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‘Fellow Travellers’ in Spanish Visual Print Cultures of the Transition: The Case of *Trocha. Cuadernos Mensuales del Colectivo de la Historieta* (1977–1978)

ANTONIO LÁZARO-REBOLL 

University of Kent

A collective of twenty-six comics artists published the first issue of *TROCHA. Cuadernos Mensuales del Colectivo de la Historieta*. This fifty-two-page self-managed magazine priced at 50 *pesetas* reached the press kiosks in May 1977, barely a month after the legalization of the Partido Comunista Español (PCE) on 9 April 1977 and the same month in which the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC) had been legalized on 4 May. The magazine’s leftist direction of travel is vehemently announced on the front cover of the first issue, both ideologically and aesthetically. Presented in the black-and-red colours of anarcho-syndicalism, a raised fist holds aloft the tools of the comics artists’ trade, a pencil and a nib, as a graphic symbol of the demands of the comics artists’ collective for strength, solidarity and unity, hailing prospective buyers and readers with an unequivocal anti-fascist and Communist gesture (Figure 1).¹ This image is superimposed upon panels depicting traditional comics genre production—adventure, romance, war, humour—that had been dominating the market. Hoisting Communist iconography as a way of expressing anti-fascist sentiment—past and present—was characteristic of some members of the *TROCHA* collective. Two of the comic strips included in the opening issue confirmed some of the publication’s main battle lines. Each of the five black-and-white pages of ‘Si los buscais ...’, by scriptwriter Felipe Hernández Cava and artist Jaime Marzal, framed the

1 All *TROCHA* covers, as well as content tables for individual issues, can be consulted at <https://www.tebeosfera.com/publicaciones/trocha_troya_1977_martin_cdlh.html> (accessed 5 April 2019).



Figure 1.

Cover of the first *TROCHA* issue in May 1977.
Reproduced by kind permission of Antonio Martín.

retreat of Republican troops through the French border in February 1939 with the image of the Communist poet Miguel Hernández and his words in tribute to the Republican troops at the battle of Teruel in 1937 in '¡Firmes en nuestros puestos!' The final page inscribed textually and visually a left-wing lineage

Colour online, B/W in print

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from the Spanish Civil War to the Transition across its five panels, calling up a transnational anti-fascist resistance and reminding readers that the fight against fascism continued at the many demonstrations taking place on the streets of Spain (Figure 2). Likewise, 'Fragmentos de una proclama lanzada

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Colour online, B/W in print

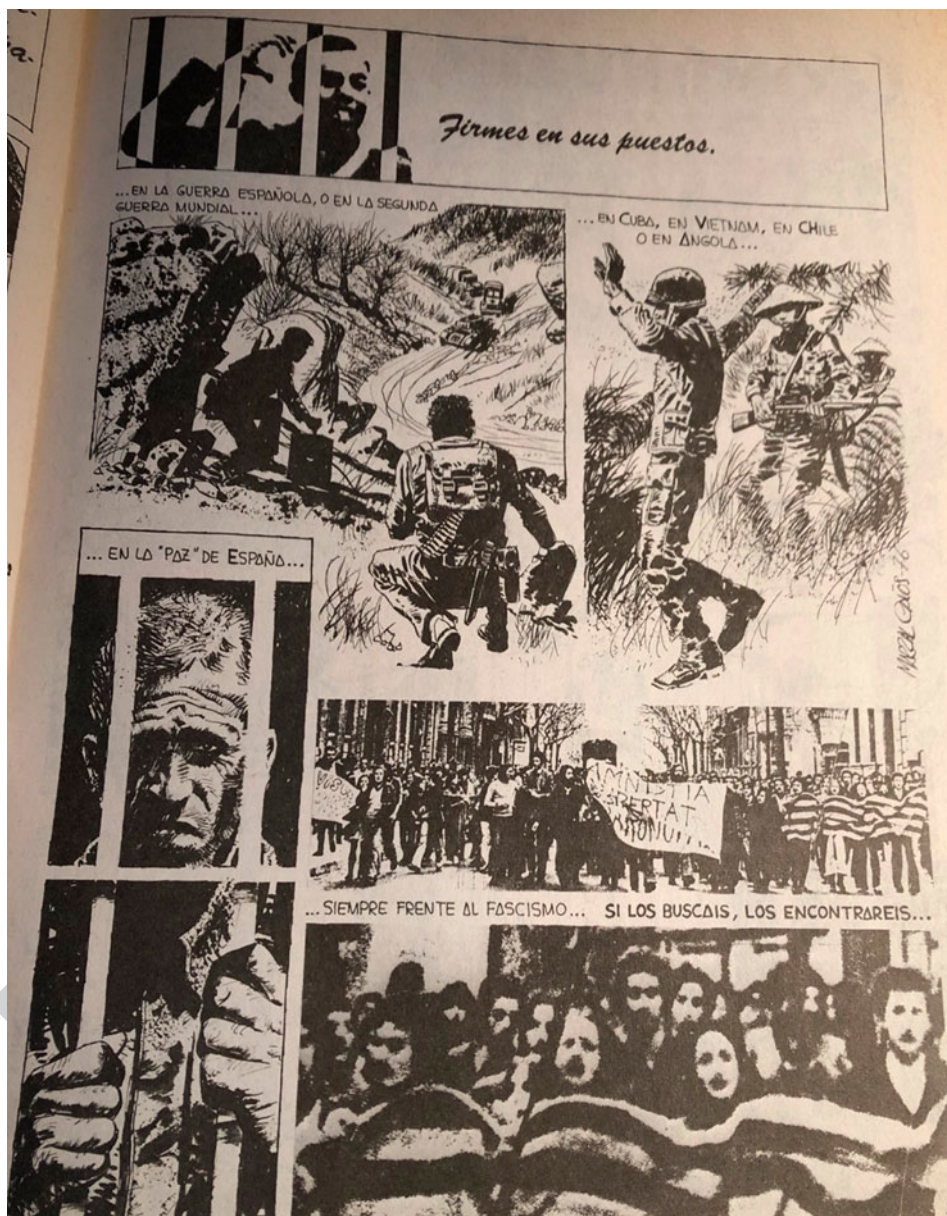


Figure 2.

