance on the European Union following the 2008 crash, and more

⁵⁰ See Ana Corbalán's chapter, ““No nos vamos, nos echan”: representación filmica de la nueva emigración” in *El cine de la crisis: Respuestas cinematográficas a la crisis económica española en el siglo XXI* (2018), for an analysis of *Hermosa juventud* (2014) by Jaime Rosales and *Perdiendo el norte*.

specifically, Germany. However, it lightens the topic by employing comical clichés of the two countries.

Buscando el norte also engages with the theme of a perceived Spanish “inferiority” when compared to Germany. This same idea appears in *El olivo*, but in the case of these works, the motif is highlighted with comedy. There are several encounters between the characters that underscore this internal conflict. Despite having an advanced nursing degree, Álex is eligible to work only as an aid in a nursing home due to his inability to speak German. Ulrike, Álex’s cousin and boss, frequently reprimands him. She scolds him for arriving late to work or chatting on the phone, and often equates his unprofessional behavior to his “Spanishness”. For example, she says, “No estoy todo el día de fiesta. La diferencia entre los españoles y los alemanes es que nosotros trabajamos y no tenemos tiempo para estas tonterías” (episode 6, 00:23:50). Álex follows suit and retorts, “La diferencia es que nosotros trabajamos para vivir y no vivimos para trabajar” (episode 6, 00:23:45). Furthermore, the series employs direct references to Germany’s involvement in the bailout of Spain. For example, Álex teaches Ulrike how to dance in preparation for a wedding in which she is a bridesmaid. Ulrike jests, “No me lo puedo creer. Un español al rescate de una alemana. Este es el mundo al revés” (episode 6, 00:54:28). Her joke, a reference to the “rescate”, the bailout of the Spanish banks, is another undercut to Álex, and by proxy, Spain. Similar instances occur during other points in the series. When Salva discusses rent conditions with his landlord, he says “Si no fuese por los alemanes, ¿qué sería del sur de Europa? Esos vagos” (episode 2, 00:31:00). These conversations are treated as jokes, masking the underlying inferiority complex that Spaniards may have of themselves in light of the economic situation.

Unfavorable labels of Spaniards and stereotypical observations of other Europeans also arise in Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José's novel, *Venirse arriba*. The plot centers on Jesús Miguel who, after losing his job in an Asturian mine, travels to Amsterdam to live with his son Miguel, a student on an Erasmus scholarship. Jesús Miguel's ignorance is a principal comedic theme in the book and is also another self-deprecating jab at the Spanish population as "other" through the use of humor.

One of the greatest difficulties the protagonists face is adjusting to a new culture, and this affects Jesús Miguel even more than the characters in *Perdiendo el norte* and *Buscando el norte*. His inability to acclimate abroad stems from his general unawareness of any nation outside of Spain. Diverging from the educated, refined urban characters in the other works, Jesús Miguel is an uneducated and unsophisticated miner from rural Asturias who has never left the autonomous community prior to his current trip. He frequently confuses his whereabouts, believing that he is in Germany or another European nation instead of the Netherlands. Hyperbolic examples of Jesús Miguel's lack of education pervade the novel, and are even included in epistolary form, evidenced by several e-mails where he commits elementary orthographic errors:

Querido Marianin:
 Qe raro es esto de escribir en la internet web. Esto os llegara inmediatamente segun lo escribo o como es la cosa? Yo que se, bueno. Imagino que estais bien y seguis llendo yendo todos los dias al trasgu eso hace qe me entre la rememoranza puesto que como ya sabeis e stoy viviendo en el extranjero desde que mi hijo chusmi Chusmi me pedio que venga viniera aqui a darle respaldo y apoyo moral en su nueva vida... (95)

In addition to his cluelessness about basic Spanish orthography, it is Jesús Miguel's first time using a computer and e-mail, a gross exaggeration of his lack of contact with the globalized, networked world. He is, however, familiar with certain

stereotypes of his new home country, the Netherlands, and ventures to the renowned “Red Light District.” During this trip, he makes an embarrassing effort to woo Greta, a prostitute, but due to his lack of English-speaking abilities, is unable to communicate with her.

‘You don’t speak English?’ preguntó Greta. ‘Qué inglés ni qué inglés, ¿esto a cómo va?’ Mientras intentaba dialogar en el español, Greta no había dejado de preparar cosas en la habitación: la peluca en un cajón, una sábana sobre la cama... Ahora se paró y miró a Jesús de arriba abajo, como si realmente reparara en el aspecto de aquel ser por primera vez. Él le devolvía la mirada con una sonrisa boba y entonces ella le hizo el gesto universal del dinero, frotando el pulgar con el corazón y el índice. (154)

Jesús Miguel’s ignorance is a predominant comedic theme in the novel and is another self-deprecating jab at the Spanish population as “other” through the use of humor. It is also another glimpse of a negative Spanish self-view due to its economic plight and yet another reference to the (PIIGS) acronym. This is because the novel focuses on specific European stereotypes and the perception of Spaniards abroad, which, according to the authors in an interview, “‘Normalmente cuando hacemos humor nos reímos mucho internamente de las comunidades, pero siempre hay un respeto un poco ridículo al europeo’, añade San José, quien considera que esto se debe al complejo que tienen los españoles de ser ‘los últimos de la clase’” (“*Venirse arriba*”). The entirety of the novel plays with this theme, laughing at stereotypes of people from specific countries, namely Spaniards, as a way to counteract the pain and struggle of the crisis. It points to the gravity of their instability as a result of the recession.

David Trueba’s *Blitz* also acknowledges the perceived Spanish inferiority abroad by emphasizing that Germans only want skilled laborers entering the country; migrants residing there without stable employment are undesirable. Helga, Beto’s sixty-year old

German lover, highlights this when she comments to Beto that, “Claro que ahora no quieren españoles sin trabajo por aquí, sólo quieren ingenieros. Bueno, tú eres arquitecto” (51). Beto responds: “Sí, la verdad es que una de las salidas profesionales de la arquitectura ahora mismo en España es ser mimo callejero, es de lo que más nos estamos colocando” (51). Beto’s self-deprecating jokes are another example of comedy as a way to ease the stress of the crisis while underscoring the dire situation in which the protagonist finds himself.

Beto and Helga’s relationship also illustrates a perceived Spanish dependence on the European Union. His relationship with Helga is most certainly depicted in a comedic way, with their awkward sexual encounters and drastic age differences. However, the relationship is actually more nuanced than a simple romantic tryst between a young thirty-year-old man and his sixty-year-old lover. Helga helps Beto overcome his emotional crisis, but Beto continues to depend on her even after finding economic stability and appears to perceive her as a motherly figure. He says: “Cada palabra y cada gesto de Helga hacia mí fue un consuelo que tardaría demasiado en apreciar. No sólo un maternal refugio para el solitario y desamparado desperdicio humano en que me había convertido la despedida de Marta” (Trueba 75). The association of Helga as a both a motherly and sexual figure for Beto relates to Sigmund Freud’s theory of the Oedipus Complex, which he discusses in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913). Examining the mother-son relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta, the study explores latent psychological desires and proposes that a human being’s first sexual yearnings are directed towards the mother (Freud 223). The insinuation of an Oedipus-Jocasta and

Beto-Helga comparison is telling and suggests that the relationship may have negative underpinnings.

Blitz elevates these undesirable connotations by comparing Beto and Helga's relationship to the global landscape. More specifically, the story establishes a parallel between Helga and Beto's romance and the politically and economically dependent relationship between Angela Merkel and Spanish leaders such as Mariano Rajoy and José Luis Rodríguez Zápatero. Beto describes:

En la tele emitían resúmenes informativos del año. Todos hablaban de la crisis económica. En el recordatorio, la presidenta alemana Merkel, con su rigidez, daba una mano fría a los presidentes sucesivos de España, primero Zapatero con sus cejas de bebé asustado y luego Rajoy con esa ausencia de personalidad idéntica al muñeco abandonado de un ventrílocuo. Ambos parecían pedir de ella más que un apretón de manos, quizá ser acunados, que los acercara a su pecho para darles de mamar. (Trueba 152)

Describing the intentional descriptions of Zapatero and Rajoy reaching out to Merkel like infants seeking their mother's milk as hyperbolic would be an understatement.

However, the metaphorical portrayal of these politicians' dependency on Germany echoes the aforementioned E.U. bailout of Spain. Beto, like Spain, also relies on Germany for aid. Through the representation of these parallel relationships, the text points to an unequal power dynamic, but one that Spain, as well as Beto, depends on in order to survive the crisis.

Another example in the text that points to negative connotations associated with Beto and Helga's relationship occurs during one of their outings in Munich when they visit an Otto Dix art exposition. During the visit, Beto notes his affinity for Dix's work, but Helga admits that she finds the paintings repulsive (104). This fragment contains several important elements. First, this scene is set apart from others because of the visual

representation in the novel of the art that Helga and Beto view. The fact that they are in color and placed within the text is telling; in the contemporary age, a reader with a certain curiosity could merely search the paintings in Google had their titles been mentioned in the text. Nevertheless, in this instance, both the artist and titles are referenced, and a graphic, colored image of the paintings are included.

On a primary level, the painting could be a reference to trauma and crisis. Otto Dix was a German painter who fought in World War I, and much of his art reflects angst, struggle, and trauma. Some of his paintings portray gruesome images of soldiers wounded in the war, and others depict marginalized communities, such as the poor and prostitutes. Dix's art, known as *entartete kunst*, or degenerate art, was confiscated and banned by the Nazis when they came to power (Vlajic 415). His art critiques society, showing it as damaged as a result of war and trauma. Similarly, the novel's reference to this art points to a criticism of the twenty-first century's crises, fraught with high unemployment, wars, government corruption, and division. Of course, it is also important to point out that the novel's title, *blitz*, is a word most immediately associated with Nazis.

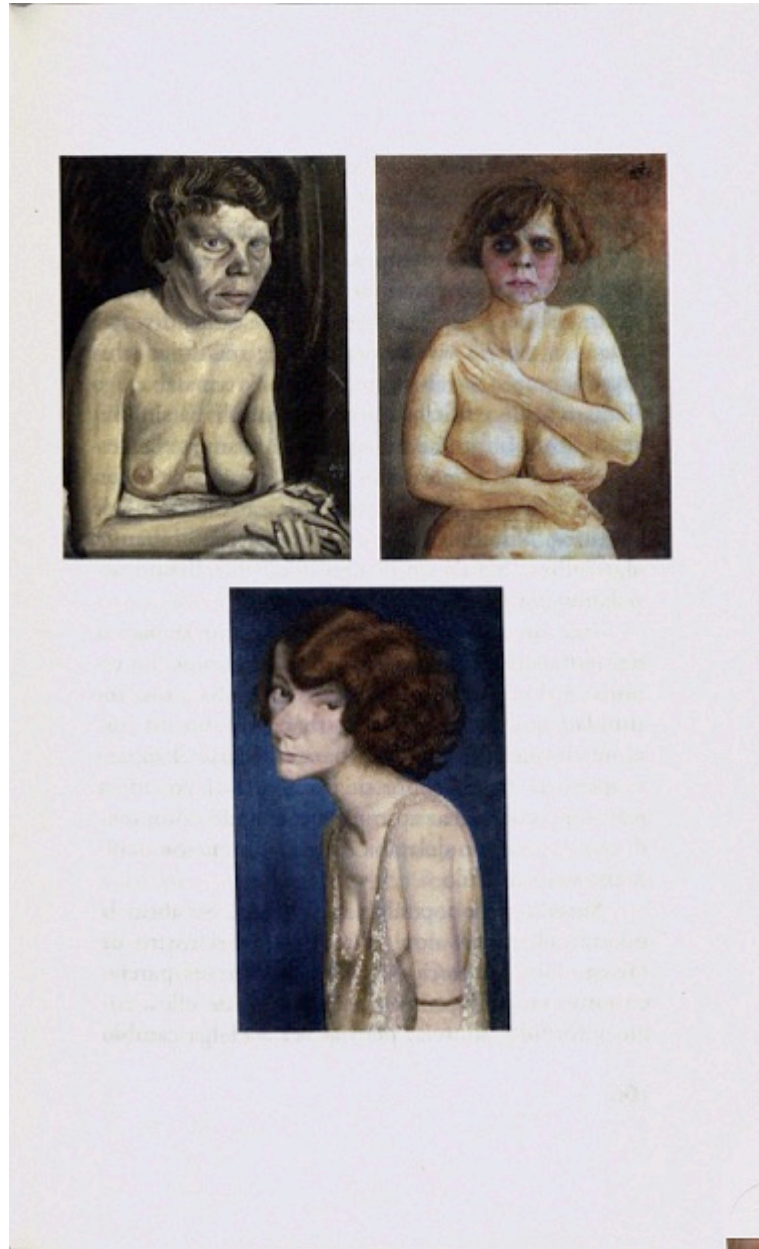


Fig. 23: Otto Dix's artwork displayed in *Blitz* (26).

Additionally, these paintings depict older women—naked older women. It is telling that Beto enjoys the paintings, just as he enjoys his relationship with Helga. Helga is his older, maternal figure, yet he is *attracted* to her, just as he is to the art. The painting *Half Nude* from 1926 shows a woman who seems to be self-conscious about her body. A similar phenomenon occurs when Helga and Beto engage in sexual encounters, as she

frequently expresses shame about her aging body. The images return to Beto and Helga's Oedipus connection and the subsequent allegorical relationship to Spain and Germany. Helga helps Beto overcome his emotional struggles, but the Freudian reference is not a positive one. This can be linked with Spain and Germany's "incestuous" relationship with the European Union. Thus, the novel insinuates a continued reliance of Spain on Germany in a negative context, through the use of dark humor.

Becoming the Immigrant "Other"

Labeling certain nationalities based on stereotypes relates to an additional motif in these works: the Spaniard as "other". Throughout these narratives, many of the Spanish characters reconcile with their new and unfamiliar status as the immigrant "other". On many occasions, and especially in *Perdiendo el norte* and *Buscando el norte*, this idea is represented, again, through comedy.

As a case in point, in *Perdiendo el norte*, after a month of fruitless searching, Hugo and Braulio are jobless and desperate to earn money. The two resign themselves to working more than ten hours per day at a Turkish kebab restaurant owned by Hakan, a Turkish immigrant who resides in Berlin with his Spanish wife, Marisol. The protagonists' status as immigrants amplifies their anxiety over perceptions of them abroad and at home. The scene of Hugo and Braulio's arrival in their new neighborhood makes obvious that they are in an immigrant zone: Turkish music plays in the background, the protagonists are surrounded by signs in Arabic, Turkish flags hang from several windows, and secondary characters in the scene even don shirts that say "Turkey". The hyperbolic juxtaposition of two Spaniards now living in a Turkish

neighborhood emphasizes that the two Spaniards are now living similarly to how they had perhaps formerly perceived immigrants in Spain. This ironic twist can either demonstrate that the Spaniards are laughing at the “other,” or, perhaps in attempts to reconcile their own anxieties, are laughing internally at themselves, as they are now the “other” outside of Spain.⁵¹



Fig. 24: Hugo and Braulio enter their new neighborhood in Berlin. (Source: *Perdiendo el norte*, 00:12:44)

Mary Kate Donovan acknowledges this issue in her article “‘Se ríen de la crisis’: Chinese Immigration as Economic Invasion in Spanish Film and Media.” She notes that several Spanish films address immigration within Spain and, “Although problematic in varying ways, these films represent immigrant protagonists whose presence forces the Spanish characters to confront their own prejudices, and in doing so gesture towards an increasingly heterogeneous sense of national identity in post-Franco Spain” (370). Donovan’s study focuses on the depiction of Chinese immigrants in Spain following the 2008 crisis and their correlation to Spanish concerns about the “other” immigrant in their

⁵¹ Hostile Spanish and Turkish relations date back to previous moments in history, such as the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

own nation. However, her argument applies to *Perdiendo el norte* and *Buscando el norte* because of these works' inversion of this idea; the Spaniards are now the immigrant "other". For example, in *Buscando el norte*, Salva often makes jokes about immigrants, not wanting to be identified as one himself. When looking for an apartment, he mistakenly thinks that the German landlord insults him for being Spanish. Upset, he yells: "¡Estoy harto de que todo el mundo nos trate como si fuéramos ecuatorianos!" (episode 2, 00:32:00) only to discover later that the landlord's wife is from Ecuador. Salva's awkward faux pas confirms his preoccupation with seeming like an immigrant "other", and also references his preconceptions regarding immigrants at home. The comedic portrayal of the Spanish characters as the "other" in Berlin reflects Spanish concerns regarding their perceptions of immigrants in Spain and the corresponding fear of being viewed similarly abroad.

In both works, *Perdiendo el norte* and *Buscando el norte*, the ubiquitous presence of primarily Spanish characters suggests that the works are directed to a very "Spanish" audience. When considering *Perdiendo el norte*, for example, although the narrative is set in Berlin, there are no leading German characters in the film, only secondary ones with little dialogue, such as those who interview Hugo and Braulio for jobs. The primary interactions occur between the Spanish protagonists and other immigrants, mainly Spaniards and Turks. These works, then, correspond to Juan Egea's theory of a "national" sense of humor in film comedies:

When it comes to comedy—and especially dark comedies—who gets the joke and who doesn't is the benchmark for measuring the possible communal and hence exclusionary properties of film genres. As theoretically unsophisticated as it may seem, "getting the joke" is still an apt expression with which to broach subjects such as the workings of

cultural *untranslatability* or the possible existence of a “national” sense of humor. (10)

By focusing primarily on Spaniards and describing them in the same context as they would an immigrant in Spain, the film emphasizes the Spaniards as “other”, but uses a “national” sense of humor to address the topic.

Underemployment

Another common challenge that the Spanish emigrant characters face is underemployment. As mentioned in the categorical division of types of emigrants, several of those moving abroad were young and highly educated, prepared to work in careers requiring advanced degrees or skills. However, after migrating, very few of the protagonists achieve a career in their desired fields. In *Perdiendo el norte*, for example, due to their underemployed status working long hours for a meager salary at Hakan’s Turkish restaurant, Hugo and Braulio feel shame and attempt to hide their actual employment predicament from their friends and families back home. For example, Hugo is reluctant at first to take a job washing dishes at a restaurant, but his attitude swiftly changes when he learns that his family cannot pay their mortgage and soon will be evicted from their home. In attempts to improve morale, he lies to his father, boasting of his great job in Germany and promises to wire money for financial assistance. Hugo’s narration of e-mails to his parents describing his “great” life are juxtaposed with scenes depicting his actual situation: scrubbing restaurant floors, riding a scooter around Berlin as a delivery boy, and scraping for money to send them.

Hugo is not the only Spaniard who pretends to be better off than he actually is to avoid humiliation. Even secondary characters attempt to conceal their employment status

from friends back home. For instance, Hugo and Braulio discover that the Spaniard who appeared on *Españoles alrededor del mundo* and inspired their move to Berlin is in reality a garbage collector. Although he performs a peripheral role, the man's connection to trash is significant as another example highlighting a failure of the capitalist system.

As Samuel Amago, in reference to the 2013 sanitary worker strike in Madrid, notes:

“Nada hace resaltar mejor el fallo de los sistemas estatales que vertebran el sistema capitalista como la acumulación de basura” (46). Moreover, this character's status as a garbage collector contains additional underpinnings; he is not needed in his home country and, forced to leave to find a job elsewhere, is essentially “thrown away”.



Fig. 25: A “successful” Spaniard abroad in *Españoles alrededor del mundo* inspires Braulio to move to Berlin. (Source: *Perdiendo el norte*, 00:09:08)



Fig. 26: Braulio discovers that the man from *Espanoles alrededor del mundo* is actually a garbage collector. (Source: *Perdiendo el norte*, 00:30:17)

A common thread in these characters' narratives is that their unemployed status affects them psychologically. The comedic depiction presents their essentially tragic circumstance in a humorous light. Hugo's ending words return to the idea of comedy, likening the absurd situation in Spain to a farce: "Creo que fue Marx quien dijo que la historia se repite: primero como tragedia, y luego como farsa. Y por lo que parece, nosotros formamos parte de esta generación a la que ha tocado ser el chiste" (01:40:06). He acknowledges that their predicament is absurd, but that this misfortune can be converted into something comical. In the end, all of the characters remain in Berlin, other than Braulio, who moves to China.⁵² Although they ultimately do not achieve their dreams of landing successful jobs in their desired fields, they create an emigrant community, joining together in solidarity, and continue to face challenges abroad. Their stories demonstrate emigration as a response to the crisis in Spain, but far from an entirely successful one.

