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RATS IN THE CITY: MAPPING A SPACE-CHARACTER INTERFACE IN THE NARRATIVES OF SPAIN'S GENERATION X

by

Corey Michael Rubin

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Spanish in
the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2013

Thesis Supervisors: Associate Professor Luis Martín-Estudillo
Associate Professor Ana Merino

ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the ways in which the Spanish Generation X writers José Ángel Mañas (b. 1971), Lucía Etxebarria (b. 1966), Gabriela Bustelo (b. 1962), and Pedro Maestre (b. 1967) represent Madrid and other late twentieth-century cityscapes in their respective novels *Ciudad rayada* (1998), *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* (1998), *Veo veo* (1996), and *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* (1996). These novels sketch an alarming social portrait of youth dissent in Spain's nascent democracy, which had relatively recently joined social, political, and economic arms with the rest of Western Europe. I read the representations of Madrid, Edinburgh, Elda, and Alcoy in these narratives as antagonistic and anthropomorphic spaces that stalk, coerce, and then attack the first-person narrators who scurry about them, rat-like. But these characters demonstrate impressive instincts that protect them from death and emotional destruction and strengthen their identities in the face of a postauthoritarian society enmeshed in the forces of global capitalism.

These Generation X authors introduce their characters to a discordant physical environment, one that works against the grain of the image Spain sought to show the world in 1992 as Barcelona hosted the Summer Olympics, Seville held the Universal Exposition, and Madrid was recognized as the European Union's Capital of Culture. Spain was trying to show the world that it had resurrected itself from the ashes of dictatorship to become a modern democracy worthy of a seat at Europe's table. But Mañas, Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre do not accept that line of thinking. In their renderings, Spain does not emerge as successful in international political and economic arenas but as a highly conflictive nation.

Abstract Approved: ____
Thesis Supervisor

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Title and Department

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Thesis Supervisor

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Title and Department

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Date

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Corey Michael Rubin

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Spanish at the May 2013 graduation.

Thesis Committee: ___________________________________
Luis Martín-Estudillo, Thesis Supervisor

____
Ana Merino, Thesis Supervisor

____
Thomas E. Lewis

____
Ana M. Rodríguez-Rodríguez

____
Cinzia Blum

To Elizabeth, David, Charles, and Abigail

A *migrational*, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

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INTRODUCTION

By the mid-1990s, the political realignment Spain began two decades earlier had transformed the Iberian nation from a repressive dictatorship into a modern democracy. But behind a self-projected facade of democratic and capitalist prosperity, unemployment and political corruption ran rampant, as its Generation X writers José Ángel Mañas (b. Madrid, 1971), Lucía Etxebarria (b. Valencia, 1966), Gabriela Bustelo (b. Madrid, 1962), and Pedro Maestre (b. Elda, 1967) reveal through their stark depictions of contemporary society. My dissertation analyzes the ways in which these authors represent Madrid and other late twentieth-century cityscapes as the agents of this discrepancy in their respective novels: *Ciudad rayada* (1998), *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* (1998), *Veo veo* (1996), and *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* (1996). In these, I read the representations of cities including Madrid, Edinburgh, Elda, and Alcoy as antagonistic and anthropomorphic spaces—ones that stalk, coerce, and then attack the first-person narrators (Káiser, Bea, Vania, and Pedro, respectively) who relate their experiences as they move about in them. As Cristina Moreiras Menor rightly points out, the narrations of these texts and others by young Spanish writers of the 1990s

> neither tell stories nor relate life histories. Instead, they describe urban cartographies, depict acts and events, and record—much like a video camera—the happenings of the present moment. (138)

The novels I read in the following chapters sketch alarming social portraits of youth dissent in Spain's nascent democracy, which had relatively recently joined social, political, and economic arms with the rest of Western Europe. All of the protagonists willingly speak of their ordeals as part of an implicit contract with the reader: in exchange for our attending to their need for discursive spaces in which to be heard, we receive eyewitness testimony about what Spain was purportedly like in the wake of 1992—"Spain's year"—when Barcelona hosted the Summer Olympics, Seville held the Universal Exposition, and Madrid became the European Union's Capital of Culture.

What we learn through their incisive renderings of urban space as a lawless social warzone undermines the notion that Spain had reawakened from the ashes of dictatorship to deserve a seat at Europe's table.

As will become clear over the course of this dissertation, Generation X writers stake a claim to originality by creating characters with life experiences that are different from, often contrasting with, those of their parents and grandparents. Exploring this gulf between their generation and the two that preceded it became something of an obsession for these young writers, and they went to great lengths to illustrate that chasm through the portrayal of the physical spaces with and within which their protagonists interact. The opening salvo came with the publication of *Historias del Kronen* (1994), the widely recognized prototype[1] of later Generation X writing that exploded onto the literary scene when its author, José Ángel Mañas, was only twenty-three years old. His first novel and a runner-up for Ediciones Destino's prestigious Nadal prize, *Historias del Kronen* represents an aesthetic and thematic break with the past that ushered in a new direction in the literature of Spain. Its success was such that critics invariably read the works that succeeded it as having been produced under its influence.

One cannot fully appreciate Káiser, Bea, Vania, and Pedro without first understanding the cynical and dissolute Carlos, the protagonist of *Historias del Kronen* and a paragon of Generation X quality. By sleeping all day and partying all night during his summer vacation from college while living in the lap of luxury of his parents' home in the La Moraleja suburb of Madrid—a neighborhood comparable to Los Angeles's Beverly Hills—Carlos paints an alarming portrait of youth apathy and dissent in a nascent democracy. He does not work because his parents indifferently support his

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1. While the debut of Ray Loriga's novel *Lo peor de todo* (1992) predated that of *Historias del Kronen* by two years, it has not enjoyed the same level of attention and success. Comparing these works to "varias novelas de los 90, escritas por lo general por escritores jóvenes," Juan Pablo Fusi describes Loriga's as "la primera . . . y algo anterior" but Mañas's as "la más representativa y exitosa" (711).

lifestyle, which includes consuming massive doses of alcohol and drugs on a daily basis in bars throughout the Spanish capital, including the Kronen, the titular tavern named after the popular French beer, Kronenbourg.

Carlos's apathetic narration offers the blueprint of a technique that Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre emulate in their respective stories, to which I refer throughout my dissertation as a space-character interface. In the opening lines of *Historias del Kronen*, Carlos expresses a visceral addiction to the Kronen bar as he sneers at its suffocating heat and the dense congregation of people it attracts on an average Saturday afternoon:

> Me jode ir al puto Kronen los sábados por la noche porque está siempre hasta el culo de gente. No hay ni una puta mesa libre y hace un calor insoportable. Manolo, que está currando en la barra, suda como un cerdo. Tiene las pupilas dilatadas y nos da la mano, al vernos. (11)

His mundane descriptions, as exemplified in this passage, advance the narrative but omit events of significant drama, interest, or effect. In congregating with his friends in the bar, Carlos represents its space as a perilous force that he must endure in order to acquire the alcohol, drugs, and cheap thrills he craves. The same may be said of Vania's routine accounting of the drinking, drugs, dancing, and mingling that she carries out in the various clubs, restaurants, and other nocturnal spaces of Madrid searching for clues as to how and why Spain lost its liberal mien.

The characters' engagements with their physical surroundings inscribe Generation X authors' defiance of the previous generations' hold on power in the very language and structure of their works. Like Carlos, Bea of *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* uses urban space to defy the vision that her parents—especially her mother, Herminia—have of the person she is and the one she should become based on extinct social and family attitudes. Etxebarria depicts a changing society in which the youngest cohort to reach adulthood rejects its predecessor's ideas. So too, Pedro of *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* clashes with his mother and father over the antiquated views that they derive from Elda, a provincial town in Valencia where they have heretofore skirted the changes occurring in

the rest of the nation, and the world. Thus, all three of these novels exhibit an increasing rift between the current and previous generations due to the fact that the latter has not adapted to the newer tides of life in democratic Spain.

Káiser and Vania similarly critique the social, economic, and political imbalances that the prior generation has carelessly created by aligning Madrid in the late twentieth-century with the promotion of their self-serving greed and power. And when the city attempts to punish Káiser and Vania for broaching their dissent, they resist its aggression with impressive instincts that protect them from death and emotional destruction at the same time as they strengthen their identities in the face of a postauthoritarian society enmeshed in the forces of global capitalism.

Books like *Historias del Kronen* and the novels published in its wake reflect a broader, international trend in literature and culture that includes North American publications like Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and *Less Than Zero*, and Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*—novels that fit into what James Annesley has called "blank fiction," representative of a "slacker culture whose protagonists avoid professional and familial responsibility" (Pao 246). The characters who follow this mold exploit the city in defiance of their parents' generational expectations, using its space to acquire and consume drugs, which numb a pessimistic outlook on life and a lack of participation in any productive academic, professional, or familial enterprise. Thus characteristic of Generation X in Spain and internationally, they avoid investing time and effort into anything other than their own instant gratification.

The originality[2] of Spain's Generation X narrative further lies in its dislocated narrative structure and terse statements. These occur in rapid-fire succession, leaving

2. Among the critics who look to *Historias del Kronen* as the initiator of Generation X narrative in Spain are Toni Dorca, "Joven narrativa en la España de los noventa: La Generación X"; Germán Gullón, "La novela neorrealista de José Ángel Mañas en el panorama novelístico español" and "Cómo se lee una novela de la última generación"; Santiago Fouz-Hernández, "¿Generación X? Spanish urban Youth Culture

very little time to be processed, the effect of which subordinates dialogue to action (Dorca 320–21). Similarly, oral language is transcribed in a way that mimics the manner in which characters speak and that simulates their physical movements through the city (Gullón, "La novella neorrealista" xxvi). Moreover, characters scream at one another in fast-moving automobiles in which the music is blaring. Mañas illustrates this facet of his narrative by structuring dialogue in all-capital letters, which gives us the same sensation as the characters experience: that of not being able to hear what others say unless they yell at an equally high volume.

The first-person narrations of the four novels on which I center the following discussions register the changing nature of the society in which their protagonists live. Like Don Pablos, the picaresque protagonist of Francisco de Quevedo's (1580–1645) *Vida del Buscón* (1626), Generation X characters catalog a painstakingly detailed description of the banal events that occur as a result of their interaction with the physical environment. In innumerable descriptions of everything from the success of their bowel movements to the speed with which they shower and dress, the authors who follow this archetype find a way to illustrate their characters' lack of rigorous commitment to larger, society-wide goals. Pedro of *Matando dinosaurios* even admits that the members of his generation should "salir a la calle a luchar por algo" (20).

These writers draw on a centuries-old tradition in Spanish literature—the Picaresque—in order to talk about the most mundane aspects of life. They adjust picaresque elements to the times in which their characters lived, using urban space as an anesthetic with which to ignore the fact that the future appears bleak in light of the chronic unemployment and political corruption that Spain experienced in the 1990s. That is why in most of the novels I examine political topics appear only insofar as they relate

---

at the End of the Century in Mañas's/Armendariz's *Historias del Kronen*"; and María T. Pao, "Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll: *Historias del Kronen* as Blank Fiction."

to the characters' uses of space. This technique paints the novel in a political light but maintains an ostensible indifference toward the contemporary Spanish society in which some of their parents figure prominently. Engagement is oblique at best and is accomplished in a sneaky, roundabout way. For instance, in *Historias del Kronen* Carlos recasts the *telediario* (daily newscast) his family watches during mealtimes and tersely paraphrases the cultural magazines his father leaves bookmarked on the coffee table—showing disengagement and cynicism in the face of a new society. Similarly, in *Ciudad rayada* Káiser repeats the political editorials of the characters belonging to the Generation of 1968, but does not offer parallel opinions of his own.

The characters that I write about in this dissertation abuse drugs not to escape social and political oppression—akin to what their parents and grandparents faced during the civil war and the Franco dictatorship that followed—but because in so doing they avoid having to face a grim future that has been ravaged by the *marxistas* and *sensentaiochistas* of their parents' generation:

> El viejo comienza a hablar de cómo ellos lo tenían todo mucho más difícil, y de cómo han luchado para darnos todo lo que tenemos. La democracia, la libertad, etcétera, etcétera. El rollo sesentaiochista pseudoprogre de siempre. Son los viejos los que lo tienen todo: la guita y el poder. No siquiera nos han dejado la rebeldía: ya lo agotaron todos los putos marxistas y los putos jipis de su época. (Mañas, *Historias* 67)

By the 1990s, when their narratives are set, local traditions have broken down—especially with regard to the relationship between generations. The lack of these highlights a growing chasm between the elder citizens who united to fight against social and political oppression, and the younger, which, having inherited the fruits of that struggle, cannot find a way to establish an authentic, positive identity. That attitude is further reflected as a cynicism toward international influences. Worldwide pessimism about the world's economic future at the start of the 1990s fed into an extant climate of economic catastrophe and greed in Spain, where the appeal of a slacker culture promoted a lack of engagement with larger political and societal goals.

Methodology and Chapter Breakdowns

The late twentieth-century incarnation of the modern city painted by these novels evidences the imperatives of global capitalism that had by the nineties reworked urban space into an abstract shape often at odds with the logical design that humans need in order to function. In opposition to ancient and medieval metropolises, which grew organically from the uses to which the local populations put them, the modern city is a planned enterprise. Its theoretical foundations favor the creation of spatial flows that maximize industrial profit, but do not necessarily fulfill basic human needs—for food, clothing, sanitation, and so forth. Mañas illustrates this especially well in his portrayal of the space inhabited by Madrid's gypsy population in *Ciudad rayada* (1998), the novel I discuss in my first chapter. There, the slum emerges as a locus of juvenile neglect, marital strife, and revolting filth where, despite those elements, Káiser feels at home. Hence, a fissure emerges in these narratives between the ways in which space is planned, and the uses to which society puts those spaces.

This same tension—between the planned and actual uses of a city—is present in both Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's reflections on space. Their theories inform to a great extent my understanding of urban space as it is lived in and used in the narratives of Spain's Generation X. In their respective analyses, *The Production of Space* and *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre and de Certeau use similar terms and notions to discern what I will repeatedly describe in my own words as "aboveboard" and "sub-rosa" spaces. The first constitutes the space in which bureaucrats legislate, the police enforce order, and the courts adjudicate conflict. The second, in contrast, indicates a spontaneous space of social interaction that arises without any preconceived blueprint, map, or other design for its use; mediating the conflict arising within it is an ad hoc process.

For Lefebvre, social space (the space of human interaction), as opposed to mental space (the realm of abstract ideas such as those of mathematics and philosophy), is

experienced in three distinct forms: perceived, conceived, and lived. The first category, perceived space, objectively measures human activity in an urban environment. Lefebvre's notion of perceived space thus corresponds to the work of cartographers, who describe it on maps and atlases with carefully calibrated, quantifiable data. Lefebvre's second category, conceived space—what I call aboveboard space—represents the technocratic and bureaucratic work of architects, engineers, and other officials versed in city planning and design. Conceived space can safely ignore the ways in which people actually use the city; it may speak only to its planned usage. It is, in essence, an abstract blueprint of how the government plans the usage of a space. It is the product not of chance encounters but of meticulous physical, social, and political forethought. That is, in conceived space the a priori design and organization of buildings and other structures has been carefully calibrated in order to determine the most advantageous utilization—or the most useful organization—of public services.

In order to broker a solution to the seeming contradiction between perceived and conceived space, Lefebvre proposes a third category: lived space, which, in comparison to the other two, represents the pragmatic, as well as the underground, use of the city (33). Lived space corresponds to my term sub-rosa space. For Lefebvre, it embodies more practice than planning. Thus, he explains, the artists who portray lived space in paintings, drawings, and literature do so based on subjective interpretation, just as Spanish Generation X writers do with regard to the cities in which they set their narratives. In that sense, then, lived space is passively constructed by the imagination; it is not an abstract creation but rather a symbolic use of physical space (39). Lived space affords a subjective interpretation of the other two categories, one that differs depending on the artist or citizen producing it. For this reason, it offers an apt model for analysis of the Generation X narratives I discuss in my chapters, whose characters use the city as a staging ground for the purchase, sale, and consumption of alcohol, drug, guns, and other contraband as well as for murder, robbery, and the solicitation of prostitutes. Their illicit engagement of

the city thus represents a form of imaginative engagement told through the eyes of novelists whose personal experiences have taught them its dissident use.

De Certeau explains his *The Practice of Everyday Life* as an examination of the ways in which individuals resist the disciplinary processes inscribed in contemporary society, those that Michel Foucault examines in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. In so doing, de Certeau delineates the city into two component parts: one suited for public consumption within a particular society, which varies from culture to culture and supports the abstract design of legal and bureaucratic administration, and another—a truer and more authentic representation of everyday life—that evades the vigilance of the first part. Much of my dissertation examines the tension begotten by the Generation X characters' fluid passage between these two categories of space.

In referring to a "dominant economic order" (xiii), de Certeau describes the lawmakers and politicians who create the aboveboard city with a strength of purpose that pursues profit at all costs, no matter the consequence to human life. The most effective tool of resistance that the Generation X character has at his or her disposal is to remain beneath the visual threshold that de Certeau describes as scopic range, the distance past which the modern city cannot detect the happenings within its pedestrian or sub-rosa spaces. Because the ordinary practices of the city take place past that visual threshold, the protagonist is able to act without the constraints of overt detection by authorities. De Certeau's celebrated example of the World Trade Center, once a symbol of scopic might elevated far above the city over which it presided, provides the aboveboard city with a bird's-eye view of its space, thus enhancing its ability to enforce the legislated use of its domain.[3] But with greater coverage comes a blurring of what appears discernible from high in the sky above the city. Thus, the recurring image of Madrid's citizens as rats in

3. Ironically, perhaps, the police command center in the former World Trade Center was on the ground floor. It is clear, then, that theoretical and actual uses of space do not always correspond.

the Generation X narratives I examine calls attention to the fact that people appear small from far away and high above, where the mechanisms of aboveboard space cannot discern their actions, intentions, or how they are using the city. Further, the image of the rat inevitably brings to mind the idea of an urban rat race, in which people scurry through the spaces of the city, eating each other alive, doing anything and everything in order to get and stay ahead of the pack. Small, aggressive, and disease-ridden but resilient and unstoppable all the same, the rat emerges as the ideal literary symbol of Generation X urban squalor.

Thus, ratlike and fully aware of a metaphorical umbrella shielding their undertakings from detection by the state, these characters do as they please. Their raw intellectual dexterity outfoxes the elaborate, but often ineffective, forms of automated surveillance—the satellites, closed-captioned television, and traffic enforcement cameras, for example—that engineers, architects, and politicians plan into the design of the city. The only means these characters have to achieve this rebellious freedom is, as de Certeau explains, to hark back to the time of hunters and gatherers, before technology so fully permeated society. He argues that while technology is pervasive, it is the product of human intellect, which only takes on an inhuman aspect once released into the world. It is that very human genesis that allows the Generation X protagonist to eventually combat it. By returning to the techniques of premodern times, when we had to use our wits to carry out the tasks that technology accomplishes for us now, the individual is able to outmaneuver the restrictions built into a system designed and executed by the limits of the human imagination.

With the exception of Pedro in *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas*, all the characters representative of Generation X that I discuss in this dissertation stay one step ahead of the state's invasive mechanism of surveillance, social discipline, and control. Pedro's inability to do the same, however, results from his fear of not complying with the urban bureaucracy, revealing him to be intellectually and creatively inferior to the other

characters. His cowardice in the face of difficult but ubiquitous and necessary tasks, such as preparing for a career or investing in a romantic relationship, emerges as the quintessence of this limitation. Pedro refuses to tackle the Spanish bureaucracy head-on. His narrative is one of cumulative and cascading failure, proving that the opposing strategy, which the other protagonists employ, of outsmarting the city at its own game, is not only more effective but also indicative of a native vitality that he lacks.

Mañas and Bustelo successfully pit their characters against the city in their renderings of Madrid as a symbolic layer of aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces. As explained in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Mañas's protagonist, Káiser, a purveyor of cocaine and other narcotics, shifts back and forth between the aboveboard and sub rosa in order to evade the legal repercussions implicit in his line of work. He describes his movements as they occur, which grounds the narration in a cartographic and demographic analysis of the aboveboard city—the names of its streets, neighborhoods, and popular landmarks, all delineated by official forces—as well as through characterizations of the youth subculture he knows well from his business dealings. Káiser maneuvers between the two aspects of the city in order to generate an income, as well as to avoid detection by the proliferated legal mechanisms entrenched in the aboveboard world. The necessity of Káiser's arduous passage between these spaces offers an implicit critique of capitalism by showing the lengths to which he must go in order to survive in a hostile environment, economically as well as literally.

In chapter 2 of the dissertation, I partially step away from Lefebvre and de Certeau and turn to Marc Augé's theory of non-place, which underlies my reading of Etxebarria's novel *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*. Augé examines the interstitial loci of transit and communication in public places, such as train stations, bus stations, or airports, as well as the satellite and cellular towers permeating and defining the modern world. His non-place also refers, however, to a metaphysical plane of inner reflection into which an international or long-distance traveler retreats while traveling on a high-speed

bus or railcar, or in an airplane high above the ground. The non-place brings together passengers from the diverse real, or "anthropological places" of the world into a relatively tiny space in which linguistic and cultural barriers abound and thus limit interaction. As this occurs, solitude affords each passenger an often much-needed opportunity to quietly think without distraction. This tranquility elicits the traveler's solitary thoughts about what has occurred in the spaces from which he or she recently departed, as well as about those to which he or she is bound.

Sitting in customs at London's Gatwick Airport, the novel's protagonist, Bea, enters a cognitive plane at the same time as her body sits somewhere between Madrid and Edinburgh. Her mind reassesses the similarly traumatic events she has experienced in each space, causing her to take stock of her emotional pain. But more than that, being far enough removed from each city affords her an opportunity to reflect upon the mess she has created in them. In order to do this, she boards the incorporeal plane of higher thinking as her flights soar above the Earth, wondering how and why she repeatedly drives away the people closest to her. Paradoxically, then, the impersonal nature of air travel allows the personal to predominate, because no distractions are present to divert her attention. The non-place thus affords Bea the occasion to diagnose herself with the clarity of self-awareness, one unobtainable in the city, or in any other social space for that matter. Bea's experience of the non-place illustrates the difficulty that members of Spain's Generation X have in resolving their emotional pain from within the spaces of Europe's metropolises. In order to secure a healthier state, they must depart the city as Bea does. But healing implies an eventual return to the anthropological places where the trauma began, so that it can be unearthed and reburied on one's own terms. In Bea's case, those images of the past that she toted in her mind for four years have long since vanished from real life.

Vania's return to the Madrilenian nightlife in Gabriela Bustelo's *Veo veo*, the novel I discuss in my third chapter, registers the similar difficulty of a Generation X

character coming to terms with the past. Vania's attempts to ascertain the identity of whomever has been stalking her represents a grievance against the lapse of Marxist ideology in Spain's Socialist Party. Like Káiser, she provides the actual names of streets and neighborhoods throughout Madrid with a keen attention to detail that not only illustrates her familiarity with its space but simulates physical movement through the aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces of the city. This narrative inscription of the Spanish capital serves two purposes: it draws us into its space, and it also validates Káiser and Vania's reportage of sub-rosa space, setting a precedent of telltale accuracy.

Vania breaks with Generation X novels' trend of only engaging politics circuitously. Her state of mind demonstrates a frustrated discontentment with regard to the reigning Spanish socialist party's ideological drift at the start of the 1990s. She alternates between Madrid's aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces in order to ascertain why Marxism, which dominated the far left before the transition to democracy, has disappeared in the years since her own recalled heyday. I read her return to the bars, clubs, and restaurants of her Movida past—supposedly undertaken in order to apprehend a commando of spies that has been watching her—as an investigation into why Spain joined forces with capitalism when it had a real chance of becoming the exemplar of a progressive society, as she would have liked. Her relapse into drug and alcohol abuse after a year of abstinence is the cause of her delusional belief that spies have concealed hidden cameras and microphones in the furniture of her apartment and her car and have dispatched an agent to track her movement throughout Madrid. Vania's capricious use of alcohol and drugs in the novel thus allegorizes her withdrawal from an addiction to the anti-Franco establishment on the far left, which Teresa Vilarós theorizes as the colloquial Castilian word *mono* (withdrawal). Thus, the real reason Vania believes she has fallen prey to the surreptitious surveillance of the aboveboard world can be blamed on the *mono* that Vilarós ascribes to the political left's failure to imbue post-Franco society with a more progressive ideology.

Edward Soja, whose theory of space I rely upon in chapter 4, expands upon Lefebvre's notion of lived space with his own concept: Thirdspace. It breaks open the binary categories of lived and conceived space, which Soja recasts in his model as "first space" and "second space," and then reorders them into a Thirdspace that includes all of the former categories. First and second space are reduced to their basic elements before being recombined into a new product, a process that occurs on an ongoing basis, which he explains in terms of a spatialization of the Hegelian dialectic. Thirdspace can thus be defined as spatializing linear thinking into an open concept in which anything and everything is possible and happens all at once.

Soja understands Thirdspace as central to the spatial dimensions of our lives. In fact, the protagonist of Maestre's *Matando dinosaurios*, Pedro, stands as an exemplar of that duality: he experiences so much turmoil and chaos in his life that he cannot make sense of anything at all. Rather than expanding his worldview, his Thirdspace-like existence renders him paralyzed and powerless. Sequestered in a rustic provincial city without the conspicuous subculture of the other novels, Pedro internalizes an idiosyncratic aggregate of aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces that, instead of liberating him from the aboveboard city, shackles him to the past.

Urban Space in Late-Capitalist Spain

As this dissertation will illustrate, the Generation X authors whose narratives I study introduce their characters to a discordant physical environment, one that works against the grain of the image Spain sought to show the world in 1992 as various high-profile world events happened in Barcelona, Seville, and Madrid. Spain was trying to show the world that it had been resurrected from the ashes of dictatorship as a modern democracy on par with the rest of Western Europe. But Mañas, Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre do not accept that line of thinking. In their renderings, Spain does not emerge as successful in international political and economic arenas. Instead, it appears as a nation

on the brink of disaster. At the same time, the narratives of Spain's Generation X cast doubt on that national vitality with a dissenting perspective representative of the displacement that many young adults felt at the time:

> . . . la sociedad española mientras celebra su puesto de largo en el concierto internacional en 1992 crea un sentimiento común de rechazo entre los jóvenes que queda ampliamente reflejado en las obras narrativas de la nueva promoción. (Pérez, "El retorno" 56)

In the following discussion of narratives by Mañas, Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre, I show that throughout the remainder of the final decade of the twentieth century, Generation X narrative proliferated in Spain as a literary instrument deliberately deployed as a countervailing narrative whose intent was to highlight the gaps and untruths in the official, and officially projected, image of Spain. That narrative urged a continued awareness of the rampant unemployment experienced by the country's youth, as well as of the corrupt political leadership that benefitted from the imbalances it created. In protesting traditional family values like marriage, parental authority, and the ethic of reward through hard work, Generation X writers found the perfect subjects with which to emphasize the ways in which Spain's Francoist past prepared the way for the bourgeois present, which it echoed in significant ways.

In this dissertation, I argue that the rendering of physical space, especially that of the urban center, establishes an equivalence between the dictatorial past and the putative democratic present. The metropolis is rendered in these novels as a threatening presence, ready to attack each of the protagonists. It threatens to inflict severe physical, emotional, and pecuniary damage upon them unless they master their use of its space. The degree to which they succeed or fail in this test of mastery indicates their author's view of national affairs. The late-capitalist city provides them with a space of economic sustainability, which is why characters flee only to be drawn back to its magnetic space. This contradictory magnetism makes sense in light of the fact that it causes each protagonist to cross an implied threshold separating Madrid into the aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces I

have described. This dissertation will show that experience and keen observation have taught the Generation X protagonists of these novels to glide back and forth between those two precarious and crafty spaces. They will demonstrate that there is no substitute for the lessons they learn through their grueling ordeals in the subculture existing below the official surface of their city. The chaotic presentation of their experiences in the troubled spaces of their youth—through flashbacks and nonlinear plotlines—simulates an equally tumultuous everyday world.

Historical Framework

In 1939, after three years of civil war, military forces loyal to General Francisco Franco (1892–1975) deposed Spain's Second Republic, a liberal government that had been established less than a decade earlier, in 1931. In its place, Franco installed himself at the head of a dictatorship—as Caudillo—that would rule Spain for the next thirty-six years, until his death from Parkinson's disease on 20 November 1975. Only after Franco died could his successor, King Juan Carlos I, oversee a transition to the democracy Spain knows today.

Franco supported a strong central state and an ultratraditional system of Catholic and family values. His decisions became the rule of law, and he enforced them with a savage secret police force. Fair elections and dissident points of view were not allowed. Franco censored literature and the media, kidnapped and imprisoned political and ideological opponents, persecuted homosexuals—often confining them to mental asylums—and imposed capital punishment at will. He also prohibited labor unions and restricted the use of Spain's regional languages. Divorce and abortion were strictly outlawed. The regime encouraged the subservience of women to men, going so far as to bar any woman from opening a bank account without her husband's permission.

Franco dispatched his political enemies, many of whom fought against him in the Spanish Civil War, to forced labor in concentration camps. Paul Preston explains that while they were there, the regime scientifically analyzed their genetic disposition:

> The defeated were also denounced as degenerate, their children were taken away and military psychiatrists carried out experiments on women prisoners in search of the 'red gene'. . . . The results of his investigations provided the delighted military high command with the 'scientific' arguments to justify their views on the subhuman nature of their adversaries for which he was promoted to colonel. (*The Spanish Civil War* 310)

Franco used this justification to separate from their mothers the babies of women who were his ideological opponents and placed them in adoptive families loyal to the regime. He then ordered the executions of their birth mothers. Although Spain maintained political and military neutrality in World War II, Franco used the war for his own ends by arranging for Hitler to transfer thousands of Republican exiles—people living in occupied France—to German concentration camps. The Gestapo also handed over Republican exiles to the authorities in Spain, where they were summarily shot.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) looked unfavorably upon Francoist Spain's ties to the Axis powers and, as a result, barred Spain from joining its ranks, passing a resolution recommending a trade boycott of the Iberian nation in 1946. As a result, Spain suffered just as much as, if not more than, its European neighbors who received assistance from the United States under the terms of the Marshall Plan:

> All the European nations suffered deprivation in the post-war era, but Spain, where the late forties are known as the *años de hambre* or years of hunger, suffered more than most. In the cities, cats and dogs disappeared from the streets, having either starved to death or been eaten. In the countryside, the poorer peasants lived off boiled grass and weeds. Cigarettes were sold one at a time. The electricity in Barcelona was switched on for only three or four hours a day and trams and trolleybuses in Madrid stopped for an hour in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon to conserve energy. But for the loans granted by the Argentine dictator, General Perón, it is possible that there would have been a full-scale famine. (Hooper 13)

By 1950, however, the United States had become increasingly concerned with the threat of Soviet aggression, as well as the outbreak of the Korean War. It had begun to search for new allies in the Cold War and, using the rationale that the enemy of its enemy was its friend, found much to like in Franco's zealous stance against all forms of communism. Spain's strategic location between North America and Eastern Europe worked to its advantage, as well. The United States therefore supported a UN resolution to end the boycott of Spain and to normalize diplomatic relations with Franco's government. As a result, the United Nations lifted its blockade of Spain in 1950 and admitted it as a member five years later. In the terms of the Pact of Madrid, signed in 1953, the United States pledged loans, grants, and military aid to Spain in exchange for permission to build US military bases on its soil.

Yet even after relations with the United States improved, Franco's cabinet still contained a faction of *falangistas*—fascist Republicans who advocated agricultural over industrial development—who persuaded the Caudillo that isolation from the international community was the most effective method of ensuring Franco's political survival, and of repairing the national economy. This philosophy was not well suited to Spain's domestic rehabilitation efforts. Amid a Europe bent on punishing the state that tolerated Franco, local agriculture and industry could not get past a slew of restrictive quotas and tariffs issued from abroad. Foreign markets, needed for domestic growth, were simply unavailable to Spanish exports. Moreover, it became next to impossible for industrial leaders to acquire cutting-edge industrial technologies developed beyond the peninsula.

Beginning with the Stabilization Plan of 1959, however, an "economic miracle" occurred nearly the moment Franco replaced the *falangistas* in his cabinet with the so-called technocrats, typically businessmen or academics with links to Opus Dei, who pushed for public investment and an expansion of national infrastructure. The technocrats exposed Spain to the democratic influences of greater Europe, which included measures to curb inflation and to lessen the government's control of the economy, ascribing

economic policy not to the Spanish state, as the *falangistas* had done, but to the changing nature of the world market:

> For the technocratic vision of subordinating economic policy and development to the rationality of the market had broken the Falange's earlier dominance of the bureaucracy, together with its insistence on the primacy of political rationales in decision-making and, by implication, the complete identification between state and regime. (Vincent 203)

In essence, the technocrats opened up Spain's economy to the boom of the West without undoing the political, cultural, and social restriction put in place by Franco. Indeed, they correctly believed that economic growth and an improvement in the local standard of living would prolong the regime's survival. The above-mentioned Stabilization Plan turned the peseta into a convertible currency, which reduced its value by half but also opened the gates of foreign investment. Thus, the years between 1961 and 1973 have become known as the *años de desarrollo* ("years of development"). During this time, Spain experienced greater rates of growth than any other country in the West. It also saw a change in demographics with a massive exodus from the countryside to the city, which laid the foundation for the emergence of a middle class that enjoyed access to automobiles and modern appliances for the first time: "Once a mainly agrarian economy only partially integrated into Europe, Spain became part of the industrialized, urban, and consumer society of the West by the early 1970s" (Balfour 269).

Blood Is Thicker than Water

In 1973, when the Generalísimo—another of Franco's titles—was already more than eighty years old, he relinquished a portion of his iron grip on the nation to Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, whom he appointed to the position of prime minister, though Franco remained head of state and commander in chief of the military. Carrero Blanco was a staunch supporter of the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (FET de la JONS)—the sole party of Franco's regime, also called the Movimiento Nacional—and a man on whom Franco depended to carry on

his legacy after his death. And although Carrero Blanco was expected to play a key political role in the next dictatorship, Franco did not intend for him to become head of state, as that role was destined for a member of the royal Bourbon family. His plan, instead, was for Carrero Blanco to mentor and instruct Franco's chosen successor, but that plan failed when the Basque separatist group ETA assassinated the Admiral.[4] Although Franco was still alive at the time of Carrero Blanco's murder, the event delivered a fatal blow to the legacy of the regime:

> . . . Carrero Blanco was not only the general's prime minister but also his political heir, and the regime was now in its death-throes. Carrero Blanco seemed irreplaceable and his eventual successor, Arias Navarro, had neither political stature, nor much support. The government was bereft of political options, and those on whom it had relied for so long were looking for the continuity of the state, but not necessarily the survival of the regime. (Vincent 203)

In the aftermath of Carrero Blanco's death, Franco's choice of a successor became even more important. Franco understood that the best way to institutionalize his legacy was to project it onto the historical monarchy. The selection of Juan Carlos fictionalized the Movimiento Nacional as an arm of the monarchy, even though the Caudillo was not actually part of the Bourbon family. Nevertheless, a large contingency of monarchists had supported the *nacionales* in the civil war. For this reason, his Law of Succession (1947) stipulated the revival of the Bourbon monarchy but identified Franco as acting regent for the remainder of his life and conferred on him the right to appoint any successor he saw fit. Thus, with only one child—a daughter,[5] no less—it is not surprising that he ultimately named a member of the royal family as his heir. But in 1968, instead of

4. ETA detonated a bomb by remote control that it had placed in a tunnel under the street on which Carrero Blanco routinely returned from mass. The explosion was so powerful that it sent his Dodge 3700 over the roof of the San Francisco de Borga Church where he had just attended mass, causing it to land on the second-floor terrace of a nearby building.

5. In 1972, Juan Carlos's cousin Alfonso de Borbón–Dampierre wed Franco's eldest granddaughter, María del Carmen Martínez Bordiú. Franco's wife, Doña Carmen, nearly persuaded her husband to transfer the title of heir to Alfonso. Ultimately, the *Caudillo* selected Juan Carlos, which is surprising because the alternative would have assimilated descendants of the Franco and Bourbon families.

selecting the Count of Barcelona, Don Juan de Borbón, who was next in line to the throne,[6] Franco chose Juan's son, Juan Carlos, over whom he had been able to exert enormous influence.

The Caudillo's hope was that Juan Carlos, whose education he had helped direct, would be more likely to reinforce the dictatorship than Don Juan, who openly objected to the Francoist regime. At first it seemed that Juan Carlos intended to carry on as a dictator of the type Franco had been. When the Caudillo selected him, in 1968, Juan Carlos was obligated to swear allegiance to the Movimiento Nacional at a ceremony recognizing his designation as monarch and the next head of state. However, in his oath of loyalty to the regime, Juan Carlos announced his admiration to seek open horizons and hinted at a kinder view of those his audience might consider disloyal:

> 'I am very close to youth,' he [King Juan Carlos] told the ranks of elderly timeservers in front of him, 'I admire and I share their desire to seek a better, more genuine world. I know that in the rebelliousness that worries so many people there can be found the great generosity of those who want open horizons, often filled with unattainable dreams but always with the noble aspiration to a better world for all.' (Hooper 28)

When Juan Carlos became head of state, only those in his innermost circle were assured of his reformist ambitions. After all, he had been appointed by Franco, which left many Spaniards in doubt as to his true social and political intentions (Vincent 206). But Juan Carlos showed the world that blood is thicker than water. He put his own agenda into motion: a parliamentary monarchy of the kind that is father, Don Juan, had long advocated. Thereafter, he put into place social, political, and economic changes that would have surely had Franco turning in his grave. It can thus be said that Don Juan had

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6. Don Juan was the son of Alfonso XIII, the Spanish monarch who had supported Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and had fled to Rome when the Second Spanish Republic was declared on 14 April 1931.

the last laugh. The undoing of the dictatorship that the Generalísimo feared would occur had he named Don Juan king was to occur at the hand of Juan Carlos.

All that would not have been possible had Admiral Carrero Blanco not been murdered, because he was Franco's deeply-trusted prime minister and confidant, and would not have stepped aside as easily as his successor did (Phillips and Phillips 281). Indeed, Carlos Arias Navarro, Carrero Blanco's replacement, the last prime minister to serve Franco, was, "a helpless figure, but not one for which anyone felt much sympathy" (Hooper 29). Franco selected him, and Juan Carlos confirmed the appointment as the new head of state, but only because there were limited options from which to choose. According to the law of Franco's Movimiento Nacional, the king was obligated to select a prime minister from a list of three names drawn up by the Council of the Realm, an advisory body made up of seventeen men appointed by Franco. Juan Carlos knew he would not be offered a more viable candidate and so reluctantly allowed Arias Navarro to continue as prime minister. The king was bound to operate within that legal framework if he wished to avoid tipping the delicate balance of power needed to bring about democracy quickly and peacefully. At that moment, though, the fate of post-Franco democracy hinged on the selection of a new prime minister better suited to the task at hand.

That being said, Arias Navarro did more harm than good. Even though Franco had handpicked him, he was a political weakling at best, a man who could not gather the requisite support from Parliament needed to pass new laws. There were surges of civil unrest during his term in office—protests, strikes, and an uprising of Republican enthusiasm—at the public's perception that he dithered over changing Spain. One such instance occurred in March 1976, when police opened fire on protestors in Vitoria demanding their right to strike, killing five. This event provided a grim reminder of how easily Spain would return to a repressive autocracy if it did not have the right leaders.

The final blow to Arias Navarro's term as prime minister came when his proposal to legalize political parties nearly failed to collect the necessary votes in the *Cortes*, fully souring his relationship with Juan Carlos. Arias Navarro's leadership had been brief and ineffective. The king accepted his resignation on 1 July 1976, at which time Spain was still operating under Francoist law, even though the Caudillo had been dead for almost nine months.

Adolfo Suárez: From Appointment to Election

In the months leading up to his death, opposition to Franco fell into two camps: the communists of the Partido Comunista Español (PCE), who wanted a *ruptura democrática*, a clean break with the past, and the socialists of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), who favored a *ruptura pactada*, a negotiated pact with regime reformists who would be tolerant of gradual and careful reform. In spite of their differences, the two opposition parties were unified in their demands for full political amnesty, legalization of all political parties, free trade unions, abolishment of the Movimiento Nacional, and free elections (Lewis 171). But the idea of a *ruptura democrática* disheartened the Left after 1977, when the hasty approval of a series of economic accords—the Moncloa Pacts—did more to help the bourgeoisie than to benefit the average worker. Franco loyalists also organized into two camps: the *búnker*, which opposed any change in the Movimiento Nacional, and the *aperturistas*, who believed that the move to a parliamentary system of government was the only way they would be able to retain their power. The *aperturistas* accepted change so long as it came about slowly.

