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DEDICATION

To Tom and Nancy Divine.
Thank you for providing me so many good examples to follow.
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ABSTRACT
This study serves as an introduction to three recent narratives in Spanish Science Fiction. While this literary genre has long been read in Spain in translation, it is only recently that Sci-Fi has been successful as a popular literature produced by native authors. Álex de la Iglesia, Gabriela Bustelo and Rafael Reig have worked in realist and genre fiction through their careers but chose to use Science Fiction to speak of the rapidly changing space of Madrid. Their criticism is centered on the changes to the physical, social, economic and political landscape of Madrid post-1992. My analysis is based on the works of the geographer David Harvey, among others, which helps to underline the importance of the urbanization of capital and consciousness that the three narratives disentangle. While being three very different texts – one film and two novels –, they all manipulate concerns of time and space to come to a similar conclusion. Their narratives serve as a warning about how the good intentions of humanist theories like feminism or scientific advancement can easily turn into a nightmare by instead serving the needs of capitalism rather than those of social justice.
Narrators since Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth century have tried to imagine a city built in the image of human values instead of reflecting those of the economy or state. More designed both the possibility of such an Utopist city and revealed the impossibility of its spatial and temporal existence. He was one of the first to use fiction to explore and criticize the difficult intersections between government, commerce, culture and the space that they inhabit. Much more recently, cultural and urban theories from Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Sallie Marston, Don Mitchell, and many others have tried to understand how these same state, economic and societal relationships play out in the neo-liberal city, one that has been built in the image of “flexible accumulation” and capital.

In Possible Urban Worlds”, the concluding chapter of Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference (1996), David Harvey attempts to describe a “socialist avant-garde movement” whose function would be to express an “alternative vision of how society will work, how socio-ecological relation will unfold, [and] how human potentialities can be realized albeit within a geography of difference” (433). Likewise, another urban geographer, Don Mitchell speculates on human condition previous to the incursion of capitalism. Specifically, in Cultural Geography (2000) Mitchell suggests that there used to exist a “natural” romantic-sexual relationship outside of our current economic paradigm that was not based on a system of exchange values but, rather, “on pleasure, love, or mutual usefulness” (181).
What Harvey’s and Mitchell’s hypothesis about human possibility in the spatially organized environment lack is the physical space and temporal possibility to bring their ideologies to fruition. Indeed, the problem inherent in all the leaps from criticism of the capitalist city to theorizing about transforming the metropolis outside of capitalism made by urban geographers and social philosophers is that there is no living model of a city to use as reference. We cannot know how the political situation or how inter-personal relationships would be different because there is no urban environment that exists completely outside of the effects of capitalism.

In order to imagine what a world with a different capitalist mode and the political, social and individual constructs that it engenders would look like, novelists and filmmakers must find alternatives to contemporary reality. These alternatives stem from urban geographers who are the first to imagine a different way and then film authors like Álex de la Iglesia and novelists like Gabriela Bustelo and Rafael Reig take these hypotheses to create a world where imagination is made into a plausible reality. This dissertation will focus on certain post 1992 Spanish narratives that have used Science Fiction (sf) as a way to escape temporal and spatial boundaries in order to imagine alternatives to the present. I will focus on the works of the writer-director and two fiction writers mentioned: Alex de la Iglesia Acción Mutante (1993), Gabriela Bustelo Planeta Hembra (2001) and Rafael Reig Sangre a borbotones (2002). I will be looking at how each author has employed Science Fiction as a discursive strategy in order to respond to the post-transition situation in Spain, particularly the space of Madrid. The thesis of this dissertation is that these authors, by appropriating a particular narrative form, allow us to
see an inherent stop-gap in capitalist functioning. Specifically, I show how the promise of progressive social thought can superficially manipulate the physical space of the capitalist city but, inversely, how that same space then works to control and stagnate social processes whereby the concerns of capitalism always win over those of social justice. In order to prove this I will map-out how these contemporary texts use Science Fiction to respond to crisis of national space and identity, not to try and solve problems of the present, but rather to show how all ideologies, however well intentioned, can become distorted into dystopias. These social texts warn the reader that the replacement of one ideology with another will not cure the ills of society because the problem always lies within the creation of space through the processes of the capitalist economy and, moreover, what David Harvey calls “the urbanization of capital” and “the urbanization of consciousness”, two terms that I will explain after a brief introduction to the state of contemporary (1992-2009) narrative in Spain.

De la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig belong to a larger group of peninsular artists that view the relationships between the city, its structure and social movements in a moment of crisis. What unites the three works to be considered in this study is a shared way to answer those questions posed by the present crisis: the creation of alternative spaces where utopian ideologies based on notions of national image, feminism, Americanization and the supremacy of technological advancement are carried to a logical conclusion. This calls to the forefront the construction and perception of contemporary Spanish space, how philosophers and novelists respond to those spatial concerns and the employment of sf as a discursive strategy that can deal with both the pragmatic concerns of lived-reality and
the theoretical concerns of ideology in a unique way. The entirety of this study will be structured keeping in mind these urban, economic, ideological and narratological concerns. In Chapter One will begin by examining those historical and contemporary social and economic processes that have formed and are forming the space of Madrid. Secondly, I will turn my attention to the representational and narratological questions that the works to be discussed pose. Namely, the representation of a contemporary space through imagining its future or alternative reality and finally, how does an author take a marginal literary form – an idea I will develop in the next pages – such as sf into the mainstream and not lose the critical distance that its very marginalization allows?

In Chapter Two, “De la Iglesia and the Limits of Fashion and Technology”, I will more closely examine the Almodóvar generation and culture and the artist-director’s response to it. The section pertaining to de la Iglesia will highlight the incursion of Science Fiction into the Spanish cultural register. Likewise, it will map out the economic and social difficulties facing Spain at the end of the transition. Chapter Three, “Gabriela Bustelo or How to Mix an Annihilation Cocktail” will focus on the convergence of Science Fiction and literatura rosa, or “chick-lit”, and the problems of institutionalizing radical body feminism under a neo-liberal economy. In Chapter Four, “Rafael Reig: City Present Reinvented” examines an alternate history of Madrid. It is with Reig that a dialectical approach to utopist and capitalist ideologies is realized. Reig’s novel carefully maps out the social and cultural consequences of historical, economical and architectural engineering. Chapter Five will pay particular attention to how these narratives are able to resist that which they criticize.
Returning to the topic at hand, Benedict Anderson defines a nation as an imagined political community. The perceived naturalness of language and culture has been formed through a conscious push to establish a collective conscious that works together for the sake of battle, religion or commerce. Barry Jordan wrote that the Spanish subject became destabilized following the post-transition entry into modernity in 1992 (2000; 4). Therefore, to understand the particular language or, as Jordan writes, the discourse of identity politics that are at play, it is important to understand what is at stake. While an in-depth analysis of Spanish cultural policies, governmental or otherwise, is not pertinent to this dissertation, a brief summary of the identity politics since the end of the dictatorship would behoove us at this point.