⁵² This narrative thread is the main storyline in Aparte Producciones' upcoming sequel, *Perdiendo el este* set to release later in 2019.

Narratives of Success

These works accentuate the challenges that Spanish emigrants may experience regarding perceptions of them abroad and at home, as well as how they deal with negotiating cultural differences and their own self-esteem, or lack of it. However, they also point to ways to overcome these anxieties. When addressing worries over the European perception of Spaniards, a surprising solution has been soccer. One specific instance is the “narrative of success” employed by the Spanish media to combat a “negative foreign gaze”, emphasizing the national Spanish men’s soccer team’s triumphs on the global soccer scene. “La furia roja” (the Spanish national soccer team) won the 2008 and 2012 European Championships and were the 2010 World Cup champions (Quiroga 127). Spain might have had a failing economy, but its success in the soccer realm made the country—and world—view Spain as a “winner”, temporarily setting aside its social and financial woes. Alejandro Quiroga’s article, “Narratives of Success and Portraits of Misery: Football, National Identities, and Economic Crisis in Spain (2008-2012),” centers on Spain’s efforts to deflect attention from the recession to its successful soccer record. Quiroga begins the article referencing Suzanne Daly’s September 24, 2012 *New York Times* column titled “Spain Recoils as its Hungry Forage Trash Bins for a Next Meal,” which showcased a photo of a Spaniard rummaging through a dumpster for food, another unspoken reference to garbage and crisis. The article emphasized Spain’s plight in the midst of the recession and its high levels of unemployment, and unsurprisingly, increased Spanish outrage over such a negative depiction (Quiroga 126). Quiroga describes the Spanish media’s reaction to the article:

The response of the Spanish media was a textbook case of nationalistic reaction to foreign criticism. It accused the national “other” of being

ignorant for using stereotypes and denounced obscure foreign intentions to undermine the nation's reputation. The response was so virulent because the picture that emerged from the national other's gaze, in this case from the British and U.S. media, profoundly challenged the image that many Spaniards had of themselves. The self-depiction of Spain as modern, relatively rich, and similar to the most advanced European countries clashed with the representation of a nation of hungry, lazy, and unproductive people. (127)

Another aspect to consider is that Spain's 2012 bailout from the European Union coincided with the 2012 European Championship. Thus, as a way to counteract pessimistic views of Spain, the Spanish national soccer team was the perfect story of triumph to eclipse the grim realities of the country's economy.

Luisa Elena Delgado also refers to the idea of the Spanish soccer team as the epitome of success in Spain when she discusses the play, *Yes we Spain*, in which President Obama agrees to provide financial aid to the country in the midst of their economic disaster. "Para que el rescate sea efectivo, sin embargo, tiene que ser manejado y mediado por un español que sea admirado por todo el mundo: la única persona con ese perfil es Andrés Iniesta, autor del gol que dio a España la victoria en el Mundial de Fútbol de 2010" (201). In a humorous fashion, the play indicates that in this time of catastrophe, the only people that can save the country's reputation are soccer players.

Another example of employing comedy in conjunction with the Spanish soccer "narrative of success" occurs in the fifth episode of *Buscando el norte*, entitled "Fútbol es fússbol", where the Spanish emigrants challenge some local Germans to a soccer match. The Spaniards boast they are the best at the sport (although at the time of the television series, Germany was the most recent victor of the World Cup in 2014). The Germans brush aside the Spanish challenge, laughing at them in Marcelino's bar. Marcelino responds, "Vale ya de risitas. ¿Qué pasa? ¿Que también tenéis que humillarnos con lo

único que nos queda a los españoles para sentirnos orgullosos?” (episode 5, 00:15:35).

His statement emphasizes that soccer is perhaps one of the only areas in which Spaniards can excel when competing against their northern neighbors. In attempts to boost his Spanish team’s morale at the first practice, Marcelino proclaims: “Aquí nos jugamos más que un resultado. Nos jugamos la dignidad. Es una batalla del sur contra el norte. De los humildes contra los poderosos. De los inmigrantes contra los que levantan muros. ¿Y nosotros qué les decimos? ¡Sí se puede!” Lucas responds:

Claro que sí, claro que podemos porque aunque ellos tengan más Premios Nobel, aunque tengan mejores científicos, aunque tengan investigadores mejor pagados, nosotros tenemos algo infinitamente mejor. ¿Y qué es? Es gente que sabe pegarle a una pelota en pantalón corto. (episode 5, 00:30:33)

The characters’ perceptions of a “German superiority” in most realms indicate a certain lack of confidence, however, they overcome this challenge through soccer. Soccer, for them, becomes a Spanish source of pride as well as a form of evasion from their dismal economic realities.

Exporting Spanish Culture and Language

Despite the predominant theme of hardship and struggle in these works, primarily depicted through the lenses of emigrants who experience failure and difficulties, there are some—albeit few—stories of accomplishment. What is evident from many of these stories is that, in many cases, the key to a successful career abroad is based on exporting Spanish culture and relying on an emigrant network of Spaniards for support.

The first depiction of success in these works is presented as exporting Spanish culture abroad. As in the actual context of the 2008 recession, this was accomplished

through Spanish language education programs and the hospitality and tourism industries (Peiro). In Spain, tourism provides a vital source of income, which has become even more essential following the advent of the crisis.⁵³ A January 11, 2018 report from *El País* notes that 2017 was a record-setting year for tourism, with more than 82 million foreigners visiting the country, an 8.9 percent increase from 2016 (“España encadena”). It surpassed the United States as the second-most visited country in the world, coming in second only to France. Tourism has been a constant source of income in Spain, especially during the financial crash, providing employment and money to Spaniards both home and abroad.

To maintain and increase such high levels of tourism in the country, promoting and exporting Spanish language and culture at home and abroad is quite common. For example, the mission of the Cervantes Institute (Instituto Cervantes)⁵⁴ is to disseminate and teach the Spanish language and culture. Via centers in Spain and in other countries, it offers courses, seminars, and other activities related to Hispanic languages, literatures and cultures. As a way to bridge tourism with language study, the Cervantes Institute has promoted language tourism, generating employment and revenue by encouraging study abroad initiatives (“Cervantes Institute”).

⁵³ The tourism boom in the 1960s also revolutionized Spain’s economy under Franco, opening up Spain to the global market.

⁵⁴ According to its website, the Cervantes Institute is “an institution that was founded by the Spanish government in 1991 to universally promote the Spanish language, its teaching, study and use, as well as develop the quality and visibility of these, and to spread Spanish and Hispanic-American culture. The central head office of the institution is located in Madrid and in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), birthplace of the writer Miguel de Cervantes.” For more information, see the organization’s official website: <http://www.cervantes.es/default.htm>. There are similar initiatives worldwide for other languages and cultures, such as the British Council, the Alliance Française, and the Goethe Institut.

Other efforts to market Spain abroad transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries.⁵⁵ The Spanish government has even established a state-sponsored initiative with this goal: Marca España.⁵⁶ This project aims to boost Spain's image, and has included campaigns targeted at elevating Spanish popular culture, specifically film and television. (Martínez-Exposito 288-90). Samuel Amago also posits that film functions as a marketing tool to promote tourism in Spain, citing films such as Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008) and Agustín Díaz Yanes' *Alatriste* (2006). When discussing the films of Pedro Almodóvar, Amago notes that:

La promoción de la región natal de Almodóvar en particular demuestra cómo funcionan las películas para vender el espacio español a audiencias internacionales, ofreciendo a turistas cinéfilos una manera de conectarse física y materialmente con las geografías visuales del país y de apropiarse del prestigio cultural en el proceso. ("Basura" 41)

In my analysis of these works, I too have found that the frequent references to Spanish culture, landscape, gastronomy, and sports work in conjunction with Marca España—whether intentionally or not—to market and promote Spain's image outside of the Iberian peninsula. Furthermore, these works equate Spanish culture to achievement abroad, as the most successful characters, in general, are the ones employed in sectors related to culture or the hospitality and tourism industries.

⁵⁵ History seems to be repeating itself. The Spanish government has used other branding tactics in the past. In the immediate postwar, slogans like "Visit Spain" were employed to promote tourism. The most successful and well-known slogan, "Spain is different" served as a marketing tactic in the 1960s to promote Spain abroad as an enticing tourist destination (Cervera).

⁵⁶ Marca España was born as a marketing tool to reinvent Spain's image abroad. It originated from British consultant Simon Anholt's idea of 'Marca país'. Marca España was created in 2001 and has been active ever since. Its official goal is to "avanzar de forma coordinada en la construcción de una imagen de España que responda a la nueva realidad económica, social y cultural del país" (Martínez-Exposito 288-90). For more information, visit the official website: <http://marcaespana.es>

An earlier example that I cited occurs in *Buscando el norte*, through Lucas who first achieves success as a result of his blog. His writing, which focuses on stories of emigrating to Berlin, catches the attention of the Cervantes Institute, and the organization offers him the Community Manager position. The job comes with perks, allowing him to work remotely and stay at home to care for his daughter. His unprecedented success when compared to the plight of the other Spanish emigrants in the series points to the power of exporting Spanish culture. His narrative also serves as a marketing tool for both Marca España and the Cervantes Institute, which is emphasized through verbal and visual references to the *Instituto Cervantes*, providing the organization publicity through a positive image. For instance, in the frame pictured below, the television series features Lucas during his job interview. His location in a fancy, scholarly office diverges from the places of employment of his Spanish counterparts. The *Instituto Cervantes* logo placed at the left side of the frame provides the institution positive branding, simultaneously linking the exportation of Spanish culture with achievement.



Fig. 27: Lucas's Interview at the Cervantes Institute (Source: *Buscando el norte*, episode 8, 01:00:00)

In addition to spreading Spanish culture via linguistic and educational means, many of the characters in these works find careers in the hospitality and restaurant industries. Although in some cases, such as Hugo and Braulio's in *Perdiendo el norte*, working in a restaurant is a reference to underemployment, for other characters, such as Marcelino in *Buscando el norte* and Jesús Miguel in *Venirse arriba*, the industry is a leading source of success. These particular characters become entrepreneurs and owners of their establishments, providing them with a steady income and giving them freedom to live independently and comfortably.⁵⁷

Marcelino's Spanish bar not only gives him financial stability, but it also serves as a refuge for the other Spanish emigrants. With the support of his wife, the couple's ability to convert Spanish culture and cuisine into a thriving business allows them to avoid the adverse effects of the crisis. The restaurant is also a tool for Spanish promotion and marketing, featuring events such as cooking contests to endorse Spain's image in Berlin. It is a place of stability for the other Spaniards, functioning as a type of "headquarters" for the protagonists to network, meet other emigrants, find job opportunities, as well as cope with homesickness. The restaurant as a central focal point also suggests that relying on Spanish roots is a recipe for success abroad.

⁵⁷ Although taken out of the inter-European emigration context, the chef José Andrés is another example of a successful Spaniard who has exported Spanish cuisine abroad. He has also been an outspoken critic of right-wing politics in the United States (www.joseandres.com).



Fig. 28: Marcelino greets German customers at his Spanish restaurant. (Source: *Buscando el norte*, episode 3, 00:14:00)

In a separate example, *Venirse arriba*'s Jesús Miguel is another notable restaurant entrepreneur. Jesús Miguel's triumphs, ironically, are due to his initial ignorance and struggles. As Jesús Miguel is unable to adapt to the Netherlands, it is not surprising, then, that he finds solace and feels most at home in a symbolic Spain in Amsterdam: a tapas bar called the Don Quijote. While unlike Cervantes's character, Don Quijote, Jesús Miguel does not set out on a quest to solve the injustices of the world, he is nonetheless a Quijotesque figure: a man perceived by others as a lunatic who voyages forth, escaping a type of crisis in search of a better life. Moreover, it is at the Don Quijote where Jesús Miguel feels most at ease, enjoying *cañas* (beers) and Spanish *tortilla de patata*. He befriends Antonio, the Spanish bar owner, and soon becomes a regular in the establishment. Antonio and the bar, like Jesús Miguel, also suffer financially, and

Antonio often expresses his worries to Jesús Miguel. Jesús Miguel offers suggestions to improve the bar's appeal to the Dutch, such as converting it into a *sidrería*, a typical bar in Asturias that serves *sidra*, an alcoholic cider native to his home region.

It is ironically Jesús Miguel's ignorance of other European nations, his status as "other", and his inability to assimilate to a new culture that helps him find employment outside of Spain and triumph with his *sidrería*. The relationship with food in times of crisis in this novel is significant because it provides Jesús Miguel with tools to manage and subsist abroad. His ending letter to his son, Miguel, discusses the newfound success he has achieved through exporting his home culture.

...Lo mejor de todo sin embargo es que el local ba mucho mejor con la nueva orientacion de sidreria que tambien quiero hacerlo gastroteca y no veas como se llena de turistas y incluso de gente de aqui holandeses. antonio el de Astorga esta que se le hace el culo pexi-cola con este reModelacion que menos mal que tenia yo la indernizacion mia pa poder hacerlo. (301)

These depictions emphasize, through humor, that like the actual phenomenon in Spain, exporting Spanish gastronomy and culture is one of the most constructive ways to achieve success both at home and abroad in a time of crisis.

Implications

In all of these works, the characters must respond to the obstacles and hardships of the 2008 recession and do so through emigration. These popular cultural enactments point to underlying anxieties of the Spanish population regarding the recession and emigration and also question the hegemonic forces that led to the economic disaster. Furthermore, as works of popular culture, they access a broad audience and are widely available in bookshops, movie theatres, and even online streaming platforms such as

Netflix and Amazon Prime. By reaching such a viewership, they expose the general public to critical political and social issues occurring in the post-crisis context. The recurrent use of hyperbolic stereotypes and comedy in these situations serves as an attempt to make light of the characters' predicaments, and by extension those of the Spanish population. Thus, the works simultaneously inform *and* provide catharsis to the crisis-weary Spanish. Although these artistic productions help the broad population cope with the crisis through comic relief, the works diverge in that the characters experience different outcomes following their decision to emigrate. The varied outcomes and struggles of the characters demonstrate that there are no easy answers to overcome crisis, and so, if there is no "simple fix", a sense of humor can provide some relief. In the next chapter centered on protest, additional ways to cope with—and fight—the implications of the crisis will be examined, as mediated through recent cultural production.

Chapter Three

Performance as Protest: Cultural Production as a Form of Denouncement

*Cobraremos los sueños despojados
Se secarán las lágrimas del hielo
No servirán los pactos firmados por traidores
Cuando se junte el hambre con el fuego.
Volverán a la tierra los frutos de la tierra,
Será barro en sus manos la huella del dinero
Será hierro en el pecho como barro en las piernas
Y una esperanza rota les partirá los huesos.
Cuando se junte el hambre con el fuego,
Cuando se junte el hambre con el fuego.*

*- Fernando Valverde and Juan
Pinilla, "Revolución" (2015)*

“¡Democracia real ya! No somos mercancías en manos de políticos y banqueros.”

Tens of thousands of protestors proclaimed this chant in La Puerta del Sol in Madrid on May 15, 2011 (15-M). Known as *los indignados*, they were frustrated with the fallout from the 2008 crash, suffering from unemployment, underemployment, and evictions. Disillusioned with the government and its failure to support those reeling from the effects of the crisis, they demanded change. They confronted institutions of power that they believed contributed to

the increasing disparities between the rich and poor, the declining mobility of most, the exclusion and expulsion of many, and governments and politicians that are indifferent at best, duplicitous at worst, and in any event blatantly closed to popular concerns. (Tejerina and Perugorria 1)

Protest against the conditions and institutions that contributed to the 2008 crisis through street demonstrations is one type of response. Dissent, however, has also been

manifested in cultural production. This chapter explores various works that both depict and serve as a means of protest in the wake of the recession. The first section discusses key protest movements in Spain following the 2008 crisis, such as 15-M and the changes that occurred afterwards. Later, the study examines a theoretical approach to cultural production as a form of opposition. Drawing on the framework of performance and protest articulated by various critics including Jonathan Snyder in *Poetics of Opposition in Contemporary Spain* (2015), Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi, in *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* (2016), and Judith Butler in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), I analyze three works. First, the novel *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, by María Folguera [2016]), second, the dramatic performance by El Teatro del Barrio, *Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español*, by Alberto San Juan [2017]), and finally Flo6x8's flamenco flash mob performances. Each work engages with various mechanisms in order to convey dissent. In some cases, the use of emotions, space, the body, and performance overlap. In other situations, the works may employ just one of those functions. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the effectiveness of cultural production as a catalyst to stimulate change.

Protest in Spain Following the 2008 Crisis

The most famous Spanish protest movement in response to the crash is the aforementioned 15-M and subsequent events. The protests targeted the neoliberal system, the government, and the banks. Those that participated in 15-M were primarily young, college-educated and underemployed or unemployed Spaniards. Although younger Spaniards were the main demographic represented at the public demonstration, it is

important to note that the movement was essentially leaderless. Those present voiced multiple grievances, including discontent over harsh austerity measures, the bleak employment climate, government corruption and lack of equality (Tejerina and Perugorría 3-4).

Spain is a country that has endured numerous crises over the last two hundred years. It has a history of groups mobilizing for causes such as worker rights and women's rights at the beginning of the twentieth century and through the Second Republic. These tensions can be examined more closely thanks to studies such as *Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction: Catalan Labor and the Crisis of the Spanish State, 1898-1923*, by Ángel Smith.⁵⁸ However, the recent movements of dissent after the 2008 crisis mark a significant change from past moments in history. Departing from past times of discontent in Spain, social networks catalyzed and contributed to the protests stemming from this particular crisis, a new phenomenon in an increasingly digital era. It is an example of network power, a theory that has been explored by scholars such as Castells, Grewal, and Harvey. As discussed in the introduction, in the new network society there are two types of actors in the global system: those that are included and those that are excluded (Castells "A Network Theory of Power" 774). In the case of Spain, those who felt that they had been left on the fringe, the *indignados*, mobilized to contest the oppressive, dominant institutions such as the government and banks. What is more, they orchestrated the movement through the use of social networks. As Manuel Castells notes regarding the formation of 15-M, "A small network of concerned citizens from Madrid, Barcelona,

⁵⁸ Exactly two hundred years before the 2008 crash, the people of Madrid rebelled against the occupation of French troops. Ultimately, the French regained control and hundreds died. However, it is another example of Spanish protest against hegemonic forces. Cultural depictions of this event include Francisco Goya's *El dos de mayo de 1808 en Madrid* (1814) and *Los fusilamientos del tres de mayo* (1814).

Jerez, and other cities created a Facebook group under the name ‘Platform of Coordination of Groups Pro-Citizen Mobilization’” (“Networks” 113). The original group snowballed, with other organizations joining such as Estado del Malestar, Juventud Sin Futuro, Juventud en Acción, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, and others. They were, as Manuel Castells writes,

encouraged by the example of Iceland: by the possibility of successfully confronting the collusion between bankers and politicians through grassroots mobilization. This platform evolved quickly into a Facebook group of debate and action under the name of “*Democracia Real Ya*” (Real Democracy Now!), which created a forum, a blog, and an email list. (“Networks” 114)

The members of this digital community began to congregate in different parts of Spain with “autonomous nodes in various cities” (“Networks” 114). These meetings—sporadic at first—became increasingly regular, prompting an increase in the Facebook group membership and social media activity. Energized and motivated by protest movements such as the Arab Spring (2011), the members planned to demonstrate in the streets against politicians and bankers. They broadcast their slogan, “Real Democracy Now!” on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tuenti. After much communication and coordination via social networks, the event unfolded on May 15, 2011, with the main center in Madrid, but also in fifty other major Spanish cities, including Barcelona and Valencia. Over 50,000 people demonstrated in Madrid, 20,000 in Barcelona and 10,000 in Valencia (Castells, “Networks” 115).