Juan Carlos's keen awareness of the situation led him to appoint Adolfo Suárez as the next prime minister, counting on his political adroitness and ability to bridge left and right in the effort to effect a democracy and simultaneously avoid civil or military upheaval. The Spanish people later affirmed the king's selection in the first democratic elections since 1936, which positioned Spain's transition to democracy in the political

center (Vincent 213). The king's choice was no random act but rather the result of a deliberate plan dating back to the final months of Franco's life, when he solicited from politicians and political figures opinions on strategies for instituting a democracy in Spain. Juan Carlos was highly impressed with Suárez's ideas and gregarious temperament. What is more, having already served as the director of state television and radio under Franco, he knew who the heavy hitters were within the camp of regime supporters and so possessed the background and contacts to negotiate changes from both extremes of the political spectrum, a task at which his predecessor had failed miserably:

> The more the future king considered him, the more Suárez seemed to fulfill the apparently contradictory requirements of the Prime Minister whose job it would be to change Spain from a dictatorship into a democracy. He had an intimate knowledge of the workings of the administration, yet he accepted that its reform could not be partial or gradual. What is more, he had enough personal appeal to be able to survive once democracy had been restored—he was from an inoffensively middle-class background, he was strikingly handsome, immaculately dressed, affable and thoroughly versed in the use of the media, having been Director-General of the state television and radio network. (Hooper 31)

The king turned to his former tutor and advisor Torcuato Fernández-Miranda, deputy prime minister under Carrero Blanco and later chairman of the Council of the Realm and speaker of the Cortes, in order to finagle Suárez's name onto the list of candidates from which he was to choose. Although many within the government criticized the decision, the king chose Suárez because he enjoyed the bilateral support—from the *búnker* and the *rupturistas* alike—that would be necessary to dissolve the Movimiento Nacional using its own procedures. Head of the newly formed Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD), Suárez won the election on 8 June 1977 by laying claim to 35% of popular vote and 47% of the seats in Parliament. Suárez swiftly attained a general consensus with the *búnker* and the democratic opposition in the form of a political reform bill that was overwhelmingly endorsed, via live telecast, on 15 December 1976:

> Scrupulous adherence to legality required that the law [of Political Reform] then be ratified by the national council of the

> single party, or *Movimiento*, and then passed by a two-thirds majority in the Cortes. This was achieved: on 18 November, 425 Cortes delegates voted the reform into existence and themselves out of it. (Vincent 212)

As Carr and Fusi point out, Suárez achieved the seemingly impossible task of forming Spain into a democracy using the legal instruments inherited from the Franco era (226). A new Cortes was democratically elected. Universal suffrage and a two-chamber parliamentary system were introduced. Other crucial reforms quickly followed, including the disbanding of the Movimiento Nacional, the freeing of political prisoners held by the former regime, the dissolution of its secret police, and the legalization of labor union activity, including the right to strike. Suárez saw these changes as necessary in order to bring Spain on par with the generally accepted political systems being implemented all over Europe in the years after World War II, but without tipping the balance that existed between the most fanatical elements of Spain's political equation.

In the years after democracy was restored, a two-party system, with the PSOE on the left and the Partido Popular (PP) on the right, prevailed in Spanish politics. This trend, which Jonathan Hopkin (13) describes as "majoritarian politics," reinforces Hooper's contention that despite the social, political, and economic upheaval of the civil war, the Franco dictatorship, and the ultimate restoration of democracy decades later, Spaniards nonetheless maintained their habitual partisan divisions.

> On the day following the first general election after General Franco's death, the newspaper *Diario 16* published an article comparing the number of votes cast for right and left in 1977 and 1936. The percentages were almost identical. Poignantly, the article was entitled 'Forty Years Wasted'. The consolidation since then of a two-party system only serves to underline the point—to the extent that there were 'two Spains,' they survived the *años de desarrollo* intact. What the boom years did was to make both of them wealthier and therefore more content and more tolerant. (Hooper 25)

The Movida in Madrid and Beyond

The arrival of democracy and modernity encouraged radical new forms of social and artistic expression which, had they occurred just a few years earlier while Franco was

alive, would have surely triggered a repressive backlash from the state. Politics aside, the Movida Madrileña was a time when the public finally had a chance to act on its hedonistic urges without the fear of being punished. It represents a time of euphoria and decadence shortly after Franco's death (1977–1985) when large cities throughout Spain put on heady displays of social and artistic excess. Sex, drugs, and rock and roll were the order of the day as people took to the streets to rejoice in the overdue arrival of modernity after decades of Francoist repression:

> La Movida fue un reflejo en la juventud urbana del deseo generalizado de libertad, de poder respirar sin corsés después de la triste y aburridísima dictadura de un general insubordinado. . . . (Lechado 15)

The Movida exhibited different qualities in different cities, but nowhere was its presence more felt than in Madrid. According to José Manuel Lechado, one reason for this is because Spain's capital was the test market for the newest releases of rock music, the lyrics of which inspired a party atmosphere there ahead of the other cities. Another is that Madrid is where Franco left the most lasting impression and therefore the place where people were most eager to celebrate the end of his reign (32). But coming to terms with that past—one which most would rather forget—would take a number of years. The Movida Madrileña arose slowly over several years, perhaps even before the Caudillo's demise. Nevertheless, Lechado cites 1977 as his estimate of when it began, as that was the year when the popular rock band Kaka de Luxe released its first album:

> Hay quien dice que la Movida pudo empezar oficialmente con el primer trabajo discográfico de Kaka de Luxe en 1977, o incluso con el concierto de homenaje a Canito, el batería de Tos, en febrero de 1980, pero, hitos aparte, desde luego no fue algo que surgiera de la nada, y menos aún de la noche a la mañana. (Lechado 15)

Experimentation with sex, drugs, and rock music brought with it a further experimentation and revision of the gender roles that had existed for so long under Franco. The idea that marriage was a strict contract in which man was considered lord of the manor and woman a domestic servant began to unravel:

> Hombres y mujeres muy jóvenes comienzan a tratarse en este plano de igual a igual, olvidando las relaciones de compra-venta del matrimonio tradicional, el esquema que todos veíamos en casa, con el padre-productor y la madre-empleada/puta-doméstica. (Lechado 15)

For the first time in nearly four decades it had become acceptable to consider both sexes as having equal footing. In addition, physical relations between the sexes were being seen as having purpose beyond just marital procreation. People of all ages experimented with extramarital sex as casual recreation, arriving at the conclusion that it was not a crime but a normal and natural expression of the attraction between two people (Lechado 20).

With these newer notions about sexuality emerged a greater tolerance toward people of alternative ways of life as well. Whereas under Franco homosexuality was considered a crime, the alternative scene in Madrid during this time welcomed people of various sexual and social orientations. For instance, the acclaimed film director Pedro Almodóvar—a homosexual who sang in glam-rock parody duos with Fabio McNamara—later become one of the most celebrated and renowned figures of his generation.

By the 1980s, the glam, punk-rock, and new-wave musicians like David Bowie, Depeche Mode, the Cure, Queen, and even Kiss who had found traction in Spain in the 1980s were already passé in other countries such as the United Kingdom. In this sense, the Movida was about image, but it did not seek to be original; it did, however, bring a breath of fresh air to a country that had smelled rancid for far too long. It called attention to what was happening in the spaces beyond Spain's borders, even if that meant acknowledging the fact that the nation was behind the times. Anything that rang of eclecticism and modernity—or had been popular elsewhere—found its way to the Iberian Peninsula (Lechado 31).

A case in point is the unmediated consumption of alcohol and drugs by many in Spain during the 1980s; substances were consumed beyond moderation in order to enhance the exhilaration that accompanied this reinvention of Spanish society:

> En aquella época la droga—pese a quien pese—era condición *sine qua non*, igual que las borracheras. Se bebía, se fumaba, se

> esnifaba . . . y se alardeaba de ello. Siguiendo el ejemplo de Lou Reed, que se picaba en público durante sus actuaciones, o de Eric Clapton, que cantaba de *Cocaine*, el que no se drogaba—o el que decía que no se drogaba—era un *pringao*: no estaba en el Rollo ni en la Movida. . . . (Lechado 25)

Marijuana use was common among hippies. In the neighborhoods concentrated with poorer, more politically committed populations, heroin became equally popular. The use of cocaine within posh crowds, however, skyrocketed above that of all other intoxicants. Each of these substances, it seemed, assumed a particular place and position within an increasingly stratified society: "Desde luego la droga tuvo su puntillo de lucha de clases: birra y porros para todos; garrafón, vino de cartón—que jamás vio una uva—y caballo para los más proletas; coca y whisky de marca para los pijos" (Lechado 24). Thus, the category of intoxicant one used during the Movida was indicative of one's socioeconomic position. Drugs and alcohol had become political commodities in and of themselves.

In a bald-faced attempt to control national politics, the Spanish government turned a blind eye to narcotics trafficking in neighborhoods that posed the greatest threat of political destabilization:

> Resulta curioso que la heroína se distribuyera con tanta facilidad en zonas caracterizadas por su compromiso político, como Vallecas o las áreas industriales del País Vasco, y no faltó quien dijera que esa difusión clasista del jaco no era casual: las autoridades, en los delicados tiempos de la Transición, preferían drogadictos consumidos antes que revolucionarios. (Lechado 24)

According to Lechado, allowing heroin to flow into working-class neighborhoods helped quash a revolutionary militancy that might have otherwise tipped a delicate social and political balance. The channels of addiction became a useful tool with which Spain's democratic leadership suppressed threats of popular insurrection.

The Movida was therefore less about political ambivalence than its participants claimed it to be. Partygoers declared themselves apolitical in order to avoid facing the unpleasant reality that they had been excluded from the political process of the transition. While some speak of popular mobilizations or of the liberties that the people secured by

fighting on their own behalf, the fact remains that Spain's transition to a post-Franco democracy evolved only at the highest levels of leadership. The voice of the people was not heard (Lechado 34). The Spanish people therefore took to the streets to party because it was the only thing left to do. Eventually, though, the exhilaration wore thin and a hangover set in:

> Pocos años después [de la Movida] la frustración de las esperanzas políticas, la carencia de expectativas personales y laborales y la gran crisis del petróleo de los setenta hicieron que muchos jóvenes, habitantes de los suburbios industriales y las ciudades-dormitorio, comenzaron a experimentar de manera no tan festiva con el *caballo* y, también, la cocaína, cuyos efectos a largo plazo resultaron menos inocuos de lo previsto. (Lechado 21)

But the younger Generation X that Lechado refers to in the above passage would inherit an addiction to a party that had already ended.

Moncloa Pacts, Constitution, 23-F, and Socialist Landslide

But in the immediate years after Franco's death, the most pressing conundrum the new parliamentary monarchy faced was popular unrest arising from uncontrolled inflation (Carr and Fusi 233). As Vincent explains, the uncertain fate of what was to come of Franco's political remnants antagonized the public sphere, which responded with waves of strikes, demonstrations, and riots. The uncertain fate of the transition called into question the nature of the relationship between the state and its citizenry, who responded in 1976 with the largest ever spate of strikes in Spanish history (Vincent 208). The fact was that the political imperative of the late 1970s diverted political leaders' attention from the direction of economic policy. As a result, inflation had risen to twenty-nine percent, there was a deficit in the balance of payments, and the peseta had recently been devalued (Vincent 215).

In order to reassure the public that Spain's new democratic government possessed the wherewithal to stabilize the national economy—in particular, that it could contain wage increases and reduce strike activity—Suárez convinced the leaders of Spain's

recently legalized PSOE and PCE parties to agree to earnings caps in exchange for enhanced measures to control inflation. The instruments that emerged in late 1977 from the UCD-PSOE-PCE negotiations resulted in the Moncloa Pacts that, as mentioned above, favored the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. According to Víctor Pérez Díaz, the Moncloa Pacts incorporated an implicit commitment on the part of party leaders to reduce conflict in exchange for a more even distribution of wealth and unemployment benefits once the economy improved (222). Because of the basically stagnant economic situation, though, the government did little to redistribute wealth as it had promised, even though the PSOE and PCE leaders who signed off on the pacts fulfilled their end of the bargain by convincing the unions to reduce their strike activity.

The pacts incorporated limits of 20%–22% on wage increases while inflation was holding steadily at 29% (Vincent 334). They also restricted credit and cut public spending. Shortly thereafter, a wave of bankruptcies and factory closings occurred, which drove up unemployment from 7% to 13%. The very workers who had assumed that their representative in the PSOE and the PCE were prepared to play hardball with Suárez's government—to negotiate higher wages, more jobs, and a higher standard of living—were sorely disappointed. The Moncloa Pacts crushed their dreams of improved living and working conditions: "The Moncloa Pacts thus sealed the fate of the transition. Talk of a *ruptura democrática* after the end of 1977 became stigmatized as immature political fantasy" (Lewis 174). What is more, neither party consulted its membership before accepting the terms of the Moncloa Pacts. In the lead-up to the negotiations, members of labor unions thought that they might finally have a seat at the bargaining table—never a possibility under Franco, nor was it made possible by the decisions of party representatives who were supposed to serve their electorate's best interests.

> Neither the PSOE nor the PCE bothered to consult the rank and file of their unions before agreeing to the Moncloa Pacts' harmful wage limits and spending cuts. Union members had been stripped of the opportunity to collectively evaluate a set of economic terms clearly not in their best interest. (Lewis 174)

The negative consequences of the Moncloa Pacts for the average Spanish worker were twofold: on the one hand, they quashed the labor movement's aspiration to have a voice in politics; on the other, they vindicated a free-market strategy of economic development for post-Franco Spain. The pacts reduced strike activity at the cost of soaring unemployment as employers took advantage of labor union flexibility in order to bypass worker-protection legislation established early on in the dictatorship (Lewis 174).

The Moncloa Pacts signaled a point of no return for the ideological left, setting in motion a capitalist agenda for Spain that was further reinforced by a referendum on the current constitution, during which neither the PSOE nor the PCE argued their ideological positions (Lewis 174). When the constitution was ratified in of 1978, it became one of the most liberal in Europe, the first in the nation's history that did not impose a unilateral ideology:

> Since the beginning of the previous century, Spain had no fewer than eleven [constitutions.] The main reason why none had worked was that each had been drafted and imposed by one particular group with little or no regard to the views of anyone outside it. This time, however, the job of drawing up a new constitution was entrusted to a parliamentary commission representing all the major national parties and the most important regional ones. (Hooper 37)

The 1978 constitution defines Spain as a parliamentary monarchy with a powerful executive, sanctifies the right to private property, recognizes the army's role in protecting constitutional order, obligates the central government to cooperate with the Catholic Church, forbids an official religion, and outlaws the death penalty. It also fixes the voting age at eighteen, separates church and state, and begins the process of what Mary Vincent describes as "asymmetric devolution" (220).

Franco was an ardent advocate of a strong central government, which stifled the cultural and linguistic diversity of Spain's regional nationalities at the same time as he subordinated their civic authority to the regime headquartered in Madrid. But this all changed in the final months of the dictatorship and the first years of the monarchy, when

Spain was gripped by what Hooper (35) and Vincent (220) describe as "autonomy fever." Once the dictatorship ended, the glue holding the nation together seemed to have lost its strength.

> All of a sudden, it seemed, everyone wanted home rule. Not just those with a distinct language and culture such as the Basques, Catalans and Galicians, but also the inhabitants of such areas as Estremadura, Andalusia, and the Canary Islands, whose Spanishness had never previously been questioned. (Hooper 35)

The former regime's staunch position on the issue of Spain's culturally and linguistically distinct regions fostered in the minds of most people an association between unity and repression, on the one hand, and the recognition of regional differences as an acknowledgment of freedom, on the other (Hooper 35–36).

For all Spaniards, freedom implied recognition of the historic communities, which the 1978 constitution does by sharing power between the central government and the autonomous communities:

> The constitutional compromise and the subsequent autonomy statutes could not have been seen by anyone as an end to the problem but they did suggest the beginning of a solution. This in itself, however, was difficult for those diehard, centralizing Castilian nationalists for whom the unity of Spain was still couched in Francoist terms. And the highest concentration of such nationalists was to be found in the military, which remained an unresolved question for democracy in Spain. (Vincent 221)

The constitution affords each autonomous community the power to select its own president, government, legislature, and supreme court. It also stipulates those areas of government that can be handed off to the local level, for instance housing, agriculture, urban planning, sports tourism, and social services. Finally, it delineates the areas that the central government in Madrid controls exclusively: foreign affairs, external trade, defense matters, the administration of justice, merchant shipping, and civil aviation.

Helen Graham and Antonio Sánchez's alternative view of the impact of the 1978 constitution characterizes the division of Spain into autonomous communities as an

anachronistic solution to tensions between ardent conservatives who wished to maintain Spain's political and territorial integrity and, on the other side, their opponents who believed in differing degrees of regional devolution. Given that Franco had achieved an integrated national economy long before the end of dictatorship, the authors explain, the economic imperatives that stirred regional sentiments no longer held true (Graham and Sánchez 408). They further describe the regional solution as a ticking "time bomb," because the regions are ill suited to the production categories of late capitalism that paint Spain as a postmodern experience in which the archaic and the modern coexist (410).

Suárez's campaign to politically empower the regions created dissent among members of the military for what they saw as the fatal dissection of the nation into autonomous communities.

> In just over four years, one of the most centralized nations on earth had been carved into seventeen self-governing administrative units, each with its own flag and capital. (Hooper 43)

The army might intervene in the name of a higher power, it was supposed, in order to restore central unity to the nation. Thus, the rumor that Hooper describes as circulating the chilly November morning that Franco died almost came true:

> . . . the gloomiest yet most plausible was that the government would sooner or later be overwhelmed by an outburst of popular frustration. At that point, the armed forces—which had much to lose and little to gain from the introduction of democracy—would step in to 'restore order', possibly in the name of a higher authority. From then on, so the theory went, Spain would settle into a pattern well known to the Latin American nations (and which was set in Spain during the previous century)—phases of limited reform alternating with outbursts of savage repression. (Hooper 26–27)

That is almost what happened just short of six years later, in the short window between Suárez's resignation as prime minister and Calvo-Sotelo's election as his replacement, when Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero, acting on the orders of the more senior commanders, Lieutenant-General Jaime Milans del Bosch and Major-General Alfonso Armada, led a group of 200 armed soldiers into the Congress of deputies and

held members of the Cortés at gunpoint for nearly twenty-four hours. When they entered, everyone in the room dove for cover except for three people: Adolfo Suárez, Santiago Carrillo, leader of the PCE, and General Manuel Mellado (Phillips and Phillips 283).

Shortly thereafter, Milans del Bosch ordered tanks onto the streets of Valencia and declared a state of emergency. But it was Juan Carlos who worked as feverishly to foil the attempted coup as those who worked to bring it to fruition. Dressed in full military regalia as captain general of the armed forces, the highest military rank in Spain, he appeared on national television and publically denounced the rebels who had turned against the monarchy—and against democracy. He then contacted the other eleven captains general to assure them that the coup attempt did not enjoy his support as the conspirators had claimed. In this way, the king usurped the rebel general Armada's intent to act as an intermediary between the monarch and the rebels (Vincent 223).

In the end, the conspirators backed down and the government prevailed. The members of the military who had tried to overtake the government were convicted and jailed. The 23-F affair proved that Juan Carlos could outflank fanatical elements within the military that sought to unravel the basic tenets of post-Franco democracy and freedom. With prison sentences of thirty years each, Tejero, de la Bosch, and Armada quickly understood that neither the political nor the popular will would tolerate a return to military dictatorship. Juan Carlos also understood—and he made this clear to the highest ranking members of the military who supported him—that any future attempts to destabilize democracy would begin with his own assassination. Quite literally, therefore, the 23-F affair bound his survival to the strength of post-Franco democracy.

In the aftermath of the 23-F affair, Spain geared up for another general election, and in 1982, its results indicated a landslide victory for the Spanish Socialist Party, the POSE, elevating its leader, Felipe González, to the position of prime minister, a job he would hold for the next fourteen years. However, the promise of change on which it ran—its campaign slogan had been "El Cambio" ("The Change")—was a more moderate

and progressive version of the resolute Marxist ideology upon which Pablo Iglesias had founded the party back in 1879. In fact, three years earlier, in 1979, González temporarily resigned his leadership as secretary general in an effort to coerce his supporters to drop the party's Marxist designation, an ultimately successful bid to reposition the PSOE left of center and enhance its appeal to voters. He only reassumed his role as secretary general after the party agreed to amend its official constitution in recognition of the change. The longer González held office, though, the more his repositioning of the party seemed to creep right:

> The Spaniards who had cast their votes for Felipe González and his team in 1982 had not opted for red-blooded socialism, and it would be unfair to judge their performance in government on that criterion. What the electorate wanted was modernization. . . . But by the time Spain became a member [of the European Community] at the start of 1986, there was a growing realization that the Socialists had brought with them into office a number of attitudes and practices at variance with what many of those who had voted for them had assumed they represented. (Hooper 48)

One of the reasons the PSOE enjoyed a landslide victory in 1982, Balfour explains, is because the electorate had been outraged by the 23-F. There was also a loss of consensus among members of the UCD (278). Furthermore, according to Hooper, if the military could not be persuaded to relax its views—even with a consensus-minded leader like Suárez in power—then it may as well choose the PSOE, which had claimed an even greater commitment to social change (44). Whereas Suárez had governed by consensus, the election of González foreshadowed major social changes looming on the horizon, a general attitude explaining an election result that catapulted the so-called Generation of 1968 to power for the first time ever in Europe.

Now stripped of a Marxist designation, the PSOE began to practice the sort of Reaganesque trickle-down economics that was expected to cause wealth to distribute down among socioeconomic classes. According to this line of reasoning, there was no

need for regulation; the generation of wealth at the top would inevitably lead to an improvement in the circumstances of those at the bottom:

> But what distinguished Spain's 'social democrats' from other counterparts in the rest of Europe was their reluctance to countenance a policy aimed at the deliberate redistribution of wealth. The consistent goal of economic policy under González's governments was absolute growth, in the expectation that wealth would spill down the social pyramid without the need for government intervention. (Hooper 56)

The PSOE also implemented austerity measures, such as the closing of factories and unprofitable state enterprises, which corrected the ailing national economy to some degree. In the mid-1980s, several factors led to widespread economic growth; these included a drop in oil prices, increased tourism, and an expansion in the influx of foreign capital into the nation. As a result, Spain's economy grew without noticeable fiscal constraints, mainly due to the requirement of foreign competition mandated by the European Community, of which it was by that time a member.

Despite this boom in the 1980s, the Spanish economy was far from perfect. By 1993, its unemployment rate of twenty-three percent was the highest in the European Union. Throughout the 1990s, various scandals exposing the exploitation of public office for the purposes of private gain indicated corruption at the highest levels of socialist government and created a blockage in the very flow of wealth that formed the underlying basis of the aforesaid economic model. Members of the banking industry with ties to government—Mario Conde, Miguel Boyer, Carlos Solchaga, Marco Rubio—initiated a frenzy of media gossip when they were photographed at lavish parties in Madrid and in resort towns along Spain's Costa del Sol. The press began to call them *los beautiful people*. González's administration also dipped into the public purse through the creation of a good-old boys network that channeled funds to ex-politicians who began to surface as consultants in alarming numbers:

> Sleaze, in the form of commissions, backhanders, nepotism, and jobs for the boys, had been a common feature of Spanish political and financial life under Franco and could be found

> amongst many parties and in business circles. It was particularly damaging to the socialists, who had built their reputation on honesty. (Balfour 278)

The public's general impression was that much of the accumulation of wealth put on display by the businessmen and high-ranking politicians associated with the PSOE was unearned and undeserved. These former-politicians-turned-consultants had encountered success in stock speculation, which, Hooper explains, was easier and more profitable than running a business because market prices were already kept high as a way to attract foreign investment (55).[7] Additionally, Spain joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1982, after membership was won by a narrow margin in a national referendum one year earlier. Membership raised GDP four percent between 1986 and 1999.

Slowly but surely, by putting party members in charge of everything from the head of state-run companies to the most rudimentary public offices, the administration invalidated its claim to be the party of change—the platform on which it had catapulted to national prominence. The PSOE emerged, instead, as a new class of upwardly mobile professionals whose only road to private wealth and social status was through political indiscretion. They billed their platform as the only viable option open to Spain given its constitutional system, the need to integrate with Europe, Spain's underdeveloped nature, the threat of a military backlash, and the problem of modernizing the country (Lewis 177).

Examples abound:[8] Deputy Prime Minister Alfonso Guerra allowed his brother, Juan, to occupy the premises of an official PSOE party office in Seville and to collect a

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7. A conspicuous example of such foreign investment includes the imposing KIO Towers, office buildings in Madrid constructed between 1989 and 1996. In December 1992, the Kuwaiti Investment Office (KIO) lost its investment in the then-incomplete construction project when it entered receivership amid accusations of fraud.

8. See Paul Heywood's article "Sleaze in Spain" for a thorough accounting of these and similar instances of PSOE corruption.

salary as his assistant, even though Juan did not hold public office. Guerra resigned in 1991, in the aftermath of the investigations. The GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación) scandal also captured the public's attention in 1988 when judicial proceedings were held against two police officers accused of involvement in the assassinations of ETA supporters and personnel. An investigation would subsequently reveal that government-sponsored GAL death squads perpetuated the murders of twenty-seven suspected terrorists between 1983 and 1987, possibly with government authorization. Finally, the so-called Filesa affair revealed that the PSOE created fraudulent companies—Filesa, Malesa, and Time-Export—to fund its 1989 national campaign. Indeed, scandal overtook the PSOE's once-sterling image.

As Spain headed into the mid-1990s, banking and business interests began to expand their investments into the rest of Europe and Latin America. With increased investment abroad came a reciprocal influx of tourists to Spain, as well as a corresponding increase in drug traffic and legal and illegal immigration from Africa and Latin American (Phillips and Phillips 291). At the same time, that looser worldview ushered in a new era in the arts in Spain. Literature, art, and cinema reflected the plural and open society Spain had become after dictatorship ended (Fusi 680). Fusi attributes this change in no small part to the relaxation of censorship. The Ministry of Culture, he explains (675), created back in 1977 for the purpose of promoting films, libraries, music, theater, and museums, financed cultural enterprises of all types for which private investment was insufficient, thus breaking with the Franco regime's unitary cultural ideology:

> En otras palabras, los principios últimos de la cultura democrática eran claros: neutralidad cultural del Estado y reconocimiento del pluralismo cultural de la sociedad civil. (Fusi 676–77)

A similar promotion was seen in conferrals of literary prices to writers with diverse identities, including those of Cataluña, Galicia, and the Basque country (Fusi 695).

This widening of Spain's cultural field brought with it a rift between Spaniards over and under thirty years of age. Fusi characterizes a younger generation with its own tastes for music, clothing, comics, video games, video clips, and violent films typical of the American director Quentin Tarantino (b. 1963):

> En la década de 1990 empezaron a cristalizar ya de forma evidente los cambios generacionales que se habían ido produciendo desde la transición a la democracia. . . . Para entonces, unos diez millones de españoles habían nacido después de 1975. El tipo de preocupaciones políticas, morales, históricas y estéticas que habían impregnado a generaciones anteriores—y singularmente a las generaciones modeladas por el espíritu a la oposición al régimen de Franco . . . eran, para las generaciones jóvenes de la transición, literalmente inexistentes. (Fusi 710)

The writers under thirty whom Fusi describes above—those of Spain's Generation X—degrade culture, he explains, into a series of unauthentic social spectacles on par with fashion, far enough removed from authenticity so as to efface the separation between high and low (712–13).

CHAPTER I
IN THE SPANISH CENTER:
THE ADOLESCENT DISCOURSE AND URBAN CONDITION OF JOSÉ ÁNGEL MAÑAS'S *CIUDAD RAYADA*

As José Ángel Mañas's *Ciudad rayada* (1998) begins, the narrator and protagonist of the novel—a seventeen-year-old rough-and-tough drug dealer named Káiser—usurps the position of the real author, José Ángel Mañas (b. Madrid, 1971), and establishes himself, instead, as the architect of the novel. He does this by slandering a character named "José Ángel Mañas," whom he dismisses as a wily and unreliable drunkard:

> Mira, tío, tú no sabes nada de mí, vale. Y si sabes algo es porque has leído una de las novelas del Mañas, que se dedica a contar historias de los demás, pero te aseguro que hay un mogollón de cosas que exagera y otras tantas que el muy listo se calla. Anda que no sé yo cosas sobre él que nunca cuenta, y te podría contar más de una. (9)

Mañas's character turns to Káiser to procure an illegal firearm for him, which he wants as protection from unknown individuals who have been making threatening calls to his home. And though the protagonist has the black-market connections to carry out that type of transaction, he flat-out refuses to do it because the inebriated José Ángel strikes him as untrustworthy:

> . . . es un tío de esos que nunca mira a la cara y por tanto de quien no te puedes fiar ni un pelo. . . .
>
> Ahí está, ahí tienes al Mañas, puesto hasta las muelas y queriendo pillar una pipa. ¿Eso lo ha contado en alguna de sus novelas? ¿No, verdad? Pues hazme caso, que lo que cuenta él no es nada comparado con lo que pasa por ahí. (10–11)

Thus, the opening scene of the novel quashes Mañas's credibility and shifts narrative agency to Káiser. It also invites readers to pay close attention to what the protagonist has to say in the upcoming narrative because, it is implied, his subsequent revelations about Madrid's youth underworld will be equally frank.

Káiser's ability to navigate the urban geography and spatial design of Spain's capital certifies an otherwise incredulous account of what he says about its subcultural

depths. His frank descriptions of the city simulate a sensational physical journey through its real streets, monuments, neighborhoods, and landmarks. Because his remarks are made with such pinpoint precision, it follows that his concomitant descriptions of its subculture will be frank, and just as accurate.[9] A narrator and tour guide, Káiser not only shows us this space but also teaches us how to conduct ourselves while in it: ". . . se puede decir que *Tetralogía Kronen* contiene toda la información necesaria para ir de picos pardos en Madrid" (Gil Casado 92). He does this by comingling the narration with asides to readers explaining the way he acts, which—it is implied—is the example of an expert, one that we should follow. In order to build credibility and to further persuade us to believe what he says, Káiser frequently addresses us with the informal Castilian *¿sabes*? as a reminder that he is the one speaking and fully intertwining his destiny with ours. Káiser's authority extends beyond even his usurpation of Mañas's rightful role. He is all seeing, an omnipotent narrator with a God complex who describes episodes that lie beyond his logical purview, such as conversations in which other characters speak about him behind his back. In so doing, the union he creates with us in the opening pages strengthens as the novel progresses.

Mañas divides *Ciudad rayada* into four parts. In the first, "El palo," we meet Káiser, the teenage dropout who sells cocaine in Madrid's youth underworld. He begins the narration with a lengthy and retrospective account of a failed robbery attempt carried out by two of his acquaintances, Tijuana and Gonzalo. They hit the jewelry store owned by Gonzalo Solozábal, Sr., the latter's father and a wealthy politician with ties to the upper echelons of Spain's Socialist Party. The younger Gonzalo had thought that the store's valuable inventory would be easy pickings. But during the attempted robbery, an

9. Káiser guides readers through a hell landscape in much the same way as Dante's Virgil does in the *Inferno*. I further explore the connection between Dante and Spain's Generation X narrative in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, where I analyze Pedro Maestre's (b. 1967) *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* (1996).

armed employee shot Tijuana, who later dies. The section continues by recounting other disparate recollections of the cultural milieu brought to light throughout the remainder of the novel.

Káiser describes himself as small in stature but generally feared by his clients, who know that he does not issue idle threats and that his methods of reprisal are swift and severe. He seems to suffer from a Napoleon complex, as well as a Machiavellian desire to be feared. These aspects of his character serve him well in his black-market drug-trafficking business. So in the second part of the novel, "Muvis con Gonzalo," when Gonzalo begins to poach his customers in order to earn enough money to repay the feared loan shark, el Nacle, Káiser demands that he stop. But Gonzalo refuses, insulting Káiser in the process. The protagonist then shoots him in the leg and leaves him to die a short while later. As a result, a corrupt police sergeant, el Barbas, so named because of his heavy facial hair—the same cop who had investigated the jewelry heist in Mirasierra and has been involved in drug dealings with Káiser's father—easily deduces who killed the young Solozábal. Earlier, el Barbas had warned the protagonist that Gonzalo was competing with him but that he should not seek retribution, as the elder Solozábal possesses the power to curtail their lucrative but illegal capitalist enterprise. Nevertheless, the protagonist ignores the warning, believing his own father could tame el Barbas if need be.

No matter how Machiavellian Káiser purports to be, his youth and inexperience become apparent when after the shooting he agrees to meet with el Barbas, who is accompanied by another person whom the protagonist does not know. The cop is out to punish Káiser for disobeying his instructions. The two men beat him badly and then drive him to the fringes of the city near the gypsy slums across the Emetreinta highway. At el Barbas's behest, Káiser is to leave Madrid at once: "—¡Como te vuelva a pillar la próxima vez no lo cuentas!, ¿te enteras? ¡Y que no se te ocurra aparecer por ningún sitio en una buena temporada! ¡Corre ya, leches!" (159). But in order to comply, Káiser must

first find someone to drive him back to his sales territory in Madrid where he can collect some of the debts owed to him, as well as the provisions necessary to subsist on the run, which include money and a gun.

The third part of the novel, "Menudo finde," begins with the protagonist lost near the Emetreinta highway and badly injured from el Barbas's surprise assault. As he regains his senses, he searches the slums there for the gypsy, Chalo, one of his suppliers, who, he is confident, will help if given a financial motive. Káiser witnesses a huge commotion between Chalo and his wife just as he approaches their settlement, where young urban professionals are waiting in long lines to purchase the cocaine that the gypsies process and sell on site. It turns out that Chalo's wife had just discovered that he had been unfaithful to her again, and so she attacks him in front of everyone present. A short while later, after Chalo has calmed down, he invites Káiser for a ride in his car to get high. After some time together the protagonist asks him for a ride back in to the city. Chalo eventually agrees. But the client who owes Káiser money cannot pay the entire debt, so the protagonist accepts a stolen car in lieu of cash, and sneaks away without Chalo knowing. In exile he is at the mercy of other characters, turning to them for transportation, refuge, and, as luck would have it, a clientele to purchase the drugs he always carries around in his backpack.

In that stolen vehicle he heads to Galicia, a drug corridor where his father is traveling on business, in order to strategize how to best deal with the threat from el Barbas. But on the way out of town he heads the wrong way, the stolen car breaks down, and he is stranded on the highway until a merciful, mustached man drives Káiser to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, where the man's elderly mother feeds the protagonist lunch. This woman, whom Káiser nicknames "Yoda" because of her wrinkled skin, tries to nurture the teenage drug dealer, which completely backfires on her. He eats her food and uses her phone to try to reach his father. But when an unknown woman answers in Pontevedra, she introduces herself and then passes the phone to a housekeeper who informs the

protagonist that his father has already left Galicia, bound for Venezuela. Stunned and shaken by his father's unannounced departure, the traumatized Káiser suddenly steals money from Yoda's wardrobe before sneaking away undetected by her or her mustached son.

From there he hitches a ride to the Festimad rock concert in Móstoles with a heavy drug user named Luis, the drummer who replaced David in the band featured in Mañas's earlier novel, *Mensaka* (1995). Through a series of other hitched rides, Káiser eventually steals and smokes his way back to Madrid. Upon return to the city, he seeks out el Barbas and observes from afar as someone shoots the crooked cop dead in order to pilfer the narcotics he had been carrying on his person. The novel ends with Káiser and his girlfriend, Tula, in an amusement park, where Káiser provides details about what has come of the other characters. He ends the novel hoping that the 1990s last forever, since in the year 2000 he will turn twenty-two, which is when he claims youth ends.

In the Shadow of the Kronen: The Critical Response

Madrid native José Ángel Mañas's scandalous reception and immense popularity have secured a momentous place for him in the literary lineage of Spain and the rest of the world. Jorge Pérez credits him with spearheading the genesis of a new moment in Spanish letters:

> José Ángel Mañas continúa atrayendo la atención crítica como el estandarte de la denominada «Generación X» española, promoción de escritores cuyas señas de identidad han sido definidas sobre la base de su supuesta desvinculación con la tradición literaria nacional. ("Suspiros de España" 33)

It seems clear that Mañas's ability to write is due in no small part to an early intellectual formation based heavily on reading, writing, and cultural study. José Ángel and his sister attended an English private elementary school where bilingual fluency was developed at an early age. Later he attended the Universidad Autónoma of Madrid, graduating in 1993 with a degree in history. Two of his five college years included study-abroad experiences:

one in Sussex, England, and the other in Grenoble, France (Gullón and Martínez-Carazo 143).

Simple plots about characters with visceral attachments to Madrid are the hallmarks of Mañas's entire Generation X oeuvre, his "tetralogía Kronen," which includes *Historias del Kronen* (1994), *Mensaka* (1995), and *Sonko95* (1999), as well as *Ciudad rayada* (1998). But according to Dieter Ingenschay, it is in *Ciudad* where the ubiquitous and anthropomorphic presence of Madrid is most felt:

> Just as in *Historias del Kronen* (and even more explicitly), the action depends on the metropolis as its indispensable backdrop; Madrid is present throughout the entire text, playing an increasingly significant role in the novel's second part. (135)

Ingenschay also cites the novel as an example of the way Madrid is represented as a nostalgic and postmodern non-place (137).[10]

Ciudad defines characters as drug abusers who prefer international over local culture and, most importantly, express ambivalence about their nation's sociopolitical condition. Considering that the plot is built around characters with agendas that routinely include the sale and use of narcotics, the critics Germán Gullón and Cristina Martínez-Carazo describe the novel as transfiguring the ritual of *salir de copas* into a juvenile delinquent *ir de marcha* (144–45). Within that context of this constant movement, there have been unsuccessful efforts to associate the novel with the Movida, that transgressive and hedonistic counterculture that erupted in the 1980s to celebrate the end of Francoism (Gullón and Martínez-Carazo 143; Lenquette 349).

The new "imaginary, fragmented urban reality" that appears in Mañas's Kronen tetralogy could be seen, according to Jorge Pérez, to represent either the return of what

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10. Marc Augé's theory of "non-place," which underlies my reading of Lucía Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* in chapter 2 of this dissertation, characterizes the spaces associated with international transit—airports, bus terminals, customs controls—as impersonal zones where the only form of human contact is with one's isolated self.

had been repressed by the regime or the political betrayal of the PSOE, which became more progressive ahead of the party's election to national office for the first time in 1982. But the characters in *Ciudad* make every attempt to obliterate their awareness of history and render their frenzied interchanges with space incompatible with the past. Unlike Vania, for example, the protagonist of Gabriela Bustelo's *Veo veo*, who knows the Movida well, they are not aware of the monumental political changes that have occurred in Spain over the two decades since the country emerged from the ashes of dictatorship as a parliamentary monarchy.

Further critical reflection regarding the novel can be seen in "Dos proyectos narrativos en la pluralidad narrativa," where German Gullón redefines *neorrealismo*, the term he first used to describe characters' shallow decadence in *Historias del Kronen*, as *hiperrealismo,* which, he explains, better reflects the core elements of daily social life found in *Ciudad rayada*. This supports his assessment of *Ciudad* as Mañas's best novel to date:

> Su siguiente novela, *Ciudad rayada*, su mejor novela, tampoco tuvo la repercusión esperada, y el escritor achacó esto en parte a la escasa propaganda de la obra hecha por la editorial Espasa Calpe, aunque en realidad la ausencia de crítica, la dureza con que su obra había usado en la primera entrega, fueron, en mi opinión, los causantes determinantes. ("Dos proyectos" 276)

Gullón also believes that the novel—though it uses local vocabulary and linguistic patterns—is universally accessible to an audience without regular access to and knowledge of the youth dynamic in contemporary Madrid ("La novela neorrealista" 278). His phonemic transfiguration of Castilian slang to indicate moments in the text when the narrator is high on drugs is a case in point. As Ana Corbalán points out, the imitation of oral speech patterns and slang, as well as the rejection of literary convention, casts this novel and the others belonging to Mañas's Generation X oeuvre in an original aesthetic light. For instance, a Castilian speaker from Madrid, contemporaneous in age to the protagonist, could verify that the oral register in the novel conforms to local vernacular in use when the novel takes place. Similarly, any reader familiar with the layout of the

Spanish capital could verify the authenticity of the physical topography Mañas maps and the social dynamics he portrays. It can be said that the author challenges us to find inconsistencies, knowing that he knows this physical and social terrain as well as anyone.

Jorge Pérez suggests that the gypsy presence in the novel harks back to the Spanish realist tradition of Luis Martín-Santos's (1924–64) *Tiempo de silencio* (1962) (*El retorno de lo real* 238). Pérez sees the similar ingress of these two novels into subcultural territory in terms of both physical and social defilement as an illustration that very little has disrupted the stratification of Spanish society even after nearly four decades of dictatorship have paved a new path to democracy:

> Es decir, la sociedad madrileña de finales de siglo sigue escondiendo estos submundos y, sobre todo, mantiene la incomunicación entre las clases. El mundo de las chabolas de gitanos que describe Káiser representa un sector de la sociedad como el Muecas y su familia en *Tiempo de silencio*. (242–43)

Elaborating upon the theory of "figural causation" articulated by Eric Auerbach, Pérez also utilizes points of contact between *Ciudad* and *Tiempo* to suggest that Mañas subconsciously inserts his oeuvre into a literary pedigree that bases itself on past works and likely influences later ones. Significantly, Auerbach notes that this process occurs without the novelist's conscious awareness of the Spanish realist tradition at the moment of his artistic genesis. But it seems that Pérez glosses over this point without paying sufficient attention to the stance Mañas takes in "El legado de los ramones," an ideological manifesto of Generation X in which he discusses the punk aesthetic underlying the Kronen enterprise. That piece clearly shows the lengths to which Mañas goes to separate *Ciudad* from literary tradition, a precondition of accepting Pérez's argument that the novel follows tradition.

Pérez also describes Káiser's physical displacement into Madrid's subcultural space as a process that removes the frontier between aboveboard and sub-rosa versions of the city. As he explains, transgressing the boundary between these two spaces constitutes a violation of the rules imposed by "civilized society" ("El retorno de lo real" 243). Both

Káiser and Pedro, the protagonist of *Tempo de silencio*, exploit the distance that separates them from mainstream society. Pedro ventures into an underground society. Káiser similarly crosses the Emetreinta Highway on foot looking for much needed support from Chalo in order to evade the dangers lurking over his head back in Madrid. Thus, based on their similar efforts at self-preservation, these protagonists disrupt patterns of social segregation in contemporary Spanish society. Káiser habitually disregards these barriers in order to turn a profit pushing drugs, which fulfills an ongoing need for cash and drug users' ongoing needs for cocaine. The narrator is impervious to them in order to make his business successful.