'Si los buskais ...', *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977).

Artwork by Marzal and script by Hernández Cava © 1977.

Reproduced by kind permission of Jaime Marzal and Felipe Hernández Cava.

por medio de la aviación fascista el 6 de septiembre de 1936 exigiendo la rendición del pueblo de Madrid', by the group El Cubri,² reproduced the ultimatum General Franco dropped—quite literally—on the population of Madrid in the form of thousands of pamphlets on 25 August 1936. Franco's words are reprinted in balloons rumbling out of the fuselage of Junker JU-52 military aircrafts, which hover ominously over a mass of people whose only lines of defence against fascist forces are a series of left-wing slogans and banners. Here the slogans and banners, so deeply entrenched in the resistance against the Nationalist military uprising and the Francoist dictatorship, powerfully conveyed a visual history of Spanish left-wing struggle and opposition, from Dolores Ibárruri's renowned 'No Pasarán' speech on 18 July 1936 to the referencing of landmark strikes to the contemporary demonstrations for 'Amnistía Total' during the Transition (Figure 3). The political force of these *historietas* resided not only in their verbal content but also in their production techniques, through the use of the opaque projector to incorporate photographic images, and in their aesthetics, through the citation of images (banners, photos, press cuttings, popular imagery, art works) associated with the visual culture of the left and the forms of cultural expression mobilized by the Atelier Populaire in the fairly recent events of May 1968.

The work of members of the collective in this opening issue evidenced other political standpoints, emotional experiences, and aesthetic sensibilities, not least, the creations of female comics artists such as Montse Clavé, Marika (Mari Carmen Vila), Armonía Rodríguez and Mariel Soria. 'Doble jornada' by Clavé, for example, featured one of the long struggles facing women: a woman performing the role of domestic drudgery while her husband pontificates about exploitation and lack of solidarity in the workplace, unmindful of—and indifferent to—his wife's labour; a close-up of the woman in the antepenultimate panel grants her a voice, 'no crees que hablando de insolidaridad podrías solidarizarte conmigo, y hablando de liberación podrías al menos "liberarme" de parte de mi jornada'.³ The editorial in issue two entitled 'El machismo en el cómic para adultos' expounded on the overexploitation of working women too, as part of the publication's forward-thinking denunciation of prevailing habits and trends within the Spanish comics industry and its own attempts to give visibility

2 Working under the common name 'El Cubri', Felipe Hernández Cava, Saturio Alonso Millán and Pedro Arjona González published their material in numerous radical left-wing magazines of the time such as *Zona Abierta*, *El Viejo Topo* and *Teoría y Práctica* from 1975 onward.

3 'Doble jornada', *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 23.

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Colour online, B/W in print



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Figure 3.

'Fragmentos de una proclama lanzada por medio de la aviación fascista el 6 de septiembre de 1936 exigiendo la rendición del pueblo de Madrid', by El Cubri, *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977).

Artwork © 1977.

Reproduced by kind permission of Felipe Hernández Cava.

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to women's rights in a male-dominated culture and society.⁴ Political and social engagement characterized the material published in *TROCHA* but the publication and the collective was a much more complex and diverse entity, bringing together in the same issue the already-established intellectual graphic humour of Perich (Jaume Perich Escala) and Galileo (Rafael Ramos Morales) as well as the more innovative and personal comic strips of Luis García, Enrique Ventura and Miguel Angel Nieto, which experimented with *chiaroscuro* images and photo-realist techniques. In addition to comic strips, readers were also provided with comics criticism and opinion columns, reviews of books and comics in its regular section 'Hemos leído', a fixed space for 'pequeños anuncios gratuitos' on the last page devoted to the exchange, search and sale of comics, fanzines and magazines, and, occasionally, with mail from readers.

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Despite its early demise, with the publication of a total of only seven issues between May 1977 and March 1978, with an initial print run of 8,000 copies, a detailed analysis of *TROCHA* contributes to a reconstruction of what Germán

4 Ludolfo Paramio, 'El machismo en el cómic para adultos', *TROCHA*, 2 (June 1977), 1–2.

Labrador Méndez has described as ‘archivos alternativos de la transición’.⁵ It came out at a time of momentous political and institutional change with extreme social unrest and economic hardship expressed through general strikes, demonstrations, mass mobilizations and terrorist violence. In its transitory lifespan, *TROCHA* was witness to the holding of democratic elections (15 June 1977), the passing of the Ley de Amnistía (15 October 1977), the signing of the Pactos de la Moncloa (25 October 1977) and the first bouts of ‘desencanto’, all of which contributed to the Transition period drawing to an end in political terms. Each editorial can be read as an intervention not only in the field of Spanish comics culture but also in cultural expression writ large. Likewise, the pages of *TROCHA* became the ground for the realization of alternative image-making projects and for the dissemination of contrary visual practices. There is no unifying *TROCHA* iconography at work in the comic strips. Narrative and stylistic approaches varied greatly amongst members of the collective, ranging from the idiom of caricature to the dialectical realism à la Bernard Rancillac to countercultural graphics. Certainly, *TROCHA* contributors inked their own idiosyncratic engagement with diverse visual traditions of representation as well as the visual culture around them. The common ground for this group of comics artists was twofold: a search for individual and collective forms of expression freed from the laws of the market, formulaic genre conventions, gender stereotypes and aesthetic conventions so ingrained in Spanish comics traditions, and, a commitment to image-making that countered the legacy of Francoist iconography and in sync with the ‘here and now’ of the Transition. Their interventions—textual and visual—contribute to an understanding of

[...] procesos creativos, colectivos e individuales, desde los cuales queremos reconstruir algunas experiencias de la juventud transicional, a partir del surgimiento de una conciencia crítica y de una estética de ruptura, desde la invención de formas de vida e instituciones culturales alternativas, y en relación a la politicización de lo privado y las luchas civiles del periodo.⁶

When *TROCHA* and the Colectivo are returned and relocated to their larger transitional contexts of production and of circulation, as this article proposes, a more dynamic and nuanced picture of visual print cultures comes to light: zones of contact between different comics artists and publications, creative partnerships and networks moving across commercial and alternative circuits, and collective aspirations around transitional

5 Germán Labrador Méndez, *Culpables por la literatura: imaginación política y contracultura en la transición española (1968–1986)*, (Madrid: Akal, 2017), 85.