In the wake of Franco’s death in 1975 Spain had to be reinvented. That is to say that the invention of the State as Franco saw it – “Una, grande, libre” – was no longer imposed upon the population and competing nationalist sentiments that had long been stifled had to be carefully dealt with. Michael Richards summarizes the transition to democracy as a success but he also notes that it was not without its difficulties (39). The problems mostly consisted of a violent Basque separatism under ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). Spain is a relatively small country in area that encloses within its borders a multitude of diverse languages and cultures; the Basques are only one of the many nationalities that have a separate identity from the centralized entity of Madrid. The governments after Franco had to play a balancing act of Spanish interests with those of the other nationalities, Basque, Catalan, or otherwise. What PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español), the socialist party that took power in 1982, was perhaps most successful
at “[t]he relegitimation of Spain as a multi-cultural society” (Jordan; 2000, 82). In the march towards democracy one of the main national concerns was how the past would be presented and remembered and from this history how the future be forged.

Indeed, the issues of the past were extremely important to the building of a future. While Franco tried to unite Spain under the distant memory of its empire with Madrid, Catholicism, and Castilian Spanish as its core identity, PSOE emphasized Spain’s history of plurality of religions and cultures. At this point we can see an important difference between policy and representation of policy. The image that the socialist party chose to represent itself to the outside was the “movida” youth culture. Mark Allison defines the “movida” as “‘the Madrid scene’ [that] originated from marginal drug culture” that also included an environment conducive to progressive art movements in music, film, and other mass media venues (165). This period of cultural explosion after decades of repression in Spain was best documented in the films of Pedro Almódovar in the 80s. Drugs, sex and rock-and-roll became the new image of Spain and it is one that persists today. According to Barry Jordan, in the early 80s and 90s Almódovar combined “sexual liberation and modernity” and his films became not only a trade-mark of Spanish identity but also a commercial success (2000;73). Consequently, Almodóvar’s parody of traditional Spanish culture mixed with hyper-sexualized images of the youth movement created a certain image of the country and its people that Jordan attributes to the movida’s most famous movie director. In agreement with Jordan: “Almodóvar and by implication Spanish film, became synonymous with sex and plenty of it, the steamier and more explicit the better” (ibid). As can be understood, this filmic portrayal of Spanish
identity was not always helpful. Returning to Jordan, “[i]ndeed, the equating of ‘Spanishness’ with sex and sexual perversion (however playful and camp) may have reinforced some rather unhelpful, negatively stereotypical, perceptions of modern Spain and Spaniards” (ibid). What many culture critics found in relation to identity in the 80s was the creation of a particular image based on the post-dictatorship moment placed into economic circulation as a commodity on the tourist market. Specifically, Franco’s mythology of past empire was replaced by Tierno Galvan’s mythology of La movida.

As the 80s youth movement began to mature, so did the image of Spain. 1992 was a watershed year for Spain in terms of its entrance into a full-fledged modernity. It was not only the 500 year anniversary of the expulsion of the Jewish and Moorish populations on the Peninsula and the Spanish encounter with the Americas, but Barcelona was host to the Summer Olympics and Seville hosted the World’s fair. In the capital city of Madrid, the latest high speed train, the AVE (Alta Velocidad Española) was unveiled at the Atocha station. Tony Morgan wrote of the event as, “a metaphor for Spain’s 1992 experience: leap-frogging technological backwardness, it joined its northern European partners in a post-Maastricht future” (58). With these events Spain symbolically closed its transition into democracy and entered modernity. However, once reaching modernity, how the future decades would be built was not so clear. According to Cristina Moreiras Menor in contrast to the push of the 80s and the work leading to the events of 1992 that strove to be “European”, “[t]he nineties, by contrast, are characterized by the absence of such collective design. Absence, negativity, and the lack of a utopian outlook define post-Olympic Spain” (135). She continues to say that,
In the early years of post-dictatorship in Spain an overriding demand to spend and consume emerges, not only as a result of the important economic upturn (itself based on images), but also due to a profound shift in the relationship between subject and object. In its desire for full integration into Europe, Spain itself becomes an object of consumption: a tourist destination. (ibid)

Dorothy Kelly has pointed out that this change out of the dictatorial past into the globalized present was aptly symbolized in the employment of a new National slogans. The dictatorship’s “Spain is different” became in the 80s the more contemporary “Everything under the sun”. While both were meant to market to a tourist’s perception of Spain, the paradigm under Franco sold the country’s image as centralized and whole with Madrid as center. Carried within this definition there is also explicitly the idea of Spain as Other where a behind-the-times quaint and picturesque quality is sold as inherently more authentic than Spain’s modern European counterparts. Likewise, the slogan used in the 80s underscored Spain’s intent at playing catch-up with the rest of Western Europe and also tried to combat the negative stereotype of the country being full of “atrasados”. However, as Kelly also points out, this image of “everything under the sun” also tries to still hold on to the notion that Spanish space is somehow still “different” in a way that makes it more authentic (32).

In 1996 a centre-right political party was voted in. The slogan was again changed to “Bravo España”. This slogan, in agreement with Kelly, is self-congratulating on the country’s progress made since the dictator’s death. However, despite the image that
Spain tried to sell to the outside, the progress made was an uneven one and the image sold, although it varied in promoting nationalist images of bullfighting with modern technology and architecture, always carried a similar undertone of packaging its difficult past as a product to be sold in the cultural marketplace. After corruption scandals surrounding PSOE and Spain’s political move again to the right with the PP (Partido Popular) in 1996 Kelly says of the changing national tourist slogans, “[i]t is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the governing party is making use of a revamped version of the old, clichéd discourse of Spanish national identity” with the intent to create a vision of Spain that promotes its progress while hiding its still un-even application of that development (36).