The title—*Ciudad rayada*—is also a source of critical reflection, for it not only employs Castilian vernacular but also announces an aesthetic analogous to the two Kronen novels that predate it. Káiser is high on drugs at this particular moment of reflection, when he defines *rayado* as the following:

> —Se dice kuando . . . pues kuando te blokeas y no sueltas una idea, komo los binilos, ke se rayan y no saltan de surko. Y también kuando alguien está muy zumbao, por ejemplo. Y kuando bas de tusas y [. . .] (234)

According to this two-part definition, Káiser offers an exposé of urban space that chronicles an ailing city, akin, on the one hand, to a scratched or defective record, and on the other, to intoxication brought on by the consumption of narcotics. An alternative explanation of the title underscores the depictions of scratches as uncomfortable noise; it could also refer to lines of cocaine:

> The title of the novel is difficult to translate. On the one hand, it evokes the unsettling noises of the night that sometimes recall the sound of a scratched record. On the other hand, it refers to the lines *(rayas)* of cocaine consumed in discotheques by this generation of young people. The characters always make the wrong choices, and the reader feels a sense of unease represented by the sound of a broken record. The record goes on and on: money, drugs, sex, alcohol, more money, more drugs, more sex, more alcohol. (Gullón and Martínez-Carazo 145)

That sensation of a broken record is accomplished in the novel through an attentive annotation of metropolitan space, the naming of streets, highways, and bars, as well as the socioeconomic status of neighborhoods and important landmarks:

> Yo conocía alguno de estos poblados a través del Chalo, y sabía dónde debía estar hoy, así que después de pensarlo un poco decidí ir a buscarle. Ne me hacía demasiada gracia, pero tampoco tenía un duro. (162)

The Emetreinta symbolizes the consumptive nature of capitalism, and its proximity to a second subcultural epicenter, the gypsy underworld, reinforces the fact that the use of narcotics is rampant in contemporary Spain. The high demand for cocaine does not prevent young urban professionals from crossing an acculturated boundary to get it. Káiser describes the Gypsies as filthy in order to show that normal, clean people who come to their slums for cocaine are just as dirty or defiled as they are.

David Sibley's theories of group boundaries are illuminative in this regard, because they demarcate a set of barriers to human interrelation, showing how unspoken rules spatialize the social fabric:

> There are implicit rules of inclusion and exclusion in a built form that contribute to the structuring of society and space in a way which some will find oppressive and others appealing. (xi–xii).

It is the city, which Sibley sees as an integral constituent of social space, one that accommodates the distributions of power in the sociospatial system. The city enables domination for some at the same time as it registers deviance for others (Sibley 76). Chalo is on the deviance side of this dichotomy.

It is not gratuitous that Káiser describes the route to Chalo's village as one littered with debris, so as to suggest that the narrator is willing and able to overlook its condition:

> Para encontrar al Chalo tenía que entrar muy dentro del poblado, y eso no molaba nada. Entre las casas se amontonaban neumáticos y restos de coches y basuras de todo estilo: televisores viejos, sofás destripados, bafles inservibles, armarios destrozados. Unos gitanillos jugaban al lado de los tenedores con una pelota medio deshinchada y dos cubos de basura robados del barrio más cercano. . . . (162)

The filth described above typecasts the social segregation of gypsies from mainstream culture based on their being unclean. Moreover, the description of Chalo's vehicle as filthy and reeking of cocaine contributes to the identification of his character as part and parcel of an "other." The key difference between Káiser and Chalo is that the protagonist maintains one foot in mainstream Madrid and another in its youth subculture. Chalo, on the other hand, has both feet firmly planted in the Gypsy underworld: he does not shift back and forth between aboveboard and sub-rosa spaces as Káiser does. According to Sibley, there is also an inherent moral panic in the inversion of a social order by which those normally on the outside occupy the center, and the dominant majority is cast into the role of spectator (43). Consequently, the *yonkis* (junkies) who come from Madrid to wait in long lines to buy coke from Gypsy vendors sacrifice a position of privilege in order to get "la mejor droga de Madrid" (Mañas, *Ciudad* 162). Cocaine becomes a tool used to undermine the Gypsies' social and physical isolation, and to invert a social apparatus in which the yuppies, who normally sit higher than Gypsies in the pecking order, are reduced to a nominal position. Those yuppies must enter a defiled space where the Gypsies are masters of the domain, since they are the ones who control the production and distribution of the drugs.

Káiser creates dynamic boundaries that relocate the center of his cultural universe to wherever the greatest personal advantage lies at any given time. The narrator becomes a symbolic member of the Gypsy underworld he takes such care to describe. Káiser enters Chalo's world knowing full well that the Gypsy is unlikely to offer any sort of help unless there is a strong motivation. The narrator knows that Chalo epitomizes the "every man for himself" principle, so he approaches him very carefully. Káiser keenly chooses to let Chalo vent about the argument he has just had with his wife before discussing his own scuffle with el Barbas. Eventually, Chalo agrees to drive the protagonist home and to the Lunátik bar to collect a debt, but only after they snort a few lines and the protagonist promises Chalo a cut of the debt he expects to collect. The novel brings the two

characters together, which may seem like a disruption of social stratification but is not—the fact that they both deal drugs ties them together more tightly than the stereotypes of social segregation break them apart.

Two Tales of a City

Káiser's portrayal of Madrid's official space and its youth subculture corresponds to the theories of space Henri Lefebvre articulates in *The Production of Space* as "spaces of representation" (or "conceived space") and "representational space" (or "lived space"). The first is abstract and theoretical, a space of commerce, legislative bureaucracy, and aboveboard capitalism, including, for example, trade routes and the principles of supply and demand. According to Lefebvre, politicians and city planners preplan that space without addressing the needs of regular people, and without taking into account the vicissitudes of real life. Representational space, on the other hand, is sub-rosa space that forms—evolves, really—outside of any premeditated design. It takes shape from the de facto social dynamics and interactions of the people who use it. Clandestine activities also take place in this lived space, unattended by the legislative gaze of surveillance and other countervailing measures of bureaucracy and social control. Káiser earns a living in this lived space by adapting to the constantly evolving social strata in which he moves. As he shows, lived space cannot accommodate the kind of planning in which bureaucratic capitalists engage in conceived space. Rather, adaptation becomes imperative if one is to master the enigmatic social and economic challenges intrinsic to this context of space. However, both aspects of space are put to work in the novel in order to challenge the condition that young people experienced in Madrid in 1996. This is because Káiser superimposes one on top of the other, as in the following meditation on the urban experience that he articulates upon returning to Madrid after a hiatus from the city:

> La verdad, te puedo decir que me alegré cuando vi que llegábamos a MAdrid [sic] ciudad y se empezaron a entrecruzar las vías de servicio por encima de la autopista y las torres de Azca aparecieron a lo lejos, más allá de los pinares de

> El Pardo y la zona universitaria, y también se veían las torres KIO. . . . Por otro lado me sentía como una rata cuando vuelve a su jaula y tuve la impresión de que la puta ciudad tenía un imán que me traía y no me dejaría abrirme aunque lo intentara. (205)

Visual recognition of a city design that includes familiar freeway exits and geographical landmarks soothes him and at the same time reminds him of the dangers lurking in Madrid. The magnetism of the city nurses his psyche and lures him back despite the order of expulsion and threat on his life issued by el Barbas. It is impossible for the narrator to articulate what draws him back other than an uncontrollable urge to know what is transpiring there in his absence—what people might be saying, or how his absence affects the impressions others have of him.

Image is everything to Káiser. He would say that maintaining a bold image is part and parcel of a successful commercial venture that forces customers to pay. He explains the psychology of Spain's Generation X as one of Machiavellian fear. That is, the driving force is to amass capital, to sit atop the social and economic heap. These are the sole motives that propel people—like Káiser—to do what they do. Mañas's protagonist utilizes his unsurpassed knowledge of the conceived and lived spaces in Madrid to expose a clandestine side of capitalism in 1990s Spain that the Socialist Party, the PSOE, swept under the rug.

Lefebvre considers the collective use of conceived space a prerequisite for the transfer of goods and services under capitalism, which ignores the socially defined space of human engagement and the problems that occur when conflict over the same space arises. The novel's subcultural milieu is capitalistic but lacks governance. No framework exists to mediate interpersonal dissent, which resolves itself violently. Gonzalo's murder is a case in point. Káiser tries in earnest to reason with Gonzalo before shooting him. But Gonzalo disrespects the protagonist, leaving him little option, given that a client, Andrés, was present to witness the entire exchange. Gonzalo fearlessly flaunts the fact that he had in fact been underselling to the same clientele that Káiser had already claimed as his own.

Káiser means not to murder but to reinforce his Machiavellian image, which is why he shoots Gonzalo only once—in a nonvital organ—instead of multiple times in the head or chest. If Káiser had not followed through, Andrés would have told everyone and he would have lost the respect that his line of work demands. The scene really drives home Káiser's youth and inexperience. Gonzalo's attempt to poach his customers does not register as strongly as the bruise to his ego does. Because he is still a child, he responds impulsively and stupidly, without thinking through the legal and moral ramifications of shooting another person.

Lefebvre further implies a "spatial economy" of nonviolence, nonaggression, and reciprocal use of common space. Individuals are not supposed to attack each other on the street, that is, in shared public spaces. Moreover, the spatial economy calls for the maintenance of proxemics, or respectful interpersonal distance in shops, cafes, and cinemas (Lefebvre 56–57). But no such theoretical consensus exists within the subcultural framework of the Generation X social organization on view here. Káiser considers his turf proprietary and defends it with an iron fist. And since the central conflict of the novel revolves around claims to profit-making uses of the same space, the story illustrates how in this subculture every person has to fend for him- or herself:

> —Mira, tío, entiéndeme. Yo comprendo que tú te lo has currado. Y todo el mundo habla bien de ti, eres un tío serio y a mí me caes bien. Pero tío, yo tengo detrás el Nacle. Y tú sabes lo que es eso. No puedo hacer otra cosa. Lo siento, pero es joderte a ti o joderme yo. Y entre los dos prefiero joderte a ti. (115)

When a *colega* (buddy) informs the narrator of Gonzalo's murder, Káiser grows livid that he did not receive credit for the attack (120–21). It is crucial for the customers, suppliers, and associates with whom he does business to know that Gonzalo's demise was not some random event but a deliberate attack by Káiser in response to a serious affront. The protagonist shows that he is not a person to be taken lightly, that despite his short stature he will go after anyone who crosses him. But this lesson is lost if it does not

become widely known that he is the one responsible for the shooting. Even so, Káiser does not correct the misinformation; he is too cold and calculated to become a purveyor of gossip about himself. As far as he is concerned—it is implied—credit for the shooting is only worth having if it arrives through the mouths of others.

Káiser goes to great lengths to analyze the social and urban framework within which he fashions himself an authority. As the narration advances, he draws our interest by providing a spontaneous set of rules—practices of everyday life, to use the coinage of Michel de Certeau—that govern a particular approach to the Generation X subculture of which he is a member. As a dealer and high school dropout, Káiser has become a capitalist through and through, spending much of his time transacting business in bars, streets, and characters' homes where he sells narcotics. But he also builds interpersonal relationships in these very same spaces. Thus, for Káiser there is little separation between the private and professional spheres, which forces him to lead a relatively lonely existence dictated by a distinct set of rules that he eagerly models for readers. As much as Káiser tries to maintain strict boundaries between friends and customers, his business blurs the division. For instance, Andrés, the client who arranges the rendezvous with Gonzalo, only does so as a way to satisfy a debt, not because he takes sides in the dispute. Andrés prefers not to be involved, only to get out of arrears with the protagonist, someone he fears, as his urgent flight from the scene illustrates: "Káiser, me voy, ¿vale?—dice el otro. —Llévate la Pepa, que está en la puerta de tu casa. Toma las llaves. Te veo más tarde" (114). The novel makes it clear that global capitalism has reached Spain in full force, and that the desire to generate profit at all costs occurs without regard to moral and legal consequence. That understanding leads Káiser to suggest to readers in one of his asides that the shooting death of Gonzalo was a natural outcome of Gonzalo's error in judgment; shooting him was an entrepreneurial necessity. In a related comment, Káiser tells us shortly after el Barbas kidnaps him that all he wants is to live a moneyed life, and that he would make money by alternative means if he knew how:

> Yo solo quiero vivir bien, con pelas, lo que quiere todo el mundo. Y si tuviera talento para otra cosa, la haría. Siempre que pudiera ganar lo mismo que gano ahora, como es lógico. (142)

The inseparability of capitalism from the lived space of the Generation X subculture requires readers to pay attention to the narrator's philosophical interjections. These become the primary instrument he uses to teach us the unwritten rules associated with his business: "En mi negocio uno no puede permitirse ciertas cosas o estás jodido . . . el trabajo es el trabajo, por muy jodido que esté uno" (138). The rules and regulations that dictate how to endure the text's precarious social climate follow the conventions of capitalism. Conceptually speaking, a government or corporation may incur large deficits yet continue to operate normally. But in the Generation X underground, the narrator operates more like a small business than a corporate conglomerate. Should something happen to Káiser, his business would fall apart, which means it is less stable than companies with boards of directors and large numbers of employees. He does not offer credit to his clientele.[11] Default incurs serious consequences including the loss of collateral, whether it is an extensive compact-disc collection in the harebrained disc jockey Josemi's case, or the destruction of one's automobile in another. In Káiser's world—which exists with no bureaucratic regulation—debts are always repaid. To this end, Káiser reminds readers that he carries a gun in his backpack alongside his narcotics inventory:

> Ésa era la primera cosa que hacía cuando no me pagaban, sabes, montar el numerito en el curro o delante de la familia. El siguiente paso era el coche, y ya luego la pipa. . . . Así son ciertos negocios. (100)

Thus, in many ways, the rules that govern his sole proprietorship mirror those of bureaucratic capitalism. Just as a home with an unpaid mortgage will be sold by the lender to satisfy the debt, these are consequences for those of his customers who fail to

11. We see this at work in the financial markets today: big companies are bailed out, and their top executives receive millions in severance pay while lower-income owners lose their homes in foreclosure.

pay: embarrassing visits at work or at home in front of family, destruction of personal property, and finally murder, which occurs for the first time in the dispute with Gonzalo.

Káiser maintains that he possesses the skills and wits necessary to outsmart potential rivals who dare compete. He takes this business seriously. While in Madrid, he does not use the drugs he sells, which allows him to maintain a detailed inventory of accounts payable. Káiser describes an earlier time when Josemi invited him to snort a few lines, to which Káiser responded:

> Tú qué crees, ¿que soy como tú, que me pongo todos los días?, con tal careto de asco, que no se repitió. Alguien me contó una vez que las ratas sólo se enganchan cuando están enjauladas. Pues los farloperos son como ratas que se pasan el día dando vueltas a la rueda loca de su jaula sin moverse del sitio, sabes. (93)

Káiser holds himself to a higher standard than the *farloperos* (cokeheads) who are so addicted that those who deal and sell cannot even keep track of who owes them money. Káiser operates to accumulate wealth, so he keeps meticulous records of accounts receivable and always knows which customers are current and which are in arrears.[12]

The success of his enterprise depends on setting prices high enough to make money but low enough to quash competitors, like Gonzalo, who encroach upon his sales turf. Above all else, success depends on quickly supplying addicts with the consignments of cocaine they want so that they buy from him again. Káiser has mastered the labyrinthine spatial design of Madrid in order to comply with their real-time requests and to make the most money possible in the shortest amount of time. Capitalist greed obliges the protagonist to master the most efficient transit routes through the city and to cash in on that acute spatial awareness with lightning-quick deliveries. Set against this

12. The city provides a capitalist framework in which money is valued above all else, at least until el Barbas restricts Káiser's access to this space, and outside city limits his craving for drugs can no longer be ignored: "Ya he dicho que normalmente no me pongo, pero en ese momento, después de lo que había pasado, me dije que bien podía hacer una excepción" (168).

egocentric, capitalist framework, time is always a limited resource. Therefore, his ability to manipulate space quickly determines how much money he earns.

Káiser gets caught up in the nets of social discipline that de Certeau exposes in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* another theoretical lens through which to read this novel. A case in point is his reluctance to speak of narcotics on his mobile phone. Satellite surveillance is a real concern, as the novel illustrates when a recorded conversation about drugs is anonymously delivered to the mailbox of the narrator's father. Not even el Barbas, a police officer, can provide a definitive answer as to who has taped it:

> —Nada, que el otro finde mi jefe pasó por keli y pilló otra cinta en el buzón.
> —¿Qué cinta?
> —Una, con conversaciones telefónicas mías. No tenía mensaje ni nada. Y es ya la segunda vez. (109)

Referring to antidiscipline, the antithesis of the disciplinary rituals in society that Foucault examines in *Discipline and Punish*, de Certeau explains how technological advances in the modern world render the panopticon,[13] in which space is designed to put people on display at all times, obsolete. Contemporary society utilizes methods of surveillance that are much more subtle and harder to detect by those being watched. These include, but are not limited to, the Internet, cellular telephones, and satellite surveillance cameras that surreptitiously record human activity.

De Certeau's discussion of antidiscipline delineates the city vertically. The application of this vertical design to the novel interprets the Generation X underworld as a subversive space subsisting below a scopic threshold, a distance below which surveillance cannot see:

> It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The network of these moving,

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13. According to the eighteenth-century philosopher who designed the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham, the design allows a guard to observe prison inmates in their cells without the detainees being able to tell for certain whether they are actually being watched.

> intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (de Certeau 93)

Káiser narrates events in spaces below scopic range, under a barrier that shields them from panoptic power positioned at the height of a modern skyscraper. Borrowing from de Certeau above, the manifold story they tell is *Ciudad rayada*, for the novel characterizes how its subcultural milieu undermines the urban engineering of democracy and capitalism.

As de Certeau explains, one can never escape these mysterious forces of social control; one's only option is to outwit and outmaneuver them (xxiii). In terms of the historical and political context of Spain, though, Káiser believes there to be a connection between the tapes on which he discusses drugs and CESID, the post-Franco intelligence agency in charge of domestic intelligence and surveillance. He is suspicious of the Solozábal family housekeeper, Rita, whose boyfriend might be an agent and therefore may be behind these mysterious recordings:

> . . . con eso de que el novio de Rita era del CESID, cosa que, por cierto, cuando lo supimos lo flipamos cantidad, sobre todo por la pinta de pringao que tenía [igual con esa pinta disimulan más]. Claro que vete a saber si no eran fantasías de la Rita; aunque yo, tal y como son las cosas en este país, me lo creo. (110)

This seemingly paranoid conclusion is rendered reasonable because of Spain's recent dictatorial past.

In the precarious political era in which the novel is set, there is a powerful and puzzling force of detection gazing down from high above and furtively observing and recording micro-users of the city engaged in illegal activity. The reflection above serves two purposes. On one hand, it posits whether the innocuous appearance of Rita's boyfriend is a ruse to hide the fact that the man is an intelligence agent or, on the other, denigrates Rita for suggesting an unlikely story. Still, because of the chaotic state of Spanish politics at that moment—especially the impending change of national leadership

to occur shortly—Káiser does not eliminate the possibility that Rita is in fact telling the truth.

As the novel brings Madrid's urban topography to light, it marks out Lefebvre's conceived/lived dichotomy of space. An instance can be seen when Káiser's returns to Madrid after attending the *Festimad* rock concert in Móstoles. Having described the concert as a dangerous, dissident space where he and thousands of others listened to loud music, sold and used drugs, and slept in tents, Káiser hitches a ride back to Madrid with two French concertgoers. Naming the geography of his return trip pulls the reader into a multidimensional textual environment that superimposes aboveboard and sub-rosa space:

> El francés se había metido por Atocha, subiendo la Kastellana hasta Cibeles, y luego kallejeó por Sol hasta dejarnos en una kallejuela mal iluminada, justo enfrente de un hostal de dos estrellas. (232)

This superimposition frames his cartographic recital within a Lefebvrian construct. Another detail that does the same is Káiser's conspicuous substitution of *k* for *c*, a telltale sign that he is still intoxicated. Because the protagonist maps an official transit route while high on drugs, he brings together an interplay of these two spaces.

In the *rayada* context of this novel, the postmodern city is one in which the elite and the masses share a common artistic sensibility. As Miguel Ugarte explains in his analysis of the Iberian city, cultural outlets such as Umberto Eco's detective novels, "The Simpsons" syndicated television series, and commercial advertisements suggest complicity with the masses that high modernists would have mocked (97). But this is what allows Káiser to build rapport with readers. The trend toward the promotion of cities as commodities for sale on the world market similarly paints cities as postmodern. According to Resina, the plethora of postcards, ad campaigns on television, and printed media designed to promote consumption in local cities hide urban elements that do not portray those cities in a positive light (Resina, Introduction xx–xi). Narcotics trafficking and violence are specific examples. Thus, Káiser's story markets Madrid differently than

the European Union has done by naming the city its 1992 Capital of Culture. Resina notes, however, that the total suppression of dissidence is not possible: the after-image flares up like an erupting volcano to suggest that suppressed danger is transparent. In reference to de Certeau's imagery he states: "Certeau's almighty seer from above is obviously a metaphor for the detached contemplation of the planner who turns the city into a spectacle based on the concealment of practices" ("Concept of After-Image" 9).

The Marxist geographer David Harvey argues that capitalism exploits the worker with an inhumane schedule fixed by profit making but inattentive to the need for rest and recuperation (231). As a sole proprietor, Káiser exploits himself much the same way, understanding that running a profitable narcotics business requires an effective sales strategy with prompt service to a large sales territory. He frequently and daily traverses Madrid from one end to another in order to meet the vast needs of a diverse customer base. But his girlfriend, Tula, does not grasp why meeting with clients is more urgent than the two of them going to see a movie together. When she asks why, he responds: "—Mira, si quieres ser algo, tienes que tener claro lo que quieres y dedicarte a ello" (143). This answer encapsulates a sound theory of capitalism in which activities that generate the most profit are those that are most urgent. The narrator's response to el Barbas about what he wants in life parallels the same idea: "—Káiser, hazme un favor. Explícame adónde quieres llegar, ¿qué coño es lo que quieres? —¿Yo? Lo mismo que tú. Hacer dinero." (141).

The physical toils of capitalism victimize Káiser the same way. On the run he scrounges for the basic necessities of life, bound by a spatially complex urban milieu that threatens to erode his profit-driven, efficient use of space. But Káiser is not a traditional capitalist because he fixes his own schedule. His goal is to maximize the utilization of space and time in order to increase sales and profit. He grows infuriated with clients who waste his time. Cocaine is a commodity and selling it is a serious activity that must also

encourage respect for one's limited resources of time. As one of his customers, Kiko, leaves him waiting at the Veneciano bar for forty-five minutes, the protagonist reflects:

> Llevaba esperando como tres cuartos de hora, y eso porque era el Kiko [. . .] A mí hay que respetarme o no funciono; así que le dije a Gonzalito . . . que le dijera a Kiko que le dieran por el puto culo. (38–39)

Káiser is furious because Kiko's tardiness constitutes a lack of respect. It is easy to see how the black market nature of capitalism the novel portrays flirts with violence when dealings turn negative. And that is precisely the scenario that causes Káiser to shoot Gonzalo, which is not a premeditated act but a knee-jerk reaction:

> No lo tenía pensado, sabes, pero es que el muy maricón se me subió la chepa, y yo no sé muchas cosas, y es verdad que pasé del colegio a los quince años —hace ya tres, fíjate— pero si hay una cosa que sé hacer bien es llevar mis negocios. (11)

Thus, the ill effects of capitalism result in the degeneration of social cohesion, as Laura Eugenia Tudoras suggests by referring to *Ciudad* as part and parcel of a *degeneración X* (187).

Politics in Flux: A Shift to the Right

Ciudad rayada takes place at a significant juncture in Spain's nascent democratic trajectory: in 1996, after the PP ends the fourteen-year (1982–96) incumbency of the PSOE with an electoral victory in the national elections of March that year. A brief look back at the PSOE's rise to power sheds light on how the novel covertly glosses history and politics. After the death of Franco in November of 1975, Spain witnessed a relatively peaceful transition to democracy and the ratification of a new constitution in 1978. The first years of government fell under the helm of Adolfo Suárez and the UCD. Then, in 1982, the PSOE won office for the first time in its century-long history as a political party. This success, however, came about only after it shed Marxism from its platform in order to reposition itself in the eyes of voters as a more moderate party than it had been in the past. PSOE leaders recognized a need to shift to the ideological center if they hoped

to win. As a result, a rupture emerged between voters who had endorsed a fundamentally socialist platform and the party that rose to power in 1982.

In the aftermath of the 1982 elections, a privileged network of upwardly mobile intellectuals surfaced whose only avenue to wealth and power lay in politics. As Tom Lewis explains: "The PSOE has in fact accomplished nothing less than the wholesale socioeconomic assimilation of members of the new ruling class to the old ruling class in Spain" (178). Lewis describes the typical career trajectory of a party member as initial involvement in popular mobilizations, followed by electoral victories, numerous offices, and then the use of public office to enter elite circles, make investments, and reap fantastic monetary rewards. He further notes that the reliance on nonunionized labor and a twenty-percent unemployment rate were the cost the POSE paid for being "modern" or "European" (178–79). Additionally, he explains, the relaxed acquisition of capital that resulted from its neoliberal fiscal policies—designed to redistribute wealth from poor to rich—increased upper-income consumption and left the economy in shambles (176–77).

There is an obvious expression of ideological limbo in the reflections of certain secondary characters in *Ciudad rayada* who scorn the past performance of González and the PSOE—under whom employment persisted and corruption ran rampant—but express little hope for renewal under the incoming leadership of José María Aznar and the PP. The mustached man who offers Káiser a ride to El Escorial after the stolen car he had been driving out of Madrid breaks down conveys this pessimism particularly well. His utter disillusionment comes into focus in comments that the protagonist repeats for us about the current state of Spain:

> Y ahí ya el fósil se embaló y empezó a largar karrete, ke si la corrupción, ke si tenemos una sociedad enferma, kon un kuarenta y cinko por ciento de paro jubenil y una edukación de mierda kon la ke kerían konbertirnos a todos en mano de obra barata, ke si a kién se le okurre la barbaridad de organizar una Expo y unos Juegos Olímpikos todo para la mayor gloria de Felipe González. Ke después de trece años de socialismo nunka los kapitalistas habían estado más trankilos, y encima ahora

> entraba la derechona más fuerte ke nunca, y a ber ké hacía
> Aznar. (188)

This passage reflects a key point in the novel and in my dissertation: that despite the international focus on Spain in 1992, the nation was wrapped in political scandal and social turmoil. The PSOE's whirlwind rise to power left deep divisions. Thus, the imminent transfer of power to the right is not a clear affirmation of the PP but rather a referendum on the Socialists.[14] Thoroughly informed in politics and current affairs, the mustached man expresses concern that José María Aznar will not improve Spain for the better.

Other characters acknowledge the PSOE's corruption but attempt to spin it in a positive light. Gonzalo Solozábal, Sr., a high-ranking PSOE affiliate and the father of the drug dealer whom Káiser murders, attributes it to the normal course of postindustrial society, a small price to pay for national progress:

> ¡Claro que hay paro! Igual que en los demás países. Es lo normal en las sociedades postindustriales. Pero para eso seguimos haciendo una política social. Ya se verá cuando llegue la Derecha al poder. Ya digo que si se va a notar. Si esto es como la historia aquella del hombre que quería pegarle pedradas a la luna. Está claro que nunca la acertó, pero desde luego fue el que tiró la piedra más lejos. Eso es lo que está haciendo el Gobierno con su política económica [. . .] (24)

It is important to note, however, that such editorials are always assigned to Solozábal Sr., Pablo, and the mustached man or his mother, all of whom are members of an older generation who seem entirely alien to the narrator and his counterparts. Mañas artfully preserves an archetype of ideological ambivalence by showing his Generation X characters to be wholly indifferent to current affairs.

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14. Paul Heywood's article "Sleaze in Spain" compares the PSOE's electoral ousting to Bill Clinton's defeat of George H. W. Bush in the 1992 US presidential elections. His line of analysis suggests that each victory indicated more of a desire to oust the incumbent than an affirmation of the challenger.

Spain's economic status, however, reveals why dealing cocaine is such an attractive financial prospect for Káiser and others who have pursued an unconventional path in life. As Lewis notes:

> Spain's economy is currently a mess: among other horrors, a massive flight of foreign capital in September 1992, two devaluations of the peseta between September 1992 and May 1993, and growth rates of 2.3 percent in 1991, 1 percent in 1992, and a projected-0.8 percent in 1993. Spain has the highest unemployment rate in the European Union: an already brutal 16.3 percent in 1991, it is expected *by government forecasters* to rise to 22.4 percent in 1993 and 23.4 percent by 1994. (179)

But no matter how much Mañas tries to disassociate political commentary from his Generation X characters, at decisive moments their opinions bleed through the narration. One of these is the seemingly nonchalant conversation between Pablo, owner of the Veneciano bar, and Gonzalo Solozábal, Sr. The only way Pablo can keep his bar in business is to bribe the elder Solozábal to arrange matters with officials at the Health Department. When Pablo arrives at the Solozábal residence with cash in hand, Solozábal Sr. goes off on a tangent about how corruption and unemployment are worthwhile sacrifices: "Pero si es que nunca hemos estado mejor en España. Hay más riqueza que en ningún otro momento de nuestra historia" (24). Yet only the members of the PSOE inner circle reap these benefits. This becomes clear in a description of style and elegance that Pablo envies but cannot attain:

> Se estaba fijando en los espejos, porque había visto una igual en una tienda de antigüedades. Tenía pelas y podía comprarse muebles tan buenos como los de esa keli, y de hecho lo hacía, pero parece que nunca quedaban tan bien como allí. Y lo mismo con la ropa. (22)

Furthermore, Solozábal and his wife appear disingenuous. They complain of Pablo's visits shortly before he arrives but have no qualms asking him to employ their son as a disc jockey in the Veneciano bar, which is how he gets mixed up with Káiser. Thus, the image of prosperity tied to the Solozábal family diverges from the world Káiser describes, and in which the young Gonzalo wades neck-deep.

For a teenager like Káiser, the lessons of history dissolve under the pressures of capitalism and self-preservation. As the critic Gonzalo Navajas explains, Káiser's only true point of reference is a present tense severed from history. Navajas contrasts him with Antoine Roquetin in Jean-Paul Sartre's *La nausée* (*Nausea*) (1938), who after examining the historical trajectory of humanism suggests that it masks ideological domination (Navajas 4). This is a contrast with Káiser, who flaunts historical ignorance of Spain's recent past. Navajas also points out how the narrator of *Ciudad* calls others *fósiles* ("fossils") who cannot process the cultural context of the Generation X because they interpret culture through a historical lens (4). It is noteworthy that a person's age does not qualify him or her as a *fósil*; only his or her insistence in the seamless interconnection of diverse moments in history does. Counterexamples of characters who know precisely how to exploit Madrid's youth culture populate the novel. Pablo—the owner of the Veneciano bar—and el Barbas, the corrupt police officer and drug-dealer, are both significantly older than the protagonist, yet they understand how to exploit Madrid's youth subculture in order to make money. For instance, Pablo hires female bartenders based on their physical appeal and forces them to dress provocatively in order to attract the business of eager male executives. And el Barbas, needless to say, knows how to connect with his network of younger dealers—including Káiser and Gonzalo—in order to supplement a policeman's income with drug sales.

The mustached man's persistent efforts to convince Káiser that people ought to band together to help one another further causes the young protagonist to turn a blind eye to what he says. This is because Káiser, unlike Roquetin, refuses to incorporate the lessons of Spanish history into his cultural paradigm, instead suggesting that such facts are useless and unrelated to the epistemology of the subculture he represents:

> Yo no suelo tratar con fósiles, sabes, quiero decir que no sé muy bien de qué hablarles. Algunos veinteañeros todavía se enteran de la movida. Pero a partir de los treinta, nada, ésos no se coscan de una mierda. A veces, cuando me encuentro con

> alguno, tengo la impresión de que vivimos en planetas diferentes, como si nunca hubieran sido como yo. (189–90)

As the employee of a charity, the mustached men has seen a variety of situations in which people depended on the generosity of the human spirit in order to acquire the basic necessities of life. He explains:

> Escucha, yo trabajo en una oficina de Cáritas y todos los días tengo que ver a gente muy diferente y con muchos problemas, muchos más de los que puedas tener tú (eso lo dudaba) y mi trabajo es intentar ayudarles. A veces lo consigo y a veces no. Pero no por eso es menos fascinante. El hombre es imprevisible [. . .] (186–87)

Despite his patronizing tone, though, he tries to teach the antihero a lesson of human camaraderie and the desire people generally have to help those who are in need. Yet Káiser shows no interest whatsoever in what this man says to him, which suggests that the protagonist is a feckless young sociopath: “Yo digo ke sí, pero no tengo ni puta idea de ké koño me está kontando esta fósil . . .” (187).

Káiser continues to care only about how to safely evade el Barbas and return to Madrid as soon as possible in order to recuperate lost sales and reconnect with his customers. Jorge Pérez suggests that Káiser grows uncomfortable with the mustached man because the man defines people according to categories beyond politics and legality—favoring those that affect biological, social, and cultural identity, all of which destabilize Káiser’s generational identity:

> Los adultos son una inquietud en cuanto recogen todos los valores que Káiser se niega a aceptar en el incomparable proceso de envejecimiento y maduración. Es decir, es un rechazo hacia sí mismo, hacia la imagen propia en un futuro no lejano. El odio hacia el otro es un odio defensivo, de un sujeto amenazado por la pluralidad, motivado a raíz de la tendencia de incluirnos en grupos sociales organizados en función de variables como la edad, la sexualidad, el origen étnico, y la procedencia nacional, que nos hacen sentirnos cómodos y seguros, pero a la vez retados por los que no pertenecen a nuestra comunidad. (“Suspiros de España” 46–47)

The self-defense mechanism Pérez describes surfaces while Káiser eats lunch at the home in El Escorial that the mustached man shares with his aging mother. It undercuts his air of

invincibility and machismo. It shows his vulnerability at the same time as it critiques his historical unawareness. When the old mother innocently queries his age, she elicits a furious rejoinder:

> —Escucha, tía, quiero decir señora. No se equivoque conmigo. Igual en su época era de otro modo, pero ahora, a esta edad uno ya ha hecho todo lo que tiene que hacer y sabe todo lo que necesita saber, ¿me entiende? (193)

Despite his claims to world-weary wisdom, Káiser comes off as an adolescent who exhibits naiveté without knowing it, who thinks he has reached the pinnacle of life at only seventeen years old. His insistence on his own maturity, however, forms a trend in the novel. Elsewhere, he offers the following corollary to Chalo, who is detailing his frustration with marriage, to suggest that regardless of age, their problems are similar:

> Puede parecer un poco pretencioso porque yo entonces solo tenía dieciséis tacos y Chalo como treinta, pero yo sabía de lo que hablaba porque a mí Tula me había montado más de un zipzape del estilo y sé que es muy chingo y que después uno se siente muy mal. (168)

His insistence is situational, though. He is happy to heighten the sense of his own youth and vulnerability when it suits him, as when he asks "Yoda"—his nickname for the mustached man's elderly and wrinkled mother—for more food, playing off her wish to paint him as a child. The fact that he is so manipulative sharpens the image of him as entirely jaded:

> —La verdad es que me gustas. Sí, sí, lo digo en serio, tía. De verdad que me mola lo que me cuentas, pero por casualidad ¿no tendrás algo más para jamar? [. . .] Quiero decir para comer. Ya sabes, que tengo que crecer. (193)

Káiser's contact with the elderly woman in El Escorial neutralizes his claim of having reached the height of life experience. A case in point is his foolish decision to return to Madrid; it would seem that he has forgotten the threat that el Barbas has made against his life. But he grows eager to return, to reassert a presence and continue making money. And while the city comforts the narrator, it is his persistently absent father who

might best provide consolation during these trying times. Immediately before calling Pontevedra, in Galicia, to speak with him, Káiser reflects:

> Yo me moría de ganas de decirle que estaba metido en líos y contarle todo . . . Él se descojonaría. Me diría que no me preocupase, que al Barbas le tenía bien controlado. Mi jefe nunca se cabrea, sabes, siempre mantiene la cabeza fría. Igual hasta le convencía para irnos a Suramérica, como me había prometido ya un par de veces. (194–95)

Thus, we understand that the brief sojourn in El Escorial substitutes for the love, affection, and regulation he craves from his parents.

Káiser's Castle: At Home in La Alameda

Following the scuffle with Gonzalo, Káiser flees the scene on foot and then takes a taxi to his house in La Alameda, an up-and-coming neighborhood of Madrid where he lives with his father—who is constantly away in Galicia, or Venezuela—and an au pair, Marilyn. The protagonist has set up strict boundaries with Marilyn: she does not meddle in his affairs, and he does not inform his father that she brings men to the house. She is supposed to enforce the rules, but her complicity in breaking them does nothing to halt Káiser's truancy, to say nothing of his business, if she even knows about it. They are cordial but unconcerned with one another.

By inviting us into this space, our fears are confirmed that the protagonist has had nobody to shepherd him through the arduous years of his adolescence. The space is one of sinister solitude because it lacks the guidance of caring parents. No mention of a mother is made anywhere in the novel, and the father he speaks of highly, whose help he desperately needs, is unreachable in Galicia:

> Hubo un par de timbrazos, y al cabo: «¿Hola?», respondió una voz de pava que no conocía. No me extrañé, porque mi jefe es de los que tienen amigos en todos lados, sabes. . . . Le dije quién era. «Ay, hijo, tu papa me ha hablado mucho de ti. Yo soy Marina. Pero es que acabo de llegar de vacaciones, ahora mismito he entrado por la puerta, y parece que no está. Espera, que te busco la guardesa.» (194)

The protagonist is as isolated from the positive influence and encouragement of other people at home as he is in the perilous spaces of Madrid.

The novel pits Káiser's domestic space in La Alameda against phenomenologist Gastón Bachelard's ideal in *The Poetics of Space* of the house as a warm and accepting space with an ambience that offers comfort, kinship, and haven to the people who live in it. But no mention of a mother is ever made in the novel, and neither Káiser's father nor Marilyn produces a domestic ideal of this sort on his behalf. Thus, the novel proves that the stability of a house is merely an illusion: "A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (Bachelard 17). Although Káiser works for no one and lives in a space where he is unaccountable to anyone, he really isn't in charge of his life at all. He exists at the mercy of the cruel world he inhabits.

It is not surprising that after shooting Gonzalo, Káiser returns home, where the world remains safely at bay. This aspect of his domestic space—and the pride with which he describes the garage he has converted into a makeshift music studio—supports Bachelard's theory of home. Káiser was once interested in becoming a disc jockey like his friend, Roni, whom he idolizes. But the time he devotes to work has always prevented him from pursuing the vocation professionally. Nevertheless, he pursues it as a hobby with the sampling equipment he has installed in the garage of his father's home. In this space, which is Káiser's alone, he mixes electronic music recreationally:

> El garaje era mi territorio y lo tenía a mi aire. . . . había un sofá viejo pegado a la pared, una televisión que no funcionaba, mi ordenador y un sinte antiguo, pilas de revistas en el sofá, y el suelo lleno de cajas de maxis. En una esquina tenía montado todo mi equipo, mis Technics, sampler y demás, entre dos columnas de sonido. (117)

For Káiser and Bachelard alike, the home—in this case, the garage—is a large cradle, an intimate refuge that offers shelter and protection from the storms of life (9). It is also the source of an image that represents one of the alternative paths Káiser might have pursued—the closest thing to becoming a real disc jockey that he will ever experience.

But unlike the typical home, this space becomes a haven for the protagonist only because no sensible caregiver is present to discipline and guide him down a less perverse path in life. And that is precisely what he attempts to do for Tula at a party he hosts for her younger friends from school.

It is noteworthy, though not surprising, that none of the characters Káiser introduces throughout the novel appear at the gathering, since he does not have any friends aside from his customers. At the party, Káiser hands out pills to maintain a relaxed ambiance, which he would never do in an actual business dealing. We also observe a more conscientious side of the protagonist when he locks Tula in the bathroom until she agrees to sober up for school the next day:

> —Káiser, no me encierres. Me lo estaba pasando muy bien. Y a mí me gusta pasármelo bien . . . —dijo, con voz tan lastimosa que me ablandó.
> —Sí, Tula, pero luego te rayas. Acuérdate de la última vez, cuando rompiste la ventosa de mi cuarto, ¿te acuerdas? Y mañana tienes que ir a clase, si no tus jefes la van a volver a montar. (153)

Tula has little choice but to comply with the directives of her boyfriend, host, and the ultimate authority at the party. The steady voice of reason that remembers the obligation to attend school the next day also suggests a higher level of maturity than one might expect of a seventeen-year-old.

It is far too late for Káiser to alter his choices and plan for the future. Because he has no marketable skills or vocational training, he is much worse off than Pablo, the bar owner, and el Barbas, the dirty cop, who have careers. Káiser might know how to survive economically, but sooner or later his business model will become untenable when another competitor or customer resorts to violence in order to resolve a bad business deal. Eventually, the authorities will catch him or he will be killed; all he can do is continue down the same road until that happens. He has no other career to fall back on. His character therefore illustrates how far the social and economic conditions of democratic Spain had deteriorated by the mid-1990s.

