Hispanic Research Journal LIVE

Spanish cinema of the 2010s: Back to Punk and other lessons from the crisis.

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Abstract: This article focuses on how Spanish cinema production has echoed the neoliberal Eurozone crisis of 2008 in mainstream (large and medium size productions), and in its "opposite" the independent sector, and how the effects of the crisis can be glimpsed (within the independent sector) on music (mostly Punk) documentaries which are not ostensibly about the economy, current politics or even the present. I suggest a course through the different ways in which Spanish cinema has been touched by the crisis: through the films of "crisis cinema" to those that focus on the 1980s and early 1990s and its youth led and Punk inspired musical revolutions, via films whose strategy is to address the 2008 to 2017 period in an indirect manner, or to retreat to the pre-2008 past. My ultimate aim is to prove that this seismic change to Spain's society has forced a re-engagement with the present and the past.

Este artículo se centra en cómo la producción cinematográfica española se ha hecho eco de la crisis neoliberal de la eurozona de 2008 en el cine para mayorías (producciones grandes y medianas), y en su "opuesto" sector independiente, y cómo se pueden vislumbrar los efectos de la crisis (dentro del sector independiente) en documentales de música (principalmente Punk) que no son ostensiblemente sobre la economía, la política actual o incluso el presente. Sugiero un recorrido a través de las diferentes formas en que la crisis ha afectado al cine: a través de las películas de "crisis del cine" a las que se centran en la década de 1980 y principios de 1990 y las revoluciones musicales dirigidas por jóvenes e inspiradas en el punk, a través de películas cuya estrategia es abordar el período 2008 a 2017 de manera indirecta o retroceder a un pasado anterior a 2008. Mi objetivo final es demostrar que este cambio sísmico en la sociedad española ha creado un nuevo compromiso con el presente y el pasado.

Keywords: Spanish cinema, crisis, mainstream cinema, Punk documentaries, la Movida

Palabras clave: Cine espanol, crisis, cine para mayorias, documentales sobre Punk, la Movida

> [T]he crisis discourse has become intrinsic to the very idea of Spanish national cinema, acting as a smokescreen covering up structural problems ([Luis Alonso García] 2003: 8-9), such as the sector's over dependence on subsidies lavished by the first democratic government, the proliferation of non-viable production companies and the shrinking of television investment into film production since 2002 – all key factors in an ailing industry that suffers from endemic de-capitalization and atomization (Ansola González 2003: 50-51). In short, the current discourse of the crisis simply exposes more sharply the historical ghettoization of Spanish cinema within its domestic market, condemned to occupy the position of cultural "other" with regard to its primary target audience (Castro de Paz and Cerdán 2003: 8). (Kourelou, Liz and Vidal 2014, 144)

Imagine a word cloud formed from writing on Spanish cinema. Crisis would be one of the biggest, boldest and closest words to its centre. Researchers on Spanish cinema have been long weary of the word "crisis". As Kourelou, Liz and Vidal explain in "Crisis and creativity: The new cinemas of Portugal, Greece and Spain', in the quote that prefaces this article, the neoliberal Eurozone crisis of 2008 came along and made the "other crises" recede into the background but not disappear. As they argue, we cannot interpret how the Eurozone crisis affected Spanish cinema without keeping the "crisis mode" as a backdrop since one effect of the brutal cuts of 2012 has been to strip bare a system that was defective and highlight that Spanish cinema production has not been the first choice of its supposed "natural" audience since the end of the 1970s, in spite of or, precisely because, of the adjective "national" attached to films.[1]

The "crisis mode" asks us to put a lot of stock in headlines such as "Ayudas al cine español: el diagnóstico de un enfermo terminal" (Reviriego 2012), "Silencio…no se rueda" (Sardá 2013) and "El cine (español) ha muerto" (Vayá 2013), published as cuts brought ailing cinema production to a total halt.

> Una larga década de desgaste continuo que se refleja en el número de rodajes. A mediados de abril, en España se habían comenzado 28 películas, un 15% menos que en mismo mes del año pasado y casi un 50 menos que en 2011. Y eso que la industria aún arrastra proyectos aprobados hace dos o tres años (…). Pero en 2014, el parón puede ser brutal. (Sardá, n.p)

[1] "In the period 1970–5, the market share of Spanish cinema was greater than that of US films; in 1977, they balanced each other out; and from then on Spanish cinema would never come close to challenging US cinema's supremacy (José i Solsona, 1989)' (Palacio 2013, 475). Evidently, as Palacio goes on to argue in his chapter, the conditions in which the two film industries compete are unequal, but this factor cannot explain that supremacy by itself. Spanish film researchers have long explored cultural and historical reasons behind the fact that "[s]ólo un puñado de películas consigue conectar de alguna forma con los españoles" (Fecé and Pujol 2003, 64).