What the slogans about Spain denote is a push from the government to sell a certain perception of Spain abroad in order to attract tourists. As others have noted, this selling of Spain abroad becomes internalized in the Spanish subject (Kelly 2002; Moreiras Menor 2002). On one hand, state lead attempts at leap-frogging into modernity left some behind; on the other hand, there is a real effort to keep the idea of “difference” as something inherent to Spanishness in order to attract tourism dollars. This push-and-pull of the desire for technology and globalization causes a fracturing of national subjects when it is superimposed over an equal push to sell the nation’s problematic multi-cultural past as a tourist attraction. This post-transition crisis that the Spain of the 90s had to deal with can be defined as an unresolved dichotomy between the lingering corpse of the idea of national identity proposed by the ultra-conservative dictatorship and the push to promote a Spanish subject according to the vibrant, hypersexualized image of the 80s.
Indeed, Moreiras Menor has written that the push towards consumer culture of the 80s and 90s runs parallel to the desire to immerse the Spanish subject in the homogeneity of modernity as a way of disassociating itself from its homogenous past of “repression [and] silence” (2000, 135).

If we continue with the example of Almodóvar as representative of the changes seen in the past thirty years, as we leave the 80s and enter the 90s we see that the writer-director’s image matures. His films become less amateurish and more thematically and stylistically available to an international market. Indeed, Almodóvar actively worked towards the ultimate international success: an Oscar. Also in the 90s another film-maker, this time from the Basque country, enters the international market, Julio Medem, and Spain’s image becomes more polished and stylized under the influence of government money and technology. Throughout Julio Medem’s oeuvre, the writer-director has produced a cinema that surpasses, as Javier Domínguez- García has remarked, the line between the peculiarities of radical Basque nationalism and the universality required for commercial cinema success (337). Medem produces films that specifically question and provoke notions of personal identity while his film style has purposefully evolved towards a narrative filmscape that evades overt nationalism in order to focus on the sexual drives of his protagonists. Therefore, the product being sold by Almodóvar in the 80s is essentially the same as that by Medem in the 90s, only the technology to sell it has improved.

1 Marvin D’Lugo offers an in-depth analysis of Almodóvar’s evolution from the 80s through the 90s as well as his Oscar aspirations in his article “Recent Spanish Cinema in National and Global Contexts”.
These governmental and cultural imaging situations cause ripples of crisis that affect traditional constructions of class, race and gender in distinct ways. To provide just one example pertaining to gender, Isolina Ballasteros has pointed out that the Spanish subject of the 1990s has found herself in a moment of postmodern crisis where it has become necessary to re-define those traditional gender roles that have been modified in the transition to democracy (278). Indeed, various critics have noticed a series of postmodern discursive and visual threads that mark the narrative written after 1992. One of the most pronounced has been the construction of a post-transitional identity through such tropes as the dissolution of the family, the creation of new communities outside of patriarchy as well as the fragmentation of the individual through a blending of transnational marketing/consumerism of the country contentiously coupled with the vestiges of Franco’s ultra-conservative dictatorship. In line with this fractured image of Spain and its entrance into modernity Monika Szumilak has noted that,

[t]he year 1992 opens symbolically a period in Spanish cultural production that constructs, or struggles to construct, new models of national subjectivity, and therefore requires new methods of critical analysis that posit the concept of national subjectivity in the ambiguous context that embraces both an information technology-propelled globalization and an internal fragmentation of the nation-state (13).

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2 Cristina Moreiras writes that this presence of the past in the present is ongoing. In her essay on Alex de la Iglesias’ *La comunidad* she postulates that it is impossible to leave the past behind when it has not been properly buried.
In this ambience of post-dictatorship, post-transition, post-nation and, indeed, post-national identity, cinematic and fictional narratives are a useful tool not only for the teasing out of these problematic sloganized and tourism propelled representations of new national identities but also for toying with their possibilities. This study centers on one such narrative play-ground for these tensions: the science fiction city space, specifically, the city space of Madrid. When Madrid, as administrative and (sometimes) cultural center of Spain, represents a particular identity, the continuous re-formation under the process of capitalist interests also must include a continuous re-formulation of Spanish identity itself in a much different way than the tug-and-pull of purely political circumstances. The city of Madrid is a geographical location and a mental construct that represents and is represented through the formation and distribution of capital.

To summarize until now, we can see a changing dynamic since the 80s of how Spain as a place and a people was to be sold on an international market. The push to sell Spain is based on a perception of cultural traits that become naturalized through state and corporate sponsorship. Almodóvar and Julio Medem, under PSOE, are not only filmmakers but they also become brands. Therefore, Spain’s post-Franco identity crisis was essentialized as “culture” and then commodified under capitalism and sold as a tourist attraction. Additionally, as we will see, in the push towards modernity, the city space of Madrid was altered in order to manipulate, not only perceptions of culture and politics but also relationships between tourists, citizens and the space that they inhabit. This brings us to the processes of the creation of space and the consequences of entering modernity.
As Spanish space became globalized, it also becomes homogenized. While the lingering emphasis on past cultural moments tried to clearly define the Spanish people and the space that they inhabit as “different”, the effects of flexible accumulation capitalism\(^3\) were working on that same space in a contradictory way. In order to make a city a viable place as a command-and-control center instead of one of production, it must modernize and it must do so in a certain way. Because the same technology that builds one city, builds all cities, relationships to place become based on structures of capital that manipulate notions of history, image, gender and, indeed, nationality. As the urban center of Madrid strove towards the benefits of globalization it began to homogenize itself in the process. What is essential here is to understand how these conflicting interests (maintaining plurality while also establishing homogeneity) produce a particular environment and, from that environment, a narrative representation of it.

Henri Lefebvre wrote in his seminal text, *The Production of Space* that we cannot separate our mental, social or lived constructions of the city from each other. They all weave together to form a specific structure and because of this, the literary, cinematic and, indeed, all projections of space are capable of changing spatial “*textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology” and, therefore, “[r]epresentations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space” (1991; 42 emphasis in original). As he effectively argues,

The circulation and exchange of material goods are distinct but not separate from the circulation and exchange of signs (language, discourse).

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\(^3\) Flexible accumulation refers to cities that become centers of command and control for corporations or places of consumption rather than generating capital through an economy based on the production of goods.
The ‘pure’ form here has a bipolar structure (use value versus exchange value), and it has functions which Capital sets forth. As a concrete abstraction, it is developed by thought – just as it developed in time and space – until it reaches the level of social practice: via money, and via labour and its determinants (i.e. its dialectic: individual versus social, divided versus global, particular versus mean, qualitative versus quantative). (1991; 100 emphasis in original).

The way in which the city is constructed and then presented for the use of its citizens, for tourists or for a fictional narration is not innocent. What we as citizens take as natural in the capitalist city – in relation to spatial or social constructions – are always products of that space as much as they work as agents that produce it. Again Lefebvre: “…space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (1991; 83). These relationships between objects, places, products and people within the city are best articulated by David Harvey. Throughout his career Harvey has clearly defined the connections of these spatial relations as the urbanization of capital.