Fig. 29: 15-M in La Puerta del Sol, Madrid. Image taken from *El Español*
https://www.elespanol.com/espana/20160225/104989833_0.html

La Puerta del Sol was the epicenter of the demonstration in Madrid. However, instead of dispersing after the march was over, Sol transformed into a “campground” in which many of the protestors remained for the duration of the night. News of the “occupation” was quickly shared on the social networks to energize more people to join, and that night evolved into a multiple-day takeover of the square, known as *acampada sol*. During this time, the *indignados* held discussions deliberating the definition of true democracy and how to achieve it. Volunteers provided support in the form of food, drink, and sanitation (Castells, “Networks” 116). There were even mental health and wellness tents offering yoga and meditation sessions. The square belonged to the people; it became a city within a city. Much like Judith Butler’s notion of the body as protest, which I will discuss shortly, those involved with the protests used both virtual spaces, through social networks, and physical spaces to denounce the failed economic system. These urban “campgrounds” inspired others elsewhere in Spain, with additional occupy movements

occurring in cities nationwide (Castells “Networks” 116-117). Due to the volume of information being disseminated at once, it was also a bit unorganized and chaotic. Media outlets had trouble reporting on events because of the simultaneous, overwhelming exchange of information online. Through tweeting, posting, and streaming, “Everyone became a reporter even if it is for a few moments. Everyone has been at some point the primary source of news. When you have a lot of people reporting, you have a collective account of what is happening” (Castells, “Networks” 124).

The energy and momentum from 15-M led to further protests and social actions that have shifted the course of history. Some groups involved with the planning from the outset continued to grow and seek ways to improve conditions for Spanish citizens. One such group is the aforementioned Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) that aimed to prevent evictions and social exclusion. Other groups, such as Marea Granate, mentioned in Chapter Two, emerged abroad to express indignation over the conditions in Spain that forced many to leave the country in search of employment.

One of the most notable transformations following the 15-M protests is the rise of new political parties, such as Podemos and Ciudadanos. These new political factions stemmed from discontent with the Spanish government over its policies that contributed to the crisis, its inability to find solutions, and its harsh implementation of austerity policies. As part of this social and political movement, in 2014 the left-wing political party Podemos was officially formed. The party supports many of the ideologies that inspired the 15-M protests. It was founded by many scholars and academics, including its current president, Pablo Iglesias. Iglesias, and Podemos as a whole, have taken full advantage of employing social networks and communication strategies to reach out to

those suffering from the crisis to build their support base. In the short time of its existence, the party's vision and outreach initiatives have garnered Podemos rapid success: during its first year of existence, it won eight percent of the vote and five seats in the May 2014 elections (Manganas 206). Podemos's rise is a threat to the PSOE and the Izquierda Unida, because many of these left-wing party supporters could vote for Podemos as an alternative. Many have already done so. Similarly, on the center-right, the newly formed party Ciudadanos presents a challenge to the Partido Popular (PP). Originally founded in 2005 with a primary platform based on opposition to Catalan secessionism, it has branded its ideology as a party of the center: a new choice for voters searching for a different option (Manganas 216). The emergence of these new political parties continues to shape the Spanish political landscape and has caused shifts in voting patterns. Nicolas Manganas contends that the crisis has completely transformed Spanish politics:

The word 'crisis' was not just a political buzzword. It was a devastating social phenomenon with real effects on the living standards of many Spaniards. More importantly, the crisis completely changed the political landscape in Spain, destroying the two-party system which had been operating, more or less successfully, since Spain's transition to democracy. The Spain of 2016 has little in common (at least politically) with the Spain of 2007. (192)

The breaking of the two-party system, in Manganas's view, is part of three key events that have revolutionized Spanish contemporary history: the 15-M protests, the emergence of new political parties, and the ETA cease-fire declaration (194). These recent developments, namely the 15-M protests and the momentum of Podemos and Ciudadanos, were born out of the indignation and frustration of the Spanish population in the aftermath of the economic meltdown. Although some label these groups as dangerous

populist organizations, it is undeniable that they offer a message of hope and change amid a dreary political climate (Delgado et al. 275).

A Theoretical Framework

The public demonstrations following the recession laid the groundwork for political changes as a response to the social and economic problems caused by the crash. However, as we have seen, cultural production is another response to the financial disaster that serves as a form of protest. Jonathan Snyder's study, *Poetics of Opposition*, provides a strong point of departure regarding protests and artistic works following the crisis. Snyder directly links cultural production and protest following the crisis with the events of 15-M:

The global financial crisis and recent social mobilizations, such as the 15-M mass protests in Spain, have inaugurated renewed interest in critically rethinking Spain's present cultural, social, and political circumstance, from the democratic *Transición* to its adhesion to the European Union. In the wake of the crisis in Spain, critical readings of and responses to the present scenario take at least two main stages of activity: cultural production in urban centers, often of an alternative status, and protests and assemblies in public spaces throughout Spanish cities. (xiii)

In this chapter, I build from Snyder's ideas to demonstrate how cultural production can serve as a channel of dissent. Each medium has different manifestations and purposes, which points to the multidimensional nature of cultural production as a tool of denouncement; it can be vocal, such as public protests, or it can occur in silence in the private sphere. Linking the functions of space and protest, Snyder draws on the networked theory of power presented by scholars such as Manuel Castells. Pointing to the city and cultural production as a form of opposition, his work focuses on Madrid, "as one networked node of activity" (24). His research regarding network power, protest, and

Madrid is of particular relevance to this chapter because the works I analyze also take place or are presented in Madrid. Madrid was the heart of the 15-M protests in Sol, therefore, it is pertinent to examine the space of the city and its relationship to protest. In addition to space, Snyder describes the function of these works and discusses emotion and affect as responses to crisis. He notes that the use of emotions is a persuasive mechanism to motivate others to act (43).

Essays compiled in *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* (2016), edited by Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi, also explore the role of emotions and their effect on political engagement and cultural production. The editors view emotions as paramount when studying the current political Spanish climate. In fact, in terms of the protests of 15-M, they argue that it is one of the key factors that motivated citizens to take to the streets. The word *indignados*, as they point out, is a way to describe the people who protested, but uses an *emotion* to label them. They write,

The 15-M movement should be understood not as an event or brand, but as a mobilization of collective emotions that went “viral” thanks to new technologies. In this respect, one of the questions the researchers asked of media users was “What emotions has 15-M created?” Their analysis of tweets sent between April 2011 and July 2012 showed that, from an initial sense of anger, paralysis, fear and isolation, the movement had generated a sense of community, hope, and, above all, empowerment. (275)

All of the works analyzed in this chapter serve as a form of protest, and in many cases, they were fueled by an emotional reaction to the catastrophic events in Spain. I argue that these artistic enactments can influence how spectators feel about certain issues, motivating them to mobilize and facilitate change.

The last theoretical model I will employ in this chapter is Judith Butler’s study on performativity and protest. In her study, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of*

Assembly (2015), she notes the gathering of *bodies* to demand change is itself a form of performance. To first understand her theory, it is useful to provide her definition of performativity:

What does it mean to lay claim to rights when one has none? It means to lay claim to the very power that one is denied in order to expose and militate against that denial. Like those squatter movements in Buenos Aires in which those without homes move into buildings in order to establish the grounds to claim rights of residency, sometimes it is not a question of first having power and then being able to act; sometimes it is a question of acting, and in the acting, laying claim to the power one requires. This is performativity as I understand it, and it is also a way of acting from and against precarity. (Butler 58)

In her view, performativity is the exercise of gathering to assert power. Butler adds:

We might see these mass demonstrations as a collective rejection of socially and economically induced precarity. More than that, however, what we are seeing when bodies assemble on the street, in the square, or in other public venues is the exercise—one might call it performative—of the right to appear, a bodily demand for a more livable set of lives. (25)

Butler acknowledges that although physical presence is a part of performativity and protest, it is not always necessary. She notes that appearance and protest can include “visible presence, spoken words, but also networked representation and concerted acts of silence” (172). The protests on 15-M and what followed are examples of performance. Likewise, in many cases, cultural works, too, are performances.

Each of the three works that will be analyzed in this chapter represents and serves as a form of protest. María Folguera’s novel, *Los primeros días de Pompeya* (2016), contains several layers dealing with theatre and points to artwork and the human body as a means to denounce neoliberal society. Alberto San Juan’s play, *Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español* (2017), is another example of performance as protest that condemns the legacy of corruption throughout Spain’s recent history. Finally, I include

the Flo6x8 flamenco flash-mob dances as an artistic form of denouncement that occurs in public spaces.

Case Studies: Novel

María Folguera's novel, *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, embodies the notion of performance and protest in several ways, often through a self-reflective nature. María Folguera is a novelist, director, and playwright. Her work is featured in *Última temporada. Nuevos narradores españoles 1980-1989* and *Bajo treinta. Antología de nueva narrativa española*, an anthology featuring young, emerging Spanish authors. Additionally, she is the director of the Teatro Circo Price,⁵⁹ and is active on the Madrid theatre scene, winning the Premio Valle-Inclán theatre award in 2010. Folguera participates in multiple theatrical and literary events in Spain and abroad.

The novel's publishing house, Caballo de Troya, is significant because it is part of the changing landscape in the publishing industry during and following the crisis. Constantino Bertoló founded it in 2004 with the aim of establishing a platform for young authors. Some writers who began their careers in this publishing house include Elvira Navarro and Mercedes Cebrián. Well-regarded authors such as Marta Sanz also started out under the wing of Constantino Bertoló. In 2015, the organization decided to renew annually the Resident Editor position in order to gain the perspective of multiple literary figures. For example, Elvira Navarro, Alberto Olmos, and Lara Moreno have each held this post (Bravo, "Reinventar"). The publishing house is now part of the larger Penguin

⁵⁹ The Teatro Circo Price has a long legacy in Madrid. It was founded in 1868 by Thomas Price, and was initially located on the Paseo de Recoletos. It is now located in Atocha and continues to offer circus and theatre performances. <https://www.teatrocircoprice.es>

Random House conglomerate, but functions as an independent organization under its umbrella. Because its catalogue boasts titles by various emerging authors, many of the topics of the novels naturally deal with issues facing a younger population. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many of the novels in the collection other than María Folguera's encompass themes that deal with the crisis, such as *Televisión* (2017) by María Cabrera and *Fuera de Tiempo* (2015) by Antonio de Paco.

The storyline of *Los primeros días de Pompeya* takes place in the context of the 2008 crisis and centers on its unnamed female protagonist. The setting occurs in Madrid, but the novel compares the city to a modern-day Pompeii, heading for destruction. The protagonist works in *El Teatrino*, an alternative theatre company in Madrid, most likely in Lavapiés, a neighborhood known for its bohemian atmosphere as well as its large immigrant population.⁶⁰ She resides with her unnamed partner whom she calls “tu Padre,” in Calle del Carmen, one of the streets that leads from the Puerta del Sol to Gran Vía. In addition to spending time with “tu Padre,” the protagonist also engages in many conversations and outings with her close friend, Adriano, who works for “La Presidenta” of Madrid. Adriano informs the protagonist of the president's plan to collaborate with an American entrepreneur, Shedelton,⁶¹ to construct a gambling resort, known as EuroVegas, in the capital. The protagonist becomes outraged at the news and after their conversation visits an art exposition called *Pompeya: Vida de la catástrofe*. The images

⁶⁰ Although not specifically mentioned, there are many existing theatres in the Lavapiés neighborhood. These include the Teatro del Barrio, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Other theatres included the Pavón Teatro Kamikaze, Sala Mirador, Sala Nada, La Gatomaquia, Teatro Valle-Inclán, and other, smaller theatres and artistic centers.

⁶¹ Shedelton is a reference to Sheldon Adelson, the actual American entrepreneur who tried to make a deal with the Madrid government and create EuroVegas.

in the exhibit of the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD⁶² resonate with her feelings about the crisis-entwined situation in Spain, and are heightened after she discovers the EuroVegas plan. She decides to tell Hannah, her new American neighbor, about the EuroVegas venture. Hannah, a renowned artist, is equally enraged and devises a plan to object to the project by creating protest art. Linking EuroVegas with Pompeii, she, with the help of the protagonist, creates sculptures of dead Pompeians and places them in strategic points of Madrid to create disruption and indignation over the EuroVegas proposal. The two women also form a scheme to become involved in and ruin the EuroVegas inaugural theatrical project, but in the end, do not carry out their plot.⁶³

Protest in the Novel

Through references to art, the novel provides many examples and layers of protest that employ the theoretical underpinnings analyzed by Snyder, Butler, Delgado, Fernández, and Labanyi. The novel links art and dissent with emotions, the body, and performance. It critiques power through thematic and literary components that underscore the work as a tool of protest. Much like the *concientización* in Latin-American protest poetry and in *testimonio* writings, it fosters readers' awareness of situations of exploited

⁶² The eruption of Mount Vesuvius is known as one of the most catastrophic volcanic eruptions in history. The only written account of the disaster comes from Pliny the Younger, a lawyer, author and magistrate of Ancient Rome (Radice). I would like to point out the connection between written documents and crisis, linking Folguera's novel documenting the EuroVegas disaster to Pliny's writing on the Pompeii destruction.

⁶³ Street art and sculptures are common in Madrid. Although not "artistic terrorism", they are examples of art strategically placed throughout the city, like Hannah and the protagonist's plan. For instance, during the spring and summer of 2018, different sculpture *menina* versions of Velázquez's *Las meninas* (1656) were scattered throughout Madrid.

and oppressed peoples (Dunn 656).⁶⁴ There are three main components that contribute to the novel's protest function: the overarching theme of the novel, references to space as symbolic of power or lack thereof, and the use of artistic enactments as protest.

The main narrative thread weaves through some of the most critical moments of the crisis with a primary focus on the EuroVegas proposal. The fictionalized events surrounding the EuroVegas plan are based on real occurrences that most Spaniards would be familiar with while reading the novel. In 2012, American entrepreneur Sheldon Adelson proposed to construct a massive gambling resort to be built near Alcorcón by the year 2025. The project was eventually abandoned but caused much controversy. The local government promised that the resort and casinos would generate thousands of jobs. However, many citizens were concerned that although it would create employment opportunities, it would also produce other complications associated with gambling: frivolous spending, alcohol and drug abuse, and prostitution.

The novel recreates this situation but changes the names of the key parties involved. "La Presidenta" is one of the primary negotiators with "Shedelton", a reference to the actual Sheldon Adelson. At first glance, it would seem that "La Presidenta" is the literary representation of Esperanza Aguirre, who was the President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid in 2012. María Folguera affirms that "La Presidenta" in the novel is a combination of both Esperanza Aguirre and Ana Botella, the mayor of Madrid who tried to win the 2020 Olympic bid for the city, but ultimately failed.⁶⁵ Other incidents that point to these real-life political figures also occur in the novel. For example, the

⁶⁴ See Elzbieta Sklodowska and John Beverley for more detail on *testimonio* in Latin American literature.

⁶⁵ María Folguera discussed this issue with me in an interview I conducted with her in June 2018.

protagonist views a news story about a bomb that exploded in a hotel in Bombay, highlighting that La Presidenta was at the scene and evacuated the hotel without her shoes. The anecdote seems trivial, but it is an echo of an actual news story involving Esperanza Aguirre.⁶⁶ Other characteristics of “La Presidenta” mirror traits or incidents involving Ana Botella. For example, Ana Botella does not speak English, but Esperanza Aguirre does. “La Presidenta” in the novel also does not speak English, adding to a perceived ignorance while negotiating with the Americans, and, according to Folguera, also align with some of the traits of Ana Botella.⁶⁷

The constant references to “La Presidenta” and her involvement with the American entrepreneur is a critique of Madrid politics and another reference to greed leading up to and through the crisis of 2008. However, by including the agreement with Shedelton, the issue of the use of power to exert influence extends from the local Madrid milieu to the United States. During the negotiations for the actual EuroVegas deal, Sheldon Adelson demanded multiple legal exemptions from certain taxes and laws, such as the smoking ban in public areas existing in Spain since 2010. He was denied, causing him to withdraw from negotiations (“EuroVegas’ giant casino plan”). Through the novel’s focus on Sheldon’s dealings with “La Presidenta,” it denounces the Madrileñan government’s consideration of giving in to the pressure of the American’s requests that could have led to the significant negative impact on the city. Furthermore, it criticizes the

⁶⁶ See the article from *El Mundo*: “Aguirre, tras el infierno de Bombay: ‘Salí descalza pisando charcos de sangre.’”

⁶⁷ Ana Botella is known for her speech in 2013 when she said, “There is nothing quite like a relaxing cup of café con leche in the Plaza Mayor.” The speech was made to the Olympic Committee as part of Madrid’s failed bid to host the games. It became an Internet sensation, and Botella, the laughingstock of much of the Spanish and global community. She is also the wife of former Prime Minister José María Aznar. <http://www.elreferente.es/madrid-2020-juegos-olimpicos/a-relaxing-cup-of-cafe-con-ana-botella-25491>

greed of foreign, and specifically, American entrepreneurs who attempted to bully their way into the Spanish market and request certain privileges that had always been refused to others. The references to neoliberalism, commercial greed and the speculative real estate market also underscore the United States' involvement with the crisis and the housing bubble burst, singling it out as one of the main contributors to the economic collapse.

Another significant motif in the novel is the comparison between Madrid and Pompeii. The novel equates the crisis in Madrid and the EuroVegas proposal to the volcanic eruption and obliteration of Pompeii. Mount Vesuvius becomes a symbolic representation of Madrid and Spain in the context of the recession; tensions are bubbling below the surface, primed for an explosive disaster. Within this analogy, Mount Vesuvius is the world-wide economic crisis and its fallout, combined with the rampant mismanagement and corruption preexisting in Spain.

The protagonist notes the “conexión entre Pompeya y Madrid como ciudades apocalípticas, detenidas en la catástrofe” (68). They are two cities, one dead and one alive. However, is Madrid or Pompeii the living city? As Folguera points out,

Me interesaba relacionar las dos ciudades porque Pompeya es una paradoja; está más viva que nunca porque murió en un día, y como está congelada en su muerte, la sentimos viva. Madrid es todo lo contrario; es la ciudad que sobrevive una y otra vez a pesar de que la intenten ignorar, acorralar y destruir. Siempre se habla de la vitalidad de Madrid. Con EuroVegas se pretendía un proyecto que alteraba profundamente su identidad; se quería convertir en una especie de Pompeya, ciudad frívola, de casinos, vacaciones... (García “María”)

A disaster is often an unforeseen event, and even the protagonist notes that the citizens of Pompeii did not anticipate the volcanic eruption. Similarly, before the crisis hit, Spaniards did not predict the impending calamity, as evidenced by the earlier mentioned

“Champions League” comment made by then Prime Minister Zapatero. Through the comparison of Pompeii and Madrid, the novel warns that with the EuroVegas project, Madrid is heading towards an inevitable and apocalyptic catastrophe.

Moreover, narrative elements in the novel underscore the collective suffering as a result of the crash. The protagonist is unnamed, pointing to the universality of her character. She represents crisis as a common social reality and the reader sees him/herself through her anonymity. The protagonist’s frequent switch in narration between first and second person adds another layer of crisis and identity. Blurriness between the two voices occurs when the protagonist begins narrating from her point of view in first person but then changes to second person, using “tú.” The reader is left perplexed about the identity of the mysterious “tú,” and it is not until the end of the novel when it is revealed that the entire story is the protagonist’s narration to her aborted child. This chilling discovery elicits an eerie sensation and reinforces the themes of absence, death, trauma, and crisis. The protagonist’s graphic description of the blood of her dead fetus might conjure a variety of feelings within the reader, ranging from disgust, indignation, and fear, to perhaps sympathy and compassion—yet another example of artistic power to engender emotion. The protagonist chooses to abort her child, and although not all of her internal motives are shared, she expresses to Hannah that she is not financially able to support a child. Even more concerning is that her economic situation is so dire that she is unable to pay for the abortion and relies on Hannah for monetary aid (213). In the protagonist’s view, the destruction caused by the crisis forces her to contribute to the grotesque, catastrophic situation herself.

