



*contemporary hispanic and lusophone cultures*

**D€MOCRACY in spain**  
**cinema and new forms of social life**  
**(1968–2008)**

isabel m. estrada

# Contemporary Hispanic and Lusophone Cultures

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# D€MOCRAZY in Spain

Cinema and New Forms of Social Life  
(1968–2008)

ISABEL M. ESTRADA

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To my son Dylan, the light of my life.  
To my aunt Natalie, in memoriam.



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# Introduction

*[Y]o estaba esperando esto desde hace cuarenta y tantos años, cuarentayséis.*

Agustín García Calvo addressing protesters at the  
Puerta del Sol (Madrid, May 2011)

The 2008 financial crisis prompted the most significant social protests in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States since 1968. The confluence of two markedly significant periods in two consecutive centuries can be seen in the political responsibility exercised and expressed by a new generation of Spaniards deeply immersed in those protests. As an expression of that cultural moment, film production at these two points in time emerges from simultaneously divergent and comparable economic and political milieus. In both instances, the merging of spirit, values, and sensibility generated collaborative and affective affiliations that are apparent in many independent films of the times. Philosopher, poet, and activist Agustín García Calvo's remark at a Puerta del Sol Assembly in Madrid, quoted above, conveys his exhilaration at this convergence ("Agustín García Calvo en Sol y en Zamora"). Indeed, he had been waiting for such a public and energetic display of political dissent ever since the student protests of the 1960s, in which he actively participated in opposition of the Francoist regime. It was evident to him that the foundations of the dominant political and financial structures being challenged in the 2000s had been laid at the end of the 1960s. Through these convergences, filmmakers expose the deficiencies of Spain's democracy in 2008 – with protest banners calling the system out as "D€MOCRAZY" – while creating new sensibilities and forms of social life. These efforts have the effect of bringing back notions of community and the common good that had been long forgotten in such a brittle environment.

Despite the disparate histories of the regions that saw the post-2008 crisis protests, as well as the divergent political outcomes of those protests, the

imprint of the revolutionary spirit endures through new forms of social life. Regardless of the political impact at the institutional level, the protests demonstrated that resistance to neoliberalism had become long-lasting and integral to Spain's fabric.<sup>1</sup> This social revolution should be understood both in the global context – as a result of the 2008 financial crisis that laid bare both the pervasive presence of neoliberalism and the shortcomings of today's democracy – and in a national context, as a critique of the Spanish democratic regime first established in 1978. The inseparability of these key historical moments offers a lens to interpret ways that cinematic practices both adopt and initiate new forms of social life. That is, the groundbreaking cultural output of independent Spanish filmmakers, including collective modes of production and experimental cinematic language that requires the active participation of the audience, illustrates alternative modes of cultural intervention and plays a key role in defining Spain's democracy at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These filmmakers' concepts of social life are collective and collaborative, and, along the way, they create affective networks that resist the insulation and powerlessness to which neoliberalism subjects the individual. The corpus of films I analyze illustrate Bryan Cameron's contention that a major impact of the 15-M Movement and the culture of indignation has been to “nurture diverse expressions of intellectual and artistic insurgency” (4). While the 2008 financial crisis left a devastating record 25 percent unemployment among young Spaniards, the creative energy prompted a collective desire to reestablish a sense of the common good within a moment of intense hardship.

In Spain, the communal energy that brought millions of citizens onto the streets did not translate into updating traditional political structures or major institutional changes. Rather, the legacy of the expression of anti-neoliberal discontent manifests itself as new ways of understanding the sociopolitical

1 At the institutional level, the most significant outcome of the financial crisis and the ensuing protests was the foundation of the leftist political party Podemos in 2014. Podemos garnered an astounding 21 percent of the vote in Spain's 2015 general election, or forty-nine congressional seats of the total 350. Soon after, this electoral support began to decline, forcing Podemos to forge alliances with Izquierda Unida (Unidas Podemos) and with Sumar, only to win a mere five seats in 2023. The precipitous downfall was caused by accusations of radicalism from the right and infighting, with the original leadership team accused of betraying the party's founding principles. Even with this diminished support, Podemos had the leverage to enter into coalition with the Socialist Party in 2019 and 2023, effectively preventing the right wing from taking over Spain's government. For an incisive analysis of the Podemos trajectory, as well as the recent political landscape, see the essays coauthored by Sebastiaan Faber and Bécquer Seguí published periodically in *The Nation Magazine* beginning in February 2015.

sphere: in new forms of social life, such as pacifist activism; interdependent political agency understood as living in community by exercising mutual obligation to one another; digital communication as a democratizing tool; affective networks that prevent the alienation of neoliberalism; horizontal organizational structures; anti-neoliberal resistance; and the organic power of emotional affinities rather than organized political practices, as this book will show. As such, these new forms of social life involve a new sensitivity to the voice of the individual and the participation of the collective. The cinematic expression of these practices represents one of the most consequential and enduring interventions of the early twenty-first century.

The 2011 protests were at their height in Spain early in the year, with the largest demonstrations taking place in Madrid on May 15, and as a result became known as the 15-M Movement. This movement was followed by a three-week occupation of the Puerta del Sol, the square at the geographical center of the capital, with other occupations occurring in Spain's major cities. Being part of the wider Occupy Movement that emerged at the time in protest against social and economic inequalities meant that many of the 15-M banners were in English, and it is from one of them that I have appropriated the term "D€MOCRAZY" (Figure 0.1) for the title of this book: it encapsulates the inherent contradictions of a system that purports to empower the people (*demos*), and contains a triple meaning that refers to the 2008 financial crisis, the internal crisis of Spanish democracy, and the global crisis of neoliberalism.

Much in the way I have appropriated the language and imagery of the protest banner, appropriation from open sources represents one of the most meaningful strategies through which these young filmmakers contest dominant narratives. Challenging the constraints of copyright, they borrow from the "cultures of anyone," to use scholar and writer Luis Moreno-Caballud's phrase. The expressive and political potential of appropriation is seen in the way these filmmakers unearth unknown, frequently amateur documentary footage from the 1960s to the 1990s and repurpose it to



Fig. 0.1. Banner from a 15-M protest.  
Source: <https://ciudadanosencrisis.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/los-mejores-carteles-del-15m/>.  
Every attempt has been made to trace the rightful owner of the image.

reconstruct the narrative of the disenfranchised: factory workers, women, agricultural workers, political activists, union leaders, political prisoners, and ostracized mental patients, among others. Many young documentary filmmakers openly borrow images from that period; by appropriating and re-politicizing this previously unseen footage from the Transition, they expose the deficiencies of the process and its tenacious impact on Spain's democracy.<sup>2</sup> By incorporating raw, deteriorated Super 8 images in digitally produced works, the video-makers imbue the material degradation of the older footage – previously regarded as detritus – with political legitimacy. Most interestingly, such works both conceptualize and counter current political struggles. They mirror visual accounts of the 1970s from regional perspectives that were excluded from the dominant discourses on the Spanish transition to democracy, thus challenging cultural and political erasure. Significantly, the causes and impact of the revolutionary spirit of 15-M galvanize regional issues that the dominant narrative of the Transition did not record or address. As a cornerstone of the new democratic regime, the *estado de las autonomías* – the territorial division of Spain into seventeen regions as a response to decades-old demands for autonomy from the central government, in particular in Cataluña and the Basque Country – represents a major flaw of the blemished regime that claims to be democratic yet does not represent its constituents, as reflected in the popular 15-M motto, “No nos representan,” which also questions the political and financial foundations of neoliberalism for defending the interests of only 1 percent of the population.<sup>3</sup> And yet, the protests and the wider ideological drive seemed unconcerned with the nationalist struggle *per se*, in that the organizational structure of 15-M aimed to foster local and horizontal components rather than a traditional statocentric system. The 15-M Movement has been deemed *un movimiento adanista* for failing to adhere to a specific historical memory and purporting to represent a clean slate ideologically (Fernández-Savater, “¿Hay”). Instead, this book argues that 15-M fosters an “open memory,” understood as an ongoing dialogue among fluid, intersectional, and jarring memories that will result in a common, inspiring future.

2 The Transition comprises the years between the end of the Francoist dictatorship in 1975 and the electoral victory of the Socialist Party in 1982, when the process of transition to a democratic regime was generally considered complete.

3 For an in-depth study of the 15-M Movement, see *Spain after the Indignados/15M Movement: The 99% Speaks Out*, edited by Óscar Pereira-Zazo and Steven Torres (2019).

## Background

A full understanding of the impact of the 2008 crisis in Spain requires a comprehensive grasp of not only its immediate causes, but also the main sociopolitical forces at play since the 1960s. The filmmakers included in this book fully engage with the present while retrospectively looking to the 1960s and 1970s to find inspiration in values and practices erased by the Transition. *D€MOCRAZY* aligns with the non-historicist conceptualization of Spanish cinema proposed by Steven Marsh in his acclaimed *Spanish Cinema against Itself: Cosmopolitan, Experimentation, Militancy* (6). Like Marsh, I challenge the teleological approach to analyzing the films selected to instead examine “interruptions” and “displacements” that eventually resurface from the “subterranean” erasure (3–6).<sup>4</sup> Though my book title includes dates, I am not attempting periodization; rather, my concern is the shattering of the causality of temporality, and the convergence of sociopolitical projects in and through unclassifiable cinema. *D€MOCRAZY* addresses ideological tensions and affinities around key moments in recent Spanish history, as it subscribes to Jameson’s challenge of historical periodization (1984, 178).

It used to be commonplace to look at Spain’s transition to democracy after the dictator Franco’s death in 1975, a hallmark of this narrative of modernization, as a model of a flawless political project, but this myth has been repeatedly debunked by scholars, starting with Teresa Vilarós in her classic *El mono del desencanto* (1998). More recently, Luisa Elena Delgado in *La nación singular* (2014) pointed out that scholars have neglected to fully understand the Transition and its two most central structures: parliamentary representation and the *estado de las autonomías*. Germán Labrador in *Culpables por la literatura* (2017) argues that from 1968 to 1986 the myth of Spain’s Transition concealed demands for true democracy that echo those of the massive protests that took place in Spain in May 2011. This book reveals and ponders those echoes. In turn, Pablo La Parra shows that post-2008 audiovisual productions incorporate footage of political violence associated with the democratic process that has been deemed irrelevant by the rose-tinted discourses that dominate discussion of the Transition (“Contar la violencia”). This book goes further, to show that it is imperative

4 Following Derrida, Marsh proposes the concept of the spectrality of Spanish film, which he defines as “the temporal connection of what is impossible to connect” (10). Scholars like Jo Labanyi and Joan Ramon Resina also allude to Derrida’s haunting motif to examine the time of the Transition. See for instance, Resina’s *Disremembering the Dictatorship* (2000) and Patricia Keller’s *Ghostly Landscapes: Film, Photography, and the Aesthetics of Haunting in Contemporary Spanish Culture* (2016).

to expand the time frame with which recent audiovisual creations engage. *D€MOCRAZY* seeks to identify the confluence of the 1968 political innovation, liberation, and unbinding of energies (Jameson, 1984, 207) and the 2008 crisis through the practices of cineastes who defy the dominant political and cinematic discourses. Their defiance signals the recuperation of forms of social life – collectivity and grassroots activism, among others – at a time when they were thought unviable. At the heart of this book is not only the way recent creatives portray the political landscape, but also the fact that they adopt a visual language that construes their activism.

The modernization project in Spain began in the 1960s, known as the decade of the *desarrollo* (development) and economic integration into capitalism (see Fusi). The economy was in the hands of a new generation of economists and politicians whose goal was to introduce capitalism to a country that was gradually opening up to the rest of the world. The nation became “mobile” (as Tatjana Pavlovic put it in *Mobile Nation* 2–3) due to industrialization, consumerism, and hedonism.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, students protested the precariousness of their lives, factory workers went on strike, and women organized in support of their incarcerated husbands. The shifts in the financial structures and the ensuing protest movements were well documented by underground filmmakers including Helena Lumberas, Llorenç Soler, Carlos Varela, and Juan Bollaín, and yet their work was little known until recently.

The 1960s was a period of significant ideological tensions. Fredric Jameson describes the era as being marked by decolonization, the rise of Marcusean identities of the subaltern (e.g., women, Black people), the Maoist concept of the “revolutionary” as a replacement for “proletariat,” and the Cuban Revolution (“Periodizing the 60s” 180–185). And yet, he argues, the 1960s “can just as easily be conceptualized as a period in which capital is in full dynamic and innovative expansion, equipped with a whole armature of fresh production techniques and new ‘means of production’” (186). In Spain, the push and pull of the liberating effect of the global revolutionary spirit to which Jameson refers coincides with the Francoist dictatorship, and thus it did not have a chance to openly manifest itself until Franco’s death in 1975. However, the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s and its aftermath are integral to the understanding of the final stages of Franco’s dictatorship. The

5 For an overview of the cultural production of this period of transition from autarky to Westernization in Spain, see Pavlovic’s *The Mobile Nation/España cambia de piel* (1954–1964), a “sociocultural history of consumerism” (3), and Alejandro Gómez del Moral’s *Buying into Change: Mass Consumption, Dictatorship, and Democratization in Franco’s Spain, 1939–1982*.

dictator's death set the democratic transition in motion at a time when Spain, just like the capitalist economies of the West, was confronting the 1973–1974 financial crisis. For Spain, this crisis meant that workers' demands were put on the back burner, and the unions had to give in to the pressure for a peaceful transition and the project of modernizing the country. Market economy and social progress won over the unions' promotion of workers' rights. Significantly, Jameson's characterization of the impact of the long 1960s on the economy resonates with the situation in the mid-1970s in Spain. To him, the 1960s are to be understood as the defeat of freedom and possibility as well as the "superstructural movement and play enabled by the transition from one infrastructural or systemic stage of capitalism to another" (208). The initial exposure to the market economy in the late stages of Francoism morphs into full immersion after the democratic Transition in the 1970s.

A renewed institutional impetus to modernize Spain came in 1982 with the electoral victory of the political left for the first time since 1936. The agenda of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, Spanish Socialist Worker's Party) promoted a true democratic regime that, with the country's full economic and military integration into Europe, would put an end to decades of isolation and traditionalism in order to become a modern nation. Ten years later, the socialist project advanced by hosting the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona and the World's Fair in Seville. With the country fully immersed in neoliberalism, the end of the construction boom resulted in a post-1992 recession that took unemployment rates to unprecedented highs, partly as a consequence of Spain's entry into the European Economic Community in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This explains the attention of filmmakers to massive unemployment in the early twenty-first century. These audiovisual productions incorporate footage of political violence associated with the process of modernization that has been conveniently glossed over by the upbeat narrative of progress from the 1960s to the 1990s. However, post-2008 film starkly reminds us of the struggles of those who remained unrepresented visually and politically in the neoliberal narrative by creating alliances between "singularities of different specific times" (Marsh 228).

In their introduction to *1968 and Global Cinema*, editors Christina Gerhardt and Sara Saljoughi observe that most of the scholarship on 1960s film has focused on France, in particular on the works of François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Chris Marker. Gerhardt and Saljoughi claim that the long 1960s need to be approached from a transnational perspective. This book represents one step toward that broader representation – not only by focusing on 1960s Spanish independent film, but especially by studying this

cinema through the eyes and camera lenses of young activist filmmakers whose work is marked by the 2008 crisis. It was precisely in the 1960s that the merging of governmental and financial powers gave rise to the neoliberal systems wielding political and financial power at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### Rationale and Methodology

In 2005, Jameson welcomed the English translation of the first volume of Peter Weiss's *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (1975). His foreword applauds the novel's leftist agenda and laments that we live in a "seemingly post-revolutionary world situation" in which the establishment is commonly felt to be unchallenged (vii). And yet only a few years later, the 2008 recession triggered a powerful social denunciation of inequities. *D€MOCRAZY* shows how, in Spain, young independent filmmakers participate in these social movements, actively and meaningfully, by reconstructing a visual narrative of unrecognized resistance against inequities. Ultimately, the new forms of social life adopted by young creatives in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis also embrace three key moments of resistance to neoliberalism: the transnational 1968 social protests, the socioeconomic demands of workers' unions during the Transition, and the movement against Spain's full incorporation into Western capitalism in the mid-1980s, when thousands of protesters opposed the government's request to join the NATO alliance. All three points in time effectively challenge and openly resist the narrative of the modernization of the country during the Transition, at the time of the Socialist victory in 1982 and full project of Europization in 1992, as illustrated by the corpus of films selected.

In *Capitalist Realism* (2009), Mark Fisher famously states that it is harder to imagine the end of capitalism than the end of the world. And yet the video artists included here resist and disrupt the narrative of progress that defines capitalism. These political subjectivities do not aspire to replicate the dominant institutions that would lead to their demise. Instead they recognize their moral responsibility in the face of injustice, which must be enacted independently from the state. That is, resistance and dissent must be ingrained in the fabric of democracy, as revealed by the words of one banner in the 2011 protests: "No me llames radical por pensar." That is, the right to ponder, reflect, and converse should be integral to any democratic regime that actually embraces the *demos*; thinking should not be vilified as fanatic or revolutionary practice. With this command, protesters endorse everyone's continued right to weave their voices and actions into the political sphere and the construction of a national discourse, rather than simply casting a vote every four years.

Dissatisfaction with institutionalized democratic structures can be channeled via creative interventions – in this case, interventions that recognize political affinities spanning from the 1960s to the present. The 2008 crisis does not represent a brand-new awakening to the urgency of social justice, but rather is evidence of the cyclical synergy with the past that encompasses the end of Franco's regime as well as democratic Spain. The deficiencies of democracy, as expressed by the familiar banners of the 2011 protesters (e.g., "Lo llaman democracia y no lo es," "Democracia real ya") have in fact been brewing and manifesting since the '60s. This is one of the most important tasks Iberian studies has ahead of it: showing the continuities between the Franco dictatorship and the post-dictatorship "D€MOCRAZY." As Duncan Wheeler states, these "disquieting aspects of Spain's recent political past" (15) have been articulated through an extensive cultural production.<sup>6</sup>

The theoretical framework of this book is grounded in the works of scholars Luisa Elena Delgado, Michel de Certeau, Simon Critchley, and Amador Fernández-Savater. Collectively, their work represents a thorough cultural analysis of the 2008 crisis. Delgado's *La nación singular* provides an incisive cultural analysis of Spain's democratic deficiencies, to which the filmmakers in this book respond by creating new cinematic languages, as well as forms of production and distribution. De Certeau's notion of the individual's subversive behavior in daily life (xii) illuminates my analysis of these new cinematic practices with his argument that the sectors of society that are normally described as minorities or marginal actually constitute a majority of passive consumers, while at the same time being devoid of cultural or political power. It is through such seemingly inconsequential acts of rebellion that the disempowered majority achieves agency. The new cinematic strategies featured here represent powerful acts of resistance to the status quo.

I am drawn to Critchley's concept of infinite political responsibility as a response to the stripping of political participation from the individual in present-day democratic regimes (92–93). Political responsibility involves empowering people through their organization into horizontal, plural, and self-managed groups that defy current power relations. Along similar lines, Fernández-Savater argues for non-statocentric politics that challenge the notion that all social change originates in vertical institutional structures with a top-to-bottom approach. Instead, he supports the creation of horizontal social organizations because political power depends on what happens in

6 For an in-depth study of the cultural production between 1962 and 1992, see Wheeler's *Following Franco: Spanish Politics and Culture in Transition (1962–92)*.

the everyday places of experiences (see “Translation”). In this way, the occupations of public squares and the so-called *mareas* – independent groups that fight for social issues such as housing, public health, and education – illustrate a new manner of understanding power structures.

Only three years after 15-M, a double issue of the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* provided a thorough analysis of the events from multiple perspectives and by scholars in Europe and the United States: sociopolitical (Guillem Martínez, Luis Moreno-Caballud, Pablo La Parra Pérez, Víctor Sampedro and Josep Lobera, and Kostis Kornetis), linguistic (Luisa Martín Rojo and Carmelo Díaz de Frutos, Ismael Peña López, Mariluz Congosto, and Pablo Aragón), and affective (Germán Labrador Méndez and Jonathan Snyder). Particularly illuminating is Kornetis’s “‘Is There a Future in This Past?’ Analyzing 15-M’s Intricate Relation to the *Transición*,” which links the 2008 activism to strategies that emerged during the Transition. Since the 2014 publication of the issue, many young creative workers have participated in the culture of resistance not only thematically, but through cinematic practices that embody political indignation and resistance to neoliberal values. The filmmakers who created these works demonstrate impactful ways to repair and contest the deficiencies of Spain’s democracy (Delgado), as well as their authors’ political responsibility (Critchley), by incorporating them as horizontal, non-statocentric cultural and social structures (Fernández-Savater).

Throughout these pages I focus on the grassroots voices of public protest, as depicted through activist filmmaking, and connect these voices with broader political and cultural dialogues. I recover little-known cinematic works and weave together a narrative of resistance and social change. It is more important than ever to understand the legacy of the sociopolitical and cultural movements resulting from the 2008 crisis not as an exclusively Spanish phenomenon but as an international one. Neoliberalism has still not been dismantled, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the very same inequalities revealed by the crisis. Palmar Álvarez Blanco argues that the impact lies in the alternative modes of production, consumption, and institutional relations that emerged around 2008 (“*De-fencing*,” 53). My book aligns with – and deepens – Álvarez Blanco’s contention.

## Structure

From the perspective of Iberian film studies, *D€MOCRAZY* explores how a group of filmmakers has challenged the dominant narrative on Spain’s recent history by engaging with silenced political protests and violence of the recent past, and examines the ways in which independent film

produced from 2008 to 2020 both captures and informs the protests.<sup>7</sup> These productions need to be understood as sociopolitical interventions because of their new modes of production and dissemination, so I look at collaborative and activist filmmaking in Spain driven by the crisis of 2008. I place special focus on the work of underground visual artists who since the late 1960s had already documented the struggles of workers, students, and women as Spain progressively modernized, integrated into economic capitalism, and adhered to the neoliberal narrative. The work of filmmakers such as Helena Lumbreras and her Colectivo de Cine de Clase (CCC, Class Film Collective) has been unrepresented in the field, and it is pertinent to study them now because they have been rediscovered as like-minded interlocutors by current young filmmakers deeply affected by the 2008 crisis, and thence by film critics. This engagement reveals a complex and fecund relationship with the past, the mirror through which the creatives identify but also from which they separate. As such, *D€MOCRAZY* also speaks to broader histories of militant and experimental cinema.

Militant and experimental cinema also constitutes the focus of Marsh's *Spanish Cinema against Itself*, which traces the origins of experimental film to the avant-garde, focusing especially on 1920s surrealism that resurfaces in the late 1960s at the Jornadas Internacionales de Escuelas de Cine (6–7). Marsh indicates that political cinema flourished in the 1930s, and that both trends have been overlooked by scholarship. To remedy this blind spot, the films selected for discussion in this book echo both the experimental/surrealist and the political/militant with profound consciousness and agency to participate and intervene in the sociopolitical and visual realms. The filmmakers do so by proposing artistic and social alternatives the mainstream, not necessarily to replace it, but to support value systems long abandoned and spurned by neoliberalism. Through the formal dislocation of and experimentation with the traditional cinematic genres, a newly liberated cinematic language offers previously unthinkable possibilities.

Within my corpus there are two main trends. Some artists incorporate the practices created by underground filmmakers from the 1960s to the

7 Chapter 9 of *Spanish Cinema against Itself* examines the films about 15-M through the perspective of performativity – understood as a film's “capacity to intervene in a context and change it in the way of a speech act” (208) – representation, and hauntology. Marsh makes the relevant proposition to use the concept of allegory as a critical lens, which he defines as a “ghostly or countergenealogy, an othered history of militant filmmaking, in which the relationship of present filmmaking to the past is that of residue” (206). His ninth chapter analyzes some of the films included in *D€MOCRAZY*. The sociopolitical interventions of what I call “new forms of social life” align with Marsh's conceptualization of performativity.

1990s. Others unearth unknown, frequently amateur documentary footage from those same years. In doing so, they integrate the collaborative practices of filmmakers who embrace disenfranchisement, and they connect with a visual history that had been deemed expendable by critics and historians. The plight of industrial workers, small farmers, environmental activists, construction workers, and feminist women has been erased from the dominant narrative of Spain's modernization, and the recently rediscovered footage attests to the attempts to annihilate their memory and subjectivity.

The opening chapter contextualizes the main works and creators included in this book and the ways they illustrate new forms of social life through novel creative avenues. It traces meaningful common cinematic and political predicaments that situate these creatives in the direction of expanded film, and shows that this new independent film is conceived as an undefined genre continuously under construction. I build upon the curatorial and scholarly work of Josetxo Cerdán, Antonio Weinrichter, Carlos Muguiro, and Gonzalo de Pedro and Elena Oroz. Cerdán and Weinrichter curated the program "D-Generation: Underground Experiments in Spanish Nonfiction" for the 2007 Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival, among the earliest recognition of some of the artists included in this book. These filmmakers exist in delocalization, cultivate an undefined genre, and are always under construction. The chapter introduces the incorporation of and the interrogation of the digital archives, which, stripped of their traditional subservient narrative role, become intrinsic to the new creations. In the context of these filmmakers that enter the independent cinematic scene and explore new visual and political languages that allow for unprecedented communicative and viral possibilities, María Cañas's trilogy, comprising *Kiss the Fire* (2007), *El coro de alma negra* (2007), and *Kiss the Murder* (2008), epitomizes their expressive potential. Thanks to the availability of images in cyberspace, Sevillian artist María Cañas repurposes found footage to not only transform cinema's modes of perception and reception, but also to voice a critique of neoliberal market forces. In the digital age, a work of art's reproducibility has achieved dimensions that exceed those analyzed by Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." The possibilities and limitations of the reproducibility and dissemination of archival footage will be addressed through engagement with the writings of Benjamin and Slavoj Žižek.

The second and third chapters illustrate a dual dialogue with the past though the unearthing of archival footage. Chapter 2 analyzes the cinematic strategies that contemporary artists devise to incorporate the practices created by underground filmmakers from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as their interrogation of their formal common ground and ideological

synergies. This is the first of two chapters that trace a revealing and overt correspondence between little-known experimental and militant film at two moments in time, showing that activist cinema emerges as a productive venue that marries social justice and creative freedom. Digital technology and the Internet have democratized both filmmaking and distribution in the twenty-first century much as video did in the 1970s. At that time, groups such as Video-Nou used video to challenge television's monolithic discourse and to give a voice to the disenfranchised. In a similar vein, Vicente J. Benet credits the availability of new, inexpensive formats – such as Kodak's Super 8 with synchronized sound, which launched in 1974 – with the development of experimental film in 1970s Spain (*El cine español*, 355). Benet also points out the underground, militant, and counterinformation tendencies of those 1960s filmmakers who positioned themselves on the margins of commercial film (“Radical Politics,” 162). I place into conversation Ramiro Ledo's *VidaExtra* (2013) and Pere Portabella's *El sopar* (1974), as well as María Cañas's *Sé villana* (2014) and Juan Sebastián Bollaín's *Sevilla rota* and *Sevilla tuvo que ser*, both from 1979.<sup>8</sup> This comparative analysis shows that today's filmmakers selectively draw on techniques from the 1970s for both formal and political effect, thus reinscribing them. A particular focus of this chapter is how López Carrasco's *El futuro* (2014) draws upon Iván Zulueta's *Arrebato* (1979) in a way that mirrors how the new generation of Spaniards looks at itself through the lens of the past. López Carrasco's film dramatizes – and responds to – the fragility of the political and cultural euphoria that emerged from the Transition, and demonstrates how a lesser-known experimental and underground film emerges as a productive transhistorical interlocutor in the twenty-first century. *El futuro* looks to *Arrebato* in a similar manner as the new generation of Spaniards looks at itself in the mirror of the past. The past is understood as a flawed origin, a time that is both embraced and devoured. In the search for cinematic and political origins, the mirror is perceived as shattered, and the times asynchronous.

Chapter 3 revisits strategies of appropriation from a regional perspective by analyzing four documentaries from Andalucía, Galicia, Cataluña, and the Basque Country, respectively: *El caso Rocío* (José Luis Tirado, 2013), *Cine Clube Carlos Varela* (Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro, 2005), *La matança del porc* (Isaki Lacuesta, 2012), and *Democráticos tiranos* (a collective work produced by Chema Mascareña, 2013). *El caso Rocío*, which engages with the controversial documentary *Rocío* (Fernando Ruiz Vergara, 1980), exposes political and

8 Bollaín's experimental and satirical films remain grossly understudied. His 2022 memoir, humorously entitled *Me moría*, unveils Bollaín's creative talent as an engaging underground artist and architect.

religious censorship that Spain's democracy endured even years after Franco's death. Appropriately, the 1980 and 2013 documentaries were sold as a bundle, as they create what can be called an iconography of continuity between the repressive past of the dictatorship and the Transition. *Cine Clube Carlos Varela* appropriates artist Carlos Varela's documentary footage from the 1970s protests in Galicia. As such, director Ramiro Ledo reconstructs the creative and militant role of Varela, who had chronicled protests against imperialism originating both beyond and within the Spanish border. The resulting film shows how Galician political organizations were excluded from any and all discussions about the democratic process in the immediate aftermath of Franco's death. Isaki Lacuesta's *La matança del porc* incorporates footage from two Super 8 shorts provided by activist and photographer Pep Armengol: the eponymous *La matança del porc* (1967) and *Spanish First Elections* (1978). *Democráticos tiranos*, an unassuming, low-budget documentary that has only been screened in Madrid, Barcelona, and Tenerife, appropriates footage of political protests as well as interviews with those who participated in them, both in 1976 and in 2011. The multiple dialogues inform and reflect what Luisa Elena Delgado calls the *cuentas pendientes* (pending issues) from the Spanish Transition, which revolve around two main focal points: parliamentary representation and the *estado de las autonomías*, the territorial division of Spain into seventeen regions (*La nación singular*, 16). Through the appropriation of archival footage, Tirado, Ledo Cordeiro, Lacuesta, and the Mascareña team disrupt what Delgado understands as the fantasy of cultural harmony where dissent has no place (18). If the concept of a nation's stability rests on its unity, cohesion, and most importantly, representation of its constituencies, it follows that dissent is viewed as an attack on its very foundation. The exposure of the regional archives rattles the core of the fantasy of dominant visual narratives of democratic Spain. These artists reside in the digital and use digital technology, but they turn to early footage, effectively defetishizing the image and signaling its political agenda. Their creative and political synergy signals the shared challenges to Spain's democratic identity that come from the periphery. The dominant political discourse of the Transition discarded the voice of the people and was stripped of nationalist and popular voices from the periphery. Since 2008, we have witnessed a movement in the opposite direction, with the increasing demands of the people for representation.

Central to the argument of the book, the fourth chapter explores the reasons the filmmaker Helena Lumbreras (1935–1995) has come to light as such a thought-provoking and meaningful cinematic voice in the context of independent, activist film in contemporary Spain. Lumbreras directed five militant documentaries between 1968 and 1978 that were virtually unknown

until the early 2000s, and her engagement with the social, economic, and political issues of her time mirrors the collaborative organizational structures of the grassroots collectives that developed during the 15-M Movement. The Catalan filmmaker Llorenç Soler collaborated with Lumbreras on her first two films, but after their cinematic and personal partnership ended, she set up the CCC with Mariano Lisa, and under this umbrella produced her following three films. The CCC epitomizes the collective and collaborative nature of her work, and her trademark horizontal approach to filmmaking, in what constitutes one of the strongest connections with the twenty-first-century cinematic practices studied in this book. In the early 1970s, Lumbreras and Lisa made a living – albeit a precarious one – by screening their work at film clubs, as well as in the basements of Roman Catholic churches where progressive communities were to be found. And yet, after the dictatorship ended, Lumbreras’s career came to an abrupt end. In fact, her work was excluded from the dominant ideological and visual discourses on the Spanish transition to democracy. Years later, between 1987 and 1994, Lumbreras and Lisa donated to the Filmoteca de Catalunya thirty-six items that included standard copies, negatives, and footage from these five films, as well as footage from unfinished projects. In 1995 the Filmoteca commenced a project to restore and disseminate her work.

Lumbreras’s cinematic practices reveal that her moral responsibility lies with the empowerment of the individual who struggles for freedom from socioeconomic constraints. In her longing for the processes of democratization, Lumbreras creates a cinematic agenda that rests on the pillars of collectivity, horizontality, authenticity, and gender equity. This is the sociocultural environment that has made the filmmaker a meaningful interlocutor for post-2008 militant film. In order to position Lumbreras’s political agenda relative to current activist practice, I point to the aspiration to freedom as political action *vis-à-vis* what Critchley calls the activism of “infinite responsibility” (95). This chapter pays particular attention to the ways she documents women’s grassroots movements, an important aspect of resistance under late Francoism that has been neglected by both filmmakers and historians. I present both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective to explain why her important exposure of Spain’s socioeconomic reality was marginalized by hegemonic political and cultural discourse in the mid-1970s, as well as the cultural and sociopolitical circumstances that have led to the recovery of Lumbreras’s militant cinema at the onset of the twenty-first century. Lumbreras was one of the many female activists left by the wayside in the dominant story of Transitional Spain; this analysis of her work serves to challenge the construction of the canon based on the dictates of the industry and the auteur tradition (see García López).