In Harvey’s *The Urban Experience* the author states that “the circulation of capital is a geographical movement in time” (1989; 19). Therefore, to say that capital is urbanized is to see the spatial and temporal dynamics of the city set in motion through the geographical separation of production from consumption and the process of creative destruction. In order to continue to grow, capital must appropriate space. Indeed, the spatial relationships of home, work and leisure are set so as to maximize labor force, their production, and consumption. Likewise, these spatial relationships become naturalized,
socialized and reproduced over and over again through the process of an intentional tearing-down or destruction for the purposes of re-growth. We can see this not only in the seasonal changes of fashion but also in the constant reconstruction and expansion programs around the city of Madrid, that we will look at in a moment. First, the naturalization and socialization of these processes are best understood as Harvey has defined them: the urbanization of consciousness.

When our consciousness is “urbanized” it means that our understanding of ourselves is based on the how, where and why we relate to the city. First and foremost we center our levels of consciousness through five loci that Harvey has signaled: the individual, family, class, community and the state. However, under capitalism, all these social and administrative social groupings become ways in which to reproduce the economic system. Therefore, our understanding of ourselves comes from the manner in which and at what level we are able to “consume” the city.

Turning to Henri Lefebvre and his *Critique of Everyday Life*, in his adept analysis of cultural shifts of the 1950s he noted how populations started to identify less with “human” sources of creativity and instead identified more with the “non-human”: technology, science and the promise of innovation. In this way, mechanical objects became infused with philosophical notions and ideas about selfhood. As a consequence, people then and now more than just attach emotional responses to these objects, they become part of a identity formation. This pertains to this study in two ways. First, technology is a rapidly changing institution that promotes itself as more and more necessary in order to participate in modern society. Secondly, the technology present in
the narratives to be studied, or moreover, the narratives itself as a technology of capitalism, became more than a prop in a story. Therefore, the objects of technologies real or imagined like cyborgs, modes of transportation, computers, the text as cultural artifact all have profound epistemological and diegetic meaning.

The problem inherent in attaching an identity to an object – technological or otherwise – is the process of capitalism’s creative destruction. Technology must always change. Objects of technology, then, come and go with economic need for consumption rather then, say human need for justice. Sharon Zukin has written of this that, “[t]he cacophony of demands for justice is translated into a coherent demand for jeans” and when these demands are not met, “[c]laims for public space by culture industries inspire the counter politics of display in late 20th century urban riots” (9). Under the current evolution of capitalism, practices of consumption in the urban space are equated with a certain level of participation in all aspects of city life. But it is not only fashion and technology that are constantly re-born, so are the spaces where they are sold. When material space is continually torn down and re-built so are the individual, community, class and state relationships to that space. The physical is the cultural. Additionally, in an urbanized city, participation has become progressively less tied to public space more linked to private space and, therefore, to capital interests.

Under the guise of culture capitalism tells us that home life should be physically separate from work life and that neither of these spaces should necessarily correspond to community. Inevitably these fragmentations of areas of where we carry-out our lives become fragmentations of how we, as individuals, families or communities understand
our identity. How do we transport ourselves as individuals within the city? How does our family and community offer or negate possibilities for participation in the city? What does the state do to allow room for progress, resistance and participation? All of these questions vary according to scales of social reproduction.

At the most basic level “scale” can be defined as “level of representation” (Johnston quoted in Marston 220). Sallie Marston underscores the importance of how a geographical and social scale becomes “constituted and reconstituted around relations of capitalist production, social reproduction and consumption” (221). Therefore, scale involves multiple layers of experience in a city. At one level there is the physical relationship of material distance between, for example, home and work but there is also an internalized level of distance that involves how communities are built and how home life is lived. Although these different scales of lived and conceptualized geographical economies may be perceived as natural, Marston stresses that it is a “political process endemic to capitalism” that is under constant transformation (221). As we can see, scale is not only a question of physical differences and distances, it must include the concept of how culture is created and how the creation of particular culture communities (based on ethnic, gender, sexual or economic class) is structured.

Indeed, “culture is a powerful means of controlling cities. As a source of images and memories, it symbolizes ‘who belongs’ in specific places” (Zukin 1). One of the most influential of culture politics are issues of history and heritage. If a particular city-space can be historicized in a particular way, the mythology of that place naturalizes our relationships to it. As we will see in all the sf narratives, as well as in the very real
circumstances of Madrid, how the state and corporate entities manipulate the past corresponds to a very real game of identity politics. How a city is preserved and structured depends in great part on culture industries that work to aestheticize social issues as well as emotional ones. Returning to the idea of public and private spheres, the best way to control space is by taking it out of the hands of local, governmental institutions and giving it to private, corporate interests. Sharon Zukin writes about the trend in New York City of making public spaces into private space for the purposes of image control. We can easily translate her work on cities in the US to all urban environments and therefore, we can confidently say that in Madrid, Spain as in NYC: to control “the various cultures of cities suggests the possibility of controlling all sorts of urban ills, from violence and hate crime to economic decline” (2). In contemporary cities Zukin points out that,

[on the local level, most mayors and other elected officials have been too busy clearing budget deficits and dealing with constituents’ complaints about crime and schools to project a common image. The ‘vision thing,’ as George Bush called it, has been supplied by religious leaders from Jerry Falwell to Jesse Jackson and by those institutions whose vital resources permit or even require them to capitalize on culture. (11)

While Jerry Falwell may seem very distant from presentations of contemporary identity in Spanish sf, the link between religious or consumer institutions and the meaning(s) ascribed to city space and its inhabitants is necessary. When industries of consumption – and the Evangelical Church in the United States must certainly be considered a consumer
industry – are given the control of how space is presented then those that inhabit those spaces become unwilling victims of a certain type of perception. These connections are of utmost importance to the social criticism undertaken in the narratives analyzed in this dissertation. For example, the government in de la Iglesia’s *Acción mutante* only allows physically or mentally deformed and handicapped people to enter bourgeoisie space as low-wage workers. Men in Bustelo’s *Planeta Hembra* become a social class only allowed to enter private, feminine space as service employees. Drug-addicts in Reig’s *Sangre a borbotones* are materially and conceptually linked to an automobile graveyard. The repercussions of this real process in Madrid as well as in the fictional sci-fi constructs are severe.