Conclusion: Politics as Indifference

Spanish history of the twentieth century has been irrevocably stamped by the Francoist regime and the ardent opposition to it. In the immediate aftermath of the dictator's death, the country saw a realignment that should have put in place some, if not all, of the hopes long cherished by those who resisted for so long. As the novel indicates, however, only twenty years later Spain's young people had already given up on the idea of engaging in a revolution against an oppressive power structure. Instead, they began eating their own. The central conflict of the novel *Ciudad rayada*, Gonzalo's attempt to undersell to Káiser's customers, is a symbol of something much larger. It illustrates how the capitalist infrastructure Spain adapts after joining Europe leaches into the lawless youth subculture Káiser witnesses.

The Generation X characters portrayed in *Ciudad rayada* show an utter disregard for the recent historical and political trajectory of their nation, which had only recently evolved from an oppressive dictatorship to a constitutional democracy. Rather than signifying a nonpolitical message, however, Káiser's lack of interest in politics—a disinterest shared by the other fictional members of Spain's Generation X—conveys Mañas's deeply felt political goals. In fact, what could be taken as offhand remarks that seem to bear little relation to the general trajectory of the novel reveal the author's heavy political hand. These become apparent in the younger characters' ostensibly nonchalant repetition of the opinions that they have absorbed second-hand from the predecessor Generation of 1968, which is represented by their parents, el Barbas, Pablo, and the mustached man.

Mañas limits these brief political reflections to terse remarks followed by abrupt subject changes to underscore the fact that members of the Generation X do not inherit the Generation of 1968's ardent zeal to influence the future path of the nation, which can be summed up by an exchange between Káiser and his girlfriend: "—Mi jefe dice que es culpa de los socialistas, que han jodido el país. —No sé, Tula. Igual es eso" (146). The

situation that prompts these offhand remarks has no political content, and neither character ventures an opinion on the veracity of the opinion, or, indeed, whether Spain lies in ruins. In fact, neither of them gives it a second thought, because neither cares if it is true. The narration swiftly avoids any further mention of governmental corruption by returning Káiser and Tula's conversation to a mundane discussion of their daily routine: for example, Tula asks if Káiser still intends to pick her up from school, and Káiser becomes aggravated with having to wait for his next client—Tula's cousin—to finish playing the arcade game *Street Fighter* before concluding their transaction. Thus, the inclusion of politics in the narration represents a sudden disruption, which illustrates Mañas's portrayal of Generation X as not apathetic but indifferent to the national condition. Their refusal to engage politically is a political act in itself. It is their way out from under the shadow of the Generation of 1968: by not fighting back as their predecessors had done, they find a space of their own to dominate. Yet because the elder characters of the novel still hold all the real-world power, the novel suggests that Káiser's generation has nowhere to go.

The bland dialogue between Káiser and Tula above is but one example in the novel in which Mañas's depiction of the Generation X as ideologically vacant in comparison to its predecessor generation stands for the unsustainability of the socialist political model in the face of a growing generation gap. In the democratic era, for the first time in recent history the nature of social struggle has changed from a public display of resistance to repression to a clandestine intragenerational fight for money and power represented in the novel as an economic chasm that, though occupying an underground space, still pits the haves against the have-nots. This class polarization set in motion a raw economic struggle unlike anything Spain has seen since becoming a democracy. Instead of a common enemy in Franco, combatants seek to annihilate each other.

That is why Káiser is the perfect capitalist in a mirror world. He understands that wealth is power and therefore strives to make as much money as he can. His insights into

drug running and his attitudes on how to conduct oneself properly in Spain's 1990s youth subculture are representative of the national edifice at an uncertain moment in its new and fragile democracy. The profitable business he has built, and which he describes as the only profession he knows, echoes the aboveboard world where the PSOE's political and economic policies have caused a mess. The novel separates its exposé of aboveboard space where bureaucracy treats people as generic obstacles inhibiting capitalism—from a sly and shady sub-rosa space where, as Mañas's antihero shows us, individuals must assert their personalities in order to survive economically and to ward off violent competitors. Káiser personifies the exertion of this ultraresilient self as he foreshadows the next eight years under the PP's right-of-center government. Because the socialists' election and reelection to national office represent only the second time in almost half of a century that the people of Spain chose their political leadership through democratic consensus, the revolution against oppression appears to have already been won. But as the novel shows, oppression casts a long shadow, one that cannot be easily set aside.

CHAPTER II
SPAIN, SCOTLAND, AND THE IN-BETWEEN: IDENTITY EXPLORATION IN LUCÍA ETXEBARRIA'S *BEATRIZ Y LOS CUERPOS CELESTES*

A widely recognized and multifaceted writer, Lucía Etxebarria de Asteinza (b. Valencia, 1966) garners enormous attention as one of the leading female voices in Spain. Educated in Catholic schools, she is the seventh and youngest child of a large family originally from Bermeo, in the Spain's northern Basque Country. After moving from Valencia to Madrid, Etxebarria worked as a waitress, journalist, music critic, and press agent before attending the *Universidad Complutense*, where she earned a master's degree in journalism. Since then she has begun an artistic enterprise that has endured more than fifteen years and her work has spanned the visual and aural landscape of postmodern (post-Franco) times.[15]

Despite her success as a writer, there are those who seek to discredit Etxebarria's obvious talents. Twice she has been accused of plagiarism.[16] Moreover, because she challenges traditional views on (homo)sexuality, immigration, gender, and feminism while attacking the conservative confinement of women to marriage and household domesticity, there are those who consider her art and image unbefitting. But the mere fact that she spearheads opposition to these commonly held beliefs in her writing places Etxebarria on a path toward revolutionary social transformation, even if the topics she writes about position her as radical within the literary establishment.[17]

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15. I follow Tom Lewis in defining postmodern Spain as the period that begins after General Franco's death on 20 November 1975 and continues into the present.

16. In 2001, the journal *Interviú* accused her of plagiarizing Spanish poet Antonio Colinas in the novel *Estación de Infierno* (2001) and American writer Elizabeth Wurtzel, the author of *Prozac Nation*, in *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* (1997). In a legal battle, the courts affirmed that the claims *Interviú* made are accurate. Then again, in 2006, Spanish psychologist Jorge Castelló accused Etxebarria of improperly integrating a sentence from one of his articles into her novel *Yo no sufro por amor* (2006).

17. Etxebarria builds upon Mañas's apparent disgust in "El legado de los Ramones: punk y literatura" with critics who supposedly wield the power to shape readers' interpretations of literature. As Barry explains to Bea toward the end of *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* (1998), "Un texto debería entenderse

Because she is so well known—indeed, because she seems to court attention—Etxebarria has produced a confused readership, one that sometimes mistakes her fiction for her biography and has a difficult time visualizing her characters unencumbered by the hand of their maker. As such, the reader closes the gap between the facade Etxebarria creates as a celebrity figure and the images of fictional characters that she delivers in her novels. Whether one agrees with her tactics, it is difficult to deny that Etxebarria has assimilated two personas, that of the writer and that of the flashy celebrity,[18] which is the conclusion Christine Henseler draws from the negative media reaction to her marketing tactics ("Fuss" 94).

Two incidents widely discussed in the criticism of Etxebarria's writing have prompted accusations that author markets sex appeal and that the decision to award the Nadal prize to *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* has tainted the award as much as Etxebarria's body has tainted her novels (Henseler, "Etxebarria Ecstasy" 113). Shortly after the fifty-fourth annual award presentation, which Etxebarria attended dressed wholly in red, critics such as Santos Sanz Villanueva, Ignacio Echevarría, and Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas dubbed her the "Queen of Hearts" in reference to Lewis Carroll's character in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Henseler, "Etxebarria Ecstasy" 113). Such a designation unflatteringly depicts the author first as egotistical and out of touch with readers and second as someone who writes superficially.

The second incident occurred in a written interview that accompanied a set of nude photographs in which Etxebarria appeared in the now decommissioned magazine

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por sí mismo, o cada lector debería entenderlo a su manera. Pero darle al texto un contexto, una explicación, significa imponerle un límite, dotarlo de un significado final, cerrarlo. O sea, que una vez la sacrosanta crítica ha dictaminado su opinión, el texto está explicado. Victoria para el crítico, y control del lector, al que no se le permite la existencia de un criterio propio" (322).

18. In addition to writing novels and poetry, Etxebarria has collaborated on screenplays and has acted in Isabela Gardela's *Tomándote* (2000). In that film she plays a reporter who asks a Catalonian writer if she slept with a member of a selection committee in order to win a prestigious award. The scene evokes the criticism lobbed at Etxebarria in 1998 when *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* won Ediciones Destino's Nadal prize.

Dunia. There she admits to the pursuit of pleasure above all else and to writing for monetary gain:

> Yo no creo en la literatura como vocación. Yo no escribo por dinero, pero publiqué por dinero (qtd. in Botana 59).

While seemingly self-condemning, this passage may be taken to mean simply that, though publication satisfies an economic necessity, she writes for purer reasons. On the other hand, she does admit to admiring the financial freedom that Almudena Grandes has secured with the success of *Las edades de Lulú* (1989). As Henseler explains, doing so puts her in a place that most—including Grandes—try to avoid, but one that Etxebarria savors, because it is purified of the politics of patriarchy:

> The "popular" is a place at once relegated to women since the nineteenth century to undercut the quality of their narrative and at once highly welcoming to their physical objectification, read advertising. For Etxebarria, this is a space where financial freedom allows for more creative and political innovations, where she can reach a larger audience with her messages, and where she can undermine the literary establishment's traditional positioning of women writers. ("Fuss" 107)

Etxebarria thus works against the traditional view, according to Henseler, that a book be taken as sanctified terrain hermetically sealed off from the life of its writer ("Unframing" 337). As a logical extension of this argument, we are reminded that male writers have traditionally been allowed to desire the spotlight but that women have often had to hide behind pseudonyms in order to do so.

From Madrid to Edinburgh and Back Again

Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes (1998) relates the fictional memoir of Beatriz de Haya, or Bea, a meditative narrator from Madrid who anxiously and impulsively relays a painful past from a retrospective vantage point. The novel consists of four sections of unequal length that unfold irrespective of linear chronology and internally alternate between her adolescent memories in Madrid and her college years spent at the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland. It quickly becomes clear that the history Bea reveals in mental

digressions threatens her chances of finding happiness and prosperity in the present and the future. Bringing a cosmological allegory to bear on otherwise inexplicable acts of random chance and unscrupulous behavior, Bea glosses the text with unending references to *cuerpos celestes*, translated as “heavenly bodies.” The allusion to intergalactic and planetary phenomena, which commences in the title and continues throughout the text, carves a metaphoric space in which the transcendental goal of the novel is to rethink beauty as more than skin deep, indeed as a manifestation of human solidarity.

Born and raised in Madrid, Bea emerges from a conservative and economically viable but abusive household to graduate from college abroad with excellent grades. During her four years at the University of Edinburgh, she studies English philology and carries on an affair with a Scottish woman named Caitlin, or Cat, with whom she lives for most of that time. In doing this, Bea hopes to move beyond problems of the past with her parents, as well as the turbulent friendship she once had back in Madrid with Mónica Ruiz Bonet, her best and only friend in that era of her life.

Bea’s childhood was unbalanced by the scarce attention of her father, who spent a lot of time away from home working and chasing other women, and the overbearing interest of her mother, Herminia, a relic of Franco’s Spain and a devout Catholic who believed in traditional models of gender comportment: men work while women raise the children. Thirty-six when Bea was born, her mother was already near the end of her childbearing years. By then the passion that once existed between her parents was long gone. Bea is therefore seen as the validation of Herminia’s otherwise hollow existence.

But Bea thinks for herself and, from a young age, begins to develop her own unique points of views. She challenges the conventional thinking that Herminia and the nuns at school have driven into her head: that women are supposed to be platonic friends with other women, that all men seeking their casual acquaintance are sexual predators, and that she must dress and act a certain way in order to secure a husband and become a good wife and mother:

> . . . al ir creciendo, empecé a compararme a mí misma, respeto a mis impulsos e intereses, con lo que me rodeaba, con la idea que las monjas y mi madre tenían sobre la niña que debía ser y la mujer en la que tendría que convertirme, y me di cuenta de que yo no era, nunca sería, así. (176)

Bea also quickly discovers that in spite of the short hair and combat boots she wears, men do indeed find her attractive, as their shouting and whistling on the street proves. For that reason, she does not comprehend the importance her mother places on superficial appearances, especially when there is such disjunction in the world between how a person looks and how he or she feels.

The deteriorating relationship with her mother further drives Bea from the domestic cradle. Bea perceives Herminia as wanting to live vicariously through her only daughter. As a result, mother smothers daughter and robs her of a chance to develop an independent identity, which further drives a wedge between the two women. Around this time, Bea grows closer to Mónica, who presents a typical case of familial dysfunction among Spanish Generation X youth. Mónica has a superficial mother, Charo, the director of a fashion magazine who would have the world believe she is decades younger than she really is, and a biological father who visits from Argentina no more than once a year. During the summer after high school graduation, Bea moves in with Mónica while Charo, her second husband Manuel, and their two young sons—Mónica's half brothers—leave Madrid on a family vacation. Mónica stays behind, supposedly to retake some of the classes she purposely failed in high school, in order to escape the watchful eye of her mother and stepfather. Her real interests, however, include partying and discovering creatively illicit ways to make money with Coco, Mónica's live-in "boyfriend" who supplies her with drugs.

Both innocent looking and beautiful, Bea is seen by Coco and others as the ideal drug mule. With Mónica's help, he coaxes her into pushing homemade speed pills fashioned from Charo's stockpile of prescription medications, as well as into delivering firearms and other contraband on his behalf to dangerous recipients in unfamiliar parts of

Madrid. More than once, this nearly leads to Bea being raped. Nevertheless, Bea complies out of financial obligation to her host, Mónica, who coercively reassures her that minimal risk is involved and that nothing bad will happen. A master manipulator, Mónica stakes the girls' friendship on Bea's willingness to go along with her and Coco's plans, which the protagonist considers convoluted at best:

> Sabes que las relaciones se deben fundar, idealmente, en un acervo común de ideas, opiniones o intereses, pero tú las bases exclusivamente en tu desesperada necesidad de amor y con tal de sentirte querida sacrificas lo que sea, incluidos tus principios y tu propia seguridad. Pero sabes que junto a tu amiga estás languideciendo como una lamparita que se apaga. (214)

Throughout the novel Bea demonstrates that she is intelligent, perceptive, and a shrewd judge of character. The fact that she agrees to courier contraband for Coco does not paint her as naïvely unaware of the dangers those tasks present, but rather how pathetically susceptible she is to Mónica's affirmation. In order to attain that approval, she knowingly enters harm's way by delivering a suspicious package, which turns out to be a gun, to the home of Pablo, a young man associated with a neo-Nazi organization and whose wealthy parents are away on vacation. While there, she narrowly averts sexual assault by smashing him over the head with a whiskey bottle. In a second encounter at *La Metralleta* bar later in the story, she brutally stabs Pablo as he is about to force himself on her. In order to avoid retribution, Bea, Mónica, and Coco move into a hotel, where Coco overdoses on alcohol and pills. Eventually, Bea moves back into her parents' apartment, and worsening calamities with Herminia culminate in starvation and hospitalization for Bea. A psychiatrist later diagnoses her with nervous depression and recommends a prolonged separation from her mother.

Bea admits to herself that she has no tenable reason to remain in Madrid. So when her father offers to send her to college abroad in order to pacify both his wife and daughter, she accepts. Together they choose the University of Edinburgh based solely on the fact that it is the only one with space still left in its residence halls. Yet an equally

influential aspect of this decision—unbeknownst to anyone other than the protagonist and the reader—is Mónica's inaccessibility. Now engaged, Mónica's fiancée, Javier, forbids her from associating with Bea, Coco, and other negative influences of the past. Because she is not allowed to see Mónica, Bea seizes her father's offer and flees Madrid in search of a new beginning.

But Bea cannot escape her unresolved feelings by simply crossing a national border. Changing cities cannot alter the self, and for Bea, Edinburgh emerges as a specter of Madrid. Her memories of Mónica, her abusive parents, and a very troubled past inhibit any effort she makes to find herself anew. After landing in Edinburgh and spending a friendless year there, Bea meets Cat, an out lesbian, one night at a bar where Cat has come with her entourage of friends. The two women begin a domestic and romantic relationship, yet Bea does not attempt to befriend any of Cat's friends, most of whom are put off by her aloofness. Moreover, they consider her competition for Cat's attention. Bea is just as lost as she ever was and in desperate need of a new companion to fill an empty space in her heart. Really, though, she needs to learn survival skills. Thinking she has a way to fill this void in her life with a male graduate student of art history named Ralph, Bea begins the first heterosexual relationship of her life, all the while still living with Cat. But Ralph does not open up to Bea the way she needs him to, so their affair is short lived.

The end of Bea's time in Edinburgh marks four years since she has been in Madrid and has last seen Mónica, yet the latter still exercises a powerful influence on her. Bea cannot foresee a future with Cat without first closing the chapter of her life that involved Mónica, so she decides to move back to Madrid and search for her after all of the years that have passed. After tracking down Charo, who now works for a different fashion magazine, Bea learns that after she left Madrid, Mónica became addicted to heroin and has since been interned in an addiction recovery facility out in the countryside. After a brief excursion to see her, Bea rests assured that no possible future exists with Mónica. She likens the memories of her that she has maintained over the past

four years to the residual light left behind by an extinguished star that shone in the remote past:

> La he sentido más alejada que nunca, nada mío ya, como una estrella lejanísima, a millones de años luz. La luz de las estrellas más distantes tiene una peculiaridad: cuando nos llega, ha podido tardar en el viaje hasta miles de millones de años y entonces estamos viendo la estrella tal como era hace milenios. . . . Al despedirme de Mónica comprendo que todo aquel amor que he mantenido vivo durante cuatro inacabables años no ha sido más que la luz de una estrella muerta. (336–37)

The novel ends when Bea belatedly phones Cat one morning, about a week after flying back to Spain. She realizes there is no going back when Aylsa, a known rival for Cat's affection, answers and tells her that Cat is still asleep.

Galactic Non-Place: *Los Cuerpos Celestes*

At the start of a long journey across Europe, Bea ponders the fateful decision she has made to return to her parents' apartment in Madrid after four years abroad in Edinburgh. She begins her trek across Europe from the train station on Lothian Road, where she senses that the other passengers bound for London share a similar anxiety about what the future will bring when they reach their respective destinations. Even though there are other bodies around her, in this space Bea feels isolated and alone:

> Aunque compartimos una tensión común a la espera de un mismo tren que no llega, no intercambiamos ninguna mirada, ningún gesto de solidaridad o simpatía. . . . Tensa e incómoda, preparo el cuerpo y la cabeza para las horas de trayecto que me esperan. (25)

With the six-hour train ride to London thus begun, Bea begins to partake of an intense deliberation over her decision to leave Cat, the roommate and lover she left sleeping in their bed—and the ultimately irreversible estrangement from her it causes:

> El constante traqueteo tiende las redes al sueño y las formas se van difuminando hasta convertirse en una pantalla verde uniforme sobre la que dibujo mentalmente la imagen de Cat. . . . (27)

The rapidly moving train affords Bea visual snapshots of a landscape that visually grounds her memories of Cat in the lush green pastures of the Scottish and English countryside, and assures her future fondness for them:

> El tren arranca con un silbido que corta el aire húmedo de Edimburgo, y el perfil de la estación se desdibuja poco a poco a medida que la máquina toma velocidad. A través de la ventanilla se suceden diferentes variaciones del mismo paisaje aterido. . . . Verde musgo, verde esmeralda, verde hierba [. . .] verde, verde, verde, todas las tonalidades del verde oscuro desfilan ante mis ojos bajo un cielo hecho de gotas de agua y de guiñapos de algodón sucio. Verde como los parques de Edimburgo, verde como los ojos de Cat. (25)

The nature of the subjective reflections in the transit spaces I describe follow a cognitive process that theorist Marc Augé attributes to spontaneous travelers like Bea:

> Thus it is not surprising that it is among solitary 'travellers' of the last century—not professional travellers or scientists, but travellers on impulse or for unexpected reasons—that we are most likely to find prophetic evocations of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense; spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future. (70–71)

Augé's commentary positions Bea in an interstitial space in which the visual stimuli that pass outside the windows of the speeding train assemble in her mind like a sensory collage. The awareness of her present role as a traveler is set aside as she focuses on the past as well as an uncertain future yet to come. An inability to leave that past behind has driven the protagonist back to Madrid, where she hopes to finally come to terms with her lingering obsession with Mónica, but only at great risk to the possibility of a future with Cat.

After arriving in London, Bea takes a shuttle to Gatwick, where she waits another hour in the international terminal of the airport. Even though she does not know any of the passengers in this busy space, her itinerary intersects with theirs. She wanders into a duty-free shop where alcohol, tobacco, fragrances, and other items are typically available

tax-exempt to international passengers in transit. Stumbling upon a tester from the Body Shop, a health and beauty store, Bea tests a vial of the cologne Cat uses, which conjures vivid memories of her partner's smooth, elastic skin, as well as the intimate moments they have shared together:

> Me detengo frente a un bote de Activist, la colonia que usaba Caitlin, una fragancia de hombre que imita al Antaeus de Chanel. Me rocío con una nube de perfume en el dorso de la mano y de improviso evoco la imagen del cuerpo elástico de Caitlin abrazando a mi espalda, la carne lisa y plástica en contacto con la mía. (34)

Because Bea has registered her international itinerary through customs control and crossed a political threshold, her body has checked out of the United Kingdom and into an interstitial space without the anthropological bearing of Spain or Scotland. It is in that nowhere space that she mulls over the past. The eerie solitude she describes of this space, which both lies beyond the political border of the United Kingdom and is still planted on its soil, recalls the description of high-speed travel in the prologue to Augé's study, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*:

> These days, surely, it was in these crowded places where thousands of individual itineraries converged for a moment, unaware of one another, that there survived something of the uncertain charm of the waste lands, the yards and building sites, the station platforms and waiting rooms where travellers break step, of all the chance meeting places where fugitive feelings occur, of the possibility of continuing adventure, the feeling that all there is to do is to 'see what happens'. (2)

Concerned with the ways in which technology and impersonal data generation corrode identity, Augé's neologism *non-place* refers to the:

> urban, peri-urban, and inter-urban spaces associated with transit and communication, designed to be passed through rather than appropriated, and retaining little or no trace of our passage as we negotiate them. (O'Beirne 38)

The above suggests that a non-place repels the passenger, commuter, and driver that pass through it.[19] *Non-place* thus refers to a multitude of imprecise nodal points within an increasingly advanced global infrastructure that supports communication and high-speed travel through airports, bus or train stations, highways, and international border crossings. As a result of the global transformations these necessitate, individuals experience alienation from a more accessible world, which appears disproportionately small because advances in communication and transportation make the entire globe more accessible than ever before:

> . . . anthropological place is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers. (Augé 81)

Thus, he explains, the non-place[20] eradicates identity and reduces it to the collective interests of passengers, drivers, and customers suffering an existential crisis of individual identity despite the collectivity of their relations (O'Beirne 38). In a perverse way, however, Bea's experiences deviate from that formula because her identity is so destabilized in anthropological space—constantly recalibrated according to the person with whom she shares any given space—that only in the non-places of the novel can she claim a space for herself. She is a perpetual traveler who cannot belong to an anthropological space without first resolving the question of her identity.

Realizing that four years and a distance of more than a thousand miles from home have neither arrested her obsession with Mónica, from whom she has been estranged since leaving Spain, nor taught her to build and maintain healthier interpersonal

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19. Augé defines this era by the proliferation of three "figures of excess": an overabundance of events, a spatial overabundance, and the individualization of references. He also explicitly states that these features find their fullest expression in the non-place (88).

20. In contrast to the examples of scopic range—the modern skyscraper, or the satellite for that matter—that de Certeau cites as examples of panoptic discipline (Foucault), here the satellite signifies a lateral glance at individuals divested of difference in a space where bodies exist in perpetual silence and physical isolation.

relationships in general, Bea undertakes an intense self-examination that, in effect, constitutes the body of the novel. The challenges Bea faces in relation to her parents, to Mónica, and to Cat, all of whom share her domestic space at one time or another, arise from an urgency to put on their identities as her own:

> A tu alrededor se alzarán las mismas ruinas de tu vida, porque allá donde vayas llevarás a la ciudad contigo. No hay tierra nueva ni mar nuevo, la vida que has malograda queda en cualquier parte del mundo. Tengo veintidós años, y hablo por boca de otros. (19)

Speaking "through the mouths of others," Bea is driven by an internal lack of identity. She looks to the other women she lives with to form a coherent sense of self that she cannot create on her own. Thus, Bea uses the literary representation of urban and domestic spaces in Madrid—where she was born and bred—and Edinburgh—where she attended college—as a means to form an identity that she does not independently possess.

Absent the distractions of Madrid or Edinburgh, in the solitary space of international travel, Bea reflects upon the lessons of a bleak adolescence and university experience in order to negotiate a stronger sense of self. Physically committed to the space of the airport by her international itinerary, she has nothing to do but think. What occurs in her mind—and appears on the pages of the novel—corresponds to a cognitive awareness that Augé generally sees in all passengers who, regardless of cultural, linguistic, and geographic dissimilarities, unanimously contemplate the future with excited optimism. Although Bea's painful retrospective puts a twist on Augé's rosy outlook, his theory nonetheless explains the narrative processes of the novel by means of a theoretical dichotomy that establishes the city as "anthropological place," on the one hand, and airport terminals, bus stations, highways, and other spaces of transit as non-places, on the other. In fact, it is precisely that division between anthropological place and non-place that lies at the heart of Bea's psychological limitations. Only within anthropological and domestic spaces does Bea fully adapt her identity so that it mirrors those with whom she lives, in the process losing any native self-making that would have

otherwise been possible. She retreats to the interstitial loci of travel in order to negotiate and reclaim a secure sense of self.

She repeats the process of self-abnegation twice in the novel: first when fleeing her parents' home and their narrow vision of her to move in with Mónica, where she stakes her entire claim to an identity on that one person, and then again when she arranges a different domestic configuration with Cat in Edinburgh. While the house she shares belongs to Cat, whose name is on the lease, Bea contributes to their financial upkeep, making her presence more legitimate in Cat's house than it was in Mónica's family apartment. Nevertheless, living with Cat threatens the precarious independence Bea has constructed as a result of her turbulent experiences with Mónica and Coco the summer before departing for Scotland:

> Hasta ahora nuestra convivencia podía considerarse una solución provisional. Al fin y al cabo, quedó siempre claro que yo estaba de paso. Mis libros, mis discos, mi familia, mis recuerdos, han permanecido durante estos cuatro años almacenados en mi casa de Madrid, esperando mi vuelta mientras se cubrían de polvo. Si decidía quedarme convertiría un acuerdo de convivencia en un matrimonio. Y yo no quiero comprometerme sin estar segura de lo que siento. . . . (33)

Remaining in Edinburgh after her term of education ends would be a tacit admission that her relationship with Cat has real meaning. Doing so would force Bea to confront her choice and fully commit to it. But she does not even wake Cat to say goodbye before flying back to Spain; Bea is not ready to commit to Cat, to their relationship, or to the vision of herself all that would imply.

Although Bea recognizes Cat's general benevolence as preferable to Mónica's egotism, she yearns for the vivacity and fulfillment of earlier times with that childhood confidant. By comparing and contrasting these two women as Bea does, the narrator suggests that she is profoundly unstable and exceedingly dependent on them to provide her with the raw materials of her own singular identity. By continually measuring the relative merits and drawbacks of these two women, Bea shows that she does not know

how to construct an authentic sense of self in relation to others. By the end of the novel, of course, she learns this important life lesson, but for most of the story she has no individual self other than as a specter of Cat, Mónica, and to a lesser extent, Ralph. That is why she finds it necessary to return to the anthropological space of Madrid in order to exhume the remains of her former friendship there with Mónica:

> Esta novela relata cómo Beatriz, joven de veintidós años que acaba de regresar a España tras una estancia de cuatro años en Edimburgo, trata de poner orden en sus sentimientos y darles sentido, para lo que lleva a cabo una mirada retrospectiva a su pasado, especialmente a las circunstancias que le acontecieron durante el verano de sus dieciocho años y que le llevaron a abandonar Madrid, su ciudad natal. (Torres 172)

Thus, Bea's chronologically unordered memoir chaotically recalls the past four years in a way that corresponds to an equally unstable subjective frame of mind that drives this narrative. But as the story progresses, the discursive self-negotiation that the protagonist carries out on the pages of *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* provides her with the life experiences she had previously lacked, which in turn strengthens her resolve in the face of emotional disaster.

The title character exits the confines that anthropological space—Madrid and Edinburgh—impose on her by projecting an interstitial non-place beyond even the train station and airport onto a metaphysical plane, called *cuerpos celestes*, from which she injects her meditative discourse into the novel.[21] It is a space that privileges abstract forms of desire over bodily attraction, and it achieves this vision by voiding and rewriting the gender and sexual stereotypes inherent in the formulation of the city as an inherently social space.[22] The *cuerpos celestes* allegory, represented in the title of the novel and in

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21. According to Augé, "Certain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are 'non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés" (77). For this reason, the metaphysical space I design for *cuerpos celestes* qualifies as a non-place in its own right. Nevertheless, I use the term for the airport, train station, and other interstitial loci of travel that Bea passes through on her transnational trek across Europe.

22. My affirmation that the city is a social space relies upon the work of Henri Lefebvre, who in *The Production of Space* argues for a "science of space" that would inculcate mental space (i.e., the level of

constant musings about the galaxy, interrupts Bea's physical interface with urban space and transfers it to a non-place unassociated with urban space. The planets, stars, black holes, light years, and other astral components that Bea repeatedly invokes liken her emotional anguish to a defunct satellite stuck circling the Earth like so much intergalactic debris.

Throughout the novel, Bea urges a reconsideration of a patriarchal tradition that ascribes gender based solely upon strict biological determinism. In order to do this, Bea allegorizes the human body as a planet floating freely among countless others in the uncharted territory of outer space. In her view, men and women ought to deemphasize gender and sexual preference as the marks of their identity, since these constrict the development of meaningful human relationships, which Bea illustrates with firsthand testimony about her urban experiences in two separate—but, as we will see, not so unique cities. Bea's discursive reprocessing of the interpersonal conflicts she has had with other people includes myriad commentaries about the social restraints patriarchy places on gender, and a brutally honest commentary that asks whether a major overhaul is in order. In order to realize any such change, Bea transfers the urban space where her trials and tribulations with her parents, Mónica, Cat, and a number of secondary characters occur, from the city to outer space. The galactic space high above Earth thus offers a level playing field where Bea meditates on these challenges, ponders which aspects are the result of her doing, and contemplates how she can avoid similar errors down the road. In the allegorical non-place of *cuerpos celestes*, no superficial demarcation defines men and women as they do in the city. The novel uses a metaphor of outer space to reimagine categories of gender as the infinite interval anywhere between hetero-, homo-, and bisexual.

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discourse) with (1) a political use of knowledge, (2) an ideology designed to conceal that use, and (3) a technological utopia (7). I am suggesting that *cuerpos celestes* neutralizes this process.

As a symbolic zone situated in extraterrestrial space, the idea of the *cuerpos celestes* implies a clean sociological slate expunged of the notions about gender and identity promoted in Spain during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975. Bea's mother, Herminia, for instance, learned very traditional ideas about the proper role and function of men, women, and children during her Franco-era youth. She teaches Bea—who does not take her mother seriously until almost being raped—that the only reason a woman visits a bar alone is to invite casual liaisons. For Herminia, men work outside the home; women take care of their families; and adolescent girls must look and appear feminine in order to attract suitable husbands to take care of them. Bea, however, believes it is more important to find true companionship and therefore decides early on to keep her options open to both men and women—to any person who offers her emotional fulfillment. Similarly, she does not agree with the decision Cat has made to only date women, which in her view represents another limitation.

Bea internalizes the identities of the people with whom she shares space throughout the story to such an extent that they invalidate her confidence and shrewd common sense. For instance, when she impulsively decides to dye part of her hair with a bottle of peroxide from Charo's medicine cabinet, Bea worries that Mónica will not like the result:

> Hubo un tenso silencio durante el cual me contempló un largo rato con ojos asombrados antes de decidirse a emitir una opinión. Yo contuve el aliento, intentando imaginar cómo podría hacer desaparecer las mechas en caso de que no le gustaran. (160)

Although Bea likes it, Mónica's is the only opinion that really matters. Thus, Bea's self-worth is tightly wound up in the opinion of another. Because the protagonist lacks the endearing support any child craves from his or her parents, she searches for it in an alternative space where Mónica acts as her surrogate mother. Another example appears when the protagonist reluctantly agrees to courier a mysterious package to a strange part of the city for Coco. Bea explains that she eventually accepts the assignment out of an

economic obligation to Mónica, who has been providing her food and shelter, and will undoubtedly use the proceeds from this delivery to continue to do so. But I believe Bea also accedes because she fears losing the maternal foundation Mónica provides, which is infinitely more important: "Venga, Betty, por favor. —Mónica puso voz melosa—. Hazlo por mí" (116).

Ironically, Bea has sought to reinforce the emotional and spiritual values of her friendship with Mónica but here rejects Cat's efforts to transcend the sexual nature of theirs by calling themselves a "couple":

> Yo encontraba aterradora es noción y deseaba que una larguísima fila de puntos suspensivos se interpusiera entre nuestros nombres, que la gente dijera:
> Caitlin...y Bea. (58)

Bea does not commit to Cat, an avowed lesbian, because doing so would undermine her ambivalence about the role of gender and sexuality in the regulation of her life. By the novel's end, Bea is stuck between the desire to reinitiate a platonic but deeply sentimental friendship with Mónica, on the one hand, and a future with Cat that she fears would pale in comparison, on the other. Thus, in the non-places of the train station and airport, Bea is stuck not only between two countries but between two relationships that belong to distinct moments along a diverse geographic and chronological narrative.

Coming out of several violent encounters with men in Madrid—attempted rapes by Coco and Pablo, hitting a man over the head with a bottle, and near strangulation by her own father—it is not surprising that Bea chooses to relax, drink beer, and listen to music in an atmosphere restricted to women. Nevertheless, she meets Cat in that female-only space, and that chance encounter results in an intimate domestic arrangement. Although Bea claims she was not looking for companionship that night when she entered a bar—"cuya entrada quedaba estrictamente restringida a mujeres" (Etxebarria, *Beatriz* 26)—it is reasonable to draw a line connecting her traumatic experiences with men in the past and her choice of a female lover.

Bea never fully vests in a new life abroad, because emotional baggage from her past transfers to the new space and inhibits a fresh start:

> Antes de conocerla jamás me fijaba en las rubias. Supongo que tenía la imagen de Mónica tan metida en la cabeza que me resultaba imposible interesarme por una persona que no se pareciera a ella. Sin embargo, me fijé en Cat desde la primera vez que la vi. (26)

As such, a connection can be drawn between the scene where Bea first meets Cat and Paul Smith's suggestion that claims to a female identity inherently beget resistance to patriarchy:

> Indeed, patriarchy has marginalized femininity as the other by means of which its own identity can be formulated and guaranteed. Thus, in the promotion of claims to women's identity there is already not only a contestation or seeking of power, but also a contradiction at work . . . because of the history and effective continuation of patriarchy, such demands for equality are not simply that—they also necessarily comport a threat and a resistance to dominatory structures. (137–38)

The correlation between idea and scene resides in the nature of its chance encounter. The unexpected meeting acknowledges the same contradiction Smith does above, that women do not have access to discursive strategies outside of an oppositional resistance to patriarchy. According to this view, Bea cannot articulate *cuerpos celestes* as an un-gendered space without first acknowledging that patriarchy has gendered the body. The fact of the matter is that patriarchal structures are so deeply ingrained that no space or place is unaffected by them. Bea either accedes to patriarchy by going to a straight bar or tries to avoid it by going to a gay bar, but either constitutes a tacit response. This might explain why Bea has to look to the heavens to find a place free of gendered hierarchy.

Kathryn Everly insightfully argues that the novel articulates a clean gender slate by placing the body and its manifestation of desire in the space of orbiting satellites. According to this line of reasoning, the dissolution of gender via bodily expression is much more than a "non-issue," as Everly suggests above. Rather, it is a core issue in the novel that foreshadows my reading of non-place by delineating the movement of orbiting

satellites in outer space as a process that separates gender from biology, just as a spinning centrifuge separates blood into its components parts. Moreover, Everly speculates that the body in twenty-first-century literature invalidates the critical path paved by Judith Butler—who set gender theory in a new direction yet still accepts it as a fundamental sociological premise—by urging a complete overhaul of the concept:

> According to Etxebarria the body as an orbiting satellite pertains to a space not yet defined. The celestial bodies of the novel become interchangeable in Beatriz's efforts to constantly reinvent herself through physical expression. Therefore we can read Etxebarria's novel as a stepping stone from postmodern gender bending to a new literature that questions gender as a legitimate device in sociological relationships. (Everly 174)

This outlook is borne out in Bea's experience at university, where she takes courses in women's studies. In those classes, she encounters an exclusively female cohort ramped up for rebellion against a vague and indefinite male enemy. But at the end of the day, their disorganization stymies action, as they are more resolved to spew venom than to work together. Unimpressed by their militant rhetoric, Bea describes their comments in class as combative swagger. She keeps a figurative and literal distance, sitting by herself in class and quietly maintaining neutral ground during discussions. She similarly avoids their extracurricular focus groups, a move that, as the novel explains, affects no one outside that inner circle:

> Tengo la impresión de que de alguna manera se notaba mucho que no me sentía a gusto entre aquella congregación de petardas y marimachos que consumían comida macrobiótica y bebidas inteligentes, que llevaban el pelo rapado al uno y teñido con peróxido, que vestían camisetas de talla infantil y chaquetones de peluche y zapatillas de jugador de fútbol búlgaro, que se anillaban hasta la mortificación, que hacían exagerados esfuerzos por mostrarse originales y distintos cuando en realidad se parecían tanto los unos a los otros. (51)

Bea internalizes her resistance but acquiesces outwardly by tailoring her written assignments to match the tones and views of the classes she takes. From an academic standpoint, she suggests:

> El concepto de género está sometido a manipulaciones sociales. Una convención impuesta. No asociada a factores biológicos. Nacer hombre o mujer no supone implicaciones de comportamiento irreversibles. Nos comportamos como tales por educación. Los roles sexuales se aprenden en función de los hábitos culturales. No son innatos. (274–75)

And while the tactic works—it earns her a scholarship, which provides the money to stay in Scotland to complete her degree—regardless of what Bea writes in term papers, she does not accept theories that explain gender in terms of social processes. Thus, Everly (168) suggests that the novel foils any theory of gender based on how men and women "perform" their sexuality, as Butler argues:

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (33)

Bea goes a step further than Butler to completely erase any difference whatsoever between men and women from the metaphysical plane of the novel. For this reason, she rejects the performance of gender to suggest that sex with Cat and Ralph form part of one and the same act:

> La mujer que amó a Ralph era la misma que amó a Cat y sé que será difícil de comprender, para quien no lo haya vivido, que amó del mismo modo al uno que a la otra. Que no hubo grandes diferencias en lo que hacíamos. Que la fisiología no determinó nunca la mecánica amorosa. Que yo nací persona, y amé a personas. (276)

The novel's spatial relations that Jessica A. Folkart describes as "outer space and the relations of places and bodies" can be thought of as what I have described as non-place:

> With the metaphor of space, seen as both outer space and as relations of places and bodies, Etxebarria captures the sense of internal individual exile and alienation from an unbounded external world. . . . In a novel that struggles to find meaning beyond the annihilation and alienation of the postmodern world, Etxebarria explores the potential of discourse to divulge the various perspectives implicit in relations of subjectivity. (44–45)

Like Everly, Folkart suggests that words and language cannot sufficiently represent the pain Bea attempts to articulate in the novel. Folkart, however, attributes this inadequacy

not to patriarchy, as Everly does, but rather to Elaine Scarry's theory of pain as resistance to language. This suggests that anguish and isolation disturb the marks of Bea's identity by interrupting the arc of subject-object relations in the novel:

> The body consumed by pain becomes at once intensely human, imploding entirely into its own consciousness and physicality, and also dehumanized, exploding to annihilate any perception of others in its space. (Folkart 46)

This occurs when Bea is in acute emotional distress. For Folkart, the concept of "cemetery orbit" that Etxebarria uses renders the subject unable to perceive an object whose interaction provides the grounding and orientation she needs. Thus, Folkart calculates the nebulous non-place of the novel as a space where Bea neglects to form a healthy and productive identity by not properly balancing her role as subject and object in relation to others.

Folkart tropes the allegory of a dead satellite in *Beatriz* to the breakdown of subject/object relations in the context of Scarry's theory: "In the subject/object model, the subject cannot see herself fully from the outside and hence needs her object to complete the vision of herself" (48). As the subject who venerates Mónica as an object, Bea clings to her friend no matter the cost, telling herself:

> Crees que estás desesperadamente necesitada de afecto que te empeñas en mantener a tu amiga cueste lo que cueste, aunque la temes, y a veces la desprecias, y a veces también la odias, pero lo cierto, lo tristemente cierto, es que también la amas. (213)

Subsequently, when she enters a romantic partnership in Edinburgh, her role transforms to that of the smothered object. Wedged between these roles, Bea cannot maintain a productive relationship with either person. Thus, her real challenge resides in tempering the desire she feels for another person in such a way that it does not obliterate but encourages the coexistence of subject and object (Folkart 51).