Chapter 5 focuses on the crucial role that affect has played in the post-2008 political protest movements, as well as the ways filmmakers perceive these affective manifestations and engage them in pursuit of political resistance, by examining two works that reside at opposite ends of the affective spectrum. The documentary *Libre te quiero* (2012) by Basilio Martín Patino captures the initial joyfulness of the 2011 protests through musical performances. By focusing on the affective impact of music – drumming, in particular, animates the audience with its contagious exaltation – the film brings attention to the protagonism of care and collectivity. My argument aligns with and expands on the scholarship by Luisa Elena Delgado (“Nacionalistas”) and Fernández-Savater (“Políticas”) on the role of emotions in the public realm. Delgado appropriately conceptualizes the 15-M Movement as the “mobilization of collective emotions” and traces its evolution “from an initial sense of anger, paralysis, fear, and isolation” to the development of “a sense of community, hope, and, above all, empowerment” (275). Indeed, emotions were channeled in the form of noninstitutional democratic participation during the post-2008 crisis, yielding the strongest protest movement since the mid-1970s. Along similar lines, Fernández-Savater, in advocating for the need to restore the spirit of 1968, argues that the anger, anxiety, depression, and lack of motivation created by neoliberalism morphed not into a strictly political movement but into a collective discussion about a new shared desire to delineate what kinds of individual we desire to be (“Políticas”). In *Libre te quiero* the affective power of music encourages us all to continue to claim our democratic right to participate and let our voices heard. That is where the value of the movement – in both senses, of the music and the 15-M revolution – lies. In a remarkably different tone, the 2019 film by scholar and artist María Ruido, *Estado de malestar*, examines how neoliberalism in post-2008 Spain pathologizes emotions. Interestingly, *Estado de malestar*, a visual essay about social symptomatology and psychic suffering, moves beyond affect to expose the predicament of those stigmatized as mentally ill and social misfits because they do not conform to neoliberal societal expectations and actively resist its obligations and constraints. Ruido’s exposure of the marginalization of behaviors that contest neoliberalism brings us back to the criminalization and clinicalization of nonconforming attitudes penalized by late Francoism and denounced by artists during the Transition. Despite their different approaches to capturing and analyzing affect, the two films demonstrate that present-day protesters and filmmakers look back to affective arguments from the twentieth century and try to ignite and sustain political action by reflecting historical and contemporary expressions of affect that yield collective solidarities and resistance.

Finally, Chapter 6 addresses Spain’s modernization project and the resulting

masked inequities by returning to key filmmakers whose work figures in earlier chapters: María Cañas (*Expo Lío 92*, 2017) and Luis López Carrasco (*El año del descubrimiento*, 2020). These films approach the socioeconomic consequences of the 1992 project from one of its centers, the Seville Expo, and from the periphery, Cartagena (Murcia), respectively. Their wide range of cinematic strategies includes found footage and nonprofessional actors, and they were exclusively disseminated in the virtual realm. I close the book with these films because they epitomize how young filmmakers have generated new forms of social life, holding space for individual agency and political participation in the wake of the 2008 crisis. *Expo Lío*, a pun that suggests both general mess and plunder, is deeply immersed in the Spanish tradition of grotesque critique of the nation, while at the same time reflecting Cañas's signature dark humor through ironic montage. The film challenges consumerism, private property, and authorship by appropriating footage from open sources such as the Prelinger Archives, and thus promoting communality and horizontality. Cañas's creative methods mirror her critical view of neoliberalism, and thus align with many other contemporary artists included in this book. By contrast, López Carrasco's documentary does not share Cañas's comic tone. With a cast of more than fifty nonprofessional actors, the multi-award-winning *El año del descubrimiento* reilluminates the plight of disenfranchised workers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, drawing the spectator into a suffocating dystopia by means of a cinematography that is simultaneously hyperrealistic and oneiric. The polysemic term "descubrimiento" connotes not only the 1492 colonization of America but, most importantly, the realization that the revolutionary ideology that originated in the 1960s has repeatedly failed to protect and support Spanish workers. As such, the focus of this narrative directly challenges the teleological project that showcased 1992 Spain as the sought-after haven of European neoliberal ideas, democratic modernization, and the welfare state. The haze of necropolitics and the humanity of collectivity merge to captivate audiences, thus illustrating the reality of new forms of social life that foster the empowerment of the individual through collaborative cinematic production. The unprecedented critical attention that López Carrasco's documentary has garnered speaks to its timeliness and timelessness.<sup>9</sup> At a roundtable at the Graduate Center, CUNY, in November 2022, López Carrasco stated that while the film does

9 Temporality is also the focus of López Carrasco's first novel, *El desierto blanco*, winner of the 2023 Premio Herralde de Novela. Narrated from an indeterminate time in the future, its protagonists reminisce about their broken dreams and utopian aspirations at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

not focus on 15-M, he would not have made the film without the inspiration and energy derived from that movement. As the creative work of each of these filmmakers demonstrates, the crisis resulted in a new sensibility that informed politically engaged cultural interventions on the status quo.

## CHAPTER ONE

# The “D-Generation” of María Cañas Spanish Cinema in the Era of Technological Reproducibility

Since the mid-1990s, the documentary genre has shown itself to be one of the most creative audiovisual forms in contemporary Spain. The genre's good health, its versatility, as well as the multitude of different approaches shown by directors, are evident from the wide range of production types. These include anthropological documentaries (*En construcción*, 2001, by José Luis Guerín), fake documentaries (*Casas viejas*, 1996, by Basilio Martín Patino), creative documentaries (*La leyenda del tiempo*, 2006, by Isaki Lacuesta), character documentaries (*Vint anys no és res*, 2004, by Joaquim Jordà), or reportage documentaries made for television (*Les fosses del silenci*, 2003, by Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis). Memory provides a unifying theme for them all.<sup>1</sup>

At the onset of the twenty-first century, filmmakers developed new ways of making documentaries with sources and distribution rooted in cyberspace. These new films are characterized by delocalization, impermanence, and a fragmentary nature. Many are crafted with footage and images found on the Internet, and some find an outlet in the same medium where they began (YouTube, Google Video, Vimeo, or personal webpages). These are filmmakers without professional cameras, taking a “do it yourself” approach that requires minimal resources. If the memory documentary stands as a reference point for collective identity, the creations in this

1 In *El documental cinematográfico y televisivo* (2013), I posit that the documentary has become an archive, in lieu of memory as Pierre Nora might say, because of the central role it affords the testimony of Civil War victims and their families. The efforts of documentary makers to compile and preserve these narratives impact historical discourse, and in so doing echo Adorno's claim that history needs testimony in order to be complete. Suffering forms an integral part of history because it is a condition of all truth. Furthermore, the boom in documentary making since the mid-1990s should be understood as a media and commercial phenomenon: these narratives constitute an industry driven as much by market forces as it is by media trends.

chapter exist in the non-places that characterize supermodernity, in which reference points for collective identity have become unstable (Augé 37). The concept of a “non-place” serves to define two distinct but complementary realities: spaces created with a determined outcome (airports, holiday camps, cyberspace), and in turn the relationships that individuals establish with those locations. If the places foster a sense of the social, the non-places generate isolation.

Archival material has always been one of the mainstays of the documentary genre. And yet, the traditional idea of an archive differs significantly from the contemporary. Though the tools are traditional, filmmakers are constantly finding new ways to develop innovative work. Consider, for example, the numerous reels of footage filmed in 1970s Chile by the documentary maker Chris Marker, which he gave to Patricio Guzmán, who later used them as the basis for his magnum opus, *La batalla de Chile* (1977–1980). Years later, the Catalan filmmaker Isaki Lacuesta also included some of Marker’s footage in *Las variaciones Marker* (2007), but with a twist – he did not use it to illustrate the narrative, but as part of the narrative itself. That is, footage no longer functions as supporting evidence to the overall narrative. Instead, it creates the narrative.

Archival footage as a resource has thus become raw material for these new audiovisual creations. They appear at festivals, competitions, museum installations, and, above all, on the Internet, but they are hardly ever commercialized. Their decision not to seek profit illustrates that these young artists are often critical of materialism and consumerism and prefer to remain on the margins of the system. In addition to grants from public bodies, crowdfunding – a fundraising system by which small sums of money are solicited electronically from family and friends – has become commonplace. In fact, many of these filmmakers demand freedom of expression above all else, and communicative and viral possibilities take priority over commercialization. They advocate “copyleft,” in other words, a rejection of “copyright,” to demand absolute freedom of use and distribution for their art. Such freedom means they can pursue the maximum artistic exposure possible, and promotion via cyberspace.

The death of the author, as theorized by Roland Barthes, finds its most ardent supporters among the new audiovisual creatives. This is not due just to a taste for appropriation, but also to the promotion of creative collaboration, as is the case with several collectives: Los Hijos, founded in 2008 and comprising Javier Fernández Vázquez, Luis López Carrasco, and Natalia Marín Sancho; Laboratorium, formed by Laura Ginès and Pere Ginard; and weareQQ, founded by Vicente Vázquez and Usue Arrieta. These

video artists support free and open culture (Lessig) to promote creativity as, for example, set out in 2002 by the Creative Commons platform.<sup>2</sup>

Gonzalo de Pedro and Elena Oroz eloquently describe the existence of this “decentralized and digitalized” mode of production, which takes the form of “a decentralized network, (dis)organized in a nonhierarchical manner, a real equivalent to P2P file-sharing networks on the Internet, lacking central servers where information is accumulated, and where each author is an author-producer-server” (73–74). For example, Andrés Duque, a Venezuelan living in Barcelona, begins his acclaimed autobiographical documentary *Color perro que huye* (2011)<sup>3</sup> with a declaration of intent to reflect his own horizontal networks of images: “I have neither films nor videotapes. I just have numbers stored on hard drives, and memory sticks labeled ‘Quicktime.’ From these I have extracted images that I now put together, sort and present with complete honesty. But it’s not the truth.” Duque thus trips the archival image of its traditional indexicality.

Moreover, unlimited access to the audiovisual world is granted by digital repositories such as archive.org, in particular its Prelinger Archives, the aim of which is to collect, preserve, and provide free access to audiovisual material. The video artist, critic, and curator Enrique Piñuel claims that such availability, “together with a break with all capitalist and industrialized processes typical of the most conventional cinematographic practices, obviously makes us exponents of the punk ‘do it yourself’ philosophy” (n.pag.). This point of view on cultural openness (Lanier 3) is on the rise, and yet some studies show that efforts to increase free culture and open archives are being curtailed by media monopolies (Ginsburg 128). Is it really possible for filmmakers to navigate a virtual world on the margins of capitalism? If young artists give their work away for free, does this mean they have no market value? If they themselves become “servers” and the hierarchical arrangement between screen and darkness in which viewers traditionally find themselves now disappears, will artists achieve a closer and more participatory relationship with their audience? Will cyberspace and digital technology bring about the death of the cinema?

2 Creative Commons aims to make the rigid system of copyright more flexible by offering a set of licenses that facilitate the use and distribution of a work of art or other intellectual property under certain conditions. Each license specifies the kinds of reuse allowed, whether work can be modified, used commercially, and so on (“About the Licenses”).

3 *Color perro que huye* has won prizes at festivals in Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Argentina, and Peru.

## The D-Generation

The documentary genre's claim to veracity is being supplanted by creative freedom based on archival images. It comes as no surprise that digital images are raw material to a generation that has grown up with Photoshop. In the context of the 2008 economic crisis, this mode also enables creativity with minimal resources. As María Cañas claims, "passion is cinema made with few means but no limits" ("Entrevista"). In addition to Lacuesta and Duque mentioned above, other leaders in this trend are Mateo Maté, Julio J. von Drove, and Alberto Cabrera Bernal. Many of them happened to meet through the "D-Generation: Underground Experiments in Spanish Nonfiction" program curated by Josetxo Cerdán and Antonio Weinrichter for the 2007 Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival (de Pedro and Oroz 81). The use of the negative prefix "d-" in Cerdán and Weinrichter's title situates them in no-man's-land, as much in terms of their existence as a group as in terms of their creativity. In other words, they are "d-generated" filmmakers because their work does not fit into any genre (de Pedro and Oroz 81). In a similar way, the "Heterodocsias" project for the Punto de Vista Festival (assembled by Carlos Muguiro) included creations emerging from an "unmentionable" terrain that is "neither colonized nor civilized" (de Pedro and Oroz 81). These delocalized works cultivate an undefined genre and are always under construction.

While these definitions emphasize the ways in which "d-generated" filmmakers fall outside traditional artistic categories, their work has had a tremendous impact in both fringe and mainstream contexts. Their relevance in the contemporary art landscape is expressed clearly by de Pedro and Oroz:

With sober discourse, traditionally associated with the documentary, now abolished, what remains is a fairground, playful and ironic, changing and changeable, of vast richness and in constant dialogue with other audiovisual and artistic forms, which travels ahead of an industry that hasn't understood the changing landscape that surrounds it. (86)

This description suggests that these creatives feel unconstrained by the limits of genre, medium, or raw material. In the words of Santos Zunzunegui, today's documentary filmmakers map "a territory with imprecise and fluctuating boundaries" (15). They blur the boundaries between documentary and fiction, work in both film and video, and mix narrative, autobiography, social commentary, and personal reflection. While they often show preference for the short film format, length varies significantly. Moreover, artists such as

María Cañas do not look at their creations as stable or finished. As such, one particular project may take different forms according to the venue in which it is shown. Also significant is the fact that the short form is no longer considered a trial or practice for an artist to acquire the cinematic skills needed for a feature film. It becomes a creation in its own right.

The expressive plurality of appropriationism, also multilingual in nature, is evident in two shows from 2012. The first was curated by the creative and critic Enrique Piñuel, of Playtime Audiovisuales for the Instituto Cervantes.<sup>4</sup> The second, curated by Eugeni Bonet, another proponent of found-footage cinema, was “Desmontaje al día.”<sup>5</sup> Both Piñuel and Bonet note that the cinematographic practice of the *objet trouvé* developed by the Surrealists came back in the 1970s, as seen in works by Muntadas, Zulueta, Torres, and Portabella. Bonet’s attitude as curator is not to treat “readymade” as a pigeonhole, but rather to emphasize the semantic diversity acquired by the recontextualized image. Through his choices, Bonet highlights how video is increasingly concerned with “cinema’s icons and offcuts” (“Desmontaje”), a trend in which the televisual image supplants our previous interest in cinema. As such, experimental film production in post-2008 Spain incorporates formal and political elements of Surrealism, which is considered one of the antecedents of contemporary experimental filmmaking, as explained in the Introduction. The combination of the oneiric, the *objet trouvé*, and the activist, anti-bourgeois origins of Surrealism results in the rhetoric of dissensus voiced by the disenfranchised.

### María Cañas and the Possibilities of Appropriationism

Sevillian artist María Cañas’s trilogy, comprising *Kiss the Fire* (2007, 5’42”), *El coro de alma negra* (2007, 4’07”), and *Kiss the Murder* (2008, 8’), is one of the most significant and original video creations of recent years. Although conceived as a whole, as we shall see below, its three parts can nonetheless be viewed in isolation. Not for nothing does the new audiovisual advocate “the fragment as a creative whole” (Zunzunegui 14), which in Cañas’s case could apply as much to the diegetic context as the extradiegetic. Cañas refers to herself as a “Sevillian archivist,” “audiovisual cannibal,” “cyberlout,”

4 My thanks to Marina Díaz López, film and audiovisual technician at the Instituto Cervantes, for providing tapes of this series, which was sponsored by the Instituto Cervantes and shown at its centers in Paris and Dublin. Playtime Audiovisuales is a company set up to produce, distribute, and curate audiovisual works: [playtimeaudiovisuales.com](http://playtimeaudiovisuales.com).

5 The full program can be found at [www.hamacaonline.net/packs/desmontaje-al-dia/](http://www.hamacaonline.net/packs/desmontaje-al-dia/).

“media savage,” “iconoclastic surgeon,” “image rapist,” “punk cannibal,” and “alchemist of audiovisual debris” (“Entrevista”). Each of these provocative terms suggests her manner of making use of existing material for new creative purposes. Cañas uses archival images in particular to denounce the values instilled in us by the media apparatus. She engages in “a militant but not proselytizing consumption of film, which is introduced into topics and genres in order to dynamite them.”<sup>6</sup> Faced with the commercialization of the new, this filmmaker advocates digital recycling. Cañas takes the slogan for her work from one of Marcel Duchamp’s questions: “Isn’t art a game between all people of all periods?” (“El Blues,” 50). Her own words are fundamental for understanding her art:

I try to provoke artistically, to point out with vitriolic humor, a grotesque view of the world. I deconstruct and distort Spain’s National Day (*La cosa nuestra*), the world of the Black Iberian pig (*El perfecto cerdo*), flamenco (*Rest in Peace*), television (*The Land of 1,000 TVs*), pornography, the history of art and of film (*La virtud demacrada*), relationships (*Kiss the Murder* and *Kiss the Fire*), the false glamor of the megalopolis (*Meet My Meat N.Y.*), “give me two” tourism and sexual hypocrisy (*Por un puñado de yuanes*), the Western spiritual supermarket and fanaticism (*Dios se ríe en las alturas*). (“El Blues,” 51)<sup>7</sup>

Playfulness, provocation, and reinterpretation are fundamental to her approach.

Cañas’s trilogy and the work of other young creatives should be considered in the context of “expanded cinema,” a term coined by Jonas Mekas in the mid-1960s (Rees 12). Mekas defines expanded cinema as the subversion of the single image, a reference to the multiple screens and images of Charles and Ray Eames’s installation for the IBM pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair. Toward the end of the 1960s, Gene Youngblood identified the three fundamental aspects of expanded cinema (Rees 12), elements which subvert cinema as a commercial show for passive consumption: first, the fusion of different artistic displays in a multimedia performance; second, the exploration of

6 This statement comes from email correspondence (Oct. 23, 2012). My thanks to María Cañas for being so generous with her work, for her intelligent insights about contemporary art, and for her friendship.

7 Cañas’s most recent work, *El desastre cuida de todo* (2023, 7), remains loyal to her trajectory by exposing and shattering the collective delusion caused by the contemporary servitude to technology and social media in the context of ever-increasing social and economic precariousness. It premiered in the Festival Internacional de Cine de Sevilla, in the Panorama Andaluz Cortometrajes Session.

technology and cyberspace; and finally, a breakdown of the traditional barrier between artist and audience through the participation of the latter. Expanded cinema shows have taken place throughout history and range from narration and live music in silent movie halls, through performances in museums, to the performative videos of Marina Abramović. Expanded cinema includes consideration and deconstruction of cinema as much as consecration. In Spain its biggest exponent was the Granada-born José Val del Omar (1904-1982), director of numerous ethnographic and poetic documentaries, the best known being *Tríptico elemental de España*. For Mekas, expanded cinema presumes the spiritualization of the image (Rees 13). He cites the relevance of dream as an analogy for cinema: they have the same oneiric imagery and merging of the senses, fundamental elements of Cañas’s trilogy which, together with those of other appropriationists of her generation, in my view constitutes the most recent link in the expanded cinema chain.

The three titles, *Kiss the Fire*, *El coro de alma negra*, and *Kiss the Murder*, signal the leitmotifs of the work: love, passion, and death. References to the senses pervade the trilogy by means of synaesthetic play. Touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste unite in the central image of fire. The color black, the singing of a choir, and the touch of a kiss emphasize the highly sensory character of the filmic image. The sensuality presented in the titles becomes patently clear in the great variety of images that follow one after another in the nearly eighteen minutes of total running time. These are images from the widest range of sources: films, paintings, illustrations, and photographs, unlimited by geography or era.<sup>8</sup> This synaesthetic filmmaking strategy has been studied by Laura Marks, who refers to it as “haptic visuality” (13). Haptic or synaesthetic visuality is erotic, because it forces viewers to extract the cinematographic image from its onscreen latency (13). Marks explains the process, unique to female filmmakers, with a play on words that establishes the equivalence between “skin” and “screen” (4). Haptic visuality is a reaction to dissatisfaction with the limits of visual language: “The more our world is rendered forth in visual images, the more things are left unexpressed” (4). Cañas’s exact purpose consists of exposing and condemning the messages embedded in stereotypical images of women. Female sexualization in a patriarchal culture is displaced by visual eroticization.

8 A challenge faced by any student of found-footage video is identification of the source material, without which a deep understanding of the resemanticization of the footage in question cannot be reached. My thanks to María Cañas for providing key details for the writing of this chapter. Nonetheless, it should be noted that recognizing that source material can be a challenge even for experts given that, as the artist herself likes to point out, it is highly reworked in postproduction.

Eugeni Bonet contributes an idea that is central to understanding a cinema made from recycled materials.<sup>9</sup> The appropriation of someone else's images, he explains, "is a metaphor rather than a reality" ("La apropiación," 17). Bonet argues that "deconstruction" is a more accurate term than "appropriationism," because through deconstructing the original image one discovers the origin of the creative process (22). In this respect, as Cañas herself asserts, her art aims to "unearth the dark truth of images and sounds" ("Intro," n.pag.). Thus she agrees with Bonet on the need to establish a dialogue with, or an interrogation or discussion of, the messages we are being given, which will serve to protect us from "injustice become performance" ("La apropiación," 22). Discontinuity causes confusion, questioning, and curiosity in viewers more accustomed to coherence in works of art.

*Kiss the Fire* begins with the title in white lettering on a black background overlaid with cigarette smoke. The title card is followed by a warning: "Be careful when following your dreams. They might come true." Next there are some indistinct flames. The following image is an extreme close-up of a pair of lips in bright lipstick, a metaphor for female sexualization. Overlaid on this mouth is a building in flames from which a man throws himself, footage taken from *The Towering Inferno* (1974) by John Guillermin. This composition creates an oneiric effect, which is emphasized by a reinterpretation of the György Ligeti soundtrack (*Lux Aeterna*). The music and images are perfectly synchronized. This sequence is repeated at the end of *Kiss the Fire* and again at the end of *Kiss the Murder*, giving the trilogy a circular structure.

The oneiric elements are introduced as a central theme of *Kiss the Fire* through the intertextuality of Federico García Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* (1929) and Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950). Both works merge surrealism and the denunciation of abject poverty, as analyzed by several critics.<sup>10</sup> That is, both feature the tension between reality and sub-reality. While *Poeta en*

9 In 1993, Bonet curated a touring show called "Desmontaje: Film, Vídeo/ Apropiación, Reciclaje," which opened at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern before moving on to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Arteleku (San Sebastián), the World Wide Video Festival (The Hague), and the Centro Gallego de las Artes de la Imagen (A Coruña). The exhibition included works by Antoni Muntadas, Iván Zulueta, and Fransesc Torres, among other representative artists of the 1980s. Twenty years later, the new generation of creatives would find an outlet in another program, "Desmontaje al día," which took place in the Cinemes Maldá in Barcelona as part of the "El Videoarte en la Gran Pantalla" series. The full program, together with Bonet's introduction, can be found at <https://www.hamacaonline.net>.

10 María Clementa Millán explains the tension between Surrealism and Realism in Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* in "La presencia superrealista" (91–98). Julián Gutiérrez Albilla offers an incisive analysis of Buñuel's film in his essay "*Los olvidados* de Luis Buñuel (1950)."

*Nueva York* incorporates the rhetoric of illogic, dreams, and death, the book as a whole is firmly grounded in the social impact of the 1929 market crash. Along similar lines, *Los olvidados* epitomizes the cinematic neorealism of the 1950s, while simultaneously echoing Buñuel’s earlier surrealist works (*Un chien andalou* and *L’âge d’or* from 1929 and 1930, respectively). It is no coincidence that Cañas should incorporate the dream experienced by Pedro, the child protagonist of *Los olvidados*, which dramatizes death, poverty, and female sexuality. This sequence, colored in red, paradigmatically sets up a dialogue with other figures in the same color, as we shall see. In this way, the poetry of discontinuity finds coherence in chromatic and visual paradigms. Clear echoes of Lorca can be seen, in particular the poem titled “La aurora,” in the text that follows the image of the lips. Lorca’s poem personifies the dawn, which travels along the angles of the unwelcoming city and “groans / on enormous fire escapes / searching between the angles / for spikenards of drafted anguish” (v–viii, my translation).<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Cañas’s declaration uses urban hardness to confront human sensibility: “Among the crowd of shapes, she is the only one looking.” She, the woman, proclaims her freedom and sets herself up as protagonist from the start by means of the play of images that condemn her iconographic reification. In this segment, she is one of the ballerinas in *L’eclipse du soleil en pleine lune* (1907) by Georges Méliès, the father of cinematic magic and fantasy, who floats beside the burning skyscraper in *The Towering Inferno*. Méliès expands the limits of our world and Cañas pays homage to him by including the female figure defying the limits of reality.

A similar message can be inferred from another of the most successful compositions of Cañas’s trilogy, a shot from Roman Polanski’s classic *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), specifically, and significantly, a shot from a dream sequence. To understand its function, we must briefly recall how Rosemary, young and recently married, is under extreme pressure to get pregnant immediately after her wedding, both from her neighbors and from her husband. In her dream, Rosemary finds herself lying in her bed, which is floating on the sea. The camera is on the headboard of the bed, such that we share the perspective of the woman, who is dressed in the most elegant red outfit, observing the immensity of the sea that evokes the freedom that Rosemary lacks. Cañas takes the shot and incorporates it into a mirror image separated by a column. This is one of several symmetrical compositions in this work that illustrate the concept of the *doppelgänger*, the “double” whose appearance presages our own death. Death and eroticism go hand in hand

11 “La aurora de Nueva York gime / por las inmensas escaleras / buscando entre las aristas / nardos de angustia dibujada.”

throughout Cañas's triptych, as can be inferred from numerous images, including the opening image of the flames.

Another composition by a different artist offers similar graphic and chromatic qualities: the double reproduction of Domenico Ghirlandaio's painting *An Old Man and His Grandson*. The old man's robes are carmine red just like those of a bald woman who appears, also in double, in the upper part of the shot. Both figures are linked not only chromatically, but also through features of their external appearance. Or rather, the physical association between them makes us question our gender prejudices. The old man's nose is hugely exaggerated, like Quevedo's famous man stuck to a nose. His conspicuous warts make it more prominent and terribly ugly. And yet, when looking at Ghirlandaio's painting, our attention is drawn away from the old man's ugliness by the overwhelming tenderness of his gaze toward the boy. In the juxtaposition of the physical and the emotional, the latter wins out. So, why is it that in the Western tradition male ugliness is minimized while female ugliness tends to be scorned? The filmmaker forces us to confront this question by creating a graphic relationship between Ghirlandaio's painting and the figure of the "singing bald woman" who occupies the central space on two accounts in the following still.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to Cañas, the dialogue that she establishes with Buñuel is not limited to the scene from *Los olvidados* mentioned above. She also includes what is arguably his most outstanding work, the cutting of the eye at the start of *Un chien andalou*, which introduced the basic premise of surrealism: the new reality is the surreality of the unconscious. Cañas deploys the image of the eye on numerous occasions throughout the trilogy's eighteen-minute duration to propose that freedom is more valuable than anything. If the Aragonese filmmaker scandalized his audience with that meaningful and graphic cut, the Sevillian does the same by merging the eye of Holofernes being beheaded by Judith, taken from Caravaggio's 1588 painting, with the vagina of a lingerie model from the book *Motel Fetish* (2002), by the photographer Chas Ray Krider (Figure 1.1).

12 *La cantatrice chauve* (*The Bald Soprano*, 1950) is the first play written by Eugène Ionesco, a playwright of the theater of the absurd. The title itself serves to illustrate the absurdity cultivated by this literary trend. While it might be expected that the "singing bald woman" would be the protagonist, there's only one reference to her in the whole play and her relevance is negligible.

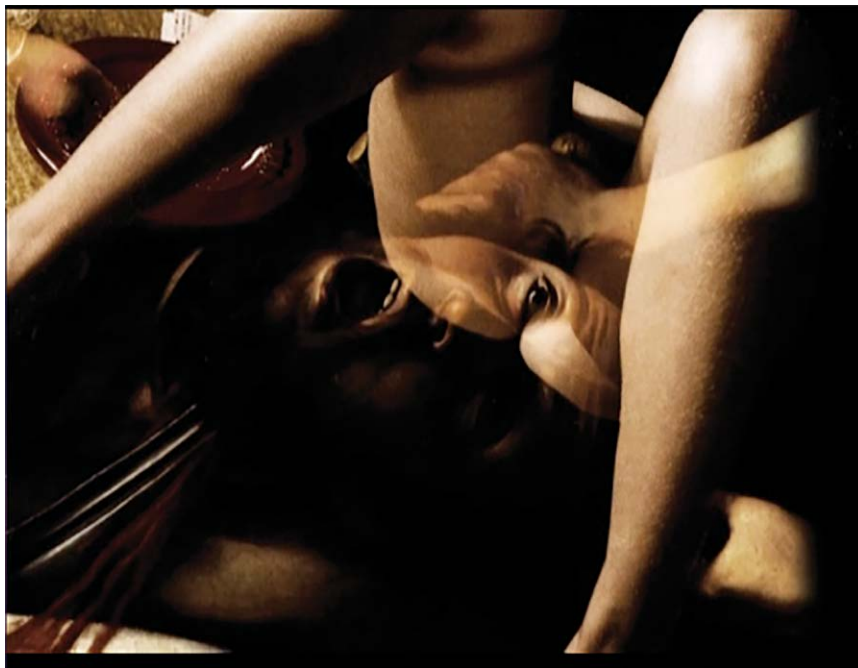


Fig 1.1. Still from María Cañas's *Kiss the Fire*, where she merges the eye of Holofernes being beheaded by Judith, taken from Caravaggio's 1588 painting, with the vagina of a lingerie model from the book *Motel Fetish* (2002), by the photographer Chas Ray Krider. Reproduced with the permission of María Cañas.

The image of an eye in a vagina is central to Georges Bataille's erotic short story "Histoire de l'œil," which also alludes to Buñuel's famous shot from *Un chien andalou*. In the story, the sexual relations between the narrator and his lover Simone are characterized by transgression, and directly or indirectly cause the deaths of a series of characters around them. Simone, obsessed with testicles, finds their insertion in her vagina to be the source of infinite pleasure. In the appendix to the narrative, Bataille explains that the eye is intimately connected to seduction and that "extreme seduction is probably at the limit of horror" (79). Bearing in mind that it is the female body that sucks in the male genitals, as shown by Cañas, the composition lays claim to female pleasure and self-determination. By means of stereotypical found images, Cañas creates her own cinematographic language to demand haptic eroticism as much as female sexual transgression. The fading of the previous illustration brings to an end a series of circular fades which show the fragmentation of the models, who are seen as synecdoches: fingernails enameled in red, thighs in black lingerie, and carmine lips. The decomposition achieves unity when it is overlaid with an iris colored in red.

### A Virtual World on the Margins of Capitalism?

Digital archives such as the Prelinger allow María Cañas to access these references as part of the collective imagination. On the Internet, these images are reproduced endlessly, both whole and fragmented, and they exist in a potentially infinite simultaneity. Their reproducibility seems endless. The eye of Holofernes, like that of *Un chien andalou*, suggests the need for new modes of perception, an opening to unexplored contexts. In a similar way, the website created by Cañas welcomes us with a picture of an orifice, an “asshole” on which one has to click in order to enter the world of animalario.tv. By clicking we go deeper into the author’s visual universe, into all her creative work.

This “asshole” offers us entry to another world in the same way that doors and windows serve as entrances to what Žižek calls “fantasmatic” dimensions in the Western filmic tradition (“¿Es posible?” 208). For him, a computer interface is the exact materialization of this setting (209). The opening – in other words a door, window, or interface – throws us into a “state of ‘contortion’” or the abyss of transgression devised by Bataille (209). In Žižek’s words, “we aspire to Another Setting which, however, always remains ‘virtual,’ a promise of itself, a fleeting anamorphic reflection seen only in the corner of the eye” (210). Potentiality, fleetingness, and mystery explain our fascination with cyberspace.

This “fantasmatic Otherness” is not only beyond our comprehension from a strictly technical point of view, but its ontology is also based on a series of fantasies that hide its true nature (“El ciberespacio,” 259). The simplest of these would be the “spontaneous ideology of cyberspace,” according to which the world wide web is an organism evolving by itself (256). This interpretation, though, is patently false; the Internet is not an evolving organism, but rather a monetized space in which user activity is recorded by corporations who use our data for commercial gain. A second false interpretation is the “social fantasy underlying the ideology of online capitalism” which strips it of materiality by imagining that it is ethereal and transparent (256). A third imaginary twist proposes “an abstract and illusory space of ‘frictionless’ interchange where the defining features of the participant’s social standing are diluted” (256). Nothing could be further from reality, especially if we bear in mind that social standing, first and foremost, determines how likely one is to be connected to the Internet.