Art and Protest

In addition to theme and plot, another way in which the novel represents protest is through the metacommentary. One of the main narrative threads involving protest is a concentration on theatre as a means of denouncement in various forms. First, the protagonist works at *El Teatrino*, a local theatre in the Lavapiés neighborhood where she organizes and schedules performances. The location of the theatre in that particular neighborhood is significant as it could be a reference to some of the theatres there at the present moment in Madrid with similar aims, such as El Teatro del Barrio. Since María Folguera is the director of El Teatro Circo Price, another theatre in nearby Embajadores, we can imagine her weaving autobiographical elements into the plot.

The motif of art, and more specifically, theatre as a protest mechanism is even more evident through the scheme the protagonist and Hannah devise to infiltrate and collaborate with the EuroVegas project's artistic initiatives in order to sabotage the plan. They find a way to assist in a theatrical production as a part of an inaugural ceremony to celebrate EuroVegas. The protagonist expresses disgust at working with the organization, even if she has ulterior motives to do so:

Estamos colaborando con EuroVegas. ¡Qué asco! On the other hand, siempre quise trabajar en Las Vegas, que es pesadilla absoluta. Como artista es lugar inspirador. En América nunca entraba en contacto con gente así imposible; en cambio aquí fue solo. Creo que voy a documentar todo lo que pasa y luego haré una pieza sobre eso. Me gusta esta etapa clandestina que vivo. (201)

Despite her repulsion at working with EuroVegas, the protagonist's observation of Las Vegas as an artistically inspirational place resonates with Matei Calinescu's theories on kitsch. He contends that the term has several meanings, which range from a reference to the imitation of art from the past, such as the avant-garde (231), or as an allusion to art

that is deemed to be in bad taste, for the masses (234). Las Vegas could be termed a “kitschy” city, known for its tackiness and over-the-top spectacles with the end goal of creating financial revenue. It is a reinvention of past art, and much like kitsch, the theatrical performance that the two women work on for EuroVegas is a tacky recreation of past art. For example, the play traces historical legends and myths, beginning with Rome and ending in the present with the EuroVegas plan. ““La idea es inspirarnos en la antigua Roma, ¿me sigues?’ Se entusiasmaba el coreógrafo” (208). The play positions EuroVegas as the pinnacle of civilization, a place so wonderful that it belongs among history’s legendary cities.

Quedaban tres horas para que el público tomara el patio de butacas y comenzara *EuroVegas, una Tierra de Leyenda*. Así se había titulado el espectáculo. En el programa de mano, el coreógrafo declaraba que en tan sólo una hora recorreríamos los mayores mitos de la Historia para celebrar todo aquello que somos, y que hoy nos une. Algo así. Había otro párrafo de la Presidenta, y otro de Shedelton, declarándose su amor muto. Cada texto estaba en inglés y en castellano. «En mis frecuentes viajes a España—glosaba Shedelton—he aprendido a conocer su sol, su maravillosa gastronomía, sus gentes. Estoy feliz de poder iniciar aquí una nueva etapa para Vegas Corporation, en el que ya es su séptimo establecimiento en el mapa mundial». (239)

The ironic commentary made by Shedelton boasts of the conquests of the Vegas Corporation and compares them to historical empires, such as Rome. The connections to Rome are significant; through the exploration of the past leading up to the current moment in Madrid, the theatrical piece underscores the consequences of greed and corruption. The effects of the 2008 crisis in Spain are akin to the decline of Rome. Spain is yet another example of a once-grand empire in collapse.

In addition to the theatrical performance and its paralleling of past and present disasters, I consider Hannah’s sculptures to be the most significant artistic enactment of

protest in the novel. Using the protagonist as her mold, the two women fashion statues to resemble corpses from the Pompeii catastrophe. It is noteworthy that the protagonist's body serves as the model for the corpse statues. She, like the citizens of Pompeii, is also suffering a crisis, experiencing the deterioration of her crumbling environment, decaying like a corpse herself.

Los rostros parecían forjados a golpes de tierra. Sin ojos, sin rasgos, pero aun así ahí estaban las formas de la cara, las manos agarrotadas, las curvas del cráneo inclinadas bajo el peso de la lluvia de piedras. Y sin embargo, saltaba a la vista, todas eran yo, multiplicada en una galería de cuerpos. Y en todas ellas en posición de defensa, de sufrimiento. Se me dio la vuelta al estómago, sentí que me mareaba. (129)

When the statues are complete, Hannah, the protagonist, and “tu padre” place the bodies throughout strategic locations in Madrid. The bodies are designed to shock, strike fear, disgust, and cause indignation amongst those who view them, and, in turn, generate awareness and fuel action towards change. In this vein, Hannah's artwork employs one of the functions of emotions as performance, outlined by Delgado, Fernández, and Labanyi (4). Hannah's artwork was created with the intention to provoke feelings within those who see them, creating disruption and repugnance, urging the viewers to act against the EuroVegas plan.

Curiously, Hannah's character is the literary construction of a real American artist and sculptor, Hannah Wilke (d. 1993), who also employed her art to create shock. Strongly committed to the feminist movement, her renowned work, known as “el arte del coño” consisted of utilizing materials to mold and sculpt vaginas. She designed her art with the intention of provoking reactions in others and to serve as a mode of protest for women's rights (Folguera, “Transcorporeal” 86). Likewise, Hannah in the novel also produces sculptures designed to grab attention and ignite contemplation leading to

change. In an interview I conducted with María Folguera in June 2018, the author emphasizes that she based Hannah's sculptures on Wilke's ability to create disruption through art; she adds that Wilke's confident and almost narcissistic nature were paramount in the creation of Hannah in the novel. Hannah's art, then, is a reference to artwork that rouses emotion in others and urges its viewers to act. Contrastingly, María Folguera, when asked if she created her novel as a form of protest added:

Fíjate que no me sentía pensando en términos de protesta, sino en términos de expresión íntima de miedo porque tenía miedo de que eso sucediera: sentía algo emocional y visceral. A lo mejor se hubiera construido EuroVegas y hubiera sido bueno para Madrid y dentro de 30 años mi novela hubiera envejecido mal. Pero la visión de EuroVegas generaba mucha ansiedad.

Folguera's response underscores the fact that emotions fuel protest, whether deliberately or not. While Hannah's art (both in the novel and that of Hannah Wilke) was designed as a mechanism of protest, Folguera wrote the novel chiefly as an emotional response, driven by fear and anxiety. All of these artistic enactments, both fictional and non-fictional, demonstrate that art can evoke emotion, reaction, and dissent.⁶⁸

The novel contains much self-reflexivity and a strong "meta" component. On a primary level, the novel's theme is a form of protest, based on protagonists who denounce the financial crisis, corruption, and the EuroVegas proposal. Furthermore, the composition, publication, and reading of the novel itself are other acts of critique. Within the frame of these protest mechanisms, there are additional meta-components involving artistic enactments. The novel itself is a piece of art, and *within* the novel, the protagonist's place of employment is a theatre where theatrical pieces are performed.

⁶⁸ Some of Hannah Wilke's best-known works include *S.O.S.: Starification Object Series* (1974-82) <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/102432> and *Needed-Erase Her* (1976), vaginal sculptures created out of erasers <https://collections.lacma.org/node/212413>.

Additionally, the protagonist participates in a theatrical production that is designed to be an act of rebellion. Further references to art are included, such as the Pompeii museum exhibit that inspires both the protagonist and Hannah to create the sculptures that they place around the city, yet again, another piece of art designed to criticize and urge action. It would seem that the novel can be likened to a Russian “matryoshka” stacking doll filled with its layers of art as protest, drawing on the performative and emotional framework outlined earlier in the chapter.

Space

Space constitutes another component of protest in the novel. One of the most important factors that Hannah and the protagonist consider when carrying out their plan is *where* to place the sculptures with the aim to “poblar Madrid de cuerpos visiblemente desesperados” (131). In order to trigger feelings and reactions, the protagonists decide to place them in highly visible areas of the city, including Retiro Park, Malasaña, and a church: “Recorrimos cada uno de los puntos indicados por Hannah y allí dejamos caer al personaje asignado: el que se apoya sobre el codo, en medio de la plaza de Malasaña. La pareja que se abraza, en la puerta del Centro de Arte. Fueron muchas y tardamos toda la noche” (132).

Due to the strategic public exhibition of the statues, “tu padre” and the protagonist worry about potential criminal accusations against them if they are discovered. The protagonist says to Hannah:

Hannah te digo que se va a complicar. ¿Qué vas a hacer, no reclamar nunca esta acción? ¿Y si te descubren de todas maneras? Vas a tener que dar explicaciones, y seguramente pagar una multa como mínimo. Has entrado en territorio militar, y has dejado un bulto sospechoso. Eso es un delito. Y

si sales a la luz, vas a tener que explicar que no eres del Comando Mateo Morral. (146)

Hannah is not concerned because her intent is to provoke disruption in the city; however, to her dismay, the sculptures are barely noticed. The ones placed in Malasaña almost seem as if they belong there because of the neighborhood's reputation as an alternative, "hip" location. The only sculptures that do receive some sort of attention are the ones that had been placed in front of the church:

Aunque habían suprimido el sonido, pudieron seguir perfectamente la noticia urgente del día gracias a los subtítulos. «Suspendida misa en la Iglesia Castrense de Madrid por aparición de objeto sospechoso». En el portón de madera se arracimaban bomberos y policías, y un reportero imprimía con sus labios mudos sentidas palabras en el micrófono, por lo que su semblante daba a entender. (140)

The limited reaction, other than the attention given by local authorities and the press to the church, emphasizes that in order to create disruption, one must target institutions of power. Nonetheless, the nebulous results of the plan raise questions regarding the effectiveness of certain types of protest. Curiously, only the statues at the church were noticed. I will return to this issue at the end of this section.

Despite the statues' limited impact, the occupation of the city with the chiseled representations of the Pompeiians echoes the *acampada sol* movement during the 15-M protests. Returning to Jonathan Snyder's discussion on space, he argues that when the protestors occupied the city on 15-M, the city served as its stage for protest. He notes that "the 15-M demonstrations likewise *transformed* the urban environment through oppositional practices that released the potential for common production in assembly, experimental problem solving, and concerted action toward change" (2). In much the same vein, by occupying the city with the statues, Madrid becomes the stage for

Hannah's protest masterpieces. The bodies both emulate the effects of crisis and catastrophe, and their presence, as Butler suggests, lays claim to the city to seize power. However, the lack of attention they receive points to the difficulty in mobilizing people, suggesting that perhaps some methods are better than others. Another possibility is that the figures were not radical enough, or not explicit enough, resembling modern sculpture with no more than an aesthetic intent or function.

Los primeros días de Pompeya's framing of the dual entities—those with power and those struggling to achieve it—are manifested in other spaces within the novel, such as the American Embassy. The reference to the United States, which arguably began the recession with the mortgage crisis and bursting of the housing bubble, alludes to the main power source and roots of the economic collapse that, like a contagion, infected the rest of the globe; economies are interconnected and part of the networked system. Likewise, it is at the American embassy where the protagonist begins to feel ill. Although at the time she is unaware that her nauseated state is due to her pregnancy, she leaves abruptly. Her friend, Adriano, becomes worried about her, “¿Adónde va usted doña performer?” (188), but later becomes concerned that she leaves rudely without acknowledging the American diplomats: “Pero ¿cómo te vas a ir así, sin despedirte? Pasa a despedirte” (189) and “Estás hablando con personas importantes, y si desapareces de esta manera pierdes una oportunidad. Es que parece que vives en otro planeta” (189). His worries demonstrate the continued power hold of the United States, emphasizing that the protagonist should impress the Americans in order to achieve some sort of opportunity or gain. Adriano's acquiescence to the Americans and treatment of them like a member of royalty is another parallel to the Roman Empire, and more specifically, its inevitable fall. It also gestures to

the familiar theme of Spain's reliance on other countries for economic aid, such as the European Union for the bailout deal.⁶⁹

Spatial references in the novel, in addition to signaling power sources, also point to discontent over the capitalist, consumer system and the ensuing protests. For example, the protagonist and "tu padre" live in an almost abandoned apartment on Calle de Carmen, which, as mentioned earlier, is one of the principal arteries connecting la Puerta del Sol and Callao. These areas are significant because they are known in Madrid as the main commercial areas of the city, always bustling with tourists and shoppers. Moreover, the location near Sol is emblematic of the overall clamor for protest, as Sol was the main hub of 15-M. The place of residence of the protagonist, "tu padre", and Hannah, then, becomes representative of the heart of the protests and even likens them to the *indignados* because they live and prepare their protests near the very same location.

However, the absence of people in their apartment building suggests other possibilities. The building is located in one of the busiest commercial areas of the city, yet the nonexistence of others is unsettling. When the protagonist and "tu padre" learn that a new neighbor has moved in, at first they think she could be a ghost because they hardly ever see anyone in the building. The emptiness inside the structure in a commercial zone represents the crisis in Spain. The exterior of the building is beautiful, it is located in a major touristic area buzzing with people on the street, but on the inside, it

⁶⁹ Spain's acceptance of the bailout deal after the 2008 crash differs from other moments in the country's history. For example, Spain, during the post-Civil War period was the only Western European country that stayed out of the Marshall Plan. The economic aid, which provided 13 billion dollars to other countries in Western Europe, was instrumental in post-war recovery. Thus, Spain did not enjoy the benefits of it and went through a period of autarky and "los años de hambre", not engaging in international trade from 1940-1958 (Carrasco-Gallego 92).

is empty.⁷⁰ Equating this phenomenon to the crisis-suffering Spaniards, many, too, created a similar façade of luxury: the ornate capitalist narrative of success on the outside, yet a decaying and empty space, falling apart on the inside.

Similarly, the cover of the book also demonstrates the link between the crash and the housing crisis. It features a graphic design of the emblematic Edificio España, transformed into a volcano, much like Mount Vesuvius, erupting into the Madrid sky. The connotations of this image are significant because Edificio España, when first constructed in 1953, was the tallest building in Spain, and “was a symbol of prosperity during decades of Franco’s regime” (“Edificio España”). In 2007 renovations began on the building, under the financing of el Banco Santander. However, due to the economic fallout of the crisis, construction was halted in 2009, leaving the building in the midst of reform, and abandoned (“Edificio España”).⁷¹ Other works of cultural production have highlighted Edificio España for its representation of the financial crash in Spain, such as the eponymous documentary by Victor Moreno, *Edificio España*. Likewise, Jonathan Snyder analyzes another artistic enactment, a performance in 2012 called *Los encargados* by Santiago Sierra and Jorge Galindo. It was filmed in downtown Madrid and “simulates a presidential motorcade to denounce the complicity of state politics and capital interests in the production of Spain’s recent crises as the very result of the Transición” (Snyder

⁷⁰ I have not been able to verify if many buildings are indeed vacated in this area of Madrid. However, in July 2018, I walked down the street and saw many “For Sale” or “For Rent” signs, indicating that there were multiple, available spaces. The exaggerated detail in the novel could be highlighted for thematic and symbolic effect.

⁷¹ The entire renovation and abandonment of the building is detailed in the 2012 documentary by Victor Moreno, *Edificio España*. The documentary highlights that many of the workers who started with the renovation of the building were immigrants. It underscores the absence and haunting space of the building and suggests links to the failure of Spain’s economy as a result of greed. Curiously, Banco Santander had initially approved the film’s release, but later blocked it for fifteen months. Susan Larson has worked on a study about this documentary.

116). While I will not study this specific artistic enactment, Snyder points to a particularly useful scene that features Edificio España:

In the opening sequence, the camera travels twice past the boarded-up Edificio España located in Plaza de España. Traces of graffiti are marked visibly on the wooden slats that cover the ground-floor windows. Although the camera does not show viewers much more, Madrid residents will recognize this square as replete with empty buildings today due to property speculation and investment losses, some of them occupied by squatters. Despite the monumental stateliness of the avenue's buildings, the shot of Plaza España serves as a subtle reminder that behind and along the façade of Gran Vía lie the ruins of property speculation. (120)

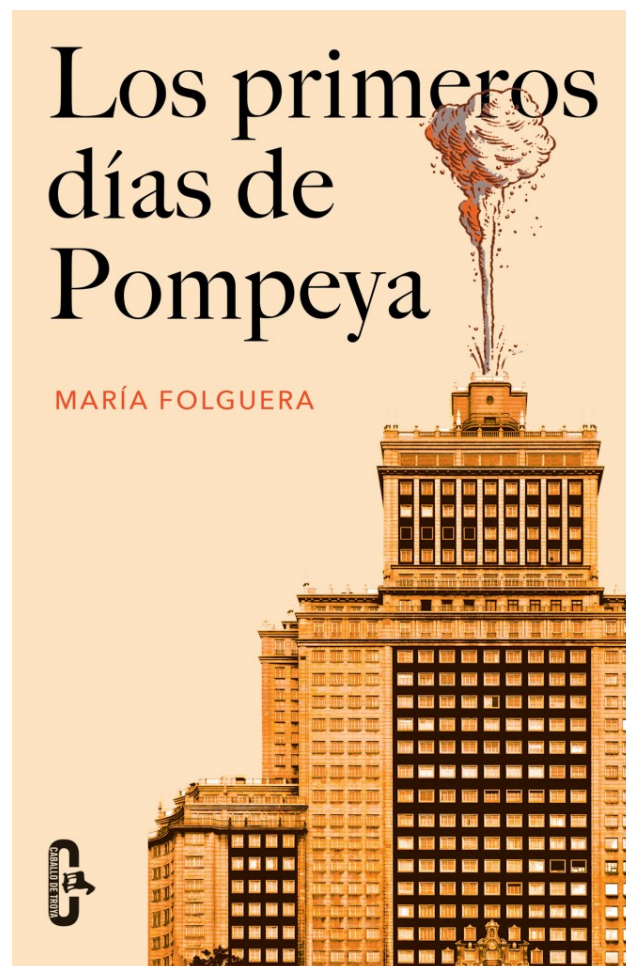


Fig. 30: The cover of *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, Edificio España as an erupting volcano.

The same underpinnings occur within the design of the cover of *Los primeros días de Pompeya*. The building, converted into a volcano, is another reference to Madrid and

Pompeii as cities with parallel catastrophes. Madrid may not be in danger due to a physical volcano, but the cataclysmic effects of the crisis, spurred in part by speculation and greed, have led Spain to its own type of disaster. The design is symbolic of Spain's impending doom if the country continues down the same path of rampant speculation, corruption, and greed.

Ambiguous Ending: Who can Protest?

The novel serves as a form of protest through theme, its use of art, and references to space. However, its ambiguous ending prompts a questioning over the efficacy of art as part of the solution to the problems of the crisis. For example, the statues receive some, but limited attention, and the protagonist and Hannah ultimately do not carry out their plan to disrupt the EuroVegas theatrical production. In the final passage, the protagonist stumbles home through the Madrid streets, exhausted and distraught after her abortion and failure to rebel in the theatre. The dismal and nebulous ending of the novel certainly raises questions surrounding the effectiveness of protests: Can art serve as a form of protest? Who has the power to protest? The novel seems to suggest a pessimistic view regarding its ability to stimulate change. For one thing, the only characters who are able to dissent are those that already have access to power. Judith Butler acknowledges the same issue in her study on performance and protest:

The question of how performativity links with precarity might be summed up in these more important questions: How does the unspeakable population speak and make its claims? What kind of disruption is this within the field of power? And how can such populations lay claim to what they require in order to persist? (58)

Folguera notes that Hannah is able to produce her subversive art because she has the time and money; not everyone has the ability to do so. Additionally, Hannah is an American, another reference to the “imperial” power and subsequent leverage that the United States employs abroad. She is also a highly regarded, established, and financially well-off artist. She is one of the elite, and therefore has the *privilege* to be heard. Even the protagonist acknowledges this when she says:

Claro—repliqué, tuyas son las grandes acciones, tuyas las estrategias. Tú estás infiltrada porque quieres observarlos de cerca y hacer un proyecto que será todo un escándalo dentro de un año, en una galería de Los Ángeles. Yo en cambio estoy aquí porque tengo que pagar la factura de la luz, y punto. Yo también quiero ser imprevisible, no te jode. (247)

Thus, the novel questions *who* can protest and effectively and *why* they protest, underscoring that Hannah perhaps does so to feed her creative impulses and the protagonist, out of necessity and the desire to achieve a better life.