Radical cuts in state investment and changes in a financing model should translate into fewer films, as these words by Juan Sardá attest. But the resilience of producers is staggering and the "crisis mode" which made us fear for the amount of films being made, skewed our sympathies in the wrong direction, because as José María Álvarez Monzoncillo and Javier López Villanueva explain, the Eurozone crisis and the PP cuts have not meant that fewer films are made, but more (2016, n.p). Where, then, have cuts been implemented? The answer is in the production quality of these films and the conditions and work security of workers in the film sector.[2]

This article focuses on how Spanish cinema has responded to the crisis in mainstream films, how the crisis and the present have become subject matter permeating mainstream cinema of all genres. To do this, it is first necessary to distinguish between a "crisis cinema" in the way that Dean Allbritton speaks of, and those films where the crisis is more obliquely present. The former represent victims of the crisis directly, victims who gain some kind of revenge even in their misery:

> These films' perpetually scrappy protagonists, unlike many who are paralyzed by sensations of precarity, find recourse in unorthodox actions that theoretically undermine the institutions that have placed them in such states. When the bank, the banker, the capitalist at large are crushing one's potential for living out the "good life" as it has been imagined, the institutions must be brought down – albeit safely, on screen, and in a manner so surreal that it has likely lost any potential radicality. (2014, 104)

[2] "Bajan los costes de producción con la crisis, se hacen más películas más baratas, pero este descenso afecta a la calidad de los proyectos y de las condiciones de trabajo de la industria. Hay pocas productoras solventes que controlan el mercado." (Álvarez Monzoncillo and López Villanueva 2016, n.p)

Films of this type that Allbritton analyses (*La chispa de la vida*, Álex de la Iglesia; *5 metros cuadrados*, Max Lemcke and *Los últimos días/Els últims dies*, David and Álex Pastor) have medium size budgets, are produced by minor or medium size independent producers with some contribution from regional and national TV networks, and are distributed by smaller, independent companies such as A Contracorriente. Films from this category may have been received positively at festivals and obtained Goya nominations, but they have not received the full endorsement of the mainstream hegemonic film culture through Goya awards.[3] In contrast, films of sizable budgets with money from private television companies (Antena 3 and Telecinco, through its production divisions Atresmedia cine and Telecinco cinema, typically), sometimes working with larger, more established hegemonic producers such as Enrique Cerezo P.C., may pay attention to the crisis, but do not tend to point fingers at the system. They avoid commenting on institutions directly by focusing on corrupt individuals within the system, positioning these rotten apples to bear the brunt of the blame or ambiguously atoning for their past in some manner. Another strategy to avoid openly criticizing neoliberalism is setting the plots in the years before the crisis. Some major box office successes and Goya winners since 2008 have seemingly sidestepped the crisis altogether by looking to the past. For instance, and focusing on the Best Film Goya winners of late, *Tarde para la ira* (Raúl Arévalo, 2016) is set in 2007 (the year before the worldwide financial collapse), *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez 2015) has a plot that takes us to the years of early democracy when another crisis, that of Post-73, looms large, *Vivir es fácil con los ojos cerrados* (David Trueba 2013) is set in 1966, *Blancanieves* (Pablo Berger 2013), in the 1920s and *No habrá paz para los malvados* (Enrique Urbizu, 2011) focuses on a time around 2004.

As well as these responses to the crisis, I will examine in this article another sector of Spanish cinema that takes up the past in response to a crisis-ridden present. Recent, mostly independently financed music

[3] *Los últimos días* was Premi Gaudi to the best film not in Catalan language in 2014. As Allbritton admits in his study its science fiction plot makes it a film that "at first glance may not seem to be an example of crisis cinema in Spain" (2014, 111)

documentaries also focus on the late 1980s and early 1990s, and particularly on Punk and Nueva Ola movements. Notable examples are *El peor dios* (Alejandro Montes, Daniel Arasanz and Nico Tarela 2010), *Si yo fuera tú me gustarían los Cicatriz* (Jorge Tur 2010), *Venid a las cloacas* (Daniel Arasanz 2010), *Peligro Social* (Guillermo Tupper 2013), *Rock Radikal Vasco: La Gran Martxa de Los 80* (Begoña Atuxa 2013) and *De un tiempo libre a esta parte* (Beatriz Alonso Aranzábal 2015) to name a few. My argument is that these music documentaries do not allow audiences to take much of a respite from the present in comforting nostalgia, they engage with the crisis. Due to the specificities of the Spanish case, the 1980s and early 1990s are the times to go back to reflect on what went wrong in the process of democratization. From today's perspective, the process of transition is far from an unqualified success: it created blind spots and maintained inequality and privilege. For those who cling onto the teleological story of progress, modernization and Europeanization that paints the political, economic, social and cultural transition from the dictatorship as a success, retracing the past can lead to being confronted with the stories that were edited out and provoke a much-needed rethink.