6 Labrador Méndez, *Culpables por la literatura*, 25.

imaginaries. The images and texts produced by members of the collective provide contrasting experiences and views which call into question the notion of consensus and its prevailing aesthetics.

245 Fellow Travellers

For some readers, the term 'fellow travellers' of the title may evoke Leon Trotsky's definition of those intellectually sympathetic to the Bolshevik ideology and the goals of the Russian Revolution in 1917 but who were not formal members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The label *poputchiki*, which could be translated as 'the one who travels the same path', was coined by Trotsky in the pages of *Literature and Revolution* (1924), and, later on, widely adopted in the Western World to identify intellectual friends of Communism. In the context of twentieth-century Spain, the 'compañeros de viaje' resonated with intellectuals sympathetic to the Communist cause across the twentieth century from the 1920s to the Transition period following the death of dictator General Francisco Franco in November 1975. The ideological dimension of this label is pertinent here for my examination of *TROCHA*. At the time, some members contributed illustrations to the leftist monthly magazine *El Viejo Topo*; others had been contributing regularly to *Zona Abierta*, which 'incluía desde militantes del PCE y compañeros de viaje, a radicales de todos los pelajes';⁷ and, many members of the collective were engaged in the publication of *Butifarra!* (1975–1979), a 'modesto panfleto vecinal de combate'⁸ for neighbourhood associations in Barcelona. Ideological alliances and collective experiences built up through struggle, as well as countercultural practices in the making encompassed 'una *izquierda sociológica*, de perfiles diversos que aglutinaba a izquierdistas, libertarios, ecologistas y activistas de género', generating its own 'instituciones culturales autónomas (colectivos, revistas, editoriales, centros culturales)'.⁹

270 The term 'fellow-traveller' can be understood in other literal and material ways, for among the twenty-six members of the collective many had been and were travelling the same professional and cultural paths throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. The assemblage of names coalescing around *TROCHA* thus provides a window into the world of Spanish comics cultures from the early 1960s to the late 1970s, revealing, more specifically, the developments and transformations of adult comics made possible by the appearance of a new generation of artists, scriptwriters and critics, most of whom were born between the mid 1940s and the mid 1950s. 'Hemos formado', stated the first

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7 Gregorio Morán, *El cura y los mandarines (historia no oficial del Bosque de los letrados): cultura y política en España 1962–1996* (Madrid: Akal, 2014), 521.

8 Pablo Dopico, *El cómic underground español, 1970–1980* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005), 146.

9 Labrador Méndez, *Culpables por la literatura*, 129 & 26; my emphasis.



Figure 4.

Photo of members of the Colectivo during one of the assemblies.

From left to right: Luis García, Marika Vila, Pacho Fernández Larrondo, Carlo Frabetti, Montse Clavé y Toni Segarra. Reproduced by courtesy of Marika Vila.

editorial, ‘un colectivo de profesionales que agrupa a críticos y estudiosos, guionistas y escritores, dibujantes realistas y satíricos, ilustradores y grafistas’, whose main aim was to publish ‘una historieta adulta, madura y crítica y que al mismo tiempo sea popular y comercial’.¹⁰ The members of the collective, as listed in this first issue, were: José Canovas, Montse Clavé, El Cubri (Felipe Hernández Cava, Saturio Alonso Millán and Pedro Arjona González), Pacho Fernández Larrondo, Ignacio Fontes, Carlo Fabretti, Galileo, Luis García, Alfonso López, LPO (Luis Pérez Ortiz), Marika, Andrés Martín and Mariel Soria, Antonio Martín, Jaume Marzal, Ludolfo Paramio, Perich, Juanjo Sarto and Pepe Robles, Antonio Segarra, Adolfo Usero, and Enrique Ventura and Miguel Ángel Nieto (Figure 4). Common to all was their resolute defence of ‘nuestros derechos como profesionales de la comunicación y de sus derechos como lector’.¹¹

Members of the collective shared similar professional trajectories through their work in publishing houses and editorial agencies, for whom, as young apprentices—sketchers, inkers, pencillers—they produced anonymous and communal genre work—adventure, romance, horror—for publishing houses like Bruguera and for art agencies like Selecciones Ilustradas carrying out syndication work for the British, French and Scandinavian markets.¹² In

10 ‘Editorial’, *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 1.

11 ‘Editorial’, *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 1.

12 See Antonio Martín, *Apuntes para una historia de los tebeos* (Barcelona: Glénat, 2000), 179–84; David Roach, *Masters of Spanish Comic Book Art* (Mount Laurel: Dynamite Entertainment, 2017), 11–13.

interviews, Luis García and Marika regularly recall their friendship as teenagers, how Marika followed in the footsteps of García working for *Selecciones Ilustradas* and for British romance magazines, and their trips to London in the early 1970s seeking both work and pleasure.¹³ The sharing of studio space also helped to generate genuine collaborative approaches such as *Grupo de la Floresta* in Madrid, whereby García and Usero worked in conjunction with four other comics artists in 1967. Seven years later, García and Usero also shared a studio near Barcelona in *Premià de Mar*, creating, together with Carlos Giménez, the *Grupo Premià 3*; as García recollects,

[...] por aquel estudio pasaron Antonio Martín, Michel Choquet (guitarrista de Frank Zappa), José Canovas, Víctor Mora, Armonía Rodríguez (Víctor y Armonía militaban en el [...] PSUC y también influyeron en mi proceso de concienciación), Manuel Medina, Ventura y Nieto ... Y un colectivo muy peculiar, El Cubri.¹⁴

Communal forms of living would be repeated a year later in Cadaqués by García, Ventura and Nieto, whose place would be frequented by the same comics crowd co-mingling with an international community of itinerant hippies and aspiring artists attracted and attuned to the village's *avant-garde* and countercultural reputation. In Madrid, a very young Pérez Ortiz, who had just turned eighteen, encountered the El Cubri team in the offices of the satirical weekly *El Cocodrilo Leopoldo* (1974–1975), which led to frequent visits to their study in the working-class neighbourhood of La Elipa in the outskirts of the Spanish capital. As Pérez Ortiz recalled:

