URBAN CULTURE AND THE STREET: PUBLIC SPACE(S) IN CONTEMPORARY MADRID

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The dissertation examines the importance of radical notions of public space and the shifts between the public and private spheres to the culture and politics of Madrid from 1975 to the present. The aperture of the physical spaces of the city following the end of Francoism was accompanied by an opening up of the public sphere of politics, where marginalized groups that had been excluded or subsumed into a universal politics of class “came out” in demand of a political voice. Questioning many recent critical assessments of Madrid’s post-dictatorship culture as apolitical, it is argued that these shifts in the relationship between the public and private are manifested in many cultural productions of the time period, thus opening up the political potential of the novels, films, and cultural movements that are analyzed. Madrid’s culture during these years offers a unique space from which to observe the vicissitudes of the public-private divide and increasing difficulty in maintaining a clear distinction between the two spheres. This trend began in Madrid with counterpublics of gender and sexuality in the 1970s and followed into coming years with the urban protests of the Okupa movement, the intimate public lives of immigrants in the city, and the public intimacy of the internet.
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Introduction

With the transition to democracy in the mid-1970s, Spanish society underwent a series of important changes that included the consolidation of the urbanization that had begun in the latter years of the Franco dictatorship. In regard to this urban context, this study argues that one of the most important changes to have taken place during the Spanish democratic process is that of the shifts in the relationship between the public and private realms. Drawing on a number of examples from literature, film, and urban cultural movements, this dissertation explores the ways in which Madrid’s culture has reflected upon and responded to the increasingly blurred lines between the public and private spheres as a consequence of the democratization of the city as well as its insertion into a globalized economy. The following pages, through a recognition of the growing importance of discourses concerning public space in Spain’s capital city, analyze how urban culture engages with—and indeed contributes to—the continuously shifting notions of the public.

Over the past several decades, the term public space has been held in high regard and been stressed repeatedly in fields of urban studies such as planning, architecture, and art history. Numerous scholars, politicians, and planners from all parts of the world have emphasized the need for public spaces in the city in order to promote a vibrant and active urban environment and citizenry.¹ A broad range of studies explore, among other topics, the relationship between public space and the public sphere and between built environment and discursive space. At the same time, discussions concerning the public

¹ In North America, some of the most influential studies are from authors such as Deutsche, Mitchell, Sorkin, and Zukin. In Spain, Jordi Borja, Zaida Muxí, and others have written extensively on the topic. In Catalonia, the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea de Barcelona (CCCB) leads a European initiative to recognize efforts to rehabilitate public spaces.
must necessarily take into consideration the notion against which it is defined: the private. Indeed, so much talk about public space certainly signals a heightened awareness of the increasingly unclear relationship between the public and private spheres. Urban scholars decry the economic privatization of public space under the influence of late-capitalism and conservative urban discourses. Meanwhile, the original feminist battle cry that the personal is political has spread into other terrains as well, as issues previously conceived of as intimate or private are brought into the public sphere.

Public Space in Madrid: Historical and Cultural Contexts

This dissertation will examine how these shifts between the public and private spheres were playing out in Madrid’s cultural scene from the Transition period to the present. While recent studies of Spanish literature and culture have emphasized the urban, none has focused centrally on the question of public space and those that have touched on the subject have not done so in a comprehensive manner. Yet such a study is necessary, particularly due to the fact that in the years since the end of the dictatorship public space has been a defining notion in urban culture. Furthermore, the opening up of public spaces of the city in the years of the Transition laid the groundwork for the reconfiguration of progressive politics in Madrid through the broadening of the public sphere.

Certainly Madrid was not the only city in Spain—or the world—where such fundamental shifts were taking place in the late twentieth century. In fact, almost all of Spain’s contemporary cities evoke strong images of public life: a lively citizenry that

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3 Malcolm Compitello and Susan Larson are two of the most recognizable names in urban cultural studies scholarship concerning Madrid. Neither explicitly deals with the question of the public and private in their focus on the ways in which capitalism shapes the city and its culture. There is in their work, however, an implicit equation of the private to the economic forces of capitalism and the public to state-related activities. This is a problematic approach, which will be elaborated upon below.
floods the open spaces of urban areas, drinks in open-air bars, participates in
demonstrations, walks in parks, and roams the streets until the early morning. Beyond
these stereotypical images, there are real social, geographical, and historical factors at
work in these cities concerning the public. Barcelona, for example, is an especially
interesting urban area in which to observe the evolution of public space discourse, and in
many ways it is more advanced today than Madrid as concerns this topic. Yet Madrid
offers a particularly fruitful site of analysis mainly because of the accelerated transition it
made from being the political and symbolic center of the Franco regime to the capital of
democratic and postmodern Spain. In Barcelona, the social and cultural aperture of the
city began ahead of that of Madrid, where in the mid 1970s, still under the rule of Franco,
the vanguard movement led by artists such as José Pérez Ocaña and Nazario Luque was
well under way. In Madrid, however, the street remained firmly under the watchful eye of
the regime, and “public” spaces such as the Plaza de Oriente were symbolic reminders of
its stranglehold on the city and its citizens. Yet this situation changed rapidly in the mid-
to-late 1970s as an unprecedented number and variety of citizens took to the streets in
protest as well as celebration upon the end of the dictatorship.4

The opening up of the city streets in Madrid following the death of Franco
entailed more than the mere appearance of citizens in physical areas of the city; this
physical presence went hand in hand with the emergence of a more open and inclusive
public sphere in the democratic era. Prior to 1975, the Franco regime clearly played a
major role in the limitations placed on public discourse, as citizens were explicitly
prohibited from speaking out against the policies of the regime. Yet ironically, many of

4 See Chapter 1 for a detailed analysis of Transition Madrid and the centrality of public space to that time
period.
the exclusionary practices of Francoism were mirrored by the traditional Leftist opposition during the Transition with its universalizing calls for “consensus,” a term that worked to silence the particular interests and concerns of women, gays, and other marginalized groups from within the Left. In this sense, the “coming out” onto the streets of the late 1970s and early 1980s of these groups involved as much a call for the reformulation of the Left as it did a rejection of Francoism.

From this perspective, what many critics and scholars have decried as the crisis or collapse of the traditional Left upon the end of the dictatorship was indeed a necessary modification of its politics. The question to be asked concerning the young generation that experienced the Transition is not whether that generation was political, but what kind of politics it practiced. In turn, the diversification of progressive politics during the Transition period began a trend that would carry into the following decades and that was tied inextricably to the city streets where urban culture unraveled. This was evident in the feminist and queer cultures of the Transition and extended into Madrid’s contemporary cultural scene with the appearance of the Okupa movement, the cultural impact of increasing immigration, and the emergence of a complex relationship between physical and virtual spaces of the city.

Theorizing Public Space

5 An important current in Spanish political and cultural thought—from within Marxist heterodoxy—considers that the Left suffered greatly following the Transition and that “postmodern” cultural productions of the democratic era reveal a malaise and lack of political purpose in Spanish society. See, for example, José Carlos Mainer. The author Manuel Vázquez Montalbán has also been a steady proponent of this perspective. His now famous phrase “contra Franco vivíamos mejor,” encapsulates this sentiment. He develops this notion further in his essays La palabra libre en la ciudad libre as well as La literatura en la construcción de la ciudad democrática. Although in a different, psychoanalytical line, scholars such as Teresa Vilaró and Cristina Moreiras-Menor also address the cultural ailments of Spanish society as a result of the lack of a united political opposition to Franco.
An important goal of this study is to address the question of what exactly public space is and the varying answers that have been given to that question. This section outlines the major theoretical thought on the topic of public space, the public sphere, and the relationship between the public and the private that will be drawn on in this dissertation.

i. Universal vs. Particular Conceptions of Public Space and the Public Sphere

Public space is most often associated with ideas related to democracy such as openness, accessibility, universality, and the common good. A starting point for the definition of public space comes from art historian Rosalyn Deutsche, whose important study titled *Evictions* develops a discussion of this inexorable link between democracy and public space. Deutsche draws on theories of radical democracy—especially that of Claude Lefort—in order to challenge universalist notions of public space—open to “all,” for the common good—in favor of a particularist stance and the idea that democratic practice is founded upon contestation and conflict. According to Deutsche, in a democratic society public space is “. . . the social space where, in the absence of foundation, the meaning and unity of the social is negotiated—at once constituted and put at risk. What is recognized in public space is the legitimacy of debate about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. . .” (*Evictions* 273-74). The social realm must not be understood as closed or organic, but rather as open and contested, and public space is the social space where that debate and contestation takes place.

For this reason, Deutsche warns against relating public space with such terms as “universal” and the “common good,” since implicit in these terms is the idea of a closed social realm and the reduction of the multiple identities that inform and constitute society.
Deutsche then takes these ideas and applies them to problems in contemporary cities by developing a critique of what she calls conservative urban discourse, or “quality of life” discourse. In this kind of approach to cities, urban planners, architects, and residents use a universal notion of public space in an authoritative manner in order to justify less-than-democratic actions in the name of “the people.” For example, “quality of life” discourse often promotes the removal of homeless people from public city parks as advantageous to “the people” but ignores that the homeless indeed form a part of the same group those in power are claiming to protect. Such a discourse averts addressing the social and economic inequalities at the heart of the issue by simply relocating “the problem” to another geographic area.

Deutsche is not the only scholar to be critical of this universalizing, authoritative form of urban discourse. Don Mitchell, for example, has worked extensively on the topic of homelessness in American cities, and in The Right to the City he develops a number of case studies that uncover the ultimately exclusionary practices of such conservative urban policies. David Harvey, the leading Marxist urban geographer, also deals with the issue by examining how capital produces urban space and perpetuates social injustice and exclusion. It is crucial to note however, argues Deutsche, that Leftist discourse has also been structured on exclusionary practices by limiting the notion of politics to a politics of class. She finds fault in orthodox Marxist thought that fails to recognize ideological systems other than capitalism at work in the city. Citing examples of public art by women in New York, Deutsche is equally critical of traditional Leftist approaches to the city that

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6 This is a recurring theme in almost all of Harvey’s work. See, for example, The Urban Experience or The Condition of Postmodernity.
seek to subsume or dissolve particular movements—such as feminism—into an overarching, universal politics of class.

Deutsche’s definition of public space—or non-definition, since she insists that it is a question and constantly changing—creates a connection between the discursive or social space of conflict and debate and the physical spaces of the city that serve as the facilitating site of such contestation. A discussion of public space in this sense raises the question of its relation to the public sphere, an idea developed by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in the 1960s. Habermas’s ideas—since critiqued by many—are an essential element for any engagement with the notion of the “public.” Habermas describes the public sphere that emerged with the foundation of bourgeois society in the eighteenth century; it was a discursive space that existed between the State and society, open to ongoing debate between private persons about public issues. This was a space that was in theory open to all, where the common interest or good was debated and took form. Habermas laments that these ideals could not be taken to fruition because of the nature and evolution of capitalist society. The public sphere was inevitably contaminated due to transformations in the system, namely the rise of the welfare state and mass media in the twentieth century (Habermas 12).

Several scholars have since criticized Habermas’s version of the public sphere as idealized, claiming that he did not recognize the exclusions inherit in a universal articulation of the “public good.” Many have shown how women, for example, were systematically denied access to the public sphere. Nancy Fraser, from a postmodern, feminist standpoint, effectuates one of these critiques in her reworking of Habermas in “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing
Democracy.” In this essay, much as Deutsche argues against a conception of public space as universal, Fraser points out that the Enlightenment, masculinist discourse of accessibility and rationality promoted by the bourgeois public sphere is indeed founded upon conflicts between the bourgeois public and other publics—such as women and working class “citizens”—and attempts to exclude and limit the latter’s participation in politics (7). She argues that these exclusions and conflicts that in Habermas’s idealized view of the public sphere are “accidental trappings,” are, from a revisionist historian’s perspective, constitutive (Fraser 8).

With these limitations in mind, Fraser calls for a revised understanding of the public sphere more suited to “actually existing” democracy. The weakening and exclusion of subordinate social groups from the public sphere leads Fraser to argue that a model of competing publics is more capable of providing an ideal of equal participation than that of an overarching public where the “less powerful are absorbed into a ‘false we’” (13). Here, Fraser coins the term “subaltern counterpublics” to describe an alternate model of the public sphere. These counterpublics are “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (14). Fraser cites as an example the feminist movement of the late twentieth century in the United States, which managed to move issues to that point considered “private,” such as sexual harrassment, into an ever-widening public arena.

Queer theorist Michael Warner has also developed a critique of the public sphere from within a Habermasian framework in his *Publics and Counterpublics*. In a line very similar to Fraser, he describes the importance of counterpublics, which mark themselves
off from a dominant public. A counterpublic for Warner “is defined by its tension with a larger public . . . [and] maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status” (56). Importantly for Warner—this is where he departs from Fraser—the conflict between the dominant public and a counterpublic “. . . extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public . . . . The discourse that constitutes [a counterpublic] is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness” (119). Thus, through the circulation of discourse in an ever expansive fashion by way of “print, theater, diffuse networks of talk, commerce, and the like” a counterpublic is able to represent—and make public—the interests of gendered and sexualized persons (56-57).

ii. Questioning the Public-Private Divide: The Personal is Political

Both Fraser and Warner, in their critique of Habermas and the elaboration of the notion of counterpublics, raise a fundamental question concerning the relationship between the public and the private. Both authors point to ways in which counterpublics of gender and sexuality have expanded what is considered to be of “public interest” by bringing to the fore topics that supposedly pertain to the “private” realm. In this deconstruction of the public-private divide, Fraser and Warner clearly confront the ambiguous, multi-faceted, and residual meanings of the term public as well as the difficulty in pinpointing a directly contrasting notion of the private and vice versa.8 Fraser emphasizes one type of privacy—domestic privacy, or sexual life—whose “rhetoric . . . seeks to exclude some issues and interests from public debate by

8 They are not the only two to discuss this difficult topic. See also Weintraub, Hardt and Negri, and Pateman, among others.
personalizing them or familiarizing them. . .” (22). Warner goes further than Fraser by arguing that the categories of public and private are intimately bound up in everyday life, the body, and gender and sexuality, and that “any organized attempt to transform gender or sexuality is a public questioning of private life” (31). Warner explores the significance of the “personal is political” slogan in this context, where its most basic meaning is “that the social arrangements structuring private life, domestic households, intimacy, gender, and sexuality are neither neutral nor immutable, that they can be seen as relations of power and subject to transformation” (34).

Thus, it becomes clear that the feminist movement and its revolutionary assertion that the “personal is political” indeed involved a fundamental questioning of the supposed divisions between the public and private spheres. For Warner, the counterpublic, with its critical relation to power, is a key player in the possibility of reworking the relations between the personal and the political. It can “work to elaborate new worlds of culture and social relations in which gender and sexuality can be lived . . . . It can therefore make possible new forms of gendered or sexual citizenship—meaning active participation in collective world making through publics of sex and gender” (Warner 57).

This notion of “collective world making” challenges the supposedly “private” nature of identity formation. If the bourgeois public sphere—the main object of Habermas’s analysis—consists of private persons whose identity is formed in the domestic family, counterpublics challenge this domesticity: “Counterpublics of sexuality and gender . . . are scenes of association and identity that transform the private lives they mediate . . . . These public contexts necessarily entail and bring into being realms of

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9 See chapter one of this study for a detailed analysis of the “personal is political” and its cultural ramifications in Transition-era Madrid.
subjectivity outside the conjugal domestic family” (57-58). That is, through the circulation of discourse among strangers, counterpublics of women and gays can begin to imagine and articulate identities that exist beyond the conventional family, for example, in the affirmation of sexual desire and in the building of alternative forms of kinship. The spaces where these “scenes of association” are elaborated are often found in—although not limited to—the public spaces of the city.

Thus, this dissertation will address how the public and private spheres were displaced in Madrid through a broadening in the idea of the political and a “coming out”—both discursive and physical—into the public sphere of “intimate,” “private” matters. This trend no doubt began in the years of the Transition with the feminist movement as well as the sexual liberation of homosexuals and the visibility of transvestites on Madrid’s streets. The pattern would carry into the coming decades as well in other contexts, and it was characterized especially by a distrust and aversion to participate in or depend upon institutionalized forms of political action. Such an attitude further shifted the location of the public from its traditional place in relation to the State into a space more connected to grassroots, citizen-oriented movements.

iii. Further Questioning the Public-Private Divide: Rhetorics of Economic Privacy

An equally important way in which the meaning and location of the public and private spheres is questioned is through a consideration of what the two represent when private is taken to mean private property in a market economy. Fraser also points out this prevailing idea and argues that: “[t]he rhetoric of economic privacy seeks to exclude some issues and interests from public debate by economizing them” (22). This has been a
central concern for progressive urban studies because, from this perspective, important issues of social inequality such as access to housing, management of public parks, and transportation are cast as concerns to be determined by the market and therefore closed off to public debate. Therefore, urban activists—often with considerable difficulty—attempt to challenge the idea that private property is immutable. At stake as well in this rhetoric of economic privacy is the notion of property and ownership. Nicholas Blomley describes the ownership model of property as a hegemonic model in which property is always conceived of as private. The same stands true for public property, where even though the property is held by the state, the state is seen as a sole, private entity with control over the land in question (Blomley xiv). Blomley argues, however, that actual uses of land and other resources in cities show fissures in this model, as there are many cases in which there is no clear owner, but rather a collective use for those resources. Here again one notes the important distinction between the conception of the public as pertaining to the state versus pertaining to a collectivity of citizens. This issue will be developed in the dissertation as regards the Okupa—or Squatters’—movement, explained further below.

iv. At the Limits of the Public and Private

With so much discussion of the growing difficulty in determining where the private ends and where the public begins, the question arises as to how fruitful or viable an attempt to maintain the two categories is. Warner has claimed that the public and private are so viscerally tied up in everyday life and human interaction that it is nearly impossible to imagine how the two terms could be dispensed with (8). At the same time, however, the complications brought on by the residual meanings of the two cannot be
ignored. In their ambitious study *Multitude*, the second of a three-book series, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri address the increasing inadequacy of the traditional notions of public and private—where public refers to state control and private to private property—in the current historical moment. In an attempt to point out the positive and potentially liberating aspects of a globalized society, the two speak of the emergence of what they call the “common.” While traditional notions of the private are not desirable because they attempt to reduce everything to questions of the market, current notions of the public are likewise unsatisfactory because state control wrests the power of decision from the hands of individuals. As they explain, “The common interest, in other words, is a public interest not in the hands of a bureaucracy but managed democratically by the multitude” (Hardt and Negri *Multitude* 206).

This approach is significant for two reasons. First, it questions the possibility of an overarching, community-like public that acts as “one.” For this reason, Hardt and Negri place emphasis on communication rather than community at the root of the common: “Whereas the individual dissolves in the unity of the community, singularities are not diminished but express themselves freely in the common” (*Multitude* 204). Second, with the notion of the common, Hardt and Negri bring once again to the fore a recurring theme related to radical notions of public space: the importance of facilitating the expression of singular or particular interests outside the realm of institutionalized politics. Furthermore, the site from which the common emerges is the city or the metropolis, whose built and social environment they describe as “the skeleton and spinal cord of the multitude” (*Commonwealth* 250).
These theoretical texts are explained in greater length in the chapters of this dissertation in relation to the accompanying cultural productions to be examined. As will be seen, the post-dictatorship culture of Madrid offers a specific historical and geographical context in which to observe the evolution of this complex relationship between the public and the private as well as the cultural reactions to these shifts within the urban landscape.

**Outline of Chapters**

The first chapter, titled “Sex and the Street: Urban Culture and the Redefinition of Public Space in the Spanish Transition,” addresses the importance of public space in the Transition era in Madrid and the expansion of the public sphere through the increased visibility of women and transvestites in Spanish society. Drawing on Warner’s theory of counterpublics, the chapter provides an outline of the role of the feminist movement as well as that of transvestites in the Spanish Transition. It asks to what extent both groups were capable of forming counterpublics of gender and sexuality in the context of the Transition. In order to answer this question, the chapter analyzes two important novels from the time period that correspond to these public, yet differing, urban movements: *Crónica del desamor* (1979), the first novel by well-known feminist journalist Rosa Montero; and *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera* (1981) by Eduardo Mendicutti. The engagement of both novels with the chronicle—a hybrid genre between narrative fiction and journalism—reveals a desire to make public the intimate, private issues of the protagonists and taps into the collective, shared experience of the citizens of Madrid at the time. An examination of these two novels brings up several questions: Considering the more fluid body politics of the feminist protagonists of Montero’s novel and the more
spectacular body politics of Mendicutti’s transvestites, to what extent is visibility within public space desirable and for whom? How does this difference in body politics affect the way that counterpublics are elaborated and the potential success of those counterpublics?

The second chapter explores the redefinition of public space in Madrid carried out by the cultural practices of the Okupa movement. Through Fraser’s and Deutsche’s theorizations of public space, in this chapter it is argued that these politically conscious squatters and activists challenge the rhetoric of economic privacy and private property employed in Madrid in relation to urban planning, culture, and in particular urban housing. The okapas protest abusive urban real estate practices and speculation by “okupying” abandoned buildings in the city and establishing social and cultural centers, thereby producing public spaces out of private ones. The “okupied” houses become public not only because they are open to all the residents of the neighborhoods where they are located, but also due to the grassroots and participatory nature of these projects. This chapter addresses the following questions: To what specific urban processes is the Okupa movement in Madrid responding and how does it differ from elaborations of the movement in other European countries? How does the movement utilize the traditional public spaces of the city in its critique of urban policies? How do the projects of Centros Sociales Okupados Autónomos (CSOA) such as Patio Maravillas in Malasaña differ from “legitimized,” municipally-supported cultural centers? What does legalization of “okupied” cultural centers mean for the future of the movement and its principles of fighting against institutionalized political action? What are the repercussions of the recent surge in cultural centers sponsored by financial institutions such as Caja Madrid and
Caixa Forum and what do these projects reveal about the urban process in Madrid and the continued relevance of the Okupa movement?

In the third chapter, the limits of the public and private are explored through an examination of the consequences of recent immigration and the emerging multicultural environment in Madrid. Drawing on Hardt and Negri’s notion of the common, this chapter argues that the way in which immigrants live and relate to the spaces of the city reveals a certain irrelevancy in the public-private distinction. The difficult access to “private” resources such as housing and employment leads immigrants to carry out these activities in public spaces, making the public an increasingly intimate way of experiencing space. This problem is explored specifically first in Fernando León de Aranoa’s film Princesas (2005). The film creates a special cartography that draws on and merges together the physical spaces of the city with the intimate emotional journeys of its protagonists. Likewise, Lucía Etxebarria’s novel Cosmofobia (2007) involves a similar relationship between the disorienting experience of urban life in Lavapiés and its protagonists’ search for some kind of emotional stability. Through its labyrinthine structure, polyphonic narrative style, and intertextuality with Camilo José Cela’s urban novel La colmena, Cosmofobia renders inadequate and anachronistic traditional notions of public space as the locus of a unified community. Rather, the novel presents a disorienting multicultural society in which individuals must find other ways to build a life in “common.” This chapter asks what this life in common and a revised notion of community might look like.

The final chapter of this study explores the consequences of the proliferation of informational and media technologies in Spain, asking to what extent the emergence of
virtual space puts at risk or enhances public life in physical cities. The theoretical approach of Manuel Castells to the urban in the Information Age is central to this chapter. In contrast to dystopian views of the impact of new technologies on cities, Castells sees potential in the emergence of cyberspace as a way to expand upon and create new public cultures. From this standpoint, the chapter asks to what extent virtual space is public and/or private. Does cyberspace expand, vanquish, or simply relocate the public, and what are the repercussions of these shifts for urban culture? To answer these questions, the chapter analyzes two narrative texts that deal with the relationship between cyberspace and the city. Taking place in an unnamed, futuristic Spanish city, Suso de Toro’s science fiction novel *La sombra cazadora* (1995) presents a society devoid of public life due to the overwhelming force and control of the Image, a metaphoric body representative of the evils of telecommunications. This dystopian text is presented in opposition to the recent *Diario de Martín Lobo* (2010), by the author of the same name, which involves a much more positive model for the relationship between the city and cyberspace. A compilation of blog entries from Lobo’s successful blog called “Blogback Mountain: Diario de un gay” published in Elmunndo.es, the novel presents a different model in which the protagonist’s adventures in the streets and spaces of Madrid are influenced by the virtual space of the blog and vice versa. This chapter will ask whether the virtual space of the blog—with its capacity to reach broad audiences and facilitate communication and feedback—expands on the potential formation of counterpublics, and the extent to which the Martín Lobo franchise’s inscription in consumer culture limits this formation.
Thus, these chapters explore approximately forty years in Madrid’s cultural and political history, uncovering the evolution of the notion of public space in Spain’s capital city during that time. Through an analysis of the city’s narrative, film, and contemporary cultural movements, one can see that public space became increasingly central to understanding the culture of the city as well as the shifts taking place within the Left concerning the how and where of political action. While these particular changes in Madrid can be explained within their specific contexts in large part through an engagement with the previously discussed theories, it will be seen that the overall development of the relationship between the public and private that is revealed when the varying cases are looked at in continuation escapes previous theorizations. Thus, this dissertation will argue that the Spanish case offers a special context in which to trace the constantly evolving meanings and layers of the public and private through to the current day. Still it is important to note that the growing emphasis on the politics of everyday life and the opening up of the city streets—as well as of the virtual city—in Madrid provided a new cultural outlet from which marginalized groups could assert their particular interests, expand public discourse, and at the same time question the limits of traditional notions of the public and the private. This questioning was carried out by women, gays, transvestites, *okupas*, and many others, and although their political aims may not have always been fulfilled, they have indelibly altered Madrid’s urban and cultural landscape.
Chapter 1. Sex and the Street: Urban Culture and the Redefinition of Public Space in the Spanish Transition

This chapter will outline the importance of public space in the process of the Transition to democracy in Spain in the 1970s and early 1980s in Madrid. Public space is essential to understanding the urban culture of Madrid following the end of the dictatorship, as a central element of that culture involved the appropriation of the streets of the city and emerged as a direct result of the treatment of public space prior to the Transition. The Francoist policy was one of control and surveillance of “public” spaces, a term which can only be considered in quotations during the dictatorship. Restrictions put in place by the regime effectively blocked the use of the street by citizens during the time period by prohibiting gatherings of more than a few people in open spaces. When unions and student movements managed to organize in the late 1960s and into the 1970s and dared to challenge the Francoist control of the street, they were squashed by the police and the military. Open spaces were not blocked for all, however; supporters of Franco were frequently welcomed to fill the Plaza de Oriente to hear the Caudillo’s speeches from the balcony of the Royal Palace, showing that the regime knew how to use the symbolic power of city spaces to its advantage.

As the dictatorship came to a close and Spain began its fragile Transition to democracy, the appropriation of the streets of the city as a repudiation of the Francoist policies of the past became a central component of Madrid’s culture. Teresa Vilarós has described this phenomenon as “la ocupación multitudinaria de la calle, la apropiación alborotada del espacio público. . .” (191). This appropriation entailed a process of aperture and democratization as well as a shift in how public space is forged. If public space is open and accessible to all, Madrid’s street culture of the 1970s and early 1980s,
particularly through its relation to questions of gender and sexuality, insisted that previously excluded groups such as women and transvestites were indeed a part of that universal “all.” In this fashion, the traditional Leftist battles engendered by the older generations of the Communist Party and workers’ unions in the fight against Francoism shifted onto a new terrain of an often criticized New Left politics, whose political battles resisted institutionalization. What would follow in the decades to come was an uneasy coexistence of the two trends.

The interaction and intersection of gender and sexuality, politics, and public space show how these issues came to lay the foundation for urban cultural discourse in Madrid following the dictatorship. Close readings of Rosa Montero’s *Crónica del desamor* (1979) and Eduardo Mendicutti’s *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera* (1982), examined within the broader cultural context of the Transition period—including Spain’s feminist movement and the increased visibility of transvestites in popular culture—will analyze how these texts in two different ways form part of a necessary redefinition of the public that took place with the arrival of democracy in Spain. *Crónica*’s narrative takes place mainly in interior spaces of Madrid while it discusses a score of women’s issues such as abortion, contraception, faked orgasms, motherhood, and workplace discrimination. The first of Montero’s novels, it gives a clear sense of the change that was occurring at the time and is particularly noteworthy for the way in which it articulates the feminist slogan “the personal is political.” Written just a few years later, Mendicutti’s humorous novel involves the memories of its transvestite protagonist, La Madelón, who recalls her involvement in various street demonstrations and, from the small, restrictive space of her
apartment, fears the loss of her freedom to be seen in public—and indeed exist—as the night of Tejero’s failed military coup d’état unravels.

The novels are especially interesting in terms of the relationship between space—both public and private—and visibility. Montero’s text describes indoor areas of the city as it aims to turn supposedly private and often invisible issues into political and public ones. The novel reveals that women are struggling to understand what their new-found visibility means for them. The women are apprehensive about making their bodies visible within public space, and the text itself becomes a sort of invisible public space through which women may place their issues on the map of Spain’s cultural consciousness. Meanwhile, Mendicutti’s novel involves a much more visible, exterior public space within the narration, as the very identity and existence of the protagonist is dependent upon the public spaces of the city. In contrast to Montero’s female protagonists, the transvestites of Mendicutti’s novel define themselves via their visibility in public. In neither case, however, does visibility in public automatically or necessarily amount to real gains for these marginalized subjects. Thus, in spite of their differing body politics, both Montero and Mendicutti’s texts are representative of a shift in Madrid’s political and cultural climate that begins to look beyond the more universalist, party-based approach to Leftist politics to a politics capable of integrating particularist needs and interests into a more inclusive public sphere. Accordingly, these texts and many of those from the time period were often criticized from the Left for their lack of political commitment, where politics was defined in a traditional sense related to the state. However, their representation of the intimate through a symbolic “coming out” constitutes a political act
itself insofar as it is the making public of the supposedly private issues of gender and sexual practices.

**Transition Politics and Public Space**

Beginning in the early 1970s, as the declining health and approaching death of Franco became a reality, the political and ideological battle over who would control Spain in the future, and how, began to surface. As Paul Preston has argued in *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*, the Franco regime, through its internal contradictions—on the one hand attempting to keep Spain isolated in a pre-modern political, social, and cultural state, while at the same time pressing for economic development and aperture—was beginning to implode. The regime was divided between hard-line traditionalists and a more progressive line of younger bureaucrats who were opening their eyes to the near impossibility of a continued fascist state upon Franco’s death and seeking to ensure their own political viability when the inevitable occurred.

At the same time, the political opposition was also attempting to influence and lay its stake on whatever might transpire, excited over the prospects of finally having a political voice after forty years of being effectively silenced by the dictatorship. Francoism would soon find that industrialization and economic modernization did not come without their price: a growing clandestine labor movement and the Communist Party (whose leaders were exiled mainly in France) gained increasing support among the Spanish population as a severe economic crisis led to spikes in unemployment. Another key player of the time period was ETA, which saw the overthrow of Franco as a key to its pursuit of independence for the Basque Country and was willing to use radical means in
order to achieve its goal. Under these conditions, as the opposition was able to slowly come out of exile and silence, an ideological battle between Right and Left that had been playing out silently for decades began to come to a head, as both sides vied for political control in what would become the process of Transition.

The role of public space in this battle is well worth examining although it has often been overlooked or relinquished to a less-than-central standing. Such an example is that of Preston, who asserts in the preface to his study of the Spanish political Transition that

\[ \ldots \] the central theme of this book is often unrolled in smoke-filled rooms, while its two principal sub-plots take place in the military barracks where golpismo was fostered and on the streets where ETA went about its deadly business. It says rather less about the popular masses, the working class, strikes and social change than I had intended when I set out. (x)

Here, Preston places primary importance on the back room negotiations carried out by Spain’s political leaders in securing the more or less peaceful Transition to democracy. But while he chooses to focus on this seemingly “private,” behind-closed-doors aspect of the Transition—perhaps because it is the one which best lends itself to narration—at the same time he cannot help but recognize the role of the masses in the process: political negotiations did not occur in a vacuum. They responded to the social and economic realities of Spain at that moment. Indeed, in his book Preston is well aware of the fact that the maneuverings of the political leaders of the Transition and the overall nature of the process was made possible and in fact necessitated by the unique convergence of and pressure applied by the aforementioned groups and their subsequent effect on public opinion. Although never stated explicitly, what is revealed in the structure of his narrative is a process of compromise in which the public acts of heavily ideological and radical
groups on both sides of the political spectrum led the general public—and in turn the political leadership—to reject these radical options and favor a stance of moderation for Spain’s future.¹

More often than not, the place where this convergence of pressures materialized was on the streets. Many key moments of the Transition took place in public spaces in the form of political protests, demonstrations, strikes, and the violence of right-wing terrorist groups, the police and the military, and ETA. The visibility of such acts, varying in ideology and radical inclination, and the symbolic weight that they carried in terms of public opinion was of superlative importance in the unfolding of the Transition.² After decades of the dictatorship’s policies of strict control and vigilance of meetings and basically all activity in “public” spaces, it is not surprising that a battle over to whom these spaces belonged should arise, nor is it startling that Madrid in particular, as the capital and the center of the Franco Regime, would be home to the streets that were most hotly contested. In 1976 Manuel Fraga, then Minister of the Interior, was faced with escalating demonstrations, protests, and calls for amnesty for citizens taken as political prisoners under Franco.³ As Preston has pointed out, the general response of the still Francoist government was to quell protests and strikes with police brutality and militarization (81). In April, as members of the political opposition planned for a large

¹ Many feminist writers have been critical of Preston and other male historians’ accounts of the Transition, narratives which they argue write women out of the history of the time period by refusing to look at the Transition as a broad social process rather than a political agreement made by a handful of officials. See below for an in-depth discussion of this matter.

² Perhaps the image with the most enduring impact is that of the 1973 assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco by ETA, an act which literally used the street as a weapon against the government. The 1979 film, Operación Ogro, filmed in the height of the Transition, reenacted the scene for the viewing public: the spectator observes how in the central streets of Madrid, supposedly controlled by the Regime, members of ETA dig a tunnel under the street and explode a bomb as the Vice President passes, sending his car flying over an adjacent five story building, where it lands on the interior balcony.

³ His official title was Ministro de Gobernación, the equivalent of Interior in Spain’s government today.
demonstration commemorating the May 1 International Workers’ Day, Fraga made a
telling declaration: “¡la calle es mía!” (“the street is mine!”), showing the belief, at least
for those in power, that the state was to maintain control over uses of public space
(Baigorri 72, Borja y Muxí 15). Fraga’s declaration is an explicit and radical example of
the ideological battle that hinged on the question of public space in the urban setting.

Attempts to control social and political activity on the street were largely in vain:
demonstrations were numerous and varied in their demands, from topics such as workers’
rights and political amnesty through to calls for fair housing, women’s rights, and
regional autonomy. Furthermore, gatherings of urban residents on city streets were
commonplace and a basic form of socialization during the era. In fact, the expression *ir
de marcha*, which today in Spain means to go out and party, originated in this historical
moment and emerged with the double meaning of partying as well as marching in
political demonstrations (Baigorri 72). Given this double entendre, the phrase is
particularly telling of the Transition period in general for the way in which it encapsulates
on the one hand, a celebratory, apparently apolitical mood of partying with, on the other,
what can be read as a conscious—although at times subconscious—recognition of the
political nature of such acts, especially when they take place on the city streets. In fact,
while many point to the apolitical leanings of the young Madrid generation that
experienced the end of Francoism, their attitudes and actions were not as irrelevant—and
irreverent—to politics as some critics would claim: instead, their rejection of the
institutionalized politics of the past was the adoption of a new kind of politics for the
future, one which was inextricably linked to public space. The “coming out” onto the
street of the Transition period, therefore, not only broke with Francoist traditions but also
marked a shift in the Left away from institutionalized forms of government towards a politics of everyday life and an opening up of public space to previously excluded groups.

_The Personal is Political: Women and “Invisible” Public Space in the Transition_

A look into the politics and culture of the Transition requires a close examination of gender and sexuality in relation to public space. Emerging from what began in the 1960s as a series of traditional leftist protests and marches organized by clandestine political parties (PCE, PSOE), workers’ unions (CC.OO., UGT, CNT), and students for labor rights and political amnesty, the appropriation of the streets in the waning years of the dictatorship and the beginning of democracy was intimately connected with the growing demands of women, gays, and other groups that had been particularly silenced during the dictatorship. In large part, this transformation in the meaning of the public came thanks to the increasing influence of Spain’s feminist movement, which slowly developed in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and its adoption of the famous slogan “the personal is political.”[^4] The popular slogan, which has its origins in the Anglo-American context, was appropriated by the Spanish feminist movement (Escario 214). The idea that the personal is political involves a fundamental questioning of the relationship between the private and public realms. As Michael Warner, literary critic and a leading thinker in queer theory, has argued, the categories of public and private are intimately bound up in everyday life, the body, and gender and sexuality, and “any organized attempt to transform gender or sexuality is a public questioning of private life” (31). Warner

[^4]: For further reading on feminist interpretations of the public and private spheres and the “personal is political” see Catherine MacKinnon, Carole Pateman, Jeff Weintraub, and Michael Warner.
explores the significance of the “personal is political” slogan in this context, where its most basic meaning is “that the social arrangements structuring private life, domestic households, intimacy, gender, and sexuality are neither neutral nor immutable, that they can be seen as relations of power and subject to transformation” (34). This assertion was indeed revolutionary for second-wave feminism, as a feminism that moved beyond fighting against official inequalities such as women’s lack of voting rights and aimed to take on the inequalities rooted in societal structures. Tied up in this shift within the feminist movement was a growing emphasis on asserting women’s difference rather than fighting to be seen an equal to men.

The belief that the personal was political was perhaps especially potent in Spain given the particular conditions of the post-civil war society. In a sense, Francoism had already politicized the personal—to women’s disadvantage—by institutionally confining women to the domestic, private realm. Women’s place within the family was central to the national discourse, and millions of women passed through the official Sección Femenina de Falange, which “helped to prepare women for their new role as rebuilders of the Spanish nation, the dedicated, self-denying heart of the Catholic family and mainstay of Franco’s deeply authoritarian patriarchal regime” (Brooksbank 2). Women had restricted access to public life, employment, legal rights, and education, and though the right to vote was never officially revoked, the regime discouraged it as “unfeminine” and placed so many obstacles in women’s paths that to vote or intervene officially in politics was extremely difficult before the end of the 1960s (Brooksbank 2). This long history of women’s subordination coupled with the general societal and political upheaval in Spain towards the end of the dictatorship made for an especially ripe moment for the women’s
movement to emerge with force. Spanish women were faced with first-wave, *de facto* inequalities that had already been abolished throughout most of the developed world as well as tackling the *de jure* inequalities that second-wave feminists had already begun addressing elsewhere. Pilar Escario, an active Spanish feminist since the Transition, has pointed out that Spain’s feminist movement may have been similar to ones in other countries at the time, but that when placed within the already turbulent political climate, it gained special potency (Escario 215). Furthermore, Escario has discussed the revolutionary significance of the “personal is political” in the context of the burgeoning Spanish movement in the 1970s, an ideology which “dio pie a un abanico de todo tipo de reivindicaciones hasta entonces impensables: el derecho al propio cuerpo, separar la sexualidad de la maternidad, o considerar la homosexualidad como una opción personal . . . Suponía transformar la sociedad de arriba abajo” (214-15). This emphasis on the “personal is political” was also responsible, therefore, for a shift within Spain’s feminist movement away from the fight for equality to the assertion of difference. This shift was closely tied as well to the decision of many feminists to distance themselves from the patriarchal structures of the Leftist opposition.

Since the major goal of feminism has entailed making supposedly private and intimate issues public, it would intuitively follow that the city streets should be a key space for carrying out such a political project. Along these lines, Escario has emphasized the importance of the street for the women’s movement during the Transition:

. . . la calle, en aquellos momentos, fue el principal escenario de actuación. La calle tuvo un valor trascendental, como espacio simbólico de la libertad, de salir del encierro del hogar, de expresión, de vitalidad y de posesión de un espacio para compartir, reivindicar y también . . . para disfrutar, ya que además de ácrrata o libertaria, la agitación callejera tenía mucho de festivo. (216)
Escario’s comments parallel those made by Vilarós, Baigorri, and others in regard to the importance of the street during the Transition as well as to its vitality and value as a place not only of freedom but of celebration. She explains that performance and provocation were important to feminist activism: “Se creó un estilo propio . . . ; las manos en forma de vagina, las mujeres-bocadillo, los almohadones dentro de la ropa para simular un embarazo en las manifestaciones pro-aborto . . . . La provocación era un instrumento imprescindible en aquella lucha” (216-17).5

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that the increased visibility in public for women and other marginalized groups was always a positive step for them in securing rights and transitioning into new identities because visibility did not always occur in the desired place and form. Furthermore, given the dominant rhetoric that called for “consensus,” women were often made invisible or, when seen, were dismissed for being too radical. This conflict became obvious during the Transition not only in feminist activism on the street but in the press as well as in narrative and film. This contradictory cultural situation for women in the Transition years leads to a series of questions: Just how desirable is visibility in the public sphere for women? What kind of visibility is advantageous? How can women bring their issues to the attention of the public without being dismissed or considered divisive?

Michael Warner’s discussion of counterpublics in combination with an understanding of Jeff Weintraub’s categorization of private and public is crucial to developing answers to these questions. Weintraub, for his part, describes two fundamental ways in which the public is defined in opposition to the private. On the one

5 The “mujer-bocadillo” may refer to what is popularly known in the United States as the “sandwich generation,” middle-aged women who must care for their children as well as elderly parents or in-laws. The imagery of course also places emphasis on women’s confinement to the domestic sphere.
hand, when the private is defined in terms of what is individual, the public is seen as what affects the interests of a collectivity of individuals. On the other, when the private is construed in terms of what is hidden or concealed, the public is what is open, revealed, or accessible. Thus, the public can be defined in terms of both collectivity and visibility, with these categories often but not necessarily overlapping (Weintraub 4). It is important to note that these two ways of defining the public do not always go hand in hand. Within the context of the general situation for women during the Transition period in Spain, it is clear that defining the public in terms of visibility at the time was often an ambiguous and contradictory operation for women.

Similarly, Warner’s definition of counterpublics—based on Habermasian public sphere theory—opens up the possibility for women to articulate alternate forms of identity in public. For Warner, a counterpublic “is defined by its tension with a larger public . . . [and] maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status” (56). Furthermore,

[T]he cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one. And the conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public or to the hierarchy among media. The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness. (Warner 119)

Certainly, given women’s subordinate position in Spanish society in general and in the media during the Transition, it can be argued that the women’s culture of the time period fits into this category. In fact, Warner cites “the media of women’s culture” in general as one example of a counterpublic (56).

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6 As Warner explains, Habermas defines the public as a non-spatialized sphere composed of private persons exercising rational-critical discourse in relation to the state and power (46).
It is important to note that publics for Warner are based not on specific places or institutions but rather on the circulation of discourse in an ever expansive fashion, “mediated by print, theater, diffuse networks of talk, commerce, and the like” (56-57). Such a public can avoid the traps of visibility under which women fall within dominant publics. In addition, this notion of a counterpublic that involves a critical relation to power is especially rich in that it offers a reworking of the relations between the personal and the political:

[A counterpublic] can do more than represent the interests of gendered or sexualized persons in a public sphere. It can mediate the most private and intimate meanings of gender and sexuality. It can work to elaborate new worlds of culture and social relations in which gender and sexuality can be lived . . . It can therefore make possible new forms of gendered or sexual citizenship—meaning active participation in collective world making through publics of sex and gender. (Warner 57)

If the bourgeois public sphere—the main object of Habermas’s analysis—consists of private persons whose identity is formed in the domestic family, counterpublics challenge this domesticity: “Counterpublics of sexuality and gender . . . are scenes of association and identity that transform the private lives they mediate . . . . These public contexts necessarily entail and bring into being realms of subjectivity outside the conjugal domestic family” (57-58). That is, through the circulation of discourse among strangers, women and gays can begin to imagine and articulate identities that exist beyond the conventional family, for example, in the affirmation of sexual desire and in the building of alternative forms of kinship. As will be seen, women were beginning to embark on this process in Spain in the era of the Transition, although not without difficulties and contradictions.
It is in this context that one must consider Rosa Montero’s novel, *Crónica del desamor*, published in 1979. Although the novel has been the subject of several studies in the past thirty years, it deserves to be revisited given its unique place within the history of women’s narrative, the feminist movement, and the Transition period in general. The relationship between the public, the private, and visibility in the novel reveals transformations that were taking place in the urban environment as well as an ideological shift in the feminist movement, both changes in which women felt trapped between the old and the new. *Crónica* presents the struggles of a handful of mostly female professionals as they go about their daily lives in Transition-era Madrid. Many critics have pointed to the novel’s “documentary-like” style and its overt effort to address current affairs that directly affected women (Brown; Davies; Ugarte; Zatlin). Most critics also agree with Ugarte’s assessment that the “desamor” of the title is a political allegory for the overall state of disenchantment with Spain’s budding democratic society (112). The novel reveals a complex and at times contradictory relationship between visibility and the public, where gender identity and its public expression are frequently at odds: while the treatment of topics such as abortion and contraception in the novel suggests a desire to make personal issues public, the women characters are reluctant to use the street as a place from which to articulate those demands, seen primarily in their hesitance to take part in public demonstrations. In this sense, the novel presents a transition, not only of the institutional kind, but also the uneasy and complex transition for women’s articulation of identity as they learn how to define themselves beyond their relation to the domestic, private realm.
An important part of what makes *Crónica del desamor* a key text from the Transition period is its hybrid use of journalistic and literary styles and the convergence in it of the figure of Rosa Montero as author, journalist, and feminist. Since the Transition, Montero has used her prose as a vehicle for representing the female experience. Indeed, her prolific writing—she has published nearly twenty novels and essays since 1979—accompanied by her successful career as a columnist for the country’s leading newspaper *El País* and her frequent mention in written and visual media have led her to become one of Spain’s best known feminists. *Crónica* is the author’s first incursion into narrative and is permeated with a desire to give voice to the personal issues of its female characters, reflecting the efforts that Montero had made in journalism up to that point.