Mainstream responses to the crisis

Starting with, the first group, those films we can consider mainstream, one response to the crisis has been to identify those responsible for the crisis and how workers, the mortgaged, and other debtors suffer. The subject matter might include *ladrillazo*, banking crisis and *rescate*, political and corporate corruption, tax evasion, ecological scandals and the council's implication in these. The plots focus on housing scandals, youth unemployment, precariousness, and other fallout from the crisis.

A good place to start a survey of such films is *Mi gran noche* (Alex de la Iglesia 2015). Here is a mainstream film that addresses the precariat within the film industry itself, by making its protagonists those members of the acting profession most exposed to the crisis: the *figurantes con o sin frase* (extras with or without speaking parts). The plot of *Mi gran noche* revolves around the filming during October 2015 of a

New Year's Eve TV Special for 2016. One of the main characters is the extra, Jose (Pepón Nieto) who is sent by the unemployment office as a last minute replacement for another extra accidentally killed on set. Jose and several other *figurantes* are part of a fake on-set audience for the musical numbers and dance routines, required to produce on demand laughs, applause, kiss each other and shout in turn by the floor manager (Luis Callejo).

Mi gran noche's script shows that de la Iglesia's and screenwriter Guerricaecheverria's interest in the juxtaposition of modernity and anachronism continues, as does their penchant for plots in which microcosms of the cultural industries, particularly cinema and television, and their workers, are represented (see also *Muertos de risa* and *800 balas*). The film directly depicts precarious working and exploitation and, significantly, the lack of protection of actors, which is aired openly, and not only in the feature film itself. The DVD release of *Mi gran noche* includes a *Making of* (Miguel Romero) feature that introduces a moment of "reality" among the fun and games of the behind-the-scenes documentary. During one of the breaks in filming the fake audience, a small squabble seems to break out among actors. One old-timer among the extras speaks of a lack of professionalism, of people who are not being grateful for what they are given. Then a younger actor – who in fact appears in *Mi gran noche* in the background and without lines – commands the scene when she complains:

> Yo soy actriz profesional, pero con esta puta crisis, pues [aunque] tenemos una formación y una experiencia que ya nos acredita para trabajar como profesionales, al final se inventan también lo de la figuración especial que no debería de existir sino [que deberíamos ser] actores secundarios.

We are led to believe that these lines are unscripted, just part of the documentary, but they also align rather closely with the conditions experienced by the *figurantes* (extras) in the fictional film. The lines encapsulate a form of exploitation that worsened in the Spanish film and television industry during the crisis. A category of extra, *figurante con frase o figurante especial* was created. These workers are normally paid less, in view

of the fact that you do not need to be a qualified actor for the role. But the crisis forced even qualified actors into these worsened pay and conditions. The first collective agreement for this sector was achieved in 2016, and now *figurantes con frase* enjoy improved protection (See Prado Campos, n.p). *Mi gran noche* reflects the crisis in the oblique manner that de la Iglesia favours, which is not by adopting the strategies of realism but by practicing realism at one remove by featuring centre-scene these workers who are among the most exploited in the industry. This is not the first film where de la Iglesia finds an indirect route to Spain's reality. In the context of Spanish cinema and its institutions, de la Iglesia may be seen as a staunch defender of cinema as entertainment but the fact is that social reality intrudes into his films frequently, as was the case in earlier films:

> If *800 balas* participates in the traditions of social realism, then, it is at an angle to the orthodox conventions. Cine social (…) normally proceeds on the assumption that the filmic text is saturated with the real (…). *800 balas* does not take this saturation approach but instead presents us with shards of contemporary social reality, shards which are positioned awkwardly next to filmic material best classified as generic (…) (Buse, Triana-Toribio and Willis 2007, 156)

Mi gran noche comes with its own "shards of contemporary social reality'. Its gleaming, fake studio mise-en-scene and orange-tanned, glitter-covered presenters and dancers welcoming 2016, are sealed off in a studio while outside picket lines are fighting the firing of workers in the TV channel in riots against heavily armed police. At one point, the demonstrators push and rock the lorry containing the programme editing suite, with chief editor Rosa (Carmen Machi) and assistant Amparo (Carmen Ruíz) inside. The lorry is toppled on its side. The signal does not stop, and the show must and does go on. Outside the sealed-off, make-believe New Year's Eve special, mayhem and crisis rock the nation.