While digital access is still far from universal, it is increasing rapidly. According to Statista, in 2021 over half of the world’s population had access to cyberspace (Johnson, n.pag.), up from 12 percent in 2005 (Ginsburg 129). The technological revolution through which we are living is comparable to

that which took place in the first thirty years of the twentieth century, as described by Walter Benjamin in his well-known essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," published in 1935. There, the philosopher analyzes the impact of new technologies on both the nature of the medium and the perception and reception of art, especially for the cinema. Benjamin starts with the idea that the reproduction of any work of art affords it a greater reach than the original would ever possess ("The Work of Art," 21). Despite losing its uniqueness, and the destruction of its "aura" of originality, the replica actualizes that which is reproduced (22). In this way, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to both ritual and aesthetics (24). Among the new art forms, film is the best suited to being modified and improved, according to Benjamin (28). This susceptibility to change, which he enthusiastically embraces, is specifically due to its renunciation of permanence as a characteristic of art (28). From a technical point of view, the German philosopher notes that the fragmentary nature, surprise factor, or sequence of events in any film helps the audience to adapt to the mechanization with which they live on a daily basis (26). In terms of reception, film is significantly different than traditional art. While traditional art requires concentration and devotion on the part of viewers, who are thus absorbed by the object, the members of a cinema audience seek distraction and entertainment that lets them adopt a more active role, and so they absorb the object into themselves (39-40). Right from the start, film generated a collective response in which Benjamin perceives the organization of the proletariat in defense of its rights (36). Film enables us not only to understand our world, but also to change it. Capitalism presents itself as being the most natural thing in the world in order to hide how surrounded we are by socioeconomic structures. Benjamin refers to this apparent simplicity as a "phantasmagoria" ("Paris," 101).

Benjamin's sense of socioeconomic phantasmagoria continues to be valid in the virtual context. Modern audiovisual material stands as a voice that is incredibly critical of market forces: the mere act of its free distribution online is proof of that. On the one hand, digital technology and cyberspace allow self-production and self-promotion at minimal cost and with hardly any intervention by middlemen. But if access to works of art, which already lost their "aura" when the era of reproducibility began, is free, and within reach of anyone, does this mean that they lack market value as claimed by critics of this "digital freedom"? Creatives such as Julio J. von Drove and Alberto Cabrera Bernal complain that digital democratization means that anyone can call themselves a filmmaker.<sup>13</sup> Von Drove quotes Kiarostami, who

13 Email correspondence with Cabrera, 26 Oct. 2012.

claims that filmmaking should be a licensed profession in today's digital era, from which it can be inferred that both Von Drove and Kiarostami are principally concerned about artistic worth. Both point out that today there are other distribution channels, such as festivals, museums, or educational institutions (the Instituto Cervantes, for example). For her part, Cañas contests that her priority is to be able to communicate her message freely and without market restrictions. Cyberspace therefore offers unlimited creative possibilities while at the same time trapping the individual in the phantasmagoria of freedom in the face of market forces. In fact, an overview of Cañas's work from 2005 to 2023 reveals an increasing disillusionment with the surveillance practices of the Internet that result in alienation and dehumanization. While found footage continues to be her raw material, her initial euphoria about the infinite possibilities of the Internet fades, as her awareness that such creative freedom comes with limitations to individual liberties comes front and center of her video art. For instance, *La mano que trina* (2015, 11'26") satirizes the ubiquity and dependence of the cell phone through apocalyptic images and soundtrack. Along similar lines, *Padre no nuestro* (2019, 15'7") illustrates her new reflections on disaffection and estrangement in the digital age caused by Facebook, Tinder, and Twitter.

Returning to Cañas's trilogy, the metaphorical dismantled image emphasizes two spheres: reality and the sub-real. Furthermore, reproducibility allows one to come and go between the real and virtual worlds without any clear boundaries between the two. The eye of Holofernes flows from reality to surreality via virtuality. The fleeting image cannot be pinned down, for it exists in the non-place of the impure. As Žižek asserts, in this state of contortion that is the virtual world, promise, potentiality, and illusion reign supreme ("El ciberespacio," 280). In this sense, the closeness of artist and audience is blurred by the sometimes-indiscernible involvement of corporations. The audience's apparently unlimited opportunities to travel and participate are restricted by hidden censorship systems; access to cyberspace seems to be conditional on our socioeconomic status. Cañas believes deeply in the dream of interconnected crowds ("El Blues," 52). In the same way, Benjamin expresses the hope that a collective response to art might result in a more just society. It would appear that the link between collectivity and connectivity continues to be a humanist dream.

Indeed, since Cañas began her career, the peer-to-peer networks that rely on open access and unlimited freedom have proven problematic. She has been subject to censorship on numerous occasions, and her own website and social media posts have been deleted because her images were deemed violent or pornographic. The most controversial and distressing time came in 2017, when the poster she created for the Festival de Cine Europeo de

Sevilla appropriated an illustration by artist Walter Popp from the 1950s. She was accused of plagiarism and endured a violent media campaign that included death threats.<sup>14</sup> While the artist proclaimed her firm belief in open culture as activism, that is, as a way of collectively countering dominant narratives, conservative sectors of the local media accused her of profiting from somebody else’s work (Ávila n.pag.). This brings us back to questions such as the creation of value on the Internet and its relation to the precarious post-2008 economy. In his seminal *Cultures of Anyone*, Luis Moreno-Caballud differentiates two spheres in the culture of freedom: one is militant and politicized, and the other “grows in the massive spaces of the mediatized consumer culture” (150). The boundaries that Moreno-Caballud describes are blurred since de Pedro and Oroz identified and described this d-generation of creatives back in 2010. At the onset, in particular at the time of the 15-M protests, a plethora of young activist artists gave audiences open access to their creations on their personal websites, YouTube, and Vimeo. And yet, open access has increasingly been limited over the past few years, as it only perpetuated the precariousness of the artistic world. Chris Marker, idolized by independent filmmakers, gave open access to his films. However, Frederick Wiseman, another major ideological reference, distributes his own work commercially, and it is not digitally available. When asked about his choice not to give open access to his films like Marker, Wiseman responded with his remarkable sense of humor that he likes to eat and that “Chris Marker was more of a man of the people than I am” (“ZFF Masters”). This lighthearted but poignant retort reveals a difficult truth: film, even low-cost film, cannot be produced and sustained unless it generates revenue. Film crews working collectively and fostering resistance need to make a living through their work.

14 In the 1960s and 1970s, postmodern thought and culture conceptualized intertextuality not as plagiarism, but as the inevitable resurfacing of the past in the present (Hutcheon *Poetics*, ch. 2).



## CHAPTER TWO

# Cinematic Dialogues with the 1960s and 1970s Ledo and Portabella, Cañas and Bollaín, and López Carrasco and Zulueta

Now, in contemporary Spain, a number of young filmmakers look back to the work of the 1970s in order to shed light on the poor health of the Spanish democratic regime. These filmmakers draw on both the political and cinematic components of 1970s film to show the futility of the discourse of material progress, social justice, and political modernization of the Transition.

In the following analysis I place into dialogue two pairs and a triad of films from the 1970s and 2010s. First, I consider Ramiro Ledo's *VidaExtra* (2013) and Pere Portabella's *El sopar* (1974), which share visual and political correspondences that are brought to the audience's attention by one of Ledo's characters. Next, I connect María Cañas's *Sé villana* (2014) with Juan Sebastián Bollaín's *Sevilla rota* (1979) and *Sevilla tuvo que ser* (1979). Cañas and Bollaín share not only a mutual admiration, but also their cinematic experimentation and a misanthropic worldview. Their productions focus on the tension between tradition and modernity in Andalusian regional identity, a perspective that has been understudied in the larger context of Spanish cinema. Continuing the comparative thread, I will show how López Carrasco's *El futuro* (2014) draws upon Iván Zulueta's *Arrebato* (1979) in a way that mirrors the way the new generation of Spaniards regards itself through the lens of the past. López Carrasco's film dramatizes – and responds to – the fragility of the political and cultural euphoria of the mid-1970s. In fact, another film by López Carrasco, *El año del descubrimiento* (2020), will close this book, as it solidifies his role as one of the most insightful cultural critics of his generation.

### Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro's *VidaExtra* and Pere Portabella's *El sopar*

*VidaExtra*'s name comes from the song of the same name by the Galician band Malandrómeda, which we hear during the final credits, the expression of a desire for a second chance at life free of its current precariousness. Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro's *VidaExtra* has been aptly described as a political and dialectic

exercise (“Impulso colectivo,” para. 2). I would add a third adjective to that label: cinematic. By means of a series of overt and more subtle cinematic strategies, Ledo invites the audience to engage in the political discussion that unfolds in the film. From a strictly formal perspective it is, according to Alarcón, a highly risky film (“Cine y 15M,” n.pag.). Since its completion in 2013, *VidaExtra* has been a significant presence on the independent film festival circuit (the D’A Festival de Cine de Autor in Barcelona, II Festival Márgenes Online, the Twenty-Fifth International Film Festival-Marseille). In 2014, *VidaExtra* and *El sopar* were screened in the same session in Madrid, followed by a roundtable where the relationship between them was discussed. Their affinities have also been analyzed by Steven Marsh, who aptly situates *VidaExtra* in the tradition of militant film, and adopts Derrida’s notion of spectrality and performativity as theoretical approach (217–231). While I agree with Marsh that these two works must be interpreted alongside one another, I adopt a different approach that focuses more intensely on the sociopolitical positionality of the film and its intervention in post-2008 Spain.<sup>1</sup> I deepen and expand that analysis below.

*VidaExtra* is divided into two main sections. The first centers on the impact of the general strike in Barcelona on September 29, 2010, and the second on a conversation among a group of friends about the strike, as well as the subsequent crisis and political commitment in present-day Spain. Ledo reconstructs these events through found footage and by having his close friends – none of them professional actors – reenact the discussion in which he had been involved on the day of the strike. Deceptively, the film opens along traditional documentary lines. A series of black-and-white photographs of the old Hotel Colón in Plaça Catalunya at the beginning of the twentieth century identifies the building as the site of the left’s political struggle, since the hotel was occupied by the Republicans during the Civil War. Archival footage from September 2010 shows that the now empty building is owned by the Banco Español de Crédito, and leftist banners are displayed on its facade. An upward-tracking shot captures a helicopter, a reminder of the ubiquitous surveillance system in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, especially during the protests.<sup>2</sup>

1 Marsh’s chapter 3 also examines Portabella’s oeuvre in detail.

2 The transformation of Spain’s urban and rural landscape has been documented by the filmmakers José Luis Guerín (*En construcción*, 2001) and Mercedes Álvarez (*El cielo gira*, 2005; *Mercado de futuros*, 2011), as I have shown elsewhere (*Documental cinematográfico* part 2). Their creative documentaries expose the ways in which neoliberalism destroys cultural legacies and historical memory in the name of progress and modernity. More recently, Víctor Moreno, one of the new names of Spanish independent film, released *Edificio España* (2013), a documentary that also

The next segment takes us to an organizational meeting in the empty building. However, Ledo does not reveal what goes on inside and instead provides viewers with a black screen with three circles of light: one bright white, one green, and one light brown. The circles change in intensity and size as the camera zooms in and out of the meeting. The audio is not perfectly audible either. While documentarians, such as Alfonso Amador in *50 días de mayo*, work with raw footage from political meetings, Ledo manipulates such footage in order to involve the audience, never letting viewers become detached, and forcing them to make sense of the political discussions through the formal experimentation.

The conversation among Ledo's six friends, which forms the second half of the film, is neither completely audible nor clearly visible due to both the director's technical choices and his postproduction strategies. The entire dialogue is recorded by one steady camera shot, a *plan-séquence*, with the camera placed behind one of the unnamed interlocutors. Ledo uses a single microphone above the table and one attached to the camera to capture the diegetic sound. The *mise-en-scène* is equally simple: the walls are bare except for a round mirror – a graphic connection to the circles of light in the first half – and a film poster of *Lancelot du Lac* by Bresson, a director whom Ledo credits with stating that the best way to get to know people's personality is by hearing their voice, instead of looking at their faces (Cabello para. 28). Because the camera does not move, the audience never gets to see any close-ups; all interlocutors remain virtually faceless, overshadowed by anonymity. As Ledo explains, he also edited out their names in order to blur individuality (Cabello para. 26). It is their voices, their political views, their anxieties caused by the crisis, and their financial hardships that the filmmaker intends to put under the spotlight. Their stories do not matter individually, but rather collectively. The conversation takes place from dusk to dawn and, despite the darkness in the room, the lack of synchronicity between picture and diegetic sound becomes evident throughout. Asynchronous sound is the result of the director's manipulation of speed, a strategy that adds to the difficulties of perception for the audience already discussed. We are not to be passive consumers of images. Ledo challenges hedonistic spectatorship to force involvement and raise political awareness.

exposes commercial speculation by focusing on the deplorable labor conditions of construction workers. He follows in the footsteps of Joaquim Jordà's 1980 documentary *Numax presenta ...*, as well as documentary filmmaker Wang Bing's work on Chinese laborers. All these films follow Flaherty's teachings about combining both observational and creative modes in the anthropological documentary.

It is close to dawn when one of the participants draws a parallel between their discussion and the dinner scene filmed by Pere Portabella in *El sopar* (1974). The reference is not insignificant, and I see cinematic connections and political differences between both works that merit analysis. *El sopar* is a documentary film that brings together five former political prisoners who were members of four different political parties during the Francoist dictatorship. They meet in a secluded house in the mountains and remain nameless throughout the film. They are only identified in the final credits, where their affiliation and jail time served are also listed. The initial camera shots move rapidly from one individual to another, simultaneously revealing and concealing their faces. A voice-over narrator intrudes only once at the beginning to explain that this is a film about these individuals' loss of freedom, and adds that the film crew will remain anonymous for safety reasons. In other words, the political background of the mid-1970s imposes anonymity on Portabella. Ledo, on the other hand, chooses to endow anonymity with political meaning. The characters in *VidaExtra* ponder how both moments in history compare, and whether the crisis in which they are enmeshed is harder than that of the mid-1970s.<sup>3</sup>

Notably, Ledo's characters overlook the most obvious difference between the two eras: the lack of freedom during Franco's regime. Neoliberal democracies may be considered states of exception, but it would be erroneous to equate the shortcomings of the right of resistance within them to the lack thereof in dictatorial regimes. In considering the overall cinematic approaches, however, a more nuanced comparison emerges. By visually and technically reproducing political film from the 1970s, convergences and divergences emerge in the link of these two moments in time. The rationale for Ledo's choice of asynchronous sound differs considerably from Portabella's. The latter utilizes the technique in order to conceal the identity of political dissidents and protect them from being persecuted by the dictatorial regime. Along similar lines, Mariano Lisa, Helena Lumberas's collaborator in her 1975 film *El campo para el hombre*, explains that, at that time, cameras did not have a synchronicity function,

3 From both a political and a formal standpoint, *VidaExtra* also sets up a dialogue with Javier Aguirre's 1970 short, *Che, che, che*, as both films render twentieth-century history as class warfare, make recourse to Peter Weiss's political writings as intertexts, and use formal strategies to disturb and unsettle the audience. The second segment in *VidaExtra*'s first half consists of a black screen with a box in the middle where an unidentified passage in German moves horizontally. The passage in fact belongs to Weiss's novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (1975–1981), and it describes the political atmosphere in Barcelona during the Civil War. Both documentaries, as well as the novel, reflect upon the revolutionary experience in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

which allowed Lumbreras to blur the identity of the subjects she interviewed in their clandestine documentaries (Lisa para. 12). Despite the shortcomings of Spain's current democracy, it is safe to state that Francoist-style repression has been overcome. With that in mind, certain technical choices by young filmmakers require reinscription, given that they fail to reflect the context in which the models were created. Technologies employed by filmmakers of the 1970s were rooted in their historical reality and were born of necessity from those material and historical circumstances. Today's filmmakers selectively draw on techniques for both formal and political effect.

Finally, questions of class and affluence emerge in a comparison between the two films. The discussion between Ledo's friends in *VidaExtra* lasts all night, over beer and olives, in a tiny apartment. During their conversation they disdainfully refer to Portabella's *mise-en-scène* as an "awesome farmhouse" with a magnificent wine cellar most likely owned by Portabella himself, a member of the Catalonian bourgeoisie. Their comment on Portabella's affluent background responds to the fact that the 2008 financial crisis resulted in precarious livelihoods. And yet, that wealth also contributed to the political power of Portabella's work. Like celebrated filmmaker Jaime Chávarri at the onset of his career, Portabella produced his own films. Most importantly, what cannot be overlooked is the fact that his production company, Films 59, financed some of the Spanish films most critical of the Franco regime: *Los golfos* by Carlos Saura (1959), *El cochecito* by Marco Ferreri (1960), and *Viridiana* by Luis Buñuel (1961). Resorting to personal and family funds is not completely unknown among young creators such as López Carrasco and Serrano Azcona, but their means pale in comparison to Portabella's. Despite limited resources in the wake of the financial crisis, others have emulated Portabella's initiative by setting up production companies, such as Isa Campo and Isaki Lacuesta with Termita Films and Neus Ballús with El Kinògraf. Some of the alternative modes of production in the twenty-first century thus mirror those of the 1960s and 1970s and allow creatives to maintain their independence, if only precariously.

### Seville in the Audiovisual Work of María Cañas and Juan Sebastián Bollaín: Specularity and Spectacularity

Seville is beautiful, because Seville is new.

Manuel Chaves Nogales, *La ciudad* (1921)

The apparent simplicity of Sevillian journalist Chaves Nogales's phrase will reveal a hidden complexity as the implications of the concepts of beauty

and newness associated with the Andalusian capital are examined in this chapter. Both terms are essential to the audiovisual works created by the architect, town planner, and filmmaker Juan Sebastián Bollaín at the start of the democratic period in Spain, and those created by the video artist María Cañas, the self-proclaimed “Sevillian archivist,” in 2012. In what follows, two of Bollaín’s underground shorts filmed in 1979 – *Sevilla tuvo que ser* and *Sevilla rota* – will be put into dialogue with *Sé villana*, a documentary made by Cañas from found footage. Both artists are devastatingly critical of what they perceive as the Sevillian cult of beauty, as well as of the complex tension between tradition and modernity – a fundamental debate in democratic Spain. In fact, the socioeconomic consequences of the teleological political project of the Transition have been embodied in Spanish cinema.<sup>4</sup> The modernizing project of the Transition, an emphasis on progress, and Europization have plunged Spain into a neoliberal system in which power has been concentrated in the hands of the moneyed. It is crucial to put Seville on the map of democratic teleological discourse in order to evaluate this debate – not only in the context of Andalusian identity, but also in the context of the economic and institutional crisis caused by the 2008 recession. These works by Bollaín (who lived in Seville from the age of eight) and Cañas (born and raised in Seville) share the marginal nature of their genre, an awareness of image, echoes of surrealism, and humor in their perception of the Andalusian capital as a locus in which the tension between progress and tradition unfolds, and whose citizens lack agency. Both have been called heterodox by critics, a label upon which we will reflect below (de Pedro and Oroz 86; Pollino Tamayo 17).<sup>5</sup>

Chaves Nogales eulogizes Seville as a city of beauty and eternal youth – but these same traits may also be interpreted as narcissism and stagnation.<sup>6</sup> Both views are shared by Bollaín and Cañas in ways that are apparent in their

4 For an in-depth analysis of this topic, see Estrada, *El documental cinematográfico*.

5 I cannot resist sharing a witty definition of “heterodox” offered by Pollino Tamayo, author of the only book on Bollaín to date: “If orto to the Argentinians means backside, and hetero someone who doesn’t maintain relations with the same sex, a possible new definition of an orthodox film director would be one who receives something from film, and heterodox someone who gives something to film. In other words, heterodox is someone who contributes something new and valuable to the cinematographic canon, and orthodox someone who moves at ease in repetition and mediocrity” (17). This section also tries to communicate to its readers everything that Cañas and Bollaín contribute to cinema, which is not inconsiderable.

6 I will explore other complex tensions in Andalusian culture and regional identity in Chapter 3, which considers documentaries where religious iconography and pilgrimage are manipulated by both the Francoist regime and those supporting democratic ideals.

films. Before delving into visual analysis, I will contextualize their implicit critique by sharing an overview of Seville's cultural offerings as of December 2013, a time period that aligns closely with Cañas's *Sé villana*. The four main art exhibitions at that time were to be found in the Museo de Bellas Artes, the Fundación Cajasol, the Espacio Santa Clara, and the Fundación Valentín de Madariaga. Bellas Artes offered a display of paintings by the Cordovan artist Julio Romero de Torres, entitled "Julio Romero de Torres: between myth and tradition." For its part, the Fundación Cajasol presented to the public a small sample from its own art collection, "Masters of the Baroque," which included the Sevillian painters Murillo and Valdés Leal. The Espacio Santa Clara in the Ayuntamiento's Instituto de la Cultura y las Artes displayed objects connected with Joselito and Belmonte, the great rivals of the "golden age" of bullfighting. Finally, the Fundación Madariaga, located in the former United States pavilion from the 1929 Ibero-American Exposition, was the only institution to show contemporary art with "Reset: What's New in the Tradition (of Sevillian Contemporary Art)?" What is notable is that the contemporary is presented in the context of the traditional, a recurring theme in the other exhibitions that in addition promote the idea of authority through the use of terminology such as "Masters" and "golden age."

This array of exhibitions is representative of Sevilla's cultural offerings, which tend toward the traditional and the sacred. As ever, anyone interested in unconsecrated art would have to go to Madrid or Barcelona. Moreover, the religious art of Murillo or Valdés Leal may have been given prominence by cultural and municipal authorities, but it did not capture the interest of everyday viewers. On the contrary, the lack of public interest in these venues was lamentable when compared with the queues of visitors, for the most part locals, to see the more provincial displays of public and private Nativity scenes that have become such a spectacle in recent years. Perhaps this is one of the phenomena that facilitate the eternal youth to which Chaves Nogales alludes: the capacity of Sevillians to get excited about the city's cultural offerings and their shared religious and cultural background year after year, gazing at the legendary with the same admiration over and over again. In this way, the exhibitions here function as mirrors of the city by which it recreates itself in its own image, continually merging the specular and the spectacular.

Cañas identifies with Bollaín's philosophy, though she does not use his footage: "Like Bollaín, I feel I am an ambassador for alternative underground filmmaking, an activist, visionary, and utopian. Filmmaking that makes the impossible possible, and the invisible visible. Popular filmmaking, rooted in the people but not pandering to them." The Sevillian professes admiration for many other filmmakers (Buñuel, Pasolini, Herzog, Vardá,

Marker, Fellini, Val del Omar, Godard, Browning, Lynch, García Pelayo, Berlanga, Eloy de la Iglesia) for their “amazed and amazing depictions of the streets and their inhabitants, their particular ways of building up imaginary citizens.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, all the filmmakers mentioned above share their activism and underground nature: they are iconoclastic as much in form as they are in content. In the context of Sevillian cultural provincialism, Bollaín’s and Cañas’s creativity are remarkably bright notes, in tune with artistic expressions that are revered at national and international level.

At the same time, being part of the “fringe” implies many handicaps for both of them, such as exclusion from other more creative and cosmopolitan scenes like the perennial Barcelona and Madrid. When analyzing the new generation of audiovisual creatives, expert critics like to point out their marginality as much in relation to the industry as to the world of subsidies and grants (de Pedro “Nacen,” para. 2). For me, marginality is not the privileged place – epistemologically, politically, or strategically – that these postmodern critics rooted in the romantic tradition insist on venerating. They are “marginal” creatives because they experiment with formats, media, running time, languages – and, above all, because they use the Internet as a platform to get their work in front of as many viewers as possible. That is not to say that online spaces are inherently countercultural, because it is well known that the Internet is dominated by the big corporations (like Google and Facebook). Rather, cyberspace provides these artists with a level of distribution that they would not achieve elsewhere. They use channels such as crowdfunding to raise money while at the same time laying claim to a creative freedom whose output does not fit the formats and systems of traditional distribution.

What is missed by most critics is that alternative modes of finance and distribution, along with digital technology, have democratized the creation of audiovisual material while at the same time allowing “marginal”

7 Cañas email correspondence, Jan. 19, 2014. Gonzalo García Pelayo is another filmmaker who built his career in Andalucía at the end of the 1970s and during the Transition, and whose work is now being brought back from oblivion. He is a dazzling director who enjoys metafiction and mixing fiction with reality, traits he shares with the young twenty-first-century creatives. After years away from filmmaking, the Viennale dedicated a retrospective to him in November 2013, which was reported in the *New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/arts/20iht-pelayo20.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/arts/20iht-pelayo20.html)). A documentary about him, *Vivir en Gonzalo* (Pepe Freire and Luis García Gil), also finished filming at the end of that year. In February 2014, the Filmoteca Nacional revived his back catalog in another retrospective ([www.mcu.es/cine/docs/MC/FE/PrograDore/PrograDore122.pdf](http://www.mcu.es/cine/docs/MC/FE/PrograDore/PrograDore122.pdf)), which coincided with the online premiere of his return to filmmaking with the feature-length *Alegrías de Cádiz* ([www.margenes.org/~margen/index.php/gonzalo-garcia-pelayo/alegr@C3%ADas-de-C%C3%A1diz.html](http://www.margenes.org/~margen/index.php/gonzalo-garcia-pelayo/alegr@C3%ADas-de-C%C3%A1diz.html)).

figures such as Isaki Lacuesta, Fernando Franco, and Elías Siminiani to demonstrate how their feature-length films can be accommodated on the “official” circuit. As Fernández, Oroz, and Cerdán conclude in their excellent analysis of the production of Siminiani’s *Mapa* (2012): “digital technology facilitates greater continuity between the production, distribution, and marketing processes” (“Producción,” n.pag.).<sup>8</sup> In the same way, Bollaín’s early work would have been permanently unavailable if it had not been uploaded to YouTube from 2009 onward. Following restoration, his films – some of them unedited – were later added to PLAT, an online film archive and open-access platform for audiovisual material. It is significant that PLAT corresponds to the initials of the Granada-born José Val del Omar’s experimental laboratory (Pinto Lumínico Audio Táctil), considered by the archive’s founders to be a “compelling example of artistic independence which links the first and second waves of Spanish avant-garde filmmaking” ([www.plat.tv](http://www.plat.tv)).

### The Battle between Tradition and the 2008 Crisis

“The south is a desert which weeps as it sings.” This opening line of *Sé villana: la Sevilla del diablo* is from the poem “Quisiera estar solo en el sur” by another Sevillian, Luis Cernuda.<sup>9</sup> Cernuda’s metaphor identifies the south as a barren place, evocative of Lorca; the characterization contains such emotional duality that it is practically an oxymoron. While the voice-over recites Cernuda’s words, we see two similar archive clips of groups of children dancing flamenco. The first is in black and white and set in a slum, and the second, in color, appears to take place in a public park. The continuity created by the edit and by the visual similarity between the clips evokes the character of the south while at the same time emphasizing happiness as a unique emotion. In other words, Cañas dispels Cernuda’s poetic duality for ironic effect: Andalusian happiness is synonymous with infantilization. This idea that becomes a recurring theme not only throughout *Sé villana*, but also throughout Cañas’s entire oeuvre, as will be shown in Chapter 6. What is interesting from this analysis is Cañas’s subversion of what Cernuda sees as the essence of the place. That

8 In fact, the Internet has become the platform on which most Spaniards prefer to watch both film and television, according to data reported by John Hopewell (para. 1). Commercial cinema revenues and the number of television sets per family have both declined since 2008, while over the same period the numbers of smartphone users (85 percent of households) and tablet users (31 percent) have rapidly increased over a short five-year period (para. 4).

9 The poem is included in *La realidad y el deseo (1924–1962)* (2000).

is, the video artist dynamites the universal significance of the “south” as an imagined community or narrated nation, in the words of Benedict Anderson (7) and Homi Bhabha (292), respectively.

Similarly, Cañas takes issue with the spectacularization of the infantile by using footage from the Juan y Medio program *Menuda noche*, broadcast on the Canal Sur de Andalucía television station, which features children who have built their own Holy Week floats and then parade them across the set while imitating the music of the brotherhood bands.<sup>10</sup> Cañas rails against those she calls “media buffoons” (“Hay,” n.pag.). Such infantilization, something Bollaín dubbed a “psychological problem” (“La ingenuidad,” n.pag.), is thus another representation promulgated by the autonomous region’s mass media. In other words, the very institutions that comprise the democratic modernizing project are themselves promoting the persistence of tradition for domestic consumption, thus creating a complex framework of temporal trajectories.

*Sé villana*, which won numerous prizes at festivals in 2013, is especially critical of the tension between progress and the primitive, between tradition and innovation. This is expressed within the framework of a series of meetings organized by the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía between May 2012 and February 2013, “On Capital and Territory III (the Nature of Political Economy ... and of the Commons),” which were intended to discuss the citizen’s lack of agency in neoliberal democracies from an interdisciplinary perspective. The film’s presentation of these workshops opens with a telling quotation from the political scientist Wendy Brown:

[T]he domination of politics by capital, the overtaking of democratic rationality with neoliberal rationality ... the juridification of politics, [the] erosion of nation-state sovereignty as well as the detachment of sovereign power from nation-states [are] crucial to the de-democratization in the West today. (48)

In this way, *Sé villana* not only denounces what Cañas critiques as the south’s backwardness, but also shares in the social discontent provoked by the economic crisis that started in 2008.

In particular, the documentary criticizes two major recent architectural projects that demonstrate how property speculation and the power of money have taken precedence over the needs of citizens. The first is a 178 m skyscraper built by the Cajasol investment company on the Isla de Cartuja.

<sup>10</sup> “Hermandades” are associations affiliated with Catholic churches that display their faith by taking out on parade sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Christ owned by each church during Holy Week.

Dwarfing the Giralda, this skyscraper was the target of a powerful campaign led by the citizen pressure group Tumbala.<sup>11</sup> The images of what is known as the Torre Pelli, also known as the Torre Sevilla, contrast with shots of anti-eviction protests organized by the collective Corrala La Alegría, who bring attention to the fact that while the banks continue the speculative policies that caused the economic crisis, they are also evicting bankrupt citizens from their homes. This has been one of the most serious problems since 2008 for those unable to pay their mortgage. Not only does the bank repossess their house, but they remain burdened with the debt. To alleviate this serious problem, the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) was set up in 2010 and funded by Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau; in its first five years it prevented 936 evictions and rehomed 712 people. This nonprofit organization provides legal advice to those affected by what Colau and Alemany in their book *Vidas hipotecadas* call “real estate tragedy.” According to data provided by Colau and Alemany, only 2 million people were affected either directly or indirectly in 2011 (30). As well as analyzing the problem from a political and economic perspective, the authors call attention to the human side of this drama, which results in domestic violence, alcoholism, broken families, and even suicide (32).

The second big architectural project targeted by Cañas is the Metropol Parasol de la Encarnación, nicknamed the “Setas” because it looks like mushrooms, a spectacular €86 million avant-garde structure with which the city government wanted to regenerate this city-center plaza. Cañas expresses her criticism with a sequence during which the unidentified voice-over announces that “Seville is changing with the times” (*Sé villana*). It is followed immediately by footage of a Holy Week float while we hear the supervisor encouraging the bearers (*costaleros*) by telling them that this “levantá” – the lifting of this heavy float – will go past the Setas. Next, a fade of the float and the Setas makes a connection between the traditional and provincial baroque – the float worked in silver – and the new avant-garde baroque of the extravagant structure designed by the Berlin-born architect Jürgen Mayer. This puts baroque ostentation in the same shot as sheer wastefulness on the part of the public administration. There are numerous other examples of this wasting of public money. In Seville in 2009, for example, the university, Ayuntamiento, and Junta commenced construction of a new central university library in the Prado de San Sebastián, designed by another internationally renowned architect, the Iraqi Zaha Hadid. After €4 million had already been spent, the Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Andalucía sided with local residents, who had campaigned to preserve the

11 The Giralda is the famed 104.1 meter-high tower of the Cathedral of Seville.

green space on which the library was being built, and halted the work. To the €4 million already expended would have to be added the security bills – €100,000 per year – as well as the cost of the enforced demolition.

The Setas was the space occupied by the 15-M demonstrations in Seville. This is no coincidence; it is one of many landmark avant-garde structures put up far and wide across the country since the 1990s that either remain unfinished because funds dried up after 2008, or which have not been used for the function originally intended (such as the Cidade da Cultura de Santiago de Compostela). These structures not only epitomize two decades of squandered funds, but have also filled the post-2008 Spanish landscape with “modern ruins,” or “ruins of a future of the past” as Germán Labrador succinctly puts it.<sup>12</sup> What is clear is that these modern ruins are caused not only by the property speculation of the past two decades, but also by the modernizing project of the Transition. The epitome of this was the year 1992, when the city of Seville underwent significant transformation of its transport infrastructure, with a new airport, high-speed railway station, and various bridges and roundabouts all being built. Some of the buildings erected in the Cartuja precinct, where the Expo took place, were subsequently taken over by university faculties or turned into offices for public and private bodies, but others became fresh ruins, such as the European Pavilion, a pertinent symbol of the state of the EU economy following the 2008 financial crisis.<sup>13</sup> The 1992 remains are in addition to construction remnants left across the city by the 1929 Ibero-American Exposition, some of which form a key part of its cultural geography, such as the Teatro Lope de Vega, while others have remained empty ever since.