Montero’s career as a journalist began in the early 1970s, when she worked intermittently in numerous newspapers and magazines. Her place in the profession became cemented in the late 1970s when she was hired into a full-time position at the recently founded daily publication *El País*. Her main work beginning in 1977 consisted in conducting interviews for the paper’s Sunday supplement. Montero quickly gained respect, and in 1978 she became the first woman to be awarded the “Manuel de Arco” prize for interviews (*Rosa*). In 1982, Editorial Debate published a collection of fascinating interviews that the author had done at *El País* since 1977 with a variety of important figures in the Spanish political and cultural scene such as Santiago Carrillo, Pilar Primo de Rivera, Manuel Fraga, Felipe González, Marco Ferreri, Montserrat Caballé, and Carlos Hugo de Borbón. The volume was titled *Cinco años de país*, referencing the number of years passed since the consolidation of democracy in Spain as
well as the founding of *El País*. In the interviews, Montero often asks questions from a feminist perspective, pressing Pilar Primo de Rivera—head of the Sección Femenina—to explain her position within the current debates about women’s rights, or asking Santiago Carrillo about the reception of women and homosexuals within the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) (Montero *Cinco* 25-26, 88-90). In this fashion, Montero was helping to transform the perception of women through her journalism.

The role of journalism in the Transition period for women was important, given the general invisibility of narrative written by women, as female writers were consistently ignored and often belittled for their contributions to Spanish literature. As Phyllis Zatlin observed in a 1985 article discussing the early democratic era:

> Democratic Spain has brought an end to official censorship and has provided women writers with the possibility of giving free expression to the female experience, including such a previously taboo topic as female sexuality, but has understandably not guaranteed publication, dissemination, and acceptance of their writing. (“Women” 30)

Women writers of the era had limited access to publishing houses, and the ones that did publish their work were generally small—often focusing primarily on women’s work—and therefore could offer little in terms of dissemination (“Women” 29-30). This treatment forms part of a longer history of women’s invisibility in literature. As Laura Freixas has shown, within patriarchal culture, women have traditionally been considered second-class authors who write from and about the “particular” and the “private,” which precludes their work from acquiring the “universality” that literature written by men is assumed to have, as well as from being recognized within the literary canon (210). Consequently, women’s work in Spain is often classified into less respected “women’s” genres such as the *memorias*, *testimonio*, and *novela rosa*. As Freixas argues, the
classification of literature as “feminine”—even if it is not written by women—has come to acquire an almost always pejorative connotation as to the quality—or universality—of the work (86-94).

Increased visibility for women writers in the public sphere in the years following the end of the dictatorship did not change the overall attitude concerning the supposed lack of quality of their work. Freixas has documented, for example, how in 1999 there had been an increased visibility of many women authors in the press and many reports claiming that women authors were among the best-selling and most published in Spain. This widely accepted notion, however, did not reflect the truth that male authors still published more, sold more, and won more awards than women. Freixas outlines what she calls “la visibilidad mediática de las mujeres . . . ; la desproporción entre esa visibilidad y su presencia real, que es mucho más modesta; [y] . . . la escasa seriedad (por decirlo cortésmente) con que se aborda el tema que nos ocupa” (35). Thus, the tendency in the press of increased visibility for female authors pointed merely toward the marketability of the image of certain women and actually constituted a set-back for improving the overall position of women within the literary world in Spain. This case points to the contradictory situation for women in defining the public in terms of visibility.7

Examples of what Freixas discusses in her study can be found in the mid-to-late 1970s as well. Zatlin points to an academic study of the novels of the Transition in which only one woman, Carmen Martín Gaite, was included, despite the fact that there were several important women writers producing work at the time such as Esther Tusquets, Carme Riera, Montserrat Roig, and Montero herself. The novels published by these well-

7 Another fascinating topic in terms of women and visibility in the Transition that is beyond the scope of this study is found in the film industry and the so-called destape, or “uncovering,” which as its name suggests involved putting women’s bodies on display for the newly sexually liberated Spanish man.
known authors were often similar in their use of the metafictional mode, the desire to raise consciousness by representing the female experience, and the subversion of patriarchal discourses concerning sexuality and gender roles (Zatlin “Women” 30). These themes are evident in: *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) by Martín Gaite, who was already an established novelist at the time; the first novel by Tusquets, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978); and in Roig’s inaugural trilogy *Ramona, adéu!* (1972), *El temps de les cireres* (1977), and *L’hora violeta* (1980).

Closely related to women’s literature of the Transition was the field of journalism. The profession was crucial to feminist aspirations—making the personal political—because it was a type of writing directed to the “public.” It is in the particular relationship to journalism that Montero’s *Crónica del desamor* stands out from the work of other female writers as well as her own novels that would come just a few short years later. For while many female authors of the time—and their protagonists—were journalists, *Crónica* was the only text to utilize an overtly journalistic style (Zatlin “Women” 30). In fact, Montero was commissioned originally to compile a book of feminist interviews, but opted to write narrative instead (Davies 97). The author also commented on the book jacket that the text was, as the title announced, “not a novel precisely, but rather a chronicle without pretensions” (qtd. in Davies 96). The chronicle, as a hybrid genre between informational journalism and literature, allows for a subjective recording and interpretation of the unraveling of current events. Accordingly, Phyllis Zatlin has pointed out the aim of consciousness raising in Montero’s text and the fact that Ana, the protagonist, like Montero, is a journalist, a profession that “reinforces the tendency to chronicle individual and collective experience” (“Women” 30). This journalistic style in
Crónica is found in several aspects of its narrative and represents a desire to record, transmit, and make public the daily urban experience of its mainly female protagonists. The chronicle traditionally has been considered an urban genre, most typically involving the depiction of everyday occurrences in the public spaces of the city. If one examines Montero’s Crónica in this light, the extent to which the novel involves a rearticulation of the public becomes clear: the novel constitutes a subversion of the chronicle genre in that what is chronicled are intimate, private experiences rather than public events.

The protagonist, Ana, works in the features, or “Noticias semanales” section of a progressive newspaper in Madrid.8 Throughout the novel, Ana’s character is the main focus. A series of her mostly female friends are presented as well, and their experiences are filtered through their interactions with the protagonist. There are metafictional references made at the beginning and end of the narration, as Ana contemplates the possibility of writing a book about the daily lives of women in Madrid. This narration that she imagines is very similar to the one of which she forms a part. These self-referential comments are important in establishing the aim of the text, which is to not only tell Ana’s story, “un diario de aburridas frustraciones,” but to form a collective consciousness among women concerning their personal lives, which are unique but strikingly similar to Ana’s own: “Piensa Ana que estaría bien escribir un día algo. Sobre la vida de cada día, claro está. Sobre Juan y ella. Sobre Curro y ella. Sobre la Pulga y Elena. Sobre Ana María . . . Sería el libro de las Anas, de todas y ella misma, tan distinta y tan una” (12; 8-9). As Ana herself recognizes, a mere personal diary “sería banal, estúpido e interminable” (12). Thus, the collectivity of the novel is essential and gives it a necessary weight and purpose contrary to what a memoir or diary could offer.

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8 The autobiographical reference here is obvious.
From within the novel then there is an urge to address a reading public through which the supposedly private matters of the protagonists may be made collective. In fact, the novel, intended for women readers, sold 75,000 copies in its first edition and had four more printings published in its first year (Davies 96). Thus, the public emerges here through the reading of the text and depends little on the visibility of the characters in public space within the narrative. Indeed, the predominance of interior spaces coupled with the limited description of exterior spaces in the narrative is noteworthy. It can be argued therefore that the kind of public being purported through the text is one based primarily, in Weintraub’s terms, on collectivity rather than visibility.

This complicated relationship to visibility is made obvious in the novel and in the Transition period in general in terms of women’s occupation of city streets. As discussed above, an important part of the feminist movement in the Transition years involved taking to the streets in protest. However, these acts did not guarantee recognition and rights. One scene involving a street demonstration against speculation in the housing market in Crónica reveals different aspects of this problem for women. For one thing, visibility for women did not necessarily mean being seen in a different light. When Ana’s friend Elena attends the demonstration, she feels “inquieta, como desazonada” after the experience (48). Part of this feeling about the event has to do with Elena’s own perception of her appearance and actions in front of others:

[Elena] se sabe agresiva y en las ocasiones de tensión siempre teme desbordarse. . . . convertirse en un personaje poco grato, en una mujer al borde de la histeria que escupe palabras entre espumarajos, ahogada en su misma rabia. Como las barbaridades que le dijo esta tarde a aquel vejete de mirada callosa, “marcharos atrás con las pancartas”, berreaba ella, y el hombre la observaba con rostro impenetrable sin hacer el menor caso. (48)
Elena is self-aware; influenced by mainstream depictions of feminists as crazy, radical, and divisive, no matter how much of an activist she is, she can not help but feel out of place while assuming a public role.

This sentiment felt by Elena is arguably the internalizing of an image of women—and feminists in particular—that was propagated during the Transition. Pamela Beth Radcliff argues that while even the more conservative political parties made up of mostly former Francoist officials like Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) y Alianza Popular (AP) supported principles of equality, feminists were nearly always represented negatively in the press as egotistical, divisionary, and acting against the need for consensus (55). Yet the need for “consensus” in this context implicitly meant a continuing support for the patriarchy. Many of the other representations of women in the mainstream press were limited to humorous vignettes reflecting on the new freedom and equality of a modernized Spain, like one that showed a man and woman walking in the airport, the woman carrying the suitcases and the man holding the hand of the couple’s child. These kinds of representations, argues Radcliff, were less threatening than feminist activism because they were private, individual acts that did not question the place of women in the domestic, familial realm (59-60). They were also representations that could congratulate men for taking a more feminized role. In general, says Radcliff, “el feminismo recibía el apoyo de la prensa cuando era algo que se hacía por las mujeres y no algo que hacían ellas mismas; cuando era algo que se les otorgaba y no algo que reivindicaban” (55).

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9 Indeed, as Monica Threlfall has shown, women organized and were present in a number of public demonstrations, protests, conferences, and the like during the Transition, a presence that undoubtedly led even the more conservative parties to recognize calls for equality (Threlfall 31-34). In addition, the revision of Francoist laws and the integration of issues such as equality, divorce, abortion, coeducation and contraception into the Spanish Constitution (written only by men) surely came thanks to the feminist movement’s efforts (Martínez Ten 13).
On the one hand, this attitude toward feminism as damaging to overall consensus and the “common good” reveals the difficulty that many had in recognizing that the “personal is political” and accepting that women’s issues were indeed of concern to all Spaniards. On the other, it also reveals what Radcliff describes as a problem within Western democratic society in defining and recognizing feminine citizenship. She explains:

Distintos países, o bien han abrazado los modelos ciudadanos de “igualdad” que ignoran las diferencias de género definiendo las cuestiones planteadas por mujeres como problemas particularistas y privados, o bien abrazan la diferencia asignada a mujeres y hombres de distintos tipos de relación con la nación, y tradicionalmente lo hacen bajo la óptica de división en esfera privada y esfera pública. (68)

Neither case represents a desirable kind of citizenship for women, whose interests are either seen as private and subsumed by a concern for “universal” rights—which are inevitably coded male—or female citizens are assigned to the private realm of domesticity. In the Transition, says Radcliff, there was no clear model of female citizenship, but rather an odd combination of the two: while Francoism had articulated a clear place for women in the home, the democratic discourse postured one of equality, and thus the image of the housewife was often looked down upon; however, the feminists who did indeed occupy the public sphere were seen as too divisionary to be “good citizens” (69). This example is a complicated and contradictory case of the image of women in the public sphere, where visibility does not automatically nor necessarily amount to real gains.

Furthermore, in spite of their proven presence on the streets and in various political actions in the Transition, women struggled to be recognized as legitimate and important figures. Many feminists from both Spain and abroad have been working in
recent years to recuperate the role that women played in the Transition and challenge historical narratives that write them out of the process, such as Preston’s study. In fact, a recent volume titled *El movimiento feminista en España en los años 70* involved sixteen women and one man in the project of recovering the feminist movement’s contributions. The reasons for the movement’s suppression from the official Transition history are numerous and complex, although undoubtedly related to women’s invisibility in most historic events over the course of centuries across the world (Martínez Ten 11). Yet there were specific historical, social, and cultural conditions that led Spanish feminism down a complicated path during the Transition.

Perhaps the most important issue in this regard is the complex relationship between feminists and the clandestine political parties and labor unions. During the Franco years, many women took part in leftist oppositional politics through these institutions. Yet they were often relegated to the role of caretaker and companion for the men who were seen as the true “guerreros” (Moreno 15). Furthermore, making demands that were of specific concern to women was typically looked down upon or ignored, since “. . . la actitud general era luchar primero por lo principal y luego por las derivadas. Lo principal era . . . la democracia, y en general las principales fuerzas de izquierda nunca se llegaron a creer entonces que ‘lo de las mujeres’ afectara a la calidad de la democracia” (Martínez Ten 7-8). The opposition remained in its class-based social analysis and could not fathom that the demands women were making formed part of a political problem. As Threlfall explains, “la izquierda sólo reconocía a la mujer trabajadora, a la que iban a liberar—aunque sólo después de ‘construir el socialismo’—, y en todo caso, siempre en un futuro distante” (39). Some feminists were as critical of the opposition as they were of
franquismo because while the latter’s subordination of women was to be expected, it was more disheartening to find such disregard and ridicule coming from the former. Amparo Moreno, for example, writing a history of the young Spanish feminist movement in 1977, opens her book with an invective against the Left for the discrimination suffered by women in their ranks:

El Movimiento Feminista ha conquistado ya en la actualidad una presencia pública y un peso específico en todo el Estado español, a pesar de todo y a pesar de todos. A pesar del franquismo, que ha puesto todos los medios a su alcance para subyugar a las mujeres y acallar sus voces de protesta. Y a pesar, también, de quienes se han opuesto al franquismo, la oposición política y sindical en pleno, que en lo que respecta a la mujer (más de la mitad de la población) se ha limitado a reproducir los intereses y la ideología de la clase dominante. (15)

This quote reveals a common opinion of feminists during the Transition, as more and more citizens involved in radical politics became disenchanted with the workings of institutionalized resistance. The patriarchal structure of the Left placed women in a difficult situation, since many had worked for years with the opposition and believed firmly in its project. The situation caused conflict within the budding feminist movement, as different “camps” emerged. Many women opted for what was called “doble militancia,” fighting for recognition of women’s issues from within the oppositional structure, while others chose to form separate organizations to promote women’s rights on their own terms. Given all of these complications, the movement did not strongly coalesce on its own until 1975, assisted by the United Nations’ declaration of International Women’s Year (Moreno 18).

This complex relationship between women and the Left is made evident in Montero’s novel. Ana and her friends—a journalist, a professor, and a doctor—are all politically involved young professionals. These women, in addition to their male partners
and friends, formed part of the political opposition to the Regime through the clandestine political parties and student movements. However, the mood has changed in the period that the narrator describes. Ana’s ex-boyfriend, Juan, for example, was active in the Communist Party but later became both disillusioned and fearful because of his involvement and decided to leave for Latin America. Ana, who in the last years of Franco “acudía a las manifestaciones con piernas temblorosas,” has stopped going to the demonstrations altogether, be it for lack of time, energy, or interest (22).

Marking the ideological shifts taking place within the feminist movement at the time, Elena and Ana are hesitant to participate in demonstrations because of what they see as the anachronistic involvement of the political parties and unions. As the narrator describes the demonstration that Elena goes to—organized by the “coordinadora de vecinos”—it becomes clear that one of the main problems for Elena with the act was the presence of the unions: “. . . también algunos tipos de las centrales sindicales . . . forzaron las filas hasta conseguir poner en cabeza sus pancartas . . . y bajo los slogans comunes se leían sus siglas en gruesos caracteres, CCOO, UGT, era el viejo intento de capitalización de una manifestación que había sido gestada apartidista. . . .” (48). For her part, Ana agrees with Elena that “los partidos ya no sirven, han de ser nuevos los métodos de lucha, es el momento de las agrupaciones feministas, ciudadanas, comunales” (43). The women are stuck in a position of wanting to replace the old system but not knowing exactly how to go about forming a new one. For example, Ana would like to think that the “desencanto” is an invention of Suárez’s government in order to rule more easily over uninvolved citizens, yet “siente ella misma también la perplejidad del contexto, el absurdo, la desidia. . . . Y así está, negándose a sí misma, aplastada por una incredulidad que se entierra en
la pereza, evadiéndose de lo real a través de un irreal amor por Soto Amón, en una huida individualista y solitaria” (43). No matter how much Ana is frustrated by the current situation, she struggles to find a new identity for herself within the democratic framework and instead holds on to a traditional romantic fantasy involving her boss.

The sensation of being stuck between old and new corresponds to the uneasy entry of women into the public sphere and what that meant for the possible constitution of a female gender identity that was not formed only in the domestic realm. Throughout the novel, Ana and her friends struggle to come to terms with their self-identity. As Caragh Wells has argued:

The female characters . . . are all collectively trapped by the model of female behaviour and identity that was propagated by Francoist discourse; despite Spain’s first steps towards democratic politics, these women are still bound by the restrictions that were placed on female identity formation during the dictatorship. (16)

On the one hand, the women are obviously frustrated with and make efforts to rebel against the traditional notions of female identity. Both Ana and Candela are single mothers; Candela, in fact, has never been married and has two children, each by a different father. La Pulga will only date men half her age. When Julita’s husband leaves her for another woman—younger than her, of course—she feels completely lost. Her friends try to make her feel better but struggle to feel any solidarity with her. Elena thinks, “como si el femenino dolor de Julita le produjera una repugnancia culpable . . . que Julita es dolorosamente tópica en su papel de madre y esposa desolada” (105).

On the other hand, even the more independent women cannot help but feel incomplete with their lives and yearn for a more stable existence with a male partner. Elena, in spite of her attitude towards Julita, later plays the stereotypical role of female
martyr by deciding to stay in an unhappy relationship with her partner Javier when he is diagnosed with testicular cancer. Ana, although happy with her independence, “vuelve a vivir el ansia de . . . intentar de nuevo la pareja, aunque la tema suicida. Y así, añora el torpe y tierno abrazo de un amante dormido, más que hacer el amor, más que el propio sexo” (33). Another friend of the group, Olga, has opted out of a more traditional lifestyle in favor of an alternative experience in India. Yet she pays the consequences: her ex-boyfriend, el Zorro, goes to India in a futile attempt to find her. He later hears from a friend that Olga has lost herself completely in drug addiction.

The traditional family model has been relatively unsatisfactory for the women in the novel and they make attempts to form their own, new forms of kinship. Ana thinks of her relationship with her neighbor Ana María as “. . . una relación que tiene mucho de fraternal y que remeda a la familia” (66). This kind of relationship with friends is crucial for Ana because she has a strained relationship with her own family; her paternal grandmother disowned her: “Al quedar Ana embarazada la abuela la repudió, la desprendió de la familia, decidió tachar su existencia con indignada mano de anciana moralista” (74). When her gay friend Cecilio fears that they—as independent people without extensive family ties—will one day die alone, she tries to refute him by saying that “lo que tenemos que hacer es buscar una alternativa a la familia tradicional, lograr crear un clan de apoyo y cobijo entre amigos. . .” (75). It is important to note the unconvincing tone in which Ana makes this argument, “Ana a veces le contradecía, intentaba discutirle con optimismo forzado. . .” (75). This attitude reveals again the extent to which both women—and in this case, gay men as well—are stuck between old and new models of public and private life.
One of the key examples in the novel of this inability to assume a new identity based on freedom comes with Ana’s central storyline and her ongoing fascination with her boss, Eduardo Soto Amón. Even though he is a progressive, “democratic” man, his employees call him “Ramsés” because of his authoritarian manner. Indeed, Soto Amón is the embodiment of all that Ana resists as a feminist. He is married but has a secret apartment in the city for his trysts. His well-groomed appearance and the necktie symbolic of his patriarchal power are what make Ana realize there is a fine line between the repulsion she thinks she feels for him and the infatuation that she develops. At the end of the novel, Ana’s months-long fantasy is finally made reality when Soto Amón, who to the point has failed to acknowledge her existence, comes on to her at a going away party for one of her colleagues. They spend a predictable night together that in no way lives up to Ana’s fantasy, and she anticipates his “cliché-ridden conversation and ritualistic behaviour when he finally takes her to bed” (Davies 105). A symbol of the continued subordination of women, Ana is not even given the chance to take off his tie, something that she had long fantasized about doing.

The unraveling of this episode with Soto Amón, however, is promising in terms of Ana’s realization of the need to change patterns and the role that the public spaces of the city might play in that shift. Caragh Wells analyzes the conclusion of Ana’s night with Soto Amón, in which Ana decides to take a taxi home and leaves him standing in the doorway between his apartment building and the street. When she announces that she does not want to be accompanied, Eduardo has difficulty believing that Ana is feeling well, but she walks away laughing and proud. Wells describes this moment as an “urban epiphany,” a moment in which Ana feels euphoric and, in the symbolic space of the
threshold, “. . . sheds her former self-identity and embraces a new sense of psychological mobility through the acquisition of greater subjective agency. She literally imagines herself into a new identity within this urban space” (Wells 17).¹⁰ For Wells, then, the public spaces of the city serve as a place from which to question the fixed notions of identity and to “explore the contradictory drive between stasis and mobility” (17).

Moreover, something not mentioned by Wells is that Ana’s “epiphany” is especially liberating in this moment because she has been watching the night with Soto Amón develop, predicting exactly both his and her words and actions (these thoughts set off between parentheses in the text). She describes the situation as a “pantomime,” an act in which both Soto Amón and she are successfully acting out the part required of them. One of the moments Ana predicts is that he will ask her to take a taxi, and this is where she is finally able to end the “pantomime;” before he has a chance to pose the question she tells him she will leave on her own. Therefore, the public space of the city becomes a space from which Ana and women in general may begin to break with the traditional roles assigned to them and which they too often carry out without questioning. This analysis corresponds to what feminist geographers have discussed concerning urban space and women. Linda McDowell, for example, has supported the notion of the city as a space from which to transgress hegemonic versions of sexuality (156). Likewise, Elizabeth Wilson, in her well-known work, *The Sphinx in the City*, has placed emphasis on the indeterminate and potentially dangerous aspects of the city. In spite of and in fact thanks to these dangers, she says, the city has served as the most potentially liberating space for women over the centuries (7-9). It is in the city where women may experience

¹⁰ Wells’s article analyzes similar “urban epiphanies” in a series of different female characters in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*, Martín Gaite’s *Entre visillos*, and Montserrat Roig’s *Ramona, adéu*.
new beginnings, much as the protagonist Ana appears to do here. On the one hand, the Ana’s hiring of a male taxi driver to take her wherever she desires shows her freedom to move about the city. Yet, this is an ambiguous act in that Ana is not able to drive herself home either, once again signaling her incomplete public liberation.

For Wells, this potentially liberating moment for Ana stands out from what she describes as the overall “image of the city that is both sinister and oppressive” (16). This description does not completely hold true. It is important to note that in the novel women are not unwillingly confined to the home. They are employed and move about relatively freely through Madrid, which has undergone an important process of aperture in recent years. Ana and Elena refer in the past tense to the fear that they felt on the street in demonstrations. The overt oppression and control of public spaces of those years has obviously passed. This is made clearest early in the novel in the description of Ana’s ride in a taxi. The narrator makes a distinction between the taxi drivers of the Franco years and the current ones who dress in leather and blast rock music:

Recuerda Ana que hace pocos, aún muy pocos años, ella aprendió a recelar de los taxistas, hay que tener cuidado con ellos, se decía, hay muchos chivatos policiales dispuestos a denunciarte si dices algo sospechoso, eran los años del franquismo, aquellos años llenos de susurros. Ahora, este muchacho conduce con una sola mano, tararea un rock angloparlante y exhibe en el salpicadero del coche divertidos carteles cuidadosamente escritos con rotuladores de colores, “no me coma el coco, por favor”, y “no insista en explicármelo todo: le he entendido perfectamente.” (18-19)

The taxi driver, as a “master” of the street, is a key figure for presenting the evolution of public space in the years since the end of the dictatorship. If the previous years were characterized by fear and oppression, the current ones are obviously more permissive. Importantly though, the moment is also marked by a lack of communication, reinforced by the young driver’s signs and his obsession with playing loud music (Marcone 65).
Throughout the novel, practically all of the characters suffer from this problem of disorientation and insufficient communication, suggesting that even though public space has been opened up to them they do not yet know how to put it to use.

Therefore, the confinement of the majority of the scenes of the novel to interior spaces demonstrates that the domestic realm is still considered in many ways the principal space of identity formation for women and serves as a familiar stage upon which to act out their push for liberation. Likewise, the city, despite its more open nature, is still shaped by patriarchal structures. The action takes place mainly in apartments, offices, and bars in which the women carry out their daily lives. References to the city streets are few and, while women pass through them as they move around the city, there is little to no description of these spaces. In the instances where description does take place, the exterior spaces of the city are depicted in terms of urban problems related to any modern metropolis that might discourage women—and anyone else for that matter—from a more visible presence in public spaces: unreliable public transportation, noise pollution, and contamination (Montero *Crónica* 76). Although they have learned to deal with it and it is not as bad as it used to be, the women also still suffer gender-specific sexual harassment on the street, in the metro, and in other public places (Montero *Crónica* 159). An important point that Michael Ugarte makes in regard to this is that the urban dimension of the “desamor” referenced in the title is central to the novel’s development (112). The women of the narrative, he argues, “. . . cope with male power structures that transcend that of a single ruler in charge of all governmental decisions. These structures overlap into marriages, love and work relationships, and urban behavior such as the wandering hand in the subway car (Ugarte 112). In this sense, the novel
addresses political problems not in the traditional governmental sense of the word but at the level of the patriarchal structures that shape everyday life in the city.

An important part of the absence of description of women in public space in the novel has to do with the desire to deal candidly with intimate, often hidden issues related to women’s difference rather than with ones concerning rights that were more easily put on display and debated publicly at the time. This choice of setting, therefore, marks the evolution of feminist values within the text. The project of consciousness-raising in the text aims to take on directly the pervading lack of communication by encouraging the construction of a counterpublic. A clear example is found when Ana accompanies her friends, sisters Candela and Elena, to Candela’s appointment with a gynecologist. The “progressive” male doctor insists she use an IUD (intrauterine device) or birth control pills, which the narrator points out are “métodos que el hombre no padece” (30). In fact, as a result of following a male gynecologist’s advice Candela had an unwanted pregnancy, went to London to abort, and then got a serious infection because the English doctor implanted another IUD before she had fully recovered. These experiences suggest, as do those presented throughout the whole novel, that women can not rely on men—even those in the medical profession—to look out for women’s best interests. This position is summed up in Candela’s thoughts as she recovers from her infection: “Tuvo Candela mucho tiempo para reflexionar, allá en el hospital. Pensó en la liberación de la mujer, o mejor dicho, en esa supuesta liberación que a ojos de muchos hombres sólo se concretaba en lo sexual, en tener hembras más dispuestas, en olvidar el odiado condón, el coito interrumpido” (27). Furthermore, as the women discuss different contraceptive options, Ana comments that she finds it odd that the diaphragm is regaining popularity
since it is one of the oldest methods of birth control. Candela assents and mentions that her mother used the diaphragm decades ago when they had to smuggle them into Spain from France. Elena is surprised to hear the story and says that their mother never told her, to which Candela replies, “será que no te has preocupado de preguntárselo” (31). This brief moment demonstrates the need for women to be more open about these matters, where the shared intimate experiences of women are shown to be a basis for articulating public demands.

The need to make the personal political permeates the whole narration. Michael Ugarte has argued that the novel is “perhaps too clear” in its project since hot-button women’s issues such as abortion, sexual liberation, contraceptive freedom, and problems faced by single mothers are “at times tenuously connected to the story line” (112). Ugarte here fails to consider that this is indeed what the chronicle is all about and that Montero’s text walks a fine line, like any chronicle, between literature and journalism. As Davies says: “It could be argued that . . . the journalist brings her newspaper column to the work of fiction and crosses conventional genre demarcations between feminist propaganda and narrative fiction” (101).11 Montero’s following works such as La función Delta (1981) and Te trataré como a una reina (1983), while certainly dealing with women’s issues, are not so explicit in their presentation of problems and are more complex in their narratives. Yet as Davies also shows, Montero’s use of nineteenth-century realist novel conventions

\[11\] Curiously, Rosa Montero has often denied that she writes feminist novels, rejecting the common notion that narrative by women must necessarily be about women while men can write “universal” novels. In an online chat with readers in 2005 she said the following: “No me considero una escritora feminista. Como persona, como ciudadana, sí soy feminista, o, para decirlo con una palabra más precisa, antisexista . . . . Las novelas no se escriben para servir de cadena de transmisión de tus ideas. Las novelas son un camino de conocimiento, y uno escribe para intentar entender el mundo, para intentar aprender, para poner un poco de luz en la negrura. Por lo tanto, me revientan las novelas utilitarias, feministas, pacifistas, ecologistas o cualquier otro ista, porque me parecen la mayor traición que se puede hacer a la literatura.” (Montero “Encuentro”)
and her conception of the novel as a chronicle “give the author plenty of scope to introduce topical and politically sensitive feminist themes . . . within a loose narrative framework” (101). Davies points out the realist novel of the nineteenth century to call attention to Montero’s meticulous description of current events, historical context, and everyday life. It is important to note, however, that *Crónica del desamor* involves a radical departure from realist novels such as Galdós’s *Fortunata y Jacinta* and Clarín’s *La Regenta* as far as women’s sexuality is concerned. While in these novels women’s sexual desire was cruelly punished, *Crónica* can be seen as a sort of rewriting of the genre from a feminist perspective.

In this sense, *Crónica* attempts to etch out the beginnings of a counterpublic in the terms described by Warner. The controversial, taboo issues that Montero confronts such as female orgasm, contraception, and abortion from a woman’s voice and perspective constitute the “sense of indecorousness” with which such discourse would be received within the dominant public (Warner 119). In addition, the novel serves as an example of how the feminist movement depended on alternative texts to circulate its discourse, as it was considered too divisive to be included seriously in the mainstream media. Within the fictional world of *Crónica*, the writing of a novel is important for Ana to be able to carry out her own public project given the difficulty she encounters in accessing more widespread channels for the dissemination of women’s everyday struggles. Ana is frustrated by her subordinate role at the newspaper, where she is the victim of discrimination. She cannot convince her male bosses to hire her on a full-time basis even though she works as much and as well as her male counterparts. The “libro de las Anas” that she would like to write will depend on another way of reaching the reading public.
Yet, as has been stressed in this analysis, the making public of supposedly private issues of gender and sexuality in the novel is tenuous and incomplete. In spite of how open Ana, her friends, and the omniscient narrator are about certain topics, they continue to struggle with complete disclosure. The most glaring example of this indeterminacy in the novel is found in Ana and her neighbor Ana María’s approach to the abusive neighbor who lives downstairs. They are both awoken several times throughout the narration by the screams and sobs that come from the apartment below. Both of the women are scared, and they discuss the situation, even offering possible theories for what is going on between the one man and two young women who live there. Even though they both realize that their initial thought that they were just “being rough” as they had sex is not true, neither is prepared to or even considers taking any action in support of the women. Indeed, their reaction is quite surprising and cold. For Ana and Ana María the situation almost is like a game, and they laugh as they listen and follow the screams of the downstairs neighbors from room to room (70). Ana suggests that perhaps one of the women is collaborating with the man in torturing the other woman, and as she and Ana María argue over which might be the victim, they break into laughter (72).

The silence of Ana and her friend in regard to the violence taking place in the home beneath them is not necessarily surprising given the time period—domestic abuse was just beginning to be recognized in the 1970s, thanks to the feminist movement, as a problem and crime. Moreover, reporting such cases to the police would not likely lead to any action and could even place them in a dangerous situation. Ana’s thoughts on the subject suggest, rather than a real fear about what might happen, a list of excuses to make herself feel less guilty for not saying anything: “[Ana] siente un pavor, un pavor
irracional, deben ser una panda de dementes, deben tener ataques de enajenación, si les digo algo lo mismo nos hacen daño al Curro y a mí” (244). Given the more overt statements in the novel from the character and the narrator concerning women’s issues, the silence surrounding this instance of violence suggests that there are still concerns that have yet to find a voice and solidarity even within the women’s counterpublic. The constant, invisible presence of this violence downstairs serves as a symbolic reminder that the confinement of women to the domestic realm has yet to be completely shattered and that the transition of women’s identity in Spain is still in process.

Another theme of the novel that reveals this continuing unease for women concerning their shifting place in society is that of maternity. The single mother is an important figure in the novel, as Ana, Candela, and Julita deal with the challenges of raising children while at the same time working outside of the home. Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer has argued that in the novel “la figura de la madre soltera y luchadora en el mercado del trabajo es el nuevo símbolo de la ‘mater dolorosa.’ [El] éxito profesional [de Ana] se ve limitado, por no decir amenazado por la maternidad. Y sus obligaciones profesionales reducen su capacidad de dedicarse al niño” (113). Ana’s life is no doubt a busy one, and she often takes her son, Curro, to work with her or leaves him with her mother in order to have a social life. However, Neuschäfer’s assessment that the women must sacrifice either their professional or maternal life in order for the other to function properly is questionable within the framework of the novel. Rather, female readers are presented with a challenging situation that no doubt many of them share, and are shown that it is difficult but indeed possible to balance motherhood with a professional life.
Indeed, maternity is seen in a positive light in the novel and represents a possible facet of the solution to the problems faced by women. As Candela, a psychologist, listens to Curro and her daughter Jara talk about their private parts, she states that, “Estoy segura de que Freud se sacó lo del complejo de castración de la manga para ocultar el tremendo complejo que tienen los hombres por no poder parir. . .” (230). Elena, upon hearing the commentary, reflects on her own views. In line with some views from radical feminism at the time, Elena had previously considered motherhood a “deformación cultural,” but she has begun to see it in a different light (230). While she still does not want to be a mother, she does consider pregnancy “una opción real y propia,” marking the evolution in feminism away from seeking equality with men to reaffirming female corporeal difference (230). Elena’s self-questioning is not a rebuke of feminism as such, but rather “. . . a case of a widening of horizons, an awareness by women of the need to revalorize and appropriate their own bodies and reproductive potential for themselves within the new democratic context” (Davies 104). Therefore, motherhood is seen as a positive, alternative way of articulating identity because it represents the beginnings of the new kinds of kinship that Ana herself has tried to imagine: motherhood, rather than a requirement framed within the traditional Catholic discourses of the Francoist past, is here a personal choice and something that has resulted from the women characters’ own sexual liberation.

In Crónica, motherhood, as well as other aspects of women’s at times contradictory liberation, is about the body. Choosing to have a child is the result of women taking control of their own bodies and discovering pleasure and exploring their sexuality. It is only through a text like Crónica and the formation of a counterpublic that
women are able to transform this desire to discover themselves into a body politics that, while based on fluidity and intimacy, is capable of becoming public and collective.  

In this sense, Crónica suggests that instead of rejecting completely their link to the domestic and familial realm, women need to find ways to reconfigure that connection through a different, feminine perspective. This approach is reflective of Michael Warner’s contention that there is a “visceral force” in the distinction between private and public that runs deep into our understanding of the body and everyday life, and at this level the categories are difficult to challenge (10). There are ways to open up and reassess the meanings of the private, and counterpublics are an essential tool in this process:

Visceral private meaning is not easy to alter by oneself, by a free act of will. It can only be altered through exchanges that go beyond self-expression to the making of a collective scene of disclosure. The result, in counterpublics, is that the visceral intensity of gender, of sexuality, or of corporeal style in general no longer needs to be understood as private . . . . Publicness itself has a visceral resonance. (62-63)

Crónica, therefore, in its attempt to assess women’s precarious position between the public and private spheres during the Transition to democracy, does not envisage doing away with such “visceral” aspects of womanhood as maternity and sexual desire. Rather, the text attempts to form a “collective scene of disclosure” from which these issues may be made public and seen in a different light. It is important to note that the imagined “scene of disclosure” is not a spectacularized one, as is made clear through the female characters’ lack of presence in and uneasy relationship with exterior spaces of the city. The “scene of disclosure” here exists on a more “invisible” plane of discourse, both from

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12 There is a long and complex history between feminism and motherhood. In this brief analysis of the public and private in Montero’s novel, the most crucial aspect of this history is that of the second-wave feminists that saw motherhood as positive to the extent that it involved the reclaiming of one’s own body. See Ann Snitow’s “Feminism and Motherhood” for an extensive bibliography of American and French feminist thought on the topic.
within the text at the level of its metafictional commentary as well as at the literal level of
the novel’s dissemination amongst a wide range of both female and male readers.

**Inside Out: the Transvestite and the City in Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera**

Eduardo Mendicutti’s short novel, *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera*, also
creates a “scene of disclosure” for questions of gender and sexuality by virtue of the
utilization of the figure of the transvestite. This scene of disclosure contrasts rather
directly to the one in Montero’s novel. Unlike the erasure of feminist activists and
women in general and the invisibility of the role that they played in the Spanish
Transition, the image of the transvestite was widely recognized in the 1970s and has been
invoked time and again in both popular and academic studies examining the history and
culture of the Transition. Mendicutti, playing with this well-known image and the
presence of his transvestite characters on the streets of Madrid, presents an alternative
vision of the Transition as well as a public questioning of “private” issues of gender and
sexuality. In comparison to the women characters’ uneasy relationship with the city and
visibility in *Crónica del desamor, Una mala noche* involves a much more spectacularized
“scene of disclosure.” The feminist body politics of fluidity and pleasure are met here
with the transvestite’s need for an audience and spectacle in order to reaffirm her identity.
The more cautious entrance of women into the public sphere and into the public spaces of
the city and the lack of confidence concerning the political situation in Spain in *Crónica*
is contrasted in Mendicutti’s novel with an exuberant and raucous taking to the streets in
celebration of democracy.
*Una mala noche*, originally published in 1982, is the first-person narration of an Andalusian male-to-female transvestite, La Madelón. Throughout her narrative, she recalls the trauma of the night of February 23, 1981 and the attempted coup by Antonio Tejero, which for many historians marks the end of the Transition period in Spain. La Madelón explains how, after arriving at her flat in Madrid that night, she began to reflect upon what the past six years of freedom meant for her and her friends and how her life would completely change if the coup were to be successful. The novel is significant because it makes a transvestite the sole voice that narrates the events of 23-F. The reader is offered an alternative vision of that night via the memories of a marginalized person who experienced and suffered through the uncertain hours of the coup. An important part of La Madelón’s narration also involves the description of her involvement in various kinds of demonstrations and actions on the streets of Madrid, and the public spaces of the city are crucial to her formation as a subject.

La Madelón opens her narration by explaining where she was and what she did when she found out about the attempted coup. This is a classic way in which individuals give accounts of significant historical events and points to a desire to join individual and collective experience. Part of this explanation involves a naming of city landmarks as she walks down the Gran Vía from Plaza de España. This type of description of Madrid inserts the reader into a discourse on the city and contains, as in Rosa Montero’s novel, 13 Pérez-Sánchez shows that the novel was first published in 1982 and then republished by Tusquets in 1988 following the success of Mendicutt’s later novel, *Siete contra Georgia* (92). 14 Today, this alternative vision of the coup and the Transition in general can be seen in contrast to a series of well-known made-for-television films such as TVE2’s documentary *La transición* (1995), which presented the official story of the period from 1973 to 1977 told by important political voices such as Santiago Carrillo and Manuel Fraga. In 2009, on the anniversary of the failed coup, both Antena 3 and TVE released mini-series about the event: *23-F: Historia de una traición*, and *23-F: El día más difícil del Rey*, respectively. All three of these accounts are related to the “smoke-filled rooms” that Paul Preston emphasizes in his study of the period, and the works silence the broader social and cultural background within which these back-room negotiations took place.
elements of the chronicle. Antonio Hernández, although arguably mistaken in his characterization of the “libertine” nature of the novel, has mentioned Mendicutti’s work within this framework: “[La novela] consigue un fresco trepidante de los sótanos de un período histórico o, lo que es lo mismo, una crónica viva y delirante de la llamada transición, desde la óptica de una sociedad marginada con un solo objetivo: el gozo de la libertad, se considere o no su aspiración libertinaje” (111). The desire to record historical events taking place within the framework of references to important places in the city—the Plaza de Santa Ana, the Atocha station, etc.—bestow the novel with important traits of the chronicle.

In contrast to Montero’s Crónica del desamor, Una mala noche establishes a much clearer relationship between its protagonists and the street. While Crónica avoids outdoor spaces and develops detailed descriptions of interior spaces and intimate stories, Mendicutti’s novel celebrates the presence of its transvestite subjects on the streets of Madrid and describes in detail the public spaces that are occupied by La Madelón and others. In this manner, Una mala noche involves a geo-corporeal politics based on the public articulation of identity by highlighting the need for transvestites to be seen in public in order to simply exist.

Thus, the reworking of the chronicle genre takes on a different twist. While Montero’s novel opts for chronicling “intimate” issues that in general do not take place on the city streets, Mendicutti’s novel describes those public spaces in detail but represents an important, public historical event using the voice of a marginalized subject who is not usually given power as an enunciator in historical accounts. With the coup as a narrative framework, La Madelón is able to tell more intimate stories about her life and
personalize and modify the symbolic meaning of public spaces such as the Atocha train station and the Plaza de Oriente. In addition, the style of La Madelón’s account, written as a spoken monologue, while contrasting with the more journalistic style expected from a chronicle, has the intention of informing about the events taking place. In fact, the protagonist puts much emphasis on her desire to tell stories and admits that she considered becoming a reporter (131). Thus, while La Madelón is not a journalist like Ana in Montero’s novel, she fills a similar role as a chronicler.

A crucial part of the rearticulation of the public in the novel has to do with the use of language, as it serves the function—beyond the transvestites’ appearance—of formulating one’s identity through public interaction with others. In Warner’s terms, La Madelón’s language is crucial to the “scene of disclosure” and the formation of a counterpublic of gender and sexuality created in the novel. As Warner has argued, counterpublics exist not necessarily only as a basis for rational deliberation and conversation; often overlooked are the “poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics” (115). In this context, La Madelón’s monologue gives voice to the “vocabularies of affect” and “styles of embodiment” that Warner stresses. Alberto Mira has discussed the importance of language in the novel in terms of Mendicutti’s cultivation of a camp style or “pluma” characterized by excessive language, references to melodramatic “women’s” cinema, a strong sense of humor, and ironic references to gender (537). Indeed, for Mira the events themselves that are described in La Madelón’s monologue are secondary to the way in which they are described: “Pero todo es anecdótico. El centro de la novela es la celebración del lenguaje muy especial perfectamente subcultural y perfectamente cultivado. Y es este lenguaje lo
que crea todo un posicionamiento, perfectamente reconocido y asumido” (538). If one accepts this reading of the novel, what is found is a chronicle in which the events themselves are less important than the style of the voice that tells them.

Once again, the contrasting style and approach of *Crónica del desamor* and *Una mala noche* is identifiable. While language for Montero is meant to be as transparent as possible with the aim of focusing on and advancing specific women’s issues and fostering communication between women, the baroque and humorous language in Mendicutti’s novel stands out and itself becomes a defining aspect of the transvestites’ identity. The characteristic, humorous language that is cultivated and maintained by La Madelón presents a different way of understanding and approaching the world. While “pluma” was often used as a heterosexist way to ridicule homosexuality, Mira argues that certain authors like Mendicutti learned to use it as a “subcultural tool” where “la pluma se sacude los aspectos más opresivos y se convierte en toda una manera de ver el mundo y de cuestionar las ortodoxias heterosexistas” (147). Using Warner’s terms, the “pluma,” as part of a “collective scene of disclosure” goes beyond working as a subcultural tool within a delimited community into an ever expansive realm of the counterpublic.

The counterpublic nature of Mendicutti’s novel is found as well in the peculiar relationship between private and public represented within it. In contrast with the women characters of Montero’s novel, the protagonist is identified and identifies much more clearly with the street, with public spaces, than with the “private” spaces of the home and family that are traditionally viewed as the places where identity is formed.

At the time Mendicutti’s novel was written, transvestites were frequently used as a metaphor for the Transition, a symbol either of new identities and possibilities in the era
of democracy, or as a symbol of a nation that appeared modern and changed on the outside, but that could not shed its “true” identity beneath, the legacy of Franco. The use of the metaphor corresponds with a time period in which transvestites’ visibility was exploding. The “coming out” onto the street of marginalized urban residents was part of a general euphoria following the end of the dictatorship, and also an act of political significance. The greatly increased visibility of transvestites drew much attention from the Spanish media. In Barcelona, an Andalusian transvestite, Ocaña, was a household name known for his performances on the Ramblas and came to be the protagonist of Ventura Pons’s well-known documentary, Ocaña: Retrat intermitent. Similarly, Patrick Paul Garlinger has studied the importance of the figure of Bibí Andersen, a transsexual whose popularity reached incomparable heights in the 1980s and who starred in the 1976 film by Vicente Aranda titled Cambio de sexo that explores a young boy, played by Victoria Abril, who moves to the city and desires to become a woman. Other films from the period such as Vestida de azul (1977) by director Antonio Giménez Rico also addressed the theme of transexualism for broad Spanish audiences.