Even if it is not his reputation, De la Iglesia is one of those mainstream directors who feels interpellated by the assumed historical call to reflect and react to Spain's problems in their films, a mandate that goes back as far as the Salamanca Conference of 1955 (although demands for "realism" go back much further -- see

Triana-Toribio 2003, 54-7). He has interpreted this thorny mandate of late with tragicomedy in *La chispa de la vida* (2012) as well as with the relentless and uncontained comedy of *Mi gran noche*. *La chispa de la vida*, the story of Roberto (José Mota) an advertising consultant who in his youth came up with a famous slogan in publicity (for Coca-Cola) and is now out of work. He is a father of two teenagers and married to Luisa (Salma Hayek). Dejected, he returns to the site of his honeymoon in Cartagena and falls into a ~~R~~oman archaeological site, where a wound in his head immobilizes him, pinning him to the ground as any attempt to move him will result in death. From this situation, he wants to create publicity to generate profit for his family. This tale of a man who goes to desperate measures to ensure the welfare of his wife and children is representative of these mainstream crisis-inspired films that have mostly national backing. It included among its producers Double Nickel Entertainment in association with Canal+ España (owned in the past by Telefónica and Grupo PRISA), and the support of the Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO), Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA), the Región de Murcia (where Cartagena is located) and Televisión Española (TVE). Ambitious projects such as these require well-known casts. In the case of *La chispa*, Hayek plays Roberto's Mexican wife, and Mota himself is half of the popular comic duo, *Cruz y Raya*, in a cast that includes Santiago Segura.

Films backed by smaller, independent mainstream production companies such as Aliwood Mediterraneo Producciones S.L., have confronted aspects of the crisis and its victims more directly (see Allbritton 2014). *5 metros cuadrados*, for example, reflected the housing crisis precipitated by unethical constructors who erected defective buildings, where buyers bury their savings and get nothing in return. This thriller also had a popular cast (Fernando Tejero [from Antena 3's series *Aquí no hay quien viva*], Malena Alterio and Emilio Gutiérrez Caba), but elicited a modest response at the box office and in spite of 15 Goya nominations, did not get any awards, surprising perhaps for a film that won major prizes at the Festival de Málaga de Cine Español.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the years of *cine social*, Spanish film production supposedly responded to Spain's reality openly in its subject matter, with films that were labelled *películas necesarias*. The literal translation of this phrase is "necessary films" but a translation that captures the essence of these words would be "films that are hard to watch but that must be made'. This is significant since film cultures interpellate newcomers and old hands alike; no one develops her career in a vacuum. Film institutions such as the Academia and Spain's film festivals with their awards, specialized magazines such as *Cahiers du cinéma España-Cuadernos del caimán*, with its reviews and articles, and film schools and courses guide filmmakers through particular avenues of what is desirable and valuable and what is not. Carrying on with this historical responsibility between 2008 and 2017 means that the EU bailout to failing Spanish banks and the brutal neoliberal austerity must also lead to films that must be made'. So what are these films? Who is making them and financing them? And what do they look like?

Among those films like de la Iglesia's which had a mainstream theatrical release and audience, there is a variation in approach to the subject matter and which precise elements of the "crisis" to focus on. First, there are genre films with substantial backing from TVE, Atresmedia or Telecinco cinema. Since the generic turn of the late 1990s (see Jay Beck and Vicente Rodríguez Ortega 2007, 2-3), mainstream producers favour thrillers and dark comedies and audiences and award givers have responded. From 2008, these thrillers have touched upon systemic judicial, political, corporate and economic corruption (of the present and the past) and generated the most profitable and critically acclaimed films nationally. For instance *No habrá paz para los malvados* about a corrupt policeman (José Coronado) who thwarts a terrorist attack, was a profitable and a critically acclaimed mainstream triumph at the Goyas in 2012. A corrupt cop with a dark past, investigating a series of brutal murders of women, is one of the main characters of *La isla mínima* (Alberto Rodríguez 2015) co-produced with Atresmedia and with a large budget for a Spanish film of the time, an estimated 4m euros (As imdb listed on its website). This film won the Best Film Goya Award in 2015. The winner of the Best Goya has never been a film with a victim of the crisis as a hero/heroine or a story that can be labelled as "crisis cinema" or even, crisis-inspired, at least in the period up to 2017.

Two big-budget features of 2015 and 2016, both co-produced by private TV channels have come closer to pointing a finger at neoliberal banking practices and political collusion with the banking sector that enabled large-scale scams (such as the scandal of the *Preferenciales*).[4] Atresmedia backed *El desconocido* (Dani de la Torre 2015) a "thriller social" (Fidalgo 2015, n.p), set in La Coruña, where a grieving widower whose wife committed suicide after losing all their savings to bank fraud, intimidates a bank employee while he is driving his children to school. *Cien años de perdón* (Daniel Calparsoro 2016) meanwhile, is a bank heist movie set in the centre of Valencia, the capital city of a region infamous for its political corruption, partly produced by Telecinco cinema. But in spite of the tantalising potential for criticism, both films' denouement avoid a direct critique of the system by apportioning blame on individual circumstances. Netflix's first production in Spanish also explored the theme of corruption in *7 años* (Roger Gual 2016), but in this case turning to corporate tax avoidance, a problem that made headlines frequently in the fallout of the crisis. Gual, like de la Torre and Calparsoro, followed in the footsteps of Monzón and Urbizu into the political/social thriller with popular casts: in this case, Paco León plays the main character.