Removed from the spatial constraints of terrestrial urban space where men and women look and act a certain way—for example, as reflected in the view that men keep

their hair short and women wear makeup, an idea held by Herminia and the nuns who teach Bea—the protagonist explores multiple subject and gender positions that form a fluid process of identity affirmation and revision. Not only does she not limit her romantic prospects to men or women, but her sexual encounter with Ralph illustrates that she does not comprehend the logic of any such limitations. Furthermore, the physical encounters she has with him only strengthen her belief that bodily and spiritual attraction belong to entirely divergent categories of desire. Bea experiences an emotional catastrophe by conflating the two, erroneously believing that Ralph intended to invest equal sources of emotional and sexual desire in their brief affair. Thus, the protagonist learns the hard way that sex does not necessarily accompany a more transcendental union.

Ironically, she refuses to invest in Cat much more than a physical relationship and shared living quarters. Bea repeatedly uses her body to secure a deeper human connection, like the one she once had with Mónica. The protagonist seems to think that physical sex correlates to communion with another person. But by excluding Bea from his space, Ralph shows that the two acts do not necessarily go hand in hand: "—Soy yo otra vez. Quiero verte—dije. —Te he dicho que no puedes—respondió" (305).

The Antithesis of Mañas's Madrid

In chapter 1, I suggest that Káiser, the protagonist of José Ángel Mañas's *Ciudad rayada*, uses his awareness of Madrid's urban space to develop his identity as a headstrong, stalwart cocaine dealer who traverses urban space quickly and efficiently, thereby retaining clients and maximizing profits. Exceedingly self-confident, Káiser represents the ideal character to push narcotics around town. By setting violent precedents for defaulters, keeping an ample product supply on hand, and creating a customer base that both fears and reveres him, Káiser earns social and fiscal stature from his interface with Madrid.

Beatriz presents an opposing view. While Mañas's character thrives in Madrid, Etxebarria's deteriorates there. Thus, while these novels both present images of drugs, violence, and shallow intimacy, they do so through highly divergent space-character interfaces. Accordingly, although they take opposing paths, they both ultimately work toward the same goal—to use the image of a modern-day *pícaro*—to weaken the representation of cultural stability that Spain sought to portray at the close of the millennium. Káiser steadfastly sustains a resolute aloofness in his social and economic dealings; no one in the novel sees past the verbal and psychological shell he establishes between himself and others. Bea, in contrast, is emotionally weak and keenly articulates to everyone the barriers to identity formation that she consistently experiences in dealing with her parents, Mónica, Cat, Ralph, and others.

It is useful to compare how these two protagonists manage disaster. For example, at one point Barbas kidnaps and later releases Káiser in a location unknown to him outside of the capital. Immobilized and penniless in an alien space—the slums along the Emetreinta Highway, in the town of El Escorial, and at Festimad, the huge youth rock concert in Móstoles—Káiser retains his composure despite being lost and lacking the requisite knowledge and resources to get back home. In a show of resilience, he figures out where he is and then seeks assistance from an errant gypsy and other strangers who offer food, shelter, and transportation either out of virtue or in exchange for street drugs. Bea, on the other hand, takes flight after self-defensively murdering a young man who had attacked and almost raped her.

A short while after that trauma, she becomes estranged from Mónica, which leaves Bea yearning for closure over the loss of their relationship and searching for another source of human affection—a replacement for Mónica—throughout the four years she lives abroad. Without Mónica by her side, Bea sees no reason to stay in Madrid. Nevertheless, leaving town conjures memories of the best friend she lost each and every time she craves companionship over the four years she is away at school. She flees

Madrid hoping to learn how to create a more stable identity, thus providing not just a space outside of Madrid but a transnational setting to her first-person chronicle. Ultimately, however, she achieves little more than a circular voyage that ends where it began. By running away to another country after high school, and then again after college, Bea chooses flight as a problem-solving tactic.

Mónica and Cat submerge Bea into the youth underworld of two separate European capitals. Her presence in those urban spaces correlates to the subculture of Madrid, where Káiser has become a capitalist magnate with an entrepreneurial venture selling cocaine and other street drugs. But while Bea drifts in and out of these ganglands on intra- and international levels, Káiser's space-character interface is intimately bound to the city of Madrid. On the one hand, Mónica coaxes her into making dangerous deliveries to unfamiliar areas of Madrid, where she is nearly attacked and raped. On the other, Cat's large network of friends, with their hair dyed orange or purple, multiple body piercings, and narcotics-related activities, unavoidably intrudes upon Bea's life. Cat's best friend, Barry, for example, a licensed dentist, sells drugs cut with Novocain when not working as a disc jockey. Cat also sells speed to supplement her income as the chef at a gay bar. And despite a stated aversion, Bea nonetheless depends on the pills Cat sells to brighten her mood during Edinburgh's dark and gloomy winters.

The narrative voice of the novel, especially in comparison to *Ciudad*, is striking. While Mañas explicitly invites and acknowledges dialogue with the reader, Etxebarria's monologue regards its audience as dispensable. Bea's unearthing of and attempted reconciliation with her past seemingly bubble up from deep within and can continue with or without a reader presence. As is explained in the short introductory chapter, Bea writes in order to escape her "cemetery orbit." The allegory suggests defunct satellites stuck endlessly circling the Earth like unnoticed trash. Ironically, the narrator explains, these massive devices that once facilitated interpersonal communication now point to the very lack of it:

> . . . unos cachivaches enormes cuya labor principal era la comunicación, mudos, aislados para siempre, rodeados de un ejército de cachivaches similares que tampoco podrán comunicarse nunca más. (15)

In this context, the satellite suspended in cemetery orbit high above the earth contrasts with Michel de Certeau's discussion of scopic range in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. There de Certeau suggests that the artificial elevation of the former World Trade Center in New York and other tall buildings teases out the proliferating identities of quotidian human life:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. . . . When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. . . . His elevation transforms him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a Solar Eye, looking down like a god. (92)

In my discussion of Mañas's novel, I showed how this elevation coerces citizens into following the rules of government and other bureaucratic organizations who keep a watchful eye on their citizens' every move with panoramic surveillance of the city from above. But here it produces an ethereal and transcendental space that Bea uses as a workspace where she diagnoses her subjective afflictions. Thus, the visual perspective here is reversed: the vision from above becomes a vision projected from below. Bea, standing on the ground, projects her vision upward into the far reaches of space in order to look back down to where she is standing. She conceives of outer space as non-place where Earth and other heavenly bodies roam free among defunct satellites and other bits of extraterrestrial trash. It is there that Bea works through her psychological and emotional pain.

Jason Klodt's insightful dissertation on Spain's Generation X[23] discusses other similarities and unmistakable differences between the works of Mañas and Etxebarria, to

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23. Klodt rejects the label "Generation X," preferring instead "novels of disaffection."

which he ascribes an inverted architecture, in that the female leads of the latter share their emotions, something their male counterparts would never do:

> Whereas Mañas's novels suggest that interpersonal estrangement is the cause of isolation, escapism, and identity, Etxebarria's narratives frame it as an effect; characters suffer the emotional fallout from the lack of interpersonal contact and the breakdown of communication. (117)

Etxebarria points to the isolation, escapism, and fractured identity of her characters as the source of relational estrangement, and thus her work recommends searching for a solution from within, which is precisely what Bea sets out to do.

For Klodt, an even greater difference lies in their divergent approaches to character identity. The Mañas character is hedonistic, strong willed, and independently exists within the nucleus of his surrounding literary-spatial universe. Conversely, Etxebarria's protagonists, Cristina of the novel, *Amor curiosidad, prozac y dudas* (1997) and Bea, depend on others for the raw materials of their identities (Klodt 117). Káiser embraces his autonomy and self-reliance; Bea laments over her alienation from the rest of the world. It is not difficult to sense that Etxebarria's representation of the struggle for interdependence trumps her representation of unmitigated youth disaster, which is Mañas's ultimate narrative goal: "Etxebarria moves beyond the representation of a troubled youth culture to confront the identity crisis resulting from an individual's alienation from collective society" (Klodt 116). By likening the youth subculture of metropolitan Scotland to metropolitan Spain, the novel represents aesthetic continuity among European youth. As a result, her task becomes exceedingly difficult. The textual representation of Edinburgh's subculture achieves very little in terms of diverting the self-destructive behaviors that nearly led to Bea's demise in Madrid. Although geographically distinct, it seems that the former city approximates the cultural milieu of the latter:

> Allá donde vayas llevarás la ciudad contigo. Puede que sea calurosa y brillante, puede que sea húmeda y oscura, pero en el fondo es siempre la misma . . . En Madrid y en Edimburgo la

> gente baila la misma música y alucina con las mismas drogas, y busca lo mismo: sexo, amor, razones para aguantar una noche más. Dondequiera que vayas les podrás observar sincronizándose cuando suena la música, y quizá el ritmo no se origine en la melodía, sino que ésta libere un compás común a todos nosotros. (235)

In other words, the time Bea spends in Scotland is nothing more than a geographically distinct extension of an earlier struggle in Madrid.

It would, however, be incorrect to suggest that Bea completely works outside of Mañas's Kronen archetype:

> The sexual exploits, alcohol and drug abuse, perpetual motion, and violence recall José Ángel Mañas's Kronen tetralogy. In fact, the appetites of Etxebarría's [sic] protagonists for sex, drugs, and escapism are as voracious as those of their Kronen counterparts. However, Mañas's and Etxebarría's similar plots develop into distinct conceptualizations of identity. (Klodt 116)

Despite Klodt's helpful contribution on these authors, he misses an important parallel that might unify *Beatriz* and *Ciudad* but therefore contradict his thesis. Klodt distinguishes the protagonists according to the music to which they listen in the bar. While he rightly associates Mañas's protagonists' taste with heavy metal, punk, and grunge and Etxebarria's with techno, Klodt fails to take into account that Káiser is privately an adamant fan of *bakalao* (techno music) and often creates his own electronic tunes in the garage attached to his father's home.

Lucía Etxebarria: Between the Writer and the Written

The critical response to *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* has been as varied as her readership. Ignacio Echevarría, for example, sarcastically compares it to Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945)—which won the first Nadal prize in 1944—facetiously recounting Etxebarria's novel as "otra vez, nada." In his view, both works colonize literature with sociology and confuse "nihilistic existentialism" with "mere sentimentalism," using corny and arrogant tones suited to *Cosmopolitan* magazine (Echevarría 11). Santos Sanz Villanueva (15), on the other hand, values Etxebarria's perception of reality but assesses her writing as lackluster, while Gorka Elorrieta asks why the writer discusses anorexia

when she is so fat, describing her work as "la letra pequeña de la literatura española," worse than the breathing medication Clenbuterol's damaging side effects on the human liver. Astoundingly, Elorrieta judges the quality of Etxebarria's writing based only on the author's appearance, thus fully demonstrating the tendency to confuse the way Etxebarria looks and acts with the way she writes. His words also make one wonder if a similar critique would have been leveled against a male writer with an equally potent public persona. Finally, Akiko Tsuchiya sees the critical power of the novel as limiting, believing it fails to posit viable alternatives to the problem of identity, which begs the question of whether she realizes that Etxebarria likely omits these in order to intensify Bea's existential uncertainty.

With these comments in mind, Laura Freixas rightly concludes that even in the 1990s literature written by women was still subject to gender-based reception (Henseler, "Fuss" 99). Etxebarria is no exception—her work is the reaction to a patriarchal tradition. Even so, Uruguayan poet Cristina Peri Rossi's review of *Beatriz* justifies its unconventional content by aligning it with earlier moments in the evolution of Spanish letters:

> Lucía Etxebarria, la autora, rompía moldes [. . .]— y la crítica le puso muchos reparos, algunos francamente envenenados [. . .] Su novela no era más escandalosa que la películas de Almodóvar, por ejemplo, y su escritura mucho más sugestiva que el realismo sucio de los escritores de la última generación, pero no hay que olvidar que Lucía es mujer y el malditismo suele estar reservado para los hombres. Novela generacional y de personajes, parecía romper definitivamente con los grandes relatos de la Guerra Civil y de sus consecuencias, sumergiéndose, de pleno, en la contemporaneidad y a veces en la marginalidad de los años 80 y 90, especialmente en las grandes ciudades, en Madrid más específicamente. (qtd. in Díaz 19)

Peri Rossi here suggests that Etxebarria has been treated unfairly simply because she is a woman, and that her focus on the problems of urban contemporaneity is as worthy of literary representation as the Spanish Civil War.

In an interview published three years after *Beatriz*, Etxebarria remarks that these comments have hurt and offended her on a daily basis (Henseler, "Fuss" 99). By admitting to feeling slighted by critics, Etxebarria invites their opinions, a characteristic that sets her apart from José Ángel Mañas and other Generation X writers. As I discuss in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Mañas's influential essay, "El legado de los Ramones: punk y literatura," zealously attacks the binary categories of literary/nonliterary that the author considers part and parcel of the critical establishment. The essay makes it plain that Mañas neither enjoys nor seeks the blessing of critics who regard his writing as unworthy of the label *literature*. His ambivalence toward them is easily detectable, as is his opinion that readers—not critics—should determine good writing based on what they enjoy reading. But Etxebarria's admission to feeling slighted by the negative reactions of critics further empowers them to exclude the writers and works they deem deserving of synthetic categories.

A similar posture appears in the novel, as Bea notices her overwhelming inability to communicate with the people around her, even in European cities thousands of miles apart:

> . . . me he quedado sola, rodeada de otros seres que navegan desorientados a mi alrededor en esta atmósfera enrarecida por la indiferencia, la insensibilidad o la mera ineptitud, donde una nunca espera que la escuchen, y menos aún que la comprendan. A nuestro alrededor giran universos enteros, estrellas, soles, lunas, galaxias. . . . Hasta basura espacial. Pero sobre todo, un silencio insondable que todo lo absorbe. Un vacía enorme y negro, una inquietud indescifrable. (16)

Jason Klodt attributes the novel's disorientation, indifference, and broken-down communication to the social fabric of postmodern Spanish society (126–27). Following his reasoning, the bipartite descriptions of urban space in the novel rarely show characters with magnanimous concern for others. But as Vance Holloway explains, although Bea is identifiable through the cultural features of Spain, she could just as easily have been from any other occidental country (58). Her message is universal. Thus, without explicit

reference to a local political context, Etxebarria broadens her narrator's Generation X experience to a broader European framework, which projects a case of youth identity crisis in the Continental arena:

> Etxebarria's novel evokes a culture of fast food: "Coca-cola . . . envoltorios de celofán de Foskitos . . . los cartones de Telepizza . . . una bolsa del Sevenileven" (72). It is a world of cable, MTV, international chic, international music—"punk, góticos, siniestros. Lounge, ambient acid jazz, trip hop. Grunge, blues, rock and roll, indies" (202, author's punctuation) video games and home cinema, gay bars, techno, neo-Nazis, AIDS and HIV, and, more important, contemporary youth culture in lieu of the counter-culture of the sixties and seventies. (Holloway 45)

As a novel about a protagonist who rejects the rigid demarcations of gender that her society thrusts upon her, *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* also fits into the purview of scholarship in the United States that concentrates on the transcendence of sexual boundaries (Henseler, "Fuss" 99). Dolores Martín-Armas explains that prior to the 1990s lesbianism took on a secondary role, at best as a subtext or a secondary theme, in narratives in which the characters are not defined in public as lesbians per se. Therefore, *Beatriz* inaugurates a new cycle in Spanish letters in which characters express lesbian identities in full public view:

> En las dos novelas citadas, las historias y los personajes se articulan, explícitamente, en torno a la experiencia lesbiana, por eso considero que estos textos [*Efectos secundarios* y *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*] representan el inicio en España de la novela lesbiana propiamente dicha, donde los personajes se identifican y viven una experiencia como lesbianas. (Martín Armas 164)

To that end, Carmen de Urioste explains that this new moment subverts the obligatory literary construction of heterosexuality by presenting an alternative sexual space free of traps, where infinite versions of physical and spiritual desire can and do flourish (127). Holloway similarly argues that the novel affirms a woman's ability to adapt to mutual commitment by lending voice to her public display of erotic desire (57).

The various forms of desire that the novel articulates traverse multiple thresholds of both space and time. It is plain to see that the protagonist allegorizes a static temporal perception of Mónica in terms of the heavenly radiance of stars light years away from Earth that, when they are visually perceived, represent the image of celestial bodies that no longer exist. Their visual afterimages linger behind due to the vast distance separating planets from each other. It takes time for the light reflected off those distant bodies to travel that cosmic space before we can perceive it. Thus, the reappearing vision of Mónica that Bea consistently and unconsciously conjures up throughout the novel—the benchmark against which she so often measures Cat and others—is a specter of the past:

> Y sin embargo, cualquier día, inesperadamente, o peor aún, cuando estaba pensando en algo que nada tenía que ver con ella, una sombra en la pared, una vaharada de perfume proveniente de alguna universitaria rubia y alicaída que se sentó a mi lado en el autobús, los acordes de algún disco que escuchamos juntas, la conjuraban; y Mónica se presentaba ante mis ojos, repentina y brutal como un disparo, perfecta, inmensamente Mónica, cuando no la había llamado. Su imagen se manifestaba frente a mí, tan visible como un holograma. (70)

Nevertheless, Bea remains blind to this until the end of the novel, when she finally meets up with Mónica in a rural addiction recovery facility and realizes that the Mónica of old she has pined after for the past four years no longer exists. Because of an outdated and distorted image of the past, Bea has blown her chance at having a meaningful commitment with Cat.

Although four years earlier events in Madrid represented the source of Bea's near mental and physical ruin, she nonetheless chooses to return to that space and move back in to her parents' apartment after graduating from college. Ironically, however, the Madrid that greets Bea after having been gone for so long is quite different than the city she remembers leaving:

> De pronto, descubro que Madrid es una ciudad sucia, gris, mal planificada, sin personalidad. . . . ¿Acaso no es ésta la misma ciudad que tan dolorosamente he añorado durante los últimos cuatro años? (38)

In comparison to Edinburgh, the protagonist recalls Madrid as a bright city full of light, with more modern architecture and a domestic space—her family's apartment—with more pleasant amenities than Cat's meager house has to offer. Yet when Bea steps off the plane to meet her mother, who has come to pick her up at the airport, she concludes that her hometown is not the luminous space she had believed it to be but a dirty and deteriorated city. Therefore, Bea's anachronistic memory of people—especially Mónica—extends to space as well. Her pattern of constantly valuing people and places lost to her extends to all spheres of her life.

Conclusion: Identity Exploration as National Growth

Etxebarria's novel examines the ways in which Bea explores identity amid the first generation to come of age in post-Franco Spain. In it, an older and wiser narrator retrospectively culls together the life experiences—both positive and negative—that make her the person she is at the end of the novel. This process as I have described it is one of rigorous identity exploration and subsequent identity formation. As I have shown, much of what Bea does to find herself deviates from the anachronisms of a rigid and traditional framework entrenched in patriarchal values. These belong to an earlier generation—that of Bea's parents—which the novel still shows struggling to accept the sweeping changes that have taken place in Spain since Franco had died almost a quarter-century earlier. The novel represents the most significant aspect of this struggle in the protagonist's zealous interrogation of the social and cultural mores dictated by tradition alone. Bea frequently questions why it is not better, instead, to establish a more tailored identity, accepting what works and rejecting what does not, even if that desire revises decades of deeply rooted tradition, one that her parents embrace. Thus, cross-generational conflict pervades the novel, especially in the extensive conflicts Bea has with her mother and father but also to a lesser degree in Mónica's defiance to Charo and Manuel.

Bea is a bright, intelligent young woman who thinks for herself at an early age. Time and again she proves unwilling to merely slip into the social mold that her parents, especially Herminia, who lives in the specter of Franco, lay out for her. Bea's fundamental questioning of why she must limit her romantic options to men, and not be open to men and women alike, challenges an entire society brought up on steadfast ideals of marriage, family, and religion. Those are the values Franco sought to inculcate in people who were born and raised under dictatorship, a cohort that the novel portrays primarily through the character Herminia.

And while Bea does not necessarily seek to upend Franco's legacy, she and other Generation X characters in the novel nonetheless question whether those social and family values still make sense. Seeing how unhappy her mother is, Bea determines at a young age not to follow the same path. Unlike her mother, she does not devote her life to looking and dressing as others may wish, to investing all of her energy in courtship, and to burying her feelings for the sake of smoothing her way socially. Throughout the novel she proves to be the type of person who questions the logic of doing something simply because it has been done that way before. Thus, through the portrayal of her character as someone determined to make her own decision, and to question the logic of following tradition simply because it has been done that way before, Etxebarria is suggesting that Spain—approximately a quarter-century after dictatorship—is still experimenting with what it means to exist and prosper in the postmodern, global world. Bea's character represents the growth process of a nation still struggling to adapt to its youngest generation's insistence on self-determination.

But the desire to attain a unique identity—be her own person—uproots Bea from the life she knows at the same time as it isolates her from other people. Identity exploration launches the protagonist as if into outer space, like a free-floating planet or a defunct satellite trapped amid other intergalactic bodies. Grounding herself anew with a tailor-made identity causes an exploration of her identity and a retroactive commentary

on the revisionary processes that were necessary for her to become the mature person she is at the end of the novel. Bea had reasoned that building a new life abroad would ease her dependence on the emotional foundation that Mónica supplied throughout her adolescence and thus break an unhealthy focus on that one person in whom she had wholly invested a sense of self-worth. But that is not what occurs; instead, the romance Bea begins with Cat becomes a new, more powerful version of that unhealthy addiction. And even though Bea's connection to Mónica was not sexual, she uses sexuality in her relationship with Cat when trying to replace it. Bea never invests emotionally in Cat but is nonetheless surprised when Ralph later turns the tables on her and wants a sexual relationship devoid of emotional connection. These aspects of the novel suggest that despite her protestations against the dominant gender ideals espoused by the Franco culture of her parents, Bea continues to hold different expectations of a heterosexual relationship than a lesbian one.

After several unsuccessful attempts to take on the identity of others as her own, Bea finally learns that finding one's own identity is a weighty personal process which, in her case, can only occur in cognitive isolation, in an interstitial non-place that Etxebarria calls *cuerpos celestes*. In that space she learns how to endure the vicissitudes of life without either Mónica or Cat at her side. More than that, as Bea gains independence she notices an increase in the frequency of parental conflict, which suggests that the more she stands on her own two feet, the less likely she is to follow in her mother and father's footsteps. The key to her continued independence is the cultivation of a more stable self in relation to others. By the end of story it becomes clear that the real challenge for Bea, as Folkart explains, "lies in learning to desire an other who does not obliterate, but who instead affirms and enables her to co-exist, to be, simultaneously as both a subject and an object" (51). As the narration nears its end, Bea shows herself to be a person who gathers the courage to reject values that do not correspond to her own principles and moral system.

CHAPTER III
THE MOVIDA MADRILEÑA IN RETROSPECT: SCORN FOR A LOST PAST IN GABRIELA BUSTELO'S *VEO VEO*

Gabriela Bustelo (b. Madrid, 1962) is a novelist, journalist, translator, and professional editor.[24] At present she writes for *La Gaceta* newspaper in Madrid. As the daughter of politician and economist Carlos Bustelo and historian Teresa Tortella, Bustelo spent a large part of her youth living abroad. From 1963 to 1968 her father worked for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, and from 1968 to 1974 at the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC. During the latter of those periods, Bustelo attended Saint Patrick's Episcopalian school in Washington, DC, where teachers taught her English after class, which for many years was the only language she spoke with her sister and parents (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 133). After returning to Madrid, Bustelo earned a bachelor's degree in English philology from the Universidad Complutense in 1985 and a master's degree in commercial direction from the Instituto de Empresa business school, both in Madrid.

Owing to these experiences, Bustelo's earliest cultural referents were American rather than Spanish and stem from the television and music to which she was exposed in the United States in the 1970s. Because of the international, peripatetic nature of her childhood, Bustelo has been described as a *mezcolana cultural* (Bosse, "El sujeto femenino" 102), which seems to suggest that the fluid and oftentimes contradictory cultural and linguistic parameters of her youth have weighed heavily upon her adult identity. Her critical and ironic capacities derive from the fact that she grew up shuttling between different worlds (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 134). For instance, while living in Washington, DC, she experienced American life during the Vietnam era of the late 1960s and 1970s and then, in Madrid, the birth of Spanish democracy after the Franco

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24. A detailed schedule of Bustelo's professional accomplishments and employment history is publically accessible through her profile on LinkedIn at http://es.linkedin.com/pub/gabriela–bustelo/41/497/a0.

dictatorship ended in 1975. Bustelo admits that upon returning to Spain in 1974 she felt as though she had to conceal her experiences living abroad:

> . . . mi código moral lo aprendí en Estados Unidos, pero esos principios básicos frecuentemente chocan con los de mis compatriotas, que valoran menos, por ejemplo, la sinceridad, la capacidad autocrítica o la tolerancia religiosa. (Bustelo qtd. in Henseler, *Spanish Fiction*133)

Despite her misgivings, however, she considers herself to be half American (Bustelo, e-mail response) and stays well informed about affairs on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Bustelo has admitted that *Veo veo* draws liberally from her own autobiography. She knew the prominent figures of the Movida and spent many hours with them in the popular nightclubs of Madrid. The alcohol and drug consumption portrayed in the novel represents an unvarnished—and unexaggerated—view of that nocturnal subculture. As Bustelo has stated, the novel mocks it for having no clear principle other than to celebrate the end of dictatorship (e-mail response).

Democratic Reality, Urban Decay

Veo veo is (1996) Bustelo's first work of fiction. A first-person account, it tells the story of Vania Barcia,[25] a twenty-six year-old single woman and longstanding resident of Madrid. An eerie spy thriller that pits Vania against a Madrid personified by urban malevolence, the novel reads as though it embeds a map of the city, a physical blueprint of the same space José Ángel Mañas has described as *rayada*. As a promiscuous recovering alcoholic and cocaine junkie and a native of Madrid, Vania experienced the Movida counterculture (1977–85) firsthand. As Candice Bosse explains in her doctoral dissertation,

> After the death of Franco in 1975, "la movida" emerged as a pop cultural scene that embodied a cocktail of humor, wild

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25. *Vania* is a Russian name. That fact, and because her character spends several years of her adolescence in France after her parents' commitment to Spain's Communist party (PCE) forces the Barcia family into exile, leads her to be considered an *hija de la guerra*: a child who grows up in the Soviet Union or France for political reasons. One such real-life figure is the Spanish writer Jorge Semprún.

> eccentricity, and passion. At its nucleus radiated cultural re-awakening, creativity, and intellectualism. The late mayor-poet-professor [Enrique] Tierno Galván was significant to the upstart of this atmosphere. . . . (191)

More importantly, Vania knows the city like the back of her hand. Her familiarity with its physical design is unmatched, as is her knowledge of the nocturnal landscape—the bars, dance clubs, restaurants, and other spaces of *la noche madrileña,* as she calls it, where drinking, dancing, cocaine, and flirtation are paramount.

In her story, Vania illustrates the breadth of her urban knowledge by naming many of Madrid's streets, monuments, and landmarks. Her ability to do so anchors a contrast between the sociopolitical circumstances of 1990, when she narrates—shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union—with periods as far back as a decade earlier in 1980, when the Movida was in full swing. The text is thus enlivened by a wealth of eyewitness testimony gathered over a decade spent living and breathing the early years of post-Franco democracy. An absolute knowledge and awareness of these physical and social surroundings defines Vania's interface with an urban space that Bustelo dates to a time when burgeoning democratic realities led to ideological erosion.

Vania quits going out to the bars at night one year before the story begins. Although we do not know the specific reasons why she decides to give up on the nightlife, it becomes clear that this self-imposed hiatus requires celibacy, discontinuation of alcohol and cocaine use, isolation from friends and acquaintances, and strict self-regulation of any reckless behavior that might add chaos and confusion to her life. Yet however much she tries to become a normal, upstanding citizen of Madrid, these sudden and drastic reforms have lasting consequences. Indeed, quitting *la noche madrileña* cold turkey triggers the symptoms of an addictive withdrawal known as *mono* in popular Castilian, with symptoms that exacerbate the very disorder and confusion that Vania tries to avoid by leaving in the first place.

Teresa Vilarós's study *El mono del desencanto: Una crítica cultural de la transición española (1973–1993)* advances a theory of social psychology—called *mono*—that stands upon a related vernacular parlance. She understands the political and ideological Left's reaction to Franco as the glue that holds it together throughout the thirty-six year dictatorship and explains that when the dictator died at long last on 20 November 1975, the decades-old utopian projects sitting on the political and ideological horizons of the Left were buried along with him. Franco's death, therefore, becomes equated with a new historical moment, one that is discontinuous with the past and in which the resistance that had been building on the Left for so long disintegrated when the Caudillo died. His death, in other words, coincided with the death of Marxism as a grand totalizing scheme of thought—a metanarrative, in the words of Jean-Francois Lyotard—represented by the PSOE's decision to distance itself from Marxist ideology. The tactic worked: the Socialists achieved electoral success in 1982 and moved into further alliance with transnational capitalism. The Communist party (the PCE), however, the party that stayed true to its name, won only 3.5% of the vote in those elections. Thus, Marxism lost traction as a viable political option in the wake of Franco's death.

Vilarós also explains how new economic strategies thrust onto Spain by the impulses of international capital happen to coincide with its transition to democracy. Spain joined the ranks of the European Community in 1986, only eight years after ratifying a new constitution establishing it as a parliamentary monarchy. And so, Vilarós suggests, the chance intersection of these two episodes characterizes its *pacto de olvido,* the consensus to forget Francoism that arose more as a visceral impetus than a sociopolitical strategy (16). This resulted in the Left's attempt to bury the past alongside Franco as a sudden withdrawal from the ideological impetus it had always known. Along with the change came the same symptoms as any sudden end to an addiction.

Vania's chemical withdrawal allegorizes a political withdrawal with odd symptoms that manifest as the perception that someone is and has been watching her

every move. Soon after her self-imposed hiatus begins, Vania discovers concealed cameras and microphones in her car, clothing, and among her personal items, as well as behind the furniture and in the walls of her apartment.[26] These discoveries, she asserts, dovetail with her claim that an unfamiliar man with a handlebar mustache has been tracking her in public, and that he or someone else has been recording her in the bathroom, kitchen, and den of her apartment. But as the novel continues, it becomes clear that most of what the protagonist reports is tainted by the possibility that she suffers from a psychological condition—a *mono* of the type Vilarós describes—that renders her testimony suspect. This claim is supported by the efforts she undertakes to figure out why anybody would want to spy on her in the first place.

In the face of the stresses brought on by the bizarre mystery unfolding in the spaces around her, Vania needs to blow off steam, which propels her right back to the bars and other spaces of Madrid‘s nightlife, where she resumes drinking, taking drugs, and flirting with men more than ever before, as if trying to make up for lost time. This homecoming to the bar scene marks the first time in an entire year that Vania has reappeared on her former stomping ground, where she used to carouse on a nightly basis. Acquiescing to the *mono* or "monkey" on her back, as the colloquial expression goes, she impulsively resumes an addiction to a physical and metaphorical space—*la noche madrileña*—that wreaks havoc on her life and drives her to the brink of violent self-destruction. Thus, Vania's capricious evacuation and return to those spaces fans the flames of a *mono* as I have described it according to the theory Vilarós has set forth.

This reengagement with the nightlife of Madrid showcases the places Vania used to hang out as far back as ten years before, when at sixteen, she began frequenting bars where the Movida was in full swing. Her account compares them to the same spaces as

26. The surveillance theme of this novel anticipates that of films like *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989), *Sliver* (1993), and *The Truman Show* (1998).

they are a decade later when the story takes place. In this way, the novel provides a cultural and literary aesthetic that perches on the cusp between Spain's Movida past of the 1980s, and its Generation X present of the 1990s, thus serving as a bridge between the two. [27] As Christine Henseler explains,

> The *Movida* gave birth to alternative modes of expression that were in part rooted in punk's underground, do-it-yourself philosophy and inherently served as one of the baselines from which Spain's Generation X was formed. (*Spanish Fiction* 59)

Veo veo thus recuperates a Movida space on the verge of a calamitous metamorphosis into the youth subculture that other Generation X novelists portray during the same period. Its evolutionary presentation is markedly different from José Ángel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen* (1994) and *Ciudad rayada* (1998), which frame synchronic snapshots of the years 1992 and 1996, respectively. By tracing the evolution of Madrid's subculture diachronically, contrasting the social and political features that have transformed the life of its main character from one decade to another, Bustelo engages a space of ephemeral social and political exhilaration that metamorphoses into Generation X dissent several years later.

Madrid and other modern cities with tall buildings enjoy the tactical advantage over ordinary citizens—what Michel de Certeau calls scopic drive—of being able to look down on inhabitants from atop towering skyscrapers. The literary construction of Madrid in *Veo veo* as a 1990s megalopolis portrays its space as the protagonist's mortal enemy in an endless struggle for life and death, but with the major tactical advantage of scopic drive going to the city. And because Vania cannot match the city's enhanced ability to

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27. Further commonalities between the Movida and Generation X include "youth's sense of hedonism and individualism," "rejection of individual elitism for more street-based and colloquial realms of experience," "apolitical attitudes centered on the present instead of the past or the future," "rebuff of high art's musical excellence for simplicity, roughness and 'noise,'" and "dismissal of grand transcendental narratives and ideas, preferring instead spontaneity, improvisation, and the experience of everyday life," as well as the use of humor, sarcasm, and irony in order to distance the subject from social expectations (Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 73).

see and hear with surveillance, the only defensive mechanism at her disposal is raw intellectual dexterity. Thus, Vania's quest for survival in the Madrid of *Veo veo* recalls the classic techniques of hunters and gathers who, absent modern technology, relied upon their own wits for survival (de Certeau xxiii). Indeed, her success depends upon a rudimentary set of maneuvers designed to outfox a sophisticated adversary.

Still, shrewd human intellect can never be enough to escape what de Certeau identifies as the technocratic expansion of technical systems in the city: illicit surveillance (xxiii). But the installation of electronic surveillance in Vania's home extends the lower scopic threshold of the city that the novel sketches on its pages. Whoever is watching Vania can see behind the walls of her apartment and witness her everyday life in the city. De Certeau (93) characterizes those who peer down from high above as "blind," or unaware, of the practices of everyday life, but in this novel the use of covert surveillance offers new ways to see. One of these includes spying from an adjacent apartment, behind the vanity mirror in Vania's bathroom. Seen in this light, we better understand why Vania and Peláez—the detective she has hired to ascertain the identity of her pursuers—alter the venue of their various face-to-face deliberations from her apartment—where electronic bugs eagerly see and hear—to bars selected at random. Another example of the detective and his client's efforts to combat the city's ability to see and hear the "practices" of citizens in its space include their use of disguises while conducting countersurveillance at Archy, one of several local nightspots Vania regularly attends. Shielded from visual detection and unrecognized by the restaurant staff, Vania and Peláez are treated contemptuously, as provincials uninformed by current fashion and trends:

> En el restaurante nos dieron una mesa bastante peor que si yo hubiera ido con el vestido rojo, pero bueno. Los camareros, que eran igual de esnobs que el resto de la trup de Archy, nos tomaban por un matrimonio de provincianos haciéndose los modernetes, y nos trataban con una condescendencia bastante repugnante. (118)

Vania cannot participate in the nightlife while uncloaked from the panoptic iniquity of prying eyes. If she is to take hedonistic pleasure in the bar as she has in the past, then she cannot remain an innocuous spectator. She shows us that seeing is only interesting with an attendant risk of being seen.

Skyscrapers and satellites alike now enjoy a bird's-eye view of spaces that medieval and Renaissance thinkers could not imagine beyond their representations in paintings and other forms of art (de Certeau 93). A theoretical extension of this model might include the God-like vantage point, with inconceivable power over humankind in the imprisoning city. But there is a lower threshold as well, past which scopic drive cannot detect the hustle and bustle of everyday life—the "practices" de Certeau refers to in his study of everyday life—that crop up undetected by those who look down from high in the sky.

> I would like to follow out a few of these multiform, resistance [sic], tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is [sic] exercised, and which should lead us to a theory of everyday practices, of lived space, of the disquieting familiarity of the city. (96)

Practices, in this view, derive from the methodologies of space that structure the determining conditions of social life. In the sense de Certeau uses, they include traveling to and from work, walking around town and shopping, as well as countless other routine human activities that require us to move about the city. In so doing, de Certeau explains, we activate a spatial order around us that has been designed without consideration of the uses to which it will be put.

The distinction de Certeau draws here between these two aspects of urban space is redolent of the latter two terms Henri Lefebvre theorizes in the spatial triad that underlies *The Production of Space*. According to Lefebvre, spaces of representation are characterized by the abstract use of space, while representational space has a more authentic, de facto context. Thus, both Lefebvre and de Certeau posit discrete versions of urban space derived from abstract planning on one hand, and de facto social interaction

on the other; and both validate the latter, social use of space, as the truer measure of authenticity. And though both theoretical subsets are useful metrics of character dissent in the Generation X narrative of Spain, de Certeau's practices explain the surveillance embedded within Bustelo's novel more convincingly than Lefebvre's representational space, as the commando who has been spying on Vania possesses the ability to more deeply penetrate her life in the city's surreptitious spaces. The possibly delusional psychosis that makes Vania feel as though she were being watched—and that prompts her to fight back against the city with Peláez, her private-eye sidekick, at her side—transcends the blindness de Certeau characterizes as practices:

> It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The network of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (de Certeau 93)

Throughout the novel Vania struggles to preserve her privacy by concealing the everyday practices of her life from Madrid's prying eyes:

> Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer. (de Certeau 95)

In an effort to obscure these practices, however, they spin unpredictably out of control, nearly killing her in the process.

Mystery or Psychosis: Perspectives on the Novel

Vania suffers a mental health crisis, as is evident in the opening scene. There, she meets with a psychiatrist, a doctor she calls Rourke, because he reminds her of American film icon Mickey Rourke. Following the advice of a friend who confirms that her neurosis has become the object of widespread gossip, or "vox populi" (10), she has sought professional assistance in order to assess why she has begun to develop suspicions that someone is spying on her. She believes her apartment has been infiltrated and filled

with hidden cameras and listening devices, that a man with a handlebar mustache has been following her around the city, and that the unnamed person who has been repeatedly calling asking for a person named Soledad has evil intentions. But because the doctor's looks, office and dress—he wears tight-fitting Liberto jeans that arouse the protagonist and keeps a large, oddly placed Swatch clock in his office—do not conform to Vania's image of a mental health professional, she rejects out of hand his prescription of rest and relaxation. Instead, she uses her overdue vacation time from a stressful job translating film scripts to revisit the bars and other noxious spaces of her past.

Dissatisfied with Rourke's diagnosis and unwilling to believe that her suspicions of being spied upon are anything but authentic, Vania uses the money with which she would have compensated him to hire a private investigator, whom the protagonist calls *Cejas* because he has conjoined eyebrows. Through the very detailed questions he asks his client about her past, we learn that approximately four years before the start of the novel Vania went through a phase of partying she describes in the following way: ". . . no tenía trabajo fijo. Traducía guiones de cine para doblaje y como no tenía horario, salía todas las noches. Siempre volvía de madrugada y casi siempre acompañada" (12). Back then, she drank heavily, used many drugs, and slept with what she describes as an alarming number of men. She explains to Peláez that this represented the moment she hit rock bottom in her life, and that it coincided with the Movida Madrileña that was then overtaking Madrid. At the start of the novel, Vania has not had anything stronger than a glass of milk to drink: she has not taken drugs—she hasn't even gone out at night. In the intervening time, she has retreated from the frenetic pace of *la noche madrileña* to a strict routine of sobriety, celibacy, and solitude. But it was during this yearlong period of abstinence that Vania's paranoia and suspicions of being spied on really began to appear. Thus, from the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist's psychological health is put to the test, leaving her capacity to narrate objectively and credibly suspect from the start.

After an initial investigation, Peláez is not convinced that anyone is spying on Vania, but soon after she reports finding a microphone in the lining of her headboard and a recording device hidden behind the bathroom of her vanity, he begins to take her case more seriously. The detective brings in his technical expert, Samperio, to investigate the high-tech equipment in Vania's apartment. He then dispatches her back into *la noche madrileña* in an effort to observe her being watched and thus catch the spies red-handed.

Vania accepts his instructions and goes back out into the night, thereby showcasing the most chic bars and dance clubs, the same places where she partied ten years earlier, in 1980. In the bars, Vania keeps bumping into a handsome, mysterious, and inexplicably familiar Brazilian man named Bernard "Ben" Ganza who knows all of the people she does, despite the fact that she believes she has never met him before. Vania immediately takes a romantic interest in Ganza, even though his almost continual presence unnerves her, as does the fact that he stares at her incessantly from across crowded dance floors.

In the meantime, Peláez locates the hotel room where the man with the handlebar mustache has been living. After having Samperio tail him, Peláez goes through the room, where he finds highly sensitive photographs and audiovisual recordings of Vania in private moments at home. But in a sudden turn of events, the mustached man dies, leaving more questions raised than answered by the wealth of surveillance that Peláez and Vania discover in his possession. Additionally, Peláez discovers information that even his client does not know: that she is about to achieve celebrity status as the heiress to a substantial fortune. It is this new information, Vania reasons, that explains the source and motive for the surveillance—two journalists out to collect gossip and, in so doing, cash in by smearing her name.

While all this is happening during the day, Vania continues to flirt with Ben Ganza at night and eventually begins an affair with him. It is not until after Ganza enters her apartment late one night in order to retrieve a lost wallet—and Vania, mistaking him

for an intruder, shoots him dead—that she discovers Peláez really worked for the departed Brazilian. After the shooting, Peláez advises Vania about what to say to the police and then mysteriously vanishes. Vania places Ganza's wallet in the freezer in order to hide it from the police. Suddenly, an anonymous letter arrives that suggests Ganza was not from Brazil, that he was really her first, Spanish boyfriend, whom she had dumped many years before in order to pursue a carefree life of independence. Altered beyond recognition by plastic surgery following a motorcycle accident that had left him disfigured, Ganza had hired Peláez to keep tabs on Vania in an elaborate plan to enact revenge, to strip away the freedom that she preferred to his companionship years earlier.