[...] les visitaba en su estudio de La Elipa [...] y alguna vez les ayudaba en sus trabajos [...] Sonaba la puerta y era un trotskista, un prochino o un leninista a ver si ya estaba lo suyo: su cartel, su portada, su tríptico, su pegatina, su octavilla ... Horas y horas de trabajo *gratis et amore*, todo por la causa.¹⁵

However, the paths of many members of the collective had also been crossing for almost a decade in the pages of *BANG! Información y Estudios sobre la*

13 See the extensive interviews with Luis García by Jorge García, 'Entrevista a Luis García', and Marika (by Javier Mora Bordel and Manuel Barrero), 'Encuentros y desencuentros. Entrevista con Marika', n.p.; both available online at <<https://www.tebeosfera.com/1/Documento/Entrevista/Garcia/Luis.htm>> and <https://www.tebeosfera.com/documentos/encuentros_y_desencuentros._entrevista_con_marika_.html> (both accessed 18 August 2020) respectively.

14 García, 'Entrevista a Luis García'.

15 Luis Pérez Ortiz, 'Madriz, que ya tiene treinta años cumplidos', *Visual*, 172 (2015), 16–25; available online at <<http://visual.gi/madriz-que-ya-tiene-treinta-anos-cumplidos/>> (accessed 18 August 2020).

Historieta (1968–1977), a pioneering publication which championed the serious study of comics under the direction of Antonio Martín. Fellow travelling was certainly documented in *BANG!* where group trips to international comics conventions in Italy and France were a regular feature.¹⁶ From such trips and their production for foreign markets came encounters and exchanges with international comics cultures, which contributed not only to a shift in the comics field towards adult content and sensibilities but also a redefinition of the professional and cultural status of comics artists as authors. Likewise, throughout the Transition period many of these fellow travellers made manifest in their works and practices a commitment to social and cultural issues, the collective exhibition *Aproximación al cómic social* being a case in point. Held in Seville in December 1976 as part of the II Jornadas de Arte Contemporáneo y Medios de Comunicación, it brought together the work of El Cubri, García, Giménez, Usero, Ventura and Nieto as representatives of a new generation of comics artist whose work the national daily *El País* described as ‘contra historieta’.¹⁷

The Colectivo was the result of the confluence of two interrelated assemblages of comics culture producers: those associated with the magazine *BANG!* divided between Madrid and Barcelona, and a group of Barcelona-based comics artists who had adopted the traditional anarchist moniker ‘Bandera Negra’ as a *nom de guerre*. In fact, travelling would be central in their attempts to raise money for the project and to generate interest in Spanish comics authors abroad: García and Hernández Cava undertook a tour on behalf of the group across major European comics publishing agencies to sell their comic art in order to fund it, but the expedition did not yield the expected results. While *BANG!*, coordinated around its editor Antonio Martín, was struggling to achieve a regular release and stalled between its twelfth (May 1975) and thirteenth issues (May 1977), ‘Bandera Negra’ had failed to get off the ground as a publishing venture aiming to channel the work of García, Usero, Hernández Cava, and others like Giménez and Armonía Rodríguez Lázaro. Eventually, *BANG!* and ‘Bandera Negra’ joined forces to launch a self-managed publication made financially viable with the contribution of fifty-thousand *pesetas* per member—or team, as in the case of El Cubri; Mariel Soria and Andrés Martín; and Ventura and Nieto—with the unambiguous expectation of little or no financial gain for the work published. What made *TROCHA* possible was the ambition and the commitment of twenty-six comics artists to develop an alternative comics culture borne of shared or similar backgrounds, collective experiences, creative associations—in other words, a

16 See, for example, ‘Sobre Lucca 9’, *BANG! Boletín Informativo*, 54 (December 1973–January 1974), 4–7.

17 Juan Teba, ‘Una aproximación al “comic” social’, *El País*, 17 December 1976 <https://elpais.com/diario/1976/12/18/cultura/219711603_850215.html> (accessed 18 August 2020).

common culture. After two years of numerous meetings and assemblies, the collective was established and the first issue circulated. Pérez Ortiz evoked the atmosphere of these gatherings as 'reuniones de muchas horas, muy concurridas [...] entre espesas humaredas tabaquistas'¹⁸ in a variety of places in Barcelona. García described the assembly dynamics as a sign of the times:

[...] las reuniones de *TROCHA* eran fiel reflejo de lo que ocurría en la política española: pactar, negociar y encontrar entre distintos planteamientos políticos los acuerdos mínimos que permitieran la convivencia pacífica de los españoles [...] *TROCHA* fue la 'Platajunta' de la historieta.¹⁹

Contrahistorieta and Counter-iconography

The Transition period was a time when kiosks were brimming with visual print material. As Pérez del Solar puts it, 'los kioscos se llenaron de pornografía, pero también se abrieron a la sátira política, que resurgió con fuerza en revistas como *El Papis* [1973] y *El Jueves* [1977]'.²⁰ In the words of Jesús Carrillo and Pablo Dopico, the 'panorama del cómic crítico en España [...] contaba por entonces con una densa y dinámica red en todo el Estado'.²¹ In this context, *TROCHA* had to jostle for space with many other magazines vying for the public's attention. Looking back at the period, Pérez Ortiz recalled how competition came with the territory and how the importation of European adult comics offered daring and innovative material:

[*TROCHA* salió] a kiosko a la vez que *Blue Jeans* [1977–1978] y *Tótem* [1977–1986], revistas a todo color y papel satinado repletas del refrescante material de los Humanoides Asociados (Moebius *et al.*) en *Métal Hurlant*; las imponentes planchas de Pratt, Battaglia y Toppi; y, gracias al aflojamiento de la censura, la *Valentina* de Crepax o los despliegues eróticos de Manera, material hasta entonces retenido.²²

By 1977, the *tebeo* format and the cultural function of the medium had also been shifting significantly, as Carlo Fabretti observed in '¿Qué es un

18 Luis Pérez Ortiz, 'Madrid, que ya tiene treinta años cumplidos', *Visual*, 172 (2015), 16–25.

19 García, 'Entrevista a Luis García'.

20 Pedro Pérez del Solar, *Imágenes del desencanto: nueva historieta española 1980–1986* (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2013), 17.