Furthermore, the actual successes of the protagonists’ artistic protests are blurry to say the least. As already mentioned, the sculptures do not incite the shock that the characters had originally intended. The EuroVegas inauguration ceremony goes off without a hitch, and the play that traces history throughout the Roman Empire is performed without any interruption. The failed protest plot either suggests that the characters’ plan was futile or that it is nearly impossible to revolt triumphantly against power structures. In response to the protagonist’s disappointment over their inability to carry out their plan, Hannah says, “No te lo tomes así. EuroVegas va a existir contigo o sin ti. Ya existen manifestaciones en contra de EuroVegas, ya existe gente que denuncia y que protesta. Tú sola, hoy, ¿qué puedes hacer?” (245) Hannah’s contradictory statement raises questions as to why she spent so much time and effort crafting her protest plan if

she never actually believed in its ability to foster change. It also urges an examination of artistic denouncement as a whole and its influence as a response to the 2008 crisis. As

María Folguera stated in our interview:

Yo digo que precisamente me interesaba ese final ambiguo porque no veo solución. Me ha pasado también en esta nueva novela que tiene un final ambiguo: formo parte de esto pero no me gusta y no puedo hacer nada. Y sé que genera sensación de frustración para muchos lectores pero no lo puedo evitar. Para mí lo más sincero es la ambigüedad.

There may not be a clear solution to the problems of the crisis, and perhaps art itself is unable to stimulate concrete change. What is certain, however, is that when people view a performance or read a novel, it makes them reflect. This thinking, in turn, can lead to actions and change. *Los primeros días de Pompeya* demonstrates that art, although it may not rouse the shock or reception desired, begins a dialogue. I will return to this idea at the end of the chapter after discussing the other artistic manifestations of protest.

Theatre and El Teatro del Barrio

Performance as protest and references to theatre are central motifs in *Los primeros días de Pompeya*. The novel serves as the perfect bridge, then, to examine performance as a mode of protest within theatrical productions themselves. The 2008 recession energized interest in political activism in the arts with surges in the creation and representation of plays as a response to the crisis in alternative and collective theatre companies (Bezhanova xxxii). Some of the theatrical productions that have centered on political denouncement and the crash include *El tesorero* by José Ignacio Tofé, Andrés Lima's *Los Máchez*, an adaptation of *Macbeth* (Vélez Sainz 57), *39 Defaults* by Mar

Gómez Glez,⁷² and the earlier seen *Iphigenia en Vallecas*, María Hervás's adaptation of Gary Owen's *Iphigenia in Splott*. Given the scope of plays concentrating on the same theme, it would be difficult to analyze all of them here; it is a topic that deserves a thorough examination and provides ample material for a future study. However, it is essential to address these productions in this project given the recent trend in contemporary Spanish theatre to represent actual, current events, and especially topics pertaining to the 2008 financial meltdown.

Many post-crisis plays allow the spectator to contemplate the current events unfolding around them (García, "El Gran Teatro"). Vélez Sainz points out that many of these types of productions follow Peter Weiss's style of politically engaged theatre (62). This type of theatre, known as *el teatro documento*, explores "los acontecimientos por medio de la presentación de un 'documento base' que le otorga un prisma objetivo, aspecto que combina con un compromiso ideológico claro y abierto y una tendencia al sujeto comunal" (53). One of the pioneer theatres implementing *el teatro documento* is Madrid's El Teatro del Barrio. Many of the theatre's plays address the financial crisis and denounce critical issues such as corruption, greed, and precarity (Vélez Sainz 54-55). To explore theatre and its relationship to the 2008 crash, in this chapter I will analyze the productions of El Teatro del Barrio as an exemplary case of performance as a form of protest.

El Teatro del Barrio, located in Madrid's Lavapiés neighborhood, was founded in 2013 as a direct protest response to the crisis. It is a local theatre that utilizes art to

⁷² See Anthony Pasero-O'Malley's excellent study on semiotics and Spanish theatre for a more detailed analysis of *39 Defaults*.

scrutinize critical political and social concerns; more importantly, it presents alternatives to help overcome them. Alberto Rodríguez points out that “el objetivo de esta cooperativa, que sostiene el motor del Teatro del Barrio, es el de subirse a un movimiento social que se está generando y creando a raíz de la crisis económica y de valores que actualmente asolan nuestra sociedad.” Through educational initiatives, such as the “Universidad del Barrio,” the collective theatre group holds workshops and discussions on matters pertinent to the crisis to create awareness and stimulate political activism. It employs culture to educate citizens and, in turn, develops artistic productions as a tool for protest. To best describe the mission of the theatre, it is useful to cite the 2013 inaugural speech by its founder, Alberto San Juan. San Juan is also a director, actor, and activist in many of the productions:⁷³

La voluntad con que abrimos el Teatro del Barrio es abiertamente política: participar en el movimiento ciudadano que ya está construyendo otra forma de convivir. Este teatro nace del hambre de realidad. La realidad tiene siempre algo maravilloso: por terrible que sea, puede ser transformada. Si se conoce. Ya ésta es la vocación del proyecto: saber qué está pasando aquí, porque no nos gusta y queremos cambiarlo. Este teatro pretende ser una asamblea permanente donde mirar juntos el mundo para, juntos, imaginar otro donde la buena vida sea posible.

Nuestros medios para hacer política son la cultura y la fiesta. Producciones teatrales propias, la Universidad del Barrio y las, felizmente interminables, noches de baile.

No sólo se busca contribuir a entender la capacidad de los grandes intereses privados para dominar las vidas de todos o el funcionamiento del poder institucional al servicio de esos intereses privados. También hablar de las alternativas que los ciudadanos (a veces, a través de organizaciones estructuradas y muchas otras veces, al margen de ellas) hemos construido a

⁷³ Prior to founding El Teatro del Barrio, Alberto San Juan formed part of the theatre group, *Animalario*, where he collaborated with actors such as Willy Toledo, Javier Gutiérrez, and Andrés Lima. The group began in 1996 when they performed San Juan’s first play, *Animalario*. This group’s objective also focused on political denouncement, and San Juan has carried on the group’s mission at El Teatro del Barrio (Vélez Sainz 57-58).

lo largo de nuestra historia y las alternativas que hoy mismo se están creando.

Parece, al fin, extendida la idea de que el sistema que ordena nuestra convivencia, no sólo no vale para nuestra felicidad, sino que directamente nos aniquila. Pero quizá no está tan extendida la idea de que podemos inventarnos otra cosa porque tenemos la imaginación suficiente. Puede parecer denso o aburrido, pero resulta todo lo contrario: no hay entretenimiento más apasionante que la realidad. Puede hacer llorar, pero seguro, porque así lo queremos, vamos a reírnos.

El Teatro del Barrio no es lugar para partidos políticos ni estructura institucional ninguna. Sí para los movimientos sociales. Toda iniciativa ciudadana que luche por los derechos de las personas tendrá aquí un lugar.

¿Por qué la fiesta? El sistema nos golpea con miseria, fealdad, depresión. Queremos responder con belleza, con alegría. Una revolución sin sentido del humor seguramente está condenada a traicionarse a sí misma, y en cualquier caso, es un coñazo. La fase de desarrollo actual del capitalismo, llamada crisis (como se podría llamar: guerra contra el ser humano), está expulsando a miles y miles de personas fuera del sistema, arrojándolas al vacío.

Existe la posibilidad de encontrarnos en el vacío, y después de tanto tiempo, unos con otros, decidir juntos, al fin, cómo queremos vivir y hacer una fiesta para celebrar que ya hemos empezado.

Seguiremos informando.

Alberto San Juan

[Este texto fue escrito para la inauguración del proyecto del Teatro del Barrio en diciembre 2013] (15-17)

In these opening remarks, San Juan outlines two key objectives; the first, as he underscores, is political.⁷⁴ The theatre's mission is to inform the public about the reality of the critical issues facing Spanish society with the goal of galvanizing a transformation. Through education and entertainment, San Juan believes that the theatre can encourage

⁷⁴ El Teatro del Barrio's political mission has not been without controversy. In 2017, it supported the Catalan independence movement, igniting much debate. It also created a stir with its production of the play *La bruja y don Cristóbal*, performed by the Títeres desde Abajo theatre company ("Teatro del barrio", *ABC*).

reflection and engagement, leading to change. A second goal is to foster celebration.⁷⁵

Likening the theatre to a “fiesta,” through humor, the theatrical productions at El Teatro del Barrio aim to rouse a revolution while providing a brief respite for the spectators to cope over the longer haul. This study will analyze El Teatro del Barrio’s works through the lens of these two objectives: the plays’ contribution to protest through performance by *informing* and simultaneously *provoking* an emotional response in the audience to incite indignation and inspire action.

With these goals in mind, El Teatro del Barrio has staged multiple productions that bring contemporary Spanish social and political issues to the fore. Some noteworthy plays that deal specifically with the crisis include *Ruz Bárcenas*, *Autorretrato de un joven capitalista español*, *Confesión de un expresidente que ha llevado a su país a la crisis*, and *Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español*.⁷⁶ To best address the performance and protest mechanism of these plays, this analysis will first discuss cases in which the plays have created a social impact. Then, it will closely examine one of these productions, *Masacre*. The *Masacre* analysis will explore how the textual and performative features of the play educate and inform the public to provoke shock and emotion, stimulating reflection, conversation, and ultimately, protest.

Before beginning the textual analysis, it would be useful to discuss the Teatro del Barrio’s plays’ social impacts. One of the best-known examples of *el teatro documento* within the theatre company’s repertoire is the play *Ruz Bárcenas*. Written by Jordi

⁷⁵ Similar to Horace’s *prodesse et delectare*, to instruct and delight from *Ars Poetica* (19 BC).

⁷⁶ Alberto San Juan’s *Mundo obrero* premiered in the Teatro Español in Madrid on October 3, 2018. Although not a production of El Teatro del Barrio, this play, like *Masacre*, stars San Juan and Marta Calvó, along with Luis Bermejo and Pilar Gómez. It takes the spectator through the history of capitalism in Spain from the perspective of the working class.
<https://www.teatroespanol.es/mundo-obrero>

Casanovas and directed by Alberto San Juan, it premiered on May 23, 2014. The production is the performance of the actual, documented legal testimony from Luis Bárcenas, ex-treasurer of the Partido Popular (PP) before Judge Pablo Ruiz on July 15, 2013. In the testimony, Bárcenas confesses that indeed the PP maintained a “Caja B,” a slush fund that made illegal payments to high-ranking members of the party (Vélez Sainz 60). The storyline itself could be a fictional narrative about corruption in the political realm, but it is not a contrived tale; it is real, and it is a performance of the *actual* transcription of the case. The “ficha técnica” of the play states:

No se ha añadido ninguna información que no esté contenida en la transcripción. Solamente se han modificado, recortado o reestructurado algunos fragmentos. Todas y cada una de las palabras y de los nombres que se dicen y se pueden escuchar en este espectáculo, se dijeron y se pudieron escuchar el 15 de julio de 2013 en la Audiencia Nacional.
(<https://www.teatrodelbarrio.com/ruz-barcenas-2/>)

The play’s text, consisting of authentic historical documents, adds to the informative component of the work. The selective editing referenced in the *ficha técnica* creates a dramatic and emotional effect that amplifies and provokes indignation amongst the spectators. It fuses documented events with performance. Consequently, as Vélez Sainz notes, it is important to analyze “cómo juega el texto teatral con el documento y cuál es el proceso por el que se varía del documento histórico al literario” (60).⁷⁷

The play received wide acclaim and remained running in the theatre for two years.

Reviews from media outlets such as *El Mundo* praised the performance and acting:

⁷⁷ *El teatro documento* has been used to examine and protest other polemical topics in Spain. Jordi Casanovas has written a new play utilizing the framework of *Ruz Bárcenas*, titled *Jauria*. Like *Ruz Bárcenas*, the play is a reenactment of the court testimonies from the five members of “La Manada,” the group that sexually assaulted a young woman at the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, 2016. Several high-profile Spanish actors perform in the play, including the aforementioned María Hervás, Álex García, and Martiño Rivas. The play will premiere in the Teatro Pavón Kamikaze in March 2019 (García “El gran teatro”).

“Prácticamente no se mueven, el juego dramático se consigue con la contención de sus gestos, los silencios, la cadencia de las respuestas y las preguntas... Hasta provocar la risa en el espectador y, a veces, incluso la indignación y sorpresa” (Alvarado). Its success led to the 2015 film adaptation of the play titled *B, la película* (Aguilar). At the outset of the film project it relied on crowd funding to create the production, and ended up receiving three Goya nominations (Pedraza).

Ruz Bárcenas is perhaps the best-known play from the collective, but other productions from el Teatro del Barrio have had similar impacts. For example, the denouncement of certain political and economic institutions in the plays has created a backlash on behalf of some of the politicians they attack, leading to censorship attempts. In April of 2018, the Partido Popular (PP) in Granada tried to ban the performance of *Autorretrato de un joven capitalista español* in the municipal theatre of Pinos Puente. According to *El País*, the members of the PP “acusaron a la institución provincial y al ayuntamiento del municipio, gobernado por el PSOE, de ponerse ‘al servicio de la ideología más radical y sectaria’ al ‘programar’ en el teatro municipal de Pinos Puente la citada obra de teatro” (“Los actores apoyan”). These motions of attempted censorship speak to the influence the plays have had in terms of protesting and informing about corruption, creating concern among those in positions of power. The fear of the elite demonstrates that these theatrical productions indeed have the potential to stimulate protest of the masses, leaving those with power concerned over the threat of losing political, social, and economic authority.⁷⁸ The influence of these productions continues

⁷⁸ Motions of censorship are not limited to the theatre realm. Recently, there have been several cases in which artistic production has been censored, igniting concern about freedom of speech. One example includes “La semana trágica de la libertad de expresión” in February of 2018 in which Nacho Carretero’s novel *Fariña* was sequestered, the rapper Valtoryc was sentenced to

to create a ripple effect in Spain, with the theatre performing multiple socially rooted plays annually. In order to examine how the plays function as a protest mechanism, I will now move to the analysis of *Masacre* to discuss how the informative features of the play and its use of emotion spur protest.

Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español

Masacre: Una historia del capitalismo español (2017), by Alberto San Juan, premiered on February 28, 2017 at el Teatro del Barrio in Madrid, and, as its title suggests, traces the recent history of capitalism in Spain. It received praise from the press, with publications such as *El Diario* emphasizing its protest function: “De Botín a Aznar: las mil caras de Alberto San Juan para golpear al capitalismo” (Zas Marcos).

The plot begins at the end of the nineteenth century and moves through the entire twentieth century, and, as I proposed in the introduction, reveals that throughout Spain’s modern history, political, economic, and social power has remained in the hands of an elite few. The play warns that the past continues to repeat itself and emphasizes that the circumstances that led to the economic meltdown are not new. They are the same conditions that have plagued the lower classes of Spain for centuries. The protagonists, a nameless middle-class couple played by Alberto San Juan and Marta Calvó, lead the audience on a time-travel journey throughout Spain’s history, with appearances from real-life individuals connected to capitalism in the country, such as Francisco Franco, Carmen de Burgos, Emilio Botín, José María Aznar, Escrivá de Balaguer, Adolfo Suárez, Esther Koplowitz, and Ana Botella, among others.

prison, and the art exhibition “Presos políticos en la España contemporánea” was removed (Machuca).



Fig. 31: A promotional poster for *Masacre*. Source: <http://www.butacadeprimera.com/2018/03/teatro-masacre-en-teatro-del-barrio.html>

Following the thematic framework of *el teatro documento*, the play employs historical anecdotes and facts to underscore Spain’s legacy of corruption and subsequent need for revolution. It argues that the capitalist system and the elite rely on great tragedies—including the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship, and the 2008 crisis—to maintain the status quo. Although not included in the dramatic interpretation of the play, the prologue of the textual version of the script begins with a piece written by Isidro López of Podemos titled “El gobierno de la mezquindad no es eterno. (Una brevísima historia de la clase capitalista española).” The prologue sets the tone for the following dramatic performance and echoes the theme of economic injustice and political corruption: “En los últimos dos siglos ha habido pocas clases dominantes más

incompetentes y crueles que las clases dominantes españolas” (21). He describes critical moments such as the environment leading up to and during the Spanish Civil War, the Franco period, and the transition, underscoring the play’s main premise that the most recent crisis was a part of the same “machine” that stifles the Spanish working and middle classes. The piece culminates with a triumphant reference to the protests of 15-M and opens the textual version of the play.⁷⁹ This text was not included in the actual performance of the play, but only in the physical copy of the script.

Another significant consideration revealed from the script is that it contains few stage directions throughout its entirety. This could mean that perhaps San Juan utilized a different version when preparing the performance. It also suggests that San Juan and Calvó engage in a significant amount of improvisation in terms of movement throughout the stage. Furthermore, the lack of stage directions indicates an emphasis on the dialogue and documentary material in the text, which I will utilize as the main argument of the play’s function as an informing mechanism. The play’s structure is divided into 19 scenes consisting of flashbacks between the past and present.

Beginning in present-day Spain, the performance commences with an unnamed couple known as “señor” and “señora,” directly addressing the spectators. They are, as they emphasize repeatedly, a “typical” Spanish middle-class family with two children, living in a residential zone with a garden and pool. Their leisure activities involve spending evenings at *terrazas* below their building with neighbors, having tapas, and enjoying the relaxed, *madrileño* atmosphere. The façade of financial security and comfort

⁷⁹ Because there are no full-length videos available of the production, my analysis is largely based on the physical copy of the script and notes from a performance I attended in Madrid in June 2018. YouTube clips of the performance are also available through the Teatro del Barrio’s channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TuTeatroDelBarrio/search?query=masacre>

contrasts with their body language. Tense physical gestures, forced smiles, and nervous speech, suggest a different story. Adding to the thematic premise of capitalism, the protagonists reveal that they are employed in the financial sector:

SEÑORA: Pero no somos banqueros. Somos empleados de banca.

SEÑOR: Claro.

SEÑORA: Ayudamos a decidir qué hacer con el dinero. Dónde invertirlo.

Dependiendo del perfil del cliente, se plantea un tipo de operaciones más arriesgadas o más conservadoras.

SEÑOR: Movemos unas cantidades importantes.

SEÑORA: Millones de euros, si sumamos...

SEÑOR: Los niños están obsesionados con comprar. Todo el día quieren comprar. Y claro, hay que explicarles qué es el dinero. Que el dinero no lo regalan. (40)

This initial exchange of the play contains several key elements for further examination.

First, the characters' names are not revealed; they are identified as "señor" and "señora."

Their anonymity shifts the focus from their personal stories to the overarching theme of suffering among the middle class as a result of the economic meltdown and the disastrous history of capitalism in Spain. Much in a similar vein as the protagonist in *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, the lack of a specific identity allows them to serve as a universal representation of the Spanish population. The pair is, as they state, a "typical" Spanish couple, paralleling the identities of the audience, which would likely consist of a similar demographic that is able to attend a relatively inexpensive theatrical production.⁸⁰ This

⁸⁰ The theatre is a collective, but does charge admission for its plays; the ticket price for *Masacre* is 16 euros. The organization's "Política de precios" addresses this issue: "La política de precios ha sido uno de los grandes dilemas del proyecto. **Es un proyecto sin ánimo de lucro.** El proyecto se basa en un capital social creado por microaportaciones de sus socios, 100 euros por cada socio, y que nos permita afrontar los primeros pagos además de tener una capacidad de respuesta frente a cualquier imprevisto. El proyecto se ha desarrollado con un desembolso económico de 2.000 euros por parte del Consejo Rector, el resto han sido aportaciones no dinerarias a un banco de tiempo creado por todos los colaboradores promotores. Los precios establecidos en las entradas son los mínimos que hemos podido establecer para un plan de viabilidad con un 60% de ocupación, pagando con dignidad a todos los trabajadores que intervengan y asumiendo todos los gastos mínimos que tenemos que afrontar. Sabemos que no

degree of self-identification intensifies the connectivity between spectator and stage. Therefore, the events unfolding in the drama mirror what many members of the audience may be experiencing, permitting them to ponder their own situation during the crisis and providing catharsis. The intersection of the audience and protagonists echoes Jo Labanyi's argument regarding emotional competence, which requires "not only empathy with the emotions of others but also the ability to admit to one's own emotions, seen as the root of one's problems" ("Emotional" 232). The emotive connection between the audience and actors at the beginning of the play "sets the stage" for a more intense recognition between one and the other during the rest of the play. The couple reveals that they work in the financial sector but are quick to point out that they are not *banqueros*, but rather *empleados de banca*. They work *for* the bank, helping an elite few manage their money, but do not profit themselves.