This frequent use of transvestites within the mainstream media was often ambivalent in terms of its openness to political and social change. As Mira argues, while the use of transvestites in the media was widely considered as a sign of the modernization and sexual liberation of Spain with the end of the dictatorship, it could also be seen as a

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15 This documentary film is of great analytical interest in terms of public space and sexuality, but given that the scope of this study is limited to Madrid, it is not included here.
16 Today, transvestism continues to be highly visible in popular culture as well as in academic studies of Spanish culture. Chus Gutiérrez’s film El Calentito (2005) explores the failed coup as well, as the transgender owner of the El Calentito night club, Antonia, decides to continue her scheduled party in spite of the danger and uncertainty of the night. In the academic world, Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi’s groundbreaking study Spanish Cultural Studies: an Introduction, for example, includes an image of Ocaña on the cover.
way to reinforce heterosexist norms (434). Indeed, the burgeoning gay rights movement of the time—which was not as developed as the women’s rights movement discussed above, perhaps because of a reluctance to establish some kind of political identity around homosexuality—shared a complex relationship with transvestites and often critiqued them as too effeminate and traditional. Transvestites were seen as caught up in the Francoist past with their shows and the imitation of traditional Spanish *copla* singers like Rocío Jurado and Lola Flores. Mira argues that these kinds of manifestations by transvestites contributed to the popularity of the image and its heavy use by the heterosexist media – it fit well into the traditional mold but could still symbolize a certain open-mindedness (434-35). Perhaps the ambivalent nature of the transvestites’ image explains why they enjoyed more widespread, enduring media coverage than feminists: feminists were the image of the radical, hysterical, and completely changed woman, while transvestites could provide a broad notion of change while simultaneously reinforcing more traditional gender roles.

In spite of their visibility in the Spanish culture of the Transition, transvestites shared a similar predicament to that of women in terms of their relationship to the Left. Within the broader scope of male homosexual culture, they were more or less accepted from within the established political institutions as long as they did not transgress or diverge too much from the “general” call for consensus and the fight for workers’ rights. This attitude has been described by Alberto Mira as “liberal homophobia,” a stance from the Left in general that tolerates homosexuality as long as it is kept silent and invisible (424). Several leaders of the Spanish Left, as important as Tierno Galván and Felipe González, made ambivalent if not debasing comments concerning homosexuality, and
several men—Jaime Gil de Biedma, for example—were turned away from the party because of their homosexuality (Mira 422). Reminiscent of many feminist assessments, Mira describes the contradictory situation on the Left as a “falta de sintonía entre el desarrollo de las actitudes hacia la homosexualidad y el progreso político: la izquierda, en principio más favorable al desarrollo de cualquier tipo de libertad, había dado signos de que la homosexualidad tampoco tendría cabida en la utopia proletaria” (422). Due to these issues, transvestites also had a difficult relationship with sectors of the gay rights movement, as they were often seen as causing a scandal and detracting from “serious” issues.

In *Una mala noche* this complex relationship between the Left, transvestites, and visibility in public space is put on display. The common view from the Left that transvestites were wrapped up in the current political “desencanto” and indifference seems to be reinforced in many places of the novel, especially through the representation of the character of La Begum. She has a narcissistic attitude toward the marches in which she participates and attends for the sole reason that she might make the front page of the newspapers. When La Begum finally arrives home the night of the coup, she blames La Madelón for putting her in danger through her involvement in politics and regrets having gone with her to so many demonstrations.

La Madelón is a different kind of character, who defines herself as “roja,” attends demonstrations, and votes for the Communist Party. She is repeatedly critical of La Begum’s dismissive attitude toward politics and her obsession with Arab men: “A esa mujer, a La Begum, es que le importa un rábano todo lo que no sean los bajos de Alá, y lo que menos le importa, por supuesto, son sus compromisos de ciudadanía. Qué
calamidad. Y lo que yo digo: eso no puede ser, en los tiempos que corren” (18). La Begum’s lack of solidarity and political consciousness is contrasted with La Madelón’s sense of civic duty. La Madelón’s experience with the Left is not completely satisfying for her nor is she fully accepted. When she describes her participation in the last elections, for example, there is a notable tension between her and the Communist representative: “. . . eché la papeleta del Partido Comunista y lo dije en voz alta: ‘Yo voto Comunista.’ Fue divino. El interventor del partido no sabía dónde meterse” (18). Indeed, the man from PCE is embarrassed by La Madelón’s public declaration that ties her to the party.

In contrast to the women in Crónica del desamor who are reluctant to take to the street, La Madelón continuously celebrates her ability to do so in Una mala noche. Ana is disenchanted with the marches and political demonstrations and is not comfortable as a woman expressing her demands in public, feeling constant scrutiny from the men who take part in the marches. La Madelón and her transvestite friends, on the other hand, derive great enjoyment and satisfaction from exercising their new-found right to be seen in public and in causing a scene. Whereas the attention from men as “different” makes Ana uncomfortable as she participates in marches, La Madelón loves to provoke the men she sees in public and uses the marches and the street as a place to make sexual conquests.

La Madelón describes her attraction to politics and her participation in street demonstrations not only in terms of political convictions but also based on a desire to make a scene. As an “artist,” an essential aspect of her political involvement is the chance to raise eyebrows. She expresses her opinion in this way: “. . . el deber no tiene por qué
estar reñido con esas ganas que a una le vienen cada dos por tres de dar el golpe (Ay, Jesús, el golpe no; quiero decir llamar un poquito la atención, hacer algo vistoso, pero sin maldad ninguna, ya se entiende). . .” (19). La Madelón is essentially restating here the notion of “ir de marcha,” where the political, the provocative, and the festive can and do exist together. This combination is seen particularly in La Madelón and La Begum’s participation in a Día de Andalucía demonstration described by the former.

First, the political aspect of the march cannot be ignored, and La Madelón, as an Andalusian emigrant who wants to cry when she thinks about the unemployment there, admits that “. . . una siempre ha sido bastante roja, la verdad, pero en cuanto me mientan mi tierra soy más roja que nadie” (47). There is also a festive, spectacle element to the demonstrations and La Madelón’s interest in them. In this particular demonstration, La Madelón even manages to interest La Begum in taking part by planning to wear traditional flamenco dresses with white and green polka dots to represent the colors of the Andalusian flag as they dance sevillanas. In general, La Madelón speaks of how she loves the spectacle and commotion that the demonstrations and other political events entail:

. . . me encanta todo este zascandileo que hay ahora con las autonomías y las banderas de cada uno y elecciones cada dos por tres, y un referéndum de échos todos los fines de semana . . . y unas manifestaciones preciosas que se montan corriendo, a cuenta de lo que sea, y a poca alegría que le eches te lo pasas de cine. A mí toda esta bulla es que me encanta. (47)

The combination of the more “serious” political concerns and the desire to be on the street and express oneself freely is brought together symbolically with the description of the sticker La Madelón puts on in the Día de Andalucía demonstration: “‘Justicia para el País Andaluz’, decía la pegatina que servidora, La Madelón, se pegó directamente en el
escote” (47). Thus, the sexual and the political are joined together in the body of La Madelón, and the distinction between public and private is called into question.

Being on the street is central to La Madelón as a person. She describes her activities on the street with passion and realizes that her access to public space is something that has just been made possible for her with the end of the dictatorship. When La Begum says that they should throw away their old alarm clock because it is time to forget, La Madelón is in agreement: “Y servidora estuvo de acuerdo, que a fin de cuentas nada era ya como antes. Ahora, hasta podíamos meternos nosotras en política sin que pasara nada. Y eso era lo que yo le decía: ‘Querida, hay que echarse a la calle y armarla, que ya va siendo hora’” (50). La Madelón also realizes that the right to occupy the street is an important aspect of democratic citizenship, and therefore the uncertainty of the weather often works in favor of the Right: “Estaba yo impaciente por echarme a la calle, a pesar de la lluvia, a pesar de que el tiempo parecía estar contra todos los andaluces que íbamos a juntarnos en la Plaza de Santa Ana . . . . Y es que a mí me parece que el tiempo siempre ha sido de derechas” (49). This observation is key because it brings to the fore the necessity to be able to occupy the street as an exercise of freedom and democracy, at both an individual and collective level.

For La Madelón and the other transvestites in the novel, the ability to be seen on the street goes beyond political participation to creating the conditions that make their existence as subjects possible. Although the protagonist is, like the author, originally from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, a small town in Cádiz, La Madelón emerges and is inscribed as a subject in Madrid. She insists that she has no past and separates the life of her pre-Madelón male counterpart—Manuel—from herself: “Aquello fue mi juventud, o
sea la juventud de Manuel García Rebollo, que es mi gracia. La Madelón nació después y, como cualquier mujer que se precie, no tiene pasado” (12). La Madelón is not born as a mere consequence of arriving in the city; for several months the protagonist lived as “Manolo” in Madrid, while La Madelón could only exist “de tapadillo” (11). La Madelón’s Madrid, in contrast, is a democratic city of freedom, and her existence is made possible only in this context and in the moment in which she can cease to be seen only “a escondidas” and can be seen in public. This ability to be seen and to move freely about the city is key to La Madelón’s survival as well in terms of her employment as a dancer: “Y es que a mí me hace falta la libertad. Porque, si no, a ver de qué como” (16). This comment inevitably points to the fact that the free, democratic city is the condition for her existence in and of itself.

Indeed, the situation of the coup is seen by La Madelón as a matter of life and death. Using her characteristic excessive and dramatic language in describing the event and her feelings surrounding it, she fears the real possibility that she could have to abandon the life that she and La Begum have adopted, swearing that they would be women forever by saying: “desde ahora, mujeres hasta morir, por dentro y por fuera, para lo bueno y para lo malo. . .” (106). This kind of identity is only possible as long as the public spaces of the city are open to them. For this reason it is significant that in the first paragraph of the novel, La Madelón, upon hearing about the coup, rushes home to lock herself in, as the public spaces of her city and of her identity, have in an instant been hostilely taken over and are no longer a safe place: “Qué sobresalto, por Dios. El Paco se fue a su casa, en taxi, que cuesta un dineral hasta el pueblo de Vallecas, y yo me vine a la
mía, a encerrarme con siete llaves, nerviosísima, que hacía siglos que no me sentía tan
descontrolada, ni siquiera por un hombre” (9).

At the prospect of losing her space of freedom La Madelón’s thoughts turn
towards the possibility of having to return to her earlier self, Manuel. She says, “Seguro
que al final acabarían matando a La Madelón –ataúd forrado de raso granate, corona de
nardos, hábito de las Arrepentidas—y habría que resucitar a Manolito García Rebollo,
natural de Sanlúcar de Barrameda. . .” (16). The closing off of the city in the attempted
coup fundamentally threatens to alter the body that inhabits it. Seen in this way, La
Madelón’s state of nervousness and lack of control upon hearing about the coup is related
to her anxiety in the face of the sudden change that has occurred in her environment. As
Elizabeth Grosz argues, “. . . built environments cannot alienate the very bodies they
produce. However, what may prove unpleasant is the rapid transformation of an
environment, such that a body inscribed by one cultural milieu finds itself in another
involuntarily” (48). The coup threatens to transform completely the environment of La
Madelón, explaining why she feels as if her body is changing in front of her own eyes as
she looks at herself in the mirror: “Tenía yo, en aquella noche en que todo parecía a punto
de debaratarse . . . ese comecome que va dejándola a una desencajadita, sin fuerzas, sin
saber muy bien dónde está . . . debía ser el miedo que se me transparentaba: desdibujadas
me pareció a mí que tenía las facciones, como si quisieran cambiar por su cuenta para
ponerse a salvo” (27). Given the rapid changes to her environment, La Madelón feels as
if her identity were dissolving in front of her.

This dependence on the public spaces of the city makes the transvestites of
Mendicutti’s novel particularly vulnerable. The city streets that have previously served as
a safe haven, a place of employment, and indeed as a constituting space for La Madelón’s identity, are rapidly closed off to her and become a space of danger. La Madelón’s enclosure in her apartment upon hearing about the coup confirms the problematic nature of her visibility in public given that her mere appearance distinguishes her from her fellow citizens. The beneficial sense of personal privacy that people should be able to enjoy is not made available to someone like La Madelón on the street. As public space is restricted, the protagonist is confined to her apartment, for which she repeatedly gives thanks as her bastion of freedom or her “cincuenta metros de libertad” (36, 37, 39).

Indeed, the apartment is the only space that provides La Madelón with some sort of protection and privacy. The description of a decorative cage in the apartment with only a potted plant inside—she would never allow it to house any kind of “bicho”—adds to the imagery of being enclosed and the importance of freedom for the protagonist.

Privacy on the street is not available to her roommate La Begum either, as La Madelón is increasingly worried about the potential dangers for her friend, who has yet to return home. La Madelón is concerned about La Begum’s lack of awareness—or disregard—about how gestures and actions can place her in jeopardy, recalling her misguided attempt to pick up an Arab man on the street who ended up being a policeman from Galicia (31). La Madelón proves to be more keenly aware of such dangers, as she describes her reaction to finding out about the attempted coup:

En la calle me enteré yo. Iba de lo más maqueda, bajando desde la Telefónica—había venido en el Metro y salí por José Antonio—hacia Callao, que había quedado con mi Paco en la puerta de la cafetería Nebraska, la grande, la que está enfrente de la cafetería Zahara, y venga a pasar coches de la pasma armando una bulla espantosa, y yo diciéndome ¿qué pasará?, pero no pregunté, que ya una llama suficientemente la atención de por sí como para andar encima por ahí preguntando cosas. (14)
La Madelón is conscious of the drawbacks to her visibility. Yeon-Soo Kim, drawing as well on the character’s misgivings about photography and the inability of her ID card to represent her identity, has described her attitude in terms of mistrust of “the visual as a hegemonic mode of representation” and the “panoptical vigilance” of the state (64-65). La Madelón is concerned about state surveillance and fears that she may be uncovered through photos as a transvestite “roja,” to which her solution, if things were to get ugly, would be to go to the mountains and become a “maqui” (17). This reference to the Republican resistance that fled persecution in the aftermath of the Civil War reinforces the notion of state vigilance.

This insecurity and the play between public and private that exists at the level of built environment corresponds, likewise, to a play between inside and out at the level of the protagonist herself in the body of the transvestite, where the body becomes a locus for the discussion of the distinction between public and private. Both levels place under question the meaning of public and private in terms of how and where identity is formed. Kim and others have pointed to the unconventional forms of kinship developed in the novel—La Madelón refers to herself both as sister and mother to La Begum and at other times takes on a more “masculine” role in their relationship. Aside from her grandmother, La Madelón refrains from making references to her family from Cádiz (Kim 59). We are offered a vision of a subject who, while obviously tied to the private spaces of her home and of his/her childhood, has an inexorable link to the public spaces of the city that she inhabits and other networks of kinship that are built there. This desire to elaborate bonds of kinship from beyond the private, familial realm is one way in which the novel questions the relationship between private and public.
The characters here are capable of forming a more solid and lasting alternative family than in *Crónica*. In the latter, Montero’s protagonist is only able to imagine the possibility of such an arrangement, while La Madelón and La Begum appear to have successfully established one. Perhaps the construction of the alternative family is more successful in *Una mala noche* because there is a clearer acceptance on the part of its protagonists of the limits of the traditional, familial and private realm. The fact that Montero’s women protagonists are almost all mothers—or contemplate becoming one—complicates their desire to break free of the traditional family.

Similar to what is seen in Montero’s women characters in *Crónica del desamor*, the elaboration of new identities of gender and sexuality through a deconstruction of the public and private in *Una mala noche* is not completely carried out and is at times contradictory. In Mendicutti’s novel, the majority of this ambivalence is tied to the figure of the transvestite. Garlinger makes a convincing analysis of Mendicutti’s novel by drawing on Judith Butler’s analysis of the ambivalent nature of drag from *Bodies that Matter*. While at times it can be subversive in its treatment of gender, at other times drag “reinscribes the very gender norms that it avowedly transgresses” (Garlinger “Dragging” 366). This ambivalence is evident in the novel in the ways La Madelón and the other transvestites appropriate heterosexual norms. Their performances, to the extent that they reveal the performative nature of all gender, are subversive; but simultaneously, “the perceived need to choose one [gender] role over the other reinstalls a heterosexual norm” (372). Garlinger points specifically to La Madelón’s and La Begum’s love for uniforms as a reinscription into state hegemony and authority. As much as La Madelón and La Begum like to imagine themselves as having been “reborn” after making their pledge to
live as women, it is made evident that they cannot erase their pasts and what lies beneath
their clothes. Therefore, La Madelón unconsciously yells out “Pedrín” when La Begum
finally arrives home the night of the coup. Likewise, the suitcase in the closet that guards
their suits, the last vestiges of their lives as men, is there to remind them of this
seemingly distant past.

This tenuous adoption of new identities is linked as well to the protagonists’
actions on the street. While La Madelón criticizes La Begum for her lack of political
consciousness, she, too, has had trouble living up to her commitments. She tells of the
time she unwillingly accompanied La Begum and La Soraya to a demonstration of
“fachas” in the Plaza de Oriente. Dressing up as falangistas “la mar de monas,” the three
transvestites drew an incredible amount of attention and marveled at how photogenic the
men in uniforms were. The occupation of Plaza de Oriente, the symbolic center of
Francoist Madrid, stands in contrast to the Día de Andalucía event that took place in the
Plaza de Santa Ana, a known “alternative” area at the time.17 The participation by the
transvestites in this event is ambivalent, yet a potentially subversive appropriation of
public space. While La Madelón regrets having gone to the march, she admits that, “por
mi parte, no me da grima ninguna reconocer que a ratos me lo pasé bien—porque
servidora es mujer de contrastes, o sea lo mismo que una ruta turística del Club
Vacaciones” (97-98). This recognition on the part of La Madelón of being a “woman of
contrasts” is significant and brings us back to the question of ambivalence and the
difficulty of formulating a coherent, unified identity. La Madelón’s performance of
falangista is a performance like all the others she does on a daily basis: “roja,” “woman,”

17 In today’s Madrid, Plaza de Oriente continues to be an affluent, more conservative area of the center of
the city, with the Royal Palace and the Opera close by. Plaza de Santa Ana is a highly frequented tourist
spot and the center of the nightlife in the surrounding Barrio de las Letras.
“Manolo,” “La Madelón,” etc. Her participation in a fascist march and her presence in the Plaza de Oriente can be seen as a reinforcement of hegemony. Yet the negative reaction of the “real” falangistas present at the demonstration, who make comments such as “qué barbaridad, qué mamarrachada, qué esperpento, esto no debería consentirse,” accompanied by the extremely “welcoming” attitude of many of the other “chavalitos” in attendance, makes the three transvestites’ presence there uneasy and subversive in the extent to which it reveals the hypocrisy and contradictions of the participants (96). However well—in fact, as a consequence of how well—they play the part of falangistas, La Madelón, La Soraya, and La Begum are considered outsiders in their presence. Nevertheless, even the “real” participants themselves are shown to be “fakes” when La Madelón explains that, “. . . cuando me ponía a cavilar que todos aquellos uniformes eran de pacotilla, me desinflaba. . .” (98). Their uniforms are cheap imitations of the “authentic” ones, which in fact are nowhere to be found, reinforcing what Butler has argued about drag being the imitation of an imitation, thereby revealing the performativity of all gender (Bodies 125). The presence of these three transvestites on the street—their photo also makes the newspaper—thus serves, at least in part, as a way to publicly question the strict notions of gender and sexuality wrapped up in the Francoist traditions of the past.

Many cultural critics on the Left have denounced the movida for its lack of political commitment, its superficiality, and the excess and personal desire involved in its public articulations. José Carlos Mainer has condemned the cultural productions of the era along these lines, including the films of Almodóvar. In El mono del desencanto, Teresa Vilarós argues that the transvestism and “pluma” of the movida period is one type
of withdrawal symptom that the national body is suffering upon the death of Franco and
the abandonment of the pursuit of a utopian future based on Marxist principles that had
sustained the Left during the forty years of the dictatorship. The “pluma,” which she
compares to postmodern *wrapping* in Jameson’s terms, attempts to cover the past without
recognizing it. Yet, however much the addictive body attempts to deny the past, it
manifests itself in the present in a phantasmatic and encrypted fashion. And that past is
expressed on the surface, in the *pluma* itself, in the form of physical marks on the body.
For Vilarós, then, the *pluma*, in this case the feathers of a hummingbird flitting rapidly, is
a superficial phenomenon that is about excess, spectacle, and volatility.

The idea of spectacle or performance is crucial to the culture of the *pluma*. Its
public nature is a central part of what defines it according to Vilarós and corresponds
with the “coming out” onto the street that took place during the Transition. Although
Vilarós does not condemn what she terms the anti-politics of the *movida*, she is skeptical
or pessimistic at best concerning its overall political possibilities due to this spectacle.
For her, the appropriation of the street, of public spaces, is key to the sexual liberation of
the period, but it is a dangerous combination of “celebración y muerte,” a mere spectacle
of excess and volatility:

. . . sin temor a equivocarnos o a exagerar podemos decir que la transición
española ‘tuvo pluma’ y que paseó esta pluma pública y ruidosamente por la calle.
Es la calle precisamente donde la pluma es Reina, el espacio público en que esta
se desplaza alocada. Siguiendo la tradición medieval y oriental española que
utilizaba la plaza o el zoco como escenario desde donde contar, narrar o explicar,
la “pluma” escoge también la calle como escenografía y espacio narrativo. Y ya
que la pluma es en la transición sobre todo performativa, la calle le proporcionará
el variado y multicolor público que necesita para expresarse. O mejor dicho, es el
espacio callejero el que forma la pluma, el que da cuerpo a la suicida vitalidad de
estos años. Y es a la conjunción establecida entre la pluma y la calle, a su
inmediatez y temporalidad, a su adorno, barroquismo y expresión de pública
superficie, a la que este cuerpo narrativo debe tanto su esplendor como su ruina. (194)

For Vilarós the performative nature of the *pluma* is superficial and thus politically precarious. The issue remains as to what kind of politics is in question here. Vilarós, by placing her study within the context of the decline of the proletarian utopia, seems to preclude politics of gender and sexuality as legitimate forms of power struggle. Under Butler’s analysis of the performativity of gender, the binary relationship that Vilarós maintains between superficiality and profundity, exterior and interior, public and private, necessarily comes under question. Indeed, Butler’s analysis sees the political potential in exactly what Vilarós critiques—the “surface”—and rejects the argument that there is something “real” or “authentic” below. She argues in *Gender Trouble* that:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. . . . Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this “action” is a public action. There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public character is not inconsequential. (34, 191)

In this sense, the “pluma” serves to call attention to the performativity and the public construction of all gender. There is no private or authentic identity beyond the performance, as Vilarós suggests by stating that the “pluma” is wrapping or covering up something underneath. This public performance, then, to the extent to which it brings attention to the public and collective nature of the construction of gender identity, holds subversive and political potential in contrast to what Vilarós sees as mere spectacle.

Returning to Warner’s discussion of counterpublics, one is reminded of the importance of language, corporeal expressivity, modes of expression, and gestures. All of these aspects are essential parts to the formulation of a collective scene of disclosure.
capable of articulating new approaches to and understandings of the relation between private and public and its repercussions for gender and sexuality. Seen in this light, many cultural productions of the *movida*, including Mendicutti and Montero’s, do not involve an abandonment of politics but rather a reformulation of politics capable of making public supposedly private issues of gender and sexuality that had long been excluded from both the Leftist and Franco regime’s political agenda.

The end of Mendicutti’s novel tells of this desire to open up the public sphere to different perspectives within a framework of democratic freedom. The brief second section or chapter of the book represents the end of La Madelón’s enclosure in her apartment and her ultimate coming out onto the street after the failed coup—once again, in the rain. The description of the crowded, overflowing streets—the masses cannot be controlled by the “servicio de orden”—is accompanied by La Madelón’s constant repetition of the words “¡Ay, la libertad!” (153). While the demonstration in favor of democracy is the reason for the immense gathering, the actual political event itself is less important than the mere act of being on the street. La Madelón explains, “Era difícilísimo. No había manera de ver si estaba pasando algo interesante. Nadie estaba muy seguro de por dónde venía la cabeza de la manifestación” (152). The description of the event confirms Paul Julian Smith’s assertion that the politics of everyday life take precedence over the parliamentary process in the consolidation of democracy (53). As La Madelón explains, “En teoría todos los políticos de la cabeza de la manifestación tenían que llegar a la tarima que habían montado delante de las Cortes . . . pero menos mal que lo dejaron por imposible” (161). The speeches that the leaders do attempt to give are drowned out by the ecstatic swarm of people on the street, and no one seems to care. For
La Madelón, simply being present and feeling part of the collective celebration is the most important thing. The novel closes by forming once again a link between public space and personal desire, as La Madelón is picked up by a “morenazo,” and whispers to him “Ay niño, qué rica es la libertad. . .” (163).

This consideration of Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera has brought into focus the shifting notions of gender and sexuality in Spain during the Transition and their relation to public space. Mendicutti, through the narration of the transvestite La Madelón, creates a chronicle of the Transition that, while addressing all Spaniards, gives voice to the fears, desires, and joys of this particular person on the night of Tejero’s failed coup. The celebratory language and personal twists to this account and the description of La Madelón’s friends, adopted family, and way of life serve in the creation of a scene of disclosure for issues of gender and sexuality. This counterpublic is further formed in the novel through the constant play and ambivalence between the public and the private, as seen not only in the body of the transvestite—who brings into question the difference between “interior” or “private” and “exterior” and “public”—but in the participation of the protagonists in a variety of political actions on the streets of Madrid. The visibility of these subjects within the public spaces of the city, often times desired and others evaded, underlines the frequently problematic relationship between the past and the present and the attempt to formulate new identities that might extend beyond the traditionally assigned roles concerning gender and sexuality.

After an extended analysis of Mendicutti’s Una mala noche, attention is called to the varying content, tone, and style of the novel in comparison with Rosa Montero’s Crónica del desamor. The transvestites of the former depend on being visible in the city
in order to establish an identity. This spectacularized body politics relies on an audience and therefore in the novel a significant emphasis is placed on the description of and action within exterior, public spaces. The feminist activists and the women in general depicted in Crónica practice a differing, more intimate body politics based on fluidity and the claiming of sexual pleasure. Given the aversion to describe exterior spaces of the city and the reluctance of the female characters to take part in public life in this sense, it could be tempting to claim that the novel is stuck in an old model of publicity, and that women are not yet capable of constituting an identity for themselves beyond the private, familial realm.

However, the use of the chronicle form and the style of the novel helps to turn the text itself into a scene of disclosure from which to introduce women’s issues previously kept in the domestic, private realm to a broader reading public. Indeed, both Montero and Mendicutti utilize aspects of the chronicle that push their texts beyond the traditional conventions of literature in order to place emphasis on collective experience and the public articulation of identity. Returning to Weintraub’s description of the public as both the collective and the visible, Montero and Mendicutti’s novels are concerned in different ways with these varying aspects of the public, as the former focuses on a kind of invisible collectivity and the latter a collective visibility.

In spite of these differences, both novels set out to achieve a similar goal of forming a collective space from which issues of gender and sexuality may be made public. Both Montero’s women and Mendicutti’s transvestites are still in the process of adjusting and adapting to their new-found freedom and access to the public sphere and what it means for the articulation of sexual and gender based identities. Through these
texts, the move from dictatorship to democracy is thus revealed to entail a transition in the meanings of public and private, as well as a transition within Spanish politics that must begin to integrate previously excluded groups into the public sphere.
Chapter 2. Redrawing the Public-Private Divide: The Okupa Movement in Madrid

Perhaps no other cultural occurrence in Madrid since the Transition has redefined the question of public space in the city as thoroughly as the counterculture of the Okupa movement. Active since the late 1970s, Madrid’s Okupa movement is comprised of urban activists who adhere to an array of political ideologies that fall under the broad denomination of the “Alternative Left.” The global movement consists of a diverse group of citizens from several countries who are critical of globalization, capitalism, and of traditional, institutionalized forms of political action. Tied to this global context, the movement in Madrid responds to concrete urban problems at the local level concerning housing, development, and planning that date back decades, and even centuries, in Spain’s capital. Needless to say, the movement has been met with great opposition from government, private industry, property holders, and the media. It also has lacked support from the general public, although there are signs that opinion is beginning to turn in favor of the movement.¹

Rethinking Public Space: Okupación

I propose a study of the Okupa movement that examines how it challenges and redefines notions of public and private space in Madrid. Nancy Fraser, in her essay “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” argues that it is crucial to reconsider senses of “private” that are deployed rhetorically to exclude certain issues from public debate, and one such sense is that of private property in a market economy (21). The Okupa movement challenges this notion of privacy by bringing the “private” or economized issue of housing into the public forum

¹ See Alcalde Villacampa.
through the act of *okupación*.² Of particular interest in this context are the *Centros sociales okupados y autogestionados (CSOA)*, social and cultural support programs aimed at the surrounding community that *okupas* establish in occupied buildings, creating public spaces out of supposedly “private” ones. Exploring the relationship between physical public space to the public sphere, art historian Rosalyn Deutsche has argued that public space should be defined not in terms of the traditional physical spaces of the city such as parks and streets that are labeled as public, but rather in terms of the social and cultural practices within a given space that foster democratic participation (“Question”).³ 

Public space in this sense comes about only through practice. Particularly helpful in Deutsche’s analysis is the notion of “cultural practices” that allow for the recognition of variations in how public space is conceived and constructed across cultures. In this sense, the Spanish context yields variables concerning public space, shaped by the specific urban culture that has developed over centuries in Madrid. The *Okupa* movement, while making use of traditional open spaces of the city in its mobilization, offers an alternative vision of what Spain’s public spaces are today through the promotion of urban policies, politics, and culture based on active grassroots participation and debate among citizens, where public space emerges through the uses and practices of those who occupy it. It is through this questioning of the public-private divide that the *Okupa* movement, in spite of its many critics and its inherently temporary nature, can make lasting contributions to Spain’s urban culture and politics.

² The *Okupa* movement changes the “c” in the verb *ocupar* to a “k” as a way to signal the difference in their political, organized occupations compared to those who squat due to a direct, immediate need for housing on an individual level.

³ Several parenthetical citations in this chapter will appear using sources with no pagination due to the vast amount of information compiled through the Internet.
What does it mean to speak of the public and private today? Answering this question is central to the *Okupa* movement’s political project. Nancy Fraser submits that an important step to doing so is the careful reconsideration of just what we mean when we refer to both terms and how they are deployed. Fraser offers a reworking of the public sphere as first analyzed by Jürgen Habermas, who defined it as a discursive arena distinct from the state and from the economy where citizens debate and deliberate about common interests. The public sphere, argues Fraser, when promoted as a single, universal representation of the “common good,” works by way of excluding certain groups and interests that often become subsumed into a “false ‘we’” (14). One way in which these exclusions are enacted is through the use of the terms private and public:

In general, critical theory needs to take a . . . more critical look at the terms “private” and “public.” These terms, after all, are not simply straightforward designations of societal spheres; they are cultural classifications and rhetorical labels. In political discourse, they are powerful terms that are frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others. (21-22)

Fraser draws special attention to two senses of the “private” that are often dangerously used in an exclusionary way: domestic and sexual life and private property in a market economy. These two senses, she says:

. . . often function ideologically to delimit the boundaries of the public sphere in ways that disadvantage subordinate social groups. The rhetoric of domestic privacy seeks to exclude some issues and interests from public debate by personalizing them or familiarizing them . . . . The rhetoric of economic privacy seeks to exclude some issues and interests from public debate by economizing them. (22)

The *Okupa* movement draws attention to and challenges this “rhetoric of economic privacy” that functions in Madrid, which in this case serves as a way to cast the issues of housing, urban planning, and even urban culture as ones to be determined by the market and therefore closed off to consideration by the public.
Beginning in the 1980s, okupas in Madrid began to “okupy” abandoned properties of run-down areas of the city. Squatting has been practiced for centuries across the world in its “traditional” form, that is, the occupation of properties as a way to fulfill a direct, immediate need for housing without paying for its use. By the 1960s in many countries throughout Europe it developed into a social movement, an urban phenomenon that responded to the acceleration of the growth of cities, land shortage, and a series of real estate “bubbles” (Adell Argilés and Martínez 22). In this manner, squatting was transformed into the political act of “okupying” as a way to denounce the lack of affordable housing and the practice of speculation, whereby owners of real estate allow properties to stand vacant with the goal of selling at a later date for a higher return.

The Squatter’s movement, which first emerged in northern European countries like the Netherlands and Germany, is a broad and dispersed one, and often resists categorization. In fact, as Adell Argilés and Martínez López point out in the volume Dónde están las llaves, defining it as a social movement can be problematic, especially in view of the resistance from within the movement itself to be defined as such (24). There are several factors involved in this attitude, including the resistance to being seen as a “formalized” movement or having its actions limited to a single theme or subversive action (24-25). For example, okupas tend not to limit their projects to only those surrounding the question of housing. Rather, made up for the most part of young generations of university students, they are often heavily involved in and promote other alternative and progressive causes such as anti- or alter-globalization, environmentalism, feminism, and more. In addition, okupas reject traditional forms of political action through established institutions and avoid a hierarchical structure to decision making and
leadership within the movement, placing them at odds not only with conservative political movements but with Leftist political parties and unions as well. Although there tends to be a certain degree of communication between them, separate projects in different locales across the city operate independently. Pinning down the ideology of the Okupa movement is also very difficult to do, given the convergence of several ideological tendencies within their ranks. In general, the movement seems to be made up of an “alternative” or “libertarian” Left, related to neo-anarchist and Situationist philosophies that place emphasis on non-institutionalized political action and more specifically on the politics of everyday life (23). In spite of all these issues, Adell Argilés and Martínez López insist upon the classification of the okupas as a social movement to the extent that they are collectives that share an overall common interest and objectives and act at least in part together to promote change in society (24).

Property Rights and Local Histories: Speculation, Citizen Movement, and the Okupas

While the movement in Madrid draws on the methods and rhetoric of the international Squatters’ movement which, as stated above, had previous successes in places like the Netherlands and Germany, it is clearly situated within and responds to a concrete local urban and cultural context. Although speculation is a common practice in all urbanized capitalist societies, John Hooper has shown in The New Spaniards how it has been taken to extremes in the Spanish case and particularly in Madrid. He outlines how persisting laws from the Franco dictatorship, along with the help of a permissive tax code, have made it more advantageous for homeowners to let their properties stand empty, and even allow them to crumble, before renting them out. Local authorities have participated in practices of speculation as well, keeping land meant to be developed off
the market as they wait for prices to rise (324). Speculation is only one factor in a
decades-old distortion of the housing market in Madrid that originated with the mass
interior migrations to the capital in the 1950s and 60s and the regime’s inadequate
response to that crisis. Attempts at reform by both conservative and progressive local and
national governments since the Transition have had little success. The overall result, says
Hooper, has been a high concentration of investment in housing, an increasing gap
between those who own one or more properties and those who can not afford to buy at
all, and a shortage of properties available for rent (325). Protesting these concrete local
problems is a central element to the Okupa movement and is at the heart of their protests,
proven by the concentration of “okupations” in urban districts most sensitive to
speculative practices (Martínez López 64).

The Okupas were not the first urban social movement to address these issues
either: they follow in the tradition of a Madrid culture that questions the role of political
authority and calls for more active participation by citizens in the construction of the city.
The Citizen Movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s serves as a clear antecedent to
the Okupas, insofar as both represent a grassroots, neighborhood-oriented reply to
authoritarian urban policies. Manuel Castells, in his classic The City and the Grassroots,
deals extensively with the Citizen Movement in Madrid, outlining its characteristics and
goals.4 Taking advantage of changing laws from the latter years of the dictatorship, the
Citizen Movement emerged as a way to demand accountability from local authorities for

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4 Castells also dedicates a chapter of The City and the Grassroots to the issue of squatting (in this case in
Santiago, Chile). However, the squatting he analyzes is of the “ocupación” type as opposed to the overtly
political “okupación” and of less interest to this project.
the poor state of Madrid and its neighborhoods. Although the leadership of the neighborhood groups was composed largely of activists from the clandestine political parties and opposition to the regime, they were able to avoid persecution, and indeed thrive, because the demands of the movement were set on concrete, undeniable urban issues such as poor housing conditions, the need for green space and community centers, problems with transportation, calls for the return of popular culture and street parties, etc. Thus, to the extent that the Okupa movement also focuses on the use value of the city and its installations as opposed to its exchange value, there is a clear connection between the two urban movements.

With the consolidation of democracy in Spain, the Citizen Movement as it was first conceived would die out. Even though the number of neighborhood associations increased significantly, the level of demands made decreased due to the institutionalization of its leadership and the “cooptación de sus proyectos por el gobierno municipal” (Gutiérrez Barbarrusa 120). It was in this context that the Okupa movement found a space within the urban landscape of Madrid, “okupying” the need for autonomous, local contestations to city government. There are important departures from this protocol in the nature of the Okupa movement, namely the generational difference (okupas are generally university-aged), its fierce independence with regards to the Administration and all institutionalized political action, and the emphasis on counterculture and alternative lifestyle as a tenet of the movement (Gutiérrez Barbarrusa 122-123). Adell Argilés and Martínez López explain these departures and connections in the following manner:

5 See Gutiérrez Barbarrusa, who cites the Ley de Asociacionismo of 1964 as the “legal umbrella” that made the formation of these groups possible.
Cabe pensar cierta continuidad entre el movimiento vecinal y el de okupación como dos tipos distintos y correlativos de movimientos urbanos de carácter progresista. El primero, inicialmente dedicado a campañas vecinales de protesta ante la falta de equipamientos o de zonas verdes, etc., termina institucionalizándose como un burocratizado movimiento ciudadano de consumidores. El segundo, más global en sus perspectivas ideológicas, conecta con la juventud y sus acciones colectivas aportando una mayor crítica ecologista al desarrollismo urbano de las grandes ciudades y cuestionando los indicadores clásicos de “calidad de vida”. (22)

As one method of achieving its goals, the Citizen Movement itself supported some squatting carried out in Madrid. These were more concrete replies to the direct need for housing of an individual nature due to deteriorating conditions and the evictions of long-time residents (ocupación) as opposed to the later political actions of the Okupa movement (okupación) (Gutiérrez Barbarrusa 117).

In spite of the obvious differences between the two movements, the connection they share is an important one to maintain for understanding the unique identity and roots of the Okupa movement in Madrid as opposed to what could be understood as a simple repetition of the Squatter’s movements from abroad. It is in the local context where the Okupa collectives, like the Citizen Movement before them, come to constitute what can be considered a unique, potentially successful social and political movement. While their methods are not traditional, the various collectives share a clear objective to bring about specific changes to the urban environment. At the time Castells published the book, the Citizen Movement was a recent development. Compared to the other urban movements he analyzes—for example, squatters in Chile or the gay movement in San Francisco—Castells saw the Citizen Movement as the only one that had what was required to bring about lasting urban change and social transformation. His description of the successes of
the Citizen Movement is telling and serves to underline the positive correlations between it and today’s Okupa movement:

. . . the Citizen Movement strongly articulated urban demands and political issues, linking city and power in the neighborhoods’ mobilization, but, at the same time, it was not a purely political movement, nor was it . . . a politically controlled process. It was an autonomous combination of urban and cultural practices, irreducible to any one dimension or dominance by one factor. When the tension became too acute, when politics took over, the Movement resisted, and ultimately collapsed, not because it was apolitical but because it was the expression of a new politics, relating issues of everyday life to power processes without submitting to the rules of the institutionalized political system. 6 (275)

The end of the Citizen Movement as a progressive force in Madrid and its transformation into a conservative neighborhood association model is explained as a result of its inability to maintain the necessary degree of political autonomy. It therefore quickly became subsumed by institutional and bureaucratic powers and thus lost the grassroots force that brought it to life. The Okupa movement’s extreme skepticism for city government and other institutionalized forms of politics has often been pointed to as a potential setback to its success at bringing about change in Madrid’s urban policies. Yet as Castells articulates so well in the quote above, the transformational power of such urban social movements comes from the ability to shift politics away from action through traditional, institutionalized outlets and onto a terrain of everyday life and culture in cities. That is to say, the strength of these movements comes from bringing supposedly “private” issues into the public realm.

It is especially in this aspect of autonomy and the politics of everyday life where the historical connection between the two might help to bring the present-day movements together to fight for common interests. The divergence in their political projects and goals in recent years has been evident, as neighborhood associations have often become

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6 Emphasis is mine.
conservative organizations that reproduce the exclusionary urban practices that their predecessors denounced. Adell Argilés describes the existing associations as “. . . espacios burocratizados y sin bases juveniles, ‘invadidos’ a finales de los ochenta por las organizaciones de pequeños o medianos comerciantes” (111). Some groups have joined forces with okupas and other grassroots organizations in neighborhoods (Gutiérrez Barbarrusa 126). Yet recently, even La Corrala, the relatively progressive neighborhood association of Lavapiés has been at odds with the okupas.

As did the Citizen Movement in the 1970s, the Okupa movement in Madrid has focused its protests on the question of who has rights to the city and its spaces. In spite of the legitimate complaints about the closing off of the city to its citizens, the movement has been frequently dismissed by the media and large parts of the public as too radical and criticized for its lack of respect for property rights (Alcalde Villacampa 260). These dismissals fall perfectly into the rhetoric of private property that Fraser describes, holding that certain topics or problems are not open to debate because they are, “impersonal market imperatives,” or “‘private’ ownership prerogatives . . . in contradistinction to public, political matters” (22). This attempt to cordon off from public debate the urban practices that the Okupa movement denounces was evident in the launching of an aggressive eviction campaign led by city governments and in the changes to the Penal Code in 1996 that criminalized squatting (Alcalde Villacampa 233). Sociologist Robert González García cites the legal arguments that have been used against such changes because the new law

Pone en manos de la propiedad un instrumento desproporcionado ante las personas que están rehabilitando un edificio abandonado, al mismo tiempo que posiciona al ordenamiento jurídico a favor del derecho a la propiedad privada.
respecto al derecho de la vivienda, en el momento que ambos colisionan en la práctica de la okupación.” (163)

The law—curiously enough, passed by PSOE—therefore serves as a mechanism to place private property rights in an unquestionable position ahead of the right to housing.

Although both are guaranteed by the Constitution, the latter is delegitimated through the rhetoric of economic privacy, which attempts to disallow any potential debate on the matter. 7

This clash between housing rights and property rights reveals fissures in the supposedly unshakable concept of property and shifts the meaning of the notion of ownership. Nicholas Blomley in his Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property addresses these same questions. He describes the “ownership model” of property as a hegemonic model in which property is always imagined as private, “with the solitary owner exercising exclusionary rights over a bounded space. While property may be public (held by the state), it is rarely imagined as collective” (xiv). That is to say, even “public” property is conceived of as owned by a single holder—the state. Yet property is much more complicated than this, and actual uses given to land in urban areas often times contradict and escape the ownership model, “unsettling” the supposedly clear cut definition of property (14). Understood through this lens, Okupa activists, by making claims on urban land and buildings in a collective manner, complicate the question of

7 Article 31 of the Spanish Constitution recognizes the right to private property: “1. Se reconoce el derecho a la propiedad privada y a la herencia. 2. La función social de estos derechos delimitará su contenido, de acuerdo con las Leyes. 3. Nadie podrá ser privado de sus bienes y derechos sino por causa justificada de utilidad pública o interés social, mediante la correspondiente indemnización y de conformidad con lo dispuesto por las Leyes”. At the same time, Article 47 declares the right to housing: “Todos los españoles tienen derecho a una vivienda digna y adecuada. Los poderes públicos promoverán las condiciones necesarias y establecerán las normas pertinentes para hacer efectivo este derecho, regulando la utilización del suelo de acuerdo con el interés general para impedir la especulación. La Comunidad participará en las plusvalías que genere la acción urbanística de los entes públicos”.
what exactly property is and what it ought to be, looking to open up its definition. Ownership in this case is not limited to the single person who has the title to the land, but rather depends upon a moral claim that citizens enact on the land through its use. As both Blomley and Fraser point out though, the respective “ownership model” and the rhetoric of economic privacy are deeply entrenched notions that are difficult to escape.

**Rhetoric vs. Practice: Okupas on the Street**

Yet there may be signs that the Okupa movement is making headway in its protests. Ironically, the attempts to quell the movement through the changes to the Penal Code have in fact invigorated it and served to attract more attention from the media. Of course, as Javier Alcalde Villacampa has shown, the representations of the movement in the press are often negative, focusing primarily on the aspects of violence and disorderly conduct involved in the vacating of “okupied” properties rather than on their legitimate demands concerning housing and urban management (260). At the same time, an important shift in the political focus of Madrid’s okupas has begun to pull public opinion in its favor. As opposed to the simple “okupation” of properties, the movement has increasingly used the streets as a place of protest (Adell Argilés 92). In fact, Martínez López has shown that approximately 73% of the Okupa movement’s “repertoire” for action has been concentrated on the street in activities such as protests and gatherings (“Para” 23).

If the Okupa movement’s goals rest upon the occupation and reappropriation of space, the “okupation” of housing is not its only goal, but rather forms part of a broader aim to question authoritarian uses of urban space in general and traditional definitions of
“public” space that are based on labeling rather than on specific cultural practices. As Deutsche has argued, what makes a given physical space public are the democratic and participatory practices that take place within it. She offers a definition of public space as: “a set of institutions where citizens—and, hopefully noncitizens—engage in debate; as the space where rights are declared, thereby limiting power . . . as the space where social group identities and identity of society are both constituted and questioned” (Deutsche, “Question”). In this context, traditional “open” spaces of the city such as parks and streets are not public simply because urban planners label them open to all; rather, public spaces emerge only from practices by users.