If between 2008 and 2017 mainstream genre filmmakers were sometimes interested in those problems that made the headlines of Spain's press, does this mean that the mainstream was uncovering the social issues troubling Spanish society? Were they doing the job of directors linked to *cine social* who, before 2008, in the words of Ángel Quintana "querían evidenciar un cierto deseo de retorno a lo real y una cierta idea de compromiso frente a algunos de los problemas del mundo en que vivían" (2005, 16). What about Fernando León de Aranoa (director of *Barrio* [1998] and *Los lunes al sol* [2002]), Iciar Bollaín (*Flores de otro mundo* de [1999] and *Te doy mis ojos* [2003]), or Chus Gutiérrez's (*Poniente* [2004] and Retorno a Hansala [2008]

[4] Clients of Cajamadrid and Bankia were sold financial products who were unsuitable for them, with insufficient information so that the clients could understand the risks they were taking (See EFE 2014, n.p)

), directors responsible for the "nuevo modelo institucional del cine español" of the early 2000s (Quintana, 16), and suppliers of *películas necesarias* of pre-crisis years?

One way of explaining this shift of the mainstream into the strategies of *cine social* is to consider that the crisis became unavoidable; dissatisfaction permeated everything, and changed cultural agendas gradually from 2008 to 2011. In 2011 the 15-M movement and the *Mareas* protests and demonstrations, ubiquitous throughout Spain, forced mainstream culture to face the situation. The 15-M indignation was reinforced with the addition of other movements worldwide which "transformed modern political culture" (Cameron 2014, 1). The distress of the population could not be ignored. Moreover, consider that since 2005, and increasingly by the end of the first decade, critics such as Quintana, Carlos Heredero and Antonio Santamarina, and others linked to *Cahiers du cinéma España-Cuadernos del caimán*, had been denouncing *cine social* for its lack of relevance and sham realism, and these accusations have become more widespread in film cultures. *Cine social* was repeatedly criticized as a timid and somewhat clichéd response to issues which seemed to be priorities of the PRISA group media and scandals that could embarrass the PP, criticisms that became part of the irreversibly weakening of the socially engaged cinema model of the 1990s and early 2000s. The praiseworthy realism was pursued elsewhere, by independent filmmakers such as Mercedes Álvarez, Isaki Lacuesta, Jose Luis Guerín, Fernando Franco, Javier Rebollo and Jaime Rosales, and others who were not so compromised by well-known political adherences and closeness to the institutionalized sectors of Spanish film culture (mainly the *Academia*). Perhaps wary of these accusations, of a relentless berating from the right-wing media, and of the cultural tectonic shift that was 2011, some key names of *cine social* became for a short while documentary directors, working in smaller, engaged projects related to consciousness rising among those affected by the crisis: for example, Iciar Bollaín *En tierra extraña* (2014), tells us how migrant Spanish youth in Edinburgh created the association 'Ni Perdidos, Ni Callados*'*, and offers a wide-ranging reflection on migration. Among the producers for this project are Tormenta Films and Turanga Films, both small producers of films with social interest, with contributions from TV and SGAE. Similarly, León de Aranoa made *Política, Manual de instrucciones* (2016) (with

producers Mediapro), which traces the development by Podemos of a new collective political consciousness and strategy.

After this detour into the smaller ventures of former mainstream directors of *cine social*, we have to consider that there are also some mainstream crisis comedies. One was a harbinger of this "crisis cinema" albeit in an unorthodox manner. Santiago Segura's *Torrente 4: Crisis letal,* (2011) is the first film to look at the crisis directly (as its title attests). Before *La chispa de la vida*, and Pedro Almodóvar's crisis comedy, *Los amantes pasajeros* (2013) (see Delgado 2016, 252-268), the migration farce *Perdiendo el norte* (Nacho G. Velilla 2014) and *Tenemos que hablar* (David Serrano 2015), *Lethal Crisis* was doing something that does not seem to sit well with the reputation of the franchise as mindless escapism. As has been argued elsewhere:

> The *Torrente* franchise […] makes no claims to belong to the traditions so valued by the Academia and the Goyas. However, to accuse the franchise of not engaging with reality simply would not hold. The entire franchise, and more precisely *Lethal Crisis*, far from neglecting Spain's present, addresses it explicitly. The title of the film is the first clue to this direct acknowledgement of current reality. The film may eschew a sober engagement with the reasons and consequences of the economic crisis, much in the same way as the comedies of the 1960s and 1970s did not delve into the fraught and uneasy relationship between Spain's Catholic morality and the challenges that the opening to modernity and Europe were creating for the characters in the films mentioned above. But exactly as the plots did in those films, *Lethal Crisis* negotiates through humour the effects of the economic difficulties and touches, albeit in a vague manner, on the very foundation of the collective financial difficulties by representing a Spain in which corrupt elites wield power and possess wealth. (Triana-Toribio 2016, 83)

Another comedy that acknowledges the origins of Spain's crisis woes is the small but popular *El mundo es nuestro* (Alfonso Sánchez 2012), in which local collusion of regional bankers and politicians, religion and tradition come together when the plot of a couple of small-time crooks to rob a bank coincides with a ruined employer's plan to blow up the office. It all takes place during Seville's Holy Week. The film was a success at the Festival de Málaga, and the first Spanish crowdfunded film (with a contribution from Canal Sur TV).(see *Días de cine* 2012). Two further small, independently distributed (by A Contracorriente) crisis comedies deserving mention are *Carmina y revienta* and its sequel, *Carmina y amén* (Paco León 2012 and 2014) which within their picaresque stories of clever plotting against the system by Andalusian Carmina, address how precariousness affects and blights working class women's lives particularly.