After the opening scene in present-day Spain, the characters transform into historical figures and transport the audience through time. The scenes, ripe with facts and anecdotes, are as informative as a history lesson, but *performed* in a way that captivates the audience's attention. The roots of crisis in the past are interwoven with the present between each historical flashback when the action returns to the middle-class couple. Later it becomes apparent that their false smiles and exaggerated presentation of economic security were part of a façade masking their unraveling lives. They are in

son precios baratos para un proyecto que pretende tener carácter social, pero tan importante es la viabilidad económica como el que esté exento de ánimo de lucro. La cooperativa propone hacer precios especiales para grupos que no puedan permitirse pagar los precios estándar y que lo soliciten al Consejo Rector. Los posibles beneficios que puedan obtenerse se pondrán al servicio de la asamblea para su reinversión en el proyecto." (<https://www.teatrodelbarrio.com/full-width/precios/>)

massive debt, unable to pay for their apartment, and have marital troubles. Providing a relatable tale to the audience, they underscore the shame felt by many who are no longer able to partake of the luxuries they once could afford. Much like the previous analysis of the Edificio España in *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, the characters wear a false mask of security and happiness, when in reality they are declining into despair.

To provide an idea of the production's informative scope, I will describe some of the historical flashbacks. The first one occurs in the second scene, set between 1857 and 1936, and is titled "Prehistoria de la moderna economía española" It consists of an interaction between Conde de Arce, the founder of Banco de Bilbao, currently known as BBVA, and Carmen de Burgos, the first Spanish woman to become a professional journalist. Their conversation, much like an economic lecture in a university classroom, outlines the creation of the banking sector in Spain. The actors bring to life a mundane list of banks and facts through their jest and humor:

CONDE DE ARCE: En España todo el poder económico fue de la aristocracia terrateniente hasta mediados del siglo XIX, que es cuando comienza el capitalismo español. Y, a partir de entonces, los aristócratas se hacen banqueros, y los banqueros se hacen aristócratas y terratenientes. Porque vamos casando los hijos de unos y otros. Y también por mérito. A mí Franco me hace conde en 1950 porque eso era una forma de agradecer. De agradecer y de reconocer. Porque sin los bancos no es posible el progreso. El Santander ¿qué?

CARMEN DE BURGOS: El Banco de Santander también se creó en 1857.

CONDE DE ARCE: El Santander no fue nada hasta la victoria.

CARMEN DE BURGOS: En 1900 se crea el Banco Hispanoamericano.

CONDE DE ARCE: Correcto.

CARMEN DE BURGOS: En 1901 se crea el Banco de Vizcaya.

CONDE DE ARCE: Que también éramos nosotros. Si a los apellidos que esmaltaban el Banco de Bilbao se unían los del Vizcaya, encontrábamos todas las familias ilustres de la vida bilbaína. El mismo año de su fundación, el Vizcaya financió la creación de Hidroeléctrica Ibérica que hoy se llama Iberdrola.

CARMEN DE BURGOS: Cuando usted dice *hoy*, ¿se refiere al año 2017?

CONDE DE ARTECHE: Correcto.

Their banter continues, with Carmen de Burgos listing more companies and banks. Playing on *machista* stereotypes and perhaps referencing the current #metoo and #8 movements, the Conde de Arteche first assumes that Carmen is a secretary, then asks if she would like to dance with him, if she would hug him, and if she is a feminist. She ignores his advances and continues with her verbal catalogue of Spanish companies and banks.

CARMEN DE BURGOS: En 1918 se constituye el Banco Urquijo. Y en 1919 se crea el Banco Central. Así se completan los siete mayores bancos españoles del siglo XX.



Fig. 32: The Conde de Arteche dances with Carmen de Burgos as they list Spanish banking institutions. Source: <http://www.butacadeprimera.com/2018/03/teatro-masacre-en-teatro-del-barrio.html>

The farcical exchange continues, and the Count contributes to Carmen's list of banks, noting that she omitted some of the most important commercial and financial institutions:

CONDE DE ARTECHE: Que hoy son tres: BBVA, Grupo Santander y Caixabank.

CARMEN DE BURGOS: En los años 20, durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera, se crean Telefónica y CAMPSA, que hoy son Movistar y Repsol. También se crean las constructoras Huarte y Entrecanales, que hoy son OHL y ACCIONA. Es decir, los principales núcleos de poder económico en España en 2017 son empresas creadas cien años antes o más. Empresas vinculadas a familias que en algunos casos, hoy, un siglo después, siguen al frente del negocio. (46-47)

These long interactions underscore Vélez Sainz's assertion that San Juan's "obras, abiertamente comprometidas, establecen un modelo teatral que oscila entre lo ideológico y lo documental" (57). The monotonous listing of names of companies, banks, dates, and facts does not usually provide an enjoyable theatrical experience. In this case, the protagonists' skillful, entertaining, recitation accentuates the financial and political system as the main perpetrators of the economic collapse. These corrupt systems have remained very much unchanged throughout history. The impressive volume of information overwhelms and awes the spectator with the exorbitant number of powerful institutions that have remained in the hands of the ruling class. As the Conde de Arteché puts it, those who have power in companies and banks in the present are the same individuals who were the landowners in the past. The scene suggests that the feudal system and those in control have undergone transformations throughout history, but have never disappeared. The exchange sets up the rest of the play, presenting a list of facts regarding the Spanish financial and business sectors and revealing a legacy of corruption. It opens the eyes of the spectator and spurs indignation.

Other historical figures, such as Emilio Botín, President of Banco Santander, also explain the incestuous nature of the Spanish economy, describing the family ties of the bank:

BOTÍN: Presidente del Banco Santander desde 1950. Hijo de Emilio Botín y López, presidente del Banco de Santander en 1909. Padre de Emilio Botín Sanz de Sautuola y García de los Ríos, presidente del Banco de Santander a partir de 1986. Abuelo de Ana Patricia Botín Sanz de Sautuola O'Shea, presidenta del Banco de Santander a partir de 2014. El método está claro: tener bastantes hijos, esforzarse en prepararlos--ingenieros, abogados, economistas,...según las necesidades--, e introducirlos tempranamente en la empresa para poder delegar en ellos antes de desaparecer. (57)

The play aims to foster anger and discontent among the spectators through its seamless combination of historical facts in an entertaining and humorous fashion. As San Juan noted in his mission statement, his plays utilize humor as a weapon of indignation. One particularly comedic moment in the work is a scene involving Franco, played by Marta Calvó. Calvó, who employs a high-pitched tone to portray Franco's voice, stares in a single direction, unblinking, without moving her body. Her performance of the *generalísimo* mimics feebleness. Simultaneously, her ghostlike mannerisms point to the haunting presence that the dictator maintains in Spain. During the time of the production in the summer of 2018, the spectators would be even more attuned to Franco's lingering shadow over the country with ongoing debates about his exhumation from El Valle de los Caídos (Díez). Calvó brilliantly conveys the sinister, phantasmal Franco in a deprecating fashion. The resulting reaction to the Franco rendition in the audience was one of hysterical laughter, due to both the performance as well as her words.

FRANCO: Cuando yo muera, el orden permanecerá. Gracias a la institución más importante que habré consolidado.
ESCRIVÁ: El ejército.

FRANCO: No.

ESCRIVÁ: La iglesia.

FRANCO: No.

ESCRIVÁ: La banca.

FRANCO: No. La clase media española. Pedro Barrié de la Maza será conde de Fenosa por su enorme contribución al desarrollo de la economía española. Puede usted descansar. (64-65)

The Franco/Escrivá interaction emphasizes that the Spanish middle class will continue to carry the burden of hoisting up the aristocracy, perpetuating the order established by Franco. It suggests that Franco's legacy continues; the suffering middle class is an institution that *he* created. However, and more to the function of protest, it indicates that the middle class allows themselves to maintain their current position in society. The conversation, then, becomes a call to arms, rallying audience members to take action and alter the course of history.

The balance of the play continues with similar historical interactions, slowly building tension until the climax, which culminates in an emotional explosion. In the scene, a game show contestant played by San Juan is ordered to recite Spain's modern economic history in order to win the grand prize.⁸¹ He speaks with a measured, brisk rhythm to finish his speech in three minutes, and does so successfully. The monologue summarizes the tragic-comic situation of the country. It begins with the phrase, "La historia moderna de la economía española se compone de una guerra y tres milagros" (105), and ends with these desperate words:

Y en 2008, a partir de una nueva crisis internacional, vuelve a reventar. El paro se desboca, los derechos laborales y sociales se hunden, las familias deben más de lo que tienen y los salarios no les permiten afrontar sus deudas. ¿Qué milagro nos salvará esta vez? ¿Quién nos va a salvar? ¿Cómo vamos a salvarnos? ¿Cómo nos salvamos? ¿Cómo nos salvamos? (107)

⁸¹ Other plays dealing with the 2008 crisis employ the game show technique. See Philip Watkinson's article "Staging Money: Theatre and Immateriality Following the 2008 Financial Crisis."

Reaching his three-minute limit, exhausted and breathless after completing the rigorous task, the contestant screams incessantly in panic. The game-show host attempts to calm him, and they end up beating each other in frustration, transferring a sensation of tension and despair to the audience. Departing from the previous scenes of comic banter, the unfolding action becomes serious and violent. The game show contestant and host morph into the present day as the middle-class couple, who announce in defeat, “Seguimos aquí” (108). The message is clear: Spain’s history is part of a vicious cycle of corruption. The lights black out, and the audience is left in silence. It is a traumatic ending: one that fills the spectator with shock, disgust, and fear. True to the play’s title, they have witnessed a massacre, but not just any massacre; it is their own. Echoing the play’s premise outlined at the beginning, the ruling class relies on destruction and domination to maintain its influence. Through the intense formation of emotions, the ending is a call for revolution.



Fig. 33: The señora and the señor on the floor in despair at the end of the production. They are victims of the “massacre.” Source: <https://www.teatrodelbarrio.com/masacre-alberto-san-juan-y-marta-Calvo/>



Fig. 34: The logo of El Teatro del Barrio with its iconic color theme of red, black, and white.

Performative and staging techniques also underscore the theme of revolution. The minimal set in El Teatro del Barrio's black-box theatre consists of a dark background and only a chair as a prop. The spatial emptiness draws the spectator's attention to the actors and their dialogue, and echoes the void created by the "capitalist massacre." The red and black color scheme conveys the motif of massacre. Vibrant vermilion colors visually communicate emotions to the audience without explicitly stating them. The actors' costumes, which never change throughout the performance, are also red and black. Marta Calvó dons an intense, red dress while San Juan wears a black suit. The colors of red, black, and white align with the scheme of Teatro del Barrio and its main logo, which also associate with some of the emotions communicated in the play. This combination of color is a reference to anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism. Visual iconography from the Spanish Civil War reflects this trend, as seen below:



Fig. 35: This poster of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (F.A.I.) during the Spanish Civil War is an example of anti-government iconography with the red and black theme. (<https://en.todocoleccion.net/posters-spanish-civil-war/cartel-guerra-civil-libertad-fai-ojo-reproduccion-facsil-papel~x33107385>)

Aside from the clear anarchist connections, the red certainly contains other interpretations. In thinking of the play as the representation of a massacre, Calvó's costume is symbolic of the blood spilled by the destructive capitalist destruction wreaking havoc on the middle and working classes. The bright cherry color resonates with past revolutions and has Communist and Socialist ties, not surprising considering el Teatro del Barrio's politically-left leanings. Red also communicates feelings of death and passion: all linked to the theme of massacre. The contrasting blackness dominating the scene and San Juan's costume have similar underpinnings. Black alludes to the weight

and influence of the ruling class, as darkness both physically and figuratively envelops the protagonists.



Fig. 36: The set utilizes few props: only a chair. Alberto San Juan and Marta Calvó are the main focus with the red and black color scheme set amongst blackness. Source: <https://www.teatrodelbarrio.com/masacre-alberto-san-juan-y-marta-Calvó/>

The actors also directly interact with the audience. At times the characters break the fourth wall, pointing to the spectators as if they were members of the elite class or historical figures. The public is not merely witnessing a massacre; they are part of it. The involvement of audience members heightens their interest in the play, making an already “real” or life-like scene more tangible for them. They are addressed as if they were characters in the unfolding action. In reality, they are part of the production, because many theatre-goers, just like the protagonists, are “normal” Spaniards suffering consequences of corruption and crisis. The protagonists are their mirror images.

Involving the audience in politically motivated theatre encourages the spectator to reflect on the issues at hand. As Watkinson points out, “a shift from emphasizing representational processes to participatory processes in performance can open up a space for experientially thinking through models of political participation” (204). Likewise, *Masacre* and other productions of el Teatro del Barrio are designed to mobilize the spectators. Encouraging political commitment and revolution, the theatre’s mission is to inform, employ emotions, and incite indignation as vehicles to activate denouncement. Much like Iphigenia’s ending words in *Iphigenia en Vallecas*, the dramatic closure of *Masacre* calls for a change in the Spanish political, social, and economic systems.

Non-Lucrative Art and Street Performance: Flo6x8

Is art a less legitimate mode of protest if it depends on financial capital to exist? As María Folguera notes, even her theatre at the Teatro Circo Price relies on local Madrid government’s funds for its productions. I will return to this question at the end of this chapter but raise the issue as a means to introduce the final cultural response linked to

protest: public dance manifestations. The flamenco flash mob group, Flo6x8, is a unit of Sevillian dancers that emerged after the 2008 crash (Moreno-Díaz 133). Drawing on Butler and Snyder's framework on the body as a tool for protest and Carmen Moreno-Díaz's research on flamenco and folklore, I will discuss how street performance creates a disruption in order to engage and mobilize spectators as form of art that does not have lucrative ends.

Flo6x8 fuses protest with traditional flamenco dance. The flamenco dancers "invade" different bank branches, surprising clients and employees, interrupting the flow of business. Their spectacle fosters awareness and attacks the banks for their role in the financial crisis. Often, at the beginning of the performance, spectators are unsure if they are witnessing a bank heist. Later, it becomes apparent that they are not bystanders of a serious crime, but rather, a dance-infused protest. Flo6x8 repositions the flamenco *tablaó* into a public space, innovating the traditional flamenco form and, at the same time, returning to its origins: a dance of the *pueblo*, of minorities and marginalized groups (Moreno-Díaz 132). As BBC journalist Jason Webster notes:

Yet look back at the history of flamenco...Far from concentrating on love and passion - themes that one might expect from such an explosive art form - the lyrics sung in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were largely about poverty, suffering and the hardship of everyday life.

The flamenco flash mob is indeed a return to the past in order to promulgate social awareness in the current milieu: a reappropriation of flamenco as a contemporary form of protest. Its modern-day role invented by Flo6x8 also aligns with Manuel Castells' theory on networks and protest in the digital age. Following the actual dance spectacle, the group posts the protest on the Internet to reach a larger audience on their official YouTube channel. Its online availability provides an additional venue to broadcast the

event. “These activists have shifted the location of flamenco and the intended effects of its performance, from personally affecting the viewer to moving for social change on a grand scale by means of the Internet” (Heffner Hayes 286).

Although the collective dance group is primarily known for its flash mobs in banks, it has also performed and protested in other public spaces of power. For example, videos on the YouTube channel depict flamenco dance and singing manifestations in places such as the parliament in Andalusia, denouncing the government’s acquiescence to the Europe Union in exchange for the monetary bailout. The E.U. deal, as mentioned earlier, helped rescue the banks, but required Spain to implement severe austerity measures that exacerbated the country’s unstable financial situation. In this particular video, the members of Flo6x8 infiltrate the room dressed as government officials. Instead of their trademark flash mob performances, each member individually rises and sings lyrics of denouncement such as “sois manijeros de la Troika.” Their voices disrupt parliamentary order, and to the judicial workers’ annoyance, they must escort the protestors out of the courtroom after each outburst. It is a peaceful protest, but Flo6x8’s message is clear; the corruption and refusal to address the needs of Spanish citizens will no longer be tolerated. The group intervenes in normal parliamentary procedures, and, through performance, captures the attention of the politicians who have the ability to affect policy.⁸²

⁸² See the performance here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxHBWmVRB8A>



Fig. 37: Flo6x8 interrupts normal parliamentary procedure with flamenco song. Source: <https://pt.globalvoices.org/2014/08/20/assista-tres-cantores-de-flamenco-interromperem-o-parlamento-de-andaluzia-para-protestar-com-uma-musica-estrondosa/>

As Carmen Moreno-Díaz notes: “La efectividad con que conviven arte y protesta en este espectáculo reside en el empleo del símbolo como arma reivindicativa a partir del cual se resemantiza el espacio del banco” (134). The use of flamenco as a weapon of protest utilizes the body and dance in order to reclaim public spaces of power and return it to the normal citizens.

The dance spectacles exhibit the practice of “intruding” on space, a technique adduced by Jonathan Snyder and Judith Butler. The flamenco dancing is similar to the scenario described in Jonathan Snyder’s analysis of the parade documented in *Los encargados*. He notes that “the performance is not only a representation, but it performs an interruption in the urban rhythms and flows” (116). Likewise, Flo6x8 intrudes on the *space* of the bank, reclaiming it for the citizens. As La Niña NINJA, one of the members of the group confirms, “We have not been given a space, we have forged it... we have to be constantly aware of it so that it is not taken from us” (Meira Goldberg et al. 265). The invasion of space shocks and simultaneously forces the spectators to reflect on their role in the process. Serving as a reminder, and at the same time, as a call to awareness about

the corruption in the banking system, the group's enactments encourage social mobilization but also foster reflection on the injustices occurring in contemporary Spain. Flo6x8 engages in a form of social activism meant to reach everyday citizens in the city. When comparing social activism to the Situationists in Paris of the 60s Snyder says: "The creation of 'situations' in the urban milieu would have spectators reflect, in part, on their prescribed (passive) roles as potential (active) agents of actions and change" (119). The Flo6x8 performance "protest" employs a similar function; it interrupts the daily routine in the city and in a space of power, the banks. It seeks to create awareness so that normal citizens can realize that their "passive" roles as clients in a bank should be converted into "active" agents of change.



Fig. 38: Flo6x8 performs a protest flash mob at el Banco Santander, dressed in all black with dark sunglasses. Source: <https://velozquietuddelcentro.blogspot.com/2014/12/flo6x8-futuro-versus-usura-univ-pablo.html>

Furthermore, Flo6x8 employs the body as a weapon of protest, which, as Meira Goldberg et al. note, is the origin of flamenco. Describing the history of flamenco from sixteenth-century literature to the political protests of Flo6x8, Meira Goldberg writes that

“the flamenco body is a kinetic site of ideological resistance, its embodied articulation carries the cruel burden of marginalization and nomadism” (1). When dancing, the body, through performance, incorporates art, song, and dance from a folkloric tradition born in Andalusia, evoking the spirit of the *pueblo*. Moreno-Díaz also points out the key role of the body in the flash mobs. When describing the dancers’ costumes, she says that in lieu of the traditional flamenco attire such as the bright dress, hair comb, fan, and castanets, the dancers don black sunglasses, black clothing, and even costumes with sanitation worker vests (136). The costumes and use of the body echo the same function as the dark colors mentioned earlier in the *Masacre* analysis. They direct spectator attention to the words and movements of the performers, allowing them to focus on the protest mechanism of the dance, rather than the costume. This phenomenon underscores the corruption and greed that Flo6x8 denounces. Furthermore, these costumes serve as a disguise for Flo6x8, allowing the group to infiltrate the banks, courthouses, and city streets in order to incite shock and disobedience when their performance commences.