Okupa actions on the street draw this distinction into focus and question a false rhetoric of public space at work in the city. Adell Argilés outlines the Okupa strategies on the street, in particular the notion, self-defined by the movement, of “Mani-fiesta-acción.” Much in the same way that the young generations took to the streets in the Transition period to ir de marcha, the okupas and their supporters use the street as the scene of fiestas that are based on protest as well as spontaneity and diversion. Through a playful reworking of the word in Spanish for a public demonstration, manifestación, these “mani-fiesta-acción” events seek to place their actions in opposition to more traditional forms of protest through a type of public performance. While they frequently include a march component replete with banners, posters, chants, and slogans, they are also often characterized by the inclusion of live music and performances (Adell Argilés 97). Okupas rarely apply for permits, asserting their right to use “public” spaces of the city without the need for government approval.
One specific example of a “mani-fiesta-acción” organized recently is the Mayday Madrid 2008, part of an international collective that planned similar events in cities across Europe. In Madrid it was a joint effort supported by several Okupa and “alternative” groups. At the margin of the traditional May 1 march led in the morning by the major workers’ unions (Unión General de Trabajadores [UGT] and Comisiones Obreras [CC.OO.]), this event presented itself as the “other” May 1st, and organized a more informal gathering in the afternoon in the symbolically important plaza of the Reina Sofia museum. As is typical in this type of event, an “okupación” was also involved: on April 30, the day before the scheduled protest, a group of approximately thirty people entered the central office of Social Security in Madrid with banners chanting “Mayday! Mayday! No llego al fin de mes!” Accompanied by representatives of the media, they took advantage of the moment to hold a press conference, reading their official press release concerning the protest to take place the following day (“Mayday”). A video of the reading of the press release on YouTube also shows images of a group gathered in the Puerta del Sol, where one young protester stands on Madrid’s famous statue of the Oso and the Madroño and places a sticker announcing the “mani-fiesta-acción” (“May Day 2008”). This combination of events is just one example of the several ludic activities organized by the Okupa movement that encourage a grassroots, participatory, and improvisational approach to the uses of the city streets.

These practices in public space can be best understood when placed in contrast with other uses of the street that present themselves as “public” and “for the people” but

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8 In “From the Reina Sofia to Lavapiés,” Malcolm Compitello analyzes the symbolic and material importance of the Reina Sofia. He argues that the expansion project carried out there in the 1980s led to a ripple effect of speculation, which contributed to increasing real estate prices and driving out long-time residents from that part of the city center.
are in fact based on authoritarian spatial practices. I take here as an example the La noche en blanco program organized for the past three years (2006-2008) by the Madrid city government. This program, run in conjunction with similar projects from other European cities such as Paris, Rome, and Budapest, is an all-night collection of cultural activities across a wide-spread area of downtown Madrid. Taking place in large part out of doors and set to coincide with the full moon and the Fall solstice, the September 22, 2007 edition of La noche en blanco, like other years, included an array of film screenings, theater, concerts, photography exhibits, sculpture, and hands-on activities for all ages. This multi-million dollar event is funded in part by the city, but relies heavily on external funding from the financial and cultural institutions and private businesses that sponsor the different activities. Major museums (El Prado, Thyssen) and cultural centers (Conde Duque, Matadero), newspapers (ABC, El País), foreign embassies, and financial institutions (BBVA, Caja Madrid) are just a handful of the five-page long list of sponsors announced in the program.

On the surface, such an event seems positive for the city and its residents and certainly inscribes itself in a discourse on public space, as Mayor Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón’s remarks in the program affirm:

La noche en blanco 2007 nace con la . . . ilusión de generar una gran respuesta ciudadana y de impactar a sus participantes; es decir, a todos aquellos que salgan a la calle a disfrutar de la fusión total entre creatividad y ciudad, entre arte y público. Con ese fin hemos preparado un extenso y completo programa, marcado por su calidad, innovación y diversidad, que amplía hasta nuevos límites el concepto de cultura urbana.

De hecho, La noche en blanco es una noche única por las múltiples manifestaciones artísticas que ofrece, porque los artistas invaden las calles, o porque espacios e instituciones de acceso restringido se abren a los ciudadanos justo cuando el sol llega a su ocaso. (La noche 3)
The question here, however, should be what kind of public space is being promoted by such an event. An example for consideration is that of the National Library’s contribution to *La noche en blanco*. The institution put on public display for the first time Per Abat’s original manuscript of the *Cantar de mio Cid* from the early 13th century. Before arriving at the display case, visitors were provided with historical background information and, on the massive staircase outside the Library, listened to a “concierto juglaresco” with songs using fragments of the *Cantar* (*La noche 24*).

What kind of public space does such an event allow for? First, it is inevitably temporary. In this event as in so many others, *La noche en blanco* permits a single night of “openness.” Yet as soon as the light of the full moon fades, the transgressions allowed the night before are yet again prohibited and forgotten until the following year.

Furthermore, one should question the public nature of *La noche en blanco* in terms of, per the prior definition, the practices carried out in the spaces involved. Here, there is a top-down organization of the program in which leading institutions put their idea of “culture” on display for observers to admire and perhaps take part. At the National Library, the culture was provided in the form of the canonical medieval text. Visitors were interviewed upon exiting the exhibit concerning their impressions—interviews that were then played over a megaphone, so that visitors became “audioguías de los que [iban] a entrar” (*La noche 24*). This approach to culture stands in contrast to the bottom-up model promoted by the *okupas*, one that would allow citizens to actively create culture through the use of space.

*Okupa* groups themselves have pointed out some of the contradictions of the city government and other institutions’ roles in the event. The “Hamlab,” a section of the
CSOA Patio Maravillas dedicated to promoting free access to Internet and other information technologies, posted a blog entry, which looks cynically upon Gallardón’s intentions with *La noche en blanco*: “El PP compra luna llena para que Gallardón se conmemore a sí mismo como el ‘Alcalde que cerró definitivamente la movida madrileña pero se inventó La Noche en Blanco para parecer progre’” (“Isaac”). These comments are particularly important for the way they place the cultural occurrence of the *Movida* in contraposition to an event like *La noche en blanco*. While the former was a spontaneous happening (although later capitalized upon by the city government) that involved the creation of public spaces in the city, the latter is a program that creates only the illusion of public urban space and culture.

The blog post by the Hamlab was accompanied by a *mani-fiesta-acción* the night of *La noche en blanco* at the seat of the *Sociedad General de Autores y Editores* (*SGAE*). The institution, which defends copyrights for Spanish playwrights, songwriters, and composers and receives the benefits from the controversial *canon digital* tax, opened its doors to sponsor *Noche de autores*, a concert combining flamenco, Latin American pop, and a choreographed enactment, accompanied by music, of Julio Cortázar’s “Instrucciones para subir una escalera” (*La noche* 15). Members of the Hamlab appeared wearing hand-made masks and wrote “*ladrones*” [thieves] on the red carpet outside of *SGAE*, and began to play their own music. They carried signs criticizing *SGAE* for its role in copyright laws and its stance on accessing music and other media via the

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9 The *canon digital* is a tax charged to the manufacturers and distributors of various recording devices (VCRs, DVDs, MP3 players, blank CDs and DVDs, etc.) as a way to compensate authors, editors, and other entities that are protected under copyright laws from the loss of revenue due to the making of private copies of their work. The *canon* was under extreme criticism in recent years after the 2003 decision to begin taxing blank CDs and DVDs. Many argued that the use of these is not always aimed at copying copyrighted material. Consumers have also complained about being left out of the decision-making process.
Internet through Peer to Peer (P2P) and similar programs. While online file sharing is legal in Spain, there has been an important move from groups like SGAE to ban it. Supporters of it insist, like the Hamlab, that “compartir es bueno,” [sharing is good] and more specifically that users have a fundamental right to access and share information (Wershler-Henry).

The Hamlab, through this type of protest aimed at SGAE, underlines the key question of ownership that surrounds debates over public space and urban culture. The protestors point out the distance between the supposedly public nature of the La noche en blanco event and the approach to property, both urban and intellectual, as private rather than collective. Thus, the protest is “unsettling” in Blomley’s terms because it reveals a fissure in the ownership model of property. The La noche en blanco program assumes, in much the same way that SGAE does in its stance concerning online music, that public space is controlled, indeed owned, by the city government or by cultural institutions, and that it has the right to allow or disallow citizens access to it. The Hamlab protestors, on the other hand, bring into view another possible approach to public property that would conceive of it as collectively owned or shared and thus open to contestation and debate over how it is used.

_Cultural Centers in Madrid: Contrasting Versions of Public Space_

As an important element in its recent growing visibility and political action, the Okupa movement has stressed the need for social and cultural outlets for citizens. This has been done primarily through the founding of Centros Sociales Okupados

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10 The blog post includes a link to YouTube for viewing of a video made by the Patio participants of the mani-fiesta-acción. Ironically enough, upon opening the YouTube link, one is informed that “This video is no longer available due to a copyright claim by Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE).”
Autogestionados in the properties that are “okupied.” These centers offer varied cultural and social programs to neighbors and anyone interested in participating. In recent years, this aspect of the movement has served to improve relations between okupas and those who live in the surrounding neighborhoods and has come to be an issue as important as housing for okupas. Indeed, okupas do not live in many of the CSOA properties, such as the Patio Maravillas. Martínez López signals different stages in the evolution of the relation between “okupied” residences and centers: “No sería difícil concebir una etapa inicial (hasta mediados de la década de 1990) en la que era harto frecuente encontrar viviendas en los centros sociales . . . y otra inmediatamente posterior en la que se tendió a una consciente exclusión de toda vivienda de los centros sociales” (81). The fact that okupas do not tend to live in the CSOAs does not detract from the statement they make against speculation and the rhetoric of private property; through the centers they are still favoring use value over exchange value by proposing alternative uses for the abandoned buildings in question based on the needs of those who live in the neighborhood.

Martínez López has stressed the importance of this shift toward Centros sociales, saying that they are what lend more transcendence to the movement, give it more public support, and at the same time bring more conflict with local authorities (“Urbanismo” 62). This increased conflict and higher rate of evictions is not necessarily as negative as it first appears if one considers the goals of the movement. Hans Pruijt has pointed out that, “la okupación es una condición inherentemente inestable. Aunque el status de ‘okupado’ puede permanecer inalterado durante dos décadas . . ., se sabe que tarde o temprano tendrá un final, como resultado de desalojo, abandono o legalización” (55). Given this, the when and if of the eviction is not so much the issue, but rather how much public
awareness the *okupas* are able to generate before the inevitable occurs. In addition, while conflict with authorities has increased, public support in favor of the work done at these *Centros sociales* has made it more difficult for the authorities to close the centers and has required them to consider negotiations to stabilize the projects being carried out.

It is in and through the social and cultural centers that this public awareness is best cultivated. These centers embody the crucial public nature of the movement because they transform a supposedly “private” space into a public one through the practices carried out there, offering a grassroots alternative to the top-down urban structure that they denounce and encouraging the participation of neighbors in a common project. In this manner, the *CSOA* draw attention to a false rhetoric of publicity surrounding urban spaces at work in Madrid.

This false rhetoric of public space is particularly evident in Madrid with regards to the recent boom in cultural centers, a phenomenon that has been met with excitement from both within and beyond the city limits. A recent article in the *New York Times* sets at over a dozen the centers operating in the capital (Ferren). Interestingly enough, most all of these centers auto-define their projects in terms of their “public” nature. Below I will consider three types of cultural center active in the city: (1) the *CSOA*; (2) the cultural centers run by financial institutions; and (3) “legalized,” autonomous, grassroots centers. By analyzing the activities carried out by each and the ways in which they define

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11 The phenomenon has also taken hold in other Spanish cities as well and has generated much interest. Documentary films *En construcción* and *Can Tunis* both deal with the cultural centers in the Mediterranean city of Barcelona.

12 See webpages of La Casa Encendida and CaixaForum. For example, an explicatory video on the website CaixaForum Madrid describes the project, “. . . CaixaForum Madrid es un *espacio abierto* para todas las personas desde los más pequeños a los más mayores… Un modelo integrador que tiende puentes entre cultura y sociedad, entre creadores y ciudadanos. *Entre todos y para todos*” (“Edificio”). [Emphasis is mine.]
their projects, the possible, or doubtful, “public” nature of these centers will come into focus.

**CSOA Patio Maravillas: Public Space, Private Property, and Collective Ownership**

Patio Maravillas is perhaps the most well-known and most successful CSOA operating in Madrid at the moment. It is located at Calle del Acuerdo 8 on the western edge of Malasaña. The name for the center itself is significant. Patio refers to the interior patio of the building but also connotes openness and the sense of a common space. Maravillas draws on the older name for the neighborhood of Malasaña, “Barrio de Maravillas.” This is the popular name for the neighborhood and dates back to the seventeenth century, when it was common to name neighborhoods after their major church. In this case, it was the Iglesia de las Maravillas, located just off of the present-day Plaza Dos de Mayo. In the following years, the neighborhood has acquired two other common names. Universidad is the official title given to it by the city government, referring to the old Universidad Central that was located on Calle San Bernardo before being moved to Moncloa and eventually becoming the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. The name Malasaña makes reference to the Calle Manuela Malasaña and was first used to refer to the whole neighborhood in the 1970s and 80s by those who flocked to the neighborhood to take part in the nightlife associated with the movida. In spite of the growing use of these last two names, long-time residents tend to refer to their neighborhood as Maravillas. It is in this context that the Patio Maravillas emerges, distancing itself from the official name for the neighborhood given by the city government, and aiming to place emphasis on the popular, grassroots nature of its project.
The center, the site of an old school, was “okupied” in 2007 after standing empty for over ten years. The Patio received much attention in recent months, as a judicial ruling ordered the building be vacated after the owner of the property complained. However, the police did not appear on the set date in late January to carry out the order, as they were unprepared to deal with the hundreds of activists and supporters from the neighborhood who had gathered to protest. The plan to vacate has been postponed until further notice, and the Patio has resumed its activities (Arangüeña).13

Since its opening two years ago, the okupas at Patio Maravillas have turned the historic building into a successful social and cultural center, replete with activities for a variety of interests and needs: a bicycle repair shop that forms part of the ecological movement okupas are often involved in, legal services for immigrants, a free thrift shop, free Internet, film series, a cafetería/bar, rap sessions, a common garden, child care services, and much more.14 The Patio, like most other CSOAs, is self-managed and run by way of assembly meetings and a horizontal decision-making process where those present put forth ideas about common projects and goals (Patio Maravillas). Martínez López argues that the self-governance of the okupas is central as a response to the alienation and ingovernability of city spaces, and the “momento esencial de los procesos de autogestión es . . . la asamblea” (77). The assembly and self-governance format in general imply the impulse to

. . . poner en común deseos y necesidades, vivir situaciones compartidas en las que se genera confianza mutual, analizar y planificar colectivamente las acciones a llevar a cabo, comunicarse, debatir y tomar decisiones consensuadas,

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13 After this chapter was drafted, in January 2010, the eviction order was carried out. This occurrence does not change the overall analysis here of the Patio Maravillas, especially since it “okupied” another building the same day of its eviction. The new site of the Patio’s project is Calle del Pez 21.
14 Along these lines, Sigfrid Monleón’s film, La bicicleta (2006), explores the bicycle counterculture of Valencia. A group from an autonomous social and cultural center organizes a “bici-festación” on the streets of the city to demand more access and rights for riders.
comprometerse a asumir tareas especiales, conseguir recursos y materiales básicos que financien el proyecto, solicitar la aportación solidaria de herramientas y de conocimientos técnicos . . . (76-77)

While the make-up and workings of assemblies vary between “okupied” houses and centers, the Patio Maravillas’s assembly is organized into four working areas: Culture, Borders and Citizenship, Neighborhood, and Instability. Each working area contributes in its own special way to the programming at the Patio. The Culture section organizes workshops and other activities involving music, film, photography, and internet. While the Border and Citizenship working area focuses on providing legal services and Spanish classes for immigrants, the Neighborhood section organizes a daycare, a bike repair shop, and gardening workshops for local residents. Finally, the Instability area runs the free thrift shop, sponsors the “Acera del Frente” LGBT group, and has organized an ongoing seminar about the global city. In addition, there is a managing assembly that coordinates the proposed activities as well as a weekly general assembly meeting open to all where principles and common projects are discussed and debated (Patio Maravillas).

This organizational form has anarchist and autonomist roots as well as a clear connection to forms of radical democracy that favor a more participatory role for citizens than typically provided through representative systems. Here, the grassroots nature of these projects comes clearly into focus and can be contrasted not only from conservative urban policies but also from traditional leftist politics that are centered on the role of parties and unions in the shaping of practices, programs, policies, and politics. In this manner, the okupas call into question notions of public and private by opening up new, 

15 Instability is my loose translation of the Spanish term precariedad. In Spanish, the term connotes both an instability in terms of employment as well as a broader sense of social marginality, or living “on the fringe” of society.
more accessible spaces through which citizens, and non-citizens, may directly debate what urban issues are of importance to them.

The practices carried out in the Patio Maravillas are not merely about recuperating traditional public spaces of the city such as green spaces. Rather, they involve a radical questioning of what exactly constitutes “public” space. This is done first through the act of “okupying” and the challenging of the “private” nature of urban properties and housing. But in the social centers, the programming and practices become central to this questioning. The Hamlab project, organized under the Culture work area of the Patio, is one example of such practices. In the Hamlab, “hacktivists” provide free wireless Internet access to those interested. More importantly, they promote open access to the web and collective or shared use of programming, files, etc. through workshops, demonstrations, and more. In the computer lab at the Patio, only open source software is used. While this might mean that it is free in terms of price, this software is “free” in the sense that its code is openly accessible and alterable. Those who work in the Hamlab consider themselves “hacktivists.” These hacker-activists believe in free access to Internet and technology but also aim to educate other users about web technology and to expand their fights for access to space beyond the Internet. In this sense, the very concept of space is being redefined.

Stephen Vilaseca has made a thoughtful connection between digital and urban spaces in Madrid, arguing that users of city space reject the idea of city as “normalized code,” that is, authoritarian regulation of space, in favor of a view of the city as “open code” in which culture is a “co-production between artist and public” and the city “can be
manipulated, changed, and improved” (2). Vilaseca analyzes the fundamental differences between the TriBall project—a private neighborhood-building initiative in Malasaña—on the one hand, that promotes a view of the city as market-based and organized in a top-down manner, and the Patio Maravillas on the other, that like its Hamlab component, “is reinforcing and energizing a view of the city as alterable by the citizen” (16). In addition, it is essential to note the connections between “hacktivists” and okupas on the question of property and ownership; the connection allows for one to see both of their practices as questioning the public-private distinction. Hacktivists question digital ownership models and the idea of intellectual property, while okupas, as we have seen, question ownership models in the city. The Hamlab’s approach to the web is the same as the okupas’ approach to everyday life in the city and is founded upon the principle of collective ownership.

Such a radical approach to space has generated interest in Madrid, and other less progressive collectives have attempted to capitalize upon the trend. An example comes, as shown by Vilaseca, in the TriBall project, a collaborative effort between a small business association TriBall and real estate developer Rehabitar Gestión, which has recently purchased a large portion of an entire neighborhood within the Malasaña district known as the Ballesta Triangle. The area forms a geographical triangle between the Gran Vía, Calle Fuencarral, and Calle Corredera Baja de San Pablo. The group, in the past few years, has bought up cheap real estate in the zone, which is rundown and has been plagued with crime, prostitution, and in general has been ignored by the city government. The project takes a top-down stance on urban planning by choosing carefully what type

16 From “The TriBall Case: ‘Okupación Creativa ¡Ya!’ vs. Okupa Hacktivismo,” presentation given at Kentucky Foreign Languages Conference at the University of Kentucky on April 18, 2009. All quotes and page numbers are from the transcription of the presentation that Dr. Vilaseca has shared with me.
of businesses may rent the properties it owns in the neighborhood as part of its broader vision for the area. Food markets and locutorios, services in demand from the Latin American residents of the area, have been rejected for not entering into that vision (Vilaseca 4).

Triball has employed a number of different strategies with the final goal of revitalizing the neighborhood and making it a lucrative shopping area for those from Madrid and for tourists. Stephen Vilaseca has described the TriBall project, which “like a concept-album whose songs are connected by a unifying theme . . . [creates] a self-proclaimed concept-neighborhood whose various spaces are connected by a modern, bohemian, ecologically friendly aesthetic (7). In an attempt to link itself to the already existing vanguard culture of the neighborhood found in spaces such as the Patio Maravillas, a fascinating piece of the Triball group’s gentrification plan in the area involved an initiative called “Okupación Creativa ¡Ya!.” The project involved inviting over forty-five local artists to “okupy” thirteen of their properties during one month from April 10 to May 10, 2008. The artists were given the possibility to rehabilitate the locales, sell their artwork during that time period, and then the option to stay on and begin paying rent at the end of the month (Vilaseca 7). In a press release, the Association described the project as follows:

Con OKUPACIÓN CREATIVA ¡YA!, lo más vanguardista confluye en una de las zonas más castizas de Madrid. . . La Asociación de Comerciantes TriBall y la incubadora de talentos La Maison lanzan una iniciativa pionera que reúne a más de 45 creadores de diferentes disciplinas en torno a las calles más castizas del centro de Madrid en un proyecto que pretende servir de escaparate y plataforma a las últimas tendencias en moda, complementos, fotografía, instalaciones, juguetes o ilustración de la capital. . . TriBall cederá 13 locales vacíos de la zona, entre los que se encuentran 4 prostíbulos, una tintorería o una antigua peletería y que durante las últimas semanas han sido reconvertidos por sus nuevos inquilinos en auténticos espacios de tendencia y arte.
Además de escaparate de nuevas creaciones, los diseñadores pondrán a la venta sus productos, con lo que el público podrá adquirir creaciones de los más diferentes estilos, desde los más discretos a los más atrevidos y transgresores. (“Okupación”)

The initiative, in essence, a marketing campaign that drew much attention and business to the neighborhood, raises a series of questions concerning its use of the Okupa name.

As different Okupa groups such as the CSOA Patio Maravillas were quick to point out, this project attempts to co-opt the movement and constitutes a perverted version of the practice of okupación that attempts to sell an alternative lifestyle. Indeed, what the TriBall group promoted with “Okupación Creativa ¡Ya!” is not really okupación at all but rather a legalized agreement between the owners of properties and the leasers. Those who “squat” in these locales agree to either abandon them at the end of the allotted time period or begin to pay rent. Whereas the Okupa movement attempts to break the rhetoric of economic privacy, the commercialized version of TriBall aims to reinforce the unquestionable status of private property by inserting okupación into a model of acceptance and promotion of the very practices that the Okupa movement denounces. For as “atrevidos” or “transgresores” as the products these artists sell may be, the spatial practices they participate in reinforce the notion that the city and its culture belongs to those who hold private property rights over it. The Patio Maravillas has been important in criticizing such notions and offering an alternative approach to the city based on the creation of public spaces.

Financial Institutions and Culture: The Problematic Case of Caja Madrid’s La Casa Encendida and the “Esta es una plaza” Initiative.
Of course, the Patio Maravillas was not the first CSOA of its type to emerge. For decades, the neighborhood of Lavapiés has been a hotbed of urban activism and the Okupa movement (Gómez 3–4). In this context, it is not surprising that Caja Madrid would choose the outskirts of the neighborhood as the setting for its ambitious venture into the Madrid cultural scene, La Casa Encendida. The center is housed in a large building on the Ronda de Atocha, not far from the Glorieta de Embajadores in one direction and the Reina Sofía in the other, and it contains a substantial library and a beautiful rooftop terrace. La Casa Encendida sponsors a myriad of cultural programming and events such as art exhibits, workshops, film series, conferences, and round table discussions. In December of last year, the New York Times published an article by Andrew Ferren titled: “In Madrid, Banking on the Art Scene.” The article hails such banking institutions as Caja Madrid and La Caixa for the cultural centers that they have established in Madrid, La Casa Encendida and CaixaForum respectively, and for their contribution to urban culture in the face of the global economic crisis.

Spain’s Cajas de Ahorros, or Savings Banks, reflect a peculiar economic and political situation. They are not-for-profit institutions, controlled by local governments and the Comunidades Autónomas where they are located. Their origins can be found in the fifteenth century Montes de Piedad, charitable organizations led by Franciscan monks that were meant to extend low-to-no interest loans to those in need. The Cajas evolved from this tradition and are required to devote their profits to the “public good.” As Ferren says, Caja Madrid is free to interpret the “public good” as it sees fit. Here is the glitch in this potentially promising project: Who is it that determines what the “public good” is? At La Casa Encendida, one is not presented with the model that Fraser and Deutsche
support with its emphasis on democratic participation and debate that is followed by the
Patio Maravillas. Rather, decision making and organization come from management,
with the occasional request for input from users as compared to the general assembly that
is employed at the CSOAs. Thus, while La Casa Encendida has an exciting offering of
activities, its hierarchical, top-down structure stands in contrast to the autonomous,
bottom-up movement engendered in the Centros okupados. La Casa also has ways of
limiting the supposedly free and public access to its center: Internet access is available for
one euro per hour if using the center’s computers. To use the free wireless Internet
access, users must provide identification every time that they wish to log in, and the
service cuts off after ninety minutes. This of course provides a clear contrast to the
Hamlab “hacktivism” project at the Patio Maravillas.

It is reasonable to argue that the Okupa movement, as a key element in a growing
popular dissent concerning urban policies in Madrid, is in part responsible for the recent
attention paid to cultural and social offerings in the city by institutions such as Caja
Madrid with their “obra social” project at La Casa Encendida. The location of the center
in Lavapiés, where demand for this kind of cultural offering is so high, cannot be a
coincidence. Of course, the users of Centros sociales okupados and those of La Casa
Encendida are not necessarily one and the same. Mayte Gómez has pointed out in her “El
barrio de Lavapiés, laboratorio de interculturalidad,” that there are distinct groups of
residents in the neighborhood: long time, older residents “de toda la vida”; young urban
activists including the okupas; immigrants; and a young, bourgeois, progressive crowd
that has moved in as the barrio has become more gentrified (2). While some of the more
radical activists, immigrants, and even older residents likely participate in the activities
offered at La Casa Encendida, the majority of its participants come from the fourth demographic, not only from Lavapiés but from all over the city. The different audience, however, and the organizer, does not preclude the possibility of some of the activities having a positive effect on the neighborhood and its residents.

Perhaps La Casa Encendida can be understood through the lens of David Harvey’s discussion of urban culture in “The Art of Rent.” Harvey argues that capital’s goal is to find ways to commodify the local cultural differences of a given city in order to be able to appropriate monopoly rents. In this sense, Caja Madrid’s obra social forms part of this logic: the financial institution attempts to co-opt the counterculture and urban activism of Lavapiés as a way to promote its own goals. The promising part of Harvey’s argument is that these attempts to control local culture are contradictory: in order to gain monopoly, capitalists must allow cultural developments that are antagonistic to their functioning and even support “transgressive” cultural practices as a way to be original. These practices “open a space for political thought and action within which socialist alternatives can be both devised and pursued” (Harvey).

One potential example of the precarious line La Casa Encendida walks in this regard is a recent installation called Urbanacción. The press release for this project describes it as “una plataforma para la reflexión, el debate y la creación de acciones urbanas desde otras formas de entender la ciudad, la participación y la ciudadanía” (“Se inaugura”). The project featured a contest that is especially contradictory because it encouraged groups to occupy—and “okupy”—abandoned solares or vacant plots of land in the city and propose different uses for them. This serves as an example of how, once a
project enters the hands of users and becomes cultural practice, a hegemonic institution may lose its grip on what it is trying to control.

*Municipal Government, Grassroots, Neighborhood Associations, and Okupas*

One collective formed of young students and activists from Madrid and other parts of Europe began a project through the Urbanacción program called *Esta es una plaza*, creating a public plaza out of an overgrown plot in Lavapiés. *Esta es una plaza* calls attention for the way in which the several forces at work in the discourses on public space in the city converge under one particular case. The initiative was originally connected to La Casa Encendida, but it has since been supported by various CSOAs, was closed and subsequently reopened by the city government, and has come into confrontation with Lavapié’s neighborhood association *La Corrala*. The *Esta es una plaza* project is a case in point for the battles taking place over public space in Madrid and the fight for a redefinition of public space based on practices by users.

*Esta es una plaza* began in December of 2008 in a week-long seminar offered by La Casa Encendida through its program Urbanacción. A group of students, led by professors of architecture from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, designed a project to be carried out involving action in an abandoned space of Lavapiés. The group chose a nearby solar on Calle Doctor Fourquet for its intervention. The plot is owned “publicly,” that is, controlled by the city government, and has been out of use for approximately thirty years. After asking neighbors what uses they preferred and thought were needed for the space, the group decided to convert the abandoned plot of land into a green space, a type of park and public plaza with activities for children, a public garden, a
flower garden, a sports area, a theater, etc. Through La Casa Encendida the collective was meant to be a temporary intervention, but given the positive reactions from neighbors, the members decided to seek the approval of the city government to continue the project on a permanent basis.

While the project was navigating bureaucratic channels, in January of 2009, the solar was closed by the town hall. After several months of attempted negotiations, demonstrations, and rallying of support among residents and urban activists, the solar was reopened at the beginning of May 2009. Volunteers took to the task of returning the plaza to its prior state, pulling weeds and cleaning debris. However, at the end of May, the plaza was bulldozed. All the flowers, fruit, and vegetables that had been planted were uprooted and removed with no prior notice. Upon conversations with the town hall and other entities in the neighborhood, it was learned that La Corrala, the neighborhood association of Lavapiés, had requested and was granted use of the solar by the city government as a place to deposit waste and rubble from some construction taking place in the neighborhood. Its reasoning was that the waste was getting in the way of parking for residents, and a larger, more removed space was necessary (Esta).

The loss of the plaza led to another round of protests from the collective and those involved in the project. Some of the protests included the apparition in the area of heads of lettuce and “mourning” trees with black bands tied around them with notes concerning the recent happenings in the solar. The group’s blog provides frequent updates of the goings-on and has been important in getting the word out about events, protests, and other important information concerning the site on Calle Dr. Fourquet. Through the blog, the collective also has been able to continually change the name of its project. It has gone
from the original *Esta es una plaza* to, upon its closing ¿*Esta es una plaza*? The most recent change has been to *Esta será una plaza* after news on June 26, 2009 that, after multiple negotiations, the use of the *solar* has been ceded temporarily, for a span of two to three years, to the collective by the city government. Although this situation is constantly evolving, as of October 2009, the city government has still not completed the cession of the *solar* to the group; however, it *did* open the space for the 2009 edition of *La noche en blanco* (*Esta*).\(^{17}\)

Even though this project began through an institutionalized outlet, it is promising as yet another in a long list of okupations that have at least temporarily marked the landscape of the city. It does have its differences from the *Okupa* groups and the projects being carried out in CSOAs like Patio Maravillas. While the latter constitute, as we have discussed, a radical approach to public space and a questioning of what it is and where it is to be found, the *Esta es una plaza* group is concerned primarily with the recuperation of more traditional forms of public space in the form of green, open spaces in the city. Nevertheless, the desire to include residents in the decision-making process over the uses of the space and in general the demand to put that abandoned space into use after thirty years of inactivity is important. *Esta es una plaza* has received support from the Patio Maravillas and other *Okupa* groups in Madrid, proving that even if their projects may differ they do not have to be at odds nor mutually exclusive.

Along these lines, another important issue that arises with the *Esta es una plaza* project is that of the relationship between these grassroots collectives and the city

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\(^{17}\) The *Esta es una plaza* initiative is not the only of its kind in Lavapiés. After research for this chapter was completed, I became aware of a similar project called *El solar de Olivar 48* that involved the “okupation” of a similarly abandoned plot owned by the city government. The collective also has had confrontations with *Urbanismo* and is also awaiting a temporary cession.
government and other existing organizations within the urban area. It is worth examining the question of negotiations with city officials in order to normalize such projects. *La Corrala* was able to have the space granted to them with apparent ease. Given the neighborhood association’s well-established relationship with the local political channels, this is not particularly surprising. In contrast, the *Plaza* collective has, through a raising of awareness among citizens and a months-long negotiation process, won a two to three year cession of the *solar* that, after months, has yet to become official. Several questions arise concerning negotiations. In particular, to what degree should such a collective be willing to bargain with the municipal government? What does legalization mean for this type of project and for the more “radical” *Okupa* social and cultural centers? Many from the *Okupa* movement have been critical of attempts to “legalize” their projects claiming that it is a betrayal of the movement’s principles of fighting against institutionalized political action. Others have been more pragmatic concerning the issue and have argued that, faced with eviction, it is better to have a legalized space than none at all.

These questions and conflicts ultimately point toward the tension between principle and practice. That is, to what extent must principles be sacrificed in order to carry out desired practices? In his “La okupación y las políticas públicas,” Robert González García would seem to agree with the pragmatic approach insofar as the legalization of a *Centro Social Okupado* allows for the continuation of the political projects of housing, youth, and urbanism being carried out by the members. Legalization, in his view, allows for a consolidation of the *okupas’* project that otherwise might quickly reach an end and, regardless of the intentions, can have a positive effect on public policy as well. By making their demands known, and indeed having them answered, the *okupas*
impact public policy on a symbolic, operative, and substantive manner, argues González García (165-66).

And while the Okupa movement certainly does not rely upon or need to be legitimized by institutionalized government, and most definitely should not sacrifice its goals and principles, the question arises if it is realistic to not seek at least some kind of communication with authorities if that will mean the increased visibility, viability, and continuation of its projects. The Patio Maravillas has been willing to utilize legal channels in its attempt to maintain the CSOA in Malasaña. They filed for the expropriation of the building through the city government, have spoken with the PSOE and IU political parties, and planned several sessions in the Reina Sofía to discuss the future of the Patio (Zapata, et al.). The Patio does not see these strategies as contradictory to its principles; rather, they are seen as an integral part of their project. In an interview, Guillermo Zapata, member of the Patio, describes the logic this way:

> Cuando decimos “hay que exigir la expropiación”, todos pensamos que eso está dentro del sentido común. . . . Hablamos con todo el mundo. Es parte del conflicto. No hacerlo es evitarlo, y es que la realidad política es tan lamentable que parece estúpido creer que esa gente, los partidos políticos, nos van a recuperar de alguna forma. Nosotros confiamos en nuestra capacidad de movilización, que la hay, y a partir de ahí viene el resto. . . . Todos los conflictos llevan una negociación, a fin de conseguir unas conquistas. . . . Los centros sociales okupados no pueden ser una experiencia efímera. (Zapata, et al.)

As we can see, “negotiation” in this context does not mean sacrificing principles or “selling out” to those in charge, but rather making views and positions known and demanding to be heard. Even though the Okupas do not expect much or anything from the political parties, they realize that negotiations are a part of the process and can be one option for the continuation of the CSOA. In this sense, negotiation does not involve an adherence to or an implied acceptance of the rules and principles in place. In contrast to
neighborhood associations and different civic organizations, the *okupas* continue to
denounce the system while taking advantage of certain aspects of it in order to spread
their message.

While the Patio Maravillas maintains its “illegal” status in spite of its attempts to
negotiate with the city government, other *CSOA*s in Madrid have been successful in the
process. In Lavapiés, the Eskalera Karakola (EKKA), a social center for women and
formerly a *casa okupada*, now operates as a “legal” center. The Eskalera was founded in
1996 when an abandoned house at Calle Embajadores 40 in the neighborhood of
Lavapiés was “okupied” by a group of young feminists demanding accessible spaces for
women in the neighborhood and in the city in general. The collective, after an ongoing
fight with the administration and collaboration with various women’s groups from
Madrid, was ceded a low rent space down the street at Embajadores 52 in March of 2005
(“Memoria”). As in the old house, the social center for women uses the space as a
springboard from which to launch its feminist project. It is a fluid and changing project,
however, as is to be expected and is demonstrated in the name of the group itself—the
spiral staircase that represents a process without beginning or end (Marinas Sánchez
220). Most of the original members from the *CSOA* are no longer involved at
Embajadores 52. A recent conversation I had with some of the members of the current
association revealed some conflict over the identity of the EKKA since its “legalization”
and the move to the new space. One member expressed the concern that since losing their
status as *CSOA* that an important part of their group cohesion had been lost. In 2009, the
EKKA was having a difficult time choosing a theme under which to march in the annual
March 8 International Women’s Day demonstration. Does this mean that once the
“okupation” is over that the political project is over as well? Not necessarily. While the EKKA is perhaps less radical an organization than it was five or six years ago, it still offers important activities and services for women in Madrid and specifically in Lavapiés. It offers itself as an autonomous, self-organized, grassroots center, an alternative to the bureaucratic, top-down workings of places like the Centro Comunitario run by the municipal government in the Casino de la Reina Park that have programs for women in the neighborhood (González García 168).

Finally, how does a feminist project such as the one at Eskalera Karakola fit, if at all, into a discussion on public space in the city? Many might argue that since it is a space that is only accessible to a certain portion of the population that it cannot be considered a public space and must rather be seen as private. This depends on how one defines public space. If, as I have argued, the Okupa movement radically redefines the divide between public and private by bringing supposedly private issues into the public realm, the EKKA is another example of this, but with a different sense of the private. When Nancy Fraser addresses false senses of the private, she mentions not only the rhetoric of economic privacy but also one of domestic privacy that “seeks to exclude some issues and interests from public debate by personalizing them or familiarizing them” (22). These issues often have to do with issues such as gender and sexuality. So while the economic form involves the okunas through their questioning of housing and property as “private,” the domestic form is the one most clearly taken on by the Eskalera Karakola. In the description of its project on its webpage, the EKKA explains the connection between feminism, space, and the public-private divide:

Somos moldeadas por los espacios que atravesamos, que estructuran nuestro cotidiano, que determinan con quién nos encontramos y en qué términos.
Así el espacio en que vivimos es algo íntimo, que constituye nuestras subjetividades, a la vez que el espacio urbano, la calle, las plazas, son “lo público” par excellence, ámbito histórico de lo que se reconoce como política. . . .

Explicitar esta unidad, esta no diferenciación, entre “lo publico” y “lo personal” e insistir en que es en este complejo ámbito que [sic] se hace la política es, como tantas luchas feministas, un proyecto de hacer visible lo invisible, desnaturalizar lo que pase por “natural”. . . . Hablar del espacio como feminista es una cuestión de valorar y politizar lo cotidiano. . . . Crear nuestros propios espacios es insistir en nuestra potencia de transformar la ciudad y de transformarnos a nosotras mismas. (“Memoria”)

Both Fraser and the Eskalera Karakola are articulating the original feminist cry that the personal is political. The EKKA tries to bring attention to this cry through the creation of a space to carry out daily activities and to be a visible and vocal force in Madrid.

Defining this space as a public one, however, is problematic because of its exclusivity. For those who would claim that such a collective is merely a group promoting its private interests and contributing little to an overall debate on the general “public good,” Fraser has an answer to this in the form of what she calls “subaltern counterpublics.” These are groups that constitute “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (14). Counterpublics must serve a contestatory function, and “insofar as they arise in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive space” (14). Fraser recognizes that these groups are not always virtuous and can often be explicitly antidemocratic. She insists that such groups be “publics” instead of “enclaves”; that is, they must constitute an attempt to “disseminate one’s discourse into ever-widening arenas” (15).
In this sense, the Eskalera Karakola leans more toward enclave rather than public. The EKKA does attempt to shed light on women’s issues in broader contexts. It has a rather expansive membership, including many foreign women. The group is involved in the Red de Lavapiés, a coalition of grassroots organizations, neighborhood associations, and other groups from Lavapiés. Collaboration with other organizations such as the Colectivo de Mujeres Urbanistas, Servicio Civil Internacional, and Consejo de la Mujer, has not only helped the Eskalera Karakola to fund its project but has also placed its discourse within a more expansive one concerning the city and public space. In the past, the EKKA’s connection with the Okupa movement also gave it a place to present its issues and concerns for debate and consideration. The assembly-based organization of the Okupa movement and its desire to support a variety of causes served in general to allow the okupa women’s concerns to enter broader debates. But the EKKA limits its membership to women and the majority of its programming to issues concerning women, problematic if one considers a public to be the interaction between willing members. In this case, the legalization of the EKKA and its subsequent lessened participation with the core of the Okupa movement may signal a process of ghettoization, or the making of an “enclave,” in which rhetoric and exclusivity preclude a construction of public space based on practice.

This last section has set forth examples of three types of cultural center active in Madrid: CSOAs, cultural centers run by financial institutions, and “legalized” grassroots centers. Projects sponsored by financial institutions such as La Casa Encendida approach culture and public space in a top-down manner, aiming to mold cultural spaces of the city to their liking. But these attempts at control can easily escape the hands of those who
initiate them, as shown in the *Esta es una plaza* project that originated in La Casa Encendida. While the CSOAs such as Patio Maravillas are the most radical in terms of their redefinition of public space through their calls for making abandoned private property available for communal uses, it is also clear that grassroots centers and collectives that work within what is considered legal have also been successful, at least to an extent, in promoting a bottom-up style of local governance and culture. The key lies in an understanding of public space in terms of the principles of democratic participation, whereby public space is built through practice, not already delineated and closed off through rhetoric.

This chapter examines the crucial public nature of the Okupa movement and the importance of its challenges to the rhetoric of economic as well as domestic privacy as described by Nancy Fraser in the particular social and cultural context of Madrid. The movement’s attempts to break down the walls that shield private property from public debate are central to its existence and open up an intellectual space for the questioning of current models and discourses on public space in the city. Is the fleeting presence of the casas okupadas enough to do so and bring any real urban change in Madrid? As Castells argued in the early 1980s concerning Madrid’s Citizen Movement, “the proper historical role of a social movement, unlike political forces, is not the cautious administration of its cultural heritage, but the momentum for innovation that it gives an established institution” (263). In this regard, the emergence of centers such as La Casa Encendida seems to be a sign of potential social and cultural change in the making rather than as a cooptation or “commodification” of culture. This is a question that will be answered with time and in large part through the amount of public support the okupas are able to gain.
for their projects through the media, as well as through the Internet. In fact, it is on the
Internet and with the creation of a connection between cyberspace and physical spaces of
the city where today’s urban battles will be fought and won. A webpage called
www.okupatutambien.net has taken to the task of documenting Madrid’s casas okupadas
past and present as a way to assure that the memory of these houses and what they did is
not lost. Projects such as these, which are able to take advantage of the incredible reach
and organizing power of the Internet in order to form communities that act within the city
of Madrid might well play a large part in determining the future of the Okupa movement.
Chapter 3. Multicultural Madrid: Immigration and the Blurring of the Public and Private Spheres

Shifts in Spain’s urban landscape at the turn of the century—specifically, the new waves of immigration to Madrid and other major cities—brought about concerns that would come to occupy an important place in urban and cultural discourse. Immigration has posed difficult practical questions for urban planners, politicians, and others in Madrid as they attempt to adapt, or in some cases close off, the city to the arriving populations. These problems are not new to the current wave of foreign immigrants; the inadequate response to the influx of migrant Spaniards into Madrid in the 1950s and 60s, as many studies have shown, caused long-lasting problems in urban housing, sanitary services, transportation, and environmental sustainability.1 Of course, recent immigration from areas such as South America and Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa poses even further challenges of juridical, linguistic, and cultural nature to urban planners and citizens as well as non-citizens. Such problems have been a catalyst in making the newly arrived and marginalized portion of the population a frequent, if often inadequately developed, topic of discussion in urban planning and in cultural productions as well.2

The relationship between immigrants and the city found in recent urban cultural productions in Spain is important not only for what it exposes about the particular plight of these marginalized subjects, but also for what it reveals about the changing nature of the fundamental units of the public and the private. The immigrant experience in the city

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1 See Borja and Muxí, Castells, Hooper and others for a more detailed analysis of the Franco regime’s response to the rapid growth of Madrid in the mid-twentieth century. Several texts from the time period—e.g., in film, Ferreri’s El pisito (1957), Berlanga’s El verdugo (1966) and Martín Santos’s classic novel Tiempo de silencio (1962)—show a sensitivity to these issues.

2 For an example of the concern for the topic by urban planners, see the 2005 publication by the Dirección General de Urbanismo y Planificación Regional of the Comunidad de Madrid titled El urbanismo ante el encuentro de las culturas: La inserción socioespacial del inmigrante en la Comunidad de Madrid. The 300-page volume includes different articles, case studies, and statistics that attempt to put forth a plan for adjusting the city to the changes in urban space due to immigration.
takes the *Okupa* movement’s critique of the public-private divide a step further. While the *Okupa* movement has been concerned with challenging private property discourses and bringing supposedly private issues into the public realm through a definition of public space that emerges through practice, the new waves of immigration pose further questions concerning public space. For many immigrants, their visibility in public spaces constantly puts them at danger due to their illegal status. At the same time, this marginalized position in the city also closes off their access to spaces such as the workplace and the home, making them more reliant on public spaces to fulfill basic, supposedly private needs. Tomás Pedro Gomariz Acuña has pointed out concerning immigrants in Madrid:

Las condiciones de vida de estos agregados sociales suelen obligar a una mayor presencia en la vía pública. El nivel de renta de estos es tan reducido que tienen serios obstáculos para gozar de un habitat privado. Disfrutar las áreas de libre acceso implica, en todos los casos, la apropiación del espacio tanto funcional, por el uso que se haga de él, como estructural, por la forma de ser habilitado. El proceso inmerso en estos acontecimientos es el de la proyección de los aspectos de las culturas concurrentes. De esta forma, el espacio se dota de una nueva utilidad y estética. (78)

Gomariz Acuña touches here on the increasingly blurred lines between private and public as formerly unfamiliar cultural practices are made visible to the “native” inhabitants of the city. Importantly, the new immigrant populations do not have the same access to private spaces and thus use public spaces to carry out activities that are traditionally understood as “private,” such as running small businesses, extensive socializing, and prostitution. In this manner, immigrant life in the city suggests that the “public” is

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3 The extensive use by immigrants of the Casa del Campo, a huge recreational area on the Western outskirts of Madrid, is a good example of the changes in function of public space through their practices. Large groups often use the park for reunions and parties and are followed there by different vendors selling food, beverage, and other items from the immigrants’ home countries. Prostitutes, in their majority immigrants, also gather in public places such as the Calle de la Montera near Puerta del Sol and the Casa del Campo, as depicted in the film *Princesas* to be discussed below.
becoming a particularly intimate or private way of experiencing space. This blurring of the lines between the two spheres necessarily leads one to question if the distinction is even a fruitful one for understanding everyday urban life and developing adequate responses to the problems that arise therein.