The wordplay in the title of Cañas’s video seems to be the mandate she gives herself to articulate her profound disquiet at the “picture-postcard” image of the city where she was born. The pun reflects her critical technique, which consists of deconstructing the folkloric and idealized vision of Seville as the epitome of the south. As well as condemning the Seville of property speculation, she unearths and presents footage of the other Seville – a city she depicts as one of legendary backwardness. Through a formal technique of creating discord between image and soundtrack, she forces the audience to decode the audio and symbolic reframing and thereby avoid being passive consumers of the image. For example, while we listen to a verse extolling

12 As stated in a presentation at the King Juan Carlos Center at New York University in October 2013. My deepest thanks to Germán Labrador for providing me with a copy of the complete text.

13 The deterioration of the Cartuja precinct can be seen at [espaciosdeshabitados.blogspot.com/2009/01/recinto-expo-92.html](http://espaciosdeshabitados.blogspot.com/2009/01/recinto-expo-92.html).

“pretty Seville” and comparing the city to the “flowers and beauty of a fine garden,” we see shots of the Charco de la Pava street market, notorious for pirated and counterfeit goods, and of groups of students out partying on cheap alcohol (the so-called *botellones*) in the streets of the same district. In the same way, the suburb of El Vacie was intended to be moved to what today is Torreblanca, a process begun in the 1970s as shown by archive images whose voice-over describes the area as a “persistent slum.” Both instances show nothing but poverty, ugliness, and dirtiness, not seen in the stereotypical imagery. This is the geography that the teleological project tries to hide. However, El Vacie is still there and continues to illustrate the persistence of those forgotten by neoliberalism. As demonstrated by Colau and Alemany, the later years of the Franco regime set in motion the politics of converting the proletariat into homeowners as a form of social control, something inherited by neoliberalism (34–35). For the dictatorship, converting its enemies into homeowners was an incentive intended to compensate for lack of freedom. But under neoliberalism, easy access to credit comes with a commitment to pay the money back, which leaves us instead constrained by the dictates of the labor market.

Cañas’s film emphasizes the need for people to make themselves heard. Not for nothing does the debate around the citizen’s true agency in a democratic regime form one of the basic principles of the 15-M Movement. Just as can be inferred from Wendy Brown’s quotation above, one of the failures of Western democracy is the real absence of people power, the lack of agency experienced by the populace. Real power lies in the hands of the big corporations and their economic interests, while at the same time the neoliberal state reimagines itself in the structure of a corporation (Brown 47). Along with intellectuals such as Badiou, Agamben, and Žižek, Brown condemns the demonstrators’ lack of real agency and sees democracy as an “unfinished principle” which guarantees neither the participation nor the equality of citizens (47). She illustrates her argument with five points. First, the average citizen is impotent in the face of capitalist power (46–47). Second, electoral processes are designed like marketing campaigns, where policies and agendas are presented as though they were consumer goods (46). Third, neoliberalism has replaced the basic principles of legal equality, political freedom, and civil and political autonomy with market criteria such as cost/benefit ratios, profitability, and return on investment (47). Fourth, the juridification of politics implies an erosion of the sovereignty of executive power (48). Finally, fifth, globalization constitutes another process by which national sovereignty and national cultural values are undermined (49). Two further features unique to modern Spain should be added to those listed by Brown: a closed-list electoral system, and a senate with no territorial

representation. Twenty-four years before Brown's theorization and the appearance of the protest movements, Michel de Certeau was writing about the marginalization of the majority in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. The French philosopher argues that the sectors of society that are normally described as minorities or marginal actually constitute a majority of passive consumers, devoid of cultural or political power. De Certeau described subversive behavior in daily life in situations where the individual is controlled by the system, and it is through such seemingly inconsequential acts of rebellion that the majority achieves agency. I will return to this twenty-first-century "trick of the weak" in the conclusion.

Cañas not only references the debate about collective agency, but also, through her manipulation and specifically desynchronization of image and sound, she restores agency to her viewers. If the society of spectacle makes us passive consumers of images, Cañas takes control of the image to draw attention to its ontological status in contemporary society. Our lives are constantly bombarded with images, such that nothing seems to exist beyond them. We have reached the point where we have internalized their ubiquity and their one-dimensionality. However, Cañas manipulates the image to force viewers to interrogate it and destabilize it, and in this way makes viewers feel uncomfortable.

### The Same Old Story of Tradition and Introspection

As the found footage of *Sé villana* makes clear, Cañas was not the first to address these cultural and cinematographic tensions; her film draws directly on earlier work, including that of Juan Sebastián Bollaín. The omnipresence of the image for passive consumption, collective agency, satirizing the traditional, and the inevitable force of progress are the central themes of Bollaín's early work, specifically the short works made at the end of the 1970s; these works establish the guiding principles of Bollaín's output up to 2009. I will consider two of these works here: *Sevilla tuvo que ser* and *Sevilla rota* (both 1979).

The first of the two shorts, *Sevilla tuvo que ser*, takes its title from Carmelo Larrea's famous 1952 song, "Dos cruces," which it uses in the opening sequence. There have been many different versions of the song, some as *copla* and others as *bolero*; the latter has seen far more success, even though the *copla* is the form more commonly associated with music that praises the beauty of Seville. As in many such songs, particular suburbs and urban spaces are idealized – in this case the Barrio de Santa Cruz and the Plaza de Doña Elvira – which thus go on to form part of the imagery of Seville. The formal originality of Bollaín's video contrasts with such a traditional

soundtrack, thus creating an instance of desynchronization similar to that achieved by Cañas.

*Sevilla tuvo que ser* is a false documentary barely nine minutes in length. At the start, while we listen to “Dos cruces,” we are told that the footage we are about to see was discovered in the archives of a forgotten American television station. The reference to found footage, which also opens another of Bollaín’s shorts made in this year, *Sevilla en tres niveles*, references the protagonism of the image itself in expanded cinema. Next, the poor quality of the footage is emphasized, with two reasons given for this: one is true (the 8 mm original has been upscaled to 16 mm) and the other false (the poor state in which the film was found, the same excuse given in *Sevilla en tres niveles*). These self-references are one of the main ways by which the audience is distanced from the film. *Sevilla tuvo que ser* opens with a shot of a television screen – a second distancing technique – showing a non-Spanish female presenter describing in an unfamiliar language how the fact that Seville has managed to modernize itself makes it a model European city. This is the well-used technique of using an outside perspective to criticize something internal – the third distancing technique – as Cadalso does in *Cartas marruecas*; Bollaín would use this technique again later in *Sevilla 2030* (2003).

What is interesting here is the tension between the external and internal points of view, between the distancing techniques and the introspective gaze toward the interior of the Andalusian capital. As the presenter goes on to say, the people of Seville have adopted new modes of public communication and installed huge screens across the city to show both external events (the movements of the “cosmos”) and domestic (the daily life of its inhabitants, and the celebration of “Pornography Week”). This fascination of Sevillians with the cosmos, according to the voice-over translating the foreign presenter, apparently derives from an interest in controlling its effects on the city. That is, looking outside of the city has no import in itself: all that matters is how much that outside forms part of the Sevillian urban landscape. Bollaín’s choice of imagery suggests a deep sense of provincialism, and a belief that Sevillians see their city as the center of the universe. Among other measures that such a mindset has induced, we are told, the Sevillians have installed a massive buoy in the Guadalquivir to monitor the tides: curiously, the image of the buoy looming above the river prefigures the similar and by now iconic shot of the Torre Pelli seen in *Sé villana*.

The urban landscape that Bollaín creates with specular and spectacular imagery contains an obvious tension between progress and recession. The big screens evoke those of the World’s Fair mentioned earlier; they also contribute to the city’s introspection. Thus, Seville regards itself on huge screens showing the daily life of its inhabitants, vignettes of local

middle-class routines presented like advertisements: a middle-aged man having dinner, a young woman writing a letter, or a father feeding his baby (Figure 2.1). At no point is there any hint that the “other” Seville exists, the Seville of Charco de la Pava and El Vacie revealed in *Sé villana*.

The presenter’s report also includes a segment on the fictitious celebration of Pornography Week in Seville – a reflection of the penchant for nudity in the early days of the democracy – and its images have become symbolic of Bollaín’s work. In this instance, the people of Seville are seen to be so tolerant and progressive that they display pornographic scenes on advertising billboards installed not only in that mecca of consumerism, the ubiquitous department store El Corte Inglés, but all across the city. Furthermore, the urban landscape incorporates constructions in the form of huge breasts and penises that proliferate among the traditional local architecture. An urban planner by profession, Bollaín has pornography modify the architectural shape of the city, which the inhabitants consider to be perfectly normal.

The counterpoint to this liberal spirit is to be found in the second short filmed by the director that year, *Sevilla rota*. Of a similar length and subject matter, this film makes fun of the Sevillian resistance to change when



Fig. 2.1. Still from Juan Bollaín’s *Sevilla tuvo que ser*. Seville regards itself on huge screens showing the daily life of its inhabitants, vignettes of local middle-class routines presented like advertisements. Reproduced with the permission of Juan Bollaín.

pictures of the demolition of some buildings on the corner of San Eloy and La Campana are accompanied by the extradiegetic sound of the buildings themselves screaming in pain. The personification of these buildings, in another city-center area very popular with tourists, suggests a symbiosis between the space and its citizens and suggests that the inhabitants are deeply possessive of “their” Seville. The same happens with “their” Holy Week, “their” Macarena (the venerated Virgin of Macarena), or “their” Betis (Real Betis Balompíe, one of the city’s two soccer teams, eternal rival of Sevilla FC).

*Sevilla rota* starts with a series of shots of mules being used to till the soil. A sequence of extreme close-ups of the mules gives the impression that we are somewhere rural, but the camera pans back to reveal something unexpected: the congested city center of Seville. The camera settles on a building that symbolizes being part of the Western world, El Corte Inglés, and the land being tilled by the mules is a building site where construction is about to begin. Bollaín manages to capture the persistence of the primitive in a static urban environment by playing with the audience’s expectations. This short film’s link to expanded cinema can also be seen in the use of the television image, as in *Sevilla tuvo que ser*. Again, the image is center stage from the start: a female voice-over describes the possibilities offered by cinema to let us see what does not exist, to fragment time and space as we know it. According to this woman, whom we take to be a film director, she wants to investigate the possibilities that cinema can offer for this. Next, a series of sequences demonstrate precisely this idea: a man fires a gun at an airplane and causes it to crash, then opens the door to a bathroom where a woman is taking a shower to reveal footage of a city-center demonstration. This breaks the cinematic causality to which we are accustomed and replaces it with the sort of surprise factor one might expect from Buñuel’s surrealist films. The man and the woman have coffee at a table in the middle of a street while cars drive past on the sidewalk. Heading home they walk past the town hall and ask why citizens do not demand the participative role offered to them by the Constitution. The ironic reply comes via a television report being listened to by someone they meet when they get to the apartment. The reporter on the television set – which is on the floor right in the middle of the room – mentions the state repression of some 3,000 residents of the Barriada de Palmete, one of the most deprived, unrecognized, and under-resourced areas on the outskirts of Seville, obviously absent from the tourist brochures. The implication is that already, at the start of the democratic regime, questions were being asked about the concept of a truly participative democracy.

What is clear in each of these films – *Sevilla rota*, *Sevilla tuvo que ser*, and *Sé villana* – is the irreverence of both Bollaín and Cañas toward local

stereotypes and idiosyncrasies. Both communicate their criticism through cinematographic language that draws on the creative process. Both artists incorporate the very images they intend to destroy, such as clichéd Andalusian imagery, which they then burst apart. To what extent is this work subversive, and what is its true impact? How effective is irreverence, either for a local audience or for an international audience with no prior knowledge of the sociocultural values critiqued by both artists? For this I turn to the ideas of two contemporary theorists: Slavoj Žižek on perversion, understood as the appropriation of the law in art; and Manuel Castells on the networks of communication known as cyberspace.

Following Lacanian theory, Žižek defines perversion as the inscription of the law on the body (“El ciberespacio,” 277). The pervert does not try to subvert the law, but instead derives pleasure from the law itself, which becomes the object of desire. The pervert or transgressor who appears to want to break the norms of what is decent, “in reality aspires to the rule of law itself” (274). Žižek illustrates this idea with two examples: body piercing and sexual perversion. One way to protest against institutional violence consists of freely exercising and displaying violence against one’s own body by means of piercings, a mixture of pain and pleasure. Regarding sexual perversion, Žižek explains that the pervert invents sexual games in which power relationships are inverted so that, when the game is over, the status quo can be reestablished. In both cases, resistance is exercised through the adoption of the very law one is trying to overturn. Thus, authority is equated with pleasure: “As the Law becomes ever less effective in its role in preventing direct (‘incestuous’) access to *jouissance*, the only remaining way to maintain the Law is to render it identical to the Thing that embodies *jouissance*” (277). In Cañas’s creative corpus the law equates to institutional policy. Her work has been subsidized, awarded prizes, and promoted by the Junta de Andalucía, through public cultural institutions, just as much as it has by the Instituto Cervantes.<sup>14</sup> In other

14 Cañas’s career, with its constant and devastating attacks on Andalusian culture, has developed as much in the context of independent production as it has in the institutional. For example, *Aceite con llamas no deja cenizas* (2011), funded by the Diputación de Córdoba, is one of seventeen works included in the “Poéticas del reciclaje” series curated by Playtime Audiovisuales for the Instituto Cervantes and screened in the Instituto’s center in Paris. *Kiss the Murder* is part of the “Todo cuanto amé formaba parte de ti. Videocreación española en torno al amor y desamor” series screened by the Instituto in Madrid between June 28 and July 4, 2010, as part of the PhotoEspaña festival. *La cosa nuestra* has also been screened as part of two more of the Instituto’s series: “[Excuse me] ... Is This Spain?” in Dublin (May 2012) and “Toros desde la barrera” in Shanghai (June 2012). Cañas’s audiovisual work

words, the position of marginality that she occupies is possible thanks, in part, to the same government funding and support that promote the cultural values that she rejects. One of the most revealing moments of my interview with María Cañas in July 2012 was her confession of the pleasure she derived from screening *La cosa nuestra*, a devastating attack on the world of bullfighting, in the Real Maestranza de Caballería in Seville. Her only regret was that the most “fuddy-duddy” members of that legendary institution were not present. In other words, for this Sevillian artist the greatest success would have been recognition by the most traditional and powerful sectors of the bullfighting world.

The relationship between marginality and law changes when considered alongside the new opportunities for distribution that have emerged at the end of the twentieth century through the Internet. Sociologist Manuel Castells theorizes that the existence of cyberspace and the flow of information that it facilitates have given rise to what he calls a “net society, formed of specific configurations of global, national, and local networks in a multidimensional space of social interaction” (44). At the junctions between these networks is where a new society is formed, one that is by definition porous in nature given that both the networks that structure the experience and the social organizations themselves are in a constant state of flux (44). The social structure of net society is comprised of networks triggered by the new digital communication and information technologies (50–51). This organization could certainly be branded as superficial when compared with social structures in the traditional sense, and there is indeed an element of technological abstractionism in Castells. Despite this, the new concepts of space and time, “the space of flows and of atemporal time,” are particularly interesting. The new organizational technologies and structures allow simultaneity without contiguity, as well as remote asynchronous interaction. If industrial society views time as progress, net society disrupts chronological order in favor of simultaneity.

It is sometimes assumed that people all around the world share the same values and cultural references simply because of the unlimited flow of communication. Castells rightly notes that this assumption is wrong: “The common culture of the global net society is a culture of protocols which allow communication between different cultures not necessarily

has also been included in the Portal de Producción Audiovisual de Andalucía, a Fundación Audiovisual de Andalucía initiative backed by the Agencia de Innovación y Desarrollo de Andalucía IDEA (Agencia de Desarrollo Regional del Gobierno Andaluz, attached to the Consejería de Innovación, Ciencia y Empresa), whose objective is “to promote the Andalusian audiovisual sector and support Andalusian businesses and professionals in their national and international growth.”

based on shared values, but on a shared appreciation of the value of communication” (67). Castells states that cyberspace promotes the fantasy of communication being synonymous with mutual understanding, like a universe in which we might lose our ancestral fear of the other (68). For this reason it is difficult to understand the perversion of the rhetoric of the south in a global context, because to do so requires shared sociocultural values. That is, the specular image developed by Bollaín and Cañas is rooted in values and traditions so local that it is hard to relay them to other multinodal communities.

The democratic philosophy that gave rise to spaces such as social networks has been absorbed by capitalism, and much of the Internet is now controlled by large corporations. And yet, despite the capitalization of the Internet and the speed with which the web is developing, cyberspace, a forum for “mass self-media” (392), remains an alternative to the mass media controlled by political and economic power, at least for now. The age of mass self-media continues to permit “multimodal communications” for the expression of alternative messages, as evidenced by personal YouTube channels, personal websites such as Cañas’s own animalario.tv, specialist archives such as PLAT, and online festivals such as that organized by margenes.org. Cañas’s and Bollaín’s works illustrate the dialectic between inclusion and exclusion. Their productions are to be found in the perverse environment that flows from the institutional toward the sphere of meaning-producing mass self-media. They are located at the margins through the inclusion of a center in a cartography that inscribes difference in law. Both the “Sevillian archivist” and Juan Sebastián Bollaín protect the spectacular status of pretty Seville, while at the same time undermining it with scathing critique.

### *El futuro* and the Failure of the 1982 Socialist Project

Moving outward from the specific focus on Seville to a broader focus on the modernization of democratic Spain, I turn now to the work of Luis López Carrasco. López Carrasco began his cinematic career with the Colectivo Los Hijos, created in 2008. This collective, which also includes Javier Fernández Vázquez and Natalia Marín Sancho, has produced some of the most creative independent short films of its era, including *El sol en el sol del membrillo* (2008), *Los materiales* (2009), and *Circo* (2009). He subsequently directed two of the films that best respond to the project of modernization of democratic Spain, *El futuro* (2013) and *El año del descubrimiento* (2020, analyzed in Chapter 6). While neither of the feature films is a product of the Colectivo Los Hijos, López Carrasco’s cinematic mission remains collaborative and cooperative. He always credits the film crew in his numerous interviews

and social media presence, while also generously enlightening audiences with his cinematic wisdom. It is no surprise that, when he is not filming, he teaches at the Escuela de Cinematografía y del Audiovisual de la Comunidad de Madrid (ECAM).<sup>15</sup>

In *El futuro*, López Carrasco does not look forward as the title suggests, but rather back, to the early 1980s in Spain. It is a film that “engages directly and critically with the archive” (Marsh 193). The year 1982 marked the electoral victory of the political left for the first time since 1936. The agenda of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español, summed up in its electoral slogan “Por el cambio,” promoted a true democratic regime that, with the country’s full economic and military integration in Europe, would put an end to decades of isolation and traditionalism in order to become a modern nation. The film opens with audio from Prime Minister Felipe González’s victory speech over a completely black background, thus emphasizing its content, a strategy that stands in stark contrast to the rest of the movie, where diegetic sound is barely audible. Notably, the all-black background with diegetic sound will also serve as effective opening for the filmmaker’s subsequent work, *El año del descubrimiento*. González asks his audience for their “participative” support in order to carry out the “collective” task and “beautiful” undertaking of modernization. In order to strengthen the country, he adds, the “collaboration” of every single Spaniard will be needed. The speech empowers citizens in Spain’s young democracy. Thirty years later, at the time of the 15-M protests, audiences would ironically feel disenfranchised, thus suggesting the failure the Felipe González’s democratic agenda. *El futuro* illustrates the disintegration of the ideals of collaboration, collectivity, and participation as understood by the Socialist project. It is precisely those very same values that the 15-M protests vindicate.

The very next sequence introduces the audience to an anonymous twenty-something man in his modest apartment. His characterization suggests passivity and lack of engagement, depicted through a series of close-ups and through his demeanor. Although the sequence seems to lead into the psychological depths of the man, he will turn out to be but one of a group of partygoers who become the collective protagonist of the film. The ensuing party, the central element of the film, is shot in a realistic style that simultaneously draws the audience into the fictional world and

15 The ECAM was set up in 1994 by the regional government with the cooperation of the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE), the Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas de España (AACCE), and the Entidad de Gestión de Derechos de Autor de los Productores Audiovisuales (EGEDA); it fosters connections between film students and film industry professionals in a similar way to the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona.

alienates them from it. López Carrasco chooses the 16 mm format in order to reproduce the texture of cinema from the 1970s and 1980s – *Tigres de papel* (Fernando Colomo, 1977), *Pepi, Luci, Bom* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1980) – and documentaries by Cecilia and Juan Bartolomé, Joaquim Jordà, Jacinto Esteva, Tino Calabuig, Warhol, and Cassavetes (de Pedro “El futuro,” para. 11). This technical choice engages with the underground film of the 1960s and 1970s, when 16 mm was the only affordable option for clandestine filmmakers under the Franco regime. In fact, film critic Enrique Brasó published a “Manifiesto por un Cine Pobre” in 1970, in which he argues for new independent cinema, marginalized both by choice and by the establishment (142). Brasó states that shooting on inexpensive formats (8 mm, 16 mm, and 35 mm) should not undermine auteurist creativity, and advocates for the creation of film festivals in order to avoid censorship (143). While digital technology and online platforms have democratized independent filmmaking and its distribution in the twenty-first century, filmmakers in the 1970s employed poor-quality formats and created festivals in order to defy censorship in their struggle for democracy.

In addition to visually reproducing underground film, López Carrasco utilizes diegetic sound to accentuate the realistic atmosphere. He does this by means of background noise and barely audible conversations that serve both to replicate a party experience and also to create “molestia perceptiva” (visual discomfort) in the audience (de Pedro “El futuro,” para. 29). We hear snippets of conversations and can barely make sense of them, as the close-up shots of partygoers appear partially obscured by the spontaneous movements of others. The director explains that in a certain sense his intention was to create his own found footage of the time, a technique used by Guerín in *Tren de sombras* (1997) (de Pedro “El futuro,” para. 7).

The connection with Guerín also concerns the production model. López Carrasco worked collectively with a number of his own friends as well as with acting students. Postproduction was made possible by resources provided by the ECAM. This collaborative format seems to have established itself as an alternative production model to that offered by the dominant film industry, both politically and financially. However, López Carrasco laments the fact that he was unable to pay either his performers or his crew, most of them unemployed, a fact that personally embarrassed him (de Pedro “El futuro,” para. 45). A production model that does not generate employment is bound to be either doomed or relegated to the domain of hobbyists. It will hardly stand the test of time, and may not even have any future at all. Additionally, it could exacerbate the financial precarity of those already on the margins, and so it could be seen as undermining the democratic ideals of the filmmakers.

In the early stages of the film project, López Carrasco considered naming it *Canciones para después de una Transición* (Elorrieta, para. 25), a reference to Basilio Martín Patino's classic documentary *Canciones para después de una guerra* (1976). Indeed, songs are crucial to the film. In the soundtrack, López Carrasco provides an impressive selection of little-known bands from the 1980s including Ciudad Jardín, Última Emoción, Ataque de Caspa, Flácidos Lunes, Fanzine, Aviador Dro, and Los Iniciados. While music from the Movida has been identified with hedonism and with the escapist attitudes of the early 1980s, these bands reflect upon nihilism, an apocalyptic worldview, a critique of national politics, and gratuitous violence. Through his choice of music the filmmaker questions the superficial perception of the Movida, as he himself has explained in a revealing analysis of his soundtrack ("Luis López Carrasco," para. 3). The songs are perfectly audible, and the ferocity of their lyrics creates a jarring effect with the joyful atmosphere of the party.

As viewers watch the last fifteen minutes of the film, they are confronted by a series of meaningful technical choices. The sound quality deteriorates, and the music is interrupted as if the recording has malfunctioned. The quality of the picture changes as if the film itself had been damaged, so much so that large black circles take over the picture. Silence is followed by another series of shots of the empty apartment. The recording disintegrates along with the party, also symbolizing the disintegration of a generation that gave up political agency and was overcome by neoliberalism. The camera leaves the apartment and, through one more series of shots, transports the audience to the top of the building, followed by a tracking shot that moves down to the ground, signaling the high and the low both spatially and culturally. The morning traffic situates the viewer in a lower-middle-class neighborhood of any Spanish city, perhaps in the 1980s or at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The interchangeability of the time references signals a relevant quandary in the filmmaker's style, as we will see again in Chapter 6 in the analysis of *El año del descubrimiento*; both of these eras marked a profound disintegration of democratic ideals. Chromatically, the grayish, dull tones contrast with the bright colors of the makeup, costumes, and decor of the party. Silence has now replaced all liveliness. Thus, the black spots should be understood both physically, as they replicate the manipulation possible with 16 mm film, and metaphorically, as political energy has drained to neoliberal apathy.

López Carrasco indicated that one of his initial ideas for this project came from a particular sequence in Zulueta's *Arrebato* (1979), one of Spain's cult movies (de Pedro "El futuro," para. 14). He refers to a film within the film, that is, to the screening of an amateur filmmaker's birthday party where

the singer Alaska, a Movida icon, carries the birthday cake. López Carrasco indicates that he had always been curious to know what else happened at the party. However, the meaning of the intertext lies beyond his mere curiosity. As the party recording is screened, the amateur filmmaker wonders where the thrill of those times went, how the ecstasy vanished, in what manner the magic disappeared. Rapture is the space on the other side of the mirror: sexual pleasure, drug-induced trance, and communion with others. López Carrasco's ending dramatizes – and responds to – the fall from grace, the fragility of the political and cultural euphoria of the mid-1970s. With the tracking shot that moves from the top to the bottom of the building, López Carrasco brings us to *el futuro*, a dull, gray, and gloomy destination. Film critic Vicente Sánchez-Biosca concludes his analysis of *Arrebato* by indicating that the film should be understood as an invitation to one of the darkest holes in film history (82). In fact, *Arrebato* does invite the audience to look at its reflection in the mirror and to embrace the dark side that simultaneously will devour us. *El futuro* looks to *Arrebato* in a similar manner as the new generation of Spaniards looks at itself in the mirror of the past. The past is understood as a flawed origin, a time that is both embraced and devoured. In the search for cinematic and political origins, the mirror is perceived as shattered, and the times asynchronous.

Ledo Cordeiro, Cañas, and López Carrasco embrace new forms of social life by choosing collective production practices, digital dissemination, and by highlighting the complex tension between tradition and modernity. Their cinematic and political correspondences signal the end of chronological order through reinscription and resemantization in synchronicity and horizontality. The materiality of the image takes us down and through black holes while simultaneously centering these narrative, visual, and temporal disruptions as fundamental to the fabric of the new political agency in post-2008 Spain.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Unearthing Amateur Footage from the 1960s and 1970s

José Luis Tirado, Ramiro Ledo, Isaki Lacuesta,  
and Chema Mascareña

The appropriation of archival footage in the development of politically engaged films in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis represents one of the most meaningful expressions of the new forms of social life.<sup>1</sup> The strategies and meanings of that appropriation vary, not only according to individual filmmaker preferences, but according to regional patterns as well. This chapter will examine strategies of appropriation from a regional perspective by analyzing four documentaries from Andalucía, Galicia, Cataluña, and the Basque Country, in order to consider the patterns that emerge both within and across regions. The regional approach aims to vindicate repressed local histories and to counter the centrality that Madrid and Barcelona continue to have in the study of Spanish audiovisual production. It proposes to recognize horizontal networks, free of a dominant nexus.

The films I will consider are *El caso Rocío* (José Luis Tirado, 2013; Andalucía), *Cine Clube Carlos Varela* (Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro, 2005; Galicia), *La matança del porc* (Isaki Lacuesta, 2012; Cataluña), and *Democráticos tiranos* (a collective work produced by Chema Mascareña, 2013; Basque Country). I first consider *El caso Rocío*, which engages with the controversial documentary *Rocío* (Fernando Ruiz Vergara, 1980); the film exposes political and religious censorship that Spain's democracy endured even years after the end of Franco's dictatorship. I then turn to *Cine Clube Carlos Varela*, which appropriates artist Carlos Varela's documentary footage from the 1970s protests in Galicia. As such, director Ramiro Ledo reconstructs the creative and militant role of Varela, who had chronicled protests against imperialism originating both beyond and within the Spanish border. Varela's work showed how Galician political organizations were excluded from any and all discussions about the democratic transition in the immediate aftermath of Franco's death. Next, I

1 The original conception of this chapter benefited from the comments provided by my colleagues at the Rifkind Seminar for the Humanities and the Arts, led by Ellen Handy in 2017–2018.

consider Isaki Lacuesta's *La matança del porc*, which incorporates footage from two Super 8 shorts provided by activist and photographer Pep Armengol, the eponymous *La matança del porc* (1967) and *Spanish First Elections* (1978). Finally, *Democráticos tiranos*, an unassuming, low-budget documentary that has only been shown in Madrid, Barcelona, and Tenerife, appropriates footage of political protests and interviews with those who participated in them, both in 1976 and in 2011.

A regional consideration is valuable because of the significant cultural and political variance from one region of Spain to another. The late Luisa Elena Delgado's premise in her incisive study *La nación singular* (2014) suggests that: "la crisis económica es la manifestación más evidente de otras cuentas erróneas, unas cuentas que justifican la contabilidad simbólica de la llamada democracia de consenso (o postdemocracia) de la que España es un ejemplo singular pero, desde luego, no único" (the financial crisis is the most visible evidence of the erroneous accounting that justifies the symbolic accounts of the so-called democracy of consensus (or postdemocracy), of which Spain is a singular example, but certainly not the only one) (16). The *cuentas pendientes* from the Spanish Transition revolve around two main issues: parliamentary representation and the so-called *estado de las autonomías*, the territorial division of Spain into seventeen regions as a response to decades-old demands for autonomy from central government, in particular from Cataluña and the Basque Country. Cataluña continues to be dissatisfied with the administrative structure stipulated in the 1978 Constitution, and calls for self-determination have increased since 2008, with a generation of young Catalans blaming central government for the economic recession. The establishment, however, considers the 1978 Constitution inalterable, and dissent is perceived as a direct threat to the democratic regime that resulted from a model Transition. In Spain, as in the rest of Europe, "there is an almost total integration of political power (the state, parliamentary representation) and financial power" (Rancière and Laclau para. 21). This notion of the state is also based on a fantasy of cultural harmony in which dissent has no place. If the concept of a nation's stability rests on its unity, cohesion, and representation of its constituencies, it follows that dissent is viewed as an attack on its very foundations, according to Delgado (18). She draws on Jacques Rancière, who believes that consensus results in the nullification of the subject and the reduction of the "political community to the relations between the interests and aspirations of the social body and of the political community" (42). For the French thinker, the essence of politics resides precisely in what he calls the process of "dissensual subjectivation," which reveals a society in its difference from itself (42). In contemporary Spain, dissent has come to signify a threat to the legitimacy

of the democratic regime, as expressed by Nicolás Redondo Terreros, who argues that extremist ideologies trample on the fundamental principles of the 1978 Constitution: moderation, pragmatism, mutual understanding, secularism, and the recognition of mutual differences stemming from a common history.<sup>2</sup>

The territorial division of Spain into seventeen regions was one of the most important political outcomes of the democratic transition. Although it is in Cataluña that this territorial structure has been most strongly contested since the Transition, the corpus of documentaries selected in this chapter illustrates that dissenting voices have been raised in other regions as well. While Cataluña's disaffection constitutes a singular case, the documentaries analyzed here demonstrate that other regions also asserted their identity and political agendas during the Transition in a way that merits critical attention. These works become significant in the context of recent independent, activist film as an expression of new forms of social life.

Given this history, the appropriation of archival footage from the 1960s and 1970s becomes both politically and cinematically meaningful. Lev Manovich's theory that digital cinema has lost "its privileged indexical relationship to pro-filmic reality" (7) sheds light on the incorporation into digital film of archival footage that was fundamentally indexical. That is, twenty-first-century cinema tries to produce images that show no traces of their artificiality, and "live action footage is reduced to be just another graphic, no different than the images which were created manually" (7). Contrary to the new digital identity, archival footage exposes its indexicality through the deterioration of the images, thus revealing the connection to a pre-digital past.