Flo6x8’s flash mobs, then, are significant as revolutionary protest functions in the aftermath of the crisis. Flo6x8’s work is a prime example of the reframing of a traditional protest form to be utilized in the contemporary era. Their YouTube channel has garnered much publicity and provided awareness to a global audience. Through articles and news stories appearing in the press both in Spain and globally, their message has been shared with millions. The flamenco flash mobs have even occurred outside of Spain, in places such as Milan, Rome, and London. In fact, after a YouTube video received more than one million views, the Spanish government enacted a law designed to impede the performance of flash mobs in banks (Webster). These initiatives demonstrate that

Flo6x8's aims are working. The performance group has generated global attention for its objectives of denouncing the banks and politicians.

Conclusions

After analyzing these works, I shall now return to the initial question posed at the beginning of this section. In what ways is art a more legitimate tool of protest if it does not rely on financial capital? Works such as novels, films, and theatrical productions denounce the government, financial institutions, and neoliberal system that contributed to the economic crisis. However, at the same time, many rely on the capitalist system and, in certain situations, the government, for their survival. Is this hypocritical? After reflecting on these examples of artistic protest, I do not believe that one form is more legitimate than the other. For example, Flo6x8, although it does not charge for its performances, achieves many of the same goals as novels, such as *Los primeros días de Pompeya* and theatrical works like *Masacre* in El Teatro del Barrio. All three works of cultural production utilize the body, the invasion of space, and the power of knowledge to create awareness and mobilize the public to become active agents in fighting for change and a better Spain. They evoke an emotional response, utilize humor, and provide a self-reflective space in which the spectator can see his or her life mirrored in the situations of the protagonists.

It is also important to consider that the degree of impact and response generated by these works varies, but this does not diminish their aims. For example, the plays from El Teatro del Barrio have received much public attention and there have even been motions to censor some of their performances. The government has also attempted to

impede Flo6x8's flamenco flash mobs in the bank. However, all three works analyzed in this chapter converge in that they have inspired a productive dialogue and discussion about the critical issues in Spain. As María Folguera noted in our interview in June 2018, the degree to which art actually creates change and how it serves as a form of protest can fluctuate, but it is a necessity if one desires to form part of a movement for renewal.

Folguera mentioned that art is often linked to systems of power. For example, her theatre, El Teatro Circo Price, receives funding from the Comunidad de Madrid. I asked her, ¿Para qué hacer el arte si forma parte de los sistemas del poder? Folguera responded:

Para expresarse porque si no te expresas... o sea expresarte no te liberará pero sí vas a contribuir a un movimiento y una transformación de ti mismo. Yo estoy aprendiendo esto ahora porque pensaba que no era tan importante expresar. Pero creo que expresar es una manera de formar parte de los cambios cíclicos o históricos. O sea individualmente no lo vas a solucionar nunca ni con una obra de arte ni con una acción concreta pero vas a contribuir. Creo que no expresar simplemente te retirará de juego antes. Como que vas a morir antes. Vas a morir igual, pero si no has expresado ya sea en forma de protesta o con el arte que tú sinceramente quieres hacer, te vas a morir sin haber formado parte de un movimiento histórico.

She later emphasized that what matters is that art creates dialogue, and that is the first step towards change. The works analyzed in this chapter all serve as a catalyst for conversation and mobilization. Through their depictions of protest, and their function as an actual form of protest, they create awareness and encourage ordinary citizens to be their own actors in creating a better future. Much like the role of the *indignados* in their occupation of La Puerta del Sol, these works also maintain an important place in contemporary Spain. They reclaim space for the citizens, sparking reflection and conversation in order to face adversity and overcome the conflicts of the crisis.

Conclusion

The vast corpus of post-2008 artistic works is a significant component in the overwhelming response to the fallout of the Spanish social and economic catastrophe. This dissertation proposes new ways of looking at this corpus by introducing cultural production from a variety of mediums that has served as a tool to open up dialogue, to inform, provide catharsis, and voice indignation. One of the most important goals of this project is to offer studies of many works that have, hitherto, never received critical attention. This study thereby lays the groundwork for analysis of these important cultural objects that have depicted and documented one of Spain's most recent disasters.

Diverging from previous approaches that center on the crisis through a focus on one particular genre, this project explores thematic responses to the crash and the omnipresence of these topics in multiple mediums. The first chapter analyzed artistic works that shed light on the repercussions of the 2008 recession through the lens of the marginalized. These issues include poverty, social cuts, evictions, and increased social and geographical exclusion. *Iphigenia en Vallecas*, *Aquí vivió*, and *El olivo* provide case studies that serve as examples of those consequences. Chapter Two examined comedic depictions of mass Spanish emigration following the meltdown. It illuminated the prevalence of this phenomenon through *Perdiendo el norte*, *Buscando el norte*, *Venirse arriba*, and *Blitz*. Chapter Three demonstrated a proactive response to the crisis: the resilience of the Spanish population and efforts to combat institutional and social problems through protest. The analyses of *Los primeros días de Pompeya*, *Masacre*, and Flo6x8's flamenco flash mobs revealed that cultural production, and specifically performance, serves as a powerful tool to voice dissent and encourage activism.

In addition to providing a model to discuss thematic responses and cultural responses to the 2008 crash, this project demonstrates that one medium may create a different kind of experience for the reader or spectator than another. The case study of *Aquí vivió* shows that through the comic, the reader becomes an active participant by constructing the story as he or she moves through the frames and gutters. Theatrical performances, such as *Iphigenia en Vallecas* and *Masacre*, engage with the spectators and elicit an emotional response, especially with breakings of the fourth wall and direct challenges to the audience. Other artistic forms, such as narrative, also evoke certain feelings in the reader through shock and the grotesque, as in *Los primeros días de Pompeya*. Film, and especially commercial productions such as *Perdiendo el norte* and *El olivo* perhaps have the broadest reach of all of these genres due to their global visibility and increasing availability via online streaming on platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

This dissertation does not attempt to assert that one particular medium is the *best* to depict and respond to disaster. Instead, what it suggests is that each mode of cultural production—whether print literature, theatre, film, television, comic, or street performance—forms part of the growing ecosystem of post-crisis cultural production and represents the human desire to respond to the crash.

A question that this project poses is the degree of impact that these works have in voicing indignation and promoting change. Past examples demonstrate that cultural production can affect action—both positive and negative—, such as the sequestration of *Fariña* (2015) by Nacho Carretero and the ensuing public support and denouncement of censorship, or even the Charlie Hebdo satirical cartoons and subsequent terrorist attack

(McAuley).⁸³ Nevertheless, in most cases it is difficult to quantify the exact impact that certain works have without conducting some kind of sociological survey or additional study. What we can determine, however, aligns with María Folguera's assertion; these cultural objects spark a conversation. A conversation can lead to contemplation, which, in turn, can lead to action and transformation.

The work presented here also provides considerable material to expand upon in future studies. As I move forward with the ongoing project, I hope to address some of the new questions that have surfaced from the textual analyses. For example, I chose to divide the project based on thematic response through multiple mediums instead of limiting myself to just one specific artistic genre. However, at times I found myself wanting to research more of a specific mode. Thus, in the next steps of the project, I plan to parse out these different vehicles of cultural expression and conduct further analyses of particular artistic forms. For instance, the comic case study left abundant room for further exploration, as there are many examples of this genre in circulation. Future plans therefore include creating a subsequent project focusing on the comic as a response to the 2008 crash. I may also revisit other topics brought up in the project, such as the plethora of post-crisis theatre and film.

This dissertation required intensive research online and on-the-ground in Spain in order to discover, document, and catalogue these just-emerging cultural phenomena. It also involved interviews with some of the authors and activists whose work contributed to post-2008 cultural production. This project has introduced a small percentage of these important works, but the majority of my massive bibliography still remains untouched by

⁸³ My 2019 MLA presentation and article, “‘La literatura de la crisis’ (Crisis Literature): Publishing in the Wake of the 2008 Financial Crash in Spain” addresses this topic.

critical inquiry. I based my selection for the dissertation from that corpus by identifying texts that best demonstrated the thematic topics of each chapter. Future research will involve studying other works from the bibliography to illuminate more examples of post-crisis cultural production. Furthermore, a subsequent collection of the interviews conducted for research will emerge from the project.

This dissertation explored the consequences and outcomes of the 2008 crisis: an event that greatly impacted Spain and continues to create ripple effects throughout the world. It underscored the necessity of resistance and the influential role that culture exercises in that process. This project opens up the opportunity for many future studies that will continue to explore and shed light on the powerful tool of cultural production as a response to tragedy and a mechanism to face adversity.

Works Cited

- Abufarha, Nasser. "Land of Symbols: Cactus, Poppies, Orange and Olive Trees in Palestine." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, vol. 15, 2008, pp. 343-368.
- Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH)*. Afectadosporlahipoteca.com. Accessed 5 October 2018.
- Agua con sal*. Directed by Pedro Pérez Rosado. Valencia: Pérez Rosado S.L., Trivisión S.L., Viguie Films, 2005.
- Aguaviva*. Directed by Ariadna Pujol. Barcelona: Alea Docs and Films, 2005.
- Aguilar, Andrea. "El poder creativo de la corrupción." *El País*, 3 September 2017.
- "Aguirre, tras el infierno de Bombay: 'Salí descalza pisando charcos de sangre.'" *El Mundo*, 27 November 2008.
- Alba Rico, Santiago. Prologue to *Marca(da) España. Retrato poético de una sociedad en crisis*, Amargord, 2014.
- Alonso de la Fuente, Alfonso and Raúl García. *La Bruja y Don Cristóbal*. Títeres Desde Abajo. Madrid, 2017.
- Alvarado, Esther. "Luis Bárcenas se explica sobre el escenario." *El Mundo*, 16 June 2014.
- Amago, Samuel. "Basura, cultura, democracia en el Madrid del siglo veintiuno." *Revista de Alces XXI*, vol. 2, 2014-2015, pp. 33-69.
- Amago, Samuel and Matthew Marr, editors. *Consequential Art: Comics Culture in Contemporary Spain*. U of Toronto P, 2019.
- Ambrossi, Javier and Javier Calvo, creators. *Paquita Salas*. DMNTIA. 2016-2018.

- Anaya, Carmelo. *Baria city blues*. Almuzara, 2012.
- Aysa-Lastra, María and Lorenzo Cachón. "Introduction: Vulnerability and Resilience of Latin American Immigrants During the Great Recession." *Immigrant Vulnerability and Resilience*, edited by María Aysa-Lastra and Lorenzo Cachón. Springer Open, 2015, pp. 1-21.
- Bahktin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Texas UP, 1981.
- Baquero, Camilo. "Un 90% de 'síes' con 2,2 millones de votos y una participación del 42%, según el Govern." *El País*, 2 October 2017.
- Bauman, Zygmunt and Carlo Bordoni. *State of Crisis*. Polity, 2014.
- Benavides, Lucia. "Spain Now Sees More Migrant Arrivals Than Any Other European Country." *NPR*, 20 September 2018.
- Bermudez, Anastasia and Elisa Brey. "Is Spain Becoming a Country of Emigration Again? Data Evidence and Public Responses." *South-North Migration of EU Citizens in Times of Crisis*, edited by Jean-Michel Lafleur and Miolaj Stanek. Springer Open, 2017, pp. 83-98.
- Bezhanova, Olga. *Literature of Crisis: Spain's Engagement with Liquid Capital*. Bucknell UP, 2017.
- Boehm, Scott. "Popular Theatre as Space and Symbol of the Spanish Democratic Revolution." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 95, no. 10, pp. 1085-1106, 2018.
- Bordoni, Carlo. *Interregnum: Beyond Liquid Modernity*. transcript Verlag, 2016.
- Bravo, Eduardo. "Reinventar una editorial cada año: Caballo de Troya." *AH Magazine*, 28 March 2018.
- Bravo, Julio. "La tercera vida de Ifigenia." *ABC Cultura*, 23 June 2018.

- Bueso, Emilio. *Cenital*. Salto de Página, 2012.
- Buscando el norte*. Created by Oriol Capel, David Olivas, Antonio Sánchez, and Nacho Velilla, season 1, Aparte Producciones and Antena 3, 2016.
- “Buscando el norte no tendrá segunda temporada.” *El País*, 10 June 2016.
- Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Harvard UP, 2015.
- Cabrera, María. *Televisión*. Penguin Random House, 2017.
- Cabrera de León et al. “Austerity Policies and Mortality in Spain After the Financial Crisis of 2008.” *AJPH Research*, vol. 108, no. 8, 2018, pp. 1091-1098.
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Duke UP, 1987.
- Carlson, Marvin. *Speaking in Tongues: Language at Play in the Theatre*. U of Michigan P, 2006.
- Carrasco, Jesús. *Intemperie*. Seix Barral, 2013.
- . *La tierra que pisamos*. Seix Barral, 2016.
- Carrasco-Gallego, Jesús. “The Marshall Plan and the Spanish Postwar Economy: A Welfare Loss Analysis.” *Economic History Review*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2012, pp. 91-119.
- Carretero, Nacho. *Fariña*. Libros del K.O., 2015.
- Casanovas, Jordi. *Ruz Bárcenas*. Teatro del Barrio, Madrid, 2014.
- Castells, M., João Caraça, and Gustavo Cardoso. *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- Castells, Manuel. “A Network Theory of Power.” *International Journal of Communication*, vol 5, 2011, pp. 773-787.

Castells, Manuel. *De la crisis económica a la crisis política: una mirada crítica*.

La Vanguardia Ediciones, 2016.

---, editor. *Europe's Crises*. Polity, 2018.

---, editor. *Networks of Outrage and Hope*. Polity, 2015.

Castellote, Antonio. *Caballos de labor*. Maestrazgo, 2012.

Catalunya.com "Millennial Olive Trees in Arión." <http://www.catalunya.com/millennial-olive-trees-arion-1-4-492712?language=en>

Cela, Camilo José. *La colmena*. Las Americas, 1966.

Cerca de tu casa. Directed by Eduard Cortés. Bausan Films, 2016.

"Cervantes Institute will Promote Language Tourism in Spain." *The Diplomat in Spain*, 28 July 2017.

Cervera, César. "'Spain is different', el eslogan que cambió para siempre la imagen de España." *ABC*, 27 March 2015.

Chiappe, Doménico. *Tiempo de encierro*. Lengua de Trapo, 2013.

Chirbes, Rafael. *Crematorio*. Anagrama, 2007.

---. *En la orilla*. Anagrama, 2013.

Chute, Hillary. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Belknap Press, 2016.

Cinco metros cuadrados. Directed by Max Lemcke. Aliwood Mediterráneo Producciones, 2011.

Cobeaga, Borja, and Diego San José. *Venirse arriba*. Planeta, 2014.

Collins, Mike. "The Big Bank Bailout." *Forbes*, 14 July 2015.

- Corbalán, Ana. “‘No nos vamos, nos echan’: representación fílmica de la nueva emigración.” Hellín García, María José & Helena Talaya Manso, editors. *El Cine de la Crisis: Respuestas Cinematográficas a la Crisis Económica Española en el Siglo XXI*. Editorial UOC, 2018.
- Corkhill, David. “Spain, A ‘New Immigration Center.’” *Immigration Worldwide: Policies, Practices, and Trends*, edited by Uma Segal, Doreen Elliott, and Nazneen Mayadas. Oxford, 2010, pp. 138-152.
- Cosas que dejé en la Habana*. Directed by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón. Madrid: Sogetel, Tornasol Films S.A., 1997.
- Crematorio*. Directed by Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo, Canal Plus, 2011.
- Crosthwaite, Paul. *Criticism, Crisis, and Contemporary Narrative: Textual Horizons in an Age of Global Risk*. Routledge, 2011.
- Crystal, David. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Cué, Carlos and Mar Centenera. “Argentina y Galicia son como un país simbiótico.” *El País*, 28 April 2016.
- Cué, Carlos, Naira Galarraga Gortázar, and Álvaro Sánchez. “España acogerá a 60 migrantes del ‘Aquarius’ tras alcanzar un acuerdo de seis países.” *El País*, 15 August 2018.
- Daly, Suzanne. “Spain Recoils as Its Hungry Forage Trash Bins for a Next Meal.” *New York Times*, 24 September 2012.
- De la Hesa, Guillermo. *La primera gran crisis financiera del siglo XXI: Orígenes, detonantes, efectos, respuestas y remedios*. Alianza, 2009.

- Delgado, Luisa Elena. *La nación singular: Fantasías de la normalidad democrática española (1996-2011)*. Siglo XXI Editores, 2014.
- Delgado, Luisa Elena et al., editors. *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History*. Vanderbilt UP, 2016.
- Deveney, Thomas. *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*. Scarecrow Press, 2012.
- Díaz-Hernández, Ramón and Juan M. Parreño Castellano. "The Recent International Emigration of Young Spaniards." Glorius and Domínguez Mujica, pp. 245-266.
- Díez, Anabel. "Franco será exhumado sin el voto del PP y Ciudadanos." *El País*, 13 September 2018.
- Domingo, Andreu I Valls, et al. "¿Migración neohispánica? El impacto de la crisis económica en la emigración española." *Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, vol. 29, 2014, pp. 39-66.
- Domínguez-Mujica, Josefina and Tanausú Pérez García. "The Economic Crisis and the Southern European Migration Model." Glorius and Domínguez-Mujica, pp. 17-48.
- Donat, Begoña et al. "Las mujeres más influyentes del mundo de la cultura." *El Mundo*. 10 November 2018.
- Donovan, Mary Kate. "Se ríen de la crisis": Chinese Immigration as Economic Invasion in Spanish Film and Media." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2017, pp. 369-393.
- Dunn, Kate. "'Clases de español': Education and *Testimonio* in the Poetry of Alicia Partnoy." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 93, no. 6, 2016, pp. 653-681.

“‘Edificio España,’ el documental que el Santander censuró durante meses, nominado a los Goya.” *El Mundo*, 7 January 2015.

Egea, Juan. *Dark Laughter: Spanish Film, Comedy, and the Nation*. U of Wisconsin P, 2013.

El olivo. Directed by Icíar Bolláin, Morena Films, 2016.

Encarnación, Omar. “Forgetting, in Order to Move On.” *New York Times*, 22 January 2014.

En tierra extraña. Directed by Icíar Bolláin. Canal Plus, 2015.

Erlanger, Steven. “Britain Votes to Leave E.U.; Cameron Plans to Step Down.” *New York Times*, 23 June 2016.

“España encadena su quinto año consecutivo con récord de turistas.” *El País*, 11 January 2018.

Espanoles en el mundo. Directed by Tobías, Miguel Ángel, Televisión Española (TVE), 2017.

“Este sábado en ‘Babelia’, la crisis de 2008 en los libros, el cine y el teatro.” *El País*, 6 September 2018.

Euripides. *Iphigenia in Aulis*. http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/iphi_aul.html

“‘Eurovegas’ Giant Casino Plan in Spain Cancelled.” *BBC*, 13 December 2013.

Fallarás, Cristina. *A la puta calle*. Del Bronce, 2013.

Fanjul, Sergio. “La nobleza de la ‘choni’”. *El País*, 27 April 2017.

Fe de etarras. Created by Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José, Netflix España, 2017.

Fernández-Savater, Armando. “Emborronar la CT (del <<No a la Guerra>> al 15-M).” Martínez 37-52.

Flores de otro mundo. Directed by Icíar Bolláin. Producciones La Iguana S.L., Alta Films, 1999.

Folguera, María. *Los primeros días de Pompeya*. Penguin Random House, 2016.

---. Personal Interview. June 2018.

---. "Transcorporeal Fiesta: Ana Mendieta y Hannah Wilke en Madrid, 2009-2017."