In reviews and articles about some of these films aimed at mainstream audiences, critics wonder whether these stories framed or focused on the crisis are relevant enough. In his review of *Mi gran noche* for *The Hollywood Reporter* after its opening at San Sebastian Jonathan Holland mentions in passing that the film is hardly subversive (Holland 2015). Allbritton levels similar charges against other crisis films (2014, 104). Perhaps the real reason for raising these concerns is that the crisis has devastated too many real lives and futures and we cannot avoid the feeling that films in these circumstances could and should do more to denounce. And yet, these large-budget productions could hardly be the ones to condemn and in doing so, bite the hand that feeds, particularly knowing that the large production companies are part of media conglomerates associated with banking and construction companies. Spanish cinema's response to Spain's reality has always been and will always be affected by who pays for content to be made. More importantly, mainstream cultural production and Spain's film establishment made compromises in the first place to secure state protection, making it impossible for it to be meaningfully critical of the crisis. As Amador Fernández-Savater explains, mainstream culture had to disconnect itself from political engagement to be supported after 1982. In the words of Germán Labrador Méndez, paraphrasing the former thinker:

> Paradójicamente, la victoria del PSOE constituye el comienzo del final de la cultura que hizo posible su victoria. Su desactivación redujo la capacidad de resistencia colectiva, lo que facilitó que el Régimen del 78 no cumpliese las expectativas de cambio político transformador con las que había sido anunciado (2015, n.p.)

For cultural commentators, writers and philosophers since 2012 such as Guillem Martínez, who coined the term, there has been *un tapón cultural* (cultural stopper) imposed on what can be discussed in Spanish culture, in its media and cultural production in general, and particularly in its cinema. A cinema that arrived at the end of Francoism with a culture of resistance to the dictatorship was soon co-opted and institutionalized into the service of a particular kind of democratization (see Triana-Toribio 2016, 17- 35). This has weighed down Spain for more than three decades, as the collective writers of *CT o la Cultura de la Transición: critica a 35 años de cultura española* document in their collection. Bryan Cameron explains how this *tapón*

> [h]as obstructed the freedom of expression (both political and artistic) since the death of Franco. These ideas, rehearsed elsewhere by critics such as Patrick Paul Garlinger ("Sex Changes and Political Transitions," 2005) and Eduardo Subirats (*Después de la lluvia*, 1993), demonstrate that the promise of democracy in the late 1970s ultimately led to a falsified vision of a democratic state in Spain. (2014, 5)

The films I have discussed so far, mainstream because they pursue a mainstream audience and because they are funded and produced via mainstream strategies, are compromised from the start by this *tapón cultural*. And even though we are more aware of its existence, now that the crisis has re-awakened political consciousness in an older generation, by no small degree, inspired by the anger and indignation of younger citizens, we are very far from recovering the conditions in which culture can be truly subversive. Ignacio Echevarria observes:

> Quienes piensen que en la actualidad se dan las condiciones para que la cultura española recupere una actitud crítica, deberán considerar hasta qué punto las condiciones de producción de intelectuales y creadores rompen con los imperativos y las inercias a que están sometidas, por parte tanto de una industria cultural como de unos medios de comunicación que han eliminado radicalmente el horizonte de dicha actitud, como no sea en beneficio de sus propios intereses. (Echevarria 2012, 36)

Critics may be frustrated about a lack of subversiveness in cinema because some aspects of Spanish film cultures have pioneered prising loose this *tapón cultural* directly. I am not speaking of films, but of the sort of interventions made at the Goya award ceremonies of 2003, with the protest onstage against Spain's support of the invasion of Iraq, backed by the US and UK. As Amador Fernández-Savater explains (2012: 43), perhaps the most significant change that Spanish cinema brought to the CT was to pull the curtain back on the fact that the development of the film industry since the 1980s has been achieved by accepting a compromise with the government of the time, by restricting itself to certain topics and not others, by allowing it to be uncritical of power, disconnected with politics, switched off from its potential to question. When the award ceremony of 2003 brought to the media what was until then a carefully muted grassroots movement against the war in Iraq, a section of the film culture succeeded in blotting the copy book by doing what it was not supposed to: "La peculiar entrega de los premios Goya funcionó al principio de las movilizaciones como un verdadero aldabonazo: la crítica aparecía donde menos se la esperaba." (Fernández-Savater 2012, 43).