21 Jesús Carrillo & Pablo Dopico, 'BANG! y El Cubri', in *Desacuerdos: sobre arte, políticas y esfera pública en el estado español*, ed. Jesús Carrillo, Ignacio Estella Noriega & Lidia García-Merás, 8 vols (Barcelona: MACBA/Arteleku/UNIA Arte y Pensamiento, 2005), III, 194–202 (p. 195).

22 Pérez Ortiz, 'Madrid, que ya tiene treinta años cumplidos', 17.

tebeo?', from 'el otrora apacible paisaje disneyano-brugueril' to the more heterogeneous and plural kiosk offer of

[...] el comix underground, la historieta política, los pornotebeos "para adultos", la proliferación de comic-books, la progresiva tebeización de algunos semanarios de humor, por no hablar de las revistas de historietas acompañadas de artículos de información y estudio.²³

Without the production and distribution muscle of large publishing houses, carving out a space for a new, self-published and self-managed publication in such a competitive mediascape demanded strategic positioning within the larger field of print visual media.

It was *BANG!* that announced the constitution of the collective in what would turn out to be its last issue: 'se ha constituido en Barcelona, en marzo de 1976, el Colectivo de la Historieta, que agrupa ya a veintiún profesionales'.²⁴ Printed alongside the article on the collective, the editor of *BANG!*, Antonio Martín, reproduced the 'Manifiesto de los profesionales' which had been approved by 'profesionales de la historieta, dibujantes, ilustradores, guionistas, humoristas y críticos' on 16 May 1976.²⁵ Segarra situated the formation of the Colectivo in relation to a 'conjunto de hechos [que] ha sido el fermento',²⁶ around which the first generation of critics and a new generation of comics artists came together, namely the publication of pioneering studies on Spanish comics, the earliest attempts to vindicate the rights of comics authors from the pages of *BANG!*, and the creation of associations such as the Club DHIN (Dibujantes de la Historieta y la Ilustración Nacionales) in June 1972. This set of elements, argued Segarra, had enabled the creation of new spaces to redefine and negotiate the ideological function of comics artists in relation to their immediate socio-political context and to adopt 'una toma de conciencia sobre la actual industria editorial y la represiva sociedad en que esta industria trabaja'.²⁷ As one of its founding members, Segarra recognized that the collective shared 'planteamientos ideológicos de ruptura frente a la actual situación [de las vigentes estructuras industriales en el campo de la historieta]'.²⁸ The concept *ruptura* had a dual significance at that particular historical juncture of early 1976: on the one hand, it expressed a communal aspiration

23 Carlo Fabretti, '¿Qué es un tebeo? Aquí y ahora ...', *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 7.

24 Antoni Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', *BANG! Información y Estudios sobre la Historieta*, 13 (1977), 66.

25 Ernesto Clavé, 'Manifiesto de los profesionales y breve comentario sobre Luis Montiel', *BANG!*, 13 (1977), 67–68.

26 Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', 66.

27 Antoni Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', *BANG! Información y Estudios sobre la Historieta*, 13 (1977), 66.

28 Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', 66.

to break away from the imperatives dictated by the market based on 'comercialidad, estilo, género';²⁹ on the other hand, it aligned the collective with the ideological position of *rupturismo*, calling for a complete break with the Francoist past. As Segarra tentatively put it, the collective had a particular readership in mind, 'una *intelligentsia* de izquierdas, con todo lo ambiguo que la palabra representa'.³⁰

The Colectivo further conveyed its intentions in a self-publicizing page in the back inside cover of *BANG!* (Figure 5). Through a dialectical composition combining image and text, it contrasted in black and white the figures of some of the most iconic *tebeo* characters spawned by the Bruguera factory and classic American comics with the adult-oriented material illustrated with brisk and distinct line styles and personal expressions of some members of the collective. While local *tebeos* and American comic-book traditions had been embedding the dominant ideology in comics for almost four decades, the Colectivo presented 'obras responsables y críticas dirigidas al lector adulto'. Through this image, the Colectivo confronted the heritage of the field. Read in conjunction, these three documents anticipated a set of attitudes and dispositions to be continued in *TROCHA*: the collective impulse to break with the heritage of Spanish comics and to renovate the medium; the commitment to intervene in contemporary political and social issues, ('los problemas concretos del país'),³¹ and, the active defence of comics artists to stand up for their rights as part of a 'sindicato libre, democrático, y de clase'.³² A common *habitus*, in the Bourdieusian sense of the term, begins to emerge, shaped by historical events, practical activities, and visual sensibilities.

The three editorials appearing in issues 1, 2 and 3–4 reveal the institutional *habitus* of the magazine. The Colectivo was ardently critical of the state of Spanish comics in 1977, as a result of almost four decades of political dictatorship and of comics merchants exploiting the market:

Porque el lector español ha sido engañado durante cuarenta años por los mercaderes del papel impreso. Porque la censura le ha impedido utilizar su inteligencia y su juicio crítico para elegir. Porque la comodidad y el miedo han hecho que la prudencia de los profesionales creciera hasta taparles la boca. Porque el sistema de producción-consumo ha engendrado una industria de las diversiones perversamente estúpida [...] Tenemos ahora una historieta mediocre, unos dibujos sin contenido, unos *tebeos* infantiloides.³³

29 Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', 66.

30 Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', 66.

31 Segarra, 'Colectivo de la Historieta', 66.

32 Clave, 'Manifiesto de los profesionales', 67.

33 'Editorial'. *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 1.



a estos personajes usted los conoce... durante 40 años han servido para lavarnos el cerebro... y usted sabe quien los paga...



Frente a los héroes de siempre el Colectivo de la Historieta le ofrece ahora obras responsables y críticas dirigidas al lector adulto, para hacerle pensar y sonreír, que recuperan el comic como medio de comunicación...

para información y suscripciones: Martin Editor, Apartado de Correos 9331. Barcelona

Figure 5.