### *El caso Rocío: Identity and Censorship in the Transition*

I turn first to Andalucía, where questions of identity and democratic expression are bound up in complex ways with Francoist rhetoric. The documentary *El caso Rocío* (José Luis Tirado, 2013) engages with the earlier documentary *Rocío* (Fernando Ruiz Vergara, 1980); both address a celebrated pilgrimage in Andalucía that has also been a site of contested identity and the tension between democracy and repression. Together, these two documentaries create a kind of iconography of continuity between the

2 See "Porque me da la gana," where he argues that the 1978 Constitution is being challenged by "nuevos extremismos y viejas intolerancias" (new radical positions and old intolerant perspectives).

past of the dictatorship and the Transition. In fact, they were sold as a bundle, along with a collection of essays written by some of the filmmakers, anthropologists, and historians who had collaborated with Ruiz Vergara in the 1970s. The essay collection, also entitled *El caso Rocío*, was coordinated by the anthropologist Ángel del Río Sánchez, the historian Francisco Espinosa Maestre, and the filmmaker José Luis Tirado. Renewed interest in the original 1980 film was also supported by two of the most important digital platforms and distributors of activist and independent videoart, HAMACA and ZEMOS98, the latter through the collaboration of its founder, Felipe G. Gil. Digital dissemination secures accessibility to works that otherwise would be forever lost.

The original *Rocío* is an anthropological documentary that centers on two themes: first, the legendary devotion to the Virgen del Rocío in Andalucía, which every May attracts over a million people to its hermitage in Almonte, a town of only 20,000 inhabitants; second, the tension between this popular manifestation and the long-standing reactionary campaign by local landowners to preserve feudal economic structures that perpetuate the repression of peasants. It was precisely this feud that led to a violent uprising in Almonte at the onset of the Spanish Civil War, which resulted in the killing of a hundred peasants. As in many other instances in the history of the Civil War, the culprits were never brought to justice. Ruiz Vergara interviews a witness of the massacre who, for the first time (and this is 1980) puts a name and a face to the killings: that of José María Reales Carrasco, a well-known landowner. Carrasco's family filed a defamation lawsuit against the filmmaker and, as a result, the Tribunal Supremo censored the film in 1984. Ruiz Vergara seemed unaware that he was violating the well-known *pacto de silencio* regarding the memory of the Civil War, a tacit political agreement to move beyond the radical and irreconcilable positions that resulted in the three-year conflict and caused 500,000 deaths. To date, the documentary only circulates in its censored version.<sup>3</sup>

Ruiz Vergara also seemed unaware of the impact that his critique of this "sacred" pilgrimage would have – and I use the term sacred both in the religious sense and in the sense of something that is not to be meddled with. *Rocío* exposes how governing elites appropriated the religious celebration and manipulated it for political purposes in the wake of historic upheavals.

3 Interestingly, María Ruido's 2010 short *Lo que no puede ser visto debe ser mostrado* also addresses censorship during the Transition and includes the case of *Rocío*. *Lo que no puede ser visto debe ser mostrado* takes its name from a quotation of Gérard Wajcman, and includes interviews with filmmaker Cecilia Bartolomé, renowned scholar Jo Labanyi, and member of the Colectivo de Cine de Clase (CCC) Mariano Lisa Escaned, as well as footage from Bartolomé's *Cecilia y el lobo* and *O todos o ninguno* by the CCC.

For instance, the statue of the Virgen del Rocío was taken out on parade to celebrate the nationalist victory in 1939, which marked the end of the Civil War and the beginning of four decades of dictatorship in Spain.

In addition to being censored, cultural critic Alejandro Alvarado explains that *Rocío* met with numerous other hurdles that prevented its commercial release. He contends that the renewed interest in Ruiz Vergara's work began around 2005, when the debate on the recuperation of the history of the Civil War and dictatorship was at its height – the Ley de la Memoria Histórica was passed in 2007 (174). While I concur that may have been the case, it is also true that Ruiz Vergara's 1970s cinematic philosophy and practice connect him to the broader emerging use of collective and cooperative practices during that time. Ruiz Vergara and his partner Ana Vila began their career in Portugal, where they helped to promote activist film, cinematic cooperatives, and collective documentaries (Alvarado 135). In the 1980s, they moved to Seville, where they tried to recreate the Portuguese model and foster collective and cooperative cinematic structures. As such, they spearheaded the formation of the Equipo de Cine Andaluz. Other founding members included Juan Sebastián Bollaín, whose work was analyzed in Chapter 2, Nonio and Elena Parejo, Mercedes Farnés, and Juan Ríos. While the initial revolutionary impetus dwindled quickly, the collective authored several documentaries (146–147). Thus Ruiz Vergara participated in the creation of collective cinematic structures in the 1970s, which the 2008 crisis brought back as politically meaningful and financially viable.

The pilgrimage to El Rocío plays a complex role in the construction of democratic identity in Andalucía. On the one hand, it is well known that the Francoist regime privileged Andalusian folklore as a referent for its nationalist identity. At the same time, and ironically, democratic Spain and the fostering of regional identities capitalized on the very same folklore. In Andalucía, Seville epitomizes the essence of regional identity, and most towns in the autonomous region now revere their own simulacra of the Feria de Abril, Semana Santa, or the Rocío. The message that both *Rocío* and *El caso Rocío* ultimately convey is that the anthropological view of the religious pilgrimage can reclaim popular democratic celebrations by and for the people by foregrounding their authentic local identity and countering centuries-old political appropriations. That is, both works defy the official structure of territorial division based on regional identities as reflected in the 1978 Constitution. Alvarado (133) states that Ruiz Vergara's anthropological documentary was conceived in the context of the struggle for the Andalusian *Estatuto de Autonomía*, in keeping with the 1978 Constitutional stipulation. And yet, I would go so far as to argue that Ruiz Vergara digs deeper into the local soul and the collective spirit of Andalucía,

thus rejecting the institutionalized structures dictated by the centralized politics of the Transition.

### *Cine Clube Carlos Varela* and Galician Self-Determination

*Cine Clube Carlos Varela* (Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro, 2005) appropriates footage shot by Carlos Varela, the highly recognized representative of “regional” cinema in Galicia. Ledo is also deeply invested in the collective identity of Galicia, and is one of the founding members of the cooperative NUMAX, a cultural center and independent cinema in Santiago de Compostela. If Varela is credited with providing the people of Galicia with their representation as a community, then Ledo has continued the path that Varela forged. Both are political activists who share an interest in cinematic experimentation and a collective approach to film production and distribution.

Varela chronicled protests against imperialism originating both within and beyond the Spanish border. The film includes 1970s footage in Super 8 format of demonstrations against the construction of a nuclear plant in the small village of Xove, against the destruction of the oceanfront in Baldaio, and against the imposition of new taxes on farmers. The protests met with brutal repression from the Guardia Civil in rural areas and from the Policía Nacional in the cities. Varela’s film documents how imperialism within Spain unfolded in Madrid, showing that Galician political organizations such as Unión do Povo Galego, Partido Socialista Galego, Partido Socialdemócrata Galego, Movimiento Comunista, Partido Carlista, and the Asamblea Nacional Popular Galega were excluded from any and all discussions about the democratic Transition in the immediate aftermath of Franco’s death. In their films, Varela and Ledo both vindicate the growing calls for self-determination from these Galician political groups: the recycled footage represents the strength of a community, the people of Galicia out on the streets, and their struggle for equality and representation.

At a time when we have become accustomed to the flawless appearance of digital images, the poor quality of the appropriated footage proves significant both politically and visually. The cinematic image is subject to deterioration and decay, as evidenced by the film industry’s efforts to preserve, restore, and conserve film so that deterioration does not affect the image itself. As theorist Roland Barthes indicates, the more technology diffuses information and images, the more it provides the means of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning (33). That is, technology, already a mediation, camouflages even further the hidden meanings of the image – what film critic Román Gubern has called the “pathology” of the image (5). We live in the digital era of ever-increasing

image definition, and yet Ledo appropriates 8 mm footage from the 1970s, which lacks definition to begin with, and presents it to us raw, bare, and undisguised. The degradation of the images over time and their color shift toward the reds pulls the viewer back to the 1970s. Varela's footage has not been subjected to the masks or mediations of today's "society of the spectacle," to use the now well-known phrase coined by the French theorist Guy Debord in 1967. We may think of Varela's images as precarious and disposable, and yet it is their unfiltered quality that sutures them as durable and vital for galvanizing Spain's contemporary struggles. In the age of the non-indexical digital image, as Manovich states, the corporality of these earlier indexical images proves as relevant as the corporality of the community that the documentary highlights. The indexicality of the images stresses their sociopolitical significance while departing from the neoliberal optimism of teleology.

### *La matança del porc* According to Armengol and Lacuesta: from 1967 to 2012

While it has become commonplace to view the Transition as the model for peaceful regime change, this rose-tinted view ironically erases its very beginnings when protests were met with brutal police repression and terrorist attacks resulted in dozens of victims – particularly in Cataluña. The 15-M Movement that brought millions of protesters onto the streets in 2011 emphasizes its nonviolent nature, and yet some short films, such as Isaki Lacuesta's *La matança del porc* (2012), argue that true political change can only be achieved through more dramatic revolutionary actions, as historian Kostis Kornetis has pointed out (85). This short film goes further than all the others studied in this chapter in its critique of the flawed origins of Spain's deficient democracy in the twenty-first century.

Lacuesta has spent his career cultivating the noncommercial short format, teaching documentary film, mentoring, and collaborating, and funding low-budget films through his small production company. In addition, he has directed several feature films that include the award-winning diptych *Los pasos dobles* (2011) and *El cuaderno de barro* (2011), as well as the comedy *Murieron por encima de sus posibilidades* (2014) and the drama *La propera pell* (2016), both of which had successful theatrical releases. *La matança del porc* is the product of a film workshop led by Lacuesta. Barcelona was the city where protesters met with the harshest police repression and, as the 15-M protests were happening while Lacuesta's workshop was taking place, that was where the idea came from: to look at both moments in time, the Transition and the 2008 crisis. One of the participants in the workshop, Pep Armengol, shared

two of his Super 8 shorts, the eponymous *The Killing of the Pig*, shot in 1967, and *Spanish First Elections*, shot in 1978. Lacuesta incorporates both so as to create a dialogue with contemporary documentary footage of the 2011 protests. Actor and critic Luis E. Parés praises the short's depth and writes that it falls halfway between the chronicle and the essay film (4).

Although *La matança del porc* was due to be broadcast by the Catalan regional television channel Canal 33, it was never actually scheduled, which Lacuesta attributes to censorship (quoted in Bollero paras. 9–10). Nevertheless, the film was later incorporated into a larger collective project comprised of twenty-four shorts made by faculty and students in the graduate program in Creative Documentary at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, “Totes les llavors sembrades” (2012). Cataluña is on the cutting edge of contemporary independent film: both the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra have implemented collaborative teaching methods that have launched the careers of a new generation of filmmakers. Along similar lines, collaboration was frequent in the mid-1970s when the Colectivo de Cine de Clase (CCC), the Colectivo de Cine de Madrid, and the Cooperativa de Cine Alternatiu produced *El campo para el hombre*, *Amnistía y libertad*, and *Can Serra*, among many other documentaries. Replicating the 1970s collaborative mode of production, the past ten years have witnessed the appearance of a number of collectives, of which Dostopos, lacasinegra, Zazpi T'erdi, and the Colectivo Los Hijos are among the most critically acclaimed.

*La matança del porc* begins with flashes of poor-quality images from Armengol's earlier recordings as well as his self-referential comments about the fact that the original Super 8 format, launched in 1965, did not record sound. One of these Super 8 images appears again at the very end to underscore its relevance. It shows an image promoting the Frente por la Unidad de los Trabajadores, a small Marxist party that did not achieve representation in the 1977 election and was later dissolved. The Frente demanded amnesty for all political prisoners as well as a socialist revolution, two demands disregarded by the establishment in the political negotiations. The image appears with the same synchronized soundtrack at both the beginning and the end of the short: the first two lines of a song by the Australian post-punk band The Birthday Party.<sup>4</sup> The lines in question add to the gloomy political scenario: “I've been contemplating suicide / But it really doesn't suit my style.” In using this shot to give the film a circular

4 In the late 1970s the band was known as the Boys Next Door. They changed their name to The Birthday Party in 1980 and released their first music under that name that year.



Fig. 3.1. Still from Isaki Lacuesta's *La matança del porc*: propaganda of the Frente por la Unidad de los Trabajadores, a small Marxist party that did not achieve representation in the 1977 election and was later dissolved. Reproduced with the permission of Isa Campo and Isaki Lacuesta.

structure, Lacuesta brings us back to a historical time when certain political aspirations remained unfulfilled: this circular structure suggests stagnation (Figure 3.1).

Lacuesta creates a meaningful sense of irony through the dissonance between narration and footage. For instance, when Armengol, the voice-over narrator, refers to the aftermath of Franco's death – he talks about “*aquellas horas tan bonitas previas a lo que pensamos una revolución*” (*the hopeful few hours immediately prior to what we had thought would be a revolution; my emphasis*) – we see footage of a pig's throat being cut and blood bursting forth. The recording of the killing of the pig, Armengol explains, came about when it became illegal to slaughter pigs in private residences. His intention was to document both the tradition and the regime change. However, the alleged “wonderfulness” of those years has to be questioned. It is true that many young activists were overcome by dreams of a revolution, but it is also true that this euphoria coexisted with ongoing political repression and terrorist attacks carried out by both the extreme left and the extreme right.

In the film, Armengol laments the fact that the excitement about voting in free elections has now disappeared. Over footage of the protests of September 29, 2011, he adds that the low voter turnout of recent years can be explained by deficiencies in the democratic regime and resulting popular dissatisfaction. A second irony emerges when we see a group of protesters lounging in relaxed positions on the ground with the superimposed words, “Horizontal democracy.” The filmmaker seems to be wondering whether the relaxed position of the protesters may be conducive to action. However, and

beyond the technical irony, horizontality refers to demands for increased equality and, especially, participation in the current democratic regime. Fernández-Savater, who has perceptively theorized the political alternative that the 15-M Movement seems to be proposing, argues for the need for a horizontal form of organization that “does not consist of ‘fusing’ or ‘uniting’ different experiences into a bloc, but rather composing them, establishing communications between them, and connecting them into a network without a centre” (“Translation,” n. 22). While recognizing the complexity of his proposal, Fernández-Savater underscores the main goal of abolishing neoliberalism’s hierarchical structures.

Ultimately, *La matança del porc* is a film about the ending of a regime and the origins, both political and cinematic, of a flawed democracy, and in particular its administrative structure. Both the 2014 and 2017 Catalan independence referendums were deemed illegal by the defenders of the political status quo, the so-called “constitutionalists,” who consider the 1978 Constitution inalterable and dissent to be a direct threat to the legitimacy of the democratic regime. This challenge to the Constitution prompted the imposition of direct rule by Prime Minister Rajoy, bringing back memories of authoritarian rule in Franco’s Spain. Cataluña’s repeated calls for self-determination illustrate that Spain’s “cuentas erróneas,” as Delgado puts it, remain pending.<sup>5</sup> The film’s strong imagery and reclaimed footage offer a powerful critique of Spain’s democratic aspirations.

### *Democráticos tiranos: Two Sides of the Same Coin*

The title card of *Democráticos tiranos* (a collective work produced by Chema Mascareña, 2013) – a close-up image of a coin – captures the essence of the political message of this documentary: Spain’s dictatorship and democracy appear on the same side of the coin, they are *not* two sides of the same coin. To illustrate this predicament, the documentary focuses on the general strike in the Basque city of Vitoria that resulted in the death of five workers in 1976, as well as its commemoration thirty-seven years later, in the aftermath of the *indignados* protests of 2011.

*Democráticos tiranos* is deeply collaborative in its structure and execution. In addition to being a collectively created work, it was partially crowdfunded through the Verkami platform. Additional funding was provided by the Basque government, namely the Secretaría para la Paz y la Convivencia, Dirección de Víctimas y Derechos Humanos – though it has never been screened in

<sup>5</sup> The December 2017 election results took Cataluña, and Spain, “back to square one” in its historical demands for independence (Faber and Seguí).

the Basque Country. An unassuming, low-budget documentary that has only been shown in Madrid, Barcelona, and Tenerife, *Democráticos tiranos* incorporates footage of political protests and interviews with participants, both in 1976 and in 2011. According to the producer, Chema Mascareña, the two moments in time share a political climate in which civil liberties are constantly threatened, the job market has become increasingly precarious, capitalism controls politics, and justice is sorely lacking. The absence of a voice-over allows the audience to focus on the visual elements. The political and economic connection between these two key moments in Spain's history is achieved not only by means of visual strategies, but also by direct references by its protagonists. For instance, Félix Placer, a priest who used to officiate at the church where protesters took refuge from the police during the 1976 strike, uses the adjective "indignados" to refer to their political disaffection and the general climate of uncertainty at the time. "Indignado" is also the term adopted by young Spaniards to express their political disaffection as well as their resentment toward the establishment around 2008.

The opening segment that precedes the title card illustrates both the form and content of the report. Visually, the documentary relies on parallel montage and graphic similarities, two strategies designed to show how police brutality in 2011 was no different than police brutality at the height of the Transition. The implied message is clear: after Franco's death, workers longed to put the dictatorship behind them and welcomed the opportunity to improve labor conditions and enjoy democratic freedom, as stated by Andoni Txasco, one of the workers who participated in the protests. Txasco laments that the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship remained in place even after Franco's death, and that those who were negotiating the terms of the Transition had not transformed it yet or, perhaps, they were not intent on doing so. In Txasco's opinion, law enforcement agents had orders to suppress that "ilusionante" scenario, the workers' expectations of a truly representative democracy, echoing Armengol's own expectations in Lacuesta's short analyzed above.

The very first image of the film is a black-and-white still of a workers' protest, the picture clearly damaged by the passage of time. The deterioration of the image stands in stark contrast to subsequent high-quality digital shots. Both sets of images, while in opposition, simultaneously suggest the political and economic continuity between the Spain of 1976 and that of 2011. The workers' aspirations to equality and improved labor laws in 1976 were squashed by neoliberalism in 2011, as some of the protesters interviewed for *Democráticos tiranos* decry. The corporatization of the government and the prioritizing of financial interests over those of the people have become commonplace in Western democracies, and as such, to bring Rancière back

to this discussion, “democracy as a form of government is threatened by democracy as a form of social and political life and so the former must repress the latter” (45). Along similar lines, Mark Fisher argues that the goal of the left should be “to subordinate the state to the general will,” for which the notion of “general will” must be revived (*Capitalist Realism*, 12). The documentaries included in this chapter echo Fisher’s proposal by incorporating images and voices of a general will ejected from the historical discourse dominated by the democratic establishment.

One of the main threads connecting 1976 and 2011 in *Democráticos tiranos* is civil disobedience. Admittedly, the Spain of 1976 did not enjoy the same freedoms as the Spain of 2011. And yet, a number of formal elements in the documentary generate parallelisms to underscore the limits of civil liberties in the twenty-first century. Current Mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau’s testimony in the documentary reminds the audience of the highly discriminatory nature of the Ley de las Hipotecas, which protects lending institutions and leaves the lower middle class so helpless that civil disobedience may be their only recourse. In fact, she traces the root of the problem to the late 1960s, when ownership was promoted and loans were accessible, thus tying their financial and working conditions to their obligations as borrowers. As Colau indicates, the dictates of neoliberalism leave no recourse to unprotected workers but to disobey. In the digital age, new media has allowed for “subveillance” to become a vital tool to carry out civil disobedience. By countering state-controlled surveillance, subveillance strategies such as hacking are used to observe the state from below, such as in search of human rights abuses as Woods indicates (“Border Hacking”). *Democráticos tiranos* illustrates that a form of hacking was indeed employed as a subveillance strategy during the 1976 general strike in Vitoria, as protesters intercepted police radio communications that helped them understand the modus operandi of the oppressors. Low-quality recordings of these communications are incorporated into the documentary and used as nondiegetic sound over footage of the clashes between workers and the police.

Although the *estado de las autonomías* is an unresolved issue to the extent that contemporary artists deem it necessary to bring to light the silenced voices and footage from the struggle, nationalism is not front and center in the 15-M Movement. Instead, as we have seen, there is a focus on the local, on community organizing, and on affective networks; Chapter 5 will explore this further. What is fundamental is that the works in this chapter do not support the *estado de las autonomías* as conceived by the 1978 Constitution, but rather demonstrate that the process of community organizing at the local level was blatantly overlooked by the system that ultimately prevailed.

Through strategies of appropriation that emerge within particular regional contexts, Ramiro Ledo, José Luis Tirado, Isaki Lacuesta, and the Mascareña team shake the foundations of digital spectatorship. These artists reside in the digital and use digital technology, but they turn to early footage, effectively defetishizing the image and signaling its political agenda. Their creative and political synergy signals the shared challenges to Spain's democratic identity that come from the periphery. The dominant political discourse of the Transition discarded the voice of the people, and was stripped of nationalist and popular voices from the periphery. Since 2008, we have witnessed a movement in the opposite direction, with the increasing demands of the people for representation.

Visually and politically, the creatives discussed in this chapter aim to revive the authenticity of local and horizontal structures and histories by pushing aside institutional interpretations and appropriations of the general will. The calls for equity, representation, and authenticity are mirrored in the incorporation of damaged and undisguised footage that breaks with the neoliberal optimism of progress. Local, horizontal, and communal histories reclaim democracy as a form of social life.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Cinema of Helena Lumbreras (1935–1995) and the Political Practice of Responsibility

Helena Lumbreras was a well-educated woman who quit her career as a teacher to pursue filmmaking, a male-dominated world, especially in 1960s Spain. After studying education in Huesca, and later art history at the Universidad Complutense (Madrid), she taught in two very small towns in Cuenca province, San Lorenzo de la Parrilla and Belmontejo. In this rural setting she was moved by the plight of children who entered the workforce as young as twelve years of age, a harsh reality that would be captured in her filmography (Lisa, interview Nov. 2, 2018), which emphasized social responsibility as a key component of democratic engagement.

Lumbreras's political agenda can be best explained by what Simon Critchley calls the activism of "infinite responsibility" (95). In his sharp and enlightening discussion of political resistance in neoliberal societies, he posits that the goal of popular resistance is not to take over the state but rather the establishment of what Marx understood as "true democracy" (90). A true democracy is composed of multiple political subjectivities encompassing racial, ethnic, gender, and class identities. These political subjectivities do not aspire to replicate the dominant institutions but instead aim to recognize their moral responsibility in the face of injustice, which must be enacted independently from the state. This activism of "infinite responsibility" stands in opposition to the activism of "unlimited freedom" that drove the young generations of the late 1960s to liberate themselves from bourgeois moral values. In Critchley's view, personal political responsibility to create a true democracy for a collectivity should take precedence over individual freedom as the ultimate aspiration. I posit that Lumbreras' oeuvre intersects with the activism of infinite responsibility embodied by the 15-M protesters rather than the activism of infinite freedom that inspired the main 1960s protests.

The path to creating that body of work was a winding one. Unsurprisingly, the small-town atmosphere felt stifling to a woman with intellectual curiosity and political sensitivity. In 1960s Spain, women who rejected their traditional

role in the domestic sphere could only dare to aspire to be teachers near the family home. But Lumbreras made the leap and enrolled in the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía (Madrid), whose faculty included some of the most respected filmmakers in the country (Carlos Saura, José Luis Borau, and Luis García Berlanga among others). Her next career move would be even more daring: she secured a grant from the Italian government to study at the prestigious Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia-Cinecittà (Rome), and then worked at the RAI (the Italian state broadcaster), where she befriended Pier Paolo Pasolini and Cesare Zavattini, and also assisted Federico Fellini, Gillo Pontecorvo, Francesco Rosi, and Nanni Loy. In 1968, she approached the production company Unitelefilm, affiliated with the Communist Party in Italy, to shoot a documentary about Francoist Spain, *Spagna 68 (El hoy es malo, pero el futuro es mío)*. Given her cinematic training in both Madrid and Rome, her collaborations with leading Italian and Spanish filmmakers of the time and her experience at the RAI, it seems surprising that Lumbreras found herself unemployed upon her return to Spain in 1971 (see Lisa). As her partner, Mariano Lisa, explains in the interview, independent film was excluded from the dominant film industry and considered meritless in the capitalist West as well as in the Soviet Bloc. She was unable to break into this male-dominated territory, even after collaborating with the well-established filmmaker and critic Llorenç Soler on two of her documentaries.

Lumbreras directed five militant documentaries between 1968 and 1978: *Spagna 68*, *El cuarto poder*, *El campo para el hombre*, *O todos o ninguno*, and *A la vuelta del grito*,<sup>1</sup> which range between forty and sixty minutes in length. Significantly, the subtitle of her debut work, “El hoy es malo pero el futuro es mío,” is a line from Antonio Machado’s 1915 poem “Una España joven.” Machado, the revered Republican poet who passed away having just crossed the French border in 1939, had become a cult figure for Spaniards resisting the dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. The optimistic tone of the line in question encapsulates the enthusiasm of the revolutionary spirit of 1968, which would turn into disillusionment in the late 1970s, especially as workers’ demands remained unheeded and feminist organizations were absorbed by the main political parties.

As only one original negative – of *A la vuelta del grito* – had survived, the restoration work consisted of digitizing this in HD quality, together with

1 Her filmography also includes works created while she was a film student in Madrid (*A los toros* (1959–1960), *El primer día* (1959–1961), *Telegrama* (1960–1961)) as well as some unfinished documentaries, *Primer aniversario de la muerte de Txiki en Cerdanyola* (1976), *Manifestació Diada a Sant Boi de Llobregat* (1976), *Osuna* (1976), *¿El Prat? Un río a desviar* (1976–1977), *Diada, 11 de septiembre de 1977* (1977), *Campo andaluz* (1981), *Lucha vecinal* (1983), and *Escuela de San Ildefonso* (1983).

original copies of the rest of her filmography, and was completed in 2005. As a result of this initiative, and now some years after her death, Lumbreras's documentaries have since been shown at film festivals in Europe (such as the Twenty-Third Mostra Internacional Films de Dones Barcelona in 2005) and in the United States (most recently at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2018, as part of the "Catalan Cinema's Radical Years, 1968–1978" series (see "What's On")), and have attracted the critical attention of numerous film scholars and academic conferences (Camí-Vela; Fernández Labayen and Prieto Souto; Guardiola; La Parra-Pérez 2018; Mirizio).<sup>2</sup> Most notably, it is the endless devotion of her partner Mariano Lisa that has made her work available to any and all interested in it.

Film scholar Pablo La Parra-Pérez emphasizes the need to internationalize Lumbreras and put her film practice in dialogue with the theory and practice of Italian militant film culture in the 1960s ("Workers," 366). Indeed, her filmography must be evaluated by taking into account her formative years in Italy, and Annalisa Mirizio has analyzed that stage of her career. La Parra-Pérez demonstrates that her political and social agenda is inextricably intertwined with the 1960s revolution. At the same time, Lumbreras's engagement with political questions of the 1960s was grounded not so much in individual freedom, but in social responsibility. It is this combination of her immersion in the long 1960s and her adscription to the activism of infinite responsibility that puts her filmography in dialogue with the present moment in startling ways.

Scholar and filmmaker María Camí-Vela ends her overview of Lumbreras's work by speculating that her cinema remained in a "state of amnesia" for many years because it is an "uncomfortable cinema" for those who support the official narrative of the Transition (262). Artist and scholar María Ruido also uses the term "uncomfortable cinema" when she interviews Mariano Lisa in her video essay *Lo que no se puede visto debe ser mostrado* (2010). This is indeed the case, for Lumbreras's approach to the reality of her time made her work as disturbing and charged as the recordings of Carlos Valera in Galicia and Ruiz Vergara in Andalucía, and as such it was erased by the dominant cinematic narrative. Understanding the oblivion of her cinema is as relevant as understanding why she has now come to light as such a thought-provoking and meaningful cinematic voice in the context

2 Most recently, a roundtable devoted to Lumbreras's work was included in the conference "Quand les femmes filment le documentaire dans la peninsule iberique et dans le continent latino-américain" held in Grenoble and Lyon (France), October 2–5, 2019. The participants were Sonia Kelfas, Margarita Ledo, Cecilia Bartolomé, and Mariano Lisa.

of the independent, activist film being made in Spain today. I propose that Lumbreras's engagement with the social, economic, and political issues of her time mirrors the collaborative organizational structures of grassroots collectives developed during the 15-M Movement. In particular, I will examine how Lumbreras documents women's grassroots movements, an important aspect of resistance under late Francoism that has been neglected by both filmmakers and historians. This chapter will adopt both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective to explain why her exposure of Spain's socioeconomic reality was marginalized by hegemonic political and cultural discourse in the mid-1970s, as well as the cultural and sociopolitical circumstances that have led to the recovery of Lumbreras's militant cinema at the onset of the twenty-first century.

### Lumbreras as an Anomaly

The revitalization of Lumbreras's visual interventions can be explained, in part, by what cultural critic Mark Fisher identifies as the culture of retrospection in the twenty-first century, which entails a longing for the resumption of the processes of democratization (*Ghosts of My Life*, 27). As film scholar Mirizio explains, the main influences on Lumbreras's work were Cesare Zavattini and Pier Paolo Pasolini in the 1960s. Zavattini's directive that all cinema be "horizontal" – that is, made by the collectivity for the collectivity – defines Lumbreras's filmography. This horizontality is also emblematic of the 15-M ideology, as well as the audiovisual production it informed.

Horizontality allows for self-marginality, which Lumbreras chose in a similar vein to many of the independent, militant filmmakers of the post-2008 crisis. Yet her personal experiences as a filmmaker, her representation of women, and most importantly the incorporation of women's agency into both the cinematic and political processes, made her an anomaly in 1970s Spain. Film scholars Fernández Labayen and Prieto Souto (412) cite other militant women filmmakers who merit critical attention, including Rosa Babí and Mercè Conesa from Colectivo SPA,<sup>3</sup> María Miró from Colectivo de Cine de Madrid, and Brigitte Domès, who worked as a film editor for the Comissió de Cinema de Barcelona. However, Lumbreras did not collaborate with any of them, and the first time that she and Mariano Lisa actually met Conesa was at the première of the latter's film *Entre la esperanza y el fraude*<sup>4</sup> (1976, codirected with Bartomeu Vilà, Rosa Babia, and Joan Simó)

3 The initials of Santiago Puig Antich, the last political prisoner to be executed by the Franco regime in 1974.

4 The name alludes to the book by Julio Sanz Oller, *Entre el fraude y la esperanza*.

at the Central del Curt in Barcelona, a venue for independent film. As Lisa has always pointed out, compared with Conesa's historical approach to militant film, for example, Lumbreras was unique in being a woman director brave enough to tackle the very complicated and dangerous political situation of her time. Her personal experience as a filmmaker as well as her representation of women therefore make her an exception in 1970s Spain.

Lumbreras's independence, simultaneously chosen and imposed, is echoed by that of the new crop of young filmmakers who took center stage in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, whose work I examined in Chapter 1. These filmmakers all pride themselves on working outside the constraints of the traditional film industry and have therefore become their own producers and distributors, taking advantage of how digital technology has democratized documentary filmmaking and distribution. By rejecting the cultural establishment in this way, such artists are choosing to base their creativity on the authenticity of their agenda and their independence from the mainstream.

The question of authenticity in relation to political practices is therefore a key component of understanding these filmmakers' works. In Lumbreras's case, this authenticity is grounded outside of official political parties. Lumbreras and Lisa were arrested at a protest in 1974 and subsequently expelled from the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC), accused of being police informants. Their exclusion from the communist project illustrates the lack of adscription to the institutional project of the PSUC that their filmography also reveals. Their documentaries originate from a perspective of social justice linked to what the philosopher José Luis Pardo understands as "autenticidad," the notion that social revolution will emanate only from direct political action that happens spontaneously and refuses to become part of the establishment.<sup>5</sup> Much like the collective groups created during the post-2008 crisis in Spain, the CCC believed that noninstitutional participation was the only alternative to the establishment. It is apt that the Filmoteca de Catalunya disseminates its restored CCC films through independent platforms – just like the distribution of independent films by the Colectivo los Hijos, Ramiro Ledo Cordeiro, María Ruido, and Isaki Lacuesta, as discussed in previous chapters.

Mirizio understands Lumbreras's marginality as visual anachronism, in that her work adheres to a neorealist ethic and aesthetic, even though in the

*Las comisiones obreras de Barcelona* (Ruedo Ibérico, 1972), which criticized the agenda of the Spanish Communist Party from a leftist perspective and was well known at the time.

5 Pardo criticizes the politics of authenticity for making "antagonismo" its pillar and for conceiving itself as outside of the social pact (253).

1960s the realists had abandoned their commitment to social justice (425). In keeping with Cesare Zavattini's *cinegiornali liberi* (431), Lumbreras conceives of film as an instrument for social transformation in the hands of the collectivity, accessible to amateur filmmakers with the new 8 mm and 16 mm formats, which were both inexpensive and relatively simple to operate. For Lumbreras, the only way to transform reality is by allowing the people to remain in control of their own narrative and to author counterinformation. In this regard, film is not only a cultural intervention, but also an independent political weapon. This idea comes to life in the Collettivo Cinema Militante, created by student protesters in 1960s Turin whose identity was based, in part, on their independence from the establishment of the Communist Party (430). Complete political independence was only possible if filmmakers also produced their own work and audiences partly subsidized them through their modest contributions to the screenings, much like crowdfunding practices today. This brings us back to Mark Fisher's notion that today's culture of remembrance illustrates the way in which the disaffected youth of neoliberal democracies yearn for authentic and representative cultural and political interventions.