Responses to the crisis from *El otro cine* (those formerly known as '*independientes*')

As I suggested above, the most effective "cine de la crisis" and the most likely areas of film culture to fight to get this cultural stopper open must be independently financed (and with tiny budgets, like *El mundo es*

nuestro), and therefore, destined for the festival circuit. One such example that was particularly well-received is *Terrados* (Demian Sabini 2011), about the lives of highly-qualified unemployed young men (and one woman) who spend their time talking and smoking in rooftops in Barcelona. It was distributed widely though festivals and online and won a Premio Seminci del Público, Sección Punto de Encuentro *i*n 2011.[5] Blogger Robert Martínez Colomer comments on the significant link between *Terrados* and the 15-M movement:

> Rodada poco antes de que se iniciara la acampada del movimiento 15-M en Plaça Catalunya – finalmente el desencanto de los jóvenes se transformó en indignación –, *Terrados* es una buena muestra de cine necesario, aquel que no ignora los problemas de la gente y que considera que una película debe ser algo más que un mero entretenimiento; además, es el ejemplo de que una buena historia y las ideas claras compensan con creces la falta de recursos […], de tal forma que incluso recibió el premio del público del *Seminci* de Valladolid, que valoró su compromiso con la cruda realidad del momento. (2012, n.p)

As part of *el otro cine español*, these films "may represent a new lease of life" (Kourelou, Liz and Vidal 2014: 146) due to their mode of production and distribution. Their reach is hard to quantify, but their non-traditional channels allow them to dodge the cultural stopper. The films that respond to the crisis in their subject matter from the "free" and "alternative" *otro cine* may have theatrical release only in festivals, have been distributed via PLAT TV, Vimeo and other independent platforms exclusively, but they have their own

[5] Festival de Cine Español y Latinoamericano de Ajaccio, Viva, Spanish and Latin American Film Festival at HOME in Manchester, UK; Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, Nuov.o.Monde Festival Cinema de Rousset; Atlántida Film Festival; Festival Résistances de Foix, Cinespaña Toulouse Film Festival, Les Recontres Cinématographique de Cerbère, Festival de Cine de Bogotá, Torino Film Festival among others (See Moviement Films SL).

means to reach audiences through these and through channels such as YouTube or through file sharing. Among the most unequivocally crisis-centred are *Murieron por encima de sus posibilidades* (Isaki Lacuesta 2015), with a timely title that, as Jordi Costa explains, comes from the infamous accusation of one PP politician that the people were to blame for the economic collapse since they had "lived beyond their means'. (2015, n.p.) and *Hermosa juventud* (Jaime Rosales 2014), which focuses on youth unemployment and the current lost generation. Of this film, Jordi Batllé has praised its directness, its concentration on telling a present-day story: "es la obra más transparente y accesible de su filmografía, exenta de los radicales retos estéticos y estructurales de *La soledad*, *Tiro en la cabeza* y *Sueño y silencio* y de la atmósfera enfermiza de su memorable primer largometraje, *Las horas del día*. Es también la que respira más libertad, sin forzar ni densificar el tiempo fílmico." (2014, n.p)

Non-crisis films?

As already noted, recent Best Film Goya winners have avoided the crisis by focusing on stories set before 2008. This seeming fleeing from the present runs into serious difficulties though. Spain has a problematic, contested past that tends to produce divisive rather than unifying national narratives. The only available "democratic past" for retreating into starts in the early 1980s. The 80s and 90s play a key role in determining Spain's perception of its own history and identity and its relationship with the rest of Europe and the world. One way in which Spain (and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula), demonstrated its belonging to Europe and the world, leaving behind the isolation imposed by dictatorship, was through the adoption of youth subcultures such as Punk, and it is to that moment of connection with the world that many post-crisis music documentaries have returned. Punk works as a foundational moment of Spanish modernity. In early 2013, TVE broadcast key documentaries, as part of *Documentales* in La2: *Galicia Caníbal* (directed by Luis Montenegro and Jacobo Paz; produced by Filmanova S.L for TVE in 2012), *Rock Radikal Vasco*. *La gran martxa de los 80* (produced by K2000, for TVE), *Venid a las cloacas*, and their in-house produced *Frenesí en la gran ciudad* (Alejandro Caballero and Antonio Moreno, 2011). The channel claimed that:

> A través de material de archivo y del testimonio de muchos de sus protagonistas, los espectadores podrán recuperar esta parte de la historia de nuestro país en la que, coincidiendo con el paso de una dictadura a un nuevo sistema de libertades, se produjo toda una explosión cultural y musical. (La 2, documentales, 'Aquellas movidas')