Publicity for the Colectivo de la Historieta published in the last issue of *BANG! Información y Estudios sobre la Historieta*, 13 (1977).

Reproduced by kind permission of Antonio Martín.

Notwithstanding the differences between the two media and the more than two decades separating these events, the filmmaker Juan Antonio Bardem's well-known assessment of the state of Spanish cinema at the 'Conversaciones

de Salamanca' in 1955, which represented the views of a new generation of filmmakers and critics, resonated in *TROCHA*'s declaration of principles in their first editorial. When the erstwhile clandestine member of the Communist Party asserted that Spanish cinema was '1. politically futile; 2. socially false; 3. intellectually worthless; 4. aesthetically valueless; 5. industrially paralytic', he was calling for the regeneration, repoliticization and reactivation of the film medium.³⁴ The similarities speak for themselves: like Spanish cinema in the mid 1950s, the medium of comics in the mid 1970s was severed from political and social realities, subjected to censorship and self-censorship, and characterised by narrative and aesthetic mediocrity. The editorial expressed the collective's commitment to 'demostrar cómo el autor puede hacerse responsable de su obra, independizarse de las presiones industriales y aceptar su responsabilidad en el conjunto de la sociedad a la que pertenece', which would lead to a different (read democratic) dialogue with their readers: 'el lector debe colaborar poniendo en juego su inteligencia para hacer de co-autor de la obra impresa'.³⁵ Despite being forced to change the title of the magazine from *TROCHA* to *TROYA* as of Summer 1977 (issue 3–4) due to the prior registration of that name for an association ascribed to the Sección Femenina, the collective remained firm on its course of action. As the editorial declared, the Colectivo aspired to

[...] abrir caminos, que eso significa **trocha**: camino abierto por las bravas en medio de la maleza [...] Entramos en un camino definitivo, buscando una marca que sirva de distintivo comercial a nuestro trabajo y defina, al menos por aproximación, nuestras intenciones.³⁶

Acknowledging the symbolic value of the Trojan horse myth, the editorial declared:

[...] al igual que el mítico caballo, aspiramos a sorprender constantemente, desde dentro, interesando a los lectores en todas y cada una de las etapas de esta guerra ... Que ¿de qué guerra hablamos? ... pues, eso tendrá que deducirlo usted mismo leyendo las páginas que siguen.³⁷

Arguably, the allusion to 'guerra' could be read as a commercial ploy to pique the interest of its readers. However, it ought to be interpreted as an invitation to mobilize readers to participate in the Colectivo's aesthetic, ideological and political aspirations in the transition to democracy.

34 John Hopewell, *Out of the Past; Spanish Cinema After Franco* (London: BFI Books, 1986), 57.

35 'Editorial'. *TROCHA* 1 (May 1977), 1.

36 'Editorial'. *TROYA*, 3–4, (July–August 1977), 3; original emphasis

37 'Editorial'. *TROYA*, 3–4, (July–August 1977), 3.

A specific event, which shook Spanish print visual cultures and the press in general, recalibrated the political stance of the collective: the far-right terrorist attack upon the editorial offices of *El Pápus* on 20 September 1977, which resulted in the death of doorman Juan Peñalver and injuries to many others.³⁸ The attack on *El Pápus* had a significant impact on the Colectivo. ‘Nos han puesto una bomba’, opened the September 1977 (issue 5) editorial. The Colectivo condemned the ‘brutalidad y cobardía’ of the bombing, while, at the same time, reaffirming the role of the media in general—and comics in particular—in defending freedom of speech and fighting against fascism: ‘Intentamos poner los medios de comunicación—y muy concretamente la historieta—al servicio de la razón y de la verdad, lo que equivale a decir en contra del fascismo’.³⁹ The December issue featured two editorials responding to the terrorist attack, ‘*El Pápus* no ha muerto’, signed by Andrés Martín, and ‘Hay que definirse’, authored by Carlos Giménez, as well as an unsigned feature article entitled ‘La historieta como compromiso’.⁴⁰ The latter included three illustrations: a five-panel comic strip of Adolfo Usero, by Usero himself, sitting at his working desk at *El Pápus* while the bomb goes off, a photo showing the devastation caused by the explosion, and an image of the front cover of the comics album *Solidaridad con ‘El Pápus’*, produced by over one hundred members of the profession in support of the victims of the attack. The Colectivo was at the heart of the activities in support of *El Pápus*, in fact, ‘la redacción de *TROYA* se convirtió en cuartel general del proyecto [del álbum]’.⁴¹ Giménez urged fellow professionals to raise the political stakes, recognizing that the rules of the game had changed (‘de ahora en adelante ya no vale decir “mis guiones y dibujos no son políticos” ni “yo hago arte y no política”, porque el que se autodefine como apolítico, con esta misma palabra, se está definiendo políticamente’).⁴² In ‘La historieta como compromiso’, the Colectivo led the way in rallying its members, *El Pápus*’ contributors and other professionals to debate on the direction of travel for comics artists at such a critical juncture in Spain.

The counter-iconography exhibited in *TROCHA* can be read as an archive of images of the Transition, from anti-fascist imagery to the hitherto unrepresented self-imaginings of female comics artists. The

38 For a detailed discussion of *El Pápus*, see the article by María Iranzo Cabrera, ‘(Re)negotiating Freedom of Expression in the Spanish Transition: The Case of *El Pápus* (1973–1987)’, in this Special Issue.

39 ‘Editorial’ *TROYA*, 5 (September 1977), 3.

40 See Andrés Martín, ‘*El Pápus* no ha muerto’, *TROYA*, 6 (December 1977), 3; Carlos Giménez, ‘Hay que definirse’, *TROYA*, 6 (December 1977), 10; and Anon., ‘La historieta como compromiso’, *TROYA*, 6 (December 1977), 8–9.