Yet the complicated relationship between private and public spreads beyond the immigrant experience. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri address the increasing inadequacy of the traditional legal notions of public and private—where public refers to state control and private to private property—in the current historical moment. They stress the need to reconceptualize the two notions into a “postliberal and postsocialist legal theory” that would not be based on public and private but rather on the common and the singular (Hardt and Negri 203). They explain the meaning of these two terms: “The common does not refer to traditional notions of either the community or the public; it is based on the communication among singularities and emerges through the collaborative social processes of production. Whereas the individual dissolves in the unity of the community, singularities are not diminished but express themselves freely in the common” (204). Similarly, historian James Livingston has pointed out in *The World Turned Inside Out*, his study of North American culture since 1975, that

[t]he difference between private and public . . . became a problem rather than an assumption at the end of the twentieth century. . . . [T]he personal became political, and vice versa, not just because feminists said it should—although we must attribute the original slogan and its radical connotations to feminism. We were all confused by the shifting boundaries between the so-called private sector and the so-called public sectors whether we were speaking of economic growth or the relation between our inner selves and our outward appearances. (xiv)

In this context, immigration is one part of a broader historical moment in which questions are generated about the limits and boundaries of the public and private concerning
gender, sexuality, the family, and more. The conflation of the public and private then leads to an increased sense of confusion across all of society as to life in the city as well.

This chapter analyzes two recent cultural productions that, through their presentation of immigrants in Madrid, reveal this shifting relationship between the public and private spheres. Two well-known figures are discussed, director Fernando León de Aranoa and author Lucía Etxebarria, whose recent film and novel, respectively, deal precisely with the place that immigrants and “natives” occupy in Madrid’s urban landscape. Both address the anxiety that arises on the part of the immigrant and Spanish protagonists of their works concerning these shifts in space, while asking their broad Spanish audiences to share in and confront these same anxieties. The first section of the chapter will examine León de Aranoa’s film *Princesas* (2005), the story of the struggle of two prostitutes—one from Spain, the other from the Dominican Republic—to survive on the streets of Madrid. The second part of the chapter deals with *Cosmofobia* (2007), the latest novel by the often controversial Etxebarria, which follows some twenty residents of Lavapiés—many of whom are immigrants from Morocco, Senegal, Guinea, and Ecuador—as their lives cross paths through encounters in the parks, streets, and bars of the centrally located neighborhood. The film, through the story of friendship between the main characters and through its haptic filmic language encourages Spanish spectators to confront shared concerns about changes in society due to immigration and the force of the market on Madrid. The novel, for its part, presents the confusing nature of Madrid by addressing the universal dilemma faced by all of its characters, immigrants and “natives,” to find their place or become comfortable in the world and in their own skin. The voyages of self-discovery of the protagonists of both the novel and the film correspond with their
traversal of city spaces, whereby their emotional journeys affect and are affected by physical spaces and affect the reader/spectator as well. Both Princesas and Cosmofobia, then, present a special kind of cartography that draws on and merges together the physical spaces of the city and the intimate—or private—emotions of the protagonists that move within and through these spaces. In this kind of mapping, the distinction between public and private would appear to become irrelevant.

(E)motion in Madrid: Intimate and Urban Geography in Fernando León de Aranoa’s Princesas

As its title suggests, Princesas attempts to offer an alternative image of the women who take part in the marginalized profession of prostitution. The film follows the brutal reality of prostitutes across the geography of Spain’s capital; at the same time, its narrative primarily maps out the desires, dreams, and emotions—the interior journeys—of its protagonists, Caye (Candela Peña) and Zulema (Micaela Nevárez). In Princesas, Caye, a Spaniard, and Zulema, from the Dominican Republic, develop a friendship despite the initial animosity between them and come to share the same emotional space, although in the end they are pushed irrevocably apart. The two planes of the narrative—the urban and the emotional terrains—are developed together and are in constant overlap as the reality of life in Madrid coincides with the fairytale-like quality of these women’s interior desires. The attention to the issue of prostitution stems from a wider concern for the effects of capitalism in the outward-lying neighborhoods of Madrid and is presented as an extreme example of commodification—of the body—and the blurring of the line that divides the public and private spheres. Immigration is also at the forefront of this film, emphasizing the dehumanizing effects of capitalism and the failings of the social
safety net that is itself corrupt and taken over by the market. The protagonists are doubly marginalized as women and prostitutes. Ultimately, the friendship between Caye and Zulema is the backbone of the narrative, and the solidarity between the two protagonists represents a sort of resistance to the social problems and injustices that these marginalized women face on a daily basis.

*Emotional Cartography, the Haptic, and the Merging of “Inner” and “Outer” Experiences*

The conceptualization of public and private in *Princesas* is varied, demonstrating the blurry and overlapping nature of the two entities. Hardt and Negri demonstrate a confusion in terminology between the two terms, where private is considered as both related to private property and to rights and freedoms of social subjects. Likewise, the public blurs the distinction between state control and what is held in common (204). It can be argued that the film, through its attention to prostitution and immigration, critiques the commodification of nearly all aspects of urban life. In this sense, the “private” is an economic issue that is related to property and the market and is seen as a negative, pervasive element of society. Yet there is another notion of the private that emerges from the film, and that is private in the sense of the “personal” represented in the intimate lives of the prostitutes and other urban subjects. The economic sense of private invades and threatens the other sense of private. Likewise, different senses of the public materialize as well. On the one hand, public is understood as that which pertains to state-owned and administered services, and there is a clear critique of the economic privatization and the corruption that results as a consequence of the pull of the market on these services. On
the other, the public is closely related to the physical, open spaces of the city, or commons. These sites are experienced increasingly in a “private” manner, as the prostitutes “work the street” and rely on it for their well-being. At the same time, their visibility puts them at risk and eliminates their “privacy,” as the “public” state monitors their every move. This complicated overlapping demonstrates an increasing confusion as to what exactly does and does not constitute public and private as a result of the contrasting, interacting forces of the market and of the broadening scope of the political in which the personal becomes political and vice versa. This overlapping leads one to question if maintaining a traditional public-private opposition is even helpful in making sense of the experience of these urban subjects.

This confusion between the spheres is drawn out in the filmic language itself. *Princesas* can be approached through the haptic film theory of Giuliana Bruno as laid out in her *Atlas of Emotion*. Bruno proposes a shift away from the gaze-oriented focus of film analysis, insisting that the cinematic experience involves much more than the act of seeing; instead, cinema should be considered as a spatio-corporeal experience in which the spectator is, rather than a *voyeur*, a *voyageur*, who comes into contact with and moves through a given environment, traversing a “haptic, emotive terrain” (Bruno 16). Bruno revisits the Greek etymology of the word cinema as a term that connotes both motion and emotion: cinema not only involves the movement of images before our eyes; it “moves” us on an emotional level, through inner space (7). The urban space is essential to Bruno’s analysis of cinema in an historical sense, as both the city and film develop out of modernity. For her, “. . . metropolis and film interface as a distinctly modern production in which a correspondence between the city space and the film space between the motion
of the city and the moving image, exists. The machine of modernity that fabricated the
city is also the ‘fabric’ of film” (Bruno 21).

Through her analysis, Bruno touches on the interaction and fusion of private and
public, where the “inner” experiences of both characters and spectators cannot be
separated from the “outer” movement through space represented on the screen or even
from the materiality of the film itself. She offers her own unique reading of the feminist
slogan “the personal is political” by approaching architecture and film as embodied,
gendered practices: “By connecting corpus and space, I am . . . suggesting that film and
architecture are gendered practices, linked by their writing public stories of private life.
The body-in-space is the narrative territory in which architecture and film meet on
public-private grounds” (Bruno 64, emphasis is mine). The use of hyphenation here
suggests a merging of the two spheres.

From this perspective one must examine Princesas, following the on-screen
experience of the ways in which the exterior journeys of the protagonists across the
landscape of Madrid reflect upon, affect, and are affected by their interior journeys, and
moreover, how this movement “moves” the spectator as well. The relation between
motion and emotion is definitive to the film, a relation through which a social
commentary on the transience and marginality of life for women and immigrants within
the capitalist system can be read, as Caye and Zulema unsuccessfully seek to fix a
location for themselves within the urban landscape. The marginal neighborhoods that
these women inhabit come to mark the insecure boundary and the movement between
inside and outside, whereby the supposedly clear lines between public and private space
are thrown into question.
This spatial instability and anxiety is at the center of *Princesas*. As the film begins, the clear relation between motion and emotion is established, and the spectator is placed into a disorienting world of movement and transience. In the first sequence, before any images appear on the screen, the sound track is occupied by an unidentifiable noise, similar to that of a wind tunnel. On the black screen where the credits pass, images of apartment buildings and other urban structures begin to flash into the frame: the spectator realizes that the shot is originating from within a moving vehicle. The view of the city out the window of this vehicle is occasionally obstructed by trees and other obstacles, accounting for the now only occasional blackness, and the sound which persists proves to be diegetic, the noise of the car as it makes its way down a thoroughfare. As other disorienting sounds such as the radio of the taxi invade the sound track, further images of the urban landscape appear in the frame of this handheld, unstable shot. There are several cuts between shots in which various high rise buildings, an industrial area, and other moving cars occupy the frame. As a car speeds by and the taxi appears to exit a roadway, the shot of the surroundings is blurred out, and the camera focuses in on the interior of the taxi, with an extreme close-up of a charm that hangs from the rearview mirror. A change in position of the camera in the next shot reveals the passenger of the taxi, a woman (Caye, the protagonist of the narrative) sitting in the back seat flipping through a magazine. She raises her eyes from her reading and proceeds to look out the window, attempting to orient herself with regard to her landscape. A cut to a point of view shot shows what the passenger observes from the window: what appears to be a junkyard and more of a gray, desolate, concrete urban landscape. The view of the city is then obstructed by the guardrails of the highway, and a cut to another close-up shot of the
passenger’s face shows how she turns her gaze away from the window, as her attempt to orient herself has been frustrated.

Although this is a short sequence, lasting less than a minute, it is crucial for the way it not only establishes the disorienting nature of the urban space as seen by the protagonist but also inserts the spectator into this space as well. In her discussion of the haptic, Bruno cites the convention of the “establishing shot” as a “fundamental feature of the dominant film language” that demonstrates the geographic nature of film. The establishing shot responds to the emotional needs of the spectator before a film’s dislocating and fragmentary nature:

At the beginning of a film, just as at the start of a traveler’s visit to a city, the spectator is thought to confront a geographic emotion. This may be a simple desire to know the location, or, more commonly, a fear that develops into the need to be reassured of one’s whereabouts. The establishing shot is the conventional response to this destabilizing “space-affect.” (Bruno 271)

In the first sequence of Princesas, we can observe a resistance to the conventional establishing shot. Instead of offering the spectator a release to his or her “cartographic anxiety” by “securely mapping the viewer in space,” this sequence—while offering a basic localization of the narrative within the urban milieu—through editing, sound track, and a handheld shot, stresses the effects of movement, transience, and disorientation. In an interview that appears on the special features of the Princesas DVD, the director makes the following comment concerning the choice of the handheld camera:

Esta es una historia muy urbana, muy dinámica también; hay mucho movimiento en la película, ellas van y vienen todo el rato. Entonces me pareció bien rodarla en mano. Quería que la cámara tuviera esa ligera inquietud, un pulso un poco más vivo, un poquito más callejero, más urbano. Acompaña bien a la historia y ese nervio que tienen ellas también, ¿no? Esa inestabilidad que les acompaña todo el rato. (León de Aranoa)
This sequence “establishes” the techniques that will be used throughout the film as a way to communicate the anxiety that both protagonists feel in relation to the space they attempt to inhabit and their struggles to ground themselves within it. The spectator thus begins to accompany the protagonists on both their exterior and interior voyages through the urban landscape.

The importance of the connection between Caye and the urban landscape that she traverses in the film, established by the first sequence, is made obvious as well by the character’s name in itself, suggesting that she disposes of no private space. Caye, short for Cayetana, is an approximate homophone of the word in Spanish for street, “calle.” This creates a direct link between the woman and her environment and is reinforced by one of the songs that appears on the sound track several times during the film, “Me llaman calle.” The title literally translated, “They Call Me Street,” plays on the double meaning Caye/calle. There is an obvious connection between Caye, a prostitute who “works the street,” and the public space of the city. Caye and the other prostitutes with whom she associates share a conflictive relationship with the city, a space that they depend upon for their livelihood but that presents obstacles to that livelihood as well. At the same time, Caye’s direct relationship with the street fuses motion with emotion, urban with intimate, public with private.

The dependence by Caye and the other prostitutes on spaces of the city, their emotional desire to be situated firmly within them, and the exceedingly blurred distinction between private and public, leads to a type of spatial anxiety on their part that

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4 Cayetana is also an extremely castizo name that emphasizes the perceived Spanishness of the protagonist in contrast to the “outsiders,” represented by the exotic name of Zulema.

5 This tune, performed by Manu Chao, won the 2006 Goya award for Best Original Song.
is represented most readily in their attitude toward the immigrant prostitutes who “invade” their space. The first sign of this occurs very early on in the film, where Caye’s apartment is “invaded” by the presence of Zulema. By the nature of film, the spectator also “inhabits” Caye’s house and “personal” space. Bruno develops this notion of the house in her study as well, drawing on Beatriz Colomina, who argues that it is central to twentieth-century architecture, transformed by the media and new technologies—one of which is undoubtedly film—“into a new form of public and work space, more public than the street” (qtd. in Bruno 104). Thus, in the sequence, the spectator is inserted into Caye’s “intimate” world. As another upbeat tune by Manu Chao plays nondiegetically on the sound track, Caye is seen partially naked in her apartment, cleaning, smoking, and carefully counting the money she has made turning tricks. She moves confidently about her domain. However, as she approaches the window to hang her clothes out to dry, a close-up shot of Caye’s face captures a perplexed and worried expression. A cut to another shot reveals the object of Caye’s gaze: a t-shirt that says “Sexy Girl 69” hanging on the clothesline of an upstairs apartment next to several pieces of women’s lingerie. Another close-up of Caye’s face followed by another shot of the t-shirt emphasizes the disconcertment of Caye before this threatening object that has invaded her territory. The t-shirt, a leitmotif in the film, turns out to belong to Zulema, the Dominican prostitute who will end up being a close friend of Caye. The anxiety felt and seen by Caye in this sequence suggests that not even the supposedly “private” space of her apartment is safe from the threats of the outside world.

“Location Uneasiness”: Princesas and Urban Immigration Film
In this sequence and throughout, the film clearly enters into dialogue with recent cultural conversations concerning immigration to Spain. In recent years, cultural critics have addressed the anxieties that arise in immigration’s wake and its implications for Spanish identity. Daniela Flesler has argued that Spain’s historically ambivalent relationship with Europe and the cultural legacy of the Moors in Spain has led to a complex attitude towards immigration—especially Moroccan—in the years after the transition to democracy (“New” 104). Even though many cultural productions, argues Flesler, “strive to show positive images of immigrants” they ultimately “. . . reveal less about the real lives of the newcomers and more about Spain’s anxiety regarding its own liminal location on the African/European border” (“New” 104). This particular type of analysis approaches immigration to Spain from a broad standpoint, rightfully considering it within a framework of national identity. So too is the case with other important work on Spain’s colonial past, such as Susan Martin-Márquez’s recent *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity*. Both Flesler and Martin-Márquez point to the *spatial* nature of the issue at hand: Flesler puts emphasis on what she calls “locational uneasiness” in terms of Spain’s place on the African/European border (*Return* 131). Similarly, Martin-Márquez, through an engagement with the two senses of “Orient” found in Edward Said, brings up questions of mapping and the cartographic imaginary in the complex relationship between Spain and its African neighbors (9).

If immigration to Spain has been, however, a predominantly urban phenomenon, little has been done to address the more specific relationship between immigrant subjects and the urban spaces they occupy. Flesler, for example, although considering three films
set in Barcelona with *Cartas de Alou* (1990), *Saïd* (1998) and *Tomándote* (2000), does not develop the urban milieu as fundamentally important to her analysis. Nevertheless, the preoccupation concerning the arrival of immigrants to Spain’s major cities can be found in a wide range of urban discourses, and the city is at the center of many cultural productions that deal with immigration to Spain. In Madrid, with the increased visibility of immigrants in recent years and the heightened sense of threat felt in the aftermath of the March 2004 train bombings by Al Qaeda, the anxiety described by Flesler has become increasingly grounded in urban space.

In *Princesas*, the anxiety concerning immigration is played out in a particularly spatial and embodied manner. This is clearest in the scenes that take place at the gathering place for the Spanish prostitutes, a beauty salon in an unnamed working class neighborhood of Madrid. The large-paned window of the salon opens onto a plaza where the immigrant, undocumented prostitutes congregate on a daily basis. The other Spanish prostitutes, along with Caye, feel threatened by the presence of immigrant women who have taken away their business. They repeat on various occasions that “se trabaja la mitad” since the arrival of these women who charge considerably less for their services. An apparent contrast is established between the groups of women by way of the two spaces of the salon and the plaza. The Spanish women appear to be privileged spatially, as they have what would seem to be a private space from which to observe the immigrants who occupy the public area of the plaza. Yet, like Caye’s apartment, that space is constantly threatened by what lies outside of it.

From the salon, they criticize and complain about the women they see beyond the window. The literal presence of the individual and collective immigrant body is essential
to the threat felt by the Spanish prostitutes: shots of the women in the plaza focus in on their legs and buttocks, and the conversations sustained by the Spanish women entertain topics of bodily hygiene and the way the black women walk. Shots of half-naked immigrant prostitutes in the Casa del Campo where men go to “shop” for the women of their choice not only emphasize the commodification of women’s bodies, but also stress the strong presence of those bodies within the urban space and the disturbing effect that presence has.

At the same time, the Spanish women’s emotions are imbued with a mixture of concern for their economic instability as well as a not-so-veiled racism, although they attempt to deny this second aspect. Their comments in the hair salon focus on the perceived bodily difference between themselves and the foreigners. In an important conversation in the salon towards the beginning of the film, as Gabrielle Carty argues, humor is used to present what she sees as the basic aim of the film: to ask its spectators to question the xenophobic attitudes of the Spanish women, shaped in large part through the media (130). At one point in this conversation, Caren, one of the prostitutes, complains about losing business. An employee says that she is a racist, to which Caren replies: “No es un problema de racismo, corazón. Este es un problema de mercado, de las leyes y cosas del mercado. Pero no del de ahí de la esquina que conoces, ¿eh? Del otro. Del de la demanda y la competencia.” The humorous statement reveals the women’s awareness—albeit basic—of their place within a larger system. It also, argues Carty, hints at a veiled “new racism” while simultaneously demonstrating the lower classes’ anxiety concerning their place within a globalized economy (130).
Prostitution is used here as an example \textit{par excellance} of the commodification of all aspects of life, including that of the human body. Zulema prostitutes herself to support her family in the Dominican Republic and is willing to do so without pay for the possibility of receiving papers that will allow her to become a legal part of the Spanish system. In the meantime, given her marginal status, the public—that is, government-administered—system excludes her and fails her, as she is reluctant to use public health services and cannot report the beatings she receives at the hands of a corrupt public official for fear of being deported. Caye’s body is also a site of commodification. It is not made clear how Caye begins to work as a prostitute, and although she says it is temporary, her circular reasoning for this short-term work is that she is saving money to pay for breast implants because “se trabaja más.” When Zulema tells Caye that she is working as a prostitute to save money to send to her son in the Dominican Republic, Caye responds, “Yo también estoy ahorrando. Para comprarle unas tetas como las tuyas.” Images of Caye placing passport photos of herself on the bodies of naked women in magazines as she tries to decide which size best suits her are humorous in an uneasy fashion, as the commodification of her body is made evident. Caye’s conversation with Zulema also reveals that the Spanish women feel particularly threatened by the immigrants’ bodies and the difference between them—the loss of business is not only a question of lower prices; men seem to prefer the “exotic,” more “full-figured” bodies of the immigrants.

The cartographic threat is not limited, however, to the Spanish women who feel “invaded.” The immigrant prostitutes, specifically Zulema, must struggle to obtain any kind of place for themselves within the urban landscape. Her supposedly private space,
her apartment, is not even her own; in a system called “cama caliente,” Zulema shares her apartment with another Dominican family, entering in the morning and leaving in the evening. The major paradox for Zulema is that she must make her body visible in the public space of the city in order to make a living—a supposedly private, economic issue—and establish a place for herself. However, the very visibility of her body within this space constantly threatens her continued occupation of it given her illegal status as an immigrant and the illegality of the work she carries out. Zulema’s spatial anxiety is an extremely acute one, as her relationship with urban space is characterized by dependence as well as insecurity and transience. Similarly, the public system fails her as well: she is involved in an abusive relationship with a government worker, or funcionario, who is supposedly working to get her papers in exchange for sex but clearly has no intention of helping her. Caye tries to convince Zulema not to meet with him reminding her of their previous violent encounter: “Zulema, lo que no puede ser es que te den diez hostias y que tú vuelvas corriendo a por otras diez a la primera que te llaman.” Zulema’s agitated response is, “lo que no puede ser es que yo no pueda salir a la calle, eso es lo que no puede ser, o ir a ver a mi hijo porque si sales no entras, eso es lo que no puede ser.” Here, the precarious “situation” of Zulema within the urban landscape and the emotional effect that it produces in her is made evident.

The relationship between the public space of the city and Zulema’s intimate geography is manifested in the sequences directly following this conversation. The camera focuses on Zulema as she walks through the busy streets of Madrid. A slow, sad instrumental song plays on the sound track, accompanied by the diegetic sounds of the street, reflecting the interior thoughts of Zulema and how they are affected by the exterior
world that surrounds her. Several close-up shots show Zulema’s face as she wanders along the city streets. Her eyes are in constant movement, as if looking for potential threats, one of which comes to her ears in the form of a police car’s siren. Zulema quickly turns her back to the street, lowering her head, and nervously waits for the car to pass. The handheld shot here, as during the whole sequence, focuses on the face of Zulema, while the background of the street is blurred, emphasizing movement, the transient nature of Zulema’s place within the city, and her emotions concerning this place. The public space of the city here, rather than being open and inclusive, is a site of surveillance and exclusion—the state, represented in the siren, invades the intimate, personal space of the protagonist.

There is a sound bridge at this point, a technique used throughout the film as a way of calling the spectator’s attention to the transition from one sequence to another, thus transporting the spectator from one space to the next in the voyage across the city and the film. As the shot continues to be of Zulema on the street, it is accompanied by the sound of Zulema talking on the telephone, which we immediately identify with the familiar space of the locutorio where she goes to call her family. The following shot confirms the location of the locutorio as two side by side clocks appear in the frame, one labeled “España” and the other “República Dominicana.” Having appeared previously in the film, these clocks serve as an index for the location of the “locutorio.” The shot zooms in slightly on the clocks as the offscreen voice of Zulema continues. The focus on the clocks here as Zulema says “bien, es sólo que me acordé de ustedes,” stresses the distance and difference between the space which Zulema occupies, Spain, and the place
where her thoughts and emotions reside, the Dominican Republic. Moreover, the hands of the clocks tick, signaling once again the transient nature of Zulema’s situation.

Another sound bridge at this point leads to a cut to a shot of the abusive *funcionario* sitting alone in a bar while the sound track continues to be occupied by Zulema’s phone conversation. The bridge, then, is also one that connects Zulema’s desire to support and visit her family with the only possible means to accomplish that goal, the violent and untrustworthy man who has promised her papers. This goal is frustrated in the meeting between the two, as the man insists upon leaving with Zulema, and it becomes obvious that he does not plan on giving her anything. As the man grabs Zulema’s hand, trying to force her to leave with him, Caye arrives, and the conversation quickly comes to a close, along with Zulema’s dream of obtaining legal status, and thus, a fixed place in the urban landscape. Caye’s arrival implies a certain sense of superiority or privilege for the Spaniard in relation to her Dominican counterpart. She encourages Zulema not to let the *funcionario* beat and use her, but Zulema sees it as her only hope of getting papers and is upset at Caye for interrupting the encounter. Zulema, as an immigrant, cannot afford such simple “luxuries” as health care, her own place to live, and reporting her abuse to the police. Caye tries to make her understand that these things are rights, not privileges, but it is not always clear that this is the case.

Ironically, Caye is not required to work the street in a literal sense, unlike Zulema and the other women she looks out on from the interior of the hair salon. Therefore, it may appear that she still reserves something of a private, or intimate, space for herself or that she is less subjected to the regime of private property than Zulema. However, while she does have some advantages over the immigrants, she still works in an “illegal”
profession that constantly puts her at risk. She, like Zulema, tries to maintain a personal romantic relationship that is constantly made impossible by her work as a prostitute. Caye tells her boyfriend Manuel that she is a prostitute from the beginning, but he seems not to believe her or chooses not to. The use of her curious Latin American pseudonym, Lima, and the talk of her “superhero” double identity cannot help her avoid being spotted by a former client as she dines with Manuel, who then forces her to perform oral sex in the bathroom. Nor can Caye’s double identity help her when two clients who set a date with her after finding an ad in the paper turn out to be friends of Manuel. Caye looks on nervously as Manuel sees his friends make a call from outside the bar where they have met, and seconds later her phone begins to ring. Here and in other moments, the persistent ringing of the cell phone Caye uses to do business serves as a link between the private and public worlds, a constant reminder that she cannot separate her personal life from her professional one.

In spite of the apparent differences between Caye and Zulema, there is indeed a constant effort in the film to present the two women as equals. As Carty argues, the fact that both women are prostitutes serves to create a kind of equilibrium between the Spaniard and the immigrant. For both Caye and Zulema, their work as prostitutes constitutes a personal failure (132). Beyond this, though, their role as prostitutes also points to their equal lack of “personal” or “intimate” space in the city. In this manner, they are placed on the same plane, where “ninguna de las dos se encuentra en una posición de ventaja con respecto a la otra, lo cual sienta las bases de una amistad entre iguales” (Carty 132).
The friendship between the two women is central to the narrative and to the film’s message. Caye, as the protagonist, serves a mediating role between Zulema, on the one hand, and her Spanish compatriots—both characters and spectators—on the other. This friendship is a key in giving voice to the particular problems, emotions, and desires of Zulema, who without the interaction with Caye would be yet another voiceless immigrant woman in the plaza outside the hair salon. Through Caye, the other women “comienzan a intentar rellenar los huecos del conocimiento ambiguo y melodramático que tienen acerca de las vidas de los inmigrantes, derivado de los medios de comunicación a los que se refieren constantemente” (Carty 131). In this context, the braids that Zulema puts in Caye’s hair are important. They are a symbol of the budding friendship between the two and Caye’s desire to integrate Zulema’s culture into her own. At the hair salon, the women are quick to denounce Caye’s braids as unhygienic. Gloria, the owner, says that she knows how to do the braids but will not because of her principles. After her long, passionate speech, it is telling and amusing to see how, later in the film, a sign on the window of the hair salon reads “Exóticas trenzas africanas 40 €” and inside, Zulema has come to help Gloria braid Caren’s hair. Gloria, abandoning her principles, submits to the demands of the market, which compounds various cultures and sells them as an “other,” as the Dominican Zulema weaves “African” braids. This is also a sign of the gradual acceptance of Zulema made by the Spanish women. Carty argues that the braids serve to build a kind of “third space,” in Homi Bhabha’s terms, whereby the braids are symbolic of an otherness that is opened up to the Spanish women. In this context, “Princesas presenta la convivencia y el paulatino conocimiento como una forma de superar la
hostilidad de los personajes españoles de clase trabajadora hacia los inmigrantes, y sugiere a la vez que este contacto intercultural les puede aportar beneficios” (Carty 131).

Thus, the cross-cultural contact between the Caye and Zulema interweaves their personal experiences and brings the women into touch with each other, with Caye’s friends, and with the spectator as well.

The question of touch and contact in the film is important, and can be developed further by returning to Bruno’s haptic film theory. Touch is central to the idea of the haptic, which Bruno defines along two lines:

As the Greek etymology tells us, haptic means “able to come into contact with.” As a function of the skin, then, the haptic—the sense of touch—constitutes the reciprocal contact between us and the environment, both housing and extending communicative interface. But the haptic is also related to kinesthesis, the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space. (6)

So far this analysis has focused more on the latter idea of movement, particularly through the urban environment, but as Bruno insists, it is in large part through touch that a person establishes his or her relation to a given space and the other people that occupy it.

Drawing on Etienne Condillac’s Treatise on the Sensations, Bruno argues against the ocularcentrism of the visual arts by demonstrating that vision relies on touch to be completed; touch pushes one outward into space. As a result, touch is what allows one to come into contact with objects, machines, and other people, thereby creating an emotional space as well. (Bruno 251; 252). Touch then is important to the haptic as both a tactile, bodily sense but also on a more metaphorical, emotional plane. This also suggests a contact between private and public.

In Princesas the relationship between Caye, Zulema, and their environment is mediated in large part through touch. Much in the same way that Bruno describes two
lovers—one Italian, one gypsy—in the Italian film *A Soul Divided in Two* who “penetrate, absorb, and finally incorporate each other’s culture by way of their touching skins,” Caye and Zulema—without the sexual overtones—interact in “cross-cultural touch” by way of their friendship as part of an “urban journey [that] . . . makes *emotion* a vehicle of cultural identification and transit” (40). For a film whose two main characters are prostitutes, there is very little bodily contact seen on screen. There are only a handful of blurred and incomplete shots of Caye performing oral sex, Zulema with the abusive *funcionario* and a volunteer with whom she begins a rather unsuccessful romantic relationship. The most significant and meaningful contact between two people in the film is between Caye and Zulema. This contact becomes an antidote to the commodification of the female body.

Throughout the film, there are several close-up shots of the hands of the two women that reveal the progressively more intimate friendship that develops between them, directly opposed to the sequence analyzed above where a close-up shot shows the *funcionario* grabbing Zulema’s hand in an act laden with aggression. While Caye and Zulema are “in touch” at first only through Zulema’s t-shirt, they gradually come into contact in a literal sense, marking the beginning of the understanding between the two women. One close-up shot of Zulema placing her hand on Caye’s arm as they walk through the crowded streets of the “latino” neighborhood is particularly interesting in this context. Here, Zulema’s touching of Caye corresponds to the fact that their distinct cultural spaces are beginning to come into contact as well. While walking arm in arm is a culturally common practice among women in Spain, the close-up shot calls attention to this particular moment. Furthermore, this touch stands out in the midst of the bustling
city; it is by way of this contact that Zulema leads Caye through the busy streetscape, and the solidarity the women find on an emotional level is what helps them in some way to map out a course through the harsh urban reality in which they live.

It is the solidarity between Caye and Zulema that allows them to overcome, although only to an extent, the dehumanizing effects of the commodification evident in prostitution as well as the disorienting effects of the city. The emotions implicated in the friendship between Caye and Zulema are what can begin to combat the disheartening and de-centering experience of their marginal life in the city. The emotional bond that the two women share is made visible in the film not only through the cross-cultural contact between them but also in the way that they begin to share a common place in the urban landscape. While Caye accompanies Zulema to her “Rincón Latino,” Zulema gradually occupies important spaces of personal and emotional symbolic value for Caye, notably her apartment and that of her mother as well.

As the film’s narrative draws to a close, Zulema decides to return to the Dominican Republic, fracturing the coincidence of the two women in Madrid. In spite of the common emotional ground they have reached, Zulema is still inevitably condemned to transience within the urbanized space of capitalism, a “princesa lejos de su reino.” Some resistance can be seen, perhaps, in the fact that Caye gives Zulema the money she has earned for her operation, rejecting the further commodification of her body in favor of helping her friend return to be with her family. For her part, Zulema finds, if not resistance, some type of vengeance. Although never stated directly in the film, it appears that she has contracted HIV, and this is a main trigger in her decision to leave Madrid. Zulema meets one last time with the abusive “funcionario,” in what can be interpreted as
an attempt to pass the virus on to him in an act of revenge. In this way, Zulema, who has been “screwed” by the system, in the form of this corrupt official, finds a way to do the same in return. The final scene between the two friends takes place in the airport. It is the exemplary non-place of supermodernity as described by French anthropologist Marc Augé. As places of transit, non-places do not allow for social life and demonstrate the enormous solitude of those who occupy them (Augé 77-78). It is fitting that in this non-place Zulema must abandon her desire to form a place for herself in Madrid. Nonetheless, both Caye (donning the t-shirt of Zulema) and Zulema (with Caye’s money in her pocket) carry with them the experiences, the memories, and the touch of the other. Zulema, although she must depart, has inexorably changed the landscape of the city.

Caye, now alone, must turn her attention to her other personal relationships, which have been challenging to say the least and characterized by a rather futile attempt to separate her work in the “public” sphere from her “private” life. The function of the cell phone is particularly striking in this context, especially in the family home of Caye, where both she and her mother engage in a similar game of denial. The mother sends herself flowers from a supposed secret admirer as a way to combat her loneliness upon the death of her husband. Caye does not tell her family what she does for a living, and at family meals she consistently lets her phone ring in an attempt to hide the truth and deny the other world in which she circulates. However, Caye’s attitude changes and she decides to end the charade that she has maintained with her family, in a sense, coming in from the street. When they ask her about Zulema, Caye tells her family about her real profession and the conditions in which they met. As she goes to the kitchen, overwhelmed, the familiar sound of Caye’s phone is heard offscreen, yet on this occasion
she tells her mother to answer. A silence following Caye’s suggestion to her mother ends the film.

The film’s ending is in many ways an open one: the spectator is not given a definitive “answer” to the phone call, the reaction of Caye’s mother, or the eventual fate of Caye. However, this last sequence marks a sort of end to the emotional journey of Caye that we have witnessed throughout the film. Given strength through her friendship with Zulema, Caye has come to terms with her reality and is no longer capable of or willing to hide it from her family. Thus it is by way of her interior journey, through the touch of friendship and through emotion, that Caye is able to perhaps find a more stable place in the world. Despite the fact that Zulema has been banished from the urban landscape, she leaves her mark on it through the effect she has on Caye, who now has a more stable emotional center from which she may confront the marginality and challenges of her life as a prostitute on the outskirts of Madrid.

This analysis has shown the crucial relationship between the urban landscape of Madrid and the interior geography of the protagonists of Princesas. Emotion and touch, in the double sense in which Bruno uses these terms, directly merge the exterior journeys of Caye and Zulema through urban space—and their difficulties in finding a place for themselves within it—with their interior, emotional journeys as well. The friendship between the two represents the coming together of Caye and Zulema’s emotional, interior spaces and can be read as a sort of resistance to the harsh, exterior reality of life in Madrid for these and other marginalized people who reside there. At the same time, the spectator is “touched” and “moved” before the moving images of the film, and thus
accompanies, and feels for, these two women on their journey through the urban landscape. In this manner, the distinction between private and public becomes blurred.

_Mapping Public and Private Lives in Cosmofobia_

Lucía Etxebarria’s novel _Cosmofobia_ (2007) is a text from and about present day Madrid, a novel in which the neighborhood of Lavapiés becomes the protagonist. Published two years after the release of León de Aranoa’s film, the novel takes on similar issues concerning immigration and urban space. In the center of Madrid in a geographic sense, but on the socio-economic periphery through its location in the culturally diverse Lavapiés district, the novel examines the disorienting experience of city life in a budding multicultural environment. The fragmentary plot and polyphonic narrative structure follow the private lives of a few dozen residents of Lavapiés, none of whom quite emerges as a central protagonist. The public spaces—the parks, bars, and streets—of the neighborhood serve as places of encounter where different characters frequently cross paths, coming and going from each other’s individual stories. Yet these public spaces are consistently described as anarchic and dangerous, and they offer no commonality or communication between characters. Ironically, for a novel about “historias cruzadas,” there is little to no sense of connection: all of the characters seem to have problems developing and maintaining relationships, and therefore their encounters with others remain incomplete. In this context, the public is rightfully no more than the fragmented private lives put on display, where the only common tie that bonds the characters is that they are all equally confused by their reality and their place within it. While _Princesas_ reveals a potential solution to the cartographic disorientation of its protagonists through
the touch of friendship, *Cosmofobia* is more pessimistic concerning the possibility of its characters to orient themselves in a new multicultural society, where people are too busy trying to survive to be able to communicate with others.

If the haptic film language of *Princesas* highlights the relation between motion and emotion and the cartographic anxiety of its protagonists, *Cosmofobia’s* narrative structure conveys the confusion of its characters by creating a disorientating experience for its reader. This is achieved through the alternation between a principal narrator, who switches between omniscient third person as well as first person accounts, and varying interspersed first-person testimonies, made more confusing by the inclusion of several characters who appear in relation to different narrative lines. In addition, the author inserts a fictionalized version of herself and other real-life personalities into the narration, throwing into doubt the line between fiction and reality. The novel involves a historical voyage as well, making references to prior epochs in Madrid’s history, namely the *Movida madrileña*, as the characters try to come to terms with the present through their pasts. The Madrid of the 1940s is also referenced through a clear intertextuality with Camilo José Cela’s famous city novel *La colmena*. These references to Madrid in prior years reveal a critical history of the city and an evolving relationship between private and public: the novel would seem to suggest that whereas the city was once a site for building community through common experience, it can no longer serve this function in a society that works to separate people.

*Cosmophobia, Confusion, and Lack of Connection*
The major theme of the novel is found in its title, for which Etxebarria includes a definition, in English, in the opening pages: “Cosmophobia. A noun (Psych.). Morbid dread of the cosmos and realizing ones [sic] true place in it. Hence, cosmophobic, adjective” (5). Thus, while dealing with the reality of immigrants in Lavapiés, the novel includes the lives of a wide range of people from the neighborhood and explores their attempts to find their place in the world. In an interview surrounding the release of the book Etxebarria explained:

Trata de eso: de cómo encontrar tu lugar en el mundo y de que al final, seas de donde seas, tienes los mismos problemas relacionales en una sociedad cruel. Aquí hay chicas españolas que son consideradas inmigrantes porque lo son sus padres. Para todo el mundo son una árabe y una negra. Intentan integrarse en una sociedad que no es la de sus padres y que no las acepta como de aquí. Y hay pijos muy perdidos que buscan sus señas de identidad a través de la ropa, las marcas. Quería meterlos a todos en el mismo saco. (“Lucía”)

By saying that she wants to place all of these characters together “en el mismo saco,” the author makes a risky statement, suggesting that she is attempting to homogenize class and racial differences represented in these characters. Yet, it becomes clear through the narration that the main idea is to recognize and maintain these differences between the characters while pointing to the two elements they share in common: their place of residence—Lavapiés—and their sense of confusion. In this sense, the author uses the experience of life in Lavapiés as a way to accentuate the dis-encounters between these different characters.

The particular cartographic nature of the novel—the relationship between the city streets, the characters, the different time periods of Madrid’s history, and the public and private spheres—is offered visually to the reader in the illustration on the book’s cover. While normally an analysis of this element would be considered irrelevant, the unique
relationship between reality and fiction in the novel allows for a consideration of this artwork as a part of the fictional world enclosed within it. The illustration was designed by Víctor Coyote, a key figure of the *movida*. A friend of Etxebarria, he is a well-known musician as well as graphic artist. Significantly, Coyote’s fictional alter-ego is a character in the novel itself. He is referred to both as the friend of David, another character, and as “... el autor de la excelente portada de este libro” (370). This is just one example of many in *Cosmofobia* in which the “interior,” fictional world seeps out into the “exterior” reality and vice versa. Before addressing the illustration itself, a brief explanation of the relationship between fiction and reality is needed.

*Cosmofobia* constantly throws into doubt the line between fiction and reality, whereby the disorienting experience of life in Lavapiés is reflected to the reader in the disorienting experience of the novel itself. Etxebarria has commented on her desire to write a realistic, novel with *Cosmofobia*. Given the emphasis placed on Lavapiés and other elements of the novel and its promotion, critics were quick to judge the text in terms of its approach to the topic of immigration. Etxebarria, however, always eager to resist categorization, dismissed such readings and insisted that her aim was not to write a book about immigrants, but rather to write a book about “real life” in her neighborhood, of which one element is immigration (“La novela”). In this regard, the author, in interviews leading up to its release, addresses what appears to be a near obsession with realism in the novel:

A mí me apetecía hacer novela realista, realista, realista y sobre el presente. Y escribir lo que no se ha escrito todavía. ... Y más realista imposible. Todas las historias que cuento han ocurrido, me he documentado, he conocido a personajes a los que he cambiado el nombre y que me han permitido utilizar sus vivencias. He respetado mucho la confidencialidad, aunque hay casos en los que me han dado permiso para contarlos tal cual. (Etxebarria “Lucía”)
This preoccupation with realism is at the forefront of the novel. Even though the opening “Nota de la autora” section points out that this novel is a work of fiction and that its characters are merely based on true stories, the narrative constantly situates itself on a fine line between fiction and reality. Indeed, the narrator turns out to be a fictionalized Lucía Etxebarria, although the name of the narrator is only revealed in the last chapter. Any reader familiar with Etxebarria will recognize her much earlier in the plot as it is mentioned that she lives in Lavapiés, has a young daughter, and is a famous writer. Her voice, however, comes and goes from the narration and is at its strongest in the “Introducción” and the last chapter. During the rest of the narration, her voice takes on a type of third-person omniscient style or cedes completely to the first-person accounts from other characters. In the introductory section, Lucía invites the reader to accompany her on an unconventional journey through her neighborhood. Speaking of the novel directly to the reader, she says: “Espero que le des una oportunidad y que no te disuada de su lectura el hecho de que me haya tomado la valentía de que no se atenga a géneros preestablecidos. . .” (10). The chapter finishes with the narrator’s request, “Permíteme que te hable de mi barrio” (11). The informal and personal tone, along with the inclusion of the narrator’s child and dog, gives the reader a sensation of proximity to the narrative voice and to the events that will soon unfold.

The narrative structure and voices are also part of a clear project to create a sense of “real-life” storytelling in the text. The novel is a polyphonic one, as the narrator often oscillates between third and first person and also cedes her voice to different characters from the fictional world. These voices are incorporated in a testimonial way. For example, there are several sessions of what appear to be tape-recordings done by the
author/narrator where the interviewees recognize that they are being interviewed for a book and gladly offer information to the interviewer. At times, we are confronted with an interviewer who includes these “transcripts” even after the person speaking believes that the recording has been shut off. The chapter “La actriz” begins as Leonor, a struggling middle-aged actress, talks to the author about the man she is dating according to TV gossip: “Ahora que has apagado el micrófono y que por fin podemos dejar de decir tonterías sobre Fulvio Trentino y su paquete de virtudes…” (249). Leonor, under the impression that she is speaking to Lucía as a friend instead of a reporter, tells her that her reported relationship with Fulvio is a farce—they are friends, but everyone knows that he is gay. Leonor does not mind and confides that she herself had an affair with a woman named Dora—another character in the book—several years ago. Similarly, Mónica tells the narrator why she never told her about her long affair with the famous singer Emma Ponte: “Y mira que somos amigas desde hace tiempo. Pero como tú eres escritora, no sé, me daba palo contártelo no fuera que lo sacaras en una de tus novelas” (165). While these conversations obviously make the reader wonder how ethical the author has been while conducting her interviews, they also suggest that she places a high value on the “truth,” choosing to forego the official interviews she does with her friends in favor of the “off the record” chats where the characters open up as they are unwilling to do on tape.

This narrative style also deals with the question of private and public by revealing the distance between the private lives of the characters and their public personas, suggesting that the “public” in this case is an imaginary entity. This is a depiction of the public in the age of mass media, where the image of certain public figures weighs heavily on the formation of the public sphere and necessarily diverges from “reality.” The tension
between reality and fiction also ties into the notion of the public as phantom as described by Bruce Robbins, who questions the possibility of positively identifying the public as such. In this view, contrary to those who imagine the public sphere as a universal realm of social plenitude that has declined due to the incursions of the media and the state, Robbins argues that such a unitary public sphere has never existed and is indeed a “phantom” because its supposedly inclusive nature can never be more than an illusion (viii-xii). This doubt concerning the concrete and inclusive nature of the public sphere is a key to the novel’s questioning of the idea that the public is an adequate space for the building of community.