In 2015, Beatriz Alonso Aranzábal, a participant in Spanish Punk/*la Movida* (keyboard in Los Monaguillosh), used interviews, stills of concerts, covers of fanzines, and photographs, to document the memories of the creative teen years of her peer-group, focusing on Madrid in the period between 1977 and 1984 in *De un tiempo libre a esta parte*. It focuses on telling a different story about the movement since "de la Movida madrileña sólo ha transcendido una parte, en el documental hablan muchos que no habían salido aún" (Alonso as quoted in Álvarez 2016: 38). The film is now available via Filmin.com. These documentaries were made available through these specially curated events as well as the already mentioned La2 and regional cultural television channels, YouTube, Filmin and Vimeo, and not in traditional film theatres. For instance, the Fundació SGAE in Valencia ran a season entitled "Quan Espanya va fer…Punk!!', with screenings between 1st and 13th July 2017 (Guillot, Eduardo 2017: n.p). Another free event where music documentaries were freely screened was in September 2016, when the "Asociación Vecinal Oviedo Redondo" held a series of out-door screenings, part of "Cine en la calle', bringing films to the "barrio antiguo". Oviedo's lack of cinemas has prompted a number of grassroots initiatives such as these. As well as the screening of *De un tiempo libre*, a trio played 80s classics (such as "Europa ha muerto" from the Asturian Punk/Nueva Ola group Ilegales, whose bass player Alejandro had died six months earlier) and there was a discussion about the movement in Madrid and in Asturias at the end with Fran Elías, from the group Modas Clandestinas, Luis Alonso, from Salón Dadá, Manolo D. Abad, critic and writer, and the director.

De un tiempo libre reminds us of the eloquent silences of *la Movida* (or Punk/Nueva Ola, as those interviewed prefer to refer to this time), of its members' "hedonist and nihilist focus on the present" (Tango 2005, 60) and rejection of political engagement (Foucé 2006, 30). The discussion after the film's screening in Oviedo was illustrative of a mood that has taken over, a nostalgia for the good old 80s and 90s (when most of the panel members and audience were young), tinged with guilt and regret from the middle-class generation who benefited from those times and reflected on the precarious conditions faced by youth today. It is no coincidence that critics and participants in these documentaries and the screenings have made the connection between what these films represent and the hegemonic story that we have been told about the transition, and which we now question. Here are the words of David Saavedra, who announces the imminent release in 2015 of *De un tiempo libre* and takes a detour to mention another film key to the critique of the CT, El *Futuro* (Luis López Carrasco 2013):

> 'El Futuro" […], recreación de una fiesta de estudiantes en un 1982 reimaginado desde la distancia, desde una visión difuminada por la memoria y desde una banda sonora imposible, que nadie podría escuchar en una fiesta en aquel año, como si se quisiera mostrar que el recuerdo de los 80 se ejerce desde un estado mental del presente. […] Todo esto que cuento a colación de "El Futuro" iría ligado a la crítica a la Cultura de la Transición y, por tanto, a la necesidad de volver a contar aquella historia desde otro prisma no oficial. Ésta sería, lo pienso ahora, la mayor especificidad del revival español del post punk, establecido desde unos parámetros sociales y políticos bastante diferentes a los que rodean a ese fenómeno a nivel anglosajón.

If culture became apolitical and accepted the muzzle provided by the state with its lavish funding, then perhaps the most effective forms of "crisis cinema" take us back and make us see the links between the promise of radical change that the explosion of Punk brought and which resulted in a disappointing continuity with the past, to question how this happened. As Labrador Méndez, (2015, n.p) argues, "[c]on Guillem Martínez, preguntarse por el final de la CT, después del 15M, es preguntarse por sus orígenes."

The same haunting is evident in *Rock Radikal Vasco,* where the concluding remarks by the narrator, Roberto Moso (writer and singer of Basque group Zarama) are:

> El RRV es ya parte de la historia pero muchas de las circunstancias políticas económicas y sociales que dieron origen a ese movimiento vuelven a manifestarse ahora en buena parte de Europa y del mundo. Sin duda un montón de bandas están dispuestas a ponerle banda sonora. (Moso, Rok Radikal Vasco, n.p)

The same can be said for the end of *Galicia Caníbal,* where Fernando Franco, a journalist from *Faro de Vigo* and part of the Galician scene, declares:

> Estamos ante un fenómeno en este momento en que las nuevas generaciones viven en un momento de opresión como hace mucho tiempo que no vivían (…) es la generación más explotada y esto va a tener una salida de alguna manera, en la calle o bien de un modo lúdico o de otro modo más serio.

These documentaries may be focusing on the conditions that enabled Spain's youth to break with tradition and become part of Punk culture; they may bring back the sounds and styles of the Spanish Punks from Galicia, Madrid and Barcelona much to the enjoyment of today's audiences. But in depicting their social circumstances, the backgrounds of industrial and political unrest against which they formed groups, developed careers and created fanzines in the 1980s, in reflecting on the lives that were lost to addiction, in putting centre-frame the losers who were not part of the anointed and celebrated *Movida,* these films do much more than trigger memories. They connect the past with the present, become part of the questioning and unpicking of Spain's transition to democracy and tell us that another stories, and history, are in the making.

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