### Lumbreras's Vindication of the Destitute Groups in Late Francoism

The five documentaries analyzed in this chapter share the theme of the vindication of the most destitute groups in late Francoist Spain through the cinematic representation of those who do not feel represented. The first two, *Spagna 68* and *El cuarto poder*, were produced in collaboration with Llorenç Soler, and *El campo para el hombre, O todos o ninguno*, and *A la vuelta del grito* through the CCC. In the context of the demise of the Francoist dictatorship, Lumbreras engages with marginalization from the vantage point of not only political ideology, but also class and gender. For instance, in *Spagna 68*, filmed in Madrid and Barcelona in the spring of that year, she documents the manner in which university students and women in general are empowered to use their voice in contexts that are not limited to the struggle for freedom – as she is herself empowered to use her voice through the medium of film. Lumbreras interviews a group of women affiliated with the communist union Comisiones Obreras who lament both the lack of representation of women in the union's organization and the fact that they are subject to more serious repression by the regime than their male counterparts. Their words overlay extreme close-ups of women factory workers, simultaneously abetting their visibility and veiling their true identity, a cinematic strategy also adopted by Ramiro Ledo and discussed in Chapter 2. Lumbreras denounces the political sphere as male-dominated and

brings the viewer's attention to the way in which women workers push to exert their political agency. Lumbreras also puts front and center the predicament of underprivileged university students, who are excluded from a student body they see as strictly bourgeois and classist. While the main student body demands freedom, some sectors also call for increased funding for public education in order to allow access to higher education for the disadvantaged. As *Spagna 68* reminds its audience, in the late 1960s Spain's education budget was the lowest in Europe, at 9 percent of the gross national product.

The next documentary, *El cuarto poder*, opens with the issue of representation by posing the following question: "¿La prensa refleja la realidad del país?" (Does the printing press accurately represent the reality of the country?). It does this primarily through a series of newspaper clippings about celebrations, weddings, opening ceremonies, and of course soccer matches. Interestingly, only a handful of the clippings reflect pressing social issues at that time, such as workers' strikes or evictions, that would become familiar to audiences as arising from the 2008 financial crisis. The answer proves more complex than one would expect. Within the borders of Spain, Lumbreras shows that the press falls under the control of the Movimiento through the Ministerio de la Gobernación. Most importantly, news that originates in the West reflects the capitalist and imperial ideology of the time, with advertisements constituting 40 percent of the content. As such, students and workers claim representation by composing independent reports of their news and hand-delivering them to newspapers editors, which is their most effective strategy to claim the representation that the government media denies them. As an alternative to this silencing, Lumbreras uses three imperative intertitles to encourage the audience to represent themselves: "Divulga tu prensa," "Financia tu prensa," and "Lee tu prensa" (Disseminate your press, subsidize your press, read your press), an open call for the activism of infinite responsibility. These commands prefigure present-day "do-it-yourself" culture as well as the proliferation of independent news sources such as *Revista Contexto* or *Público*. The latter, for instance, promotes journalism from the perspective of the people, and resistance and political action are central to its mission. In order to remain independent, *Público* calls on its readers to subscribe and ensure its mission will not be compromised for lack of funding.

*El campo para el hombre*, Lumbreras's first collective production, focuses on farming in Andalucía and Galicia, where 0.86 percent of landowners possessed 53 percent of all the land at the time of filming. The film suggests that not much has changed since the Second Republic's attempt at agrarian reform, and that farmers suffer twofold marginalization. In the context of the economic liberalization of the 1960s, the struggle for Spanish farmers is not

only to survive through their labor, but also to have a voice. As the voice-over narrator states, “El capital quiere mantener al campesinado en el olvido y el silencio, pero el campesino quiere ser dueño de su propio destino. Él sabe y habla” (The goal of capitalism is to keep peasants silenced and forgotten, but peasants aim to control their own destiny. They have voice and agency). People should not be enslaved by the land; children should not be forced to quit school in order to work the land. Rather, the land should belong to the farmers, that is, “el campo para el hombre” (the land for the man). In this context of deprivation, Lumbreras documents women’s empowerment by interviewing them about their everyday tasks and productivity. As one of the female farmers explains, they “do it all”: sewing, cooking, planting, milking, and childcare (Figure 4.1).

In fact, the generation of young adult women who experienced the Transition were the “do-it-all” generation. Several factors contributed to this tendency. First, the 1960s, the *década del desarrollismo* (the decade of development), saw the relaxation of women’s dependence on men. Subsequently, the 1973 financial crisis forced many women to leave the domestic sphere to provide for their family when their husbands were laid off or simply earned meager salaries. In either case, the notion of shared housework and child-rearing remained quite outlandish for their husbands’ generation, and women’s labor in the paid workforce only added to their traditional responsibilities at home. La Parra-Pérez attributes Lumbreras’s women’s empowerment to the influence of Italian feminism in the vindication of women’s social reproduction (“Workers,” 374). These factors were part of the story, but it was the specific social and historical situation of Spanish women in the 1970s that led to the gender patterns that have emerged in contemporary Spain.



Fig. 4.1. Screen shot from Helena Lumbreras’s *El campo para el hombre* illustrating women’s empowerment through their involvement in everyday tasks and collective productivity. Reproduced with the permission of Mariano Lisa, Lavinia Lisa, and José Bellosta.

Compounding the challenges of economic marginalization and a lack of voice, many farmers do not feel represented by the unions, which prioritize the fight for factory workers in urban areas. The farmers in the documentary suggest that they and the factory workers should join forces and create a *conciencia de clase* (class consciousness) in order to avoid splintering and thus being disenfranchised by capitalism. Lumbreras does not propose returning to the Second Republic's agrarian reform project; rather, her defense of collectivization responds to the double marginalization to which farmers are subjected, deeply rooted in the sociopolitical reality of the 1960s *desarrollismo*. On the one hand, the teleological project of modernization promoted by capitalism leaves out the rural economy. On the other, workers' unions, that is, the very political structures that are supposed to represent and fight for the underprivileged, also exclude farmers, thus confirming their ostracism from the social pact of an incipient liberal economy.

While *El cuarto poder* concludes with an exhortation to self-representation, Lumbreras's subsequent film, *O todos o ninguno*, not only realizes the practice of self-representation, but also brings it to the foreground of the documentary. The film opens with a close-up of Lumbreras herself, her partner Mariano Lisa, and Manuel González, a worker from the Laforsa factory in Barcelona. This opening sequence marks a significant departure from the previous films, where authorship and the identities of all contributors were hidden. None of the previous films includes credits, nor are the names of the interviewees provided. Their identities are obscured by technical means: they are rear-lit and there is no synchronicity between the talking heads and their voices. However, as *O todos o ninguno* opens, González introduces himself, as do Lumbreras and Lisa, who proudly and defiantly identify themselves as the CCC. The Laforsa worker introduces the film with similar enthusiasm, explaining that it chronicles the longest strike in Spain since 1939 and that a Laforsa employee, Ramón Rulo, contributed to the film as electrician, cameraman, song composer, and performer. The very structure of the film is deeply collaborative, having been negotiated by the CCC and the Laforsa workers. This is the nature of the collectivity: the film's contributors are not subject to the author's requirements; they speak for themselves about a strike that they describe as "sin líderes" (without leaders), thus reinforcing the horizontal structure of the protest. Lumbreras implements in her cinematic practice the very same social structures for which the working class fights, as the collaborative structure of the film mirrors the organization of the Laforsa workers' protest. She stresses that the documentary came out of conversations with the workers, thus endorsing collective authorship. In addition, although *O todos o ninguno* was produced by the CCC, the Laforsa workers contributed financially in order to make copies of the film (Fernández Labayen and Prieto

Souto 406). The name of the documentary illustrates their cohesion: the administration of the factory is being forced to rehire all the workers who had been laid off (“todos”), or none (“o ninguno”) will rejoin the workforce, again reinforcing the idea of infinite responsibility as a means of protest and liberation. In fact, the phrase “o todos o ninguno” (all or none) became one of the most popular chants at workers’ protests in the mid-1970s.

The founding of the CCC connects Lumbreras with the practice of self-managed communities that resulted from the 2008 crisis. The latter are not limited to the cinematic sphere but have emerged to fight for multiple social justice causes, originating in the true grassroots with the aim to replace neither existing power structures nor other important democratic structures defending social justice, such as workers unions, but to operate with them side by side, horizontally. For instance, the Plataforma de Afectados de las Hipotecas discussed in Chapter 2 is considered one of the most active and impactful during the financial crisis. At the time of the occupation of the Puerta del Sol, the collectives were color-mapped according to specific social causes or *mareas*, and constitute a perfect example of bottom-to-top structures (map by autoconsulta.org in “15-M, hoy no es un día cualquiera”). Palmar Álvarez Blanco and others have identified and researched forty-eight self-governed and self-managed collectives in the aftermath of the 15-M in Spain in the collaborative online Constellation of the Commons project.

Lumbreras builds on the collaborative and labor-focused work of *O todos o ninguno* in the documentary *A la vuelta del grito*. This film chronicles protests and strikes at six factories across Spain: Megesa (Sevilla), Babcock-Wilcox (Vizcaya), and Battenfeld, Fisam, Eurostil, and Roselson (Barcelona). The documentary represents the 1973–1974 financial crisis that resulted in high unemployment, with the impact of the crisis illustrated by footage of empty factories, shut-down machinery, and workers’ protests. The credits include not just the CCC but also a long list of “male and female workers” whose names are fully displayed. As in her previous films, women workers claim equal benefits and lament their lack of representation in the hierarchical and patriarchal organization of the workers’ unions. The final sequence, a close-up of Robert Capa’s well-known photograph of the falling soldier during the Spanish Civil War, provides a bleak close to the film. The retrospective look gives Lumbreras’s filmography a circular structure, as *Spagna 68* also opens with archival footage of the Civil War. Through the sequence of these five films, we see Lumbreras turn increasingly toward the idea of infinite responsibility through her growing emphasis on collectivity, identity, and workers’ rights.

### Lumbreras's Feminist Agenda

An in-depth analysis of Lumbreras's representation of women's participation in the political resistance of the 1970s reveals that she perfectly captures a struggle that came to be excluded from the dominant visual and historical discourses about the Transition. The historian Pilar Díaz of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid has written about the decisive role of women against Francoism, with a special focus on their involvement in labor issues in factories and their organization of political resistance in local neighborhoods. Díaz explains that while both men and women joined the resistance together, the women's role was not recognized as an integral part of the project of democratization. Furthermore, the women's participation included additional tasks, one of the most important of which was creating a support system for their male relatives or partners, especially those serving jail sentences. Most importantly, women played an active role that was instrumental in publicizing the plight of the miners in the 1962 and 1968 strikes, as well as in bearing the impact of the strikes on their families (39). Lumbreras perfectly brings these roles to the forefront of her documentaries, as women present themselves as active members of their community, in both rural and urban spaces. Visually, her entire filmography illustrates both facets of women – their roles in the workforce and their roles in familial networks of support – through extreme close-ups of their hands, both in the kitchen and in the factory, thus branding all female agency as political (see Fig. 4.2).<sup>6</sup>

The importance of this supportive role already appears in her very first work, *Spagna 68*, which includes a women's collective that has traditionally been overlooked, the *mujer de preso* (inmates' wives) (Díaz 41). Not only did the women provide much-needed provisions for prisoners, but also emotional and political support by facilitating communication between the men and the political organizations in which they were involved. Figure 4.3 is a screenshot of a group of wives and partners of incarcerated men interviewed in the film. They bravely show their identities as they look directly and defiantly into the camera, and the presence of the little boy serves as a visual reminder of the women's roles in both the political

6 I concur with Susan Martín-Márquez (553) that Lumbreras does not prioritize gender over class-based analysis. However, my contention is that Lumbreras does highlight women's crucial role in the labor struggle, which other filmmakers neglected to do. Martín-Márquez (550) notes the irony that in order to rescue Lumbreras from cinematic oblivion, a number of initiatives associated with the auteurist tradition were needed (symposia, academic publications, film series).



Fig. 4.2. Extreme close-up of women workers' hands brands female agency as political (*El campo para el hombre*). Lumbreras's filmography showcases women's participation in the workforce and their roles in familial networks of support. Reproduced with the permission of Mariano Lisa, Lavinia Lisa, and José Bellosta.

and the domestic spheres. Children represent this role in similar situations throughout Lumbreras's filmography, as I will show.

Díaz also explains that women created collective, horizontal political structures, which resemble the organization of the 15-M Movement in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis in Spain. In the 1970s, these *movimientos asociativos* (associations) were based on collaboration and the defense of common interests, and would also offer free legal advice (44). Community-based organizations had been legalized by the 1964 Ley de Asociaciones, and, according to Díaz, they illustrate not only political consciousness, but also the awareness of a female-specific agenda. In 1965, the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres was founded in Madrid, and the following year, the Moviment Democràtic de Dones in Barcelona. Lumbreras best represents women's efforts to organize in *A la vuelta del grito* by representing the plight of women textile workers, specifically in the Eurostil factory, also in Barcelona. The credits of *A la vuelta del grito* listing the "trabajadores y trabajadoras" (male and female workers) of all the factories documented in the film illustrate an awareness of linguistic gender equality with which twenty-first-century Spain continues to struggle. These women workers claim political autonomy from male-dominated unions, such as Comisiones Obreras, by creating their own local union. In fact, one faction of protesters



Fig. 4.3. In *Spagna 68*, Lumbreras interviews a group of wives and partners of incarcerated men. The women bravely show their identity as they look directly and defiantly into the camera. Reproduced with the permission of Mariano Lisa, Lavinia Lisa, and José Bellosta.

denounces the so-called *Comité Unitario* for selling out to the directives of *Comisiones Obreras*, thus illustrating how the left has marginalized women throughout the twentieth century. The leaders of the protest explain the crisis with words that echo Lumbreras's didactic intertitles. Notably, the year 1974 marked a crisis of overproduction that resulted in thousands of factories being shut down, while the workers reacted by demanding their jobs back as well as reduced working hours and better benefits.

Along similar lines, *O todos o ninguno* shows how the wives of the striking Laforsa workers perform the dual role of supporting the men and, most importantly, organizing themselves to contribute to the workers' struggle with their own voice. Six of the women dramatize the meeting where they drafted a letter to inform the general public about their husbands' sixty-three-day strike and their occupation of the Santa María de Cornellá church. Figure 4.4 captures the dramatization, where the presence of a child again serves as a reminder of women's dual role.

The women explain that they also resolved to occupy the factory themselves in order to replace their husbands, as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with both the administration and workers who were not supporting the strike. In addition, they visited their husbands at the church to encourage them to hold firm despite the cold and hunger; they were met with police brutality. Their third action was to request a meeting with the mayor that did not materialize, although he did approve of their public protest. The fourth meeting requested by the women was with



Fig. 4.4. In *O todos o ninguno*, six women dramatize the meeting where they drafted a letter to inform the general public about their husbands' sixty-three-day strike and their occupation of the Santa María de Cornellá church in protest. Reproduced with the permission of Mariano Lisa, Lavinia Lisa, and José Bellosta.

the workers' union, as seen in footage of the women marching in their husbands' uniforms in a parallel montage with the dramatization of the organizational meeting

Interestingly, women's organizing as chronicled by Lumbreras mirrors the manner in which many collectives were created by women at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It takes several women to gather in support of a cause for social justice; that association includes more than a political fight. It involves empowering one another, building common esteem, and fostering mutual connection and support. For example, mapping by Álvarez Blanco and others shows that collectives such as La Selecta or Las Gildas focus on the intersection of social justice and gastronomy aiming to create an inclusive space that fosters affective relationships among its constituents. Women often organize in keeping with their own sense of moral and political responsibility rather than channeling their causes through established structures. During the occupation of the Puerta del Sol, the *marea violeta* (purple tide) galvanized women's collectives but added diversity and inclusion to feminism by also supporting gender rights. Some of the collectives affiliated to the purple tide include Asamblea TransMaricaBollo, Diversidad Funcional, and Plataforma de las Mujeres en la Diversidad. Thus, it is important to note that Lumbreras engaged in and chronicled what we now call the "feminization of politics," understood as new political practices focused on everyday life, the role of the community and its affective relationships (Roth and Shae Baird n.pag.).

Despite these efforts, there has never been a strong feminist movement in Spain. The activism documented by Lumbreras did not develop into nationwide women's organizational structures; instead, what makes her filmography significant is that it rescues footage of grassroots movements from complete critical and visual oblivion. For example, when founded in 1965 the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres was associated with the Spanish Communist Party. It incorporated two generations of Spanish women, the generation that had supported the Second Republic and the generation of the *desarrollismo*. However, when the Communist Party was legalized, its leadership mandated that the political priority became to fight for a democratic regime. Within the party leadership, feminism was perceived not only as bourgeois, but also as a distraction from the goal of achieving a peaceful transition to democracy.

Women's rights were put on the back burner, even though it was a time when women's sexual liberation was hailed as the ultimate expression of freedom. Consider Susana Estrada's *Húmedo sexo* (1978), an explicit account of her overindulgence in sexual experiences, where she describes herself as the embodiment of freedom: "Soy la libertad" (I am liberty) (3). It is also significant that groundbreaking research on women's sexuality in the 1970s was translated into Spanish and published and distributed in Spain. For instance, Master and Johnson's *Understanding Human Sexual Inadequacy*, originally published in 1970, was translated into Spanish in 1974: a revolutionary study of human sexuality, *La inadaptación sexual según Masters y Johnson* was welcomed by the new generation of Spaniards whose sexual mores had been shaped by the repressive agenda of the Catholic Church. *The Hite Report*, another radical publication on female sexuality, was translated into Spanish only a year after its original publication in 1976 (*El Informe Hite. Estudio de la sexualidad femenina* [Plaza y Janés, 1977]). In other words, freedom – especially sexual liberation – was welcome, but a feminist take on rights and collective responsibility was not. Lumbreras's feminist agenda, with a focus on social justice, appears to have been out of step with a time when freedom was the supreme political aspiration. Lumbreras's cinematic stance advances a sense of personal political responsibility to create a true democracy for a collectivity, rather than subscribing to freedom as the ultimate aspiration of the individual. Just as Critchley identifies this form of activism as resistance in neoliberal societies, Lumbreras's filmography dialogues with present strategies of resistance in significant ways.

This focal point of the intersection of the labor economy and support work continues to resonate. In post-15-M Spain, the feminism of care has been the ideological pillar of collective organizations that have also striven to replace vertical power structures with a horizontal style of

leadership. For instance, Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Unidas Podemos, has been widely criticized for perpetuating the vertical leadership style, thus reinforcing patriarchy. While liberal Spaniards understand the need to support women's equality, and big strides have been made toward that goal in 2022 Spain, feminism continues to be perceived by conservatives as a threat that needs to be kept at bay. Moreover, demands to legally protect women have been dismissed recently as a nonissue, one that also needs to be swept under the carpet in favor of loftier political goals. For instance, gender violence, which has attracted significant media attention and has been recognized as a dire social issue since the mid-1990s, continues to be deemed by the far right as a matter of violence but not necessarily gender. As one example, see "Dos señores, dos pancartas" by Elvira Lindo, who satirizes a public confrontation between the Madrid mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida of the conservative Partido Popular and Javier Ortega Smith, a representative of the far-right party Vox. Ortega argues that what the left calls "gender violence" should be conceptualized as "intrafamiliar" violence, while Martínez-Almeida disagrees yet acknowledges his own opposition to feminism; the confrontation is perfectly captured by Flavita Banana's cartoon. As Luisa Elena Delgado aptly argues, for many on the right feminism has come to be identified with an excess resulting from democratic freedom that needs to be controlled and even eliminated ("Nacionalistas," 277–280). The feminist Lidia Falcón, founder of the Partido Feminista de España and the Confederación de Organizaciones Feministas del Estado Español, has recently accused the Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of excluding the feminist movement from his political agenda and of negotiating exclusively with feminists affiliated to the Partido Socialista at a time when the 2004 Ley de Violencia de Género has proven insufficient to prevent the killing of a single woman at the hands of their partner. In fact, the massive celebrations on International Women's Day in 2018 and 2019 centered on the issue of gender violence.

To conclude, Lumbreras's oeuvre subscribes to the activism of infinite responsibility by advocating for underserved students, striking factory workers, unappreciated women farmers, and supportive *mujeres de preso* (inmates' wives, or prisoners' wives) rather than an organized political project. Her documentaries resonate with today's audiences in ways that exceed the connections she was able to forge with audiences during the transition to democracy – audiences ready to welcome freedom and forget the Francoist dictatorship. Significantly, the practice of moral responsibility – which was overshadowed by the activism of freedom in 1968 – has put her previously marginalized cinematography front and center in post-2008 crisis Spain.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Euphoria and Madness or Affect as a New Form of Social Life

María Ruido and Basilio Martín Patino

“Desolados” and “engañados” (bleak and deluded) are the two adjectives that *El País* columnist Francesc de Carreras chose to describe the morale of Spanish voters in September of 2019, when political leaders failed to reach a governing deal after five months of negotiations. As a result, a repeat general election was scheduled for November 2019, the second in six months and the fourth in four years. The debacle marked a first repeat election since the beginning of the 1978 democratic regime. A newspaper editorial warned citizens about the affective consequences of this state of desolation and deceit: “el malestar ante la nueva convocatoria a las urnas no debe imponerse al deber de votar el 10 de noviembre” (the distressful inconvenience of a repeat election should not stop anyone from voting on November 10) (“Irresponsabilidad consumada,” n.pag.). That is, voters should not be acting upon their disaffection, advised the editorial, and instead should exercise their democratic responsibilities. The editorial recognized that the emotional distress would have direct political consequences, as citizens would express their rejection of the system by refusing to vote and therefore manifest their blatant repudiation of the regime. It also warned readers not to exercise political duties based on emotions, emphasizing that voting is a responsibility and requires deep reflection. However, it is not only reflection, but also emotion, that triggers political action. This transformative effect connects the emotional valences of militant films with the powerful political actions that can emerge in their wake. This chapter examines the performative aspect of emotions as political interventions, through a consideration of films by Basilio Martín Patino and María Ruido.

The term “malestar” (unease/distress) coexists with a cluster of words that recur in Spain’s sociopolitical and cultural discourse, such as “indignados,” “hartos,” and “crispación” (indignant, fed up, and anxiety), that confirm that the lexicon of the public sphere has absorbed emotions. Spaniards are clearly angry, and the media plays it up. At the opposite end of the

emotional spectrum, cultural critic and scholar Germán Labrador refers to the 15-M Movement – and the 2011 protests as a whole – as “un enamoramiento colectivo,” a collective falling in love. Labrador articulates the process in affective terms. Indeed, at the time of the 2011 protests the “crush,” or falling in love, emerged out of collective exasperation, which for the most part was channeled not through violent outrage but through collective altruism, mutual cooperation, and humorous expression. The process echoes philosopher Simon Critchley’s assessment of present-day politics of resistance: “At the core of politics is the anarchic practice of democratic dissensus articulated around an ethical demand that arises in a situation of injustice and inspires the mood of anger, which I see as the first political emotion” (94). Critchley’s sharp and enlightening assessment of democracy and resistance sheds further light on the new forms of social life in the twenty-first century examined in this book. The loss of popular confidence in democratic institutions, which have angered large segments of the population in neoliberal democracies, has resulted in a rise of activism that has not been seen in such force since the 1968 revolution.

The goal of popular resistance is not to take over the state, but rather to establish what Marx understood as “true democracy” (Critchley 90). A true democracy is composed of multiple political subjectivities encompassing racial, ethnic, gender, and class identities. These political subjectivities do not aspire to replicate the dominant institutions but to recognize their moral responsibility in the face of injustice, which must be enacted independently from the state: “true democracy would be the enactment of cooperative alliances, aggregations of conviviality and affinity at the level of society that materially deform the state power that threatens to saturate them” (117). Critchley’s concept of “hetero-affectivity,” which refers to the subject’s ethical responsibility to the community, carried out away from and independent of the state (119), is helpful to understand the idea here. Hetero-affectivity should avoid the reproduction of the statocentric structures that are the root cause of disaffection in neoliberal democracies.

At the core of activism lies the transformation of emotional capital into political capital. While the theorization of affect has a long philosophical history, cultural critics have only recently begun to incorporate affect and emotions as fundamental elements in cultural theory – and this shift has happened in large part due to the overt presence of emotions in the public sphere. “To think affect is to think the social,” stated Jeremy Gilbert in 2004. Since then, Sara Ahmed, Brian Massumi, and Lauren Berlant have laid the foundations of affect theory. In the field of Iberian studies, the most relevant volume to date is *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* (2016), edited by Luisa Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo

Labanyi. Their comprehensive introduction provides an overview of the complexity of the term “affect” as examined by various medical sciences, and argues for the use of the term “emotion” instead of “affect” because of the inclusivity of the former (see also Leys). Delgado, Fernández, and Labanyi concur with Sara Ahmed’s thesis that emotions are understood as social and cultural practices, not simply as interior psychological states (3). Ahmed and Delgado Fernández, and Labanyi argue that cultural theorists conceive of emotions as performative – that is, emotions always involve an action of the individual and require a response from audiences and interlocutors. Likewise, Delgado, in the essay she wrote for the volume, states that her object of study is the “sociality of emotions,” what emotions *do* (“Public Tears,” 264).

Delgado adds that an “emotional reading of the public sphere” sheds light on the current political scene in Spain (265). To understand the point of connection between affect and political engagement, the terms “emotions” and “affect” need to be differentiated. Merriam-Webster defines affect as “a set of observable manifestations of a subjectively experienced emotion,” that is, affect is the manner in which emotions are externalized. This basic definition is a helpful starting point, but it uses “emotions” in the more general and everyday sense, as a synonym of “feelings.” It fails to distinguish how certain emotions yield different, specific “observable manifestations,” such as the process by which negative emotions like anger, frustration, or disillusion are transformed into empowerment, and therefore inextricably linked to political agency. For example, Delgado appropriately conceptualizes the 15-M Movement as the “mobilization of collective emotions” and traces its evolution “from an initial sense of anger, paralysis, fear, and isolation” to the development of “a sense of community, hope, and, above all, empowerment” (275). Along similar lines, both *Libre te quiero* and *Estado de malestar* center the affective transformation of political discomfort and indignation into public empathy, open solidarity, and humorous utterance.

### Songs of a Revolution: Basilio Martín Patino’s *Libre te quiero* (2012)

In May 2012, I read that Basilio Martín Patino, Spain’s foremost documentarian, was finishing up a new documentary on the massive protests that had taken place a year earlier, what we now know as the 15-M. The news intrigued me, as I could not imagine a well-established filmmaker toting his camera through the streets among thousands of angry protesters at the age of eighty-one. Most of his work revolves around the memory of the Civil War, so making a movie about current events was a first. I set out to understand the documentary in question, *Libre te quiero* – his happiest film – in the context of

his politically engaged career, which began in the mid-1970s, as well as in the context of documentary production focused on the protests and subsequent occupation of the Puerta del Sol in May 2011. Music, revolution, and affect are the threads that illuminate my examination.

*Libre te quiero* appropriates the title of a song recorded by Amancio Prada in 1979, which is a musical version of a poem by philosopher and longtime activist Agustín García Calvo. Both Prada and García Calvo are associated with the fight for freedom during the Spanish transition to democracy in the mid-1970s; Prada belongs to the generation of singer-songwriters that created the soundtrack of the final years of the regime (Martínez and Fouce 8). Prada and García Calvo also put the words of Republican poets to music, as Joan Manuel Serrat did with the poetry of Antonio Machado and Miguel Hernández. Unsurprisingly, García Calvo was also a strong supporter of the 2011 protests.

The documentary's title thus draws a direct link between this older generation and the new. *Libre te quiero* celebrates liberty through the music performed by protesters, and is the first film that Patino has made without a script (García "El guión," n.pag.). While some younger documentarians take a strong ideological stance by creating a narrative controlled by the voice-over – for instance, Stéphane Grueso's 2012 film *15M, Excelente. Revulsivo. Importante* – Patino places his camera among the protesters. This has the dual effect of recording the way the protesters' frustration with the sociopolitical status quo is channeled through music, while also using music to create a sense of connection. After collecting twenty-five hours of footage, Patino stated that he had never enjoyed filming as much as he did for this documentary, and praised the warmth and camaraderie on the streets and how the movement liberated the imagination of millions of people around the world (García "Martín Patino"). Music becomes part and parcel of his diegesis.

Connecting popular music and political freedom is key in *Libro te quiero*, and also figures into many other films throughout Martín Patino's career. For example, his best-known work, *Canciones para después de una guerra* (1976), combines archival footage of wartime and postwar Spain with popular music to create a portrait of daily life in the 1940s and 1950s. The soundtrack "works both as the formal and discursive backbone of the film" (Zuazu 157). In the film, Zuazu adds, popular music is both the deposit of memory and the expression of the collective identity of those who had no freedom of speech at the time (165).

Another clear use of music in relation to political freedom is found in one of Martín Patino's lesser-known works, *Andalucía, un siglo de fascinación*. This series of mockumentaries, which was made for the regional television

network of Andalucía and broadcast in 1994 and 1995, offers a fresh look at the stereotypes of southern Spain while celebrating freedom and popular culture.<sup>1</sup> Two of the episodes, “Ojos verdes” and “Carmen y la libertad,” are explicitly related to music. “Ojos verdes” is the name of a popular *copla* written in 1934 by Salvador Valverde and Rafael de León, with music by Manuel Quiroga (Sánchez Oliveira 47). The *copla* is a genre of popular song with moving and tragic lyrics about marginalized characters that originated in the 1920s. The episode vindicates the value of the *copla* beyond its political manipulation by the Francoist regime, as well as the defining role that folklore and *cante jondo* (flamenco) have in the collective identity of the south, as illustrated in the poetry of Antonio Machado, Federico García Lorca, and Rafael Alberti (Sánchez Oliveira 48). The episode “Carmen” is a significant departure from Bizet’s and Mérimée’s representations of the famous *cigarrera*. Martín Patino’s interest is to draw attention to Carmen’s engagement with the social reality of her time, her struggle for women’s rights, and the support of the liberal General Riego.

The film in Martín Patino’s corpus that best dialogues with *Libre te quiero* is the lesser-known *Madrid* (1987), which incorporates archival footage into a fictional story. Both films celebrate unavailing revolutionary movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through the affective power of music – in *Madrid*, specifically *zarzuela*. The protagonist of *Madrid* is Hans, a German filmmaker investigating the Civil War who, along the way, witnesses the celebration of freedom and hope for political change right before the electoral victory of the Socialist Party in 1982. Patino recreates the protests against joining NATO, which at the time were backed by the Socialists in the name of national sovereignty. While selecting footage, the protagonist’s search centers around two key moments in the history of twentieth-century Spain – the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931 (with emblematic images of the Republican flag), and the transition to democracy in 1977 (through footage from pro-Amnesty protests). In this twofold analepsis, archival footage from both moments in time shows the enthusiasm of the masses on the streets of Madrid. As Hans becomes acquainted with the city, he comes to realize that *zarzuela* is a manifestation of local popular culture. Through Hans, Martín Patino once again brushes aside stereotypes and political manipulation of *zarzuela* in order to celebrate it as the free expression of the average individual.

Madrid symbolizes the liberal tradition, in the words of the beloved Socialist mayor Enrique Tierno Galván, for its loyalty to the popular will.

1 See my analysis of the episode about the Casa Viejas peasant uprising in *El documental cinematográfico*.

Therefore, throughout his career, Martín Patino's support of freedom spans from the liberal revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth. With *Libre te quiero*, he writes the first chapter of the twenty-first century: the 2008 financial crisis and the occupation of streets and squares by the so-called *indignados*. In this documentary the dual time reference is illustrated through its unique use of music. As mentioned above, the song is Amancio Prada's 1979 musical rendition of a poem written by Agustín García Calvo.

From the point of view of narrative structure, the backbone of *Libre te quiero* is comprised of images from the protests as well as the three-week occupation of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid. Patino also includes footage from the police repression of protesters in Barcelona at that time. Unlike other films that show the participants debating the deficiencies of the neoliberal state, Martín Patino focuses almost exclusively on the musical performances of the protesters and some of their chants. As they dance, the protesters play drums, whistles, and maracas. These marching band-style performances are not foreign to protests, as they have the power to boost morale and energy. Over the course of the occupation, some protesters perform tap dance and Gaelic music on the stage. Others play classical music as they claim their instruments as their only weapons, thus voicing the movement's commitment against violence. It is all music without lyrics – that is, music without political content, unlike the songs of the 1970s singer-songwriters or the songs of the Civil War.

Undoubtedly, film audiences share in the transformative force of the *Libre te quiero* soundtrack. After watching the documentary the viewer is left with a sense of not only happiness, but almost euphoria, emphasized by footage of fireworks at the very end of the film. The documentary has been criticized for this celebratory tone and its lack of a critical view on the political crisis, particularly the fact that many protesters endured police violence in clashes during the Barcelona protests and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> This perspective has been attributed to problems in postproduction, as critic and filmmaker Samuel Alarcón indicates (“La revolución”). Alarcón adds that Martín Patino's positive portrayal of the revolution as the expression of freedom and lack of fear is the filmmaker's legacy to future generations. By examining the affective power of music, the film can be read as a call to action through the mobilizing capacity of music.