As sociologists and geographers have pointed out, a requisite point in how one is able to gain access and to have mobility in the city is through the construction of public and private space. The public/private divide is a question of access. That access is based on money but also on issues of symbolic capital. Therefore, while one can buy their way into a particular space, it does not necessarily mean that someone “belongs” there. Consumption, how and where one decides to spend their money, is a significant function in space and place making (Marston 299). Doreen Massey, in *Space, Place and Gender*, stresses that to understand how space is created and experienced we must look at differences in degree of movement and communication but also differences in degree of control and initiation. She states that as urban geographers we must develop a politics of mobility and access (150). These different hierarchies of money and capital are of utmost importance because where we are situated in the power structure determines how our
particular perceptions of a place, when working with tangible questions of money and symbolic capital, allow an individual or a community to participate in city life at any level.

At this point, it is essential to underline the importance of the city space as an area of spectacle, especially in as much as this aspect is emphasized in all of the works under consideration. The importance of selling gaze is exceptionally important in terms of selling a city space as a destination for tourists or corporate executives alike. Certainly, an image that promotes pleasure – legal and illegal – as part of the city space is an economic development strategy. The way spectacle works in connection to the city is again a relationship of access and mobilization. This particular point is very much tied to our conception of ourselves in society and how advertising creates a fractured sense of being in order to artificially create desire. Tim Armstrong has carefully analyzed the images of advertising where only particular body parts are shown in order to promote the improvement of the body. When we as citizens are visually surrounded by the destruction of space, body and ideas of national identity we can see that this fragmentation of the body is essential to the process of creative destruction:

The reference to advertising suggests the way in which commodity capitalism is dependent upon – as well as producing – a fragmentation of bodily integrity. Indeed, it is fragmentation and the promise of a restored integrity, like that in war, which renders the commoditization of the body possible. (98 emphasis in original)
Seeing a body fragmented on billboards, television advertisements and in other promotions of consumption underlines what Lefebvre says is, “[t]he predominance of visualization …[which] serves to conceal repetitiveness. People *look*, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. We build on the basis of papers and plans. We buy on the basis of images.” (“Space” 75-76). Additionally Zukin adds, “[i]f visible culture is wealth, the ability to frame the vision brings power (15)”. Therefore we see that a way to solve the problem of homogenization inherent to flexible accumulation and capitalism is through the visual framing of cultural practices. This is an important idea not only to further our understanding of how a city works but also to understanding the narratives to be analyzed in the following chapters. The city, the body and the processes that actively work to manipulate and fragment them are essential narrative motivators in de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig.

John Logan and Harvey Molotch have carefully analyzed how cities promote growth through various industries. As we shall see, the city of Madrid has used the strategy of culture –very legal, highbrow museums and architecture as well as notions of the hypersexualized and drug-fused night-life – much to its advantage. In Tony Morgan’s analysis of the heritage industry in Spain in the 80s he recognizes that restoring historical places was prioritized in the modernization process (88). Many of these programs were wonderfully executed however others were more polemical. For example, the moving of Picacco’s masterpiece “Guernica” back to Spain, as requested by the artist, was met with anger by the Left when his anti-Franco painting was sent Madrid. Likewise, PSOE encountered problems from the Right when it favored more centrist institutions and
ignored some of the counties monumental churches (Morgan 88). While these culture institutions brought tourist dollars and have made Madrid a seductive place for international business, we must let Logan and Molotch remind us that “growth” does not always equal improvement. Apart from these questions of national heritage, PSOE also faced a daunting problem with how to re-build the physical construction of the city.

In all the urbanization plans for the city of Madrid under Franco we can see a prioritized push to conserve the city center and to retard growth in the outlaying areas of the city. When the socialists took office in 1982 they were faced with a number of challenges. One of these was how to deal with urban blight. The 1985 plan, specifically, represented a change in the approach to both the planning process and to the built environment itself. It was a plan based on bottom-up decision making and its goal was social justice and making the city inhabitable for all segments of the population. This plan should be seen as a way to stop the process of flexible accumulation. However, the problem, as we shall see, is that those who controlled the purse strings were more in tune with the ideology of Thatcher and Reagan than with that of social justice (Compitello, lectures).

As important as the framing of the collective memory to inhabitants of a city is how the future of that place is presented to the viewing public. Because as Harvey so aptly understands it: “[t]ime future is illuminated by memory constructed out of time past” (Paris 31). Therefore, the historical narratives that become tied to images representative of the city of Madrid are able to transform the community. This transformation is not in the image of the pursuit of culture or a unified collective
understanding of the past, as it may be proposed. Rather the city space is projected in the image of a selective memory of the past that attaches itself to hope and money. It is easy to see that cities are at once products set to reproduce capital as well as to reflect only certain notions of history and culture (Philo and Kearns 18). The particular portrayal of the past and the present is part of what Harvey calls “monopoly rent”. Returning to our earlier discussion on the homogenization of space, which we could also term globalization, Harvey writes that globalization is not only a way to take away differences, it is, moreover, a geographical patterning of capitalist interests, activities and relations (Spaces 403). Therefore, how a city decides to sell itself has a direct correlation to identity politics on the national and international scale. In agreement with Harvey, what better way to sell the uniqueness of a place than through the appropriation of its history? Indeed,

…by invoking the concept of monopoly rent within the logic of capital accumulation, is that capital has ways to appropriate and extract surpluses from local differences, local cultural variations and aesthetic meanings of no matter what origin (Spaces of Capital 409).

Monopoly rent must always be a careful balance of finding something unique enough to differentiate a place or a product but not so unique so as to exhaust its resources. Additionally, what differences get chosen to represent a space become endemic to the politics and, consequently, to the constructions of ideological utopias that seek to correct the very real deficits of social justice that those constructed differences create. Whereas Harvey writes that a utopia is constructed out of a view of the past infused with nostalgia,
upon considering de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig’s narratives, we must regard the convergence of memory, hope and desire as essential when viewing how those imagined places evolve into dystopias.

How monopoly rents are built in Madrid pertains to many levels of historical consequences. One example is the museums that were renovated and built after the death of Franco, most importantly the Reina Sofia where Picasso’s *Guernica* was brought after the death of the dictator. Also, as already mentioned, was the conscious selling of the night-life and the “sexy celti-iberico” (Ballasteros 176). We will look at more particular appropriations of historical monopoly rents in continuing chapters. In this introduction I will continue to explain what urban theory is as well as describe some of the most exemplary macro-changes seen in Madrid in the last thirty years.

In David Harvey analysis of the cartographic imagination projected into the works of French author Henri Balzac he states that the physical distances and, consequently, degrees of public and private domain in the city space, represent more than physical numbers. With Balzac as with any narrative, “The physical distances that separate classes are understood as ‘a material consecration of the moral distance which ought to separate them’ (Paris 43). While always carefully treading between fictional constructs and the material spaces that they represent, it is not a difficult leap to make between spatial concerns and cultural ones. At the end of the chapter on the “Urbanization of capital” in *The Urban Experience* Harvey reiterates the fact that in order to transition out of capitalism whatever social revolution that does it must change space, control space to suit its own functioning instead of allowing itself to be subsumed within capitalism’s cycling
of creative destruction. As seen in Madrid since the 1960s, Franco’s attempt to incorporate technology and capitalist consumption into his empire, the city space of Madrid has experienced change based more exclusively on the desires of capitalism.