This discovery is too much for Vania to handle, driving her to attempt suicide. But right before pulling the trigger that would have ended her life, she hears a sudden sound from the apartment next door, where the spies are supposedly stationed. In a final act of defiance, Vania shoots into the mirror that hangs over her bathroom vanity on the wall between the two apartments. When the mirror shatters, it reveals Peláez lying dead on the floor in the adjacent apartment. Unnerved, Vania returns to Rourke's office and blames the psychiatrist for masterminding the entire affair. But when Rourke takes Vania back to her apartment on *Calle de Pez* Street, nothing there is out of order. The doctor convinces her to pack a suitcase and delivers her to a sanitarium where she is treated for symptoms of alcohol and drug withdrawal, as well as delusional psychosis. Upon returning to her apartment after completing treatment, Vania opens the freezer, and, as is to be expected, does not find Ben Ganza's wallet. She is thus convinced that the entire chain of events recounted by the novel was the product of her fevered mind and that she never murdered the two men. That is, until she receives another anonymous telephone call asking for Soledad, which, because she had earlier told the caller that he or she has

the wrong number, sinisterly leaves readers in a state of uncertainty as to the truth of what really happened.[28]

Today, more than sixteen years after publication, *Veo veo* continues to inspire original interpretations of its innovative content, which previous scholars who have written about the novel ascribe to the Spanish Generation X literary aesthetic of the 1990s.[29] The reasons why Bustelo's novel often emerges in discussion of works such as José Ángel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen* (1994), for example, include the unmistakable grounding of the work in Madrid's urban space, as well as the myriad allusions to international elements visible in television, popular literature, comics, and fashion, all of which mediate Vania's perception of reality (Gavela-Ramos 310). Other pervasive themes scholars of the novel have noted include the blurring of public and private space, the relationship between sight and consumer culture, and the obsession with enhanced vision as a way to increase desire and consumer demand (Villaseca 154).

In relation to the various themes of sight in *Veo veo*, Christine Henseler reads the pervasive surveillance that the protagonist perceives around her as a precursor to reality-based television shows such as *The Real World* and *Big Brother*, in which strangers agree to live together while being filmed.[30] A major difference between those shows and the novel, however, is that in the former the participants agree to be filmed, while Vania does not. Other critics have interpreted *Veo veo* from a cinematographic perspective. Based on

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28. On this point, Tzvetan Todorov's theory of fantastic literature offers a useful model with which to put Vania's credibility as narrator into theoretical perspective, as we do not know for certain whether the narration conforms to an objective version of events presented in the novel or to her subjective interpretation of them. In addition, the use of alcohol or drugs—or the presence of a mental defect—often adds to this uncertainty and thus increases the "fantastic" effect.

29. Bustelo wrote *Veo veo* in 1992, though she did not submit it for publication until four years later, in 1996, when a friend who works in the field urged her to do so. Had she done so earlier, its release may have preceded that of *Historias del Kronen* (1994). For this reason, it can and should be considered a pioneer of Generation X narrative in Spain. See Bustelo's comments in Henseler, *Spanish Fiction* 118.

30. The television series *Big Brother* is named for the totalitarian dictator of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1947), who uses surveillance to track the lives of ordinary citizens. Henseler also identifies Orwell's classic as a thematic precursor of *Veo Veo*. See *Spanish Fiction* 121.

Yuri Lotman's theory of "iconic rhetoric," Yvonne Gavela-Ramos proposes that Vania's self-conscious creativity discharges a series of filmic snapshots reflected through a symbolic mirror embedded in the discourse of the novel. With this comment the critic refers to the allegorical presentation of a mirror in the epigraph of the novel, in the lyrics to a song by Lou Reed—"I'll be your mirror. Reflect what you are in case you don't know."

Critics have also taken great pains to read the symbolism of the mirror in the epigraph to mean that Vania cannot exercise a stable sense of self, or perhaps she suffers from a fractured identity. Gavela-Ramos believes Vania looks in on her own life, which is reflected back and therefore delivers an artistic vision unavailable through a straightforward interpretative lens (308). Candice Bosse offers a further interpretation of how the symbolism of the mirror functions in *Veo veo* by suggesting that it has to do with paranoia in that the protagonist does not recognize the image of herself that she sees reflected back ("El sujeto feminino" 106).

The existing critical corpus on the role of sight in *Veo veo* is at its sharpest in Stephen Villaseca, who suggests that the protagonist represents a version of Medusa. In his reading, Ben Ganza forcefully penetrates Vania's private space by subjecting her to his voyeuristic gaze, just as Poseidon's rape of Medusa in Greek mythology caused Athena's simultaneous outrage and punishment of Medusa for being vain, by transforming her hair into serpents and her eyes into weapons that turned any man who looked into them into stone (Villaseca 158). Further, Vania's decision to break off ties with Ben years before in order to live a freer life symbolically castrates him, leaving him powerless. But Ben regains that power through surveillance. Thus, the infiltration of Vania's apartment with cameras and microphones serves a dual purpose: it allows Ben to relive the original trauma of Vania breaking up with him in the repeated acts of her breaking up with other men; it also punishes her by curtailing the freedom and privacy she had enjoyed (Villaseca 159).

Vision—seeing and being seen—is indeed a pervasive theme in *Veo veo*. In the 1980s when Vania went out at night, she did so in order to see others and to be seen by them. But in the 1990s she becomes the object of an invasive threat rooted in the expanding power of technology. This change from one decade to another, a topic I explore in greater depth later in this chapter, emerges to some extent in the existing criticism of *Veo veo*. For instance, Susan Divine explains that the "heady excess of a suddenly liberated post-Franco Spain" is not wholly replicated in the 1990s as the movement loses its image of hegemony and rebellion. She explains this deterioration in terms of the failed social and political revolutions of the Generation X's predecessors.[31] Drug use in the 1990s thus becomes a means of escape, an expression of apathy, whereas in the 1980s it responded to an ardent rejection of behavior that was taboo under dictatorship (Divine 115).

Yet drugs are not the only form of escape from the lost rebellion of the Movida in the novel. Candice Bosse illustrates a similar apathetic vein rooted in Vania's consumptive practices, as does Nina Molinaro, who argues that Generation X characters appropriate rock music for sensorial diversion. Molinaro explains that there is no cultural rebellion inherent in the rock music Vania listens to, because the opportunity for that form of transgression has long since passed, along with Vania's youth. Music defines and projects an anachronistic sense of self that is already obsolete. Looking to the music of the past in order to exchange her pain and regret in the present for something more authentically revolutionary, Vania is therefore

> . . . a global user who learns anew that she must return to past pleasures in order to compensate for the failure and fear that characterize the uncontrollable circumstances of her present.

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31. Here Divine is referring to the events of May 1968 in France, when a wildcat general strike arrested the national economy and nearly brought down the De Gaulle government. Similar events occurred the same year in Mexico and Yugoslavia, as well as in Chile in 1973, Portugal in 1974, Iran in 1979, and Poland in 1981. See Lewis 176 for further information.

> Music marks the time of those past pleasures. (Molinaro 206–07)

Popular music enables a "cultural reappropriation" that "imagines another time, place, and self." The past actually translates into pleasant physical sensations for Vania, a sensorial experience that outweighs the high she seeks from alcohol, drugs, and sexual intimacy (210). Thus, it would seem, the pleasure of music is the only true form of contentment left to her. A final register of the transformative change from the 1980s to the 1990s in the novel lies in the erosion of interpersonal relationships in the locales Vania visits:

> Vania deambula por locales nocturnos popularizados en los noventa como las discotecas Pachá y Joy, santuarios de encuentros pasajeros de la noche madrileña, que traslucen menos señas personales que los locales mitificados por la movida madrileña de los ochenta. . . . (Gavela-Ramos 312)

We may conclude, then, that bars popular in the 1990s—Pachá and Joy, for example—contain crowds of people with personal interests that diverge from the celebratory artistic and political milieu that was prevalent during the Movida Madrileña of the 1980s (Bustelo, *Veo veo* 12).

As I argue above, although Bustelo grounds her narration locally in Madrid, she likewise projects an awareness of international pop culture that amplifies the novel's appeal to a universal audience. Bustelo explains that she infused *Veo veo* with international cultural references because these increase her ability to reach a wider audience with her work:

> Debido al enorme poder del cine y la televisión, las referencias estadounidenses puede entenderlas por igual un francés, un alemán o un japonés. Esto amplía las posibilidades de comunicarse con una mayor cantidad de lectores. (Bosse, "El sujeto femenino" 105)

Another reason for saturating the novel with popular culture, Bustelo explains in the same interview with Candice Bosse, is that it furthers her goal of writing about the world she lives in, and from the widest perspective possible (106). This world is inherently

postmodern, as I explain later in this chapter, and as Stephen Villaseca suggests in his doctoral dissertation (154).

Nonetheless, as the existing body of literature written about *Veo veo* suggests, we can easily recognize urban features of Madrid in its narration. The first of several critics who support this assertion is Susan Divine who suggests: "In *Veo veo*, Bustelo focuses on a cartographic image of contemporary Madrid within a globalized and homogenized world" (10–11). With this comment, Divine supports the notion that Madrid is the specific setting but further argues that Bustelo's novelistic space projects beyond the Spanish capital into a wider global sphere. In Divine's words, the protagonist's place is local, but her self-conscious understanding of that environment stretches globally (114). Candice Bosse illustrates the same points when she suggests, of Bustelo:

> Mientras ella dialoga con la comunidad internacional a través de su obra, también mantiene un discurso local en el cual se centra en los múltiples avances que han sido realizados en los últimos veinticinco años en España. ("El sujeto femenino" 102)

Two additional critics stress Madrid's role as the urban backdrop of this novel. The first is Gavela-Ramos:

> Ciertamente *Veo veo* puede considerarse una novela urbana, concretamente una narrativa paródica del Madrid nocturno que despierta después del sueño de la movida de los ochenta. . . . (310)

The other is Divine, who undercuts Dorothy Odartey-Wellington's implausible claim that the novel's space conforms to spaces Marc Augé theorizes as non-place[32] as opposed to any particular place:

> . . . *Veo veo* (1996), takes place in the streets, bars, cafés and interior private spaces of Madrid. . . . With the help of a private

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32. I use Marc Augé's theory of non-place in my reading of Lucía Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Augé suggests that nodal points along a global transit network—bus stations or airports, for example—are spaces that invalidate human individuality with passports, tickets, or other generic data. Another aspect of the non-place is the mental reflection that occurs during travel when a person symbolically "checks" his or her identity along with the luggage he or she is carrying.

> detective they [Vania and Peláez] both move through the city's public and private spaces trying to figure out if Vania is really being followed or if it is all part of a paranoid delusion. The locales of the novel are recognizable to those familiar with Spain's capital and we can follow the protagonist on a map through the city streets. (Divine 113)

Previous scholarship written about *Veo veo* regards its myriad allusions to local and international pop culture as evidence that Bustelo fits within the Generation X literary paradigm that emerged in Spain in the 1990s. It is impossible to deny that numerous citations of television, film, music, and comics broadcast an international accessibility. But we must not forget that explicit references to Madrid's geography plant the novel firmly in Spain's capital. Thus, the global becomes an extension of the local, and not the other way around, as Odartey-Wellington has argued.

The Monkey on Spain's Back

According to Teresa Vilarós, Spain's democratic revival after Franco's death in 1975 constitutes the momentous dispensation of claims to a radical Marxist utopia that the Left imagined looming on the sociopolitical horizon throughout thirty-six years of dictatorship. She attributes this rupture with the immediate past, an otherwise continuous flow of history, to the decision undertaken by both sides of the political aisle to suppress the memory of Francoism, and to avoid blaming the brutalities committed by the regime on any particular group or party. This agreement—the *Pacto de olvido*—also meant that the Left could no longer fashion a socialist ideal for Spain based solely on claims of being the antithesis to Franco; in the end, it would also have to annul the Marxist legacy that had nurtured its resistance to dictatorship for so many years. Thus, while the eager anticipation of rebuilding Spain along Marxist lines began many years earlier, while Franco still maintained an iron grip on the nation, the opportunity to do so got swept away in the social, political, and cultural events of the transition to democracy.

Vilarós describes the processes of the transition as a "black hole," with that astrophysical term here describing the trappings of infinite space and time, in which the

historically repressed makes an unwelcome return (20). The black-hole metaphor undermines the linkage between past, present, and future that Spanish sociologist José Ortega y Gasset believes binds new literary-cultural generations to their predecessors:

> No sorprende, por tanto, que también el presente histórico español de los años de la transición se entienda como una serie de eventos políticos, económicos y sociales que encuentran el origen de su suceder en otra serie de hechos anteriores, los cuales a su vez habrían sido determinados por otra serie eventual precedente. La historiografía en la España de nuestros días sigue en general la tradición generacional y estructura una narrativa lineal que inscribe la muerte de Franco como punto final de una era y principio esperado de otra nueva señalada por la posmodernidad, la europeización de España, las nuevas tecnologías comunicativas y la globalización. (Vilarós 6)

Recognizing the frequent use of this linear approach to the formation of new literary and cultural generations in the peninsular context, Vilarós employs it as a cultural springboard from which to explain how the enigmatic context of the Transition to democracy in Spain necessitated a nonlinear alternative. As Vilarós explains, the Orteguian model provides an incorrect picture of the turbulent years when dictatorship ended and democracy took root, wrongly asserting that the two periods fit neatly together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In actuality, the Marxist resistance to Franco slipped into historical oblivion, as symbolized by the gaps between pieces of a completed puzzle:

> El colapso de los grandes proyectos utópicos de izquierda forma parte del gran pacto del olvido, siendo el momento de la muerte de Franco el que inicia de forma radical un presente nuevo: después del 75, españolas y españoles nos dedicamos con pasión desesperada a borrar, a no mencionar. Por consiguiente, en el período de la transición política de la dictadura a la democracia la sociedad española, aun votando masivamente al partido socialista, rechazó los presupuestos ideológicos dolorosa y pacientemente incubados en la era franquista por los sectores izquierdistas. (Vilarós 8)

Vilarós tropes this break from history as akin to a sudden withdrawal from drugs, or any other addictive substance. That is, the addictive euphoria generated by a collective utopian framework that was, more or less, grounded in Marxist principles suddenly seemed out of reach. A future free of Franco—a figure hated by the Left—was the

sociopolitical ideal around which an entire generation rallied its support and kept its ideological fires burning for thirty-six years, from 1939 to 1975. Thus, his death extinguished the flame of collective opposition. In this sense, the left became unknowingly addicted to Franco, just as a drug addict becomes addicted to a narcotic high:

> Propongo, pues, pensar el período de la transición española como un espacio/tiempo colgado entre dos paradigmas históricos que a su vez, y debido a las características sociopolíticas del particular momento español, se dirime también en el imaginario social como el momento de negociación psíquica con una brutal y totalitaria estructura patriarcal y represora (Franco y el franquismo) a la que nos habíamos hecho adictos**.** El momento transicional, tensado por diferentes y opuestas fuerzas, se revela como un agujero negro, una fisura o quiebre en la sintaxis histórica que si bien permite por un lado iniciar en el posfranquismo una nueva escritura, agazapa en su seno todo un pasado conflictivo que el colectivo "pacto de olvido" reprimió. (Vilarós 20)

Vilarós articulates this disinheritance of Marxism as *mono*, the Spanish word that translates as, "monkey," which in Castilian vernacular also means "abstinence syndrome" or "addictive withdrawal." Thus, her analysis posits *mono* as a burdensome monkey hanging on the back of those who yearn for a lost Marxist utopia, an unthinkable past that could never transcend the purely idealistic realm:

> En el caso de España, y más específicamente en el caso de la escritura de la historia del fin del franquismo, lo impensable reprimido toma la forma de un Mono colgado a la espalda. Un mono—o monos—que vive, respira y se hace presente en esta intersección fisural, en este espacio negro, lapso, punto o pasaje que va del tardo al posfranquismo. (8)

After Franco's demise, the desire to be on par with other modern nations motivated Spain to recant national strategies that might isolate it from more established democracies. The most important example of this trend can be found in Felipe González's dispensation of Marxism from the PSOE party's constitution, which increased its support among less radical constituents and helped it win national office.

Thus, the compromise of the transition meant that the left would have to give up on a Marxist agenda that had become so overripe it rotted:

> En un proceso político que anticipa en más de una década las posteriores renuncias marxistas de la izquierda europea y la debacle ideológica de la Unión Soviética, la izquierda española abandona sus señas de identidad y con ellas su pasado. La derecha no extremista, por su parte, ejecuta un proceso similar produciéndose como resultado la especular e incruenta reforma política de la transición. (Vilarós 10)

Based on the eventual collapse of the left-leaning utopian projects referenced in the above passage, as well as the excision of Marxist ideology from Spanish socialism, Vilarós sees Franco's death as the initiation of a new historical moment, a break from the past (15).

Concomitantly, the political and economic impulses of global transnationalization and late capitalism precipitate a rapidly changing world order, which hastens Spain's willingness to align itself with other modern democracies in Western Europe and beyond. As Vilarós explains, the coincidence of the end of dictatorship and the rise of global capitalism eradicates the utopian project that had been brewing on the left for years, by disqualifying Marxism as a universal system of truth and knowledge. Seen in this light, the death of Franco inscribes Spain in a postmodern condition that Jean-Francois Lyotard describes as skepticism toward metanarratives—forms of transcendent truth and knowledge that include the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational subject, and the creation of wealth (xxiii). The official pledge to forget Franco should thus be thought of as a visceral impulse to hastily suspend the utopian grand narrative of the left and launch the nation into a postmodern social, political, and cultural circuit (Vilarós 15–16).

In the novel, Vania appears on her former stomping ground with an anachronistic mindset, thinking that she will find that a Marxist infrastructure's integration into post-Franco Spain will still be the main topic of conversation and intellectual reflection. Thus, she abides by an obsolete belief in which recovery from General Franco's brutal military

dictatorship signaled to the liberal intelligentsia that the chance had finally come for Spain to enact a stale utopian ideal. But a number of episodes in the novel illustrate how that ideological framework—when considered in light of the recent collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall—corresponds to an omnipresent devaluation of Marxism that had gradually worsened since Spain became democratic.

Vania goes to great lengths to prove that she is the target of espionage when in fact, as her friend Nander recognizes, her steadfast insistence that a commando of spies has been deliberately watching her results from her overuse of Madrid's nocturnal spaces:

> Por lo que yo sé, salir de noche es un deporte muy duro que requiere años de entrenamiento mental y físico. Y más todavía si le añadimos la coca, que, por mucho que diga la gente, es una droga dura. Tú te pasas mucho de todo, trabajas mucho y piensas demasiado. Pasa de salir una temporada y seguro que te quedas como nueva. Si todos empezamos a montarnos películas con las cosas que nos pasan saliendo de noche, tienen que abrir una sucursal en Ciempozuelos. (123)

Despite Nander's advice, Vania still desperately searches for evidence to prove that the surveillance she experiences is objectively real, because if it were, she could blame an unbearable postmodern reality—in which utopian idealism does not transcend the pragmatic reality of everyday life in Madrid—on the spies who pursue her. This is why Vania's search for answers to the questions of who is watching her and why they would do so is bathed in a delusion that spins further and further out of control the more she tries to find a resolution.

Addiction stands in for the collapse of a utopian promise that fed Spain's liberal intellectual base since the end of its civil war in 1939 (Vilarós 27). However potent the narcotic effect of utopia may have been, like all addictive highs it eventually wore thin, and when it did, the Spanish intelligentsia was left in tatters. Thus, the protagonist's experiences in *Veo veo* symbolize the broad cynicism and loss of public faith in government, along with a lack of faith in its ability to improve the lives of ordinary citizens. Seen in this light, *Veo veo* distinguishes itself from the other Generation X

novels I study in this dissertation because of the presence of a protagonist who expresses an interest in politics. The detective case ensnares the protagonist in a cycle of addiction to the spaces of her past—the bars of Madrid—that symbolize an addiction to alcohol and drugs:

> Quiero proponer aquí la adicción como metáfora para la utopía más o menos marxista que alimentó a la izquierda española desde el final de la guerra civil. La utopía fue la droga de adicción de las generaciones que vivieron el franquismo. La muerte de Franco señala la retirada de la utopía y la eclosión de un síndrome de abstinencia, un mono que obedece a un «requerimiento inconsciente» y a una «necesidad visceral». . . . 1975 representó el fin de la utopía, la constatación del desencanto y el advenimiento del mono. (Vilarós 27)

Building upon what Vilarós says above, Vania's character expresses a measurable degree of scorn for Spain in 1990, which explains why she reconstructs her national identity via rock music and film imported primarily from England and the United States.

Vania's tendency to use imported song and cinema to articulate her feelings, thoughts, and actions eradicates local traditions and articulates a stylistic amalgam illustrative of what Fredric Jameson defines as *pastiche*: the imitation of cultural style based on a conglomeration of earlier forms that have eliminated any possibility of originality. Even though she professes communist[33] beliefs, Vania's existence revolves around imitation, not only of popular music and film, but of the cultural politics of late capitalism. Drawing from a large repository of personal knowledge about the aesthetics of international style—cinema, song, comics, and commodities—the protagonist privileges a version of history rooted in nostalgia of what Marxist theorist and literary critic Frederic Jameson calls "real history" (20).

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33. While my reading of *Veo veo* suggests that Vania is a communist, Gabriela Bustelo has never belonged to any political party. The author is not a communist and has always sponsored a real democracy for Spain. Her political beliefs agree with the Right on particular issues such as antiterrorism, antinationalism, and the defense of Spanish as Spain's national language and with the Left on the separation of church and state and a woman's right to choose. (Bustelo, e-mail response)

Vania's *mono* for a Marxist ideal that never comes to fruition inhibits her ability to link the past, present, and future in linear chronology. She thrives off of a euphoria derived from sustaining the present tense with a seemingly endless chain of material signifiers that erase historical awareness by replacing it with the byproducts of global culture. Her signifying chain, in the Lacanian sense, is broken which suggests that an aesthetic—not clinical—version of schizophrenia has warped her mind into believing what Jameson describes as a series of pure and unrelated presents in time (27). For Vania, this is a highly pleasant experience that adds to the hallucinatory effects of cocaine, alcohol, and other drugs:

> This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity. (Jameson 27–28)

But one of the dangers associated with the hallucinatory effects of the schizophrenia that Jameson is describing is that it conceals the threatening realities of economic and social institutions prevalent in the third stage of capital, which Spain enters after 1975. Within the context of *Veo veo*, the example of entertainment literature written about high-tech paranoia beyond human comprehension supports his assertion that the euphoria that schizophrenia stimulates obscures a dangerous postmodern world:

> This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature—one is tempted to characterize it as "high-tech paranoia"—in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind. (Jameson 38)

Vania's irrational fear of being watched constitutes just such a form of high-tech paranoia, but she is the only character in the novel to speak out against the threatening economic and social realities taking root in Spain, which Jameson associates with third-stage capitalism. The other characters ride the wave of postmodern decadence as though

its ephemeral high will never end, as if they were immune to the crash that always follows.

From Movida to Generation X: Artistic Spontaneity to Deliberate Calculation

Nervous skepticism about whether spies have infiltrated her life motivates Vania to cancel a planned vacation to Chile and remain in Madrid during the two weeks she has off from work, time she uses to investigate her fears of being watched and followed. However, without her habitual and highly structured work schedule, Vania cannot withstand the visceral temptations that the city exerts upon her, and sooner rather than later, her *mono* thrusts her back into the nocturnal chaos of *la noche madrileña*. As she urgently engages the scenes of the heyday of her Movida experience, it quickly becomes apparent that she views the changes in collective thinking that have occurred since that time with scorn. Her planned vacation from work turns into a two-week-long drug and alcohol binge that frames the entire novel, thus drawing attention away from her humdrum existence as an unmarried film script translator and redirecting it toward her homecoming to the nightlife of Madrid.

During the Movida, hedonistic pleasures such as heavy drinking and hard drug use were indulged in by large swaths of Spanish youth. These excessive outpourings occurred in many of the same spaces where Bustelo sets the plot of *Veo veo*. Vania dances, drinks, and uses cocaine excessively in elite bars throughout Madrid, where her nights often end in casual liaisons with different men. These extreme displays celebrate the potential of interpreting society as the Marxist utopia that Vilarós describes. But by 1990 the Movida has become moribund, and the contempt Vania shows toward others who now lack her revolutionary drive reveals itself as anachronistic and out of place. Still, she regularly parties late into the night, as if this wild and desperate attempt to relive the earliest stages of the Movida could rescue it from extinction and resuscitate the revolutionary ambitions that had previously been widespread. And though Vania quickly

realizes that any opportunity for true revolution has come and long gone, she cannot leave *la noche madrileña* alone, for she is addicted to the space of the bars even more than to the alcohol and cocaine that are served there.[34] Thus, her real objective in resolving an imaginary spy mystery is to learn how to cope with the disappointing tides of life in Madrid.

Going out to the bars reoccupies Vania's nights on a regular basis as it once did, although this time around her hedonistic behavior is a deliberate intellectual calculation, rather than a spontaneous and subconscious hatching of artistic expression, as Jorge Berlanga suggests the Movida was (Vilarós 27). The protagonist's interaction with Madrid at night in contemporary 1990 is a deliberate counterattack aimed at luring whoever is supposedly spying on her out into the open. She devises a plan of countersurveillance with Peláez and executes it purposefully. For this reason, *Veo veo* articulates the dichotomy Vilarós mentions between the sort of spontaneous creativity that produced a multitude of cultural and artistic artifacts during the Movida of the 1980s, and the later assessment of what these artifacts actually achieve from a political standpoint.

This shifting cultural paradigm at the end of the 1980s is evident in Vania's first-person reflection of what she encounters upon return to her former Movida stomping grounds. She is indeed aware that the once viable revolutionary framework sitting on Spain's liberal horizon during the final moments of dictatorship has since withered. In this regard, Vilarós explains that after Franco died, the liberal intelligentsia anticipated a radical utopian reform of much greater significance than that which actually arose with Spain's democratic resurrection. For instance, in 1976 both the Communist Party (PCE) and the Socialist Party (PSOE) remained united in their demands:

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34. On this point it is useful to recall Káiser's affirmation in *Ciudad rayada* that the city exerts a magnetic-like force over him, which draws him back into its space no matter how hard he might try to leave.

> Parecería que la muerte del dictador en 1975 debería de haber dejado en principio vía libre a una práctica de realización de signo más o menos marxista pero, como bien sabemos, no ocurrió así. El colapso de los grandes proyectos utópicos de izquierda forma parte del gran pacto del olvido, siendo el momento de la muerte de Franco el que inicia de forma radical un presente nuevo: después del 75, españolas y españoles nos dedicamos con pasión desesperada a borrar, a no mencionar. Por consiguiente, en el período de la transición política de la dictadura a la democracia la sociedad española, aun votando masivamente al partido socialista, rechazó los presupuestos ideológicos dolorosa y pacientemente incubados en la era franquista por los sectores izquierdistas. (Vilarós 8)

This is, in part, why Vania becomes addicted to going out: when she first started participating in the nightlife, she and other ideologues would habitually commiserate over this loss of ideological promise. In 1990s Madrid, however, nobody cares or even bothers to remember. Thus, she returns to the city's nightscape not to party but to deaden her disappointment, consuming massive amounts of alcohol and cocaine in order to anesthetize the present and celebrate her sorrow for a forgotten past. Metaphorically speaking, widespread addiction followed by withdrawal in the final quarter of the last century signifies a comprehensive shift from conscious to unconscious action, what José Ángel Mañas characterizes as an overall shift from revolutionary sanguinity in the 1980s, to violent egocentrism in the 1990s:

> La imagen que yo tengo de la *Movida* ochentera es la de una historia de artistas y culturetas treintañeros, con un buen rollito muy *cool*, conviviendo en un número de limitado de locales selectos. Los noventa, en cambio, fue el momento de auge de las macrodiscotecas y la masificación de la noche. El público era cada vez más joven, y las drogas y la música cada vez más violentas. (*El legado de los ramones* 17).

We might also add the following retrospective reflection, made in 1990 by musician Herminio Molero, which is included in José Luis Gallero's classic study of the Movida, *Sólo se vive una vez: esplendor y ruina de la movida madrileña*:

> En la *Movida* siempre hay un problema de vacío. Es inverosímil. Por donde tiras te encuentras con la nada, con eslabones que ya no existen. Es la historia de un vacío. Todo estaba a punto de ser y no ha sido. (Molero qtd. in Vilarós 37)

Vilarós explains that these words, as well as hers below, dislodge the euphoria that once celebrated a cultural backlash against Francoist repression:

> El eco desencantado que resuena en su afirmación es nuevo, es decir, no se expresaba en esa forma de los primeros ochenta, y responde, aunque de forma todavía vaga, a un sentimiento de anticipación retrospectivo que recoloca —o descoloca— la movida. . . . No es por tanto hasta los noventa cuando empieza un movimiento de recuperación y rescritura de lo que fue la movida por parte de los sobrevivientes a ella. (Vilarós 38)

By the time Vania shares her story, the numerous secondary characters—her peers and former Movida participants themselves—have lost their zeal for social mobilization and now party aimlessly without the guiding light of collective ideology. To Vania, they have become a bunch of self-interested, yuppie sell-outs. Her narration accordingly conveys the disillusion left by the contemporary conditions on the ground in Madrid, which are anything but revolutionary. In this fashion, Gabriela Bustelo has pointed out that the novel mocks her own Movida-era perception of people's overwhelming desire to celebrate excessively, but without any prevailing politics or organizational philosophy (Bustelo, e-mail response). In this vein, Bustelo's story demonstrates a chronological advance toward the cultural mobilization of the 1990s that Henseler describes as "the stripping of glam and kitsch to portray a more realistic, yet aesthetically diverse take on life and art" (*Spanish Fiction* 61).

The nightclub Archy is the first of many spaces the narrator describes in what can be described as a retrospective gloss, gleaned from over a decade of personal experience in the nocturnal spaces of her hometown:

> Una de las ventajas del lugar era que al haber musiquilla de fondo, muy buena en los primeros tiempos, hablar no resultaba estrictamente necesario. Lo fundamental era el juego ver-ser visto. (19)

Archy is, in fact, the first space Vania revisits after her yearlong respite. She goes with a causal friend and lover name Leo, who takes her out for dinner and dancing. Vania knows that Leo, like her high school friend Mota, would not take an interest in her

surveillance case, so she declines to bring it up when he asks what she has been doing since they last saw each other. As the conversation quickly turns mundane, Vania notices a contrast with the past, when two movers and shakers like these did not need tedious conversation to enjoy each other's company. She highlights this disparity in an aside to readers: "Me dediqué a mover un poco el trasero por el local, recordando los viejos tiempos, pero ya nada era lo mismo" (20). As we will see in the following examples, Vania sees a disparity between *la noche madrileña* during the heyday of the Movida and her experience of it upon her return. She grows increasingly disillusioned with its current state of ideological vacancy as the novel progresses.

I have argued that the protagonist's psychosis stems from a sense of personal contempt toward the sociopolitical conditions of Madrid circa 1990. In order to comprehend why Vania is so exasperated with what has become of life in this city, we must recall that fifteen years after Franco died, decades-old expectations of revolution have been wiped away. The PSOE governs Spain for the first time, from 1982 until 1996, under the leadership of Prime Minister Felipe González, but not before he disavows Marxism in his electoral platform ahead of the decisive vote that lays the first stitch in the fabric of Socialist Spain. His emulation of a center-right agenda represents the source of dissatisfaction, skepticism, and scorn that Vania Barcia feels. At one point, the protagonist deliberately tries to antagonize a group of casual acquaintances—the friends of her friend, Tono—with negative banter about the socialist leadership of Spain, but to no avail:

> Empecé a poner verde al Partido socialista a ver si lograba caldear un poco los ánimos, pero nada. Antiguamente eran los intelectuales los que se metían con el gobierno, pero ahora que había que pringarse para conseguir subvenciones, toda la vasca chicoleaba sin reparos al poder establecido. Y los miembros del Café Clan, supuestamente rojeras y republicanos, eran los primeros en arrimar la sardina al ascua. (Bustelo 94)

She delivers this tirade at Café, a bar that could in the past be relied upon to contain other ideologically committed youth. But Vania can no longer count on the "reds" and

"Republicans"—the opponents to Franco who used to hang out there—as the clientele of Café. The present company, in contrast, does not sling mud at the current government because, like it, they are knee-deep in its corrupt practices and reap benefits from them. Thus, the expectation Vania has of engaging in a zealous denigration of the PSOE loses traction even before it begins, as does any related discussion of current events.

Vania's exasperation and skepticism toward socialist Spain and its decision not to pursue a "utopian" agenda appear to reside at various points along the discursive surface of her narration. First, there is the fact that her job translating film scripts no longer serves as a diversion. It has taken on the cast of compensated torture, done not out of joy but in order to satisfy her basic need for economic survival:

> Lo de trabajar había pasado de ser divertido a convertirse en un suplicio renumerado. Tuve que escribir un guión para un video industrial que era de pico en la vena. . . . La productora era un sitio gris enmoquetado y casi sin ventanas . . . (15).

This description of the space where she works amounts to a life spent in prison. Like an inmate being punished, both at work and in her apartment Vania feels trapped in panoptic spaces designed to prevent her from knowing who is watching her and when. Because of that uncertainty, it is useful to interpret the above description of her workplace as a panoptic prison layout according to the presentation Foucault offers in *Discipline and Punish*.[35]

A further example built into this novel of Vania's contempt for contemporary Spanish society is the economic obligation she has to compensate Detective Peláez for his services. Under a purer from of what Vilarós describes as a "Marxist utopia," those necessary services would be covered by the state. Vania registers this distaste for having

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35. An obvious difference between the surveillance Vania suspects and the panopticon design that Foucault appropriates from eighteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham is that in the latter, one person surreptitiously observes multiples prison inmates, whereas in *Veo veo*, Vania is perhaps being watched by many. See David Lyon's *Electronic Eye* for a revision of Foucault's theory that incorporates this difference.

to pay Peláez in a conversation with her romantic interest, Ben Ganza, another ardent communist from a family with a comparable political background.

As an outgrowth of this ideological outlook, Vania registers her distaste for yuppiedom in a conversation with Mota—an old friend from high school and a work colleague—at a restaurant where the two women eat lunch. As they discuss the fact that nobody within their wide social network has seen Vania in months, Mota pays no attention to the explanation her friend gives as to why her presence has been sparse: that she has stayed away because she feels suspicious of anyone and everyone they know. In fact, the only concerned reaction the protagonist ever receives from Mota—as her eyes tear up—occurs only after Vania angrily asserts ambivalence over what has been said about how little she has been lately going out to the bars. Clearly, Mota cares more about the nightlife of Madrid and what other people there think than helping an old—and supposedly dear—friend resolve a very personal problem. Her inattentive behavior in the restaurant is alone evidence of that fact.

As Vania tries in earnest to tell her that she is convinced someone has been spying on her, and that that is the reason she has stayed away from *la noche madrileña*, Mota pays little attention at all. She is more focused on fixing her hair in order to look presentable in case somebody she knows suddenly appears in the restaurant. Mota will not sacrifice her appearance in order to pay close attention to the crisis Vania tries to share with her. No, what matters most to this narcissistic woman is her own embarrassment at having to publically defend Vania, who most people now think is insane:

> La gente ha empezado a decir cosas como que estás loca y yo teniendo que defenderte. . . . Pues si te cuento que estoy convencido de que me siguen, ya alucinarás del todo, ¿no? Mota se atusó el patch llongueras por si acaso la miraba alguien y se quejó amargamente: —Mi amiga del colegio, ida para siempre. (17)

Vania resignedly redirects their conversation to *la noche madrileña* and learns that Mota has already begun to date a man that she knew Vania had set her own sights on. The protagonist realizes how disloyally her old friend acts, and that any solicitation for help with serious matters such as the suspicion of being spied on is impossible. Exasperated and disgusted with their superficial banter, Vania refers to herself and Mota as “dos yupis pringadas de hoy en día” (18), implying that whereas people might have once looked out for one another, now nobody is interested in anything more serious than fashion, casual romance, wealth, and drugs. With few exceptions, the people Vania encounters in the bars are all yuppies who care for little other than their own self-guided interests. In that sense, the communist master narrative Vania once believed in has disintegrated, and innumerable, self-guided interests have taken its place.

The above episode indicates how rare it has become to see the kind of concern that Vania wishes her friends expressed for her, and for each another. The other Generation X characters in *Veo veo* do not evince such compassion. Even an old friend like Mota cannot absorb the fear and emotional peril Vania faces when she attempts to explain why she has disappeared from the bar scene. Mota makes herself unavailable when the protagonist needs her most. This contrast between the characters’ attitudes toward others reveals that Vania does not fit into their precise mold. She is different, for example, from Carlos, the protagonist of *Historias del Kronen*, who cares so little about other people—even his own family—that one wonders if he suffers his own form of mental illness. For this reason, Vania feels segregated and out of place in her own town and among her cohorts:

> Cada vez me sentía más marciana. No tenía claro en quién podía confiar y en quién no. Además, la gente tiene su vida y no se puede ir por ahí dando la vara con historias peregrinas sobre micrófonos y detectives. Los noctámbulos no están para películas de suspense. Quieren oír chorradas, reírse, beber y esnifar. De lo demás, pasan. (31)

Vania's private lamentations illustrate several important features of *Veo veo,* as well as the niche it carves in the literary, political, and cultural affairs of the world. First, the story is set roughly between the unification of Germany in 1989 and the fall of the USSR in 1991. These episodes are historically significant because they represent the contemporaneous collapse of a Marxist metanarrative not just in Spain but around the world. Second, Bustelo also argues that the post-Franco integration of Spain into the international community is anathema to its spiritual well-being. Vania derides cutting-edge science, astronomy, and space travel as infectious diseases spread by billions of human beings continually inhaling the same molecules of oxygen (141). All are, according to her, malevolent forces that humankind has somehow managed to endure without annihilating itself, which is itself the result of divine intervention. And third, when read against the backdrop of *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*, it resists Etxebarria's allegorical use of celestial space as a site of inner discursive contestation: the space of this novel, instead, is strictly limited to Madrid and its surroundings.

The dismal surveillance ordeal Vania faces results from the city attacking her at every possible twist and turn of this unpredictable story. Even if the threat she perceives from spies is a delusion, the collateral damage she endures from the portrayal of a sinister residential and metropolitan space in Madrid is very real indeed. In contrast to Etxebarria's protagonist, Bea, who negotiates her troubled urban experiences emotionally and mentally, the urban offensive against Vania in this novel depicts Madrid as an external enemy. As I argue above, the technical and industrial sophistication of the post-Franco era—high-tech surveillance in the form of hidden cameras and audio transmitters—magnifies the scopic threshold of the city so that it can now detect the daily habits and routines of ordinary citizens. Thus, Madrid's violent aggression against Vania triggers several events, the causes of which are otherwise inexplicable according to the body of facts supplied by the narration. The slashing of the tires on her red Mazda (56),

or the nearly violent encounter she has in a bar where she was to meet her drug dealer, Lolo, serve as examples (158).

Postmodern Madrid: Love the City, Hate the City

At night in the bars, Vania is imprisoned in an inescapable space of urban despair. This juxtaposition of her adoration and hatred for the city indicates an ambivalent relationship with Madrid as the protagonist enters deeper into a mystery she sees unfolding there. For Vania, the city represents a stagnant repetition of sameness: ". . .un gueto, un compartimento estanco donde siempre estaban los mismos, sin poder entrar ni salir" (20). One minute she loves the city, the next she hates it. And although Vania describes her disquieting abuse of alcohol and drugs, the urban space of Madrid is the true source of her addiction, and she relates to it primarily through nights out on the town.

Vania explains how she and the other people in the bars—some her close friends, some not—routinely calibrate a dangerous equilibrium of stimulants and depressants, mixing alcohol and cocaine into a chemical cocktail that corresponds to the particular mood of a given night: "Pedimos una copa para bajar la raya, luego nos metimos una raya para subir la copa, y otro copazo para equilibrar el peligroso tentetieso coca-copa" (121). However, alcohol and cocaine consumption in a group setting such as the one she describes above is secondary to a stronger and more real compulsion to being in the bar at night with other people. Furthermore, the fact that Vania orders drinks in the bar instead of drinking elsewhere illustrates that that space, where waiters and waitresses serve drinks—rather than the drinks and drugs that she consumes—is the fundamental source of her addiction.

An important illustration of the negative effects arising from the protagonist's addiction to the urban space presented in the novel occurs during an emotional breakdown during a car ride on the *La Coruña* highway toward Boadilla, on the outskirts of Madrid, far enough away to afford an opportunity for her to think peacefully. Káiser

escapes the city toward Galicia via this road too, hoping to meet up with his father, though he takes a wrong turn and ends up in El Escorial. It would therefore seem that this is the main way out of the prison of Madrid, but that the city's hold is so strong that neither character can easily traverse it.

Listening to music and driving quickly calms Vania, but after only a few moments, she resigns herself to the fact that, like a caged animal (20), she is drawn back to the city to face whatever lies ahead. Her addiction to Madrid is so strong that she does not even make it out of the city limits before an overpowering urge to return overtakes her. Compared to Káiser and Bea, who both leave Madrid for substantial periods of time in order to reflect upon their problems before eventually returning to the city, this brief excursion beyond the capital does not provide Vania with enough time to blow off steam and resume life mentally refreshed.