While song lyrics boosted troop morale during the Spanish Civil War by reinforcing the political doctrine behind the fight, in the recent revolutions

2 The issue of police repression was taken up by Xavier Artigas and Xapo Otega in *Ciutat morta* (2013), as analyzed by Eva Woods Peiró (“Subveillant Narration”).

it is music *without* overt ideological content that helps create a sense of collectivity and connectivity.<sup>3</sup> Given that, it is appropriate to discuss what the music *does* to both performers and the audience, rather than simply what the words *mean*. Music has the power to mobilize bodies through affective transmission (Thompson and Biddle 5). Thompson and Biddle provide a good chronological overview of affect theory, which originates in Plato, was defined by Spinoza, and later reinterpreted by Deleuze and Guattari and Brian Massumi.<sup>4</sup> Massumi refers to “affect-as-potential, the continual variation in a body’s capacity to affect and be affected” (qtd. in Thompson and Biddle 8). According to Thompson and Biddle, affect should be understood as the main motivator in bodily drives (7). It is a “pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (Massumi, qtd. in Thompson and Biddle 8). Sound can create an atmosphere “via the induction, modulation and circulation of moods, feelings and intensities” shared by a group (5).

In *Libre te quiero*, the affective nature of Martín Patino’s cheerful representation may prompt audiences to join a political cause that looks like a celebration rather than a reflection on the precarious sociopolitical situation of the generation of Spaniards that took to the streets. Some might argue that *Libre te quiero* neglects to represent the true *indignación* of the moment and instead presents the revolution as a big party, and the *agora* as a quasi-bourgeois space whose inhabitants leisurely listen to the “Sol-fónica,” a classical music orchestra created by the protesters that performed in the Puerta del Sol. But *Libre te quiero* captures what scholar Rosa María Artal calls the “energía liberada” (liberated energy). Artal uses the analogy of the energy resulting from the friction of tectonic plates, which symbolize the jarring components of the neoliberal order. Along similar lines, García Calvo addressed an assembly in 2011 and referred to the 15-M Movement as an unforeseen joy – as seen in the epigraph of my introduction: “Sois la alegría, es la alegría de lo inesperado, de lo no previsto, ni por parte de

3 In fact, music seems to be a meaningful component in post-2008 revolutionary movements and a number of filmmakers capture its empowering function, as can be seen in the 2014 Oscar-nominated *The Square*, by Jehone Nougha, which follows the revolutionary struggle in Tahrir Square in Cairo and the incredibly violent repression. By the end not much has been accomplished, but this disillusionment is counterbalanced by diegetic footage of an earlier musical performance on the square vindicating freedom. The affective power of music does certainly have an impact on the audience.

4 Thompson and Biddle (7) credit Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick with bringing attention back to affect in her 1995 essay, “Shame in the cybernetic fold.”

las autoridades y gobiernos, ni por parte de los partidos de cualquier color, verdaderamente imprevisto” (You are the embodiment of joy, the joy of the unexpected, of that which was not foreseen by neither the authorities nor any political party, truly unpredictable) (“Agustín García Calvo en Sol y en Zamora”). Artists such as Luis López Carrasco in *El futuro* and María Cañas in *Expo Lío 92* also resorted to the trope of the party atmosphere as a microcosm in order to parse the fractures of the project of modernity (though they look back to the Transition and the 1992 project of Europization respectively, as outlined in Chapter 6). Interestingly, the 2011 protests mark the failure of that same narrative. That is, representing the project of modernity as a big celebration marks an ironic stance on the political narrative of socioeconomic progress.

It has been years since the 2011 protests and many wonder if the revolutionary energy has faded. A political party, Podemos, was created, led by Pablo Iglesias, and other participants have organized themselves as the Movimiento por la Democracia. Martín Patino’s concern is not with the immediate political impact of the 15-M Movement. As others have indicated, the so-called sleepy generation is now fully awake and that awakening is worthy of celebration in and of itself. In *Libre te quiero* the affective power of music encourages us all to continue to claim our democratic right to participate and let our voices be heard. That is where the value of the movement – in both senses, of the music and the 15-M revolution – lies.

### Madness, Malaise, and *Malestar* According to María Ruido

The video essay *Estado de malestar* premiered at the Museo Nacional/Centro de Arte Reina Sofía on June 15, 2019. Produced seven years after Patino documented the early 2011 protests, *Estado de malestar* problematizes the systemic manipulation of individual affective behaviors that emerge when people express resistance through collective organization. Ruido contextualizes the celebrations and musical performances chronicled in *Libre te quiero* and explores the complexity of affect as political agency and resistance. *Estado de malestar* connects the 2010s to the 1970s by way of the antipsychiatry movement, which pushed against the pathologizing of certain emotional and psychological states.<sup>5</sup> In the 1970s, the antipsychiatry movement resisted the tyranny of the Francoist dictatorship, and in the 2010s

5 The term “antipsychiatry” was coined by David Cooper in 1967 and refers to the antipathy with which certain diagnoses and methods of treatment have been perceived since the nineteenth century.

it resisted the tyranny of global capitalism as manifested in the neoliberal state, in part by working to normalize complex elements of mental health that are deeply linked to societal expectations. *Estado de malestar* illustrates the transformation of resistance into agency.

Ruido's project was funded by 2018 Premio de Videocreación (Barcelona) and coproduced by the Xarxa de Centres d'Art Visual de Catalunya, Arts Santa Mònica, the Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat, and LOOP Barcelona, a platform that promotes video art.<sup>6</sup> The film was screened with a live performance of its soundtrack by the band Edredón, and concluded with a roundtable discussion that included the director as well as several members of the InsPiradas collective featured in the film, thus emphasizing the collective nature of *Estado de malestar*.

Ruido's essay film, which follows the found-footage style of many of the artists studied in this book, includes interviews with curator Alfredo Aracil, psychiatrist Guillermo Rendueles, philosopher Santiago López Petit, and members of several collectives that advocate for mental health patients, among them Vivi Naharro and Ada Vila, who, along with María Ruido, share their personal experiences of mental breakdown. In the opening sequence, we watch footage of the sea, which is both soothing and disturbing because of the reflection of the bright sun. Images of unsettling brightness are coupled with clips of the nondiegetic sound of Ruido and López Petit's conversation. Ruido posits that the breakdown she suffered in the recent past should not be viewed as a personal episode, but as a symptom of our time. Pushing the limits of "normalcy," a social construct constantly morphing, should be understood as an act of resistance and agency in the public realm.

The visual representation of the participants reveals a stark departure from traditional documentaries, where most interviewees are talking heads. Their conversations with Ruido, who never appears on camera, function as diegetic sound to her images. Naharro and Vila capture the spotlight, and candid and spontaneous close-ups of their conversations create intimacy with the audience, even if they do not necessarily look at the camera. The documentary essay typically includes interviews with experts on the subject in question, whose presence and input provide validity. Interestingly, the people who provide theoretical expertise on behavioral health – Aracil, Rendueles and López Petit – do not appear on camera. Visually, Ruido

6 The film was also included in the official section of the 2019 Alcances festival (Cádiz) as well as the Periferias 20.0 festival (October 17–27, 2019). It was also shown in art galleries such as Centre d'Art Tecla Sala in Barcelona (October 16–December 1, 2019), the online Festival Periferias (October 17, 2020), Bòlit\_LaRambla, Sala Fidel Aguilar in Girona (January 17–February 16, 2020), and Azkuna Zentroa in Bilbao, as part of the "Contemporary Discomforts" exhibition (January 11–22, 2020).

replaces the traditional hierarchical representation of the experts with the members of the collectives, elevating them to protagonists.

Other footage incorporated into the video essay includes clips from Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique* (2004), which is a reflection on the representation of violence in film; *Ombres chinoises* (1982) by experimental Chilean filmmaker Raúl Ruiz; the Prelinger Archives; Béla Tarr's Hungarian drama mystery film *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000); the performance *El cuerpo del delito* (2017) by La rara troupe; and Ruido's own *L'œil impératif*, an "invitation to think collectively about visual sovereignties, colonialism and coloniality" ("L'œil impératif"). In an interview with the Chilean publication *laFuga*, the artist and academic explains that she consciously avoided incorporating footage from films that put mental illness front and center, *La porte* by Esseddik Jeddi and Moncef Letaief (1980) being the only exception (see Voto). Appropriately, *La porte* chronicles the breaking down of the door that separated the patients of Tunisia's Razi Psychiatric Hospital from the nursing staff. For Ruido, the appeal of the film lies in the power of the images as well as the fact that it was filmed by the patients themselves, which makes them agents of their fate rather than victims.

In addition to these clips, *Estado de malestar* appropriates excerpts of texts written by contemporary theorists Mark Fisher and Franco "Bifo" Berardi, rephrased by Ruido and read by two children, Ada Vila and Max Mezzadri. One of the quotations relays that in 1972, the Socialist Patients Collective stated that "illness is a condition and result of capitalist production relations" and that "life was a protest against the transformation of the world into dead matter."<sup>7</sup> Created in 1970 by Dr. Wolfgang Huber and a group of his patients at the Psychiatric Hospital of the University of Heidelberg, the Collective spearheaded the antipsychiatry movement, which contends that psychiatry "pathologizes normal variations of human behaviors, thoughts or emotions" (Nasrallah 6). Underscoring the unfamiliarity with this revolutionary discourse, discarded since the 1970s, the child who reads the "Bifo" extract has difficulty with the pronunciation.

By harking back to the antipsychiatry movement embodied by the Socialist Patients Collective, *Estado de malestar* echoes medical, social, and cultural manifestations against psychiatry from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, a defining period in twentieth-century Spain. Ruido includes a statement by psychiatrist Guillermo Renduelos that summarizes the way in which neoliberalism dupes individuals into believing that their malaise is exclusively physical, when in fact it is deeply rooted in precarious working conditions: "Tú no necesitas un psiquiatra, sino un comité de empresa" (You

7 I am quoting from the film's English subtitles.

don't need a psychiatrist, but rather your local workers union). Renduelos's presence reinforces the connection between present-day neoliberalism and the social ruptures of the 1970s. He began his career in 1972 at the Hospital Psiquiátrico in Oviedo, where he led an antipsychiatry movement that promoted the transformation of treatments. The regime reacted with violent repression and most of the physicians that supported Renduelos's proposals were laid off. Furthermore, Ruido's denunciation of the stigmatization of dissent and alienation as mental illness echoes Germán Labrador's observations about the very same phenomenon during late Francoism. Labrador explains in *Culpables por la literatura* that the dictatorial regime passed the Ley de Peligrosidad Social (1971) that criminalized the dissonant behaviors of a new generation of Spaniards who did not conform to the mainstream educational, religious, or gender mandates. Through Foucault's well-known concept of biopolitics, Labrador proposes that the law inscribes the values of the regime on to these young Spaniards who, by resisting, are deemed outcasts, ill, or criminals (205).

Thus, *Estado de malestar* reflects upon the affective manipulation of the individual by financial and political interests. Carlos Escolano contends that the film proposes otherness and dysfunction as features that bring out the individual's humanism. Echoing French theorist Jean-François Lyotard, Fernández-Savater describes the "predatory state" as that which energizes its victims only to bring them down ("Políticas"). The neoliberal state wants its citizens "high," as it fosters a desire for bliss. But the path to euphoria has devastating consequences for the individual, who is socialized to live to work, and eventually ends up overcome by anxiety and stress caused by never-ending stimuli and the impossibility of achieving a work-life balance. Lauren Berlant formulates the phenomenon as "cruel optimism," a process by which the object of desire effectively prevents the achievement of the actual objective (1). That is, as citizens heed the demands of corporations to aspire to bigger and better, consumerism results in anxiety and depression.

The exigencies of neoliberalism on the individual result in widespread anxiety and depression, which are perceived as personal inadequacies and treated as stigmatized mental illnesses by psychiatry. Ruido and the two mental health rights collectives featured in the film, InsPiradas and Flipas GAM (Grupo de Ayuda Mutua, Madrid), therefore deliberately align themselves with this historical, radical movement that decries the idea that being healthy has always meant being exploitable, able to produce and reproduce. Indeed, *Estado de malestar* gives face and voice to three members of InsPiradas – Marta Plaza, Vivi Naharro, and Flavia Ribes Renshaw – who claim that while neoliberalism makes us extremely "fragile," that fragility can be morphed into political agency.

InsPiradas and Flipas GAM replicate the grassroots resistance movements that emerged from the 15-M. Such groups challenge traditional psychiatry to vindicate patients' rights, to promote mutual support, and to raise awareness against the stigmatization of mental illness (Flipas GAM "Manifiesto"). Both collectives bear names that incorporate puns and informal language, a morphology that became characteristic of 15-M political language. "InsPiradas" is a pun on "inspiradas" and "piradas," which means "nuts" in Spanish, thus merging the idea of creativity and lunacy, while "flipas" is slang for "you're nuts." InsPiradas, an exclusively female group, protests the double oppression to which they are subjected: cis-heteropatriarchy and the mental health system that pathologizes women's resistance to societal expectations.<sup>8</sup> As they celebrate the first day of the Orgullo Loco,<sup>9</sup> they protest the systemic violence against women's bodies that pathologizes women as mad and continues to relegate them to the "attic," to paraphrase Gilbert and Gubar's classic 1979 feminist essay. The gravity of the issue does not prevent the protesters from resorting to humor, as well as music and dance performances that create an overall sense of joy and, most importantly, strength and empowerment. Humor not only appears in the organizations' names, but also on the placards that members carry to protests. "Los ingresos, a mi cuenta," (Please make the deposits into my account) reads one, playing on the double meaning of "ingreso" as money transfer and mental hospital check-in. "Tenemos más etiquetas que Zara," (We have more labels than Zara) reads another that plays on the double meaning of "etiqueta," both clothing label and derogatory phrase. Another meaningful placard perfectly illustrates otherness and alienation as sites of resistance: "Sí estamos loco/@s y sabemos lo que queremos" (We are crazy,

8 The affective implications of the crisis have also been the subject of fiction film in post-2008 Spain. For instance, film scholar Belén Vidal has examined self-harm of the female body as the cinematic locus of resistance to the emotional and physical constraints of neoliberalism. Through the analysis of three fiction films released between 2012 and 2014, Vidal argues that self-harm signals emotions that can be "harnessed into political affects" resulting from the individual's refusal to accept the state of crisis (55). Additionally, pain and suffering in Spanish crisis cinema have been studied by Bryan Cameron ("Elliptical Life"), who borrows Lauren Berland's notion of "elliptical life" to frame a trend in Spanish film that emerged from the crisis. "Elliptical life" is the space of possibility for nonsovereign subjects and the deployment of a "loose cinematic language."

9 Mad Pride is an international organization created by psychiatric patients with the goal of normalizing mental illness and vindicating patients' rights. Created in 1992 in Canada, it spread to Australia, Ireland, Portugal, Brazil, Madagascar, South Africa, and the United States. The first celebration of the Día del Orgullo Loco in Spain did not take place until 2018, as documented by María Ruido.



Fig. 5.1. Still from *Estado de malestar* that shows a group of Flipas GAM members playing drums, bongos, and *panderetas* at the celebration of Orgullo Loco in Madrid in May 2018. Reproduced with the permission of María Ruido.

we know what we want). The slogan paraphrases the band Ketama's popular 1995 hit, "We're not crazy," thus reclaiming madness, malaise, and *malestar* as spaces of resistance and agency. These puns also align with the mission of antipsychiatry movements to strip pejorative connotations from the mental health terminology present in colloquial language, and instead to promote that terminology as a tool of empowerment for all. Figure 5.1 shows a group of Flipas GAM members playing drums, bongos, and *panderetas* at the Orgullo Loco celebrations in Madrid in May 2018, evoking the near-identical performances at the 2011 protests as chronicled by Martín Patino in *Libre te quiero*. The performers wear a bright uniform of sorts as an indication of unity, simultaneously being heard and seen.

As financial and political structures pressure us to the point where the individual fails to recognize that illnesses can be rooted in external causes,<sup>10</sup> the political agenda of collectives is to morph vulnerability into political agency to counter personal fragility. In the documentary, philosopher and essayist Santiago López Petit follows Plaza, Naharro, and Ribes Renshaw with his own reflections on the manner in which society conceptualizes mental health as a personal illness, rather than as a consequence of the pressure of neoliberal societies on the individual. He echoes the thesis of his 2014 essay *Hijos de la noche*, where he refers to this illness as "social malaise," which manifests in a number of indeterminate but prevalent

10 Recent studies show the correlation between suicide and low wages (see Van Dam).

conditions, such as “enfermedades del vacío” (depression, anxiety, anorexia) and “enfermedades del sistema inmunológico” (chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple chemical hypersensitivity, fibromyalgia).

Ruido discusses this “malestar social” with several interlocutors, particularly focusing on the alarming rate of suicides reported by the French company France Télécom in 2014 (twenty-five over the course of two years), which prompted the company to investigate the labor conditions of its employees. These reflections echo the essay “La epidemia depresiva,” by Italian theorist and activist Franco “Bifo” Berardi, who argues that the future becomes threatening when the collective imagination fails to identify alternatives to the current devastation, poverty, and violence (237). The conversation is overlapped by a montage through which Ruido represents the violence inflicted by political and financial structures on the subject: two images of beautiful flowers, one superimposed over the other, both moving jarringly in opposite directions. The conversation then alludes to the fact that the life of the neoliberal subject is controlled by corporations, a segment which overlaps with footage that evokes dehumanization and automatism. Images of dog-training exercises are followed by footage of students picking up diplomas in a militaristic manner. Later on, Ruido stresses the trope of dehumanization by means of a repeated sequence of manipulated footage of a rider who fails to make their horse follow orders in a jumping competition. Interestingly, as Chapter 6 will show, this bleak and grotesque perspective on humankind is shared by María Cañas in *Expo Lío 92*. Additional footage brings our attention to the repetitive and monotonous labor of factory workers as well as close-ups of the machinery, as seen in Figure 5.2.

Vivi Naharro, one of the InsPiradas members interviewed by Ruido, denounces the biopolitical violence of neoliberalism, thus echoing Francoist repression. Naharro exposes the ways in which neoliberalism discards unproductive citizens and medicates them in an effort to reintegrate them into the very same system that marginalizes them. The goal is to change the individual while maintaining the status quo. She recounts the tense

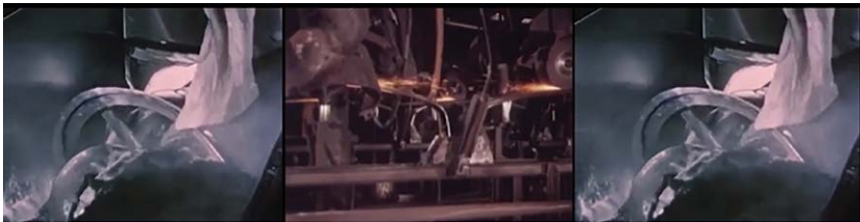


Fig. 5.2. María Ruido uses close-ups of the machinery to suggest the repetitive and monotonous labor of factory workers. Reproduced with the permission of María Ruido.

dynamics with her behavioral health professionals, who represent the system and look down on the individual. These forces at work signal the same social fractures that Labrador highlights in 1970s Spain, when the antipsychiatry movement conceived of the individual as deserving of care, as opposed to Francoist practices that deemed psychiatric patients as socially dangerous (*Culpables*, 208–209). While Ruido’s interviewees decry the numbing effect of anti-anxiety medication, Labrador celebrates the use of recreational drugs in the 1970s.<sup>11</sup> If affect leads to political action, Ruido shows how the collectives smartly found precedent in another time of social upheaval in Spain. But now, instead of dictatorial control, it is the market in control of what is deemed appropriate emotion, closing off potential for resistance by censoring affective expressions that may lead to activism. *Estado de malestar* and *Libre te quiero* chip away at forms of social control by liberating affective energies and empowering otherness and alienation. Through affective, non-statocentric alliances, the multivocality of the disenfranchised emerges as a new form of social life.

I began this chapter with a discussion of affect as expressed in recent political discourse. I now return to the same political sphere to further contextualize its relevance. As a result of the collective energy of the protests, a new political party was created, Podemos, which gathered enough support to achieve significant representation in the 2015 legislative elections. And yet, the 2019 election results showed that the project had dwindled, in part because it had excluded affect and care, one of its original pillars. Urgent calls for the reintegration of love into politics emerged after the 2018 electoral routing of the political parties formed as a result of the 2008 crisis, both at the national and regional levels: Unidas Podemos, Ganemos Madrid, Madrid en Pie, and Ahora Madrid. Activist and ecofeminist Yayo Herrero has called this oversight the “blind spot” of the leadership style that seems to be reinforcing patriarchal practices by overlooking the fact that, in order to build a strong political movement, honesty, loyalty, dialogue, truth, cooperation, and love must all be incorporated. The continuation

11 In addition to discussing antipsychiatry in Labrador’s *Culpables por la literatura*, cultural representations of the criminalization of dissent were part of the exhibit *Poéticas de la democracia. Imágenes y contraimágenes de la Transición*, co-curated by him, Rosario Peiró, Lola Hinojosa, and Cristina Cámara for the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. The project was directed by Manuel Borja-Villel and Rosario Peiró, and the room “La anormalidad democrática” included photographs of the *Psiquiátrico de Conxo* in Santiago de Compostela by Anna Turbau, drawings by Toto Estirado, and the experimental drawing collection *Esquizoide* by Antón Patiño, published by the Colectivo da Imaxe in 1978 and republished in 2020, which attests to its enduring relevance (Madrid, December 5, 2018–November 25, 2019).

of old political dynamics by which dissent results in purges, treason, and expulsions will impede the regeneration of the current impasse. Along similar lines, A. Córdoba, a self-identified Podemos staff member who withheld their full name, published in the independent online news outlet *El salto* a scathing denunciation of the adverse impact that infighting and patriarchal leadership dynamics have had on the mental health of Podemos delegates. After a long paralysis and overcome by frustration, anger, and exhaustion, the writer acknowledges that the time has come to yet again transform emotions into political agency. The articulation of affective energy, however, emerges as most impactful through horizontal value systems rather than institutional structures.

## CHAPTER SIX

### From 2008 to the Dreadful 2020 Dystopia and Necropolitics in María Cañas's *Expo Lío 92* (2017) and Luis López Carrasco's *El año del descubrimiento* (2020)

Before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of this book spanned from 1968 to 2008, and the aim was to put into dialogue the respective realities evoked by these two emblematic years. The new forms of social life derived from the 2008 crisis constituted the bulk of my research, with a special focus on film. It centered on the ways in which recent militant and experimental cinema resists neoliberalism by adopting new social practices that involve collaborative production, as well as the appropriation and reinscription of images. As I was completing the manuscript, the uncertainty of the pandemic, a brittle reality, triggered myriad existential questions. Was there a need for academic scholarship in light of this unimaginable tragedy? How valid were my insights? Does an event of such proportions mark a socioeconomic rupture with its immediate past? The spiking death toll and the epistemological uncertainty created an apocalyptic dystopia. The end of the world could be fathomed, and simultaneously the end of neoliberalism seemed further away. The fragility of those marginalized by the system became more visible and alarming. The privileged remain just as powerful. Luis López Carrasco's *El año del descubrimiento* (2020) gave a turn of the screw to my manuscript. Generating – and modeling – new forms of social life, the hallmark of the individual's agency in the wake of the 2008 crisis, became urgent in 2020 and the success of the film proves it. *El año del descubrimiento* is not only the best Spanish film of 2020 (Martínez), but it is also the film that perfectly resonates with the audience in that dreadful year, and it does so by engaging with the culmination in 1992 of Spain's modernization project and the resulting masked inequities (see Martín Maestro).<sup>1</sup> María Cañas's *Expo Lío*

1 On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in Hispaniola, Spain showcased its modernity by organizing three big events, the Olympics in Barcelona, the naming of Madrid as Europe's Cultural Capital, and the World's Fair in Seville. The triple celebration required astronomical investment in infrastructure, which resulted in economic growth immediately followed by high unemployment once the construction boom ended.

92 (2017) also challenges the 1992 narrative, and the analysis of both works further reinforces the need to hold space for individual agency and political participation.

### *Expo Lío 92*, “investigación experimental sin ánimo de lucro”

*Expo lío 92* presents Cañas’s signature apocalyptic vision, her excessive and accumulative compilation of images, a grotesque perspective on representations of the national, be it state or regional (Andalucía), and the dehumanization of the individual by neoliberalism. The film revisits her main themes: progress and technology, tradition and the primitive, state surveillance, consumerism and materialism, the fetishization of the female body, and critique of national identities. *Expo lío 92* is described by the director at the end of the documentary as an “investigación experimental sin ánimo de lucro. Su intención es artística, humorística, didáctica y crítica” (Not for profit experimental investigation. Its goal is artistic, humorous, didactic and critical), a statement that also summarizes her career. The motto of the 1992 World’s Fair in Seville was “La era de los descubrimientos” (the era of discoveries), thus promoting an epistemology closer to the Renaissance than to the end of the twentieth century. In other words, to continue using the celebratory term “descubrimiento” acritically, in light of the well-documented atrocities that ensued after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in America, demonstrates transhistorical insensitivity and obliviousness. *Expo Lío 92* aggressively disrupts the epistemology and teleology of such a conception.

The full version of *Expo Lío 92* is sixty-three minutes long. Cañas also created a five-minute version, which comprises one of the sections of the full documentary entitled *Cumbia against the Machine*. Both include footage from the Prelinger Archives, from thrillers, and from regional and national news media, as well as anonymous interviews with local residents of Seville. This work was commissioned as part of two projects, “Arte y cultura en torno a 1992,” sponsored by the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC, March–September 2017), and “¿Éramos tan modernos?! Reflexiones sobre el concepto de Modernidad ligado a 1992,” funded by the Fundación Cajasol (July–August 2017). Organized to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Expo 1992, only the CAAC exhibit engaged with Spain’s colonial past, albeit superficially. The show at the Fundación Cajasol focused on dismantling the narrative of modernity.

In *Expo Lío 92*, the official 1992 celebration is represented as the “murderous function of the state” (Mbembe 19) that drove the colonial politics of imperial Spain. The occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the *descubrimiento*

serves to showcase Spain's project of modernization, thus exposing the country's inability to assess its own history of necropolitics. Necropolitics, the main project of sovereignty, consists of "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (14). Echoing Hegel, Mbembe points out that terror and killing become part and parcel of any teleological historical project (20). Cañas dramatizes the massacres in America at the beginning of the video with a section titled "1492: comienza la inmigración ilegal" (1992: illegal immigration starts), thus merging the massacres of Spain's imperial past with present-day illegal immigration to Spain. The section alludes to the wave of immigration in the early 1990s, mostly from Latin America and Africa and prompted precisely by the economic opportunities offered by the project of modernization in 1992. As undocumented migrants have been risking their lives crossing from North Africa in precarious rafts since the 1990s, the Mediterranean Sea has become the resting place of those individuals deemed expendable by the status quo.<sup>2</sup>

*Expo Lío 92* – very much like López Carrasco's *El año del descubrimiento* – challenges the narrative of twin unavailing beginnings: the so-called "discovery" of America and the celebration of this discovery as a way to showcase Spain's full integration into the Western world in 1992, as well as the Socialist rule from 1982 to 1996. If Mbembe considers necropolitics an attribute of teleological narratives, one could argue that there is no future for the disenfranchised, who are left to reject and resist the project. Spanish philosopher and longtime activist Agustín García Calvo conceives of the future along similar lines. Addressing 15-M protesters in the Puerta del Sol, García Calvo stated that the future belongs to and exists for the financial powers ("Agustín García Calvo en Sol y en Zamora"). Affirming that there is no future implies taking charge of that future by breaking with the structures of necropolitics that subjugate the people. Taking command of history can be accomplished by creating new forms of social life, which is a joyful and hopeful affective endeavor as perceived by both García Calvo and Martín Patino's *Libre que te quiero* (see Chapter 5).

The dramatization of the massacre and extermination of the native peoples of America that opens *Expo Lío 92* incorporates footage from the popular thriller *Frogs* (1972), directed by George McCowan, as well as its 1991 sequel. By appropriating footage from *Frogs*, Cañas revisits her animalized perception of humanity that turns against itself to self-annihilate.<sup>3</sup> In

2 See Ballesteros and Flesler for an in-depth analysis of the representation of immigration in 1990s European film.

3 Animalization permeates Cañas's work. It is a strategy brilliantly displayed

addition, Cañas appropriates graphic found footage of frogs in party attire being massacred in bloody explosions, with fake pyramids in the background that evoke the killings in Aztec Tenoxtitlán. The frog becomes an iconic figure in Cañas's "animalario" that reveals the main threads of *Expo Lío 92*.<sup>4</sup> That is to say, through their festive and bizarre attire, Cañas mocks the Expo as a most absurd celebration. As in the thriller *Frogs*, the amphibians represent the forces of necropolitics: the state turning against the people, surreptitiously subjugated by an alliance of political and financial powers. In keeping with her misanthropic stance, Cañas also portrays humankind as grotesque and deserving of extermination for its complicity with a power structure that degrades humanity. The idea of degradation is reinforced by images of dehumanized mobs and drifting crowds. Footage of sweaty and eccentric hordes dancing half-naked to the summer hit "Bomba" follows the massacre of the frogs. Dancing pigs and dogs provide a graphic parallel to the partying mob. Footage also shows crowds repeatedly trying and failing to climb an insurmountable wall, piling up on top of each other.

In *Expo Lío 92*, the squalor arises from a cacophony of dissonant voices with diametrically opposed perceptions of the Seville Expo, as well as crowds running to enter it, which Cañas presents as a big empty space. Humans are degraded and infantilized by their unconscious servitude to the senseless dictates of the teleological project of modernization and mindless consumerism. I see Cañas's oeuvre as the Valle Inclán *esperpento* of the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup> Infantilism is exacerbated by the recurrent footage featuring the Expo mascot, a grotesque, androgynous figure with a big grin, a long beak, and rainbow-colored cockscomb. The mascot was appropriately named Curro, a popular male name in Seville, short for the common Francisco. *Curro* is also slang for "labor" and, twenty-five years after 1992, Cañas reclaims the mascot in order to expose the precariousness of

in her photomontage series "Los monstruos de la copla," which mocks the slang term of southern Spain that hyperbolically portrays stars and celebrities idolized throughout the twentieth century as larger-than-life figures, or "monsters." As such, and in keeping with the popular view of *copla* artists as the epitome of stardom, Cañas represents them as grotesque figures, part human, part animal. Some samples can be accessed via the Isabel Hurley art gallery ([www.isabelhurley.com/artistas.php?lang=esp&artista=4](http://www.isabelhurley.com/artistas.php?lang=esp&artista=4)). A companion photomontage series is entitled "Los monstruos de Hollywood."

4 "Animalario" is the neologism Cañas invented to refer to the animals she uses in her work.

5 "Esperpento" is a term created by playwright Ramón del Valle Inclán to refer to his grotesque, hyperbolic, and absurdist representation of Spain's bleak reality at the beginning of the twentieth century. Valle Inclán's *Luces de bohemia* (1920) embodies this literary strategy.



Fig. 6.1. Collage from *Expo Lío 92* evoking the 15-M protests, both linguistically and visually, with the blue-and-yellow Ikea logo modified with references to the “indignados” or protesters. Reproduced with the permission of María Cañas.

Spain’s job market. Figure 6.1, which is a frame from *Expo Lío 92*, situates Cañas’s characteristic double entendre at the center of the image: “25 años sin curro.” Twenty-five years without mascot or jobs – twenty-five years since Spain’s 1992 modernization project, which resulted in a laudable overhaul of the country’s infrastructure followed by one of the highest unemployment rates of the century, caused by the bursting of the construction boom bubble. The iconography of Figure 6.1 evokes the 15-M protests, both linguistically and visually, with the blue-and-yellow Ikea logo modified with references to the “indignados” or protesters, thus echoing the affective nature of the 2011 protests, as analyzed in Chapter 5. The figure also refers to those who are unemployed (*parado*), and offers an irreverent wordplay on the acronym INEM (Instituto Nacional de Empleo or Secretary of Labor) and “himen.” As discussed in previous chapters, creative representations of recent Spanish history follow the opposite trajectory to that promoted by successive ruling parties. Rather than a teleological project of modernization, artists such as Cañas and López Carrasco perceive the recent past as a continuum that repeatedly excludes the disenfranchised, thus echoing Mbembe’s and García Calvo’s contention that the future does not exist (for them).