The city of Madrid is the administrative, political and economic center of Spain. It is the largest city in the country and hosts some of the world’s top 100 companies. Namely, Telefónica, Repsol-YPF and Endesa; Telefónica is Spain’s only telephone company and the second and third companies mentioned are oil and electric companies, respectively. Because of the city’s importance as the seat of the government and of the Spanish monarch as well as having significant economic importance, it is also important as a cultural center that hosts some of the world’s finest museums and art-work. However, in order for any urban center to survive in the flexible accumulation phase of capitalism, cities must learn to compete as centers of consumption rather than as places of production. To repeat an idea already discussed, city planning in Madrid since the demise of the dictatorship, especially under PSOE, can be seen as an intent to balance notions of social justice with consumer interests.

In the 1985 plan for the rehabilitation of Madrid under the Socialist party the objectives stress “rights to the city” and “restoring traditional rights to residence and work” (*Plan General* 126 my translation). In order to do this the architects of the new city wanted to build homes that restored historical patrimony but that also stress the idea of dignity (*Plan General* 129). Included are plans to better the public transportation and to re-centralize commerce so that more people have access to it. All of these objectives are interspersed with literary citations from authors like C. José Cela that denounced
capitalism, the process of industrialization and the unequal distribution of wealth and land, for example they include a call to arms form Cela to all: “españoles que no son partidarios de la industrialización del país” (ibid 131).

We can see that the history chosen by PSOE in this plan is one that has as its base in revolution and, as already mentioned, equality and social justice. One of the most exemplary of architectural transformations that occurred during this political party’s tenure was that of the Atocha train station. As mentioned earlier, it was part of the 1992 Olympic transformation and it was equally a part of the post-dictatorship transformation. The *Operación Atocha* was undertaken by the *Ayuntamiento de Madrid*, the *Comunidad de Madrid*, *Renfe* and the *Dirección General de Infraestructura del Transporte* and their cooperation and eventual success at creating a central hub for transportation in Madrid was seen as a great success (Espelosín 1984). This first transformation of Atocha is important, especially because of the role it plays in Reig’s *Sangre a borbotones*. In the case of Reig’s novel, the changes that took place under PSOE in the early 80s are stopped by the North American invasion and subsequent flooding of the city. In Reig’s cartographic imagination, the central train station becomes the central boat-house and also center of the lower economic class’ leisure time.

In agreement with Malcolm Compitello, one of the ways in which the political parties following Franco established and validated their power was through architecture and urban planning (1999; 201). Compitello describes the way in which architecture and, consequently, certain architects became inscribed into space and into ideas about that space. He frames the forces at work on the city space of Madrid in the 80s and 90s
through a discussion of the goals of modernist and post-modern architecture. In his words,

As Harvey and others have pointed out, the shaping of space for social purposes that characterizes modernist architectural theory and urban planning cedes to a conceptualization of space as something to be shaped independently of these concerns under postmodern design. (ibid 204)

Although PSOE had the best interests of all economic levels at the core of their changes, they were by the 90s subsumed by the concerns of capitalism. Compitello analyses the 1995 film of Alex de la Iglesia *El día de la bestia* as a narrative that puts at its narrative center the architecture of the 80s and 90s familiar to most Spaniards and Madrileños: “the Edificio Capitol and the Torres de Europa, originally called the Torres KIO”. These buildings are significant, Compitello convincingly argues because, “[they] are landmarks whose construction was tied to efforts to link the construction of Madrid with ideas of what a metropolis should look like… The monuments that de la Iglesia employs are emblematic of Madrid’s hopes for itself as a (post)-modern metropolis” (ibid 206). However, they are also emblematic of all that went wrong with those attempts.

In the film, a Basque priest must find where the Devil is to be born on a cold *Nochebuena*. Set against the back-drop of a Madrid consumed by Christmas consumption practices, the Priest and his side-kicks, an Italian TV star and a Satanic madrileño, find that the devil is to be born in the shadow of the Torres de Europa. Writes Compitello, “[i]f any design project can qualify as the ‘casa del diablo’ it is the Torres de Europa” for they symbolized “all that went wrong in the history of urbanization in Spain under
socialism and the redesign of Madrid in the hands of the governments that succeeded the PSOE in the 90s” (ibid 208). Moreover, using these buildings to show the darkest aspect of humanity de la Iglesia underscores “the narrative of redesigning Spain in relationship to the political and market forces of flexible accumulation and consumption” (ibid).

If, as Annette Kolodny has written in the context of feminist narratives and what we engage are paradigms not texts, then the works under consideration in this dissertation are science fiction paradigms of the contemporary urban city of Madrid. They present structures meant to compress time and historical process in order that we see more clearly our own time and the processes we are living. They are meant not to be read as biologically gendered and born understandings of culture and city space but as technologically engineered. What these narratives show is that, as Lefebvre was first to understand, that despite the intention or desire of ideas of social justice and thought, capital reproduces itself through the manner in which it appropriates space. Whatever is put into the capitalist system becomes subsumed by it and works to further the needs of economy rather than the desires of communities.

Narratives that represent the city space of Madrid are numerous. One of the most important literary figures that documented the transition changes was Manuel Vázquez Montalbán in his series of novels featuring the private detective Pepe Carvalho. In John Macklin’s discussion of the *Novela Negra* in Spain he cites Vázquez Montalbán as being keenly aware of documenting social questions through a popular narrative form. The very real problems of the space of Madrid during a transitional period were tied together
through solving a crime that relates the forces of government, city and culture that allow the crime to the city where it happens.4

Toni Dorca writes that Spain’s literature in the 90s, especially with that of the Generation X, consciously tried to put itself at the margins of the adult society and to exalt those things in which the youth culture has put its faith. Correspondingly, Carlos Heredero writes that the generation of film makers from the 90s no longer felt the weight of the past and that the films of the 90s did not conform to any generational aesthetic or social theories. These attitudes towards society and nation translate into popular fiction narrations with cultural representations whose social mores come not from history or tradition but rather than objects taken from global popular culture. We can see this in authors like Lucía Extebarria’s novel from 1997 *Amor, prozac, curiosidad y dudas*. The constant referencing of brand names works to establish subjective identity. While another author of the same time period, Belén Gopegui also uses consumer practices as a way of representing identity formation, she does so in way that documents a personal self-awareness of those practices while the narrator voices a social criticism. Especially in her novel *La conquista del aire*, published in 1998, the critical eye can place her literature in a much different category from that of the other authors considered to form a part of the Generation X.