In addition, the constant mention of real-life celebrities, authors, TV shows, and bars is another important element of a strategy to connect the novel’s events to current, real-life ones in Madrid. Especially interesting is the inclusion of a “Dramatis Personae” section following the end of the narration. While by definition the “Dramatis Personae” should address the fictional “cast” of the novel, the author/narrator explains that it includes names of characters as well as real names.\(^6\) She thanks a certain Luis de la Peña for having made a hand-written alphabetical list of all the characters included in the novel. The first section of the “Dramatis Personae” is “Personajes de la Introducción,” where “real” people such as Mónica, the friend of the author, and her dog Tizón are mentioned. In addition, in this section and the entire novel, “real” public figures from the Movida, such as Alaska and Almodóvar, are mentioned. As important figures of the Madrid of the 1980s, they evoke a kind of public collective memory of the time period. Furthermore, the narrator’s voice that presents the Movida as an important historical

\(^6\) Of course, the use of a Dramatis Personae is traditionally limited to theater, yet another way in which Etxebarria uses the section to break with conventions.
moment inverts the initials of Almodóvar’s character Patty Diphusa in forming the “Dramatis Personae.” The second section of the “Dramatis Personae” is called “Personajes de la Novela.” Yet some “characters” from the introduction later appear in the novel, and are explained in more detail in this second section. It is tempting to separate the “Dramatis Personae” and the introduction from the “fictional” world created in the novel. In fact, the text invites such a reading through cues to the reader signaling the end of the novel and the beginning of, back in reality, an explanation of that world. However, even “real” people are still referred to as characters. In addition, the author/narrator continues to create and expand upon her characters in the “Dramatis Personae” as she introduces new information not included in the previous parts of the novel, such as the musical preferences of several of the characters (370). It is here also that the cover illustration is inserted into the fictional world. Considering these examples, what we find in Cosmofobia is a near obsession with creating a novel representative of present day life—a novel that goes to great lengths to convey a testimonial feel to the narration and in the process reveals an uneasy relationship between reality and fiction. This back and forth between fiction and reality is arguably how the public sphere—as a phantom—is formed in today’s society. The use of testimonial and dramatic elements reveals further uneasiness in terms of the genre of the novel. Through this process, the reader cannot help but feel slightly disoriented and confused by the reading experience.

This sense of disorientation is offered to the reader in visual form on the cover illustration. In bright yellow, we see a street map of Lavapiés, representing the public spatial organization of the city, where names of several streets and plazas are indicated, and upon which twelve superimposed faces are placed in three lines of four. The faces of
the culturally and racially diverse men, women, and children that grace the cover arguably represent some of the characters of the novel. A piece of the map is “erased” in order to clearly place the author’s name and the title of the novel. Curiously, though, aside from darker features of hair and shadows, the faces are translucent and share the same bright-yellow color of the map below, allowing the names of the streets and other elements of the map to appear as part of the faces. In this sense, the physical spaces of the city are joined with the facial expressions of those who walk the streets, pointing to the inextricable link between physical and emotional cartography.

Furthermore, a series of orange arrows with no clear beginning or end weave across the faces and spaces of the illustration. These arrows coupled with the body-less faces that look straight ahead at the reader—and therefore appear to be isolated or unaware of those around them—point to the notion of the phantom public and also suggest an indeterminate sense of connection between the different characters and the spaces they occupy. Some other designs appear over the map in the same orange writing, making reference to different elements of the novel—a drawing of a cell phone, a dog on a leash, a heart, and some written words and expressions such as “tienda de la esquina,” “perro,” “estado alterado,” “sin papeles,” and “asistente social.” What appear to be droplets of water are also included, a nod to the water imagery invoked by the narrator in this important quote from the last pages of the novel: “. . . la vida avanza inevitable y rápida, en batallar intenso, corre como un manantial, como un río, y el cauce no hace sino subir. Algunos se ahogan en este torbellino, y otros aprenden a nadar y a guardar la ropa” (365-66). Here, contemporary life in the city is seen as the waters of a flood, which the characters must learn to navigate by putting themselves in a type of survival mode in the
face of the rising dangers. In this precarious context, a public space founded on social unity is revealed as glaringly impossible.

**Anarchy and Chaos in Lavapiés’s Public Spaces**

The cover of the novel immediately brings together the notion of the public with urban space and the city. While the public is not a necessarily exclusive urban phenomenon, it has consistently been presented in the urban context over the centuries, where the city is seen as a privileged or even a prerequisite space for debate. This tradition begins in the Ancient Greek city-states, where the *agora* or public forum was a central space for assembly and representative of democratic participation, at least for some. Modern notions of community and citizenship are also closely related to those of public space in the city, as the latter has often been seen as an idealized space of encounter from which to build the former two. Spanish geographers Jordi Borja and Zaida Muxí explain the particular importance of urban space in the formation of the public:

> Las relaciones entre los habitantes y entre el poder y la ciudadanía se materializan, se expresan en la conformación de las calles, las plazas, los parques, los lugares de encuentro ciudadano. . . . [La ciudad es] el ámbito físico de la expresión colectiva y de la diversidad social y cultural. Es decir que el espacio público es a un tiempo el espacio principal del urbanismo, de la cultura urbana y de la ciudadanía. Es un espacio físico, simbólico y político.” (15-16)

*Cosmofobia* examines the city of Madrid, specifically the neighborhood of Lavapiés, and the capability of its public spaces to serve as this idealized space of citizenship and community given recent changes in the urban landscape.7

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7 Jeff Weintraub’s discussion of different notions of the public-private distinction is helpful in sorting out this relationship between the city, the public, citizenship, and community. One model of the public-private is what he calls the “republican virtue” model, including Jürgen Habermas’s analysis, “which sees the
Accordingly, the close relationship seen in the cover illustration between the characters and the city spaces they traverse is emphasized throughout the novel, where the neighborhood of Lavapiés is depicted as chaotic and dangerous—a space emblematic of the lack of order in the characters’ lives. There are several moments in the text where Lavapiés is described in terms of its lawlessness. Characters frequently mention that the neighborhood is not safe for women to walk alone at night. Men accompany women to their homes or to find a cab, since taxis will not enter the “barrio” after a certain hour (30). The owners of restaurants and bars discuss what they can do to make clients feel less vulnerable while sitting on their sidewalk terraces, where they are often threatened by the young knife-wielding Moroccan drug dealers (101).

This depiction of Lavapiés as a site of anarchy in Cosmofobia does not come as a surprise given the makeup of the neighborhood and the image of it that has been propagated over recent years. First, the growth in the immigrant population there has been astounding, and with increased population comes increased visibility in public space for these ethnic and cultural groups. This visibility causes unease concerning shifting practices taking place within those spaces. As a result, the imaginary of Lavapiés has evolved to center on a sense of fear, especially in the aftermath of the bombings of the Madrid train system in 2004. As sociologist Fernando Díaz Orueta has pointed out:

> "public’ realm in terms of political community and citizenship, analytically distinct from both the market and the administrative state” (7). Another model—‘public’ life as sociability”—sees the spatial organization of the city as particularly valuable to society because it allows for the interaction of diverse strangers in a given space. As Weintraub points out, these two models entail different notions of public space. The former sees public space as one of discourse with the aim of addressing common concerns, while the latter sees the public as a “space of heterogeneous coexistence… of physical proximity coexisting with social distance” (25). There are essentially two different cities imagined in these models: the first is the polis, a self-governing political community. The second is the cosmopolis, which has the qualities of diversity and coexistence, but where the residents of the city are not called upon to be citizens. The important question that Weintraub poses is if the advantages of the polis and the cosmopolis can be combined in modern society (26). The answer to this question may become clearer through a reading of Etxebarria’s novel.
Different media have presented the district as a dangerous place, occupied by
groups of delinquents who have turned it into a “lawless territory.” This image
was heavily reinforced by the terrorist bombings of 11th March 2004 in Madrid,
as some of the accused had links with the neighbourhood. Without a doubt, there
is an effort being made to convince the population of Madrid that Lavapiés is a
dangerous ghetto in urgent need of cleansing. (188)

This imagery of the last decade has undoubtedly shaped public opinion about the
neighborhood. The case is similar to what geographer Don Mitchell describes concerning
the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. He chooses
this important event as a way to frame his argument in the introduction to his book *The
Right to the City*, using the attacks as a prime example of ongoing attempts to close off
the city and public space to “undesirable users” in the name of “the people” and
“security” (Mitchell 1-5).

In Madrid, an important change in the aftermath of the train bombings is the
polemical trend of installing security cameras in public areas. The municipal government
has formed a governmental body called the Comisión de Videovigilancia that has led the
installation of cameras in areas where petty crime rates are high. One of the most well-
known camera surveillance projects is being carried out on the Calle de la Montera, a
street known popularly for prostitution. Likewise, cameras on the streets surrounding the
Plaza Mayor are meant to control pick-pockets (“Ruiz-Gallardón”). In late 2009, the
Commission installed forty-eight cameras in Lavapiés. Such programs are supposedly
carried out at the request of the residents, as *El País* reported: “Fueron los propios
vecinos y comerciantes los que pidieron la instalación de las cámaras” (Barroso). Yet,
these same policies have drawn consistent criticism from other residents for invading the
privacy of citizens. Various television reports and a blog called *Un barrio feliz: Contra la
videovigilancia en Lavapiés suggest that not all citizens are represented in what the Commission reports as the “public” call for surveillance (“Comisión;” Barrio).

In Cosmofobia, the anarchic image of Lavapiés continues throughout the narration, where public space is often seen as one of danger. One woman who lives in the neighborhood takes her son, Teo, to play in another area because she is afraid of the situation in the Casino de la Reina Park in Lavapiés:

Miriam ha elegido un parque fuera de los límites del barrio de Lavapiés, ya en Huertas, en la zona más turística, la cara. Allí los niños son todos blancos, excepto alguna chinita adoptada. Y la mayoría va con sus cuidadoras, ecuatorianas y colombianas. Antón insiste en que debería llevar a los niños al parque donde está la ludoteca, pero a Miriam no le hace ninguna gracia la presencia de los borrachos y los marroquíes que esnifan pegamento. . . . (79)

Miriam thinks about the two different worlds of Huertas and Lavapiés. In one neighborhood there are designer lofts, bars for tourists, and theaters; in the other, one finds “los inmigrantes, los niños derivados de los Servicios Sociales, los borrachos con sus litronas, los latin kings, las maras, las navajas, los traficantes de hachís” and coffee for one euro instead of three (80).

Yet Miriam’s reluctance to take her son to the park in Lavapiés is not only a question of a public, urban conflict; it also entails Miriam’s own intimate mapping of emotions onto the city. The two areas are representative of a personal conflict for her: “Lo que Miriam no le dice a Antón es que no quiere bajar hacia esa parte del barrio porque allí es donde ella vivía con Yamal, y que por eso prefiere quedarse en la zona de los ricos, en la que vivió con Daniel” (79). In this case, Yamal, the rich French-Morroccan immigrant with whom Miriam had an affair as a young woman, is associated with Lavapiés. The two met in Paris, and he moved to Madrid. Miriam believed to have
found “El Hombre de Su Vida,” but not long after they moved in together in Lavapiés the relationship went awry.

In this case, the spaces of the city are used as a way to map out the personal problems of the character. After the failure of her relationship with Yamal, Miriam moves on with a Spanish man that she knew from her childhood, Daniel, and the relationship fits all of her—and her parents’—dreams and unrealistic expectations of “Una pedida de mano, una boda por la Iglesia con traje blanco, velo de tul y la primita llevando las arras” (87). However, things go equally as badly with Daniel, who travels too much, appears to have an affair, and then sues for custody of Teo when they split (93). In the end, Miriam finds stability on her own. She is happy to have casual sex with the younger Antón and decides that the only “Hombre de Su Vida” is her son (94). Her movement through city space reflects this decision: she moves to a flat in her own territory—away from the center of Lavapiés where she lived with Yamal, but not in the Barrio de las Letras either. Thus, the characters’ experiences in the city directly affect their attempts to make sense of their personal chaos and map out intimate geographies.

The sense of disorientation shared by the characters is drawn out through a combination of the description of the neighborhood and in the structure of the narrative itself, which involves a rather complicated and often times confusing use of narrative voices and overlapping stories. Tellingly, public spaces of the neighborhood are crucial to this structure: important landmarks of Lavapiés, such as the Casino de la Reina park and La Taberna Encendida, a bar owned by one of the characters and frequented by many others, serve as spaces where the polyphonic and disparate narratives overlap—although only to an extent—as the different characters come into contact.
The Casino de la Reina park, where the narration begins, can be seen as a key structuring agent in the novel since many of the characters know each other from, or cross paths at, the park—going to group therapy sessions held there, walking their dog, or working with immigrant children in the after-school program. In the “Introducción,” the author/narrator asks the reader to let her talk about her neighborhood, and she uses the park as a microcosm to do so (11-12). For two pages she describes exclusively the space of the park—the Caserón and the Casita, which house a variety of activities for the residents of the neighborhood; the playground; the Social Services program that takes care of immigrant children in the afternoons; and the soccer games among these children. The narrator mentions the wide range of nationalities represented by the children, parents, and other users of the park and the aggressive nature of the immigrant children as they play soccer (12-13). In the first lines of the next chapter, she adds more to her description by mentioning two drunken homeless people sleeping beneath a tree and a group of young Moroccan drug dealers who sit on the steps of the Center. The park therefore, far from an idyllic and unified public space, serves as a space where the basic conflicts and confusions of this marginal and multicultural neighborhood are put on display.

Although the first chapter is called “Las mujeres y los niños primero”—the lifeboat reference appears to be clearly related to the flood imagery from the previously cited quote—the main character who emerges here is Antón, a young man who goes to the park each afternoon to take in the sun. The third person narration starts with a description of the current happenings in the park and alternates with the thoughts of Antón as he reflects on his past and present relationship problems. These reflections coupled with his volunteer work in the “Ludoetnia”—the afterschool program for the
immigrant children—introduce the reader to a variety of characters from different layers of Lavapiés society. These characters will reappear in their own narrative lines throughout the novel, introducing in turn more characters whose stories all overlap in different and often unexpected ways.

**Intertextuality, Public Space, and Community: Cosmofobia and La colmena**

In this sense, *Cosmofobia* employs a style reminiscent of Camilo José Cela’s in his 1951 urban novel classic, *La colmena*. In Cela’s novel, Doña Rosa’s café serves a narrative purpose similar to that of the park: a place of encounter and crossing for characters of different classes and means who are not necessarily connected beyond the fact that they occupy the same space at a given point in time. The intertextuality with *La colmena* is also found in the intertwining of pieces of narrative and relationships between characters where no one character clearly takes precedence over another and the city itself emerges as protagonist. Dieter Ingenschay, in his article “Bees at a Loss: Images of Madrid (before and) after *La colmena*,” has explained the importance of Cela’s novel in the formation of an image of Madrid in literature since then, calling it a kind of “degree zero” from which other representations of Madrid must necessarily build (126). As Ingenschay points out, one must ask where this intertextuality reaches its limit and how the images from Cela’s text are dealt with, given the evolution of the city and urban society in the nearly sixty years since the publication of *La colmena*.

In reference to the structure of Cela’s novel, Dru Dougherty has addressed the question of the beehive and the correlation between the image of the hive, the city, and the narrative structure itself. He argues that “the image of the *colmena* . . . likens Madrid
to an urban hive that is populated by creatures whose collective swarming appears chaotic except to a specialist trained to make knowledgeable observation” (9). In the end, says Dougherty, the apparently chaotic narration that does not follow chronological order, has no clear protagonist out of more than three hundred characters, and jumps from place to place within the city, is indeed ordered and governed by an inner structure. What emerges from La colmena, he argues, are patterns of interdependence amongst city-dwellers, a “reduced social community distinguishable in [the] midst” of the “anonymous vastness of the city” (14-15). Similarly, one can examine the role of the individual cells of the hive, which in the novel stand for the seemingly unconnected individual stories of different characters. While each cell appears closed off or isolated from the other, there is in fact a connection and interdependence present. This is demonstrated by what Cela himself has called the “‘novela reloj . . . hecha de múltiples ruedas y piececitas que se precisan las unas a las otras para que aquello marche’” (qtd. in Dougherty 15). By working together and for the community (those who share the contiguous urban landscape), the bees create something that they could not create alone. In other words, the hive forms a public that is greater than the sum of its private parts.

Much in the same way that Cela’s novel portraiture Madrid as an “urban hive,” Cosmofobia reflects the complicated web that is life in Lavapiés. In these lines already quoted in part above, Etxebarria’s description of Lavapiés evokes, instead of the beehive, an anthill:

El barrio bulle de vida como un hormiguero, se encoge y se expande como un corazón, la vida avanza inevitable y rápida, en batallar intenso, corre como un manantial, como un río, y el cauce no hace sino subir. Algunos se ahogan en este torbellino, y otros aprenden a nadar y a guardar la ropa (365-367).
At first glance, the metaphor appears to suggest that a social structure similar to the one described in *La colmena* is at work in *Cosmofobia*: both the hive and the anthill, that function similarly in nature, suggest chaos on the surface but systematic interdependence if examined more closely from the eyes of an expert. While the comparison of the city to an anthill has clear connections to Cela’s beehive, the metaphor is taken up here with a difference, suggesting an evolution in Madrid’s urban space and society since the publication of Cela’s masterpiece.

The difference of this metaphor, therefore, requires a consideration of the actual urban context from which Etxebarria writes, where the economic, social, and cultural make-up of the city of Madrid has undoubtedly changed. Perhaps helpful for this task is Andy Merrifield’s *Metromarxism*, where he explains the evolution of the ideas of key Marxist, urban thinkers from Karl Marx through David Harvey, in relation to the historical circumstances of the cities about which they write. In an attempt to “show how and why certain positions within Marxism flourished at certain times and places,” Merrifield constructs a critical history that outlines the important shifts that have taken place in the capitalist city since the mid-eighteenth century (6). Within the context of Merrifield’s analysis, *La colmena*, as a product of 1940s Madrid, occupies a place in the evolution of the city where Marxists must begin to look beyond industrialization to the question of everyday life. Merrifield discusses Henri Lefebvre, who saw everyday urban life as the key to a revolutionary politics: “From the mid-1940s on, Lefebvre [began] to recast Marx’s thought. . . ‘Modern’ post-war capitalism continued to exploit and alienate at the workplace, but now alienation also began to cut deep into everyday life itself. . .” (79). *La colmena* recognizes the alienation and anonymity of modern life in the
metropolis at the level of everyday interaction. At the same time, if the quotidian was the “primal site for meaningful social resistance,” the novel also involves the call to find social unity through the common experience of city life in the aftermath of the Civil War (Merrifield 79). In other words, there is alienation, but some form of social unity is still possible.

The contemporary, multicultural urban society that Etxebarria describes must be seen from a distinct perspective, as the capitalist city has undergone important changes in the era of globalization. Merrifield outlines these changes as described by urban geographer Harvey, who explains postmodernity in terms of flexible accumulation and space-time compression that involve the “speeding up of time relations . . . and a corresponding shrinking of space relations” (152). Harvey goes on to argue that while postmodernity presents such new and baffling circumstances, it is still graspable from a Marxist standpoint. He thus “cl[ings] onto a modernist rope, dangling across a postmodern abyss; his Marxism s[eeks] to retain critical distance from the postmodern trappings that lay below; it retain[s] the rationality that postmodernism reject[s]” (152). For Harvey then, in spite of the changes it has undergone, the city can still serve as a site for the building of a “politics of space,” a “politics in which people and places ‘bond’ with other people and places, coalescing across a larger scale . . ., nothing short of a ‘concrete utopia’” (153). In the era of globalization however, such a utopian space is less readily imagined, and one could indeed argue, rendered impossible. Cosmofobia makes visible the confusing and disorientating globalized city that Harvey describes without positing the emergence of some kind of community from its midst. Indeed, the very same passage from the novel that utilizes the anthill metaphor stresses the fight for individual
survival that is entailed in current city life, whereby individuals must learn to manage this precarious situation on their own lest they risk succumbing to its dangers. In this kind of society based on survival, suggests the novel, forming some kind of utopian, united public is not possible.

The moral community evoked in _La colmena_ brings up questions concerning the relationship between the city, public or communal spaces, community, and the public sphere. Here, it is hoped that interaction between private citizens in communal or public spaces can bring about the formation of community, where community is grounded in the sharing of a particular landscape—the city. This model of community approximates the notion of a universal public sphere, first outlined by Jürgen Habermas, where private citizens are represented and come together to act in the public interest. Yet in contemporary Spain, as Parvati Nair has shown, forces of deterritorialization consistently reveal the impossibility of such a notion of community: “. . . the process of globalization entails changes to the local brought on by links with afar, thus altering land or landscape as a stable, unchanging and defining feature of communal identity” (11). In fact, in a multicultural environment such as the neighborhood of Lavapiés, the notion of community becomes even more complex and problematic. As Nair says, “Central to the

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8 As Parvati Nair outlines, drawing on Tönnies, Delanty and others, modernity has imagined a mythical, pre-modern community that was an organic totality characterized by landscape, solidarity, trust, and cohesion; this community was lost with the spatial and temporal shifts and fragmentations of the modern world. The construction of this mythic community involved a dualism between community and society, where community was seen as grounded in rural areas while society was represented in the city. Many theorists however, such as Amitai Etzioni, have attempted—rather unsuccessfully—to rescue this moral notion of community within the urban spaces of modernity (18-20).

9 In _The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere_, Habermas describes the public sphere that emerged with the foundation of bourgeois society; it was a discursive space that existed between the State and society, open to ongoing debate between private persons about public issues. This was a space that was open to all, where the common interest or good was debated and took form. Assuming that such a space did exist at one point, Habermas then laments its contamination due to the rise of the welfare state and mass media (12). Several critics have since criticized Habermas’s version of the public sphere as idealized, as he did not recognize the exclusions inherit in a universal articulation of the “public good.” Women, for example, were systematically denied access to the public sphere. (See Nancy Fraser and Robbins).
notion of multiculturalism is the juxtaposition of different communities, whereby the
border or boundary acts both as dividing line and point of close contact” (94). In this
sense, Lavapiés is composed of various ethnic communities, rendering a single, unified
community based on the interaction of all citizens—and non-citizens—in communal
spaces unimaginable. At the same time, the lines that divide these communities are
continuously proven to be porous and unstable, as contact with others often produces
hybrid identities. Public space in this context is not the site of community-building or of
social unity. In the words of Rosalyn Deutsche, who offers a definition of public space
that debunks its unitary or universal nature,

Public space emerges with the abandonment of the belief in an absolute basis of
social unity, a basis that gives “the people” an essential identity or true interest.
Public space, in this view, is the uncertain social realm where, in the absence of
an absolute foundation, the meaning of the people is simultaneously constituted
and put at risk. (268)

Therefore, public space is the site where conflict is put on display, a place of encounter
where the unclear boundaries of different communities are manifest, thrown into doubt,
overlap, coincide, or are pushed apart. Such a space indeed moves beyond traditional
notions and distinctions between private and public.

Does any kind of community thus emerge from Etxebarria’s novel? If so, how is
such a community characterized and what distinguishes it from the earlier notion? What
is the role of the city and public space in the construction of this community? Through
further analysis of its structure, plot, and the description of spaces, it becomes clear that
the notion of characters as “social insects” that form part of a city characterized by, what
Dougherty describes in La colmena as “the establishment of community in which
interdependence, whether moral or instinctual, is the rule” is purposely not maintained in
Cosmofobia (19). In fact, incomplete connections and missed opportunities are more adequately described as “the rule” in Etxebarria’s novel due to the contemporary urban moment that she is attempting to capture. The community metaphor from La colmena is taken up as a way to demonstrate its impossibility, and if any sense of community emerges from the novel it is one that is predicated on plurality and open-endedness.

Looking to the text, it is clear that the neighborhood of Lavapiés and its public spaces, while generating connections mainly due to proximity, do not necessarily serve to construct deeper relationships between characters or some sort of overarching community amongst them. The park, rather than a key space for social interaction or political action, is shown to be merely a place where various urban subjects unwittingly cross paths. After the introduction, the narration begins with these lines: “‘Mejor robar un banco que fundarlo.’ Ésta es la pintada que se lee en el muro que encierra el Parque del Casino. La frase es de Bertolt Brecht, pero Antón no lo sabe” (15). Here, using a style reminiscent of La colmena, the narrator situates the reader immediately in a world where utopian discourses—symbolized in the revolutionary “writing on the wall”—have become anachronistic and irrelevant.

Furthermore, the described romantic relationships and friendships, which are brought into view through interactions within the neighborhood’s spaces, tend to be unsuccessful or superficial. One example is the previously mentioned relationship of convenience between the actress Leonor and Fulvio Trentino. In addition, Susana, a Spanish woman whose parents are from Equatorial Guinea, fantasizes about Ismael and Antón while she is involved in an abusive relationship with Silvio, who appears to be having a sexual relationship with Álex Vega, a well-known actor. In turn, Álex has been
in love for years with David, his straight best friend and has-been rock star, who similarly agreed to help his long-time lover Emma, a famous singer, have a baby even though she uses him as a cover for her lesbian relationships. As seen in these examples, relationships in the novel are often formed out of convenience or built on completely false pretenses. This is especially true of Livia, who claims to be a model from a rich family in Sevilla but turns out to be a con artist. She successfully dupes both the singer David and later on in the novel, the gay fashion designer Óscar. Óscar gives a first person account of how several of his friends warned him about her but he chose not to believe them until over a year had passed, and he realized all that she had stolen from him. His friend Álex, with whom Óscar is in love, explains: “Mira, Óscar, a ti lo que te pasa es que tienes amigos como quien tiene un bolso de Prada: para lucirlos. Que a ti te venía fenomenal Livia . . . y quedaba fabuloso que te vieran con ella en las fiestas, pero nunca te tomaste el mínimo trabajo en profundizar a ver quién era” (312). Interestingly, the theme of sexuality comes up throughout all of these narrative lines, where characters are reluctant to reveal their sexual preferences or often just as confused about that aspect of their lives as others. This ongoing question of indeterminate sexual orientation no doubt serves to reinforce the overall sense of disorientation that permeates the novel. In addition, it involves the question of appearances, whereby one’s “public” persona diverges from one’s “private” self. In such a case, the public as a site for the building of community is thrown into doubt.

This lack of understanding and connection between characters is brought out in the beginning of the novel as well with the character of Antón, whose presence in the park makes for a telling interaction between his interior confusions and the exterior space
that he occupies. The third person narrative alternates between a description of the happenings in the park and the thoughts of Antón concerning his recent sentimental problems. As he watches Claudia, Antón remembers his failed relationship with Irene, his ex, and his unsatisfactory current flings with Sonia and Miriam. Part of Antón’s problem seems to be his inability to relate on a more intimate level with his female counterparts, whom he categorizes by first impressions and stereotypes, giving each her own nickname: El Hada (Claudia), La Mamá (Miriam), and La Chunga (Sonia). Antón’s personal conflicts alternate with and are drawn out by the conflicts taking place back in the “real world” of the park. Intertwined with his daydreams, the narration also describes the immigrant children from different African and Latin American countries who also have their own private or familial problems, mostly related to absent parents. Overall, the novel portrays people who are confused and unsure of their place within a multicultural and divided society. The open spaces of Lavapiés do not help to combat the alienation and confusion felt by these urban subjects, but rather, precisely by bringing them into contact, serve to underline and make visible the differences and distance between them.

Returning to La colmena, it could be argued that Cela’s novel hardly does anything but suggest a similar anonymity and alienation through its fragmented narrative segments and the description of many of its characters who struggle to survive in the sordid Madrid of the post-war. Yet as Dougherty explains, the structure of the novel, or how and in what order these fragmented segments are pieced together, is crucial for reading it as an ultimately unifying work. Dougherty places emphasis on the end of the novel in his appraisal. The unique use of time, although non-chronological, begins with evening and night settings and in the last two chapters places the action in the morning,
where this image of the dawn can be read as a symbol of hope and new beginnings (10-11). Furthermore, the structure interconnects characters across the network of the city due to different elements of modern urban life such as telephones, subways, cinemas, newspapers, and streets (18). Indeed, in the “Final” of La colmena, the reader witnesses the “outright emergence of community” as Martín Marco’s friends learn that he will soon be arrested and come together through these different outlets to hide him from the police (20-21). In this sense, argues Dougherty, “[t]he elaborate integration of the novel points unmistakably and wishfully to the restoration of social harmony to life” (21). The formation of community at the end of the novel can be read as an attempt to show that Madrid’s social order does not correspond with the rule of law imposed by Franco’s regime.

It is most notably here, in this longing for “social harmony,” community, or some type of universal public sphere, where Cosmofobia departs from La colmena. Part of the distance between Cela and Etxebarria’s work can perhaps be attributed to her not wanting to write a duplicate of Cela’s work or to the less intricate and rich narration of the latter. Cosmofobia is not nearly as rewardingly complex as Cela’s masterpiece. The three hundred some characters of La colmena are reduced considerably in Cosmofobia, and the inclusion of the “Dramatis Personae” takes the task of recognizing names and disentangling overlapping stories out of the hands of the reader. Furthermore, the passage of time, such a precise and symbolic element in Cela’s novel, is vague at best in Etxebarria’s novel. In addition, the last half of Etxebarria’s novel seems almost like a second novel altogether, where the stories of different immigrants and working class people of the neighborhood shift into the stories of rich models, actresses, movie
directors, and rock stars. Many of these differences could be easily explained away by arguing that Etxebarria simply does not have the skill to produce a novel on a par with *La colmena*, or that the need to make her work commercially viable to a general reading public undoubtedly influenced the complexity, or lack thereof, of the novel. However, this intertextuality with a difference in *Cosmofobia* most surely reveals something about the historical moment in which it is written.

The particular organization of *Cosmofobia* should be considered in terms of the multicultural nature of Lavapiés. A common conception is that Lavapiés is multicultural, but not yet intercultural, and this very thought is repeatedly invoked by different characters in Etxebarria’s novel, especially Claudia, who works with immigrant children in the Casino de la Reina park (27; 142-43; 155). This repeated statement, and the notion that “las comunidades se toleran, pero no se mezclan, los límites se respetan” draws attention to the conflict that is being put on display in the novel (27). It should then come as no surprise that beginning with “El efecto dominó,” the tenth chapter out of eighteen, the world of immigrants and working class people gives way to the description of another face of the “barrio,” the affluent “pijos” who have flocked there in search of a more “alternative” or “bohemian” experience in the city.\(^{10}\) In the first half, certain “native” Spanish characters like Claudia and her boyfriend Isaac, through their work in the Casino de la Reina, have contact with various layers of the immigrant population of Lavapiés. The reader also meets Susana and Amina, two Spanish women of Guinean and Moroccan descent respectively, who have connections to both the Spanish and the immigrant world.

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\(^{10}\) Mayte Gómez, in her article “El barrio de Lavapiés: laboratorio de interculturalidad,” divides the population of Lavapiés into four general groups who all clash over the meaning and uses of the different spaces of the neighborhood. The groups include the following: (1) aging, long-time residents “de toda la vida”; (2) radical activists; (3) newly arrived international immigrants; and (4) “novísimos,” or a group of young-to-middle-aged, progressive, and artistic neighbors who have moved to the neighborhood recently in search of both lower real estate costs and cultural diversity (3-4).
but do not feel at home in either. Therefore, the first half of the novel gives the impression that there is significant, if not exactly profound, interaction between the different groups that live in the neighborhood.

In contrast, for the characters that are developed in the second half of the novel like David, Álex, Fulvio, Óscar, Leonor, Héctor, and Lola, their contact with the immigrants of the neighborhood is limited. One of the few contacts between these groups is found in the story of the actress Leonor, who tells of a brief affair she had with Hisham, a Moroccan construction worker whom she met on the Gran Vía as he was working. They eventually ended their sexual relationship because he was continuously telling her about his plan to marry his girlfriend Amina, the young Spanish-Moroccan woman who has previously been introduced. These few references keep the second half of the book connected to the first, yet there is little to no meaningful interaction between the two groups of characters. It would be wrong to suggest, though, that some characters have more “profound” or “real” relationships than others. Even the social worker Isaac, who leads a group for physically and mentally abused women at the Center in the park, admits to himself his lack of altruism in his decision to write an article about one of his patients, Amina. He is more interested in building his own notoriety and in the exoticism of her eyes that carry the “sugerencia de un mundo desconocido e inaccesible, de un encanto doloroso. . .” than in trying to find solutions to her problems (203). Thus, most of the Spanish characters throughout the novel are interested in a certain image that is given to them through an association with diversity. This of course leads one to question what exactly a “real” community based on diversity would be anyway and if it is possible in this particular—or any—environment.
The question of time in *Cosmofobia* offers further insight into the fragmentary nature of the novel. In *La colmena*, time is important symbolically because it suggests a new day. Also, by placing the final section three or four days later than the rest of the action, Cela draws attention to and forms a sort of unified action around the character of Martín. It is his centrality in the end of the novel that makes the emerging community possible (Dougherty 21). *Cosmofobia*, however, entails a different regimen of time—more synchronic than diachronic—where there is only a vague notion of chronological progression. The characters who appear at the beginning of the novel, when mentioned by other characters later on in different narrative lines, have often experienced changes since they were first introduced. In the final pages, it is clear that time has passed, and the narrator summarizes some of the developments in the characters’ lives. Yet the amount of time gone by is unknown. In general, while there is a progression through time—lending once again a certain verisimilitude to the on-going compilation process carried out by the author/narrator—it is a vague one. In fact, the amount of time passed in between the described events is quite irrelevant to the overall project of the novel, which simply aims to present the overlapping lives of these different individuals who struggle to survive. Whereas *La colmena* constructs structural cohesiveness through the chronological culmination of its plot and the central role of Martín in the denouement, *Cosmofobia*, through this lack of precise chronology, deprives its reader of some overall unified action around which a community might be formed.

While the exact passage of time is quite irrelevant in the “present” of the narration, the past that reemerges through different characters who remember events from their younger years is indeed crucial. The most conspicuous reference to the past comes
in the frequent mention of the *movida* and 1980s Madrid. Several characters, such as Mónica, Emma, David, Leonor, and Víctor are tied to this period. Likewise, the narrator and characters mention well-known historical figures of the *movida* such as Pedro Almodóvar, Fanny MacNamara, and Alaska. As previously mentioned, Víctor Coyote serves as both “real life” figure of the *movida* and fictional character. The author/narrator also mentions symbolic places—neighborhoods, bars—related to the time period. On a personal level for the characters, these references serve as reminders of what might have been in their lives. This sentiment is made clear in the first pages of the “Introduction,” as the novel opens with an anecdote concerning the character Mónica and a chance encounter with Pedro Almodóvar. According to Mónica’s story, says the narrator, it was the early 1980s, and one night she went to Chueca with her gay friend Aritz. Alone at the bar, Mónica began to talk with a man who turned out to be Pedro Almodóvar. After some friendly conversation and a walk home, he offered her the role of Bomi in his upcoming movie, but she never called him back, and the role, as we all know, went to Alaska (10).

The author/narrator puts this anecdote in the context of the story she herself is about to tell:

> Si Mónica no hubiese tirado el papel con el número de Pedro, ¿habría acabado convirtiéndose en una actriz de renombre? . . . . Mónica a día de hoy tiene un trabajo razonablemente bien pagado, una relación sentimental estable, ningún problema de adicción y la seguridad de que está viviendo la vida que eligió. Así que, como la historia se juzga siempre según el cristal con que se mira, nunca sabremos si una oportunidad perdida no ha sido en el fondo una oportunidad ganada, de forma que de nada sirve lamentarse por lo que pudo ser y no fue. Éste es un libro sobre oportunidades perdidas o ganadas (11).

This idea of missed opportunities runs throughout the narratives of almost all of the characters, and as is stated here, the secret to success for them on a personal level is to learn not to dwell on the past but to survive with what they have.
On a broader symbolic level, the use of the *movida* constructs a former moment in Madrid’s history against which to measure the current one. If the Madrid of the 1940s is evoked through the intertextuality with *La colmena* as a way to show an evolution in the city, the same is true of the *movida*. The period directly following the death of Franco is portrayed in the novel as one of excitement and possibilities that was in large part a missed opportunity. Though some of the people who lived the moment, like Mónica, have managed to construct a relatively good life for themselves, others “acabaron [heroinómanos], como tantos otros jóvenes de los ochenta para los que demasiado nunca fue suficiente” (11). But even those who have built successful lives are portrayed as bourgeois sell-outs. David, for example, who was once a famous singer with an interminable line of “groupies” in waiting, imagines that his fans “. . . se sentirían desencantados al saber que el autor de una canción como ‘Somos chusma’, que se había convertido en todo un himno generacional, no era más que un vulgar rentista, un burgués de medio pelo” (119). Unable to find a job in another field and without connections, David gets drunk nightly and lives off the rent of two apartments he bought when he was still successful. The hopeful moment of Spain’s democratization represents a missed opportunity, where neither of the two common outcomes—drug addiction or bourgeois conformity—is seen as positive, coinciding with many leftist critiques of the time period.  

Therefore, the increasingly bourgeois and consumerist Madrid represented in the “pijo” characters of the novel is seen, at least in part, as a product of the *movida*.

There is an important link established between the *movida* and the actual reality of Lavapiés. The neighborhood of Chueca, one of the centers of the *movida* along with

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11 Many have been critical of what they call the lack of political engagement from the protagonists of the *movida*. See chapter one for a detailed discussion of this topic.
Malasaña, is described in terms similar to those of today’s Lavapiés—in terms of diversity. Mónica speaks in first person about a bar in Chueca where she met her then girlfriend: “Yo conocí a Emma hace ya muchos años en el Ras, un bar muy conocido en los tiempos de la movida en el que podías encontrarte de todo, desde un camello iraní que pasaba jaco hasta un pijo de los de Lacoste rosa y naúticos” (165). Years later, after having broken up with Emma, Mónica notes the changes in this once diverse neighborhood:

Chueca ya no era el barrio del Ras y de La Ola, ya no era una mezcolanza informe de yonquis y modernos, sino un barrio estrictamente gay en el que había bares de lesbianas, y cuando salía algún sábado por el barrio, si avanzaba por la calle Barbieri, donde antaño estuvo el Ras, se me subía el corazón al estómago si me acordaba de cómo nos conocimos. (175)

The diversity and marginality that made Chueca so exciting and full of possibility in the 1980s has been lost, as it has been transformed into a gentrified ghetto for gay men and a few lesbians. Tellingly, Mónica’s description of El Ras is strikingly similar to the one that the author/narrator makes of Yamal’s bar in Lavapiés, some twenty years later:

“[Yamal] ha abierto un bar de bastante éxito en el que ha conseguido, de nuevo, lo imposible: mezclar a la crema con la plebe, a los escritores, cineastas y artistas con los manteros y los traficantes de hachís” (361). The novel seems to suggest then that Lavapiés is today’s Chueca. Whereas Chueca was a neighborhood at the center of the rebellion and freedom associated with the Transition and the democratization of Spain, Lavapiés is the neighborhood most representative of present day Madrid’s increasingly multicultural environment. It is painted as a marginal, yet diverse and exciting neighborhood, one that, like Chueca in the 1980s, is the locus of burgeoning social
change. If this is a “libro sobre oportunidades perdidas o ganadas,” it is implied that Lavapiés, contrary to Chueca, has yet to win or lose.

The reluctance to portray in the novel the emergence of a social community grounded in public space is a result of this indeterminacy. The end of *Cosmofobia* comments on most of the main characters—“pijos,” immigrants, and more—at a time slightly further into the future from when the narration began. In the final pages, the narrator shares further details about the characters, as each continues to search for his or her “place” in the world. This recap begins as the narrator mentions the Ludoteca in the park. From there, her description of the lives of the characters grows outward in a web that has its center, once again, in the Casino de la Reina—namely, her daughter, Nicky and Mahamud (the immigrant children who play soccer), Antón, and Claudia. From her conversations with Antón, the narrator “finds out” about Susana, Sonia, and so on. The ending description emphasizes indeterminacy and process; the current situation of the characters is neither completely positive nor negative—the characters seem to have learned from their experiences but are still involved in their ongoing process of self-discovery. Relationships built between characters also remain incomplete. Antón may be in love with Miriam, but he will not recognize it. Susana, having left her abusive boyfriend Silvio, begins a relationship with an African man, Ismael, and she agrees to marry him, aware that it is only so that he can become naturalized.

This indeterminacy leaves open the chance that some sort of multicultural community might emerge in the future. The case of Susana, for example, hints toward this possibility. At first, Susana is very unhappy, eats obsessively, and is involved in an unhealthy relationship with her white boyfriend, whose mother disapproves of their
relationship. The wealthy women who go to the plus-size boutique where she works are often taken aback by her appearance. Her boss, Dora, cannot believe it when she says she is from Alcalá de Henares, and a client’s child screams when she sees her, not having ever seen a black face other than that of her doll. Slowly, however, Susana begins to build a network of friends and support: Dora, despite her initial reluctance, gives Susana a job. One of the clients, Poppy, helps convince Susana to leave Silvio. Susana begins to go to the therapy sessions at the center in the Casino de la Reina where she meets other abused women who find mutual support through each other’s stories. Susana ends up dating Ismael, an illegal immigrant from Ivory Coast, after meeting him at the corner store where she goes to buy chocolate candy. This is a relatively positive progression of events for Susana, who has been able to count on the help of various people from the neighborhood.

These positive moments of interaction between “natives” and immigrants are always shown to have their limits—and even their dark side—especially in the case of Yamal Benani, who could be said to emerge as one of the central characters. Etxebarria has even noted that he is the closest thing to a protagonist in the novel (“Novela”). The last chapter of the narration, “Le Beau Terrible,” is primarily about Yamal, a successful tavern owner and painter who has appeared intermittently throughout the novel. He is the only character who can move easily between the different communities of Lavapiés. He helps his fellow immigrants, all of whom he calls “primos.” At the same time, through the bar and as a wealthy painter, he has built a wide network of friends among the “pijo” residents, appearing to act as a sort of mediator between the two groups. He is depicted as exotic and mysterious; all of the women—and many men—of the neighborhood are
intrigued and entranced by him. Amina, the young Spanish-Moroccan girl, even believes that she was put under a spell by Yamal when she worked at his home. The questions about this mysterious man are answered in the final chapter as the fictional Lucía Etxebarria tells of how she met him years ago. It appears that his father was a corrupt Minister in Morocco and that Yamal himself is actually an important figure in a hashish smuggling ring between Morocco and Spain. At the same time, his success as an artist has come as part of a concerted effort on his part to triumph at all costs: admitting to Lucía that he is willing to “pactar con el diablo” in order to succeed, he steals the ideas of another painter and, Lucía suspects, even has a hand in the murder of an important curator (361).

So much of the mystery surrounding Yamal is resolved in the last chapter. His ability to bring together the different people of the neighborhood is a result of his business acumen rather than some mysterious, supernatural pull he has over people. The narrator recognizes this contradiction: “Y ahora, mientras tecleo estas páginas, no sé bien si el mundo que Yamal habita es ese espantoso y sobrenatural en el que me paso el tiempo situándolo o si por el contrario mi imaginación ha actuado como un reflector mal regulado que proyecta en torno a un objeto grandes sombras fantásticas” (363). Once again, there is a sense of indeterminacy involved in this description, as neither the narrator nor the reader is sure what to believe about Yamal.

After the narrator shares this information about this character, she also connects him directly to the neighborhood, as a sort of representation of Lavapiés itself:

A veces, tengo la impresión de que Yamal siempre me fascinó porque representa la esencia misma del barrio, que se va escondiendo tras tantos disfraces distintos, el corazón místico y latente de todas estas gentes que viven juntas pero que no se conocen ni se reconocen, de esta masa limitrofe enfrentada a una inevitable
This description of Yamal and Lavapiés brings the novel back to the themes of the urban, public space, community, and survival, whereby the meaning of the anthill metaphor comes clearly into focus. The “masa limítrofe” that the residents of the neighborhood form is not a social group that works in unison, but a group of individuals facing constant change who do not recognize each other and whose community or citizenship is not determined by their origin, where they live, or whom they live near. For better or worse, suggests the narrator, Lavapiés is an example of the world of the near future, and we must learn to live with it.

Etxebarria’s observation runs the risk of turning into condescension given the direct insertion of the author/narrator into the storyline and the celebration of her open-minded attitude. In the introduction, she seems to embrace the diversity of the neighborhood, as she makes a point to emphasize her own involvement in the space of the park: her dog plays soccer with the children, she brings them candy and learns their names, and her daughter, “la única niña rubia,” plays at the playground and takes part in some of the activities in the Casita (12, 14). Again in the final pages, the narrator makes sure to point out that she has enrolled her daughter in classes at the ludoteca, which were previously open only to the children sent there by Social Services (363-64). These comments give the impression that the narrator is perhaps the only person in the whole novel willing to break the “límites que se respetan” between “natives” and immigrants,
and thereby imply that she has some sort of ethical superiority or more forward-looking understanding of the world than those with whom she lives.

This flaw in the narration can be somewhat overcome if one considers it in the context of the importance of the narrator’s daughter. The main point that is being conveyed is that the neighborhood and the world are changing rapidly, and the daughter is a member of a future generation that will experience space and citizenship in different ways. Indeed, the daughter is already exhibiting these signs—she has Canadian citizenship, lives in Lavapiés, and plays with children from various ethnic backgrounds.

Earlier in the novel, while Amina also reiterates the common idea that “por aquí de mestizaje nada,” she also recognizes that the younger generations, her little brother included, are more open-minded and have friends of different ethnicities. She states, “Yo no veo todavía mestizaje. Pero todo eso es muy dinámico y ha pasado poco tiempo” (143).