*Expo Lío 92* incorporates footage from the final section of Jean-François Brient’s documentary *De la servidumbre moderna* (2009), and through this cinematic dialogue Cañas echoes the main predicaments of the 2008 crisis. *De la servidumbre moderna* follows a conventional documentary format with a voice-over that explains modern servitude as a voluntary and chosen enslavement of the individual to the political, social, and financial dictates of neoliberalism. Brient condemns the hordes transfixed by their cell

phones who give up their political agency, thinking that exercising their democratic political responsibility revolves solely around voting. Voting is seen to be all but an illusion, as evidenced by a quotation of nineteenth-century French anarchist Élysée Reclus that appears as an intertitle. Notably, mental health is exposed as a symptom and consequence of the neoliberal system, echoing María Ruido's *Estado de malestar*. In fact, the voice-over narration criticizes the pharmaceutical industry for profiting from the pathologization of the servitude of the modern individual, which explains why antipsychiatric movements such as the Mental Patients Liberation Front have endorsed Brient's film.

The only way to fully implement participatory and real democracy in through creating collective, nonhierarchical, and non-statocentric organizational structures. By this logic, all power structures must be destroyed, a contention that Brient illustrates through footage of violent confrontations between law enforcement and protesters. As its soundtrack, the final section of *De la servidumbre moderna* features a 1992 song by the American rock band Rage Against the Machine, entitled "Killing in the Name," whose refrain sums up the overall message: "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me." And while the modern servitude alluded to in the title stems from neoliberalism, Brient selects a number of quotations to support the transhistorical nature of the enslavement of humankind, from sources including Guy Debord, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Isaa Bashevis Singer, the Old Testament, Victor Hugo, Henry David Thoreau, and Paracelsus.

This closing footage from Brient's *De la servidumbre moderna* helps to give *Expo Lío 92* an apocalyptic ending. Through a parallel montage, Cañas's connects Brient's images to iconic footage from the Expo featuring Curro and the Spanish royal family. The coda that immediately follows the montage epitomizes Cañas's signature misanthropy: a series of brief opinions about how wonderful the Expo was lays bare the local public's lack of intellectual sophistication and their inability to critically analyze contemporary culture.

Through her critique of the 1992 discourse of modernity, that is to say, through analysis of the recent past, María Cañas sheds light on post-2008 Spain. Thus, she resorts to the same retrospective stance as other creatives analyzed in previous chapters. Through the link with necropolitics at the beginning of *Expo Lío 92*, through the visualization of the murderous function of the Spanish state in 1492 America, and through the apocalyptic incitement to annihilate all power structures at the end, her contribution to criticism of neoliberalism touches on Mark Fisher's contention that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

***El año del descubrimiento:***  
**Challenging the Epistemology of Progress**

*El año del descubrimiento* takes a more in-depth look at the bleak reality veiled by the celebratory events of 1992. Luis López Carrasco's films have lengthened with his cinematic maturity, which peaked with this film. We live in a time when our attention span is shaped by TikTok one-minute narratives, and yet López Carrasco created a three-hour documentary filmed in Hi8 video over the course of nine days and edited over nine months. Considering that the director was inspired by Peter Watkins's *La commune: Paris 1871* (2000), which spans five and three-quarter hours, the duration of *El año del descubrimiento* may not seem extraordinary.<sup>6</sup> A collective portrait, López Carrasco's superb film includes interviews with a large number of citizens congregated inside the claustrophobic space of the Café Bar Tana in Cartagena in the region of Murcia, López Carrasco's birthplace.<sup>7</sup> The setting and costumes recreate the 1990s, and at times the image evokes the texture of found footage, a technique that López Carrasco used previously in *El futuro*. Tellingly, he puts a complex and intricate treatment of time front and center in the film. Through a number of masterful cinematic techniques, *El año del descubrimiento* exposes the plight of the disenfranchised as a continuum in twentieth-century Spanish history, spanning from the 1960s to the 2010s. That is, the narratives and counternarratives had been brewing and manifesting for decades. In this context, the polysemic term "descubrimiento" should be understood not only as the 1492 discovery and colonization of America but, most importantly, as the realization that the revolutionary ideology that arose in the 1960s has repeatedly failed to protect and support Spanish workers. As such, the focus of this narrative directly challenges the teleological project that showcased 1992 Spain as a sought-after haven of European neoliberal

6 In addition to *La commune*, the films studied by López Carrasco before editing *El año del descubrimiento* include Frederick Wiseman's *Welfare* (1975) and Eduardo Coutinho's *Jogo de cena* (2007), as he stated in an interview with Lur Olaizola ("Luis Lopez Carrasco | Entrevista").

7 The claustrophobic bar resembles the suffocating space of the welfare office where Wiseman's *Welfare* takes place. López Carrasco also seems to have found inspiration in Wiseman's treatment of sound in the same documentary, where the constant conversations and background noise in the welfare office become deafening in the context of the tense conversations between the welfare recipients and the office staff. Along similar lines, the spatial and soundtrack elements of *El año del descubrimiento* create a feeling of claustrophobia, with background conversations, kitchen noise, and radio broadcasts constantly in the background.

ideas, democratic modernization, and the welfare state. In particular, López Carrasco focuses on the little-known struggles of workers in Cartagena, who responded to the policies of deindustrialization and the conversion measures of the industrial sector in the early 1980s, under Socialist rule, with 180 days of protests and violence. Companies such as Bazán, Peñarroya, and Fesa-Enfersa, centered on the shipbuilding, chemicals, and metals industries, collapsed, and the workers facing unemployment responded not only with protests, but also with the occupation of the regional parliament building. José Ibarra Bastida, a union leader who features prominently in *El año del descubrimiento*, tellingly compares police repression to the Francoist suppression of student protests in 1956.

López Carrasco echoes Cañas's exposé of the spectacularization of the 1492 massacres in America through several strategies, although he does not take the same grotesque and excessive approach. Instead, his film incorporates sound bites and footage from radio and television shows that audiences will find ironic. For instance, a state-run television commercial promoting 1992 as the "mayor proyecto europeo ... *en beneficio de todos*" (the largest European project *that will benefit everyone*; my emphasis) is surely intended for audiences to appreciate the irony of the statement. This is the same irony arising from Felipe González's words at the beginning of López Carrasco's *El futuro* (see Chapter 2). Like Peter Watkins's *La commune*, *El año del descubrimiento* exposes the manipulation of the media by political and financial powers. Also inspired by Watkins, López Carrasco focuses on a specific revolutionary time to reflect on social justice as a universal yearning, as I discuss below.

What makes *El año del descubrimiento* such a powerful film is the push and pull of hyperrealism and the oneiric, life and death, progress and stagnation, the microvision of the local and universalism, the familiar and the remarkable, the irrefutable and indeterminate. Like the documentarian Frederick Wiseman he so admired, López Carrasco finds inspiration in a little-known town (Cartagena) in a little-known region (Murcia), thus bringing local histories to the fore. Along similar lines as Wiseman's in-depth exploration of the American small town in *Belfast, Maine* (1999) and *Monrovia, Indiana* (2018), *El año del descubrimiento* explores a concrete situation – the 1992 protests in Cartagena – to reflect upon and understand the larger history of the workers' struggle and the organizing of unions, and to predict an uncertain future. The genre of the film is hybrid: elements of documentary and fiction film converge and their lines blur, as they do in many of the other works discussed in this book. On the one hand, *El año del descubrimiento* resembles the documentary genre in that it incorporates archival footage from Cartagena's local television station, as well as the

testimonies not only of those who experienced the 1992 celebrations, but also of the younger generation of Spaniards that experienced the 15-M protests. The plights of both generations converge, and at times become almost undistinguishable, in what constitutes yet another challenge to the narrative of progress in democratic Spain. On the other hand, the film follows an original script and, furthermore, was shot on a set with detailed 1990s decor (calendars, advertising, etc.) highlighted through extreme close-ups. The nonprofessional actors wear wardrobe from the same decade, including workers' uniforms.

The testimony follows the script at times, but also captures snippets of spontaneous conversations between the amateur actors who lived through the 1992 protests. Notably, the combination of reality and fiction and the utilization of nonprofessional actors are strategies implemented by the creative documentarians in the 1990s. Genre hybridity trademarks the works analyzed in this book, a phenomenon that arose in the 1990s with the "creative documentaries" of José Luis Guerín and Mercedes Álvarez, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (*El documental*).<sup>8</sup> Their practices perfectly illustrate the creative possibilities and the social impact of twenty-first-century cinema as conceptualized in the manifesto published by the Colectivo de Cine sin Autor: "El Cine XXI será un laboratorio de formas de vida ensayadas y revividas. Permitirá otra experiencia social de la memoria al poder revivir vivencias pasadas y hará aflorar narrativas sociales sobre la identidad local, cultural, política de las personas en su propio escenario" (Tudurí 37).<sup>9</sup> López Carrasco creates allegorical laboratories in both *El año del descubrimiento* and *El futuro*, in the form of the bar and the party respectively. This pair of microcosms of the 1990s and 1980s in Spain allows the nonprofessional actors to evoke both the memory of the past and the predicament of the present, as they both follow the script and spontaneously improvise. As such, the narrative of collective, local, and sociopolitical identity emerges in the very same locus. The laboratory in question, far from aseptic and remote,

8 The lack of adherence to traditional genre and production formats is also demonstrated by the fact that what would normally have been considered outtakes are not necessarily discarded. For example, the filmmaker's voice is heard reprimanding the cast (as in the club scene, when he urges them to dance according to the script), and at one point Raúl Liarte's hand blocks the camera's view of the interviewee's face. A film is a film, the director seems to suggest, and the cinematic process lies at the heart of it.

9 "Twenty-first century film will be a lab of rehearsed and lived experiences. It will allow for the social experience of memory through which local, cultural and political identities emerge" (my translation).

more closely resembles the home garage where punk bands practice: raw, unmediated, and authentic.<sup>10</sup>

While *El año del descubrimiento* is deeply rooted in materiality – as evidenced by both the texture of the image and the harsh reality of the workers’ lives – López Carrasco masterfully integrates the abstract and the universal. The film begins with the same audiovisual strategy as *El futuro*, with a black screen and the sound of a diegetic narration by one of the characters, who recounts a nightmare in which he finds himself trapped in a school with dead people. It is the first of the movie’s three parts, all of which begin with oneiric references. This first segment of the film introduces smoke, a visual reference throughout. Smoke is present because the patrons of the bar smoke cigarettes constantly. Extreme close-ups of their facial expressions bring the audience into their inner world while the cigarette smoke hinders the visual experience. Smoke also comes out of the factories affected by the policies of deindustrialization. Additionally, smoke is produced by Molotov cocktails exploding during the confrontations between protesters and police. It both reveals a specific historical reality and also partly conceals it. As a cinematic strategy, the ubiquity of the smoke suggests realism and familiarity, but also creates visual discomfort.

Undoubtedly, the most striking visual element is the use of a split screen throughout the film, which results in myriad narrative possibilities. As López Carrasco indicated in an interview (“Luis Lopez Carrasco | Entrevista”), it was while reviewing the footage from the two cameras used on the set that he realized that he was effectively surveying the process from a double perspective, already a split screen of sorts. It can also be explained as a consequence of techniques learned from the filmmakers he had researched, namely Peter Watkins and Frederick Wiseman.

Mostly populated with extreme close-ups, the split screen offers a high degree of visual and narrative versatility. While it draws attention to the materiality of the screen as artifact, it also fosters intimacy between the audience and the participants. For example, the strategy allows the filmmaker to offer a close-up of his interviewees’ facial expressions on one side of the screen and their simultaneous hand gestures on the other side, inviting the audience to develop a deep emotional connection. The split screen also creates a true collective portrait of these ordinary people, the local working class, by simultaneously focusing on a specific conversation at a table and the faces at the bar, or the frenetic activity in the kitchen and intriguing shots taken from behind the patrons’ heads that allow us to penetrate their inner world, signaling depth and reflection, as well as the deep concern of the film

10 This is the analogy used by Raúl Liarte in an interview (“Carne Cruda”).

for the workers' inner lives. Along similar lines, close-ups of the cook's hands washing dishes alert the audience to the hardships of manual labor. The camera captures conversations about traumatic work experiences and pairs them with the everyday activities of people eating *tapas* and drinking *cañas* at the local bar. The split screen is shared by the national television news in 1992 and television commercials for the Barcelona Olympics, highlighting the irony that arises from the discrepancies between the grandiose public discourse of progress and personal narratives of precarity.

The second part of the film opens with the intertitle "Aunque no lo recuerde, sí que lo he vivido" (I experienced it, even if I don't remember it), a quotation of a patron who appears at the end of the section and who shares the story of her family's eviction and bankruptcy when she was around five years old, followed by her father's fatal heart attack at a protest. This is the second direct reference to death by one of the interviewees, bringing our argument back to the manner in which necropolitics has become indissolubly tied to the supremacy of neoliberalism. Visually, it is noteworthy that individuals relaying the death of a family member appear beside a black screen (Lara), as seen in Figure 6.2. A meaningful idea comes from the oxymoronic statement that opens this second part of the film: it is not necessary to remember a particular experience to suffer its consequences and, as a result, intergenerational trauma emerges. While lived experience is the precondition for memory, the trauma of death and annihilation can be passed on from one generation to another, and migrate from the private to the collective realm transgenerationally.

As indicated above, the decor of the bar meticulously recreates the early 1990s and the costumes are equally inspired in the same time period, a

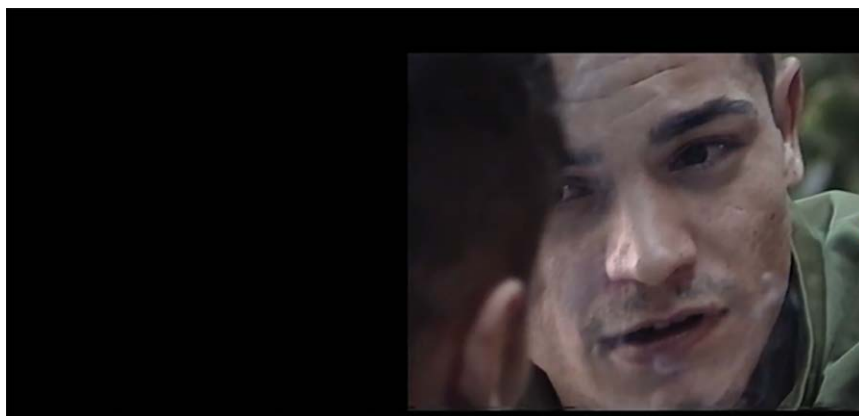


Fig. 6.2. Frame that illustrates the split-screen technique in *El año del descubrimiento*. Reproduced with the permission of Luis López Carrasco.

strategy that López Carrasco used effectively in *El futuro*. And while most dialogues make specific reference to those years, some conversations include indeterminate time references to “la crisis,” to “antes,” but also concrete allusions to the present time, as in statements such as “hoy en día, ahora cada uno va a su bola” (nowadays everyone does their own thing). Even more interestingly, some of the patrons, supposedly discussing the past, make anachronistic references that instead of setting the conversation in the 1990s refer to the sociocultural reality of the twenty-first century. Thus, by means of references to the “precariedad,” “fake news,” “la tablet” and Facebook, the conversations became reflections on the post-2008 financial crisis rather than exclusively on the protests in 1992. As such, the audience perceives the bar patrons not as characters recreating the past, but as their own interlocutors.<sup>11</sup> One may speculate that they go off script and, if so, they do so spontaneously, convincingly, and seamlessly, which seems to corroborate Wiseman’s contention that the camera of the documentarian does not impact the behavior of its subjects (“ZFF Masters”). The line between fiction and reality blurs, as the actors come in and out of character flawlessly. In *El año del descubrimiento*, the crisis becomes a blur that blends the struggle for social justice in 1956, 1968, 1973, 1992, 2008, and 2019, effectively dramatizing intergenerational trauma and stressing the universality of – and the need for – the revolutionary spirit. Through this continuity, we understand both *El año del descubrimiento*, and López Carrasco’s entire filmography, as the epitome of cinema in the twenty-first century. Thus, the cinematography connects the history of workers’ struggle through the 1960s to 2018. There

11 The continued struggle for social justice is a major focus of Watkins’s *La commune*, a film that López Carrasco studied thoroughly before editing *El año del descubrimiento*. Watkins dramatizes the tragic events of 1871, when 30,000 revolutionaries were killed by the French army. But several times throughout the film the actors talk among themselves and reflect on the struggle for social justice at several moments in history: 1871, 1944, 1968, and globalization at present. The intertitles corroborate their conversations. For instance, we learn that “En 1870, les 20% les plus riches de la population mondiale disposaient de 7 fois le revenu des 20% les plus pauvres. En 1997, cet écart était de 75 contre 1. Aujourd’hui, les 20% les plus riches se partagent 86% du PIB mondial, contre à peine 1% pour les pauvres.” They also refer to the media and the Internet as forms of state control. These discussions represent a crucial element of the film, which is conceived as the product of a collectivity working on this cinematic project democratically. To that end, Watkins hired 200 citizens from Paris and its suburbs, as well a group of undocumented immigrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The working process of the film included group discussions that allowed the cast to develop their characters according to their own experience and motivation.

is no future for the disenfranchised, to echo Mbembe's theory, only cycles of resistance that brings them back to the same point, again and again.

The film's epilogue centers on conversations about the bleak future of workers' unions in the neoliberal order, and provides a fatalistic ending to *El año del descubrimiento*, very much in line with the bleak tone throughout. In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, the precarious job market prevents workers from achieving labor stability: the unions seem to be failing the working class. The union leaders interviewed by López Carrasco critically reflect upon the changing role of workers' organizations at the onset of the twenty-first century, and lament that unions have become marketplaces that provide a selection of affordable life- or home-insurance programs. That is, their strictly organizing role has gradually weakened as the impossibility of chiseling away neoliberal structures only leads to frustration, impotence, fear, and paralysis.

At the onset of the twenty-first century, workers' predicament shuts them down and brings them to a standstill. Deprived of agency, the new generation of precarious laborers lacks the ability to conceive a much-needed novel union strategy, effectively signaling the end of the workers' movement. The traditional model of the union, that which fosters communion and camaraderie, has become obsolete. Current union practices offer services akin to a bazaar, that is, a market of benefits from which to purchase. This hopeless tone<sup>12</sup> marks a significant contrast to previous cult films that document workers' struggles in Spain, such as Joaquim Jordà's *Numax presenta ...* (1979) (see Benavente). As I have shown elsewhere, Joaquim Jordà's *Vint anys no és res* (2004) celebrates two events, one cinematic and the other real (Estrada, *El documental*, 156–157). On the one hand, it commemorates the documentary chronicle of the shutdown of the Numax factory in *Numax presenta ...* After massive lay-offs caused by the 1973 crisis, the Numax workers took over production and turned the factory into a cooperative that ultimately did not succeed. Twenty years later, and despite the ineffectiveness of the collaborative project, these workers reunite in person to collectively

12 Wiseman's *Welfare* concludes with a similar gloomy tone when a welfare recipient comes to the office to claim his check and he's asked to wait, as are most of the characters of the film. He responds that he's been waiting for the check as if he were waiting for Godot, who never comes. He calls himself destitute, and articulates his desperation in the following manner: "and that's what I'm waiting for, something that will never come: equity, justice." After pleading his case, the man finally agrees to sit down, and the camera then pans the office to show the never-ending flow of anonymous citizens who continue to enter. There seems to be no way out of the system, very much the same sense of frustration articulated by union leader José Ibarra Bastida in *El año del descubrimiento*.

claim their dignity and integrity. Their lives had been upended by the Pactos de la Moncloa of the Transition, when the major political forces of the time excluded the demands of the workers' unions. Jordà's *Vint anys no és res* captures the cheerful reunion of the Numax workers and reveals that the belief in and struggle for social justice remains very much alive for them. Interestingly, Jordà's affective stance aligns with the festive approach to activism in Martín Patino's *Libre te quiero*.

However, the numerous narratives about the past, present, and future of the workers' struggle in *El año del descubrimiento* are informed by a similar affective focus as Ruido's *Estado de malestar* (see Chapter 5). Affect, illness, and malaise reemerge in this film as side effects of neoliberalism. The diverging affective conceptions of labor justice reveal a generational chasm. Interestingly, the two filmmakers who began their careers under the dictatorship, Jordà and Martín Patino, offer a more auspicious and upbeat representation of the prospects of social justice in Spain than the younger López Carrasco and Ruido. López Carrasco's script humanizes politics by incorporating into the dialogues the impact of the fight for social justice on physical and mental health, livelihoods, family dynamics, even causing death. For instance, an elderly worker recalls the psychological and emotional impact that the deindustrialization process had on him. In order to combat it, he explains that he resorted to anti-anxiety medication, which failed to help because of the strong side effects, effectively increasing his unease. As also evidenced in Ruido's and Brient's documentaries, the injuries of neoliberalism may not be erased with prescription medication.

Affect pervades the narrative of José Ibarra Bastida, the Comisiones Obreras union leader who, when López Carrasco conducted research for the film in Cartagena, was himself writing a book about the conversion measures of the industrial sector. He became a history consultant, and the book in question, *Cartagena en llamas*, was published the year after the film was released. In fact, Ibarra Bastida plays several additional roles in *El año del descubrimiento*, such as a radio show host whose voice can be heard in the background at the Café Bar Tana. Appropriately, Ibarra Bastida is the interviewee with the most screen time, since he was not only an organizer of the protests in Cartagena, but also the most knowledgeable patron of the bar regarding the local events in 1992; through his numerous interventions, he provides a narrative thread to what may otherwise appear to be an fragmentary three-hour film. As insider and expert, Ibarra Bastida provides a detailed account of the sociopolitical context of 1992 Cartagena to understand the workers' predicament, but at times he is overcome by emotion as he shares personal details of his work experience when he was barely a child. Notably, this unfamiliar emergence of emotions in the context

of the political discourse causes him to excuse himself to his interlocutors. He apologizes to his interviewer Luis López Carrasco for the affective nature of his narrative when recounting the hardships of his factory job, which caused him a serious and long-lasting injury at only fourteen years old. Thus, the issue of child labor is approached from an affective stance rather than from the perspective of a union leader. Along similar lines, Ibarra Bastida explains that he was not allowed to earn a college degree because, in the industrial town of Cartagena, teenagers traditionally were destined to join the workforce regardless of their intellectual capacity. He feels it as a tremendous loss, affectively channeled through his confession of his embarrassment at providing deeply personal information that reveals his vulnerability. His father's death at a young age marks an additional loss that leaves him exposed and helpless. The emotional vulnerability on the personal front, a soft masculinity of sorts, marks a stark contrast with the traditional representation of the union leader as an unassailable fighter.

The film's epilogue closes with another oneiric narrative offered by a young bar patron, Quino Hernández, who echoes and reinforces Ibarra Bastida's despondent tone. While Hernández expresses surprise about the recurring nature and mysterious meaning of a dream, the audience may be able to easily interpret it in the context of the cinematic narrative. The patron in question relays his physical inability to fight a group of far-right neo-Nazis. The prospect of confronting extremism, which has surged in Europe in recent years, overcomes him. Fighting right-wing extremism, very much like fighting neoliberalism, only leads to paralysis and death. The oneiric narration brings us back to Mark Fisher's gloomy outlook mentioned above and to García Calvo's words at the Puerta del Sol in May 2011: "No hay futuro" (There's no future) ("Agustín García Calvo en Sol y en Zamora").

"Sube que te llevo," the song that López Carrasco selects for the closing credits, makes the audience jolt, as if he wants us to wake up from the nightmare. While the filmmaker gathered an impressive and highly praised 1980s soundtrack in *El futuro*, "Sube que te llevo" is the only musical contribution to *El año del descubrimiento*. Released in 1993 by the band M.P.M. (María Del Mar Soto, Pepe Moreno, and Mariano Vera), also from Murcia, it can be classified as *bakalao* (electronic music with maddening repetitive lyrics and rhythm which was played loudly in bars and clubs in the 1990s), and when it starts playing the frantic and repetitive rhythm abruptly disrupts the reflective and meditative tone of the film's epilogue. In this way, "Sube que te llevo" plays a meaningful narrative role that reinforces the awakening of the audience at the conclusion of the film, enticing us to participate and functioning as a call to action of sorts, removing us from the comfort of our seats as moviegoers to incite us to perform our political responsibility.

Whereas Cañas's *Expo Lío 92* shocks audiences by brutally showing the pitiful state of the individual subjugated by the system, López Carrasco's cinematic project does the opposite by empowering them. His filmography showcases twenty-first-century cinema as a locus-bar-fiesta-laboratory from which participatory and empowering narratives emerge. Death, dreams, and discomfort echo surrealist hallmarks that anchor these creatives at the intersection of experimental and activist film. Anachronism contests the illusion of progress; the materiality of the image and the black screens call into question the optimism of advancement; and local histories oppugn the hegemonic narratives of modernity. Through blurred cinematic genres, spatial references, and time periods, horizontal and affective networks surface as combative twenty-first century mores.

## Conclusion

Martín Patino's *Libre te quiero* captures 15-M protesters peacefully challenging the police as they pressure them to vacate the Puerta del Sol. Through a close-up, the film draws our attention to a significant banner: "Podéis quitarnos la plaza pero nunca las ganas de luchar" (You may take the square from us, but you'll never be able to take away our energy to fight). The protesters may have removed their encampments from the Puerta del Sol in due course, but their goals persist. Their departure did not signal a surrender of their values of fostering collective and affective networks. Although no significant institutional changes came out of the 15-M Movement, new forms of social life involving horizontal, collective, non-statocentric, and affective practices were established that have the potential to effect change from within, from the interstices of the system. As we have seen, this process was mirrored in the creative practices of independent filmmakers, a parallel history of film that broke from standard criteria such as commercial success or adscription to widely recognized genres. Through the rediscovery of lost or little-known footage from the late 1960s and 1970s filmed by the likes of Helena Lumbreras, Juan Sebastián Bollaín, Llorenç Soler, and Carlos Varela, and the inspiration that filmmakers such as Iván Zulueta and Pere Portabella have provided to today's militant and independent creatives, there has been – and continues to be – unprecedented scrutiny of the social and political landscape in which the terms of Spain's democratic regime were being brokered, and which lie at the root of that democracy now being dubbed "D€MOCRAZY." The archival footage may be perceived as precarious and disposable and yet it is the unfiltered quality that renders them both durable and vital for galvanizing our contemporary struggles. In the age of the non-indexical digital image (Manovic), the corporality of these earlier indexical images proves as relevant as the corporality of the community that the documentary highlights.

The films in the preceding chapters, when examined together, show a sustained narrative of resistance and social change that illustrates the

continuities between the Franco dictatorship and the democratic regime that succeeded it. The recovery of both independent films and archival footage emerges as a way of signaling the persistent political shortcomings of Spain's democracy, as expressed through the 15-M insurrections. The 2008 crisis brought back collective cinematic structures from the 1970s as politically meaningful and financially viable. That is, the crisis resulted in a new sensibility that informed politically engaged cultural interventions on the status quo. The revolutionary spirit of the 1960s recognized a multitude of new subjectivities in defiance of hierarchical structures, thus exuding liberating energies and innovative politics. The cultural production analyzed in this book adduces that spirit in post-2008 Spain by centering experimental, militant, and non-conforming creative energies and a communal, horizontal value system. The new forms of social life advance personal political responsibility as a means of creating a true democracy for a collectivity rather than subscribing to freedom as the ultimate aspiration of the individual. By enacting what Critchley calls hetero-affectivity, the cultural output analyzed in this book exemplifies the subject's ethical responsibility to the community, carried out away from and independent of the state (119). Hetero-affectivity avoids the reproduction of the statocentric structures that are the root cause of disaffection in neoliberal democracies. In fact, Fernández-Savater defined the *indignados* as an *affective* community of new political subjects, “una comunidad de sensibilidad, no tanto sociológica, ideológica o identitaria” (a community of sensitivity rather than one of identity or social status) (“Debes cambiar,” emphasis original). The films analyzed in *D€MOCRAZY in Spain* showcase these affective alliances, subscribe to the ethics of political responsibility, and emerge from new forms of social life.

Works by María Cañas, Helena Lumberas, Luis López Carrasco, and Ramiro Ledo not only participate in the sociopolitical dialogue around 15-M but, most importantly, do so by contesting the narrative of progress and individualism that has dominated in Spain since the late 1970s. Instead, their social and cultural practices involve empowering one another, building common esteem, and mutual connection and support. They draw their strength and impact from revolutionary strategies that allow the oppressed to thrive within the system. The corpus of films analyzed in this book illustrates Amador Fernández-Savater's contention that the political power of “the weak” – the disenfranchised – stems from their position as both insiders and outsiders of dominant structures (*La fuerza*, 2–10). As such, they generate parameters of space and time that simultaneously coexist with and challenge the establishment, while empowering and reclaiming voices that escape institutionalized structures. To exemplify the revolutionary space,

Fernández-Savater explains that the protesters of the 2008 crisis chose to occupy city squares with the goal of structuring public space according to principles of collectivity and connectivity. The weak or the disenfranchised are not only those protesters who may have been unemployed and felt unheard and unrepresented. They also include, among others, María Cañas, who after twenty years of work, remains in the regional realm of the Spanish cinematic landscape, while most scholars focus on her counterparts based in Madrid and Barcelona; Helena Lumbreras, who was expelled from the clandestine Communist Party in the 1960s, and yet carried on with her cinematic career; the workers of the Laforsa factory, who lost their jobs after daring to go on strike; the female relatives of the political prisoners interviewed in *O todos o ninguno* and *Spagna* 68; López Carrasco, who found the cast of his first feature film, *El futuro*, among his friends and crew, some of whom performed pro bono due to the lack of funding (Luis Parés, Ion Sosa, and Marta Bassols); the local histories of the labor struggle in Cartagena (*El año del descubrimiento*) and the small town El Rocío (*El caso Rocío*); and the collectives InsPiradas and Flipas GAM, which oppose the pathologizing of women's resistance to societal expectations. This book illustrates a new sensitivity to the voice of the individual and the participation of the collective by centering the multivocality of the disenfranchised.

Many of the films analyzed here are set in an intimate locus that fosters the affective bonds of the characters as well as their mutual empowerment. A party (*El futuro*), a bar (*El año del descubrimiento*), and a dining room (*VidaExtra*) become liminal spaces where memory archives are created through the participation of non-professional actors. Figurative space also emerges as a crucial component of film distribution. Rather than disseminating their films through mainstream channels, the filmmakers examined here relied mostly on the democratic power of cyberspace and online film festivals to showcase their work. They challenged capitalist notions of intellectual property and commodification by making their work available open-access and under Creative Commons licenses. In turn, these channels of dissemination allow them to break with the time constraints of commercial theatrical releases, as evidenced by the fact that the works analyzed here range in length from four minutes (Cañas's *El coro del alma negra*) to three hours (López Carrasco's *El año del descubrimiento*). They defy cinematic genres (fiction vs. nonfiction) bound by the constraints of the industry and resist the dictates of the market. New organizational technologies and structures allow simultaneity without contiguity, as well as remote asynchronous interaction. If industrial society views time as progress, net society disrupts chronological order in favor of simultaneity.

Bonds of solidarity and affect take center stage, as collective modes of production directly connect the years 1968 (Colectivo de Cine de Clase)

and 2008 (Colectivo Los Hijos). Collective structures of production and distribution discarded in the 1960s and 1970s come back to reclaim the agency of the disempowered majority. Additionally, discarded footage from those same decades populates new productions as a strategy to unearth the plights of factory workers, environmentalists, and women activists that had been obscured by the official visual narratives, as in Ledo's *Cine Clube Carlos Varela*. Through the representation of affective networks, artists such as María Ruido defy hierarchical structures of control of the individual and illustrate the potential to instigate collective resistance to the criminalization and clinicalization of nonconforming attitudes (*Estado de malestar*).

The visual recourse to surrealist, experimental, and activist cinematic trends, which are often situated in the “margin,” in the space of otherness, serves to constantly redefine the role of creatives as simultaneously insiders and outsiders.<sup>1</sup> D€MOCRAZY argues that it is precisely through new forms of social life such as hetero-affectivity – as opposed to abject individualism – crowdfunding, digital production, and creative commons dissemination that their value system regains the space that oxymoronicly remains excluded from neoliberalism. The visual production born out the post 2008 crisis, with its democratizing practices, marks a crucial intervention in Spain's recent sociocultural realm. This is especially noteworthy – even groundbreaking – given that Frederic Jameson and Mark Fisher had deemed the possibility of censuring neoliberalism insuperably difficult. The tensions and confluences with the turning points in recent Spanish history arise from silences, disruptions, and displacements in and on dominant discourses of progress, thus challenging the causality of their rationale. López Carrasco, by choosing to film *El futuro* in 16 mm, challenges the concept of technological progress. Engaging with the same type of camera that allowed Lumbreras to contribute politically and cinematically in 1960s Spain, *El futuro* brings temporal disruptions to the fore. Along similar lines, *El año del descubrimiento* highlights the illusion of concerted advancement through a set design that recreates the 1990s and a script that, at some points in the film, echoes the sociopolitical predicaments of post-2008 Spain. D€MOCRAZY contends that the ruptures and voids in the official discourse of Spain's modernization intersect with underground convergences – both political and cinematic – that constitute new forms of social life in the twenty-first century.

1 The reviews of Cañas's most recent short film continue to relegate her work to the margins. See for instance Antonio Moreno, “María Cañas.”

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