Gopegui is an important example because she also focuses on what Judith Drinkwater referred to as fin-de-siècle malaise as well as “the solitude, isolation and fragility and insecurity of the individual”. She also notes in Gopegui the feeling that that

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4 I will further analyze these particular genre considerations in Chapter 4.
in the move from post-dictatorship recovery to post-Olympics democracy may mean greater autonomy for the individual but it also brings with it a loss. This loss is what Tim Armstrong links to a particular consumer neurosis caused by the feeling of not being whole:

The equation of capital and the commoditized body replaces the biblical injunction to work: ‘Now money, for the night is coming. Money for my hair, money for my teeth, money for shoes that won’t deform my feet (it’s not so easy now to walk around in heap shoes with very high heels), money for good clothes, money, money, money.’ This is the ‘vicious functional circle’ described by W.F. Haug, in which the body constantly reaches for a false totality, undoing experience in the name of youthfulness and a cosmetic self which is in turn commoditized. (101)

Consumer culture constantly tells us that, as individuals, there is something more that we must constantly do to modify or to better ourselves and our appearance. If we can just buy the right clothing, shampoo, or house-hold tool we will reach a sense of totality. According to Armstrong this sense of totality mixed with creative destruction will necessarily always be false. There will always be something more that must be added or modified about our identity. In light of what Armstrong notes, what we find, then, at the heart of the metaphorically fragmented bodies in the realist narrative of Echevarría and Gopegui is also what is at the core of the very literal fragmentation of bodies in the Sci-Fi narratives to be discussed. Boiled down to one of the neo-liberal, aspects that all contemporary narrative reflects, it is the cause and effect relationship of creative
destruction. When the economic superstructure calls for a constant tearing down of the old to make way for the new through industries like fashion or beauty with objects that have such a close relationship to the body become so easily thrown-away then, in turn, the body also becomes an object to be thrown away and renewed with each passing fashion.

Returning to Drinkwater’s work on Gopegui, the author states that “the mapping of the land, like the mapping of the body, represents the assertion of the self over the unknown.” (101). Like Sergio Prim in Gopegui’s novel La escala de los mapas, literature is a map that relates the reader to the world,

Separé mis ojos de la letra escrita, los guié por el aire hasta el fuego y di en pensar en el mismo sistema que rige para la tierra y sus mapas, rige para los hombres: escalas y signos, representación. Los mapas de los hombres son los libros.[…] …yo llevo conmigo el plano de Madrid, igual que un turista, porque tengo fe en los mapas. Ellos establecen una relación distinta entre nosotros y el mundo. Lo mismo hacen los libros. (Gopegui 127)

What the sf narratives stress first departs from this described relationship between the map and the city. From there it extends the analysis of map-individual to individual-body. In the Sci-Fi dystopias, the body has become so completely fragmented and modifiable that there is no way to insert it into either a psychological map or cartographic map of the city. Not only are the structures that used to work to link us to family, community, state,
class and to the city have become commodities that one must buy into, so is the very relationship to our body and our sexuality.

In contemporary theory and realist narrative, the ways to resist this crisis of fragmentation of identity, nation and body come in many ideological forms. The problem that the narratives of de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig are pointing out concerns the transitioning of these theories into practice. Specifically that socialist thought, feminist and queer theory and all socially progressive movements that seek to insert the Other into the center must find a way to incorporate spatial concerns into their functioning. The authors signal a lack of understanding how the interaction between thought and economy play out in spatial concerns. Perhaps one of the reasons that social theories are incapable of accommodating spatial concerns is their inability to see beyond their own limits. To again quote Harvey,

Such limits, exceeded only at moments of breakdown and revolution, constrain the possibilities to change history according to conscious design precisely because consciousness can express only what practical experience teaches. (*Urban Experience* 243)

Science Fiction offers a way to expand beyond the limits of experience. While we see many examples of the genre in the Western and Eastern literary traditions, it has traditionally not been present in the Iberian Peninsula. However, the evolution of sf in Spain has traditionally followed North American models (Knights 204; 2002). As Juan Ignacio Ferreras has signaled, those that first began the genre in the United States were not writers of literature, rather they were mostly journalists and, often times, they wrote
badly (1971; 61). Because the very nature of sf is to be a criticism of a contemporary situation, an idea we will return to in a moment, in its original creation it did not strive to be “good” literature, rather “good” criticism. This particular aspect of Science Fiction has also followed to be true in Spain. Although there have been various magazines and on-line fanzines in Spain, the most popular right now is BEM that can be found in hard-copy and on-line.⁵ Some of the more hard Sc-Fi writers are published there, such as Domingo Santos or Rafael Marín.⁶ What can be found on the web-site is a combination of literature, mostly in the short-story form, by national authors and translated works. The creators of the fanzine also include objective, historical articles about, for example, the influence of sf on the evolution of contemporary film. Also included are more subjective critical articles about the literature published as well as questionnaires for the readers about their likes and dislikes. In a popular first-person short story by Marín “Palabras de amor” from 2008, the central theme is a stolen moment of romance between a human man and a female android. This narration is infused with nostalgia for a time before severe pollution when the city space served also as a community:

Había leído en algún sitio que la gente, antes, se miraba a la cara, y hasta se saludaba o se sonreía si se encontraba en los portales, o en los ascensores, o en el trabajo. Había leído en algún sitio que los parques se

⁵ Knights also signals out the fanzine Nueva Dimensión that ceased publication in 1982, and other collections such as Ultramar, Futurópolis, and Nova that have worked to promote Spanish sf (204).
⁶ The distinction has been made between “hard” and “soft” science fiction. As Patricia Melzer in Alien constructions (2006) has pointed out, the hard sf typically refers to those narratives that express a certain faith in science, is coded as male and incorporates mathematics, physics or chemistry as essential content. In contrast, soft sf is coded as female has referred to the “soft” sciences such as linguistics, anthropology or social theories. The narratives in this dissertation do follow these classifications but only to a certain degree.
visitaban desde dentro y no eran dioramas a los que hacer holografías desde fuera. Había leído en algún sitio que antes se leía (Marin http://www.bemonline.com/bol/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=163&Itemid=38).