This understanding of the process of mestizaje in Lavapiés can be linked to Mayte Gómez, whose critique of the district offers a vision of Lavapiés in contrast to the predominant imaginaries of the neighborhood as “multicultural but not yet intercultural” or, on the other hand, as the quintessential “barrio castizo” of Madrid. Gómez argues that if Lavapiés indeed has an “essence” it is that of change, and in particular that of an ongoing process of interculturalism that dates back centuries to when it was the city’s Jewish Quarter. Interculturalism in this context is a transitional space between multiculturalism and mestizaje. In the former, various cultures live together but remain to

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12 Castizo here means “pure” or “authentic” and is used to refer to the centric, eighteenth and nineteenth century popular neighborhoods of Madrid mainly located to the south of Sol—Lavapiés, the Rastro, La Latina, etc. This imagery persists today, as icons of Madrid’s popular culture evoke this area of the city—chulapos, the fiestas populares of San Isidro and La Paloma, etc. Gómez also points out the irony that Lavapiés was the Jewish Quarter of the city in the years prior to its becoming the capital of the Hapsburgs.
a great extent segregated, while in the latter cultures and ethnicities mix and intertwine (21). Gómez’s definition of interculturalism allows for a positive view of the existing conflict between different cultures by looking at the neighborhood as having been involved in this same process since its beginnings: “. . . [L]a historia del barrio no es sino la de un proceso de inmigración así como de evolución cultural y étnica continuo, estable, y, por sobre todas las cosas, inconcluso” (2). In fact, she says, the barrio is immersed in a state of chaos in which the varying forces and identities clash, cross, and come together (19). In this context, the process of interculturalism taking place in Lavapiés “no debe verse . . . como un caos nihilista, sino como un caos fecundo” (22). This chaos can be seen as productive insofar as it leads to interaction and the negotiation of cultural meaning in the future. Through the comments of Amina and the role of the narrator’s daughter, this idea of interculturality as an on-going, dynamic process begins to take hold towards the end of the novel.

This topic brings the discussion of Cosmofobia back to the question of indeterminacy, whereby the public sphere, community, and citizenship must also be seen as unstable and open-ended processes. Drawing on Parvati Nair’s discussion of community in postmodern Spain, we can begin to identify the kind of community that is suggested in the novel. Nair argues that:

The Spanish context is . . . exemplary of the impossibility of community as totality or cohesive unit. By dispensing with the notion of moral integrity from community and by incorporating into it instead a flexible concept of citizenship that extends across regional and other circuits, community is turned web-like, a prime vehicle for postmodern cultural politics. . . . [T]he importance of community shifts, thereby, from an imagined longing which, by its very definitions, is unrealizable to diverse, open-ended discourses and practices. (20-21)
Lavapiés is representative of this new kind of social experience in which the city neighborhood, or any other place for that matter, does not serve as a space in which to form a unified collective identity. As has been shown, the public spaces of the district in the case of the novel are spaces that put on display the conflict and uncertainty that characterize this historical moment. Likewise, the depiction of the various characters as lost and in search of their place in the world demonstrates a sense of confusion that has emerged in the face of such changes.

Specifically, the contemporary shifting boundaries and confusions between the public and private are clear preoccupations in this text that go hand in hand with the question of community. Hardt and Negri, for example, criticize what they call the traditional Left’s nostalgic call for community, arguing that such a concept ignores the fact that at this point in time there is no unitary social body and that “we are all singular” (195). Indeed, the current historical moment “tends to displace the traditional divisions between individual and society, between subjective and objective, and between private and public,” all prerequisites for the type of community that the traditional Left imagines (202). In this post-Utopian context, Hardt and Negri recognize the impossibility, and indeed undesirability, of an overarching public that would bring about some kind of social unity and imagine instead a society in “common” based on communication between singularities.

_Cosmofobia_, through the depiction of its characters, its structure and narrative style, and its unique intertextuality with _La colmena_, recognizes that these traditional notions of community and the public are not possible due to historical, social, and cultural changes. The public spaces in the novel are no more than the receptacle of the
individual lives that are put on display, where the public becomes an increasingly private way of experiencing space. Lavapiés, as a multicultural neighborhood in a globalized world, must look for some other model upon which to build. Of course, the communication that Hardt and Negri imagine has yet to become visible in the novel, as the characters are simply portrayed as confused about their changing urban landscape and indeed do not communicate well with others. Etxebarria leaves the political posturing for others and concentrates, rather successfully, on producing a realistic depiction of the disorienting experience of current urban life and the struggle for survival within it.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the increasingly confusing experience of life in the city where the meanings of the public and private and the distinction between the two begin to fall under question. Both *Princesas* and *Cosmofobia* capture this blurring of the lines between the private and public spheres in the depiction of a multicultural Madrid where previously accepted truths are thrown into doubt, and the characters that live in this context must find ways to deal with their new circumstances. Likewise, the anxieties felt by the characters in both the film and the novel are transferred to the spectators and readers through the respective haptic film language and novelistic structure and style employed. As a result, as members of the same society that is put on display, we are asked to reflect on the portrayed methods of confronting these confusions.

While both León de Aranoa and Etxebarria’s projects are similar in regard to the type of society they represent, they differ in the imagined solutions or outcomes that are presented as possible. *Princesas*, through its appeal to emotion, offers the possibility of
cross-cultural friendship as a way to survive the difficult circumstances of life in the contemporary city. This friendship in the film implies that “natives” and immigrants are really not that different, as Caye and Zulema are placed on the same plane through their common experience as prostitutes. This commonality would suggest to the spectator that cultural differences are surmountable if we can realize that the workings of capitalism are what really divide us. *Cosmofobia*, on the other hand, is reluctant to unify experience in this way. Through its fragmented and polyphonic narrative and the lack of a central character or storyline, the element of emotional identification that is found in *Princesas* is constantly displaced in Etxebarria’s novel. Therefore, while the film posits the prospect of a (re)emerging public, the novel dismantles this prospect as a possibility. In this sense, *Cosmofobia* is arguably the more forward-thinking of the two productions; although it does not necessarily offer a solution to the disorienting experience of city life in a multicultural society, it accepts that the clear sense of division between public and private will most likely not be recouped.
Chapter 4. Spanish Cities and Cyberspace: Shifts in Public Space in the Information Age

Perhaps the most important cultural occurrence in Spain’s cities to have contributed to a shift and redefinition between the public and private is the growing importance of internet and information technologies over the past decade. Although Spain has been slower than some other European countries in adopting and developing these technologies, there is no denying their growing importance in recent years. In fact, the use of mobile technology has, while not at the same level as other larger European nations, increased drastically in Spain in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Abril; “Hacia”). Furthermore, in spite of its late start in the implementation of internet services, Spain places among the leading countries in Europe in the utilization of certain online activities like instant messaging and free communication tools such as Skype (“España lider”).

How does this expansion of cyberspace shape urban space and what does it mean for the relationship between the public and the private? It will be argued here that, going beyond the immigrant experience in the city that constitutes an increasingly intimate way of experiencing public space and thereby fuses the public and private, the rise of cyberspace involves an ever more public way of living intimacy and vanquishes the notion of the private and its relation to the public altogether. Two novels that deal with the virtual, its relationship to the physical city, and the public-private distinction will be analyzed here: La sombra cazadora (1995) by Suso de Toro and Diario de Martín Lobo

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1 In 2006 Spain reached two important landmarks concerning mobile phone technology: (1) The number of mobile phone lines, at 44.3 million, exceeded for the first time the population of 44.1 million people. (2) The country surpassed the rest of European countries in terms of network coverage, with practically 99% of Spanish territory covered by at least one of the four major networks.
2 The newspaper 20minutos cites a French study from 2007 that found that Spain placed ahead of France, the UK, Italy, and Germany in these two categories as well as in the creation of blogs and podcasts.
An important question to address in this chapter is what effects cyberspace has on the physical spaces of the city and what this means for the public and private. In his book, *Making the Digital City*, Alessandro Aurigi lays out what he classifies as two opposed yet surprisingly similar perspectives on the answer to this question that have predominated in Europe with the rise of informational technologies. Aurigi describes a utopian and futuristic approach that sees cyberspace as a place to build the ideal city and a way to overcome the limits of physicality. This perspective has been widespread among many architects and planners who “have been looking at high technology as the instrument to overcome all the problems of communication and fragmentation—both social and physical—that affect contemporary cities” (18). In this case, the virtual is seen as a

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3 This study uses the Spanish translation of Toro’s *A sombra cazadora*, originally published in Galician.
predominantly public space that is capable of overcoming the increased privatization of cities.

This positivist attitude has been contrasted by another that involves what Aurigi calls a “techno-determinist dystopia” (21). Here, cyberspace is seen as an inevitable parallel reality to the “physical” one. Technological advancements bring on “an epoch within which a self-identity derived from ‘real,’ ‘embodied’ experiences is unable to compete with ones derived from the ‘erotic ontology’ of hyperreal simulated disembodied cyberspace” (21). This critique of cyberspace is often tied up in a materialist approach that sees new technologies as part of the way in which capitalism reproduces and upgrades itself (23-24). Many imagine a place in which physical spaces of the city become irrelevant to city dwellers who spend more time isolated in the “cyber-world” than in the “real” one. Specifically, public space is often assumed to diminish as internet and mobile phone users become isolated within private bubbles of technology.4 From this latter point of view, the public spaces of the city become irrelevant and are indeed negated as people begin to live in a privatized cyberspace.

Aurigi points out that both the utopian and dystopian discourses concerning cyberspace and the city assume deterministic stances in which technology is seen to inevitably advance in one way or another and to bring about a certain kind of future. However, he argues, both discourses are “quite indifferent about present times” (25). He adds, “What is going on now is seen as a mere series of facts, something that will affect [the] future but that cannot be affected, modified, or carried out in a different manner” (25). For Aurigi, both attitudes subtract importance from the influence that local actors can and do have over the implementation of technology in relation to the city (9).

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4 See Michael Bull, “To Each Their Own Bubble.”
Following this logic, it can be said that the rise of cyberspace is neither inherently positive nor negative; rather, its effects on the city may be either depending on what kind of actions are taken by users in the present. Furthermore, to expand on Aurigi’s point, one can argue that cyberspace is neither necessarily public nor private, but in a way similar to physical space, can house elements of both.

In this sense, cyberspace opens up new avenues through which the public and private manifest themselves, thus altering the geography of the city. The work of the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells concerning the evolution of urban space can assist in the understanding these shifts. Castells has, similar to what Aurigi proposes, put forth a more practical approach to the urban given the changes that have occurred due to the Information Age. In several of his recent texts, such as the essay “The Culture of Cities in the Information Age,” he speaks of the emergence of what he terms the space of flows. Castells defines it as a space that “works across distance through communication flows, processed and transmitted by telecommunications, electronic networks of information systems, and transportation networks” (Culture 381). While it may have begun as a space of power and dominant functions—financial institutions, science and technology—it has extended to include the diversity of all human activity—education, interpersonal communication, virtual communities. While the space of flows includes certain locales, these physical places are but points, or nodes, of a greater network. At the same time, explains Castells, alongside this space of flows, there still exists a space of places, one of

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5 Castells is one of the most important voices to examine the crossroads between urban studies and information technologies. His work has been inevitably influenced by decades spent in California, where he experienced first-hand the digital revolution, and therefore he is often seen as an outsider in Spain. Castells has attempted to bring his different, more optimistic perspective concerning new technologies to bear on his home country, and he has engaged in some important research about Spain. See “The Culture of Cities in the Information Age” and La era de la información.
territorial contiguity in which the majority of citizens live their daily lives and form social relations. That is to say, the space of cyberspace, media networks, and other informational flows is an essential element to the lives of city-dwellers today, but people still live in physical locations that are the prevalent spaces of personal experience and cultural identity as well as the sites where the space of flows and of places intersect.6

The growing importance of the space of flows is not to be feared according to Castells, but rather seen as something that offers astonishing possibilities. With the emergence of cyberspace, the new culture of cities is the culture of significant communication promoted by an interface between the space of flows and the space of places (Culture 383). Among the possibilities for creating this interface is the use of public space as a bridge between individuals and communities, a new monumentality that would give symbolic meaning to new spatial forms and would be oriented towards the new infrastructure of the metropolitan area, and the use of media and information networks that connect local experience with the hypertext of the space of flows.

Cyberspace does not necessarily negate or expand physical public space. Along these lines, Clive Barnett, in his essay “Neither Poison nor Cure: Space, Scale, and Public Life in Media Theory,” discusses the potential effects of media technologies on the notion of publicness. Barnett comments on views concerning the increased presence of media—television, internet—within the domestic sphere and the claim by Raymond

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6 The distinction Castells makes between the space of flows and of places is similar in this regard to Marc Augé’s opposition of non-places and anthropological places. Augé argues that non-places have emerged in the era of supermodernity. These are places in which identity is not constituted, where there are no true relations between individuals, and where history does not exist. The relations that are established within these places are mediated most often by texts and machines. Augé asserts that the non-place continues to co-exist alongside anthropological places and that neither exists in pure form nor is fixed (Augé 79). This part of his argument has been overlooked or downplayed by many who apply Augé’s theory to urban studies, anxious to condemn the solitude provoked by the great metropolitan centers of today. Many claim a disappearance of “identity” and “community” in which the entire city is transformed into a non-place (see Odartey-Wellington 208 and Resina 78).
Williams that the trend of what he calls “mobile privatization” leads to “a movement away from engaged forms of public association, and an extension of a private attitude” (62) Barnett points out that “... one can just as easily argue that the re-articulation of spaces and mobilities might extend publicness into new areas, not least that of the home, so fundamentally transforming the meaning of what counts as public” (62-63). Taking Barnett’s point one step further, if it can just as easily be argued that cyberspace creates a private attitude in that it extends publicness into new areas; perhaps, the conclusion to be made is that cyberspace collapses the supposedly clear lines that divide the two spheres. What follows is an examination of the cultural reactions taking place in Spain’s cities to the shifts in the public and private that are bound up in the emergence of cyberspace. These two texts, while different in their evaluations concerning the positive or negative outcomes of cyberspace and its effects on the physical city, demonstrate together the imminent redefinition of the public-private divide.

*The City of Alienation, Surveillance, and the Lost Public: La sombra cazadora*

Suso de Toro’s *La sombra cazadora* (1995) is exemplary of the negative conceptualizations of the effects of cyberspace on the city and its inhabitants.7 8 On the border of the science fiction genre, the novel develops the themes of surveillance,

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7 Opposed to the other texts analyzed in this dissertation, this novel is written by an author—the Galician Suso de Toro—who is not explicitly tied to Madrid. This discrepancy with the rest of the dissertation is not problematic if one considers the fact that the unnamed city in the text is meant to be ambiguous in identity. As will be seen below, part of the project of the novel is to erase local culture to the point where the city described could as easily be Madrid as Santiago.

8 Another novel of interest in the context of cyberspace and its effects on the city is the 2001 runner-up for the Premio Primavera de Novela, *La vida en las ventanas*. The book’s author, Andrés Neuman, was born in Argentina but is a long-time resident of Granada. While not as extreme in its conclusions and lacking the science fiction element, the novel deals with themes very similar to those presented in de Toro’s work, portraying an urban environment in which the physical space of the city disappears and the lack of communication between the characters, particularly the young writer/protagonist, underlines the solitude of the Information Age.
solitude, and lack of communication and presents these traits as part of a loss of public as well as private space that occurs with the proliferation of media technologies. The novel paints a bleak picture of the future in which a brother and sister are forced out of the idyllic, isolated farm where they have grown up alone with their father into a scary urban landscape. The city that the protagonists occupy remains unnamed and lacks recognizable streets and landmarks. The death of this city in *Sombra* is attributed to the conquest of the city by the “Image,” a virtual monster that has taken over control of society. The negatively perceived effects of media technologies are further underlined by the antagonism developed in the novel between the real and the virtual—as well as the surreal—and between the written word and the image. This invasion of the virtual into the “real” is also at the heart of the vanquishing of the public and private. The public spaces of the city disappear because people stop interacting with each other and only stare into the thousands of television and computer screens found throughout the city. At the same time, any notion of privacy is similarly negated through the panoptical gaze of the “Image,” which appears constantly in the screens and holds complete control over the viewers. In the text, the virtual is not really conceived of as a space in its own right; rather, it is a shadow, a sort of emptiness that can only act on—and destroy—the “real” public and private that exist in the physical spaces of the city.

Toro’s novel resists classification and contains elements of varying literary genres and styles. The bizarre plot and futuristic elements require one to ask where and if *La sombra cazadora* fits within the context of the science fiction genre. English and Cultural studies critic Sabine Heuser is author of a study titled *Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction* that examines cyberpunk, a type
of narrative and a subculture that gained force in the eighties and nineties as a genre that comments on cyberspace from within the broader ambit of science fiction. Although science fiction is nearly impossible to define—Heuser asserts that its principle of identity is change—one of the key aspects of the genre is its contemplation of the impact of technological innovations within an imagined futuristic landscape (xvi-xviii). Science fiction, she states, also involves a tension between high and low culture as well as between natural sciences and the humanities (Heuser xii). Cyberpunk can be seen as a current of science fiction that uses aspects of cyberspace and virtual reality as the futuristic landscape and the technology to be commented upon. *La sombra cazadora* contains elements of cyberpunk to the extent that it constitutes a clear reflection on the impact of information technologies on an imagined future society in order to make a commentary on the current one. In addition, the novel uses extended metaphor and presents what Heuser describes as “. . . an imagined world which is to be treated ‘as if’ it were real and [that] belongs to the realm of fiction and imagination” (xix). However, Toro’s novel resists a clear classification within the genre since it also contains elements of fantasy and the supernatural. To be discussed further, the naïve main characters of *La sombra* do not resemble the savvy hackers of typical cyberpunk narrative, but rather are a young girl and boy who have lived their lives closed off from the outside world.

The adolescent brother and sister team whose alternating first person narrative forms the novel’s action place *La sombra cazadora* not only on the border of science fiction and cyberpunk but also on the cusp of literature directed at an adolescent audience. The presentation of the novel’s events through the perspective of two teenagers

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has often led the novel to be categorized as literature for children, although its serious and mature themes are arguably addressed to a much broader and adult audience. In addition, the novel rests at the margins of Toro’s literary work. The Galician is perhaps best known for his novels, but has also published theater and has written extensively in the essay form. Through his work and his political activity, he is often associated with other Galician writers, such as Manuel Rivas, who aim to revalue the Galician language and culture and look critically at its place in relation to the Spanish literary tradition and culture. An important part of his narrative, most often written in galego, has a complex and experimental narrative style and structure and has won several literary awards.

This novel does fit at least partially with the broader themes of Toro’s work, which the author himself has described as “el relato iniciático, la pelea por ganar la propia identidad, la pertenencia a una comunidad . . . . Se podría decir . . . que siempre escribo el Edipo rey, es decir, hablo de personas que han perdido a sus padres o, al menos, a alguno de ellos y que buscan su identidad” (“Suso”). As will be seen, La sombra does involve the journey of its protagonists in a search for their identity. They both have lost their mother and father, and at the end of the novel the brother must kill the Image of his father in order to save humanity. La sombra differs from the majority of Toro’s work in its more simplistic structure and prose. Importantly as well, the novel makes no specific references to Galicia. Indeed, there is never any mention of specific

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10 La Casa del Libro online bookstore, for example, classifies the novel as “literatura juvenil más de 12 años.”
11 Toro wrote a biography of the current Spanish president, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero titled Madera de Zapatero (2007) as well as critical essays against the interior politics of José María Aznar such as Españoles todos (2004).
12 Toro was awarded the Premio de la Crítica Gallega for Polaroid (1987), the Premio de la Crítica Española for Tic-Tac (1993), as well as the Premio Nacional de Narrativa for Trece campanadas (2003).
locales in the novel, which aims to present a society in which local identity has become irrelevant. Thus, *La sombra* defies categorization on several levels.

Ironically, in spite of this sensitivity to the difficult maintenance of clear distinctions between categories, the novel presents and maintains several binary, antagonistic relationships, one of the most important being that of the city and the country. If a common way to present the relationship between these two regions in Spanish literature has involved the notion that the country is pure and the city the root of all evil, the beginning of the novel appears to challenge such a false dichotomy.13 The two young narrators, Clara and her brother—whose name remains a secret until the end of the novel for reasons explained below—describe their lives of isolation on a farm in an unspecified area of Spain. The two have lived there as long as they can remember with their father and have never been allowed to leave the property. Speaking from an undetermined time in the future, Clara begins narrating in the first chapter by talking about her eighteenth birthday—and the death of her father on the same day—and explains that as a child she did not understand why they had been locked away. A lack of communication permeates the beginning of the narration, not only due to the fact that the children have no contact with the outside world but also because of the silent and mysterious relationship they have with their father, who since his wife died several years earlier due to complications from the birth of their son has been lost in solitude. Clara explains the situation:

Estaba convencida de que mi vida tenía que ser así, sin esperanza ni horizonte. Una vida encerrada en una finca separada del mundo por un alto muro coronado

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13 See Nathan Richardson’s *Postmodern Paletos* for an in-depth analysis of representations of the city-country binary in twentieth-century Spanish literature and film. The preference for the country over the city, for example, was a common theme in the so-called Generación del 98 and was later propagated by the Franco regime in its celebration of the “eternal Spain.”
de puntas de vidrio y un portalón de madera gruesa y hierro, con la única compañía de una perra, un hermano menor al que le costaba hablar y un padre que casi no hablaba porque no quería y al que nunca le veías los ojos, cubiertos siempre por unas gafas negras. (14)

The degree to which the children are cut off from the world serves to set up a contrast between their life in the country and that of the city that they will soon visit and is made evident in their naïve discussions of what life might be like beyond the walls of the farm. Before this visit, the city exists only in their imaginations. At one point, when the young siblings look into the night sky and see lights of different colors, Clara asks, “¿Y cómo será una ciudad?” (19). Neither have many thoughts on what life in the city might be like, yet they are able to construct a basic image of cars, movie theaters, and shops thanks to the novels that Clara reads (19). Clara, who before felt a need to discover the outside world, resigns herself to the fact that “. . . el verdadero mundo era el nuestro, aquel donde habitábamos los tres dentro de los muros que rodeaban la finca. Todo lo que nosotros sabíamos del mundo exterior era lo que [nuestro padre] quería contarnos, y él no hablaba del asunto” (25). Yet the children do not resign themselves completely to the impossibility of leading a life beyond the farm. Drawing from what Clara has read in novels about pirates, the two often write messages in bottles asking to be rescued and throw them into the stream that runs through the property, which they name “Río de la Esperanza” (18). When the father finally decides to explain to the children a few things about the outside world, he must define very basic notions to them: “También [las personas] andan en autobús. Son autos que llevan a más gente, a cualquier que los quiera coger en unos sitios llamados ‘parada’. Para viajar en ellos hay que tener un plástico azul que se llama ‘billete’” (43). This kind of definition is often given and underlines the extent to which these children are oblivious to the workings of the world.
Given this picture of isolation, the novel begins with what seems to be a critique of an over-celebratory attitude towards life in the country. While their father describes the city to them as “perversa e infernal,” the reader cannot help but think that the perverse and hellish existence is indeed the one they lead on the farm (25). It soon becomes evident, however, that the cause of the children’s enclosure as well as the odd behavior of their father towards them is in fact due to a problem that has arisen in and out of the city and has come to invade the countryside. The cause of their strange existence is attributed to what the father classifies as the evils of telecommunications. The father’s explanation of the isolated life they have had to lead is a strange, metaphoric tale related to the emergence of cyberspace. When he was younger, the father was the most successful television presenter in the country. In order to capitalize on his youthful image and appear more frequently in as many places as possible, he developed an idea with his wife to record several series of images of himself and to have a computer control those images and insert them into television shows and commercials. Somehow, though, the Image gained its own existence within the television and computer screens and could no longer be controlled by the humans who had made the computers.

The title of the novel is understood in the father’s explanation of the situation: “Imaginaos que vuestra sombra se separa de vosotros y toma vida propia. Imaginaos que la imagen del espejo toma vida propia y actúa por su cuenta” (62). This shadow, which exists separately from the human body that created it, is hunting the “real” body of the father in order to kill him and eliminate the threat that he poses to its control over the world. The Image has recently found out that the children exist—thanks to the father’s indiscretion with a woman who works at the supermarket where he goes occasionally to
buy supplies—and now the father has decided that he must kill himself and send his children out into the world in an attempt to escape from the Image.

These bizarre circumstances are telling for the way in which they present telecommunications and computers. These technologies are depicted as evil things that can take on their own life, in the process becoming completely severed from and even attacking humanity. In this regard, *La sombra* makes a commentary on the evolving nature of the image in contemporary society. As Román Gubern has explored in his study *Del bisonte a la realidad virtual: la escena y el laberinto*, the digital image is novel in relation to the photochemical image, in that it involves the production of rather than the reproduction of reality:

La imagen infográfica, ajena a cámaras y objetivos, es autónoma respecto a las apariencias visibles del mundo físico y no depende de ningún referente. Al haber eliminado a la cámara y hasta al observador, la imagen de síntesis nace de un “ojo sin cuerpo” y culmina así el trayecto histórico de la imagen a la busca de la autonomía absoluta, liberándola del peso y de las imposiciones de la realidad, en un proceso de desrealización que culminará con la realidad virtual. (147)

In *La sombra* there is a profound preoccupation concerning this “proceso de desrealización.” Indeed, the most important thing that the father wants his children to know is how dangerous images are:

Es importante que os metáis esto en la cabeza y que no lo olvidéis nunca: todo lo que veis en la pantalla parece real, parece que esté sucediendo de verdad, pero es falso. Solamente son imágenes . . . Las pantallas tratarán de convenceros de que son la realidad, de que la realidad es lo que se ve allí, y vosotros debéis recordar siempre, siempre, que la realidad está fuera de la pantalla, nunca dentro. Las pantallas quieren que vosotros entréis en ellas y os perdáis dentro, en su laberinto . . . Confiad siempre en la carne y desconfiad de las imágenes . . . [Y]a sé que me entendéis, pero tenéis que grabarlo bien aquí delante, en la frente, para poder defenderos de las imágenes. (54-55)
Of note here is not only the idea that the images appear to be reality when they are not, but also the notion that the images want to capture the innocent onlookers in their trap and that one must defend him- or herself from that attempt.

Returning to Aurigi’s description of the “techno-determinist dystopia” perspective to the effects of information technology, it can be argued here that the novel shares in the idea that technology is negative in and of itself and naturally leads to the downfall and loss of the “real” world. The novel, through the metaphoric story of this family, presents a clear contemplation of what will happen or is already happening to the world at large as a result of the creation and growing use of telecommunications technology. Yet the problem is not only in the hands of humans: while the father himself is responsible for creating the Image in the first place, a point is reached where he no longer has any control over what he created and the Image itself continues to gain power regardless of human actions that may attempt to keep it at bay. The father also wants his children to flee because he believes the Image is invincible: “Yo no quiero que tengáis que enfrentaros a la Imagen, pues ella os ganaría” (64). This is where Aurigi would likely counter that such a vision leaves no room for human agency and assumes that technology must necessarily and uncontrollably develop in one direction or another. This viewpoint is made evident not only in the father’s description of what has happened to his family, but also in the continuing narration by the children of their venture into the city and what they must do to “defeat” the Image.

The reader soon discovers that for as horrid as life seemed for the children in the country, the city is much worse. Upon their father’s suicide, the children head into this unnamed city in search of the home of their godfather—an old friend of the family and a
partner in the father’s failed business scheme—where the father instructed them to go before dying in hopes that he would be able to protect them. The city that the two children encounter is home to a bleak and frightening landscape due to the omnipresent control of the Image. It is a dystopian city, one that José Luis Charcán Palacios describes as “ciudad laberinto, ciudad infernal, ciudad bosque” in his essay about recent representations of urban landscapes in Spanish literature (51). The physical landscape is a desolate one: Clara and her brother see gray, non-descript high-rise apartment buildings from the bus they take to travel across the city. The so-called public spaces are nothing but abandoned plots of land. Clara explains that “[e]ntre los edificios quedaban de cuando en cuando espacios vacíos con vegetación, montones de escombros y objetos abandonados y rotos. Allí andaban grupos de personas con ropa de colores, la mayoría parecían chavales, y algunos incluso niños” (102). These open spaces do not provide a liberating gathering space for these young people but instead serve as another place from which they stare at screens.

One of the most striking characteristics of the city is the lack of signs of identity to distinguish it from any other. The city itself has no name and neither do its streets. The godfather’s home can be reached in this manner: “Si cogéis este autobús y bajáis en la [parada] 67, llegaréis a . . . la calle 214 A, número 138” (43). The significance of this lack of proper names can be explored further by way of Michel de Certeau’s thoughts on the city. He has discussed the importance of proper names and the residual meanings that they create for those who inhabit the city. Proper names for Certeau are important because they open up the city by allowing access to a collective history that can then be
reinterpreted by those who walk and live in it. Proper names elude the functionality and
systematic nature of the modern city because

they make habitable or believable the place that they clothe with a word . . . ; they
recall or suggest phantoms (the dead who are supposed to have disappeared) that
still move about, concealed in gestures and in bodies in motion; and, by naming . . .
and by altering functionalist identity by detaching themselves from it, they create
in the place itself that erosion or nowhere that the law of the other carves out
within it. (Certeau 105)

Such aspects of the city underline the fact that it is not something merely constructed by
planners and other authorities in a top-down fashion; rather, it is a place that is made and
transformed continuously from the bottom-up by the inhabitants who walk through it on
an everyday basis. The city that Toro depicts in La sombra cazadora is one that is, at
least on the surface, devoid of these everyday practices that resist the authoritarian vision
placed on it from above by the Image. In this sense, while the countryside farm the
children left was in no means idyllic, in comparison to the city it is seen as positive
because it is a space that the father has managed to maintain—at least temporarily—
outside of the control of the Image.

If public space is made possible through the everyday actions and interactions of
citizens, then the public is completely vanquished in La sombra. Castells’s space of
places is similar to what Certeau proposes in his “Walking in the City” in that the space
of places is the space of cultural identity and personal experience. In La sombra cazadora
the public spaces of the city that Clara and her brother visit are completely taken over and
controlled by the space of flows, by cyberspace, or the Image. The residents of the city
who are seen on the street, on the bus, or in plazas, do not interact with each other.
Indeed, the only purpose of the “public” areas is to serve as a gathering place where
people, all wearing black sunglasses, stare fixedly at the thousands of screens that
provide a non-stop series of disturbing and/or sexually explicit images for them to watch.
The same is true on the buses, where people sit silently and watch the screen at the front
of the vehicle. The Image is present in all of the screens, observing those who are on the
other side. In this sense, the space of flows invades and controls the space of places to the
point that it and the public practically cease to exist, as there is little to no sense of
solidarity or even life beyond the screens. The black glasses worn by the residents are
symbolic of this lack of interaction, simultaneously making it easier for people to see the
screens and more difficult to see each other.

Thus virtual space is responsible for the vanquishing of the public in the novel.
The nature of the city described here is similar to the one that Michael Bull discusses,
although he is more concerned with sound and the use of cell phones and personal
stereos. Bull argues that “[u]sers tend to negate public spaces through their prioritization
of their own technologically mediated private realm” (288). Yet there is an important
difference between what Bull describes and what occurs in the novel. In the text, the
private is also impossible since the lack of interaction between the residents of the city is
accompanied by constant surveillance and a sense of trepidation and distrust. Being
present in this pseudo-public space is associated with the fear of being seen. Clara and
her brother struggle to pass unnoticed and blend in with the regular residents of the city,
constantly afraid not only of being spotted by the Image in its appearances in the millions
of screens throughout the city, but also by the citizens who report to the Image.

The collapse of privacy is illustrated in a situation in which Clara and her brother
find a dead body. Clara has read in novels that in these situations one must tell the
authorities, but no one in the city seems to have taken that step. Frightened, the siblings
approach a woman on the street to ask what they should do. Clara narrates the scene, which puts on display the constant fear in which the residents of the city live:

La mujer estalló en un sollozo mudo. Temblaba toda ella, y parecía que las piernas se le fuesen a derretir. Murmuró algo ininteligible. Me acerqué un poco más para comprender su murmullo. Quería tranquilizarla pero ella simplemente se dejó caer de rodillas con la cara encogida por el llanto y las manos agarradas al bolso contra su pecho flaco. –No me matéís, no me matéís. . . . (110)

The reader finds that not only the young, innocent first-time visitors are subject to the dangers of being in “public.” The residents of the city also live in a constant, debilitating fear that destroys their sense of privacy.

Such is the control of the Image in the city that the very meaning of the terms public and private and their shared relationship disintegrate. The Image, in its appearances on the screen, repeatedly and ominously pronounces: “¡Todo para el público!” (118; 144; 145). This phrase refers to the idea that everything that happens on the screens is for and in the service of the people that watch: the public. Yet the statement from the Image is imbued with a sense of falsity and irony since the people who watch the screens are completely subordinate to the Image. Here, the public is not a group of people who are connected; rather, it is an entity that has no control over its fate and whose members have no relationship between one another. In another important instance, Clara and her brother explain to an adolescent boy they meet that they burned the body of their father and escaped to the city. The boy exclaims that they have broken the law: “¿No sabéis que está prohibido enterrar o quemar a los muertos? ¿No sabéis que los muertos pertenecen al público?” (116). This notion of the public differs from the one pronounced by the Image above. In this case, the Image itself takes on the role of the public, as the dead obviously do not belong to the people themselves. Indeed, when Clara
replies angrily to the boy that “¡mis muertos son míos!,” he cannot help but break into uncontrollable laughter at what for him is such an inconceivable statement (116). Here, Clara’s attempt to assert private ownership over her father’s body is denied. When both of these cases are considered together, what the public and private actually are and where they are located in this society is impossible to determine. The Image defines these terms and bends them arbitrarily to fit its need for control, rendering them inadequate and anachronistic to the world that it presides. In this sense, the virtual is responsible for the vanquishing of the private and public.

The relationship between the private and public also crumbles in the novel’s futuristic city as it relates to the family. It can be said that the family traditionally has served as a boundary between an interior private life and a public life in relation to a greater community. Yet in the novel, the Image works to destroy these boundaries. At one point in the narration, Clara and her brother stumble upon a gathering of young people watching the screens in an abandoned lot in the city. There they meet a young man—whom they call Manco because he has a metal hook for an arm—who helps lead them to the godfather’s home. Manco asks Clara and her brother what it is like to have parents, since he has never had that kind of familial experience (126). In fact, when Clara’s brother says that it is good to have parents in order to know where one comes from, Manco replies: “¿Y cómo se sabe quiénes son tus padres? . . . Supongamos que alguien te dice que es tu padre. ¿Cómo sabes si es verdad?” (127). These questions, aside from underlying the mistrust and fear so characteristic of the city, reveal the extreme doubt that envelops the notion of family in the novel.
Among Manco’s group of screen-watchers is a young woman who is likely the mother of a two year-old that they appear to share. The young parents, however, address each other harshly and Manco is aloof with his daughter and repeatedly scolds her for referring to him as “papá” (121). Later on, when Clara and her brother arrive at the godfather’s home, he tells her that he must hide them even from his wife and son because he does not trust them (154-55). The godfather clarifies to Clara the reasons behind the way the young people act in the city:

Mi hijo se crió mirando la pantalla. Supongo que piensa que Él, la Imagen, es su verdadero padre y que nosotros somos público encargado por Él de mantenerlo hasta que marche de casa. Es lo que Él les dice, “¡Soy papi!” . . . Ya ningún adulto quiere tener hijos. Pero ahora los tienen los muchachos; con trece y catorce años ya son padres, así que no faltarán nuevas generaciones de público. Andan en bandas y hordas por ahí; mi hijo forma parte de una de ellas. Es como si todos fueran hijos suyos, unos hijos que son huérfanos y son monstruos. (155)

In this manner, the Image is capable of bypassing and rendering defunct the nuclear family as a way to maintain control over the “public” that will propagate its existence. In such an atmosphere, the so-called private sphere of the family ceases to exist and the public is nothing but a space of control and surveillance. Thus, the breakdown of the family in the novel marks—due to the rise of telecommunications—the disintegration of the supposedly clear relationship between the public and private spheres.

If the institution of the family is threatened by cyberspace, so too is the most basic notion of individual identity. As previously noted concerning the lack of proper names of streets in the city, the characters of the novel also largely appear without names. For the most part, this points to the fact that in the society dominated by the Image, proper names have no place and serve no real use. Interpersonal relations are kept to a minimum, and the most important relationship anyone has is with the Image. The Image’s goal is to
eliminate ties between humans so as to avoid any threats to its control, and one important way of doing this is by constructing a “public” in which the individual is irrelevant. It is not surprising that the father, the mother, the godfather, the brother, and several of the other people in the city are never named. At the end of the novel, the reader discovers that the real name of Manco is Miguel. Clara is able to get him to share this information as they attempt to escape the Image. He explains that, “Mis padres me llamaron Miguel, pero ya ni lo recuerdo. Supongo que no estarían mucho conmigo, pues no los recuerdo. Debi marchar de casa, supongo. Creo que ellos se llevaban mal, pero no sabría decirte con certeza. Sólo recuerdo imágenes de la pantalla, sólo lo recuerdo a Él” (166-67). Miguel’s comment is demonstrative of the fact that, under the influence of the Image, humans are no longer capable of memory. This reality exhibits the extent to which the Image has succeeded in cutting off familial relationships and making individual identity irrelevant. It also suggests that the Image has become the only reliable source of memory, transforming it into something exterior to the individual. This transformation is yet another example of the disintegration of the clear relationship between the public and the private.

It is important to note, however, that the Image is not entirely successful in this venture. Miguel does remember his name, no matter how much the Image tries to make it irrelevant. It is especially in the character of Miguel where the novel begins to reveal that there are some possible holes in the totalitarian society that the Image has constructed. In this sense, El Manco, or Miguel, contains some of the characteristics of the cyberpunk hero—a young, clever individual, typically male, who is familiar with and able to maneuver the system and find holes within it (Heuser 37-8). Although unwillingly at
first, Miguel is able to help Clara and her brother in their quest to take down the Image. After meeting them in the abandoned solar with his other young screen-watcher friends, Miguel agrees to lead the two protagonists across the city to their godfather’s home.

The somewhat cyborgish El Manco—with his metal arm and teeth—creates his own itinerary across the city away from the control of the Image, elaborating a sort of underground resistance into the sewers and the underbelly of the city. He is an expert in navigating the tunnels in the darkness, away from the control of the Image above the surface. He tells Clara and her brother: “Quitaos los lentes, que aquí no somos público, aquí no hay ley” (124). Underground, the young characters no longer form part of the Image’s “public;” they are free from surveillance. The dark glasses, a sign of the Image’s efforts to prevent the citizens from seeing each other—and to keep them from seeing clearly the situation they are in—are not needed in this place. In this instance it can be seen that certain residents are indeed capable of developing practices of walking in—or below—the city who resist to an extent the control of the Image.

Here, the single most mentioned name in the novel, Clara, gains particular importance. While the innocent brother and sister do need Miguel—who has the experience of living in the city—in order to escape from the Image, there is no doubt that Clara is the heroine of the novel. Clara, as her name suggests, is able to see clearly through the traps of the Image, as opposed to her brother who quickly becomes hooked on looking at the screens. She avoids the draw of the screens and remains focused on finding a way to escape from and ultimately defeat the Image. The name no doubt also refers to the innocence of the young woman who has yet to be tainted by the “evils” of the city and telecommunications. In an obvious symbolism, Clara’s innocence comes to
an end on her eighteenth birthday with not only the death of her father but also her first menstrual period (96). However, Clara and her brother’s unique position as people from outside of the city allows them to find a way to defeat the Image.

As the narrative draws to a close, the Image begins to close in on Clara and her brother. The godfather’s son has advised the Image that the two adolescents are at his home. Miguel arrives, however, and they embark on their final adventure. The godfather tells them to go to the “Zona de Sombra,” a mysterious area of the city that is only rumored to exist where Clara’s father lived and first created the Image. The forbidden territory can be reached only by taking one of the subway lines beyond its last stop. Again, the reader witnesses a sort of defiance to the official, mapped-out version of the city. With Miguel as their guide, the two reach the zone, where Clara and the brother play out two important scenes in the confrontation with the Image.

As they arrive in the abandoned subway station, the Image appears on a screen and claims that there is no escape for them: “Pensabais que ésta era una salida, pero es el centro del laberinto” (174). Here, the novel underlines the labyrinthine nature of cyberspace, something described by Gubern in his discussion of the experience of the user who navigates virtual worlds:

Los mundos virtuales son, en efecto, laberintos formales y no materiales. El laberinto se opone al camino recto, expedito y obvio, pues es engaño y disimulo en sus itinerarios. Y el ciberespacio, bajo su apariencia de imagen-escena envolvente, esconde un laberinto. . . . Pues cada iniciativa del operador no es más que la exploración de una rama en un sistema informático arborescente. (174)

In *La sombra*, the young people must navigate this labyrinthine virtual world in order to arrive at its center in the hopes of destroying it. There is a clear reference here as well to the Greek myth of the Minotaur, which involved Theseus’s journey into the center of the
labyrinth to slay the beast who lived there. This reference is made certain as Clara insists to her brother that he pronounce his name to the Image, which turns out to be Teseo, the Spanish name for Theseus. Theseus’s path through the labyrinth symbolizes, according to Gubern, “el hallazgo del centro espiritual oculto a la vez que el ascenso de la oscuridad hacia la luz” (173). In this same fashion, Teseo is able to overcome the “dark” images that have captivated him since he arrived in the city.

Teseo’s name becomes a crucial weapon against the Image, who when he hears him pronounce it loses his expression and color and becomes blurry (175). The father had kept this identity from Teseo with the hope of protecting him from the Image, but he discovers it by speaking with the ghost of his mother. Teseo takes his slingshot, wets the rock with his blood from a wound he has on his forehead, and—in David and Goliath fashion—shoots the rock to hit the Image in its forehead as well. The screen breaks into pieces and the Image disappears. Although Clara’s brother looks just like the Image, his name is enough to defeat it. Furthermore, his human blood—a recurring image that is also referenced in Clara’s menstruation—also leads to the Image’s downfall because it proves the difference between image and reality, life and death.

The importance of blood in symbolizing the “real” is further underlined in one more step taken to do away with the Image. Teseo returns to the city apartment where he was born and sits in front of the television in the living room, summoning the Image. Once it appears, in spite of the Image’s pleas, Teseo makes a cut in his hand and touches the screen; both the Image and Teseo dissolve into nothing, and the latter says: “La Imagen se debilitó disolviéndose en millones de parásitos que la devoraban por todas partes. Y yo sentí que mi conciencia se disolvía en la nada. Una gran nada” (179). Thus,
Teseo sacrifices himself—once again through the use of his own blood—in order to eliminate the Image. As the novel ends the Image no longer appears on the screens in the city and the people, although disconcerted, begin to return to their daily lives. Clara and Miguel begin a romantic relationship and return to the family farm. Clara takes the television with her, insisting that her brother is inside the screen. This idea is confirmed when the brother continues to narrate and tells how he can see his sister and Miguel from his place in the television in the kitchen of the farmhouse. Teseo says that he speaks regularly to his mother and father and that all is well.

The end of the novel brings up several issues concerning technology, cyberspace, and the public and private. The conclusion serves to underscore the overarching hostility toward technology in the novel. One way in which this hostility is brought out is in the uneasy relationship developed between technology and the written word. The reference to the myth of the Minotaur at the end of the novel can be read as symbolic of the triumph of the word over the image when seen within a broader obsession with literature that is developed throughout the novel, often putting it at odds with technological developments. Isolated on the farm, Clara’s principle form of entertainment is reading novels. Furthermore, due to this isolation, the majority of what she understands about the world is what she has read in those books. The father is able to hide from his children what telecommunications is by merely ripping those pages from the encyclopedia that they have in the house (54). Time and again, upon her and her brother’s entry into the “real world,” Clara’s actions are guided by the things she has learned in novels. It is curious to note here the importance that is given to women in relation to literature and in the unraveling of the plot. Clara inherits her love of reading from her mother, and it is this
literacy that makes her the more resolved of the brother-sister duo. While Teseo does
sacrifice himself at the end of the novel, the development of the two protagonists
suggests that Clara’s younger brother is more of an instrument in the carrying out of a
plot of which she is the leader and mastermind.

Aside from helping her know how to act in certain situations, Clara’s experience
with novels helps her to distinguish between the real and the virtual. When their father
explains the notion of images to them, he draws a comparison with novels: “Las
imágenes no son realidad. ¿Recordáis los cuentos de gigantes y dragones que te leía tu
madre, Clara, y que luego tú leías a tu hermano? Pues pensad que el dragón vive en la
pantalla” (55). Clara’s exposure to this supposedly more “healthy” distinction between
fiction and reality that is found in books assists her in recognizing the falsity of the
images she sees. Her brother admits that he has never enjoyed reading as much as Clara,
and this could well be the reason why he is so quick to succumb to the pull of the images
on the screens in the city. Through Clara and her mother’s ties to literature, there also
appears to be some kind of gender essentialization carried out here in which women are
perceived to be more capable than men—Teseo, Miguel, the godfather, and the father—in
recognizing the falsity of images.

This identification of women with the “truer” aspects of life is reinforced with
Clara’s return to the countryside. This return to the country is also telling of the stance of
the novel concerning cyberspace and the city. Even though the Image has been destroyed,
Clara decides immediately to return to the countryside. In spite of her unhappiness as a
child and desire to see the outside world, she has no doubts about remaining isolated in
her family home. Even Miguel, who was so accustomed to life in the city, is happy to go
with her and pleased with the comforting and healing attributes of the country for himself and his daughter, Estrella: “No sé qué nos deparará la vida, pero nunca había comido tan bien y a Estrella se le ha curado aquel catarro que tenía” (182). To add to the overly idyllic ending, Miguel and Clara are awaiting a child, thus forming the perfect family that was not available to Miguel in the city. In spite of the city’s supposedly improved nature—the Image has permanently left the screens—Clara seems to view it as still contaminated in some way. There is something inherently unhealthy and unsatisfying about the city, while the countryside—representative of family, love, protection, and security—is presented as the more personally fulfilling place to lead one’s life.