41 Carlo Frabetti, Review of ‘Álbum solidaridad con “El Pápus”’, *TROYA*, 3–4 (July–August 1977), 64.

42 Giménez, ‘Hay que definirse’, 10.

works of Galileo and LPO mobilized pervasive and concrete signs of Francoism. Galileo's wordless, single-page, simple drawings re-enacted with black-humour summary executions carried out by army officers, where individuals are put up against the wall (the *paredón*) but somehow manage to avoid death by witty subterfuge, thereby ridiculing Francoist institutions.⁴³ A second iteration of the same scenario represented an Army officer and a member of the Church sanctioning and blessing respectively, the execution of a prisoner in the presence of a child—the last executions of the Francoist regime still fresh in the mind of many Spaniards.⁴⁴ In true surrealist spirit, the viewer is asked to identify with the victim. LPO's series '... ha de helarte el corazón ...', spread across two successive issues, invoked Antonio Machado's poem LIII in 'Proverbios y Cantares'.⁴⁵ In issue 2, LPO related the hopes of a new generation of Spaniards coming together in the struggle to fight visible as well as covert forms of repression, alienation and violence (Figure 6).⁴⁶ The caption in the final panel is a cry for active, collective action and opposition to fascism: 'pero la juventud luchará fundiéndose con las aspiraciones populares, para que no vuelva sobre nuestro pueblo el fascismo ni se mantenga a través de formas solapadas'.

Counter-narratives and counter-iconography also came from the three pioneering female comics artists belonging to the Colectivo: Clavé, Soria and Marika (Figure 7).⁴⁷ As the latter herself has noted, their presence as part of the collective was clearly uneven; 'la asimetría es clara, la proporción d'autores [...] es fins i tot extraordinaria en un territori absolutament masculí [...], absolutament colonitzat en tots els aspectes pel diàleg entre nois'.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Colectivo was inclusive, progressive and groundbreaking in its organization and coordination of activities. Whether individually or in partnerships with some of their male counterparts, their works were gendered interventions into a male-dominated comics culture, and, by extension, in a political environment with deeply-rooted sexist attitudes toward women. Out of a total of almost sixty comic strips published in the magazine, this minor archive of female authors amounts to

43 Galileo, 'Untitled', *TROCHA*, 1 (May 1977), 12–13.

44 Galileo, 'Untitled', *TROCHA*, 2 (June 1977), 4.

45 'Ya hay un español que quiere / vivir y a vivir empieza, / entre una España que muere / y otra España que bosteza. Españolito que vienes / al mundo te guarde Dios. / una de las dos Españas / ha de helarte el corazón.' (Antonio Machado, 'Proverbios y Cantares', in his *Campos de Castilla* [Madrid: Afrodísio Aguado, 1949]. 132–49 [p. 149]).

46 '... ha de helarte el corazón ...', *TROCHA*, 2 (June 1977), 46–47.

47 See Ana Merino's article, 'La consciencia de la voz adulta en el cómic: transiciones estéticas y miradas políticas', in this Special Issue for a discussion of the work of Marika.

48 Maria Carme Vila Migueloa, 'El cos okupat. Iconographies del cos femení com a espai de la transgressió masculina en el còmic', Doctoral dissertation (Universitat de Barcelona, 2017), 296–97.

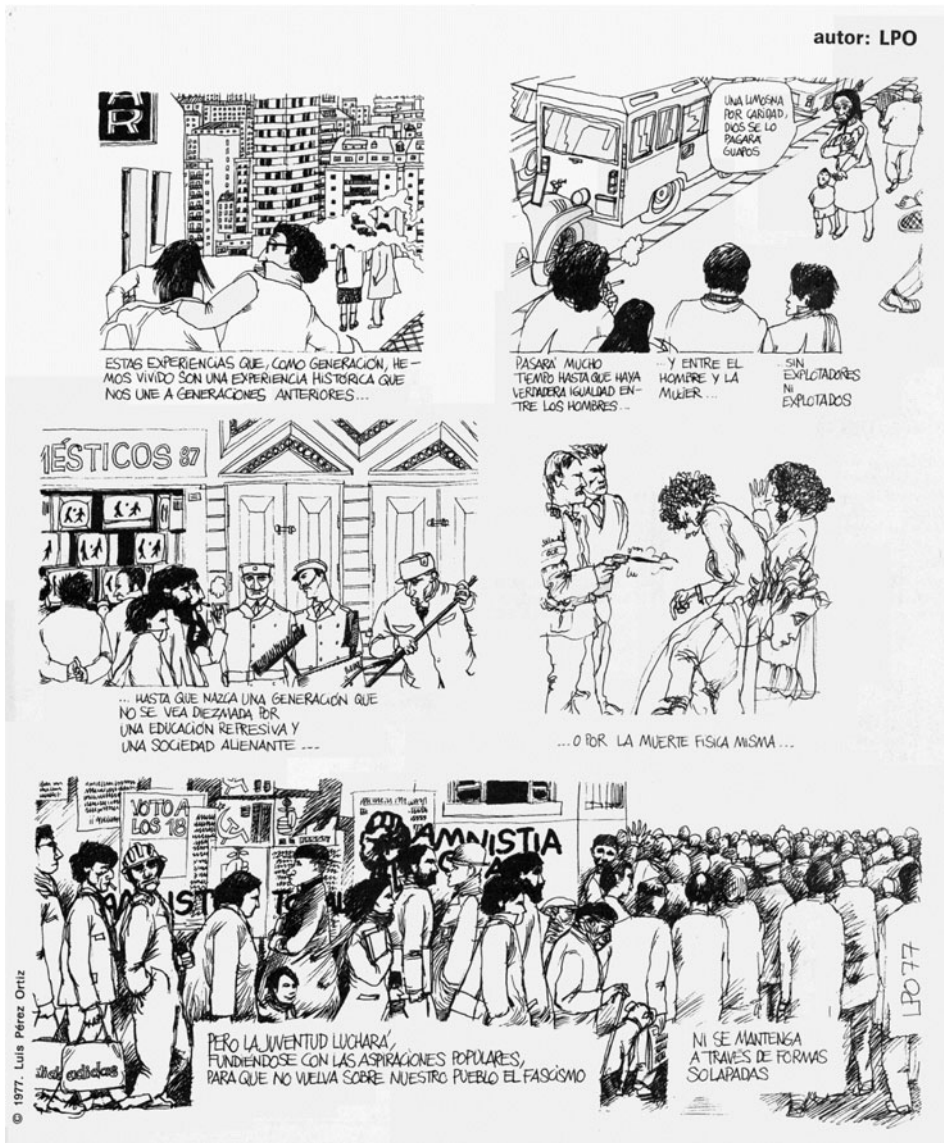


Figure 6.