In another scene, however, as she drives to the neighborhood where Bernard Ganza lives, the protagonist engages Madrid serenely. Driving down Gran Vía, Alcalá, Velázquez, Doctor Arce, and Príncipe de Vergara for the first time, Vania articulates her ambivalence toward this space:

> Quien no haya conducido por Madrid en agosto no sabe la gozada que es poseer la ciudad, reconciliarse con ella olvidando las broncas pasadas. Después, al llegar septiembre, vuelven los gritos y los susurros. (86)

Her level of inner contentment remains tethered to and controlled by the seasonal conditions of the surrounding urban space, as though the city were a self-sufficient mass of energy with superhuman command of its inhabitants. This reversal in attitude occurs at the height of Vania's happiness in her relationship with Ganza. After a romantic night together, she exclaims:

> Me daban igual los espías y todo lo demás. De un día para otro, el mundo se había convertido en un sitio donde se estaba bastante bien, y la vida era bella. . . . Iba recién salida de la ducha, con el pelo mojado, que es la única manera de andar por Madrid en agosta, y me sentía guapa y feliz, así que podían mirarme todo lo que quisieran. (141)

The blithe outlook reflected in this passage results not solely from the developing romance with Ganza, but also because the pleasant August weather allows Vania to stroll through Madrid and enjoy the refreshing outdoors. From this example we understand that her experience of the city throughout the novel deeply affects her mood and overall ability to live harmoniously.

My analysis in this chapter draws from Teresa Vilarós's discussion of *mono* as a social psychology that views the liberal base of Spain's hatred of Franco as an addiction that sustains its expectation of Marxist renewal after the dictator finally dies, but which does not occur anywhere close to the scale it intended. Vania's addiction to the nightlife of Madrid represents her sorrow—and that of others on the far left—that the social, political, economic, and cultural development of post-Franco Spain had been stripped clean of her revolutionary aspirations for the nation.

Upon return to the bars she knew during the heyday of the Movida, Vania encounters a number of unsettling changes that suggest the people there no longer rally around a Marxist master narrative. In particular, the topics of conversation on peoples' minds have shifted away from a collective revolutionary agenda and toward individual pursuits, such as the private accumulation of wealth. This suggests that the political cohesion of the early Movida years has been fragmented by efforts to accumulate private stores of wealth, which is the reason why Vania believes that two journalists she knows want to smear her name in the yellow press. In addition, the very reason why the protagonist reemerges in *la noche madrileña* after a yearlong hiatus exemplifies the evolutionary changes that have become a reality in the time she is gone. She goes there in 1990 in order to act out a premeditated plan with the imaginary Peláez at her side—the resolution of a surveillance mystery—which is different than back in 1980 when Vania, like other participants in the Movida, joined the nightlife in response to the visceral artistic impetus that Vilarós describes in her study.

My reading of *Veo veo* ties the political to the spatial, as the protagonist's redeployment in the spaces of her Movida past symbolizes her futile attempt to enact a Marxist framework that has long since been forgotten as ancient history by everyone else. Vania stands out against the backdrop of socialist Spain as a political dissident who cannot deal with the evolution of democracy and transnational capitalism. This might explain—symbolically, at least—why she believes she has been targeted with convoluted surveillance in the first place. Bustelo personifies the city as a menacing force that seeks and destroys dissidents. Her novel warns us that in 1990 the Spanish center wields furtive forces that ensure our social and political conformity with what Lyotard describes as its postmodern condition.

CHAPTER IV
FROM ELDA TO ALCOY:
EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN SMALL-TOWN VALENCIA, PEDRO MAESTRE'S *MATANDO DINOSAURIOS CON TIRACHINAS*

Pedro Maestre's (b. Elda, 1967) Nadal-winning *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* (1996) opens with the twenty-five-year-old narrator and protagonist, Pedro, disparaging the provincial Valencian town of Alcoy, where he has come to live with his girlfriend, Elia, who has found work there as a clerk in a local clothing store: ". . . las montañas que rodean a Alcoy lo aíslan y lo convierten en una lata de sardinas, ¿has tomado nota? . . ." (77–78). Pedro's negative opinion of the town results from an overgeneralization of the apparent prejudice of a prospective landlady the couple encounters shortly after arriving. Treating them like children, the woman questions whether they can afford to pay the monthly rent. She even asks to speak with Elia's mother. Worse, she makes it quite clear that only Spaniards are allowed to enter the property:

> . . . es que en mi casa no entra cualquiera, aquí vino una chica muy maja . . . y trajo a su novio, y, claro, el chico no tenía trabajo, y eso no importa porque las cosas están muy mal, pero es que era chino, y eso en mi casa yo no lo puedo permitir . . . (77)

The landlady objected to a former tenant's boyfriend being on her property not because he was unemployed—unemployment ran rampant in Spain in the narrative year of 1995—but rather, because of his Chinese ethnicity. Her speech has a profound effect on the protagonist and his girlfriend. It sours Elia's taste not only for Alcoy but for all manner of provincial living in general.

The novel thus touches on the contemporary bigotry of rural society at the same time as it broadens its scope to the state of national politics as they existed at the tail end of Spain's first socialist government under the political leadership of Prime Minister Felipe González (1982–96). According to Alberto Madrona Fernández, Maestre brings to

bear a portrait of the current political leadership besieged by scandal, unemployment, and excess immigration:

> . . . esta joven generación se ve inmersa en el turbulento inicio de los 90 cuando, tras una década de bonanza económica, el partido en el poder se ve salpicado por frecuentes escándalos políticos, aumento el paro juvenil, se agudiza el problema de los inmigrantes y se instala en la sociedad española una sensación de desazón. (Fernández 88)

Elia's character represents the unsettling reality of Spanish life in the 1990s, the point of view that Fernández explains in the passage above. Having grown up with Pedro in Elda, another small town in Alicante, she has grown weary of provincial life. She knows that the path to social and economic vitality leads to larger cities where the people are more cosmopolitan and open minded and where the job opportunities are greater.

Pedro, however, still holds Elda in high regard, despite the shifting humors of post-Franco society described above. He makes a distinction between the two towns, ascribing the landlady's narrow-mindedness to Alcoy's isolation—where inhabitants live like "sardines in a can" (Maestre 78)—and to the fact that she grew up under Franco, at a time when conservative traditions were prized more than they are twenty years later when the novel takes place. Unlike Elia, Pedro still considers Elda heaven on Earth, as it is the place that has made him who he is, where he feels safest in his skin:

> . . . es un pueblo, mi pueblo, donde conozco a la gente de vista y me sé más o menos en qué calle me encuentro, donde me siento como Pedro por su casa, no hace falta echar mierda sobre algo para idealizar otra cosa, Elda es un pueblo comparado con Valencia, y Valencia con Barcelona, y Barcelona con Nueva York, cada sitio tiene su síes y noes . . . (78)

Elda, he admits, is not as cosmopolitan as Valencia, Barcelona, or New York, but one does not expect a small city to be, which is why the protagonist still considers it the ideal place to live.

Pedro resents Elia painting Elda as another Alcoy. He dismisses her as a broken record—*un disco rayado*—that repeats the same, unoriginal arguments over and over

again: ". . . no te quejes más de que Elda es un pueblucho de mierda que pareces un disco rayado . . ." (78). His characterization echoes the Castilian vernacular parlance of *rayado/a*, which Káiser, of Mañas's *Ciudad rayada* (1998), defines as either a temporary state of irrational behavior or a narcotic intoxication: "—Se dice kuando . . . pues kuando te blokeas y no sueltas una idea, komo los binilos, ke se rayan y no saltan de surko. Y también kuando alguien está muy zumbao, por ejemplo" (234). Nevertheless, the implication that Elia is obsessively repetitious simply because she objects to the small-minded bigotry exemplified by the landlady reflects back upon Pedro negatively, suggesting that it is he—not she—who is *rayado*. The small-town mania that prevents Pedro from ascribing the landlady's behavior to the rest of Alcoy's residents sets him apart from Elia and the other characters I have examined throughout this project. This is illustrated more clearly when he is turned down for a position delivering food at a Chinese restaurant. By ridiculing the owner of restaurant's accent, he discriminates in a manner much as the landlady did, showing that he is more or less just like her:

> . . . ya no habel, ayel sí todavía, hoy ya no, ya tenel, eso me ha dicho el del chino, abuelo, y, ¡joder!, yo sé porque lo he visto que tiene un BMW nuevo, pero no puedo joderle las ruedas . . . (35–36)

Despite the vast differences in their ages and the sociopolitical eras in which they grew up, Pedro and the landlady retain strikingly similar prejudices. Both show contempt for the considerable population of Chinese immigrants that arrived in Spain beginning in the 1980s. But the aspect of this scene that most vitally underscores my reading of *Matando dinosaurios* is that Pedro does not slash the tires of the restaurant owner's luxury automobile, which he feels the urge to do. The sudden inclination toward vandalism illustrates his desperation to find work. He is angry that the restaurant owner has spent money on a new BMW but will not fund a food-delivery position. But he buries this rage instead of acting upon it. He quietly acquiesces to the realities of capitalism that protect the owner's right to live opulently when other people are in need.

The unemployment that the landlady refers to above and that Pedro experiences firsthand is what compels the protagonist and his partner to move to Alcoy in the first place, where a low-paying and uninspiring job awaits Elia, and an *objeción de conciencia*[36] awaits Pedro. When she receives an offer for a better job, she declines it in order to invest in her relationship with Pedro, as the job offer is too far from Alcoy for him to commute on a daily basis:

> . . . nos hemos ido a Alcoy porque ella encontró trabajo, lo que pasa es que luego le salió uno mejor en Onteniente, pero como yo he elegido aquí la objeción, pues a unos 35 km de Alcoy . . . (19)

Elia remains in Alcoy in order to be with Pedro. She could have gotten out, but she chose to stay. She has invested in their relationship, even to her own economic disadvantage, but as the experience of reading the novel will show, Pedro does not reciprocate her loyalty.

The emotional upheaval that *Matando dinosaurios* pours forth points to its protagonist's radical alienation from the outside world. The interior uproar that consumes Pedro represents a threat far more troubling and pervasive than the one Alcoy realistically poses. This sense of overreacting to urban space is precisely what occurs on a trip to Madrid with Elia to visit his friend Mesca, who has left Elda and now lives in the capital:

> . . . la mía está en una ciudad pequeña en la que no me sienta un extraño como en las grandes, sobre todo en Madrid cuando fuimos a ver a Mesca, ¡qué espectáculo de paisaje en el metro y qué acojono!, no me digas que no es por habitual menos tremendo lo que pasa allí, Mesca después de vivir un año sólo conocía su casa, el bar de abajo y su facultad, y sí, sé que es exagerado, pero viene al pelo para simbolizar lo que quiero decir, que la grandes ciudades te deshumanizan, sus habitantes se convierten en ratas . . . (78–79)

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36. In Spain prior to 2001, men eighteen years of age were required to complete a term of compulsory military service or request a community-service-based alternative called an *objeción de conciencia*: ". . .pues, como la mili pero ayudando a ancianos, a drogadictos, o en los montes vigilando para que no haya incendios" (Maestre 16). Pedro has chosen the latter, which had been postponed while he was in college but can no longer be deferred.

Pedro insinuates that he would not choose to live among countless strangers who attack one another in order to get ahead of the pack—people that he and José Ángel Mañas in *Ciudad rayada* (1998) describe as big-city rats. He interprets the recollected scene on Madrid's subway as a rat race representative of all modern cities, one that he wishes to avoid at all costs.

Although Alcoy does not present the same danger to Pedro as Madrid does to Káiser, Bea, and Vania, the existential stasis he experiences there is just as threatening. Maestre does not pit his protagonist against sinister urban forces as Mañas, Etxebarria, and Bustelo do theirs; rather, Pedro is against himself—in unfamiliar Alcoy. Unlike them, however, he does not fight the city by delving into subcultural space as the other Generation X characters do:

> . . . si me entre la vena de ser Indiana Jones iré en busca del arco pedida adonde sea, aunque a lo mejor la mía está en una ciudad pequeña en la que no me siente un extraño como en las grandes, sobre todo en Madrid . . . (78)

Madrid's subculture gives them breathing room, a space of respite in which to regroup and rethink how best to deal with the dangers lurking in the capital. But Maestre does not present any such subculture in small-town Valencia, so Pedro must face the unnerving existential uncertainties of his life head-on. His adverse experiences in Alcoy demonstrate that a lack of familiarity with new surroundings—not the nature of large versus small city—is what causes him to retreat into his own head.

In so doing, he repeatedly synthesizes a rhetorical contradiction that drives forward the discourse of the novel, keeping him talking and generating the narration:

> La diferencia más significativa entre la agresividad del personaje de Maestre y otros personajes de la ficción y el cine contemporáneos es que en Pedro los impulsos violentos no llegan a expresarse. Quedan latentes solamente. Logra reprimir sus instintos destructores, lo cual es resultado de su extrema cobardía. (Estrada)

The repression of this destructive instinct adds fuel to a discursive fire that keeps the narration ablaze. In other words, the synchronous and vertiginous dispensation of rhetoric

conjoins into a seemingly infinite number of terse narrative fragments in which Pedro capriciously voices his fear of the outside world in one breath, and his accumulated fury toward the social and economic barriers he faces there in another. Throughout the novel, the former stifles the latter, preventing him from improving his social and economic circumstances with decisive action. For instance, he bitterly complains about not having work but refuses to buckle down and study to retake the *oposiciones*—licensing exams—that he previously failed. He similarly hides his violent reactions to other characters, revealing them only in the interior monologue, such as when he expresses an urge to cut off Elia's hands or rip out her throat as retribution for falling asleep during a movie they watch together at home (Maestre 56), or when Sergio, the roommate who rents space in Pedro and Elia's apartment, accidentally shatters a plate and a few glasses. The protagonist had been trying to relax, so he seethes with irritation when the accident occurs but acts calm and courteous toward his roommate in order to avoid confrontation:

> . . . glis, glas, crack, mecagoendiós, no me puedo contener más, le voy a meter un puro, ¿qué ha pasado, Sergio?, ¡ah!, ¿te ayudo a recoger los cristales?, no, no me has molestado, no, no estaba durmiendo . . . ¿dos vasos, y un plato?, no te preocupes, no importa, lo mismo me hubiera pasado a mí . . . (Maestre 134–35)

Pedro cannot fit in anywhere—not in Madrid, not in Alcoy—and so retreats into the space of his mind. He avoids Spain's capital and other big cities by choice because he does not desire the anonymity they offer and is not willing to bear it in exchange for the greater employment opportunities they might offer over and above those of a small town. Pedro expects Alcoy to serve as another Elda, since its quaintness represents an aspect of the provincial isolation he likes. Yet it does not: Pedro is alienated just as much in Alcoy as he is in Madrid, despite the fact that they are cities as completely different as Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is from New York, New York. His imbalance, therefore, derives from pent up frustration and loneliness. This is just as indicative of the way he experiences Alcoy as

it is of his take on Madrid. Rather than a renewed sense of community, misery is what Pedro experiences as a result of his social seclusion.

In the novel, a blend of ardent rage and cautionary stasis takes hold of the narration right off the bat and remains in place until the end. Pedro sublimates the cognitive dissonance originating from his experiences in Alcoy into a narration highly charged with emotion. The seemingly incongruent scraps of data he sets adrift in the narration move beyond the sequential flow of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis into the spatialization of that dialectic as "Thirdspace." It is here—in the Thirdspace of his mind—where the existential weight of past, present, and future swarm around, yoked together into a chaotic and seemingly unrelated narrative outpouring.

Narrator versus Author: An Itinerant Mind

Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas compresses the nonlinear strands of discrete data radiating from Pedro's mind into a dense array of space and time that makes the novel difficult to summarize. The first-person narration changes focus capriciously between paragraphs—even between lines—quickly and without warning, in such a way that its narrative outpouring captures the inherent disorganization of the protagonist's mental state: ". . . que de ser bueno a malo no hay ni dos líneas y mi equilibrio emocional chirría por los cuatro costados . . ." (135).

The novel—one extended sentence interrupted only by commas and question marks—is a book-length monologue in which Pedro releases all of the anger and rage he has kept bottled up inside of him, everything he is afraid to express directly to his girlfriend, his parents, and his friends from Elda who occasionally visit him in Alcoy. This frustration grinds on his nerves and makes his mind run in circles. Thus, the unorthodox structure Maestre has chosen for the novel mirrors the unbridled chaos of his protagonist's mind. Supporting this claim is Eva Martínez Navarro, who interprets the

novel's typology as a window into Pedro's mind, a discourse that mimics the way he thinks and feels:[37]

> . . . no hay ni un punto en esta novela, solo comas y signos de interrogación. . . . Tampoco se encuentran mayúsculas al comienzo de una oración por lo que, en muchas ocasiones, es el propio lector el que tiene que adivinar dónde se halla el principio y dónde el final de la misma. El hecho de que Maestre haya decidido usar este recurso puede responder a que el espacio de la narración es, principalmente, el pensamiento del narrador. . . . (53–54)

Pedro does not embrace the adult responsibilities expected of someone his age. These include economic independence and the ability to sustain stable personal relationships, neither of which he carries out successfully. Because he cannot find work, he is unable to provide for himself, or for Elia, which adds to his exasperation and causes them to bicker. He wishes to teach in the public school system where there are the greatest numbers of available positions. However, he has failed the *oposiciones* that Spain requires in order to work in the public sector. He has already graduated with a degree in philology from a well-respected university, the University of Alicante, but has no job and no good prospects of finding one. Even if he were to overcome his obvious anxiety about retaking the *oposiciones*, his interest in attaining unskilled work outside of teaching language and literature, for which he has been trained, paints a particularly biting picture of youth unemployment in the mid-1990s. It shows that attaining a college education, which takes years of rigorous study, does not advance one's chances of attaining stable employment.

Pedro solicits alternative teaching positions at several of the private academies in Alcoy, where the *oposiciones* are not required, but none are willing or able to offer him work:

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37. The paucity of scholarly attention paid to this novel is surprising considering it was a recipient of the Nadal Prize. The lack of extensive scholarship explains the absence of a discrete literature review section for this chapter.

> . . . ¡hola!, nada, que soy profesor de Lengua y Literatura, y también podría dar Latín, y buscaban trabajo, ¿no?, pues vale, ¡adiós!, ¡buenos días!, que venía por si necesitaba a algún camarero, ¿no?, vale, ¿academia Sancho?, mire, que venía por si necesitabas a algún profesor, ¿no?, ¿de nada?, pues hasta luego, ¡hola!, ¿necesitáis más profesores? . . . (82)

Throughout the novel he makes similar telephones inquiries to a variety of other prospective employers, even to businesses advertising part-time work in service-oriented fields unrelated to teaching—as a waiter, a courier, a clerk—but comes up dry in those attempts as well. It quickly becomes clear that any type of work in Alcoy other than in the public sector is difficult to find.

He abandons the idea of retaking the same *oposiciones* and decides to pursue a career in the post office instead. But the mail carrier job is also publically funded, so he must pass a variant of the same exam he dreads: ". . . aunque me sepa las capitales de todos los países del mundo y chapurree un inglés de garrafa, lo máximo a que puedo aspirar, y si sale la maldita convocatoria, es a ser cartero . . ." (195). Pedro studies and looks for part-time work while completing his *objeción de conciencia*. He is also supposed to tend house during the day while Elia is at work. But more often than not he lies around in bed staring at the ceiling, as fearful of finishing the laundry as he is of facing the daunting challenges awaiting him in the space beyond his bedroom.

Pedro comes from a family with parents he loves but with whom he cannot tolerate to spend time. At various moments in the narration, he insists they visit a psychiatrist to sort out their acrimony for one another, as well as his for them. He even offers to take them to the doctor, but they do not consent:

> . . . hasta que no vayáis a un psicólogo no vuelvo ni os llamo, así que ya lo sabes, cuando lo decidáis me pasáis recado a través de Elia y yo vengo a acompañaros y a decir todo lo que haya que decir . . . no puedo con esta cárcel . . . (53–54)

The conflict-driven relationship Pedro has with his parents—and the one they have with each other—adds to his desperation and rage. He threatens not to have anything to do

with them until they visit a psychologist, indicating a desire to work through this resentment in order to remain a part of their lives. Exasperated, he proclaims:

> . . . esto se está poniendo irrespirable, si puedo a malas penas soportar a uno, a los dos a la vez es demasiado para mi cuerpo, la combinación de la Madre Carmen de Elda versión alma en pena con la Sombra Muda carraspeando al fondo es para salir corriendo y no volver más . . . (Maestre 30)

Pedro's adamancy that his parents seek a professional solution to the bad blood they maintain for each other is such a private revelation that it suggests a conflation of protagonist and author. In an interview Maestre gave to Teresa Juan López, he admits to filling the pages of *Matando dinosaurios* with real-life confessions of animosity toward the people closest to him:

> En concreto, "Matando dinosaurios . . .", la novela más autobiográfica que tengo, fue un atrevimiento valiente en el que solté todo lo que me agobiaba y me atreví a decir muchas cosas a mis padres, a mi novia y a mis amigos. Confesar detalles de mi vida a los demás ya me importaba menos. (López)

If the novel is both autobiography and confession, it can be said that Maestre writes in order to come to terms with a real-life existential uncertainty, one that is reflected through the protagonist's character. Hence, the novel forms part of a larger literary project urging us to rethink the limits that separate fact from fiction. As part of that reconsideration, Virgilio Tortosa Garrigós posits the relationship between Pedro Maestre and Pedro the protagonist as one of alterity, not autobiography:

> El protagonista de *Matando dinosaurios* se marca una distancia permanente respeto a su personaje, en un atractivo uso del ensimismamiento conflictualizando su propia realidad del sujeto parado y con problemas en la sociedad contemporánea, creando una alteridad de sí mismo atractiva a ojos del lector. . . . (Tortosa Garrigós 223)

Pedro—the narrator of the novel—thus straddles the divide between biography and fiction. The novel's inconclusive ending further supports the notion that his character's creation reflects aspects of the author's life. *Matando dinosaurios* cannot end decisively because Pedro Maestre's real-life story has yet to end. This explains why on

the last page of the text the narration artlessly trails off without warning. It is noteworthy that in comparison to the other Generation X characters I study there is no marked improvement in his personal circumstances. Elia cheats on him with a mutual acquaintance before moving away to Barcelona in pursuit of the big-city experience she has always wanted. She leaves Pedro behind in Alcoy with a small stipend with which to pay the rent. He does not return to Elda because his relations with his parents have become estranged and he has no money to live elsewhere. He is stuck in Alcoy just as much as he is stuck in a mental cycle: he wants to escape but is not able to take any active steps to get out.

The more he thinks about his situation—stuck in Elda with few prospects and unhappy with his financial and domestic situation—the more his latent anger builds up. Sequestering the way he feels in private ruminations becomes easier than speaking out in real life since being open and honest runs the risk of creating conflict with other people. Pedro lacks the courage to speak his mind aloud. His limited perspective introduces the reader to an internal mental space that passes all external stimuli through a subjective filter:

> El protagonista retransmite lo que los otros van diciendo, ya sea repitiendo las frases de su interlocutor o bien, porque a través de la respuesta, imaginamos lo que ha dicho la otra parte. El efecto que se consigue es el similar al de escuchar una conversación telefónica solo desde un lado. (Navarro Martínez 57)

Pedro works so hard to sort things out for himself that he appears not to care whether readers actually understand the threads of his reflection. This explains both the novel's unusual structure—as one long, winding sentence—and why he fastens random connective tissue together into such a heterogeneous concoction:

> . . . Pedro Maestre con *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* nos presenta una novela compuesta totalmente de pensamientos o sensaciones que no son sino imágenes que se suceden a un ritmo rápido, sin ningún tipo de conexión formal (puntos, guiones, etc..., ya que los signos de puntuación han

> desaparecido) o, a veces, incluso sin ningún tipo de relación de contenido. (Navarro Martínez 50)

Eva Navarro Martínez interprets this typology as a disparate concatenation that imitates the way Pedro thinks. Yet because his thoughts are often incompletely fleshed out, the narration resembles the act of listening to a one-sided telephone conversation (57). For Navarro Martínez, Maestre's presentation is frustratingly incomplete, as it often requires readers to guess how the protagonist intends to finish a hanging thought. But what she overlooks is that these hesitations in the narration reflect a fear of coming to terms with the fury stemming from his social and economic stagnation in Alcoy. The two emotions push against each other and torture his mind. Pedro's trepidation stymies his urge to act on his rage, to lash out at the world for trapping him in Alcoy with a vision of the future that holds no reprieve.

Pedro's monologue—the novel—is thus revealed as a streaming synthesis of passivity and rage that retrieves overwrought gripes about the economic and interpersonal hardships he has faced in the past, faces in the present, and will face in the future. His outpouring of fear on one hand, fury on the other, instills the narration with contradictory emotions that repeatedly separate and recombine into an additional, independent space within the novel. Whereas urban space features prominently in the other novels investigated in this dissertation, here it does not act as the primary place of antagonism. Rather, it is the refraction of the semiurban surroundings within the protagonist's mind that forms the catalyst of his alienation from the rest of the world.

The novel represents a thin, dissected slice of Pedro's life. It begins midstream and ends that way, too. There is no resolution, no character arc. The implication is that Pedro will continue on in exactly the same way, having learned nothing and gone nowhere. The novel thus defines itself as a window through which readers experience Pedro's ongoing subconscious monologue fleshed out in written form.

Thirdspace in Alcoy: Pedro's Inferno

In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Edward W. Soja harks back to Hegel's notion of the dialectic by disordering the binary categories of thesis and antithesis and reshaping them into a third term, one that integrates the traces of its original elements (60–61). He liberates the restrictive chronological sequence of the Hegelian dialectic by melding thesis, antithesis, and synthesis into what he terms a "cumulative trialectics" in a process that activates one part at the same time as another (61). Soja achieves this by moving past the double illusion he identifies as part of Henri Lefebvre's work in *The Production of Space*:

> Through his critical attack on the double illusion, Lefebvre opens the way to a *trialectics of spatiality*, always insisting that each mode of thinking about space, each "field" of human spatiality – the physical, the mental, the social – be seen as simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical. No one mode of spatial thinking is inherently privileged or intrinsically "better" than the others as long as each remains open to the re-combinations and simultaneities of the "real-and-imagined. (64–65)

The process Soja describes as "thirding" blends two terms into a third that remains open and susceptible to endless and regressive critique. This is because, unlike Hegel's dialectic, thirding occurs along multiple dimensions of space, meaning that the theoretical spaces it produces are not set in stone but remain unbound by the restrictions of linear progression.

> Thirding recomposes the dialectic through an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning. . . . The spatialized dialectic "no longer clings to historicity and historical time, or to a temporal mechanism such a theses-antithesis-synthesis or affirmation-negation-negation of the negation." Thirding produces what might best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge. (Soja 61)

Pedro compresses the triad of perceived, conceived, and lived space—which underlies Lefebvre's groundbreaking work mentioned above—into a dense package of space and time:

> . . . jamás podré olvidar que no me dejarais ir al viaje de fin de curso de EGB a Palma de Mallorca . . . me pasaré toda la semana del viaje sin salir de mi habitación llorando, y para estar entretenido no pensaré que es jueves y Matías, Carmen, Julio, Pilar y todo los demás están en las Cuevas del Drac, y que esta noche dormirán en la playa e inventarán historias fantásticas que recordaré de memoria mucho tiempo después . . . pese a ser toda la vida un debilucho tenía que haberme escapado y haber ido al viaje. . . (Maestre 37–38)

The memory of the time when his parents did not allow him to go on a trip with friends to celebrate their graduation from the Spanish equivalent of junior high school serves as an example. It crosses various registers of space—Elda and Palma de Mallorca—as well as time—adolescence and adulthood.

While "perceived space" does not appear in the discussion of Lefebvre in chapter 1 of this dissertation where I focus on how Mañas's caustic critique of contemporary capitalism interweaves dual "conceived" and "perceived" representations of Madrid's space, it does plays a crucial role here. Soja utilizes that missing term as early as the subtitle of his book, where he formulates yet another set of alternative designations—"real" and "imagined"—for the spaces Lefebvre has already referred to as, respectively, spaces of representation (conceived space) and representational space (lived space). Thus, Soja's terms, used in this chapter, accord with the Lefebvrian terminology and are applied here as means of understanding the spatial dynamics of the novel. Thirdspace does not simply combine first and second space; it incessantly distills new products from each and then synthesizes them at the same time:

> *Thirdspace* too can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the "real" material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through "imagined" representations of spatiality. (Soja 6)

This theory helps to explain the novel's seemingly random narrative structure and rationalizes its dizzying recall of apparently unrelated information. The novel reads in a serial order, as all written texts do, but its multifarious allusions to past, present, and future places and events change so erratically that they overwhelm the reader.

My work in this chapter reads Maestre in much the same way as Soja reads Lefebvre: as a spatialization of the dialectical reasoning embedded in each text as the concurrent representation of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The novel portrays Pedro not as fearful in one place and furious in another but as experiencing both emotions at once. For example, he is afraid to the point of paralysis of retaking the *oposiciones* in order to get a teaching job but is simultaneously furious that he cannot find decent work. Likewise, he is afraid to agitate Elia by failing to perform the domestic duties she expects of him, but he often lies in bed mulling over how angry it makes him that he has to cook and do the laundry. The constant fluctuation of these feelings produces a Thirdspace where Pedro's perpetual dissonance remains unpredictable. He cycles through them so quickly that they are practically simultaneous.

Soja illustrates the meaning of Thirdspace through a discussion of "The Aleph," a short story by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges:

> Attaching its [the Aleph] meanings to Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of space detonates the scope of spatial knowledge and reinforces the radical openness of what I am trying to convey as Thirdspace: the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood . . . (Soja 56)

The radical openness Soja describes in the preceding passage cannot be communicated through writing, however, because narrative requires words to be processed in serial order.[38] The inability of the written word to express spatial simultaneity is a main theme in "The Aleph," which Borges names for the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet,[39] whose

38. Soja believes that the unwieldy disorganization of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* is an indication of its author's attempt to not be bound by the conventions of writing. He reads it as a fugue, a musical composition in which various part play at the same time: "Thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are thus made to appear simultaneously . . . in both contrapuntal harmonies as well as disruptive dissonances" (Soja 9).

39. Borges's use of the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet as the title of his story harks back to the Kabbalistic idea that God created the world by using the letters of the alphabet. Aleph begins the Hebrew

title he uses to refer to a narrow sliver of space through which one witnesses a simultaneous vision of all of terrestrial space and time:

> Todo lenguaje es un alfabeto de símbolos cuyo ejercicio presupone un pasado que los interlocutores comparten; ¿cómo trasmitir a los otros el infinito Aleph, que mi temerosa memoria apenas abarca? (Borges 121)

In Borges's story, a character named Carlos Argentino Daneri discovers an Aleph under the basement stairs of his home in Buenos Aires, which he utilizes for much needed creative impetus in his efforts to write poetry. This transcendent vision of all space and time provides the impetus Daneri lacks in his initial writing, which Borges, also the protagonist of the story, describes as dreadful. Daneri convinces Borges to experiment with the Aleph by drinking an intoxicant of some sort and then lying flat on his back in the cellar. In other words, the only way to experience the acutely simultaneous vision of the Aleph is to lie supine in a flat position that mimics, to the degree possible for a three-dimensional human figure, two-dimensional space.

In the short story, Borges is given the opportunity to see the Aleph for himself. He follows Daneri's instructions and is rewarded with an experience he characterizes as overpoweringly unpleasant. In *Matando dinosaurios*, Pedro also sees everything at once, only his experience is not limited by a trip into a dank cellar. His entire life becomes defined by simultaneity, and he is, like Borges before him, overwhelmed. Borges escapes Daneri's basement in order to stop seeing the engulfing Aleph. Pedro would also like to escape, but unlike Borges, who can run up the stairs and out of Daneri's house, he cannot escape his own mind.

Daneri's name is no doubt a reference to Dante Alighieri, whose fourteenth-century *Inferno* chronicles his tour of hell and subsequent redemption of the soul. The

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character set, so when the Kabbalists claim that God creates the world by speaking the letters of the alphabet, they naturally begin with aleph, the first letter. They can make this claim because the Hebrew Bible opens with the words, "In the beginning . . . ," which they understand to be the beginning of the alphabet itself.

character's name therefore forces us to think of Dante's own sojourn in hell. The Aleph, though powerful, is ultimately demonic, a "pernicious metropolis" according to Borges (123). But in his treatment of the story, Soja bypasses Borges's pessimistic appraisal, theorizing Thirdspace as an optimistic space where new and exciting creative syntheses become possible across a wide-ranging disciplinary spectrum:

> As we approach the *fin de siècle*, there is a growing awareness of the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence. And this three-sided sensibility of spatiality-historicality-sociality is not only bringing about a profound change in the ways we think about space, it is also beginning to lead to major revisions in how we study history and society. (Soja 3)

In a sense, then, the disorder, confusion, and unrest at the core of the novel correlates with the original, more nefarious, Borgesian understanding of that simultaneity. Whereas Soja views Thirdspace as auspicious and harmonious, a space in which anything and everything goes, Pedro's experience of it shows how burdensome it can really be. Pedro is devastated by the burden of the infinite and incessant ruminations that play out in his mind. This reversal acts in a similar manner as my suggestion, in chapter 2, that Marc Augé's rosy theory of non-place becomes intolerable to the title character of Lucía Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*. There, non-place becomes a space of painful and introspective self-diagnosis in which Bea takes stock of her life, leading to an eye-opening assessment that teaches her to deal better with other people and ultimately sets her on the road to a new beginning as a stronger person.

Pedro's self-assessment in Thirdspace, however, is not as productive as Bea's in non-place is. The last few lines of each novel show a huge difference. At the end of his journey, Maestre's protagonist has achieved nothing. He does not learn from Thirdspace. He is stuck there in a circular journey. Bea, in contrast, travels a heroic journey and returns to where she left—Madrid—a changed, better person. Pedro does not learn from his travels but retains the patriarchal views of his childhood, as Isabel Estrada suggests in

her reading of the novel. Estrada reads his character as a closet misogynist who refuses to completely disavow a system he claims to despise. Thus, she believes that despite the fact that Pedro stays home while Elia provides an income, he nonetheless retains the archaic view that woman are subservient to men:

> . . . el hombre se ha adaptado a nuevos tiempos en los que la igualdad sexual es un hecho. Sin embargo, la adaptación es harto incompleta porque en algunos casos la desinhibición viene acompañada de una reacción agresiva. El descontento del sujeto masculino consigo mismo se canaliza por medio de la violencia. . . . Se observa, así pues, tanto un incipiente cambio en el plano emocional como la persistencia de patrones de conducta agresiva tradicionalmente asociados con el género masculino. Este modelo dual incluye a la vez cambio y estatismo. (Estrada)

That view stems from a patriarchal ideal he has heard repeated throughout his life. An example of this is the comment one of his uncles makes about *la mili*, which suggests that it is a coming-of-age experience, the completion of which makes a boy into a man: “En la mili te haces un hombre con dos cojones y cuando sales te comes el mundo . . .” (Maestre 16). In the uncle’s eyes, the community service that Pedro explains is a stand-in for *la mili* could never substitute the patriarchal ideal embodied in military service. Therefore, the uncle finds it rather strange that Pedro has opted out of it:

> . . . el Miguel . . . mi tío, a bocajarro me pregunta si no he hecho la mili sabiendo que no, y yo, sabiendo que voy a ser la víctima de su payasada de hoy, . . . le respondo que voy a hacer la objeción de conciencia, que es, yo diplomático a más no poder, pues como la mili pero ayudando a drogadictos, o en los montes vigilando para que no haya incendios, y él, no sé, eso suena a mariconería . . . (Maestre 15–16)

Pedro would make himself the object of even further ridicule were he to reveal to his uncle Miguel that he is unemployed and living off his girlfriend. These actualities add up to extreme embarrassments since, on a fundamental level, he agrees with his uncle but is too passive to live up to his own ideals.

In light of a childhood entrenched in patriarchy, the fact that Pedro executes the role of homemaker does not mean he accepts post-Franco gender equations. No matter

how much he claims that the gender reversals encased in his romantic and domestic arrangement with Elia are progressive, there are telltale signs that he does not believe that to be true. If we believe Estrada, he is angry about and emasculated by this domestic function, as his use of patriarchal language indicates:

> Es significativo que Pedro represente a una generación que rechaza instituciones patriarcales como el ejército pero al mismo tiempo continúe utilizando estructuras lingüísticas íntimamente ligadas al machismo más recalcitrante. Coexisten, por lo tanto, actitudes contradictorias dentro de los propios individuos que rechazan estructuras anacrónicas pero son incapaces de liberarse de ellas completamente. (Estrada)

Pedro's choice of words illustrates his distaste for the domestic role the novel affords him, one that he considers a threat to his masculinity. It puts his antiquated thinking on display for all to see. He views the world through an obsolete lens. Perhaps this is why he often argues with Elia and Mesca, characters who embrace post-Franco progressiveness, and with his mother and father, who fully uphold patriarchal tradition at the opposite end of Spain's contemporary social spectrum. Spanish society has long positioned the domestic space as feminized. The distinctions in gendered space were very clear under Franco. But after the dictator's death they begin to break down. Whereas Bea and Vania are victims of this change, Pedro's attitude toward domestic space is an example of how it operated under dictatorship.

The manner in which the protagonist fluctuates within a pre- and post-Franco society suggests that conditions on the ground in contemporary Spain have reversed the male role of breadwinner, and the female role of homemaker. Pedro does the cooking, the cleaning, and the laundry, while Elia brings home the bacon. Oftentimes, however, he outright neglects those duties in favor of wallowing in laziness and self-pity. In that sense, he is stuck between a changing society and his desire to revert back to the way things were. His conservative reflex runs counter to the changing nature of the world in which he lives; it drives him deep into a state of solitary unrest.

Pedro fulfills a traditionally feminine role—that of the caretaker of another person—not only in his domestic arrangement with Elia but also in the volunteer work he completes at a daycare in the capacity of a volunteer carrying out the *objeción de conciencia*. Outside of Elia and his friends from back home, the only significant relationship Pedro has in Alcoy is with Jaime, an autistic child he cares for there. Jaime's disease traps Jaime inside of his head. He cannot verbally communicate with the narrator, who nonetheless makes headway toward drawing him into the real world through the use of gestures and other nonverbal methods of communication. Through his work with the boy, Pedro proves that he has the ability to connect with others at least in some situations, which is evident in a joyous reunion between the two after Jaime is absent for several days on a family vacation.

The mutual affection Pedro and Jaime demonstrate suggests that the protagonist recognizes how much his unpaid work at the daycare affects the life of another person. The progress he has made with Jaime implies that Pedro is not likely to abnegate the legal responsibility he has to finish the *objeción de conciencia*. He would not go to such great lengths to help Jaime if he were thinking of violating the law by leaving his assignment. In a comment directed to Jaime, but more as an aside to himself, he says:

> . . . no me claves las uñas, trátame bien que tenemos que vernos todas las mañanas cinco días a la semana, menos mal que las tardes las tengo libres para buscarme algún curro, porque si te digo la verdad me la he jugado viniéndome a hacer la objeción a Alcoy . . . ¡gracias por darme ánimos! . . . (124)

Still, he has dreams in which he gets arrested for *insumisión* (desertion) even though he shows the authorities all of the relevant paperwork to prove that he is actively completing the daycare assignment. In his waking hours, he never fails to fulfill his duty, but the dream disquiets him. These fears surface despite the fact that the protagonist has done nothing to attract legal attention. The panic of being caught breaking the law precludes any inclination he might otherwise have of doing something wrong. His paranoia derives from an indeterminate sense of state surveillance hanging over his head, watching

whether he goes to the daycare on a daily basis in order to carry out the tasks he has been assigned by the state.

Pedro is paralyzed irrationally by the fear that stems from an uncertainty of knowing whether the authorities are watching every move he makes. He lacks the courage to challenge any form of authority, even an official request that his *objeción* be transferred to another town—Onteniente—where Elia has been offered a job. Instead, he stays in Alcoy like a prisoner without the ability to appeal his sentence, in order to see his work at the daycare through until it is set to end. In this sense he is, as Michel Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*, caught up in a power system of which he is the ultimate bearer:

> In view of this, Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. (201)

The original design of the panopticon—an obscure watchtower observing adjacent prison cells—functioned because subjects could not discern the presence of a guard in the tower. In other words, the panopticon instilled doubt in the prisoners' minds as to if and when the authorities were watching them:

> The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad; in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. (201–02)

This constant fear of being caught breaking the rules made it a powerful disciplinary mechanism.

Maestre's protagonist, like the others I study in this dissertation, experiences a similar fear of mysterious and unidentified forces in his midst. He does not dare breach the terms of his *objeción de conciencia* because the state may—or may not—be observing his movements, checking whether he attends the daycare. Thus, the state subjugates Pedro, making him comply with its directives through intimidation. His fear

helps explain why he builds a relationship with Jaime, because the state may or may not be watching, so he may or well make the best of it. He internalizes state surveillance so much that he irrationally fears getting caught up in it.

Unable to overcome the irrational anxiety of leaving Alcoy, Pedro is thus stuck in a space where his chances of finding a job are slim to none. Elia's income is the only means of economic sustenance at his disposal, which impacts his sense of self-worth. He becomes unmoored both from his surroundings and from himself. With no job and little chance of getting one, he feels inadequate, emasculated, and cut off from the rest of the world:

> . . . el que no se para a hablar con nadie pues a nadie conoce en esta ciudad en la que vive cinco meses y no ha hecho un puto conocido, y peor aún, en la que estará diez, quince meses, y no podrá deshacerse de la dentelladas de esa soledad tan diminuta que parece de juguete, pues ése, sí . . . (Maestre 9–10)

The compulsory civil service required of the *objeción de conciencia* reduces the amount of time Pedro is available to work full time, which makes his task of finding a job a difficult one, and thus adds to his hopeless economic dependence on Elia. In a sense, then, the *objeción* pushes him further into a disquieting mental plane. He quickly retreats into an inner shell where his depression alternates with frustration and anger as it builds into a rant, the book-length monologue that makes up the text of Maestre's novel. Thus, the narration lets loose a disorderly stream of private thought that mimics a frenzied state of mind.