Pygmalion, 8/16, 2018, pp. 77-96.

Fontana, Josep. *El futuro es un país extraño*. Pasado y Presente, 2013.

Fontdevila, Manel. *¡Esto es importantísimo!* Astiberri, 2011.

---. *La crisis está siendo un éxito!* Astiberri, 2011.

---. *No os indignéis tanto*. Astiberri, 2013.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The MacMillan Company, 1913.

Friedman, Jeffrey. *What Caused the Financial Crisis*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2011.

Frye, Northrup. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton UP, 1957.

Gago, Verónica. *Neoliberalism From Below*. Duke UP, 2017.

Gamoneda, Antonio. *En legítima defensa: Poetas en tiempos de crisis*. Bartleby, 2014.

García, Laura. "María Folguera." *El Cultural*, 9 May 2016.

García, Rocío. "El gran teatro del mundo real." *El País*, 5 September 2018.

García Montero, Luis. *No me cuentes tu vida*. Planeta, 2012.

Gil Grande, Rocío. "'El olivo', 'Julietta' y 'La Novia', preseleccionadas para representar a España en los Oscar." *rTVE*, 19 August 2016.

Giroux, Henry. *On Critical Pedagogy*. Continuum, 2011.

Glorius, Birgit and Josefina Domínguez Mujica, editors. *European Mobility in Times of Crisis*. Transcript, 2017.

Godenau, Dirk. "The Role of Intermediaries in Spanish Emigration: Past and Present."

Glorius and Domínguez Mujica, pp. 191-214.

Gómez Bárcena, Juan, editor. *Bajo treinta. Antología de nueva narrativa española*. Salto de Página, 2013.

Gómez Glez, Mar. *Cifras*, 2012.

---. *39 Defaults*. Los Angeles, 2014.

Gómez, Manuel. "España cierra 2017 con la creación de casi medio millón de empleos."

El País, 25 January 2018.

González-Ferrer, Amparo. "La nueva emigración española. Lo que sabemos y lo que no."

Zoom Político, vol. 18, 2013, pp. 1-20.

González Pérez et al. "The Economic Crisis and Vulnerability in the Spanish Cities:

Urban Governance Challenges." *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol.

223, 2016, pp. 160-166.

Gopeguí, Belén. *El comité de la noche*. Penguin Random House, 2014.

Green, Stuart. "Exaggeration and Nation: The Politics of Performance in the Spanish

Sophisticated Comedy of the 1940s." *Performance and Spanish Film*, edited by

Dean Allbritton, Alejandro Melleró and Tom Whittaker, Manchester UP, 2016,

pp. 59-75.

Grewal, David. *Network Power*. Yale UP, 2008.

Gutiérrez, Pablo. *Democracia*. Seix Barral, 2012.

Hall Stuart, editor. *Representation*. 2nd ed., Sage, 2013.

Harvey, David. *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*. Profile Books,

2010.

Heffner Hayes, Michelle. "Choreographing Contemporaneity: Cultural Legacy and Experimental Imperative." Meira Golberg et al., pp. 280-291.

Hellín García, María José and Helena Talaya Manso, editors. *El cine de la crisis*. Editorial UOC, 2018.

Hervás, María. *Iphigenia en Vallecás*. Adapted from Gary Owen. 2017.

Hirschman, Albert. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Harvard UP, 1970.

Hola, ¿estás sola? Directed by Icíar Bollain. Canal Plus España, 1995.

Horace. *Ars Poetica*. Translated by John B. Quinn, Blackwell Wielandy Co., 1938.

Howard, Hannah. "Spain's Olive Oil Ambition: To be the World's Best." *Olive Oil Times*. 11 December 2018.

Iberia Nature. Iberianature.com Accessed 13 November 2018.

"Icíar Bollain: 'Hacer cine es muy costoso, por eso hago el que me interesa.'" *ABC*, 25 October 2018.

Ilundain, David and Jordi Casanovas. *B, la película*. Avalon, 2015.

INE. Instituto Nacional de la Estadística. Migrations Statistics. 2016.

<http://www.ine.es/dynt3/inebase/es/index.htm?padre=3696&capsel=3697>.

Iphigenia en Vallecás. El Pavón Teatro Kamikaze.

<https://teatrokamikaze.com/programa/iphigenia-en-vallecás-3/>

Izquierdo Chaparro, Rosario. *Diario de campo*. Caballo de Troya, 2013.

Jaboís, Manuel. "Nacho Carretero: 'Si ha servido para que no vuelva a pasar, ya ha servido para algo.'" *El País*, 23 June 2018.

Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke UP, 1991.

Kinder, Marsha. *Blood Cinema*. U of California P, 1993.

Krugman, Paul. *End this Depression Now!* W.W. Norton & Co., 2012.

“La crisis ha aumentado la brecha entre la España urbana y rural.” *La vanguardia*, 30 November 2017.

La llamada. Directed by Javier Ambrossi and Javier Calvo. Apache Films, 2017.

Labanyi, Jo. “Emotional Competence and the Discourses of Suffering in the Television Series *Amar en tiempos revueltos*.” Delgado et al., pp. 225-241.

---. “The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain.” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2008. pp. 119-125.

Labrador Méndez, Germán. “Las vidas subprime: la circulación de historias de vida como tecnología de imaginación política en la crisis española (2007-2012).” *Hispanic Review*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2012, pp. 557-81.

Lima, Andrés. *Los Macbez*. Madrid, 2014.

López Rejas, Javier. “Iphigenia, mito y suburbio.” *El Cultural*, 14 April 2017.

López-Sala, Ana. “The New Emigration Issue in the Public and Political Debate in Spain.” Glorius and Domínguez Mujica, pp. 267-286.

López Trujillo, Noemí and Estefanía Vasconcellos. *Volveremos*. Libros de K.O., 2016.

“Los actores apoyan a Alberto San Juan tras el ‘intento de censura’ del PP.” *El País*, 10 April 2018.

Los lunes al sol. Directed by Fernando León de Aranoa. Lionsgate Productions, 2002.

- Love, Catherine. "Gary Owen: 'I Always Want to Leave the Audience Troubled.'" *The Stage*, 28 January 2016.
- Machuca, Pablo. "Malos tiempos para la libertad de expresión en España." *Huffington Post*, 22 February 2018.
- Manganas, Nicholas. *Las dos Españas: Terror and Crisis in Contemporary Spain*. Sussex Academic Press, 2016.
- Mañas, José Ángel. *Historias del Kronen*. 4th ed. Ediciones Destino (CCC), 1998.
- Mar-Molinero, Clare. *The Politics of Language in the Spanish-Speaking World*. Routledge, 2000.
- Marcos, José and Julio Núñez. "El Congreso asume que el sobrecoste del tranvía de Parla llegó al 38%." *El País*, 27 September 2017.
- Marea Granate. MareaGranate.org. Accessed 22 December 2017.
- Marr, Matthew. "Building a Home for Crisis Narrative: Intermediality and Comic Pedagogy in Aleix Saló's *Españistan* Project." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, (forthcoming).
- Martínez, Christine. "The Affirmative Politics of Degrowth: Miguel Brieva's Graphic Narrative *Memorias de la tierra*." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2017, pp. 191-212.
- Martínez, Guillelmo. *CT o la cultura de la transición*. Debolsillo, 2012.
- Martínez-Expósito, Alfredo. "Tapas, dietas y chefs: la Marca España en el nuevo cine gastronómico español." *Encrucijadas globales: Redefinir España en el siglo XXI*, edited by José Colmeiro, Iberoamericana, 2015, pp. 285-310.

- McAuley, James. "A Terrorist Attack Turned Charlie Hebdo into a Revered Institution it never Sought to Be." *Washington Post*, 26 May 2018.
- McClennen, Sophia and Remy Maisel. *Is Satire Saving our Nation?: Mockery and American Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. Kitchen Sink Press, 1993.
- McLaughlin Robert and Sally Parry. *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema During World War II*. U of Kentucky P, 2006.
- Meira Goldberg, K. et al., editors. *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*. McFarland & Company, 2015.
- Mejón, Ana and Rubén Romero Santos. "Perdiendo el norte: Una brújula para la crisis." *Discursos de la crisis: Respuestas de la cultura española ante nuevos desafíos*, edited by Jochen Mecke, Ralf Junkerjürgen, and Hubert Pöppel, Iberoamericana, 2017.
- Méndez, Ricardo et al. *Atlas de la crisis: Impactos socioeconómicos y territorios vulnerables en España*. Tirant Humanidades, 2015.
- Mendoza, Eduardo. *El enredo de la bolsa y de la vida*. Seix Barral, 2012.
- Mesa, Sara. *Cicatriz*. Anagrama, 2015.
- Milroy, James and Lesley Milroy. *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 1991.
- Minder, Raphael. "Ex-Chairman of Spanish Bank is Found Dead of Gunshot Wound." *New York Times*, 19 July 2017.
- Minder, Raphael, Nicholas Kulish, and Paul Geitner. "Spain to Accept Rescue from Europe for its Ailing Banks." *New York Times*, 9 June 2012.

Morales, Manuel. "70 novelas al año en España sobre la Guerra Civil." *El País*, 19 October 2018.

Moreno-Caballud, Luis. "Desbordamientos culturales en torno al 15-M." *Teknokultura*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2013, pp. 101-130.

---. "La imaginación sostenible: culturas y crisis económica en la España actual." *Hispanic Review*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2012, pp. 535-555.

Moreno-Díaz, María del Carmen. *Juntos pero no revueltos: Aproximación a las disciplinas festivas en el cine musical folclórico español*. March 2017.

Moreno, Victor. *Edificio España*. Victor Morena P.C. and Zentropa Spain, 2012.

Muñoz Molina, Antonio. *Todo lo que era sólido*. Seix Barral, 2013.

Narotzky, Susana and Gavin Smith. *Immediate Struggles: People, Power, and Place in Rural Spain*. U of California P, 2006.

Navarro, Elena. *La trabajadora*. Penguin Random House, 2014.

Neale, Steve and Frank Krutnik. *Popular Film and Television Comedy*. Routledge, 1990.

Ocho apellidos vascos. Created by Borja Cobeaga and Diego San José, Universal, 2014.

"Olive Oil Production in the Mediterranean." *Prosodol*. Accessed 26 December 2018.
<http://www.prosodol.gr/?q=node/203>.

Olmos, Alberto, editor. *Última temporada. Nuevos narradores españoles 1980-1989*. Lengua de Trapo, 2013.

Otero, Miqui. "CT y humor: la risa atada (y bien desatada)." *CT o la cultura de la transición*. Random House, 2012, pp. 171-183.

Ovejero, José. *La invención del amor*. Alfaguara, 2013.

Owen, Gary. *Iphigenia in Splott*. Obreron Books, 2015.

Paco, Antonio de. *Fuera de Tiempo*. Caballo de Troya, 2015.

Pasero-O'Malley, Anthony. *Staging of the Sign: Semiotics and Spanish Experimental Theatre*. May 2019.

Paumgarten, Nick. "The Hangover." *New Yorker*, 25 February 2013.

Pedraza, Jacobo. "El día que 'B' habló." *El País*, 1 April 2016.

Peiro, Patricia. "Trips of the Tongue: Spanish Language Tourism on the Rise." *El País*, 27 April 2015.

Perdiendo el norte. Directed by Nacho Velilla, Atresmedia Cine, 2015.

Plantinga, Carl. *Screen Stories: Emotions and the Ethics of Engagement*. Oxford UP, 2018.

Pope, Randolph. "A Hispanists View on Changing Institutions, or About Insects and Whales." *New Spain, New Literatures*, edited by Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini. Vanderbilt UP, 2010, pp. 99-115.

Portes, Alejandro. "Migration and Development, Reconciling Opposite Views." *How Immigrants Impact their Homelands*, edited by Susan Eva Eckstein and Adil Najam. Duke UP, 2013, pp. 30-51.

Prado, Benjamín. *Ajuste de cuentas*. Alfaguara, 2013.

Princesas. Directed by Fernando León de Aranoa, Reposado Producciones, Mediapro, Antena 3 Televisión, Canal+ España, 2005.

Quiroga, Alejandro. "Narratives of Success and Portraits of Misery: Football, National Identities, and Economic Crisis in Spain (2008-2012)." *Romance Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 3, 2017, pp. 126-134.

Radice, Betty. *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. Penguin Random House, 2003.

“Rees-Mogg says Reformed Brexit Deal Could Win Over Critics.” *BBC*, 23 January 2019.

Requisitos para ser una persona normal. Directed by Leticia Dolera. Contracorriente, 2015.

“Retrato de España en crisis: Écija y la lenta desintegración del mundo rural.” *elEconomista.es*, 10 May 2010.

Ribeiro de Menezes, Alison. “From Liquid to Illiquid Modernity? Fear, Anxiety, and the 2008 Crisis in Spanish Narrative of the New Millennium.” *Telling Tales: Storytelling in Contemporary Spain*, edited by Anne Walsh, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 146-165.

---. “Memory as Disruption: Entanglements of Memory and Crisis in Contemporary Spain.” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 94, no. 8, 2017, pp. 883-901.

Ribeiro de Menezes, Alison and Stuart King. “Introduction: The Future of Memory in Spain.” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, vol. 94, no. 8, 2017, pp. 793-799.

Riggins, Stephen Harold. *The Language and Politics of Exclusion*. Sage Publications, 1997.

Rodríguez, Alberto. “Teatro del Barrio. Comprometido con el movimiento ciudadano,” *Sala-Mandra*, 12 April, 2016.

Rodríguez Jiménez, José Luis. “Los trabajadores españoles en la Alemania nazi.” *El País*, 22 May 2000.

Rodríguez Marcos, Javier. “Una crisis de novela: La recesión económica se ha convertido en argumento literario.” *El País*, 16 March 2013.

- Rogers, Vaneta. "Is the Average Age of Comic Book Readers Increasing? Retailers Talk State of the Business 2017." *Newsarama*, 2 February 2017.
- Rosa, Isaac. *Aquí vivió: Historia de un desahucio*. Illus. Cristina Bueno. Random House, 2016.
- . *Compro oro*. Ediciones La Marea, 2013.
- . *El país del miedo*. Seix Barral, 2008.
- . *El vano ayer*. Seix Barral, 2005.
- . *La habitación oscura*. Seix Barral, 2013.
- . *La mano invisible*. Seix Barral, 2011.
- . *¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil!* Seix Barral, 2007.
- . *Tu futuro empieza aquí*. Nube de Tinta, 2017.
- Ruíz, Aldo. "'Iphigenia en Vallecas': El Huracán María Hervás y su devastador torrente de emociones sacuden las entrañas del Kamikaze." *El Teatrero*, 6 December, 2018.
- Ryan, Lorraine. "The Economic Degeneration of Masculinity in Rafael Chirbes's *En la orilla*." *Romance Quarterly*, vol. 62, 2015, pp. 83-96.
- Sáez Silvestre, Alberto. Personal Interview. July 2018.
- Saló, Aleix. *Españistán: Este país se va a la mierda*. Editores de Tebeos, S.L., 2011.
- . *Simiocracia: Crónica de la gran resaca económica*. Random House, 2012.
- Salvà, Nando. "Iciar Bollaín: 'Si tienes un don, debes usarlo y afrontar los sacrificios que conlleva.'" *El Periódico*, 13 December 2018.
- San Juan, Alberto. *Autorretrato de un joven capitalista español*. El Teatro del Barrio, Madrid, 2013.

---. *Confesión de un expresidente que ha llevado a su país a la crisis*. El Teatro del Barrio, Madrid, 2014.

---. *Masacre: Historia del capitalismo español*. El Teatro del Barrio, Madrid, 2017.

---. *Mundo Obrero*. Teatro Español, Madrid, 2018.

Sanmartín, Olga. "El 'boom' de las tesis doctorales: 12.100 lecturas en sólo seis meses." *El Mundo*, 8 March 2016.

Santaolalla, Isabel. *Los 'otros': etnicidad y raza en el cine español contemporáneo*. Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2005.

Schmidt, Vivien. "What Happened to the State-Influenced Market Economies (SMEs)? France, Italy, and Spain Confront the Crisis as the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." *The Consequences of the Global Financial Crisis: The Rhetoric of Reform and Regulation*, edited by Wyn Grant and Graham Wilson, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 156-186.

Selfie. Directed by Victor García León. Gonita, 2017.

Serra de Renobales, Fátima. "Inconformismo y resistencia: *El olivo* (2016) de Icíar Bollaín." Hellín García and Talaya Manso, pp. 245-261.

Servulo González, Jesús. "La movilidad laboral aumentó en España un 11.2% durante el año pasado." *El País*, 11 December 2018.

Shiller, Robert. *The Subprime Solution*. Princeton, UP, 2008.

Sierra, Santiago and Jorge Galindo. *Los encargados*. Madrid, 2012.

Smith, Ángel. *Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction: Catalan Labor and the Crisis of the Spanish State, 1898-1923*. Berghan Books, 2007.

Snyder, Jonathan. *Poetics of Opposition in Contemporary Spain*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Stargardter, Gabriel and Paul Day. "Reversal of Fortunes Sends Spaniards to Latin America." *Reuters*, 1 November 2012.

También la lluvia. Directed by Icíar Bollaín. Canal Plus España, 2010.

"Teatro del Barrio, de los titiriteros del <<Alka-ETA>> al independentismo catalán." *ABC*, 19 September 2017.

Te doy mis ojos. Directed by Icíar Bollaín. Alta Producción, 2003.

Techo y comida ¿y a quién te rescata? Directed by Juan Miguel del Castillo. Contracorriente, 2015.

Teichler, Ulrich. "Temporary Study Abroad: The life of ERASMUS Students." *European Journal of Education*, vol. 39, 2004, pp. 395-408.

Tejerina, Benjamin and Ignacia Perugorria, editors. "Beyond Austerity and Indignation: Embodiments, Space, and Networks in the 15M Movement: an Introduction." *Crisis and Social Mobilization in Contemporary Spain*. Routledge, 2018. pp. 1-14.

Teruel, Ana. "España es el país de Europa con más jóvenes que ni estudian ni trabajan." *El País*, 12 September 2012.

The Big Short. Directed by Adam McKay. Paramount Pictures, 2015.

Tofé, José Ignacio. *El tesorero*. Madrid, 2014.

Trueba, David. *Blitz*. Anagrama, 2015.

Valdivia, Pablo. "Literature, Crisis, and Spanish Rural Space in the Context of the 2008 Financial Recession." *Romance Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2017, pp. 163-171.

---. "Narrando la crisis financiera de 2008 y sus repercusiones." 452F, vol. 15, 2016, pp. 18-36.

"Vallecas: Madrid's Rebellious Working-Class Neighbourhood." *Madridnofrills.com*, 25 November, 2017.

Vélez, Sainz, Julio. "Teatro documento y denuncia social en tiempos de crisis: Alberto San Juan y el Teatro del Barrio." *Acotaciones*, vol. 37, 2016, pp. 51-68.

"Venirse arriba, la novela 'más gamberra', que se 'burla' del concepto de ser europeo." *20 minutos*, 1 November 2014.

Vente a Alemania, Pepe. Directed by Pedro Lazaga, Asapa Producciones Cinematográficas, 1971.

Vice. Directed by Adam McKay. Annapurna Pictures, 2018.

Vilá, Juan. "Diego San José & Borja Cobeaga: 'La gente espera que seamos millonarios, no graciosos.'" *El Periódico*, 14 January 2015.

Vlajic, Ada. "Invalidity and Deformity in the Art of the Weimar Republic." *Vojnosanitetski Pregled: Military Medical & Pharmaceutical Journal of Serbia*, vol. 4, 2014, pp. 413-419.

Watkinson, Philip. "Staging Money: Theatre and Immateriality Following the 2008 Crisis." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2018, pp. 195-208.

Webster, Jason. "How Flash Mob Flamenco Took on the Banks." *BBC*, 18 April 2013.

"Zapatero afirma que España juega en la Champions League de la economía mundial." *El País*, 11 September 2007.

Zas Marcos, Mónica. "De Botín a Aznar: las mil caras de Alberto San Juan para golpear al capitalismo." *El Diario*, 12 September 2017.