The condemnation of technology and the city is made even stronger by the fact that the supernatural is considered to be more “real” than the virtual. While the reader is cautioned through the lessons taught to the children against believing in the reality of images, at the same time she or he is presented with fantastical elements that are assumed to be completely plausible. On the farm as a boy, Teseo has a near death experience during which he speaks with his dead mother. After this, he is able to see people’s auras and frequently comments on the rings of colors he sees above people’s heads, a supernatural ability that Clara readily accepts and does not question. Indeed, at the end of the novel, for Clara, the television is not a technology that opens up a world of images to her, but rather it is an apparatus that—through these fantastic elements in the plot—connects her to her deceased family members.

Considering Suso de Toro’s perspective as a Galician writer, perhaps this reference to supernatural elements as well as the tendency to favor the countryside over the city is not very surprising. Indeed, one could likely develop a nationalist reading of

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15 Estrella’s mother is not mentioned again, and the reader knows nothing about what has happened to her.
the novel. Given the reluctance and deliberate choice to not name places, it is best situated within a more universal discussion of the topics mentioned above. The destruction of the Image through Teseo’s sacrifice is seen as a brave and necessary act in order to save society from the dangers of technology and the ensuing collapse of the private/public divide. Yet the question remains as to what exactly the world looks like in the aftermath. The novel avoids addressing this question, even though the Image itself poses the problem to Teseo when he is about to destroy it: “Ahora que existo no me puedes negar, nadie puede desandar lo andado. Yo no pedí existir, no lo elegí, pero ahora ya soy una parte del mundo” (179). However, there is no real development of what happens in the city upon the end of the Image. All that is known is that the Image no longer exists, and that people have stopped wearing their black glasses. Miguel explains that, “Incluso parece que fuera vuelven a emitirse programas de televisión, aunque sólo unas cuantas horas al día. Pero no creo que Clara quiera conectar la antena de nuestra pantalla, por miedo a que afecte a su hermano. Aunque yo podría traer de fuera otra pantalla, si ella quisiese” (182). The people have been able to return to “normality” and even watch some television. One is left with the question of what this means for the city: Is there no chance of another “Image” being created? What do the city and its public spaces look like now? Have the city residents now been able—and is it possible—to find a balance between cyberspace and physical space? What does the destruction of the Image mean for the relationship between the private and the public? The novel bypasses all of these questions by merely sending its protagonists back to the isolated countryside where the narrative began.
Returning to Castells’s discussion of the city in the Information Age, the message of evasion of—and aversion toward—the city and technology in the novel suggests that this particular cultural production is not capable of nor interested in building an interface between the space of places and the space of flows. Toro’s text can be seen within the context of the sudden and overwhelming changes brought on by the proliferation of information technologies in the 1990s, responding especially fearfully to the new and seemingly unlimited nature of the space of flows and painting a bleak picture of the future of the city and the public in the wake of information technologies.\textsuperscript{16} The goal of the novel becomes merely to destroy the space of flows or avoid it to the degree possible. Likewise, the digital city that Aurigi would like to construct where citizens are capable of using technology in a positive manner in order to enhance the public sphere is impossible in the novel. Its dystopian stance requires that two “innocents” save a tainted humanity from the evils of technology that have vanquished the public and the private and therefore offers a nostalgic desire to return to a utopian state—that perhaps never existed—when the divide between these two spheres was clearly identifiable.

\textit{The City and the Blogosphere: Relocating the Public in Diario de Martín Lobo}

Not all cultural productions of recent years, however, have this negative, dystopian attitude in the face of the Information Age. As citizens adapt to the uses and possibilities of new technology, they find ways to reconcile the space of flows with the space of

\textsuperscript{16} Within the same time frame, novels such as \textit{Historias del Kronen} (1994) and \textit{Héroes} (1995), although in a different style, address similar concerns to those expressed in \textit{La sombra cazadora}. Written respectively by José Ángel Mañas and Ray Loriga, authors associated with the so-called “Generación X,” these novels and others from the period develop a commentary on the effects of media and entertainment on urban youth. The adolescents are so saturated with images that they have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fiction and are incapable of establishing meaningful relationships with those surrounding them. Even though these protagonists move through physical, urban space—the space of places—their identities are built around the information that they receive from television, movies, and music—the space of flows.
places. By looking specifically at the urban culture of Madrid in the past five years, one can see that many cultural productions and movements among young citizens have found ways to utilize the internet and cell phone technology to draw people into the city and to enhance and enrich urban space. Many cultural centers in Spain’s cities depend on the use of internet to find participants, promote events, and to carry out other daily functions. The Okupa movement, analyzed in detail in chapter two, has found innovative ways of using the internet to question models of economic privacy at work in Madrid.\textsuperscript{17}

Manuel Castells, in his new work titled \textit{Communication Power}, includes an important case study of Madrid in the days following the March 11, 2004 bombings of the commuter train system. He outlines how a spontaneous movement arose on March 13, the day of reflection directly preceding the general elections. Upset by the ruling Partido Popular’s lies concerning who had been the author of the attacks, a man sent a text message with his phone to ten friends calling on them to go to the PP’s headquarters in Madrid to sit silently in protest. The text message was forwarded in an outward-growing web that caused messaging traffic to increase by thirty percent that day in Spain. Over five thousand people attended the gathering in Madrid, and spontaneous protests popped up throughout the rest of the country as well (Castells \textit{Communication} 359-60). Castells uses the case as an example of what he calls “insurgent communities of practice,” or a type of spontaneous grassroots movement that emerges instantly around a particular concern in resistance to domination through the use of wireless communication networks (363). He is also careful to point out that the “context of communication was

\textsuperscript{17} See particularly the analysis of Patio Maravillas’s “Hamlab,” its effort to bring free internet services to Malasaña as well as to promote the use of public, open code computer programs. In addition, mobile phone technology was a key factor to the Patio’s response when it was evicted from its original location on Calle de Acuerdo in early 2010. Through the extensive use of text messages and Twitter, supporters of the Patio were able to quickly mobilize, organize a response, and “okupy” another building in the neighborhood on the same day.
provided by the physical gathering on the streets, at the origin of the formation of public space. . .” (361). Thus, in contrast to Bull’s argument that use of cell phones by city residents negates urban public space, one sees how in this case the use of media technologies has the effect of increasing its importance.

It is difficult to speak of the concrete impact that internet and other information technologies are currently having on the Spanish literary scene, although publishing houses increasingly rely on the internet for marketing, surveys, publicity, and sales. In terms of literary production, by browsing the internet one can find several examples of blogs, digital poetry, and other literary works from and about Spain’s cities, but due to the emergent nature of such literature there has yet to be much in-depth study or criticism of the phenomenon. One possible exception to this diffuseness is the so-called Generación Nocilla, a loosely-connected group of young authors who write hybrid, fragmentary works that reflect on the explosion of mass media. Journalist Nuria Azancot has described the group as “una nueva generación de autores, nacidos en torno al 1970, con un planteamiento revolucionario y marcados por internet” (Azancot). One important aspect of this so-called Generation is its use of blogs: “Casi todos tienen su propio blog y lo utilizan no sólo como cuaderno de bitácora, sino como campo de experimentación para sus propias obras de ficción” (Santos qtd. in Azancot). These

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18 See Chiappe for one essay that does outline and analyze some of the cyber-literature being produced in Spain.

19 The term emerges from one of the authors, the Galician Agustín Fernández Mallo (1965), whose novel Nocilla Dream (2006)—title based on a song by Galician punk rock group Siniestro Total—is considered to be one of the “foundational” works of the Generation. Not surprisingly, Fernández Mallo and other authors associated with the group such as Vicente Luis Mora (1970), Jorge Carrión (1976), Eloy Fernández-Porta (1974), Javier Fernández (1970), Milo Krmpotic (1974), Lolita Bosch (1978), Javier Calvo (1973), y Domenico Chiappe (1970) do not agree with the categorization, although they do recognize a shared style and thematic.
authors are no doubt on the cutting-edge of the contemporary Spanish literary scene and will be a fascinating topic of study in the coming years.

The specific examples of literature tied to the internet to be considered here, though, are a recent and commercially successful novel titled *Diario de Martín Lobo* (2010) and the blog that it is based on, “Blogback Mountain: diario de un gay.” The novel is not related to the *Generación Nocilla*, which is known for being critical of the cultural “establishment” in Spain and that avoids large editorials and what it considers the commercialization of literature (Azancot). To the contrary, *Diario* participates fully and knowingly in the consumer culture that the *Nocilla* group attempts to denounce and therefore offers an interesting case for examining the effects of mass media and consumerism on the categories of public and private. Martín Lobo is the name of the fictional protagonist of the novel as well as the pseudonym adopted by Javier Cid Riesco, a journalist in the Culture section of Madrid’s *El Mundo*, one of Spain’s leading daily newspapers. Lobo’s novel is a compilation of blog entries published during 2008 and 2009 on his extremely successful “Blogback Mountain” at elmundo.es—the online version of El Mundo. Each chapter of the novel presents an excerpt of an original blog entry and then goes on to expand on the ideas in a newly written narrative text: Thus, it constructs a coherent narrative concerning a year in the life of the character Martín Lobo. In the novel, Martín, a thirty-year old gay man living in Madrid, tells the story of his life and an unfruitful attempt to find love that coincided with the writing of his blog. The novel—and the blog before it—are meant to provoke, and both utilize an erotic and sexually charged language to describe the often scandalous aspects of Martín’s life in Madrid and beyond. Cid has stated that the success of his blog, whose title references
director Ang Lee’s successful Hollywood film about two cowboys who fall in love, was an important part of the decision by Random House Mondadori to publish the related novel (Cid Riesco).20

What do the budding Martín Lobo franchise and its inscription within a consumer-driven culture on the internet reveal concerning the public and the private? *La sombra cazadora* is quick to denounce media technologies, and indeed the narrative sets up an antagonism between the written word and visual media. *Diario* embraces and elaborates a relationship between new media and literature. Does the model of *Diario* fulfill Toro’s dystopian reservations concerning the effects of cyberspace on society? Or is it possible to form a new relationship between the virtual and the city? These are complex and overlapping questions that will be addressed and unraveled in the coming pages, with the aim of showing that *Diario*, although in a different manner than *La sombra*, also reveals the collapse of the public and private. Toro’s novel posits this collapse from a dystopian perspective in which an all-consuming virtual emptiness acts upon and vanquishes the relations of public and private that exist in “real” space. In contrast, *Diario* recognizes the spatiality of the virtual and maintains a relatively positive relationship between the text, cyberspace, and the city, as the novel/blog develops an urban chronicle of the life of Martín in Madrid. Aside from the initially digital nature of the text, it also differs from Toro’s in that it is much more place-specific. The protagonist describes his adventures in and around Madrid, especially in the gay enclave of Chueca. The city and its spaces are a key part of his identity, and importantly, these spaces are not threatened by cyberspace. Yet the relationship between the private and public—now capable of existing within the virtual realm as well—is dismantled as much here as it is

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20 During its time of publication the blog had over three million followers.
*La sombra.* Martin exposes his “private” life willingly in a “public” way; indeed, the private details of his life only come into existence through his cathartic storytelling in the blog. The nature of the blog—through its very “public” iteration of “intimate” details—tears down the relationship between the two spheres.

In order to evaluate the relationship between the virtual and physical spaces and between the public and private elaborated in the blog and the novel, it is necessary to explore further the nature of the blog as an emerging literary genre. Short for weblog, a blog is a type of personal diary published on the internet, a type of writing whose popularity has exploded exponentially in the past several years.²¹ Many blogs, including the one to be examined here, are related to the journalistic tradition and can be placed within the hybrid realm of the chronicle, combining journalism with the literary. David Parra Valcarce and José Álvarez Marcos discuss the phenomenon of the blog in their text *Ciberperiodismo,* which deals with the changes occurring in journalism due to the increasing use of internet technologies. The relation of blogs to journalism goes beyond the content and form of ones that deliver current events to readers on a daily basis and expands as well to the types of institutions that host blogs as well as to the kinds of people that write them. Parra and Álvarez point out that blogs reinforce independent journalism to the extent that many journalists use their personal blogs as a way to “publicar, libres de censuras y conflictos de intereses comerciales, artículos que no encajan con las líneas editoriales de los medios tradicionales” (196). Martin Lobo’s “Blogback Mountain,” existed within—yet on the margins—of the El Mundo newspaper in a section that presents various blogs about a wide variety of topics concerning daily

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²¹ In Spanish, the English term *blog* is typically used. The Spanish term *cuaderno de bitácora,* or simply *bitácora,* in reference to the daily travel logs kept by captains at sea, is used as well.
life in Madrid and other cities across the world, culture, entertainment, politics, and more. Cid was able to use the online edition of the newspaper he works for as a platform for the elaboration of personal stories—and the advancement of his career as an aspiring author of fiction—that had no place within his normal job description as a writer for the Cultural section.

Of course, the publication of the blog within the multimedia giant’s sanctioned website necessarily leads one to question the independence and the freedom with which Cid was able to construct the Martín Lobo blog. Cid has stated that El Mundo did not censor him in any way, although he does recognize that at times he held back due to the forum in which he was writing, contrasting the “anything goes” attitude found in other places on the internet with the more confined context of elmundo.es and what he considers to be its relatively conservative readers (Cid Riesco). At the same time, the blog also involved itself in a game of provocation in order to generate more “hits.” Along these lines, the main theme of the blog is seen in its description on the main webpage where it is housed: “Martín Lobo, rondando la treintena y homosexual, se desnuda en este diario gay” (Lobo “Blogback”).

This description of the unclothing of Martín points to the extent to which blogs collapse the relationship between the public and private in that they are defined by their particularly intimate nature and desire to share personal details in an extremely public manner. Valcarce Parra and Álvarez Marcos place emphasis on this play between public and private in the blog. Citing critic Koldo Meso, they define the blog as

. . . una especie de mural digital, en el que se mezclan fórmulas de revista electrónica, foro de noticias e ‘hipercolumna’ de opinión . . . un weblog es una reinvención de página personal donde se combinan reflexiones, confidencias propias de un diario íntimo y enlaces a nuevas páginas o artículos de interés para
The nature of the blog as described here is exacerbated even more in “Blogback Mountain,” due to its explicitly sexual content. Lobo’s blog posts often addressed his sexual encounters, details about his personal hygiene, and other intimate issues.

This collapse of the public and private is further observed in the first chapter of the novel, where Martín discusses the premise of his blog and the reasons behind his decision to create it. It is a very personal project that he calls a “catarsis cibernética” and a “válvula de escape gratuita y eficaz” for the problems he was facing in his life at the time he decided to write (Lobo Diario 26). In this sense, writing the blog is a sort of therapy: “Decidí compartir con el común de los mortales los detalles más escabrosos de mi vida íntima. Como no podía vomitar mis frustraciones en el diván de un terapeuta, comencé a escribir un blog en la web del periódico que me da de comer” (Lobo Diario 26). Yet the blog entails an important difference from a therapy session with a psychologist beyond the fact that it is free—its public nature. When his boss at the newspaper reminds Martín that by writing the blog he will “... exponer[se] al desprecio, a las fobias y al odio de miles de personas,” he is excited at the possibility (Lobo Diario 26). Martín’s reaction is telling: “No tengo nada que perder. Los pormenores de mi existencia deben ser de dominio público, y quiero compartir con la Humanidad esta gran crónica del desastre” (Lobo Diario 26). Martín’s is a conscious decision to open up concerning the details of his life to an unknown virtual reading public.

This decision brings up questions as to the special nature and appeal of the blog in the contemporary world. What do those who write blogs seek by exposing intimate
details of their lives to anonymous and faceless strangers? Likewise, what do the readers of these blogs look for or gain as a result of the voyeuristic sharing in these personal issues put on display? While it is difficult to offer a concrete answer to these questions, and no theorists appear to have done so as of yet, it seems that the development of a response must pass through a consideration of this collapse between the public and the private spheres. Several moments from “Blogback Mountain” reveal this shift, one specific example tellingly so. In his post from October 28, 2008 titled “Semen, pedradas y policía,” Martín describes his initial sexual encounters with men in a park in his hometown. Although several comments made on basically all of the author’s posts are negative and out of tune with the ideas being presented, one of the comments to this post stands out for its awkward and anachronistic response: “La vida sexual de cada uno es eso mismo: DE CADA UNO, que el autor se dedique a lamer penes bajo un arbol o bajo algun urinario es pura y exclusiva responsabilidad suya. Que lo publique pasando cualquier limite de decencia de la forma que lo hace, eso si ya me toca la retina [sic]” (“Comentarios”). The anonymous commenter here is completely oblivious to the purpose and nature of blogs in general and arguably uncomfortable about the increasing difficulty to distinguish between public and private. One must ask why this particular reader even reads this blog, and what he or she expects to find in “Blogback Mountain” if not an open discussion of personal issues. Indeed, the whole idea behind Lobo’s blog is that one’s sexual life is not just his or hers but the business of all of those who read.

Blogs further collapse the public-private distinction through the democratization of the process of writing and reading. One important aspect of the blog from the writer’s perspective is that it makes writing material to be published highly accessible. Anyone
with a computer and access to the internet can publish content on a blog. Another
innovative aspect of blogs in this regard is their increasingly participatory and interactive
nature; that is, they allow for the almost instantaneous participation of their readers in a
dialogue with the writer and with other readers about the topics being explored by the
writer. Interactivity, argue Parra Valcarce and Álvarez Marcos, in addition to hypertext—
or the ability to link information in one page to another—are indeed two of the most
important changes brought about in the era of cyberjournalism—in this case the era of
cyberliterature as well. As opposed to the flatness of printed news, they argue, “en
internet, las informaciones se configuran por capas, que aparecen en pantalla en función
de los nodos y enlaces de hipertexto activados” (Parra Valcarce and Álvarez Marcos
104). At the same time, the three dimensional nature of hypermedia implies that “. . . el
usuario o receptor no sea un elemento pasivo del proceso comunicativo” (Parra Valcarce
and Álvarez Marcos 105). These participatory trends are found in varying types of online
activities such as forums, chats, polls, online interviews that allow readers to ask
questions, animated graphics, and, not least of all, blogs (Parra Valcarce and Álvarez
Marcos 193).

This question of interactivity and hypertext points to another node through which
the private and the public are fundamentally altered in the realm of online blogs: the
ability of the consumer to become an active participator in rather than a passive
receptacle of culture. As Henry Jenkins has argued in his study *Convergence Culture,*
Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the
flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers. The promises of this new media environment raise expectations of a freer flow of
ideas and content. Inspired by those ideals, consumers are fighting for the right to
participate more fully in their culture. (18)
Underlying what Jenkins describes is the radical shift that the internet has brought about in terms of accessibility and participation. The extensive commentary on “Blogback Mountain” is exemplary of this type of participation, the formation of a reading public that simultaneously helped to write the story of Martín Lobo through its feedback. The commentary was important not simply for the sheer volume of response to the issues presented in the blog, but for its instigation of a back-and-forth dialogue between writer and readers and among the readers themselves. This dialogue is evidenced in the many blog posts by Lobo that addressed more or less specifically the feedback he received. In the novel, the narrator also explains the effect that certain comments from the blog had on him, his writing, and his actions. In one example, Martín speaks of the conversation he has with his diverse group of friends after posting his first blog entry, representative of the spectrum of readers of the blog. They all offer their thoughts on the ideas he presents. One gay friend, Titán, is especially critical of Martín’s language and what he considers an unfaithful representation of the gay community as frivolous and overly sexualized (Lobo Diario 30). Martín also mentions other types of reactions elicited by the blog: “generaba debates cada vez más incendiarios entre los lectores, y muchas webs de temática homosexual, religiosa o social denunciaron la frivolidad de mis reflexiones. Incluso me llamaron de un canal de televisión y de dos emisoras de radio para entrevistarme” (Lobo Diario 86).

While Martín is dismissive of this feedback at first, he later on recognizes the pull that such commentary would have on his approach to the blog. Chapter 10 of the novel, “Cuestión de sangre,” draws on a blog post Martín published about getting tested for the HIV virus. The expansion of the story in the narrative text explains the reasons behind his
impulse to get tested—his self-identification with an AIDS patient he interviewed for an article he was writing for the newspaper—and to publish an entry about the experience on his blog. Importantly, part of the decision to write about the topic has to do with his concern for negative feedback and his desire to reinvent himself into “un bloguero serio y respetable” (Lobo Diario 180). He says, “Cuando le veía los colmillos al HIV y una aguja me perforaba las venas, pensé en compartir aquella experiencia sanguinaria en mi blog. Sólo así, evitando hablar de semen, whisky, o brasileños depilados, me granjearía el respeto de mis lectores más reaccionarios. Y me ahorraría los insultos, las humillaciones públicas y las amenazas de muerte” (Lobo Diario 180).

In this example, the novel serves as a place from which to bring to light and elaborate on the effects that the narrator’s interactions in cyberspace were having on his “real life” in the city. In this sense, differing from La sombra cazadora, the novel is capable of constructing a positive interface between the text, the city, and the virtual. This is not the only issue to be observed concerning the transition from the blog to the novel, and the other will be explored further below. First, Diario deserves some attention concerning the relationship it constructs between the city and cyberspace. The first thing to stand out in Diario in comparison to La sombra cazadora is its numerous, explicit references to the city of Madrid. While in Toro’s novel the virtual is imagined to negate the spaces of the city, Lobo establishes an interface between the space of places and the space of flows. This is accomplished in the novel through the quotations of the blog and the frequent mention within these fragments of the city of Madrid. The protagonist is from a small town on the “Meseta Ibérica,” but he moves as a young man to Madrid and
identifies with it and its streets.\textsuperscript{22} Martín repeatedly names neighborhoods—particularly Chueca—streets, bars, and other specific places in the city. He even forms relationships with people that he originally communicated with through the blog within the physical spaces of Madrid.

While local identity has been rendered irrelevant in \textit{La sombra} due to the Image, \textit{Diario} stresses the cultural specificity of Madrid and its neighborhoods. Chueca, the centrally located area that has developed in the years of democracy into Spain’s best-known gay neighborhood, aside from being the “punto caliente de la homosexualidad planetaria,” is also a key space to the identity of the protagonist as well of the cultural legacy of the city (Lobo \textit{Diario} 22). In the narration, Martín frequently points to the personal importance that Chueca has for him as the place where he began his transformation from a closeted adolescent in a small provincial town into a sexually liberated gay man in the big city. This relationship between the city streets and the intimate geography of the protagonist is drawn out in quotes such as this one, where Martín describes his first weekend visit to Chueca:

\begin{quote}
Llegué a Chueca, y lo primero que sentí fue un intenso olor a manzana. Dicen los que me conocen que ése es uno de los síntomas de mi bipolaridad. Que Chueca, como mucho, huele a semen y a kebabs. Me importa un rábano lo que piense la gente; Chueca, y todo lo que representa para mí desde aquella escapada relámpago, olía a manzana dulce y roja. Muy roja. Todavía hoy me entra un escalofrío suave cada vez que pongo un pie en la calle Fuencarral. (Lobo \textit{Diario} 207)
\end{quote}

The apple metaphor no doubt evokes thoughts of sin and sensuality. Furthermore, Martín’s connection to Chueca is tied to his sense of smell, a highly subjective and intimate way of experiencing the public spaces of the neighborhood. Indeed, his friends

\textsuperscript{22} The author Javier Cid Riesco is from Zamora (Cid Riesco).
completely disagree with the intimate association he makes, which is symbolic of his sexual awakening.

This description of Chueca is different from *La sombra* not only for how it ties the personal experiences of the protagonist to the city streets. In addition, it draws out the historical and personal layers that exist under the surface of today’s Madrid. This aspect is reinforced in the protagonist’s frequent mention of the Gran Vía, which he describes as the “artería sanguinaria de esta ciudad en la que los teatros ya no son teatros y en la que los cócteles que bebía Orson Wells se han transformado en ginebra de garrafón,” adding that “. . . aunque sus luces ya no brillan como antes, medio siglo después sigue siendo la calle más canalla, más guapa y más puta de Madrid” (Lobo *Diario* 82). While Toro presents an unnamed city devoid of history, Lobo’s Madrid is multi-layered and contains those aspects of the habitable city discussed by Certeau in which the phantoms of yesterday’s city are present and have repercussions in today’s. At the same time, Lobo’s novel is capable of imagining and developing these geographically and culturally specific items from within the text and in cyberspace, whereas Toro’s city is devoid of identity precisely because of the growing importance of the virtual. In this regard, it is clear that the novel/blog is interested in constructing an interface between the space of flows and the space of places.

At the same time, the importance of symbolic public spaces in the novel—especially that of Chueca—must also be understood within the context of queer culture and the crucial and often complicated relationship between sexuality and public space. Queer culture is tied to and dependent upon the public nature of intimate acts. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner have argued for the recognition of the difference between
intimacy and privacy. In their words, heteronormativity has privatized intimacy, and “... a hegemonic public has founded itself by a privatization of sex and the sexualization of private personhood ... [thus] sexuality seems a property of subjectivity rather than a publicly or counterpublicly accessible culture” (200). In this sense, the stigmatization of gay promiscuity and other public, visible intimate acts is a reaction to the failure of these practices to remain within the sanctioned domestic sphere. As they point out, “Making a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation” (Berlant and Warner 199). This inextricable link between public space and queer sexuality is made evident in the novel, as Martín talks openly about his sexual encounters in various places throughout the city. In one important example, Martín discusses the importance of “cruising” as he describes his adolescence: “Cruising: dícese del arte vanguardista y equilibrista de ligar, fornicar y eyacular en lugares públicos. Es decir, la única escapatoria sexual al ronroneo de provincias. . . . Aprendí a follar bajo los ciclos caprichosos de la luna; di mis primeros besos furtivos entre la flora de un parque cualquiera” (Lobo Diario 131). Although referring to something that took place in his hometown and not in Madrid, the quote draws out the public nature of this gay man’s sexual experience, which when combined with its presence on the blog as discussed above, works to tear down the walls between the public and private.

The importance of place in the novel extends beyond Madrid to other cities that the protagonist visits such as Miami and Istanbul. Martín takes great care to explain the cultural intricacies of each city—especially concerning its gay nightlife—and refers frequently to specific places he visits. In this manner, the novel demonstrates another side
of globalization and information technologies. While Toro imagines that cities will become irrelevant with their onset, Lobo demonstrates the surge in the local and the particular. As sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued, the notion of place is especially important to understanding globalization. As opposed to dominant accounts of the phenomenon that focus on the overarching trends of networks and flows, the local, the particular, and the cultural are all essential aspects to the process of globalization (Sassen 49). The argument is very similar to Castells’s in which he asserts that the space of places does not lose its importance with the rise of the space of flows.

At the same time, the importance given to the particular here also plays into consumer culture. Lobo is acutely aware of the place of his prose within this process, commenting playfully on what he calls “la globalización sexual (y homosexual)” (Diario 108). He explains that this globalization “. . . nos tiene cogidos por la entrepierna. Nos obliga—a nosotros, humildes gays de andar por casa—a conocer los idiomas de la carne. A encamarnos en varias lenguas, a trasegar con miles de costumbres sexuales, a estar prevenidos ante las inclemencias de la multicultura genital” (Lobo Diario 108). He proceeds to elaborate a “top-ten” list of his favorite foreign men, using a series of stereotypes and clichés in the process: “El oro de este ránking huele a historia y a revolución. Llegados directamente desde la Plaza Roja, los rusos son los grandes desconocidos de la geografía homosexual . . . . Algunos de los ejemplares más grandiosos de la fauna gay beben vodka y tocan la balalaika” (Lobo Diario 109). Here, sexual and cultural identities are bundled into trite packages to be consumed by an internationally aware audience.
In fact—arriving at the discussion of another important element in the relationship between the “Blogback Mountain” and *Diario de Martín Lobo*—the entire novel and the blog before it are exercises in the production and reproduction of sexual identity to be consumed. The Martín Lobo project is inscribed from the beginning in this exercise, made clear in the title of the blog, which alludes to the Hollywood blockbuster *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), one of the most widely accessible and commercially successful films to represent a same-sex love story.\(^{23}\) An interview with the author reveals as well the intent of provocation in the blog: “Yo en el blog, lo que buscas también . . . tienes muy poco espacio y tiempo para provocar . . . . Estás en un espacio como elmundoes en el que hay muchísimos contenidos y tú tienes que conseguir que la gente que entra . . . pinche en tu post. Entonces tienes que jugar con la provocación, con el impacto” (Cid Riesco). Thus, the explicit sex and other polemical content in the blog is understood as part of an attempt to draw more attention to the blog and to market its content to potential readers/consumers. The “hunt” referred to in the surname Lobo can be seen as symbolic not only of the character’s search for sex and/or love but also of the author’s search for readers. Regarding the novel, Cid goes on to explain the changes he made in order to attract a different kind of audience. He explains that in the novel the provocation needed to grab a reader’s attention is no longer necessary

> porque a quien se ha comprado tu novela ya no le tienes que convencer. Y tú a un lector de novela no le vas a convencer con el sexo porque el sexo no lo va a buscar en una novela. Sería absurdo si yo quisiera excitar en 250 páginas, porque teniendo internet, teniendo el porno, todos los elementos que están al alcance de los gays o de los heterosexuales . . . . En la novela yo me he cuidado mucho de huir del tópico de novela gay y no hay absolutamente nada de sexo, hay mucho erotismo, mucha insinuación . . . . Se insinúa, se sugiere. Pero en el blog, la verdad es que sí. (Cid Riesco)

\(^{23}\) Directed by Ang Lee, winner of the Oscar for best director in 2006, the film grossed an estimated 83 million dollars in North America and 95 million dollars abroad (“Brokeback”).
Another important change made by Cid in the writing of the novel from that of the blog is the elaboration of a more cohesive plot in comparison to the blog, which entailed relatively unrelated day to day impressions, opinions, and commentary. The novel takes fragments from those blog posts and constructs a narrative thread between them and a coherent sense of character development that does not clearly emerge in the blog.

An important example of this shift is found in the overarching story of the novel, which follows a year in the life of Martín Lobo and his unsuccessful search for love. The blog was very reluctant—and indeed was ironic—about the idea of Martín falling in love. A post from December 2, 2008 titled “Mi primera carta de ¿amor? Je je” in fact flirted with the possibility by including a somewhat sarcastic love letter to an unnamed addressee. The letter is hedged with a warning as to its doubtful veracity: “Aviso a navegantes: lo que viene a continuación puede ser real, o no, o vaya usted a saber” (Lobo “Blogback”). At the end of the rather heartfelt declaration of love, the author once again puts in doubt the sincerity of his words: “Esto es pirotecnia literaria, palabrería con algo de emoción y mucho de espectáculo, mentiras sobre verdades y verdades sobre mentiras . . . La tiranía de los 'mass media' es así: me debo a mis fans, y haria cualquier cosa por este blog. Hasta escribir una carta de ¿amor?” (Lobo “Blogback”). Chapter nine of the novel is titled “Mi primera carta de amor”—note the absence of question marks—and begins with the transcribed blog post and letter. In the accompanying narrative text, the letter is placed within the framework of the story being told in the novel, which involves Martín’s up-and-down relationship with a Russian man named Sasha whom he meets while on vacation in Miami. They fall in love, begin to live together in Madrid, and they are even engaged to be married until Sasha leaves Martín at the altar. Martín explains that
after receiving a letter from Sasha he decided to try to write one as well and publish it on his blog: “Y aunque muchos iban a criticar aquella exhibición edulcorada, yo lo entendí como un guiño tecnológico al amor. Nadie sabría a quién iba dirigida; sólo Sasha y yo. Sería nuestro secreto virtual” (Lobo Diario 165). Within this context, the provocation and irony of the original letter is negated in order to fit into a novelistic model with a more coherent storyline and a universal story of love encountered and lost.

An important issue that comes into play with this example is the relationship between fiction and reality in the blog and the novel. It could be said that a blog by its nature as a public revelation of private issues leads one to expect a more “biographic” or non-fictional narration. Yet even in a strictly personal diary format, a blog always allows for some kind of play between reality and fiction. A reader can never know for sure whether or not the information being presented is true or not. “Blogback Mountain,” although referring to real places, current events, and historical figures, never had any pretenses of being “real.” The use of a pseudonym by the author suggests so much in its creation of a fictional, alter-identity through which to present a series of stories. The explicit recognition within the blog as to the “pirotecnia literaria” that it entailed further confirmed the fictional aspects of the writing. In the novel, the invention of a coherent narrative plot around which to frame the contents of the blog may at first glance have the effect of rendering more “real” what was originally published online. However, all of the “explanation” offered in Diario is presented within a clearly fictional, novelistic context. Therefore, the novel has the effect of confounding the “mentiras sobre verdades y verdades sobre mentiras” that Lobo introduces in the blog. Indeed, the reader of the blog and/or of the novel has no clear idea of what might be “real” and what not. While La
*sombra cazadora* insisted on the need to maintain a clear distinction between the real and the virtual, Martín Lobo plays willfully with the limits of each, suggesting that in the age of the internet the distinction is really quite irrelevant.

One can observe how the novel evolves from the blog in the articulation of its relationship between the city and cyberspace and the real and the virtual as well as in order to best meet the demands of its intended reading public. The blog comes first as a way to build interest and establish a broad reading public, but since it is not capable of generating income, the natural next step for the author is to attempt to publish a novel or some other project that can yield economic benefits. In this regard, the question becomes one of how to best translate the success of the blog into a marketable novelistic project. The book cover displays an enormous headshot of a well-groomed and attractive young man—to be understood as the image of Martín Lobo—another image packaged to sell. If the novel reproduces and repackages the original content of the blog with the aim of reaching new audiences and consumers, this cycle of consumption is furthered beyond the blog and the novel. Cid has commented on his desire to derive as much benefit from what can be considered the Martín Lobo franchise as possible: “Con la novela no me voy a retirar . . . . No voy a mentir, tengo alguna conversación para llevar la novela al cine y yo todo lo que pueda hacer con la novela lo voy a hacer. Y si tengo que hacer una segunda parte de Martín Lobo lo haré” (Cid Riesco). Furthermore, Lobo has a Facebook page with over two thousand fans where he posts fragments of the novel, notes, contests, links, and other related items (“Martín Lobo”). I am a “friend” of Martín Lobo on Facebook and recently found the link to the cited interview with him on Radio Televisión de Castilla y León—posted on YouTube—through his profile page. In this case, social networking serves as a way to generate new potential consumers of the franchise.
What, then, is the role of the public—if any—within this consumer-driven environment? A combination of Warner and Jenkins’s thoughts on consumerism and the media can help to arrive at an answer to this question. For Jürgen Habermas, the media would ideally facilitate rational debate within the bourgeois public sphere, but with the emergence of the mass media, its function shifted from one of facilitator to creator of spectacle, where citizens stopped being debaters and became instead passive consumers. According to Habermas, “Inasmuch as the mass media today strip away the literary husks from . . . bourgeois self-interpretation and utilize them as marketable forms for the public services provided in a culture of consumers, the original meaning [of the public sphere] is reversed” (171). However, in “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject,” Warner points to possible elaborations of the public within consumer culture. He demonstrates that the bourgeois public sphere was a disembodied entity that was premised on concepts of negativity and anonymity, therefore eliminating the presence of difference within the sphere. Yet the mass-cultural public sphere, with its emphasis on visual rather than print media, offers images of bodies such that difference cannot be denied. Within this context, Warner argues, “[c]onsumption offered a counterutopia precisely in a balance between collectivity of mass desires and an unminoritized rhetoric of difference in the field of choices among infinite goods” (168). Seen from this angle, it is not true that the public sphere is “. . . simply corrupted by its articulation with consumption” (Warner 183). Rather, due to its capacity to recognize and allow for difference, “consumption sustains a counterpublicity that cuts against the self-contradictions of the bourgeois public sphere” (Warner 183).
Warner’s essay was written in the early 1990s, before the boom in internet technologies, and addresses more specifically the rise in visual media such as television. Here, Jenkins’s reflections on the effects of what he terms “convergence culture,” or the “flow of content across multiple media platforms,” can be useful in exploring the evolutions in consumption and the public in the age of the internet. For Jenkins, the circulation of media content across different systems of old media—such as print—and new media—the internet—depends on active participation on the part of consumers (3). One can think of the *Harry Potter* franchise, its international repercussions in novel, film, video games, social networking, fan fiction, etc. and the importance of consumer involvement in the success and explosion of that international image. Indeed, argues Jenkins, the nature of consumption has changed in the age of new media and its collaborations and encounters with old media: “If old consumers were assumed to be passive, new consumers are active . . . . If old consumers were isolated, new consumers are more socially connected. If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, the new consumers are now noisy and public” (18-19). These changes in the way media is consumed arguably enhance the counterpublicity of consumption that Warner discusses by providing the consumer with an even more active role within mass culture than previously thought.

Of course, as Jenkins points out, the interaction with new media undoubtedly flows both ways, from consumer/participants at a grassroots level as well as from media conglomerates in a top-down fashion. Returning to “Blogback Mountain” and *Diario de Martín Lobo*, it can be said that the packaging of the Martín Lobo image beginning in the blog at elmundo.es and moving through to Random House Mondadori’s promotion of the
novel and the possible making of a film, all negatively condition the possibility of forming some kind of counterpublic around the notions of sexual identity that are put forward merely as a way to provoke and attract consumers. In fact, Cid has confirmed the novel’s basic role as a product to be consumed, recognizing that the novel “tampoco tiene grandes pretensiones filosóficas” (Cid Riesco). The Martín Lobo “franchise” is, however, offer an implicitly political in its attempt to normalize gay culture and to counteract compulsory heteronormativity. It also encourages feedback, social networking, and other activities that support active participation among readers; and once in the hands of consumers, if we are to believe Warner and Jenkins, the cultural content provided by the blog and the novel could possibly move into new, unanticipated directions.

Thus, the indulgence in consumer culture in “Blogback Mountain” and *Diario de Martín Lobo* limits the potentially public nature of both works, where the public would mean the promotion of a rational debate concerning the texts’ predominant thematic of sexuality. At the same time, the engagement of the texts with the emerging genre of the blog and its revolutionary promotion of interactivity and participation reopen however slightly the political potential of Martín Lobo. Most importantly, the nature of the virtual space of the blog as an exceptionally public forum from which to speak of extremely intimate matters reveals an increasingly suspect relationship between the public and the private. This vanquishing of the public and private spheres is posited in a negative way in *La sombra cazadora*. In the quasi-science fiction narration, the loss of the public and private is brought about by the invasion of a false virtual entity—the “Image”—into the city. The young protagonists, still untainted by the evils of technology, find a way to destroy the Image. Even though the supernatural may form part of this world, the crucial
point for the novel to make is that the lines between the real and the virtual and the public and private have been clearly redrawn and restored. In *Diario de Martín Lobo*, these lines are willfully erased, as the fictions of both the blog and the novel overlap and are embraced as inevitable aspects of a postmodern world. The virtual is now inhabitable and offers a space from which to elaborate a positive relationship with the city. In spite of their differences, both Suso de Toro and the Martín Lobo reveal this vanquishing of the public and private. While *La sombra* wonders about the possibility of retrieving the categories, Martín Lobo hints at the possibility of the birth of a new public through the internet. Whether that public materializes and what it may look like is yet to be seen.
Conclusion

The preceding pages have outlined the shifts in the notion of the public as seen in varying cultural productions from Spain’s capital city from the beginning of the democratic era to the present. While certainly not an exhaustive treatment of this topic during the time period, this study has aimed to include a wide variety of texts and movements that are representative of—and indeed have had an influence on—an overarching cultural and political shift in the urban discourses on public and private space since the end of the Franco dictatorship.

Drawing on differing theories concerning public space and the public and private spheres, the study has underlined the importance of these terms to understanding contemporary Spanish urban culture. The arrival of democracy in Spain had the effect of opening up the public spaces of the city in a show of protest and celebration by groups that had previously been excluded from visibility in such spaces. At the same time, this increased presence in public spaces mirrored an aperture and democratization of the public sphere, not only in terms of breaking free from the repressive Francoist policies of the past, but also by virtue of the diversification of the Spanish Left and the expansion of what counted as political. In this evaluation made through the lens of public space, there is an implicit critique of certain critical approaches that would too quickly condemn the lack of political involvement and commitment of Spanish culture during this time period.

If one returns to the arguments laid out in each chapter, it is possible to trace an evolution in the ways of inhabiting and occupying the spaces of the city and the ramifications of such in relation to the public-private divide. In Chapter one, an analysis of *Crónica del desamor* and *Una mala noche la tiene cualquiera*, two novels from and
about the Spanish Transition, reveal the role of marginalized groups based on gender and sexuality that laid the basis for a “coming out” into the city streets as well as the public sphere. A differing body politics of women and transvestites is presented in the novels, manifested in the relationship that the respective protagonists maintain with the spaces of the city. The more fluid body politics of the feminist protagonists of Montero’s novel leads them to avoid visibility in public spaces and use the text itself as a place from which to launch a public, political discussion of female sexuality, birth control, abortion, maternity, and other “intimate” topics. In contrast, Mendicuitti’s transvestite characters revel in their new-found freedom to be on the street and indeed depend on this public visibility in order to establish their new identities. Ultimately though, both novels, through different means, are successful in forming counterpublics of sex and gender. These counterpublics formed in the Transition period were capable of questioning the limits of the public and private by insisting that the personal was political; that is, that the intimate was open to and worthy of public recognition and debate.

The questioning of the universalizing tendencies of the traditional Left that was elaborated by these cultural movements of gender and sexuality in the late 1970s can be followed decades later into the Okupa movement’s critique of urban planning and policies in Madrid. The roots of the Okupa movement in the libertarian Left and in relation to Madrid’s Citizen Movement of the 1970s further demonstrates its adherence to an ideological vein that prefers the use of non-institutionalized politics and a politics of everyday life for the advancement of its causes. As explored in the specific examples of the Centros Sociales Okupados Autónomos (CSOA) such as Malasaña’s Patio Maravillas, okupas in Madrid have succeeded in questioning the rhetoric of economic privacy and
property that permeates urban discourse there not only through their performative actions on the street, but most importantly through the “okupation” of abandoned private properties. It has been shown that the recent boom in cultural centers in Madrid stems from attempts by Madrid’s municipal government and financial institutions to co-opt and capitalize on the demand for citizen-driven cultural opportunities as expressed in the heart of the Okupa movement. Centers such as La Casa Encendida certainly do not harm the city’s culture; indeed, they often serve as institutionalized spaces from which more radical and independent projects can emerge. In addition, their existence cannot help but validate the political project of the CSOA’s, whose advancement of social and cultural programs of a participatory and grassroots nature make possible the creation of public spaces through practice.

While the Okupa movement has transformed what counts as public by questioning private property, and the sex and gender counterpublics of the Transition made intimate issues public, the recent surge in immigration to Madrid has further shifted the relation between the public and private by pointing to an increasingly intimate way of experiencing public space. The reliance of immigrants on public spaces in order to carry out an array of supposedly private activities suggests the difficulty and increasing irrelevance of the distinction between the two spheres. This tendency is examined in Fernando León de Aranoa’s film Princesas, which explores the lives of both Spanish and immigrant prostitutes who must work the street in order to survive. The film fuses the interior journeys of both its Spaniard and Dominican protagonists with their exterior journeys through Madrid. Lucía Etxebarria’s novel Cosmofobia, offers a disorienting, polyphonic, and labyrinthine depiction of life in the multicultural neighborhood of
Lavapiés. The reworking of the imagery from Cela’s *La colmena* in addition to the refusal to create some kind of unified action within the plot, serves to call into question the adequacy of traditional notions of public space as the basis for community-building. Rather, the novel posits the need for another model of community predicated upon openness and plurality.

If the multicultural experience of life in Madrid makes the public an increasingly intimate way of experiencing space, the recent surge in internet technologies seems to work in the opposite direction, making the intimate exceedingly public to the point where the public and private are both vanquished. Suso de Toro’s *La sombra cazadora* and Martín Lobo’s *Diario de Martín Lobo*—in combination with the blog “Blogback Mountain”—reveal different reactions and approaches to the meaning of this shift within the context of the expansion of media technologies. *La sombra cazadora* presents a dystopian story in which an omnipresent and all-powerful Image destroys public spaces and private relationships in the barren, futuristic city it inhabits. The only solution is the impossible one of destroying the Image and returning to a previous state of plentitude. Martín Lobo offers neither a dystopian nor utopian vision, as the fictional character’s provocative narration spans the real spaces of the city and the virtual spaces of the internet, creating an interface between the two in his search for consumers. While remaining anchored in the physical and symbolic city of Madrid, the blog works to tear down the walls between the public and private through its extremely public exposition of the intimate and its interactive nature.

When examining the evolution of the individual cases presented in each chapter, two important conclusions come to the fore. First, the meaning and location of public
space undoubtedly became a central concern to Madrid’s culture in the years following
the end of the dictatorship, and the texts and movements presented here were more often
than not successful in carving out public spaces from which to promote democratic
practices predicated on the importance of the particular and in extending democracy to
the margins of society. Second, when looked at together, these texts reveal the elusive
nature of the meaning of and relationship between public and private as it is manifest in
Madrid’s contemporary culture. While certain theories help to explain specific aspects of
the public-private relationship, when placed in different contexts they become
insufficient to capture the complex vicissitudes of the subject. Indeed, with each layer of
meaning that is added to the question of the relationship between the public and private,
the more difficult it becomes to sustain a line between the two. Given the rich history of
the terms and the extent to which their use is tied up in our everyday lives, the talk
concerning the public and private is not likely to go away anytime soon. For this reason it
will be crucial to continue to critically examine the ways in which the terms are deployed.
Furthermore, as contemporary society and culture evolve with the expansion of the
internet and new spatial forms, we must ask carefully about the relevance of the public
and private in describing our urban—and virtual—experiences and if the birth of some
new kind of public may be imminent.
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