715 '... ha de helarte el corazón ...', *TROCHA 2* (June 1977).

Artwork by LPO © 1977.

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seventeen creations (approximately one fifth), a repository that is to be regarded as the 'irrupción del feminismo en el cómic español de los setenta'.⁴⁹ Their output extended to a diverse range of ideologically like-

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49 Katia Almerini, 'La irrupción del feminismo en el cómic español de los setenta', *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, 27 (2015), 213–29.



Figure 7.

The three female members of the Colectivo.
 From left to right Mariel Soria, Marika Vila, Montse Clavé.
 Courtesy of Marika Vila.

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 minded publications and projects: Clavé for *El Viejo Topo*, and the feminist Barcelona-based publishing house La Sal, Edicions de les Dones; Marika for *Gaceta Ilustrada* and *Repórter*; and, Soria for *Sal Común*. Clavé and Marika had also been involved in clandestine politics, the former producing material for the Communist association 'Bandera Roja'; the latter actively collaborating with *Butifarra!*

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 Having worked for the local and the international romance comics industry throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Clavé and Marika were fully familiar with the demands and expectations of commercial genre publishing—standardization of character types, narrative patterns, conventions, and themes.⁵⁰ Clavé had worked for Bruguera, on romance comics aimed at girls, such as *Sissi* and *Celia* between 1960 and 1965, and Marika had been a regular member of the Selecciones Ilustradas team, serving the British romance comics market at the turn of the 1970s. Such

50 See Juan Antonio Ramírez Domínguez, *El 'cómic' femenino en España: arte sub y anulación* (Madrid: Cuadernos para el Diálogo, 1975).

schooling in, and knowledge of, the *tebeo para niñas* and its aesthetic standards of female characters must be borne in mind when reading their innovative comic strips in *TROCHA*, for they self-consciously broke away from the legacy of romance comics and confronted contemporary female (and male) comics readers with alternative female representations. Whilst contemporary graphic humour publications, mainstream comics genre magazines, and, to a certain extent, underground comix, exhibited the female body as a commercial, erotic and symbolic object, *TROCHA* enabled a new generation of female authors to express their perspectives and experiences. Self-representation was manifested aesthetically through their art styles, which markedly disrupted conventional and stereotypical depictions of female characters and opened up the space for other forms of self-expression. Thematically, many of their comic strips acted as vehicles to denounce everyday *machismo* and the institutions in which it was entrenched, ranging from marriage to progressive politics to avant-garde criticism. Clavé, for example, censured the double standards of men in the domestic and public sphere with historical figures in the more instructional combination of text and image in ‘Jenny de Westfalia: Homenaje a tantas otras ...’,⁵¹ in which the title character, Jenny, Karl Marx’s wife, served as a universal symbol of ordinary women, as the opening caption condensed in the line ‘verdadero drama de heroína de la vida cotidiana’. In ‘Desconfía’, Marika delivered a scathing one-page critique of political and intellectual male avant-gardists whose rhetoric of female liberation and equality is quickly betrayed by their grotesque demands to be cooked for by the female protagonist (Figure 8).

Conclusion

The model sought by the collective, that is, the combination of comic strips and comics criticism, failed to connect with a wider readership. The initial impetus and urgency to engage critically with the medium and to make a case for the rights of the profession in the first issues was not followed through, as the lack of editorials in issues 7 and 8 seemed to indicate. Arguably, some of its more ideologically-charged material verged on pamphleteering, and, unquestionably, the graphic rupture represented by some of the members of the collective struggled to compete in a market increasingly drawn to sexualized imagery and largely dominated by rising French and Italian adult comics authors. In search of a commercial life and a wider audience, the Colectivo published its last issue in March 1978, despite promises to outstrip other visual print products at their own game ([incluirá] material muy especial de algunas grandes figuras del comic mundial [...]), un “museo

51 ‘Jenny de Westfalia: Homenaje a tantas otras ...’, *TROYA*, 3–4 (July–August 1977), 56–59.

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Figure 8.

'Desconfía', *TROCHA* 5 (September 1977).

Artwork by Marika and script by Hernández Cava © 1977.

Reproduced by kind permission of Marika Vila & Felipe Hernández Cava.

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de la historieta" y otras erotizantes secciones),⁵² to get bigger ("32 páginas más"), and to circulate regularly ('será bimestral'). While the Colectivo de la

52 'Lectores Amantísimos', *TROYA*, 8 (March 1978) 51.

Historieta's artistic and political itinerary as *TROCHA/TROYA* came to an end, fellow-travelling persisted in like-minded ventures in the early 1980s, namely the Catalan-language magazine *Cul-de-Sac* (1982) or the self-managed *Rambla* (1982–1985). A comprehensive exploration of unmapped
845 networks of production and creative alliances coalescing around these visual print media during and after the Transition would yield a more, nuanced and rigorous analysis of the visual culture of the left and its intersections with neighbourhood associations, libertarian groups and feminist activism.

850 As manifestations of autonomous cultural institutions emerging during the Transition period, publications like *TROCHA* bring into view broader interconnected networks of people, places, texts and images at the intersection of visual print cultures, collective practices and politics. As carriers of visual and cultural histories, they articulated a comic idiom
855 counter to dominant industrial practices and critical of the past and of the transitional present, signalling emerging dispositions, sensibilities and tendencies in the field of Spanish comics. Transversal and inclusive in its assembling of comics producers and in its ideological leftism, *TROCHA* provided its twenty-six members with a common ground from which to
860 formulate an alternative comics culture and to counter images of consensus. Conceptualizing and historicizing visual print media such as *TROCHA*, therefore, contributes not only to supplement what Labrador Méndez called residual 'archivos alternativos de la transición', but also to reassess the Transition's textual and visual imaginary.*

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ORCID

Antonio Lázaro-Reboll  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1356-5054>