Throughout the novel, Pedro suggests that he is the type of person who should thrive off of the close-knit community in Alcoy, which is similar in size to the one in Elda. Alcoy seems to fit the bill of what Pedro considers the ideal city, one that is neither too big nor too small:

> . . . lo ideal para mí sería una simbiosis de las dos, y Elda, con sus 60.000 habitantes, por cierto, 20.000 menos que Alcoy, y con todas sus carencias garrafales, se acerca a ser una pequeña gran ciudad, eso sí . . . (Maestre 79)

Pedro tries to make the best of Alcoy. He expects that in time he will get to know the local residents, but even after living there for more than a year, he cannot claim even one local acquaintance. He experiences a dearth of neighborly connectedness in another community that is just as insular as his own. Like Bea in Edinburgh, he feels like an outsider.[40] He has not gotten to know the neighbors in his apartment building, or in the town. He knows only their idiosyncrasies and gripes about them constantly: ". . . la rubia de bote del segundo siempre en la cocina, . . . las omnipresentes persianas bajadas del quinto donde seguro que hay un cadáver, . . . la cotilla de tercero . . ." (11). The same may be said of the townsfolk he runs into on a daily basis:

> . . . a ver qué conductor me toca?, ¡hombre!, si es Jesús Hermida, también hubiera podido ser Nicolás Cage u otro que no se parece a nadie y le presto menos atención . . . meto el bono en el aparato ése y hace click, y miro la hora en el reloj de enfrente, siempre la misma, quizá esté parado o quizá lo esté yo . . . (155–56)

In Alcoy, Pedro is isolated from the casual acquaintance of people other than Elia, with whom he routinely fights when she arrives home after a long day of work. He also bickers constantly with her about minor irritants, such as not calling the plumber to request that the leaky faucet be repaired, or simple tasks like making the bed after he wakes up in the morning. The protagonist mulls over events such as these with such frequency that he begins to doubt whether Elia really is the person with whom he wishes to spend the rest of his life: ". . . estoy confuso, te quiero pero no podemos seguir así, y con esto no pretendo decir nada definitivo sino que, estoy confuso, cada dos por tres discutimos . . ." (132). His presence in their home is a solitary one, where deep, inner despair has the opportunity to run unchecked. He seethes with rage toward the people and circumstances that force him to stay in Alcoy, but he is too scared to take corrective action, as confrontation entails the need to own up to his fear. Pedro prefers to just keep

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40. A noteworthy difference between Bea and Pedro is that Bea chooses to leave Madrid, whereas Pedro would prefer to remain in Elda.

things the way they are, rather than stir the pot with Elia. It is easier for him to maintain the status quo than to work hard to improve his circumstances. He bottles things up because he does not know how to adapt to the changing circumstances of his and his generation's lives and expectations:

> . . . me veo un poco grillado, menos mal que escribo y eso me desahoga, que si no a más de uno le habría cortado el cuello, o sea, a mí mismo, pero . . . no soy capaz de matar ni a una mosca . . . (135)

The dormant rage Pedro feels toward the people around him in Alcoy makes them his neighbors in terms of location, but not in terms of human solidarity. They are bound to each other by culture, tradition, and acquaintance but remain anonymous to Pedro because he chooses to know them only by generic description. The novel suggests that the lack of social intimacy the protagonist experiences in Alcoy is not an attribute of the town but rather the result of an isolating retreat into the depths of mental cacophony. It is therefore reasonable to still think of Alcoy as an "anthropological space," the ideal Marc Augé sets up as the antithesis of non-place, a space of (international) transit, one of solitary mental cogitation, or both at the same time. Pedro is scared to act on his violent urges, so the violence festers in his head without release. He regularly suppresses anger, rage, and violence with rhetoric and inaction, feigning composure when he is really fuming on the inside. Thus, his character represents a larger social crisis, that of a young adult struggling unsuccessfully to find his own place in the world.

The novel positions Pedro—and by extension the males of his generation, for whom he stands a representative model—as expendable members of a society that would be better off without them. Pedro, like his best friend Vicente, does not define his social and professional roles in unique ways. Both are aspiring teachers and authors, but neither has earned a teaching license or has successfully published the book that each is in the process of writing. We expect adult men who enter the workforce for the first time after graduating from college to leave a mark on society with new and exciting careers in

innovative fields. A career in business or technology, for instance, would have offered these young men greater chances of adapting to Spain's new and rapidly changing democracy. But their choice of profession—teaching high school—though a necessary and noble choice, is a more traditional path. It is also a gendered career, one mostly entered by women. Moreover, because they do not consider branching out into bigger cities where there are greater opportunities to fulfill vital professional capacities, they are left with limited options. I believe Pedro, Vicente, and the men their characters symbolize hold Spain back more than they help the nation evolve. Their characters are indicative of what the future holds in store for their entire generation.

Between the Province and the Present

As the novel begins, Pedro discovers that his grandfather did not stop his uncle Paco from sexually abusing his mother when she was younger. Even in scenes where he speaks about other sources of his fear and fury, the anger Pedro harbors toward his grandfather sits in the background:

> . . . diciendo, mama? pero ¿qué me estás diciendo?, ¿me estás diciendo que el tío Paco abusaba de ti? ¿me estás diciendo eso?, ¿Cómo que te tocaba?, ¿te tocaba cómo?, pero ¿dónde?, ¿qué quieres decir? . . . ¿y el abuelo?, ¿qué hacía el abuelo?, ¿el abuelo no hacía nada? (9)

This imaginary exchange further illustrates how fear and fury are juxtaposed in the novel. The protagonist wants more than an acknowledgement of the abuse: he wants to debase his *abuelo* by painting him as a Nazi and a war criminal, someone who has stripped away his mother's identity in the same villainous manner that Hitler and Milosevic adopted in their targeting of whole populations.[41] Pedro's fury inflates his family's personal tragedy to an international level:

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41. At several points in the narration Pedro paints his grandfather as a terrible villain who terrorized his mother. He not only calls him a Nazi but also equates him with Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic, Serbian leaders convicted of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia contemporary to the novel's narrative year.

> . . . venga, abuelico, te ayudo?, te he querido tanto, ya tienes que seguir tú solo, te he querido tanto, tanto, Pedrín, porque toda la vida me he sentido, me he sentido, sigue, no te pares, ya casi está, me he sentido, sigue, no te pares, ya casi está, me he sentido culpable, culpable de haber sido un nazi cabrón con tu madre, ¡lo has dicho, abuelo!, por fin te has quitado la máscara, tienes que decírselo a mi madre . . . (Maestre 96)

Pedro disparages his grandfather at the same time as he remembers the older man as a loving, caring, and influential part of his life. He is furious at him but loves him nonetheless. But he suppresses the rage with panic at the thought of dishonoring the memory of this heretofore beloved relative. His fear and fury therefore coalesce continually, not only here but extensively throughout the novel:

> . . . me he metido en un callejón sin salida, . . . pero a pesar de todas estas estratagemas yo soy muy cuco y cuando lo de fuera me dice, ¡a moverse!, yo oigo, ¡acción, a rodar!, y represento mi papel a la perfección, que toca ser amable, pues yo me derrito de amabilidad, que toca ser cabrón, pues yo me derrito de cabronería y de gusto . . . (Maestre 26)

This contradiction acts as the glue holding the entire narrative together, as Maestre suggests in the dedication of the novel: "A todos los que salen porque han hecho muy bien el papel que les he escrito, sí, abuelo, a ti también." Alluding to this psychological conflict even before the narration begins helps explain the weight of the contrary emotions Pedro experiences in relation to his grandfather, which explains why he expresses himself loquaciously in the inner narrative reflection of the novel, but reticently when recreating the conversations he has had with other characters. According to Eva Navarro Martínez, Pedro's testimony of the abuse reclaims the moral rectitude that was lost when his grandfather did not address it, which, we are led to believe, allowed it to continue for quite some time. Martínez Navarro believes that the grandfather's decision not to end the abuse is the consequence of his living in a society entrenched in *machismo*:

> Pedro Maestre dibuja a la madre del protagonista como a una pobre mujer, que arrastra una experiencia horrible: el abuso sexual de su propio hermano ante la impasividad de su padre. Maestre hace una crítica a cómo estos problemas se esconden en la sociedad, fruto del machismo, por supuesto; y de anteponer prejuicios como el honor y la apariencia frente a la denuncia abierta de los abusos. (180)

The protagonist's insistence on reversing this logic illustrates a dramatic reversal of the traditions associated with life under Franco. Pedro is a traditionalist living a modern, nontraditional life. His character's attempt to be progressive and traditional at the same time encapsulates a move to post-Francoism when the rigid norms of masculine and feminine social roles began to change. Men began to more fully participate in the cooking, cleaning, and caring for their children at home; women began to enter the professional workforce in greater numbers than had been afforded to them under dictatorship.

Pedro identifies an egocentric current coursing through the veins of Spain's youth in 1995, which reflects the loss of unified resistance to fascism around which Pedro's *abuelo* and other young people like him rallied in their push against Franco decades before during the Civil War (1936–39). But since then, he explains, there has been a radical reversal in the revolutionary spirit that once motivated the youth of the nation to band together in common alliance. Thus, the issue at stake here and in the rest of the novel is how he can reasonably corroborate both historical intervals:

> . . . es muy fuerte lo que está pasando ahora, ¡coño!, . . . lo que no me explico es cómo los jóvenes no nos rebelamos como cuando no se tenía nada y nos conformamos con defender egoístamente las migas de comodidad que nos quedan, deberíamos unirnos y salir a la calle a luchar por algo como en la guerra civil para no tirar cada uno por su lado esperando que nos lo den todo hecho. . . . (20)

Although only twenty-five, the narrator speaks from the illogical position of a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, someone with direct experience of the sweeping changes in the youthful mindset that have occurred throughout the more than five decades between 1995 and when the Spanish Civil War took place. He claims a comprehensive knowledge of both periods, even though vast gaps in geography and history make it only possible to have learned about the earlier period from his grandfather or another elderly person. He strings together incongruent parcels of geography and history without ordering them in a linear fashion. His peripatetic transcendence compresses space and time.

The protagonist seems torn by older ideas and worldviews than those guiding his life in 1995, the year the novel takes place, shortly before incumbent Prime Minister Felipe González of the PSOE lost the national elections of March, 1996 to José María Aznar of the PP. Pedro establishes this political backdrop as the setting of his narration through a reference to the capture and arrest of Luis Roldán (Maestre 64). In his role as the former civilian head of Spain's paramilitary police force, the Guardia Civil, Roldán was convicted of economic corruption, of funneling funds earmarked for renovating military buildings and accepting kickbacks from contactors who won bids to do the work. He became very rich as a result of these activities. Roldán claimed his fortune was the result of lucrative investments of his father's taxi-driver pension, which the authorities did not believe. Convicted in 1993, he fled to the Philippines, where he was arrested and extradited back to Spain in 1995:

> The two principal scandals [of González's tenure] surrounded the activities of the former Governor of the Bank of Spain, Mariano Rubio, and the former head of the Civil Guard, Luis Roldán, who escaped and went into hiding after being arrested on suspicion of fraud and perversion of the court of justice. (Heywood 726)

This and other scandals during González's tenure—as well as measures of privatization and deregulation of the economy that led to massive unemployment—made people question whether the Spanish Socialists were being true to their name:

> The achievements of the government of Felipe González are not our topic here, but inasmuch as *Matando dinosaurios* is a portrayal of life in contemporary Spain, one can but feel a tremendous sense of sadness toward a country which has been unable to overcome the pitfalls attributed to the former regime. (Larios Vendrell 923)

Pedro, however, does not yearn for a renewal of that revolutionary zeal. His stance is not one of hope for a lost past, as Vania's is in Gabriela Bustelo's *Veo veo*, but one of bitter resentment toward the social and political conditions of the present:

> . . . hoy en día las influencias que vienen desde el otro lado del océano vuelven en nave espacial y el eclecticismo de culturas es el signo de los tiempos . . . la forma de vestir como la

> música no tienen el valor virginalmente revolucionario de antes . . . que la sociedad de consumo se lo traga todo, incluso lo molesto o desagradable lo hace digerible, vendible. . . . (103)

Pedro is not aware of the decayed ideology Vania has seen right before her eyes. He only knows that strangers show more interest in helping themselves than in helping him find an honest job, but he is oblivious to the fact that they do not owe him any such assistance. He believes that his numerous petitions for work to schools and business go unanswered precisely because people do not go out of their way to advertise work clearly or to make professional connections on his behalf. Pedro's frustration shows when he berates a prospective employer for advertising a position that has already been filled. In a similar fashion, none of the private academies where he fails to find work even offer to pass his name along to students who might hire him as a private tutor. He is shocked, as well, to learn that it costs money to place an ad for tutoring services in *El Gratis*, believing that the publication should not be titled as such if it actually charges to publish. The negative portrayal of Pedro's job search can be seen as a criticism of his view of the people in Alcoy as individualists. He expects others to work on his behalf, even though he does not contribute to the common good of the community.

Existential Stasis as a Larger European Trend

There is no amnesty for Pedro in the concluding pages of *Matando dinosaurios*. They are as sudden and anticlimactic as the rest of the narration. In them, he still grapples with the obstacles and uncertainties he has been contending with all along. The lack of direction in his social and professional lives bears down on him unrelentingly. Still unemployed and at odds with most of the people in his life, he repeats the same fears and anxieties at the end of his story that he does countless times during the course of the novel. Borges may flee the Aleph he sees in Daneri's basement, but Pedro is stuck in a cycle in which he endlessly rethinks the past, the present, and the future.

This repetition traps the protagonist in what I have been referring to as an existential stasis: an agonizing cycle of confusion about who he is and what he wants to

make of his life. It also insinuates that the entirety of *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* offers only a limited glimpse into a more extensive, ongoing subjective crisis. Because the narration begins midstream—with Pedro discovering his grandfather's ambivalence about the sexual abuse of his mother—and ends midsentence, with him stirring up a shallow conversation between Elia, Vicente, and a number of other characters in Alcoy, Maestre implies that Pedro remains perpetually and indefinitely trapped in an interstitial non-place. This is why there is no definitive start and end to the narration: Pedro's fear and fury sideline him indefinitely in a space—Thirdspace—where his mind runs in vicious circles.

The novel shines a light onto the psychological prison of his private catastrophe: we see him wither away on the inside all the while remaining calm and collected on the outside. But Pedro is unaware of the reader's intense scrutiny. In this sense, we are the voyeurs Michel de Certeau describes—city planners that, in his estimation, peer down from high above on an improvised network of human activity (92). Maestre gives the illusion of his protagonist operating within a just such a network. The interactions Pedro has with his best friend, Vicente, his girlfriend, Elia, their roommate, Sergio—even the landlady the couple encounters when first moving to Alcoy—all support the mirage of an apparent network. But the internal space of the human mind is not one of the spaces de Certeau takes into account. He essentially assumes that how people outwardly interact is all there is to the story. My reading of this novel, however, has shown that Maestre actually privileges internal over interpersonal space. The solitary distress Pedro narrates thus stands in for the network de Certeau places at the center of his theory.

The protagonist is thus imprisoned in a space he does not wish to inhabit. The only method of escape is to acknowledge that his backward thinking, which is at odds with the changing nature of post-Franco society, underpins his entire crisis. It is not surprising that Pedro is so oblivious of his error since, as José Manuel Lechado explains: "La modernidad aún tardaría siglos en llegar a la cada vez más lejana y pequeña España

profunda" (Lechado 33). Thus, the novel points to the creeping incursion of modernity into the narratives of Spain's Generation X. Newer attitudes about money, marriage, and friendship that surface in large cities such as Madrid and Barcelona spread much more slowly to the coastal periphery where Elda and Alcoy are located. Still, the pace of their arrival is much quicker than Pedro and the demographic he represents would like. Pedro arrives in Alcoy wrongly expecting to replicate the principles he learned in adolescence that have made his character a relic of times gone by. His stark discovery that modernity has already begun to creep into the town is evident in the difficulties he has persuading other people to help him find a job, or to make him feel welcome. This lost sense of communal purpose sets the general attitude of the community he knew growing up apart from what he discovers it to be in contemporary Alcoy.

Pedro had expected to replicate the Elda of his youth in Alcoy. His understanding of his hometown, however, is as flawed as his views on everything else. The fact of the matter is that modernity has reached Elda. He simply cannot see the changes there, because his view of the town is embroiled in an adolescent nostalgia not based in adult reality. Pedro holds fast to the conservative notions of his upbringing, ones that maintained rigid roles for men and women. He tries in vain to reproduce the role he imagines for himself based on an upbringing that supported the values Franco instilled in the nation, which are now at odds with contemporary society. His partial acceptance of the gender reversals encapsulated in the move to a post-Franco society is forced upon him by unemployment and economic necessity. In that sense he remains chained to the sinking traditions of a conservative and patriarchal past.

The limited instances in which he partially adapts to the changes Spain undergoes—such as when he speaks out against his grandfather's ambivalence or when he criticizes the way his father forces his mother to shop for groceries—alienate him from family and the people closest to him:

> . . . ya sé que el día de compra es el viernes a las 7.30 a 10, ni un segundo menos ni un segundo más, porque hay que cumplir el horario a rajatabla, y que no se olvide algo imprescindible como aquella vez del aceite, que si no hasta el viernes siguiente no se puede freír la carne o aliñar la ensalada . . . (183–84)

Pedro berates his father for the strictness of his grocery shopping routine and unwillingness to adapt to life's changing necessities as they emerge. His parents, who came of age under dictatorship, do not realize the distancing effect consumer society has on their relationships with their children.

Ironically, Pedro is also inflexible and insists upon imposing his own needs onto others. This social and ideological ambivalence is precisely what prevents a timely escape from his incarceration in Thirdspace. He seethes with anger at a society that does not accept the system of values he holds as a standard. Santiago Fouz-Hernández explains the same ambiguity in relation to Carlos, the protagonist of *Historias del Kronen* (1994) as: "classic male insecurity caused by rapid and perplexing changes in Spanish society and, in particular, the consequent blurring and re-definition of gender roles" (88). Like Carlos, Pedro and the young men he represents are overwhelmed by dizzying social changes everywhere they turn. They lack the knowledge and ability to adapt to the changes occurring in the spaces in which they live. Fouz-Hernández further explains this failure in light of sociological research that began in England but applies equally to Spain:

> . . . Recent sociological research has shown that the so-called 'New-Laddism' (in this case a British term but also of broader applicability) is really 'a cover for a growing subculture of men who feel impotent in the face of rapid economic and social upheavals'. The New Lad, who is supposed to be 'a tough, arrogant, sexy and self-reliant replacement for the effeminate New Man of the 1980s' is, according to a recent study, 'a bit of a weed [. . .] out of his depth in the midst of the rapid changes affecting society at every level [. . .] a vulnerable man-child [. . .] unprepared to take responsibility for [his] actions'. (88 qtd. in Williams et al., 267)

Maestre's story shows that while the pace of change in Spain may be slow and arduous, it does arrive. It comes about at a different pace in different places, whether

rural or urban. Mesca's move to Madrid and Elia's relocation to Barcelona illustrates what Pedro refuses to see: that the provincial ideal he longs for no longer exists in any city large or small. Pedro still yearns for the security blanket he associates with adolescence. In that sense, the state of crisis he is in represents a larger crisis at the national and international levels. The sentimental response of New Laddism demonstrates that while the somewhat recent Franco dictatorship makes Spain seem unique, it is in reality part of a larger trend across Europe. *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* shows that the space of Europe is no longer as it had been, and its citizens, whether young or old, male or female, will have to keep up or risk being left behind, mired indefinitely in a distant past.

CONCLUSION: RATS IN THE CITY

In a scene from Manas's *Historias del Kronen*, Manolo, the bartender of the Kronen bar, ridicules Carlos's refusal to go camping in the countryside: "—Pues me pensaré lo de la acampada, aunque no creo que vaya. —A ti eso del campo no te va, ¿eh? Eres una verdadera rata de ciudad" (89). This scene illustrates how the allure of urban space overpowers Carlos, the prototypical Generation X character who, like a caged rat, cannot fathom leaving the city even for a few days. He has become addicted to scavenging its spaces for frivolous exhilaration, just as a rat forages the hidden crannies of the city for food. So too Káiser, of *Ciudad rayada*, allegorizes his drug-addicted clients in Madrid as rats trapped in a cage: ". . . los farloperos son como ratas que se pasan el día dando vueltas a la rueda loca de su jaula sin moverse del sitio, sabes" (92–93).

Indeed, far from being limited to the works of one author, the rat appears as a totem in the other works of Spain's Generation X that I have discussed. Káiser, Bea, Vania, and Pedro all scurry capriciously in and between Europe's urban corridors, leading their lives by scavenging at the margins of inhabited space. All four authors—Mañas, Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre—turn to the image of skirmishing rodents as a means of representing their characters and the worlds they inhabit in order to cultivate a common theme: the ways in which the small and powerless can shirk the state's scopic power. Each of the characters in these stories believes he or she is being watched, even in the absence of contravening evidence, so they infiltrate the city's byways and clandestine spaces in order to elude state-sponsored surveillance, revealing themselves to be like rodents scuttling about the intricate metropolitan spaces of the real world.

The four novels on which I have centered my discussion equate the conditions of life in bustling European cities of the 1990s to a physical environment in which sewer rats entombed in big cities feed off refuse and debris. They depict urban space as entirely

dehumanized, a place where the only rule of thumb is "every man for himself." It is for this very reason that Pedro of Maestre's *Matando dinosaurios con tirachinas* assiduously avoids Madrid, characterizing its space as one in which the people's saturation in filth has made them stink of a "gray odor" emitting from the sewer: ". . . las ciudades grandes te deshumanizan, sus habitantes se convierten en ratas, si hasta desprenden un hedor gris de alcantrilla . . ." (79).

Pedro purposefully avoids the big-city life that so influences Káiser, Bea, and Vania, showing his distaste for an urban condition wherein people destroy each other in a rat race to rise above the pack. In the Valencian periphery where he lives, he chooses isolation over engagement. But his preference for provincial space prevents him from finding sources of employment available in larger cities. Pedro uses his *objeción de conciencia* as an excuse to tether himself to an obsolete and incompatible vision of his place in society. Being wedged between a predilection for the provincial living of his past and the economic necessities of his present thrusts Pedro's mind into a threatening Thirdspace, where his volatile emotions and negative thoughts spiral out of control. He stays trapped in that space for the duration of the novel, never learning the lessons or acquiring the tools needed to escape. Even in more conservative spaces where Francoist ideals still predominate—or were predominating during Pedro's childhood—the effects of capitalism cannot be evaded by this member of the Generation X. At twenty-five, Pedro reveals himself to be too young to remember the indignities of the past but not mature enough to throw off its dangerous legacy.

With Maestre's book we begin to understand the effects of urban space on the lives of young people who remain conflicted outside of the capital and the other major metropolitan centers. Even in Alcoy, where life is slower and no discernible subculture exists to provide Pedro with diversion and opportunity, the environment still proves antagonistic to his image of a provincial world like the one he knew growing up in Elda. In some ways, the challenges Pedro faces in *Matando dinosaurios* are not unlike those

that affect the lives of the other Generation X characters I examine. Alcoy does not act as a sub-rosa space like that of Madrid—in which Káiser, Bea, and Vania overcome their problems—so Pedro has fewer and narrower paths of evasion at his disposal. Nor can he run to another country, as Bea does, because of the legal commitment to finish the *objeción de conciencia* in Alcoy. Maestre thus pushes his protagonist into an existential worst-case scenario. His mental skirmishes in Thirdspace, especially his fear of punishment by the state for not fulfilling the terms of his *objeción*, thus stands as an analogue to Káiser's, Bea's, and Vania's frenzied evasion of surveillance in the city.

Maestre's novel proffers the argument that the populations of big cities thrive off of the misery of others. He and the other writers I study depict economic survival as more important than physical survival, which is evident in all of the protagonists' use of extreme violence as a way to ensure their continued ways of life. Like rats who attack when cornered, they also fight their way out of conflict. The fact that characters are prepared to kill illustrates their authors' estimation that post-Franco Spanish life has deteriorated into one in which the use of death and violence are the only ways to ensure self-preservation. As the inheritors of that culture, the members of Generation X that came of age in the 1990s survive economically by exploiting the misery of others.

At the heart of the novels lies a depiction of state surveillance as a mysterious, ominous, and invasive threat to dissident users of late twentieth-century urban space, those who would be defined by the state as dangerous because of their predilection for the illegal and disruptive: buying, selling, and using drugs; attacking and killing one another; playing their music too loudly; and threatening public safety. In an attempt to evade the authority of the state, the characters—rodentlike—infiltrate the dark and concealed spaces of the urban landscape, where they then face newer and more threatening forms of physical and emotional danger. Just as small animals hide in the cracks and crevices of old buildings, or in dumpsters and city sewers, eluding human detection, so too, the denizens of late twentieth-century Spanish literature occupy bars,

concerts, pedestrian spaces, and private residences—the only spaces available to them in which to avoid the state's infiltrative power.

The masters of aboveboard space in these novels, portrayed as recondite agents of the contemporary Spanish state, seek to exterminate Generation X because its members subvert the notion of Spain as successfully prospering as a post-Franco democracy. These novels paint sub-rosa spaces—where criminals and other elements of the subculture flourish—as more anarchic but more genuinely representative of real life than those of an aboveboard world that seeks to annihilate their threat to its hegemony. The state treats dissident youth characters as if they were vermin, and the characters respond by eluding its detection with corresponding measures of evasion. They use every means at their disposal to defend themselves and their ways of life, the most common of which is to delve into prosaic spaces of the city where the focus of surveillance blurs as if from a distance. Nevertheless, as we have seen in these novels, an escape into the underground spaces of the European metropolis causes new challenges with regard to these characters' uses of that clandestine space, by triggering physical, emotional, and economic hardship from the other users of the subculture. Thus, these characters move through an intricate web of space in order to prevent the state from seeing what they are doing.

The state's scopic power is dangerous because of the lengths to which it forces the powerless to go in order to maintain autonomy and some mastery of their own spaces and lives, both of which are uncertain for Vania Barcia, the protagonist of *Veo veo*, because she fears that she's being watched even in her own domestic space. Surveillance has forced Vania underground, into the nocturnal spaces of her past. The forms of surveillance she encounters are more invasive, malignant, and penetrative than those which the characters in the other novels experience. They extend deep into her life: hidden cameras in the walls and furniture of her home and in her automobile, as well as spies tracking her movements through Madrid and into the spaces of her return to the nightlife there.

These unwelcome infiltrations are seen as a farther protrusion of the state's scopic range than in any of the other narratives I have read. Bustelo therefore offers an interpretation of the lengths to which the post-Franco State is prepared to go in order to eliminate threats to its grip on power, suggesting that it drives Vania to a possibly delusional psychosis, forcing her to believe that every move she makes is being watched in every space she goes. Bustelo does not affirm whether Vania's suspicions are objectively real or a projection of her alcohol- and drug-induced paranoia; either way, her perception of surveillance punishes her for not assenting to Spain's evolution into a late-capitalist state. In contrast to the other novels, however, *Veo veo* takes its message home: it speaks to more than just the aboveboard and the sub-rosa spaces of the city and extends to the sanctity of one's home and interiority, which is violated by a corrupt and all-powerful state that sees and hears all.

Vania's frantic movements through the spaces of Madrid's nightlife, executed in a fraught and desperate attempt to catch the supposed spies watching her, demonstrates an addiction to the city similar to that of the characters in the other novels. Like them, she scurries about urban space, revisiting the bars and clubs of her past. Like Carlos, she too refuses to leave the city, cancelling a trip to South America in order to spend her two weeks of vacation from work in Madrid, a space that punishes her, but one within which she feels compelled to remain in order to solve the mystery of who or what has targeted her, and why. The frantic movements of Vania's counteroffensive against the city can thus be read as those not only of a scampering rodent but also as of a ferocious rat that claws and bites its way out of danger. Bustelo's protagonist stands alone among the characters depicted in the novels I investigate in resisting the state using proactive tactics, such as hiring a private detective, Peláez. But the more she fights back, the closer her quest for answers draws her to the edge of self-destruction.

In Lucía Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*, the title character, Bea, also confronts the threat of annihilation—both physical and emotional—from urban space.

But unlike Vania, who stays in Madrid and fights back against the city, Bea leaves Spain's capital for Edinburgh, Scotland, in a desperate effort to attain the buildings blocks of a stronger identity. Nevertheless, she encounters a similar set of negative circumstances abroad as the ones that prompted her to leave Spain in the first place. Whereas Bea's addiction to Mónica eventually drives her childhood friend away, Cat's addiction to Bea inspires the protagonist to return to Madrid in order to pick up the unsolved pieces of her past. Thus, in either space—Madrid or Edinburgh—Bea loses track of her own identity. Her addiction to taking on the identities of the people with whom she lives thrusts her into a metaphorical outer space somewhere between the planets, just as urban space encloses the other characters like animals spinning wheels in their cages.

The satellites that survey the city from outer space in Mañas's, Bustelo's, and Maestre's narratives are reassigned to an image of intergalactic debris in Etxebarria's *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*. Their useful lives ended, they roam outer space as unwanted refuse. Nonoperational satellites thereafter remain freely floating up in outer space without either direction or purpose, and without any chance of ever serving a useful purpose again. Urban space, in the same way, unmoors Bea from her sense of self, which is why her mind so easily inhabits an interstitial space—while in transit between the two European metropolises—that gives her an opportunity to mull over the past. Changing cities, she learns, has not served Bea as much as has her movement between the two, which takes her into a non-place that, according to Marc Augé, manifests not only as an airport or bus terminal but as a cognitive plane into which one's mind retreats while in transit between two loci of international or long-distance travel. Bea's presence in the airport and her passage through customs control figuratively and symbolically check her mind out of national space and into a metaphysical plane of higher thinking. The lack of acquaintance with other passengers there affords her an opportunity to take stock of what she has done to repeatedly drive people away and destabilize her identity.

In the non-place of her pensive brooding, she flashes back over the previous four years in a frantic effort to determine the source of her strife and to figure out what she must do to fix it. Her search for answers corresponds to a self-diagnosis; it can be said that the interstitial non-place of her transnational voyages from Madrid to Edinburgh and back again provides a diagnostic workspace in which she might become more self-aware. Like a rat that sifts through trash until it finds something to eat, Bea figuratively drifts among interspatial wreckage and debris, a path that ultimately prove fruitful. Her satellite's cemetery orbit ends with her bearing the blame for sacrificing a relationship with Cat to Mónica's ghost of the past. Bea resides in Scotland for four years, but while there her mind remains high above the earth, uncommitted to Madrid, Edinburgh, or any other urban space.

Káiser, in comparison with Bea, possesses a much stronger sense of who he is and what is his purpose in life. He has no interest in soul-searching as Bea does, but he wants to ascertain the quickest way of neutralizing the threat against his life in Madrid and thus return to making money there through his lucrative enterprise. He demonstrates that his ease of movement between the aboveboard city and its sub-rosa spaces enables him to evade the state at the same time as it furnishes him with a source of economic livelihood. He sells drugs in the spaces he has found to be impervious to the state's bird's-eye—but shallow—vista of the city.

Narcotics trafficking is shown to be the quickest and easiest way for him to make money, and, more importantly, the only method at his disposal. By quitting school, he has both limited his options and chosen the anarchic life of a rat that must always run and hide from the authorities, from clients, and from competitors in order to survive. As a representative of his generation, Káiser presents a bleak portrait: his lack of a career path suggests a constricted future scavenging a living off of the drug addicts of society. There is no point in getting an education, the lifestyle of his character implies, because no other opportunity will be available to him other than the one he has chosen. His choice of a

profession therefore reflects the reality of Spain, which suggests that by the 1990s, young people had turned away from any sense of communal feeling, leaving them dependent upon and concerned about only themselves. They will work together when it suits them, as when Káiser and Gonzalo work with el Barbas in order to sell cocaine, but they also fight each another for every last crumb, as Káiser's murder of Gonzalo shows.

Like a rat, Káiser is physically small, a characteristic commented upon by Gonzalo, who describes him as an *enano* (a midget). So too is he congenitally violent, thus demonstrating the rodent-like qualities needed to traverse the porous division between the aboveboard and sub-rosa layers of the city in order to evade the state and, simultaneously, exploit its space for his own financial ends. The fact that he, Bea, and Vania are able to relatively easily carry on their narcotics-related activities suggests that Spain in the 1990s was not able to contain its mushrooming drug problem. For these characters, especially Káiser, the greatest concern is not arrest and prosecution but the threat of underhanded entrepreneurial competitors. In fact, Káiser's fear of the policeman, el Barbas, has to do not with being arrested but with being beaten or killed. This suggests that the state's executive mechanisms are ineffective: they enable the 1990s youth characters to move nomadically from place to place, foraging off the good will or desperation of others while on the run, as a rat does perpetually in order to survive.

Whether consciously or not, Mañas, Etxebarria, Bustelo, and Maestre pick up on an image of rodents used long before their time in Luis Martín-Santos's novel *Tiempo de silencio* (1962). In contradistinction to the use of rats as the symbols of social disintegration in the novels of the late twentieth-century, in Martín-Santos's novel mice symbolize the transformation of Francoist Spain. These small rodents figured prominently, if only as test subjects, in the protagonist's attempt to develop a vaccine for cancer, an emblem of the national condition. Identified as the "ingress of modernist practices into Spanish narrative" by Joan Ramon Resina ("Madrid's Palimpsest" 56), Martín-Santos's novel allegorizes physical cancer as the disease of Franco's political

system. The mice that Pedro, the novel's main character, uses to test his serums thus serve a double purpose: rodents become both the disposable subjects of the Francoist regime and the instruments of change that could lead to a cure in the future.

In the novel, Pedro, a scientist with dreams of winning a Nobel Prize, needs a new supply of mice on which to conduct his experiments. Amador, an assistant at the institute where he works, offers to get him more from a cousin, Muecas, who has been breeding them in the shack where he lives. Out of curiosity as to how the mice survive the severe conditions there in the *chabolas* (slums) of Madrid, and to alleviate his concern over whether Muecas's daughters have contracted cancer from being bit while keeping the baby mice warm in their breasts, Pedro ventures into the *chabolas*, just as Káiser does in *Ciudad rayada*. Unlike Káiser, though, Pedro is thoroughly astonished by the living conditions he witnesses in the neighborhood where the mice are being illegally and dangerously bred. Martín-Santos's representation of these *chabolas* in Madrid suggests a great deal of similarity with what his Generation X counterpart describes of the filthy environment where Chalo lives with his extended family.

A crucial difference, however, lies in the fact that while Mañas's protagonist nonchalantly describes the space as if its repugnancy were part and parcel of daily life, Pedro is shocked by what he sees because he has been otherwise sheltered from that kind of squalor. Nevertheless, both enter the space as matters of sheer necessity: Káiser in order to solicit Chalo's help in preparing for his necessary, if temporary, exile from Madrid, and Pedro out of curiosity and concern for human health.

Káiser's reaction to the gypsy *chabolas* has lost the tone of wonder and exoticism that Pedro exhibited in *Tiempo de silencio*, where class distinction is much sharper. In Pedro's total lack of experience in the slums, the author has painted a portrait of his country as blinded to the social conditions under which it operated. But those social and economic realities became more visible over the three decades separating Martín-Santos's and Mañas's portrayals of urban space. While physically still separate from the

main sections of Madrid, the gypsy slums do not represent an unknown, barbaric world to the Generation X protagonist whose postmodern rendering of the division between them is more ambiguous. The social groups who would have been shielded from them—represented by the comfortably middle-class protagonists of the novels I discuss in the chapters of my dissertation—now find themselves identifying to some degree with some of those excluded groups. Thus, these two novels use rodents as symbols with which to gauge Spain's national condition. Yet the goal of Martín-Santos's protagonist is a noble one, whereas Mañas's is utterly self-serving.

Although rodents had been the means through which a new and frightening world was exposed to Pedro in 1962, for the young people inhabiting the novels of the 1990s, they stand as a quotidian reality. In the 1960s, a character had to procure or go out looking for actual mice; by the 1990s, Spanish youth have become the rats. This transformation suggests that the national condition has moved beyond all possibility of repair because the people at the top of the political and social hierarchy who benefit most from Spain's growing wealth and prestige, like Bea's parents or Carlos's wealthy father and millionaire uncle, grow rich while the young adults entering society on their own for the first time cannot even find jobs. Not having employment robs them of their sense of self-worth and enlarges the generational chasm between them and their parents, who are members of the same generation as the young scientist, Pedro, in Martín-Santos's novel. Rather than actually finding a cure for the "cancer" of Francoism, that generation simply waited it out and then turned its back on the noble goal of improving society for everyone, focusing instead on enriching its own.

As children of that generation, the cohorts of the Generation X view the world as having failed them, and they turn only to themselves as reliable sources of security, resulting not in confident self-reliance but in an unstable independence and extreme egocentrism. But it is Generation X for whom the dizzying changes that Helen Graham and Antonio Sánchez describe have become a reality, one that the earlier generations do

not bother to understand, which widens the gulf between members of Generation X and their parents and grandparents:

> To describe Spanish culture as schizophrenic is not mere postmodernist affectation, but an attempt at defining the disorienting effects on Spaniards' consciousness of the speed and the complexity of the changes that have radically altered their society over the last thirty years. (Graham and Sánchez 408)

That dyspeptic view of the situation in Spain is reflected in the novels produced by Generation X writers. The relatively recent transition to democracy brought on expectations that a society more tolerant and egalitarian than the one Franco had allowed would arise. But the characters these authors created do not believe that their country has undergone drastic improvements in the years since Franco died, despite the fact that they are not old enough to remember how bad things really were under dictatorship. In their minds, social conditions act against them: they do not know or care how far Spain has come since the dictatorship ended. The present tense is all that matters to them. Their understanding of the past is limited to a vague and distant time when people's lives were allegedly much worse than theirs, as Carlos's father suggests when he erupts at his son for not wanting to do something productive with his summer vacation:

> No te entiendo. ¿Por qué no aprovechas el verano para leer algo?, ¿o para hacer algo práctico? Vosotros los jóvenes lo tenéis todo: todo. Teníais que haber vivido la posguerra y hubierais visto lo que es bueno [. . .] (Mañas, *Historias* 66–67)

According to this line of reasoning, there is little reason to exert any real effort to improve one's life since no amount of personal toil—building a career or investing in a personal relationship—will change its course. This interpretation suggests that any conceivable future is predetermined, which explains why Carlos and others like him feel trapped between an incomprehensible past and an unbearable future. Moreover, a lack of faith in their parents' understanding of the world fosters in them a sense of self-reliance that is not laudable so much as necessary in the face of the uncertainties their lives hold.

Coupled with a narrow view of the world, their utter self-determination anchors them in an unstable present.

Rats of Democratic Space

Behind the international limelight set ablaze by Spain's participation in the Olympics, the World Exposition, and other events of the year 1992 stood a tacit implication: that the root cause of Spain's unfavorable image in the world had been Franco, with his death ending nearly four decades of protracted misery. As my reading of Spanish Generation X novels has shown, however, democracy was not the panacea people had hoped it would be; in fact, as these narratives show, it opened up previously unimagined spaces into which the novels—channeling the cultural imagination—injected murder, drug trafficking, prostitution, and erratic pranks and behavior. Democracy and late capitalism, they declare, did not improve the mood and prospects of those it was supposed to help. Thus, no amount of hype regarding Spain's post-Franco transformation could hide its postmodern condition.

As one case of political corruption after another came to light, it quickly became clear to those not ensconced in the corridors of power that their nation's top officials were more interested in pilfering the public purse than in strengthening social and economic infrastructure. A case in point: unemployment, a topic much commented upon in the novels covered in this dissertation, remained among the highest in Europe, stubbornly stuck at record levels even while a gush of foreign capital made politicians and businessmen rich. The young Spaniards of the 1990s were left to forage off their crumbs like rats, fighting a raw struggle for survival that separated their goals from the larger aims of Spain's newly democratic society. Their experiences, as portrayed in these novels, demonstrate a departure from the premise that the death of General Franco cured a social and political desolation. Instead, the Generation X characters' personal

experiences—refracted through urban space—show that Spain was suffering from a more innate ailment for which no easy cure was to be found.

In *Tiempo de silencio*, the hope for a cure for cancer points to a cure for the national disease of Francoism. In the shared narrative of Spain's Generation X, however, Francoism is long gone but no hope exists for a cure to the newer evil of democracy. In all of the Generation X novels I have investigated, characters use space as the means with which to solve serious threats to their safety and identities; regardless of their reasons, they slide and slither into the spaces of urban subculture just as rats squeeze into spaces that humans strive to prevent them from entering. In so doing, the humans outfox the panoptic forces watching their every move, just like rats that scurry into the shadows.

In the spirit of Martín-Santos's imagery, the Generation X narratives this dissertation studies show that Francoism was not the cancer everyone assumed it to be; rather, it was a congenital disease. Their representations of Spanish life in the 1990s illuminate how the pestilence of dictatorship later metastasized into corruption, which prevented Spain from learning to govern itself. The grand narrative that had been imposed since the start of the dictatorship, which stated that life would be better absent Franco, is therefore proved false. By reanimating the image of the rodents from *Tiempo de silencio* within the spaces of the late twentieth-century city, the authors of the 1990s stake their claim to a generational critique of all that has led to their moment in time.

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