The story-teller makes reference to a time before pollution that has made the outdoors uninhabitable as well as to past authors who expressed their love through poetry and through words. Despite the many issues that the narrative raises, the motivating question that propels the story is the question at the end of the narrative is: can an android experience love and, conversely, can a human truly love a machine as it would a flesh-and-blood woman? This question points to the growing difficulty in contemporary society to being able to draw a line between human and not human. This referencing to a not-so-distant “real” past as a culture that has been completely severed from the technological dream of a not yet real and not-so-distant future is a recurrent theme in much of Science Fiction inside and outside of Spain. Much like the authors presented in this dissertation, the hard sf found on fanzines and in sf magazines make use of tropes, like love, found also in classic literature as a device to refer a time that is inscribed as pure or uncontaminated by technology. We can read this device as signaling a break of the present time with the past. Therefore, we can read in this literature a crisis of the present that represents a disconnect with human history.

While this type of fictional device is common throughout all of Science Fiction, authors like Marin write a very

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7 The environment is of great concern in all the city planning documents to recuperate the space of Madrid and it also becomes an important factor in the telling of the narratives to be studied.

8 The post-human in literature is a topic that deserves an analysis of its own. For the purposes of this study I will limit myself to only discussing the appearance of this break or shift of thought and ontological patterning.
universal brand of sf. Of fundamental importance to the authors presented in this dissertation is that they strive to be more particular to their contemporary audience. De la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig work to weave specific notions of technology, the nation and utopia into their narrations.

Science Fiction is a genre that is hard to define yet easy to recognize. It uses a language that tries to explain a new world with a new language by reflecting the reader’s hopes and dreams about their known world in a distorted mirror. In order to be “optimal” Sci-Fi, according to Darko Suvin, the imagined world should be about power struggles that take place in the reader’s empirical world. The best Science Fiction must link lived reality with ideology and so criticism must also “be able to do justice to such specific characteristics of sf, and to avoid confusing the genre’s utopian-cum-scientific pathos and cognitive horizon with a pragmatic demand for accurate scientific extrapolation, either technological or socio-political” (“Poetics” 59). Suvin defines utopia as: “the presence of a particular quasi-human community where socio-political institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized on a more perfect principle than in the author’s community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis” (Positions 35). At this point it is essential to recognize the “utopian-ness” of which Suvin references and, then, to underline the connection between the sf to be presented in this dissertation and utopian literature⁹.

Suvin writes that utopist literature is a necessary precursor to Science Fiction and he maps out the qualities that unite these two sub-genres. The first quality that joins
utopian and sf fictions is the creation of a different world that is meant to illustrate
something that is wrong with our present conditions. Whereas strictly utopian literature
does not project into its imagined world technology or scientific innovation, Science
Fiction uses it as the aesthetically and structurally essential component to the construction
of the narrative. Carl Freedman in his useful essay “Science Fiction and Utopia: A
Historico-Philosophical Overview” underlines utopias dependence on our hopes for the
future, he then emphasizes its “inherently collective character [that] at [the] bottom has
nothing in common with individualist impulses like greed” (74). Freedman goes on to say
that “Science Fiction as an aesthetic form is, even more the novel of the artist, a
privileged object of utopian hermeneutic” (81). In the research that Ferreras has done on
this genre, he also explores the conceptual link between utopian literature and sf. Ferreras
breaks it down into the very rational dichotomy of good vs. bad. Some technology is
good and beneficial to society. Those sf writers that have faith in scientific innovation
will create “good” sf utopias. Also, some science is bad and does not help human-kind
and also has the power to destroy it (Ferreras 117). Therefore, some future worlds,
described as dystopias, will be as nightmarish as the science that created them.

In this form that mixes utopia and Sci-Fi we can see a world based on an ideology
that has the effect of criticizing that same ideology (Suvin 83). Suvin warns that Science
Fiction and Sci-fi critics should not stop at only an ideological (or technological,
scientific, etc) reading of the literature. In agreement with Suvin, the following chapters
will begins with the particular epistemological quality of the narrative – Almodóvar’s
representation of Madrid, Radical Body feminism or Spanish post-Franco history – as a
necessary first step to understanding the alternative realities presented in the sf world. Furthermore, Suvin writes that the critic’s task with sf is to ask if “such [theoretical] propositions can be translated into a tenable conceptual system” (“Positions” 51). In the creation of the dystopias created by de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig, the answer to this question has already been answered: yes. The system presented can be transformed into a viable system and therein lies the criticism. Specifically, those aspects to make the nightmare happen already have been conceived in today’s society. Contemporary Peninsular Sci-fi narrative, then, becomes a very real warning and critique of social thought and its possible outcome under current economic circumstances.

Suvin goes to great lengths to say that the critic must make a material link between the text and the world that it represents. The link that Suvin suggests must exist between the use of technology in a narrative and the tangible ideological superstructure that they represent is a link that Lefebvre made in the 1950s in his seminal *Critique of Everyday life*:

Far from suppressing criticism of everyday life, modern technical progress realizes it. This technicity replaces the criticism of life through dreams, or ideas, or poetry, or those activities which rise above the everyday life from within: the critique which everyday life makes of itself, the critique of the real by the possible and of one aspect of life by another. Compared with lower or degraded standards of living, everyday life with all the superior mod cons takes on the distance and remoteness and familiar strangeness of a dream. (9-10)
Nowhere is this image of society transformed by technology better realized than in sf. Science Fiction blends aspects of alienation, possibility and familiarity in such a way as to be able to respond to our fears and hopes of technology or science and, moreover, to the concept of the world as dream that Lefebvre describes. Therefore the link between the alternative reality narratives and everyday life will be based on spatial concerns as well as on the language of those concerns: both the real and imagined consumer culture revolving around technology and scientific innovation.

To reiterate what I wrote above, according to Juan Ignacio Ferreras, Sci-Fi responds not only to our hopes and dreams about scientific innovation but, moreover, to a crisis of our present conditions. Although Ferreras refuses to pin-point a definition of the genre, he underlines that the Science Fiction, despite its name, does not treat themes of the value of *science* but quite conversely signals areas of doubt in its effects and then carries those scientific, technological and ideological contradictions to their logical conclusions (31). Ferreras makes a distinction between those novels that are what he calls “scientific” fiction and treat themes of science. On the other side are those narratives that put the values of science into question: “Science Fiction”.10 Additionally, the purpose of the sf genre is to serve as a reaction to scientific theory and innovation, not to find answers to the moral or ethical dilemmas it presents (63).

The most widely used definition of Science Fiction comes from Darko Suvin’s land-mark essay “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre” (1976). In this essay Suvin lays-out his much-used theories on sf as the literature of cognitive estrangement.

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10 In the “scientific novel” category he includes Jules Verne (62).
While the formalist Roman Jakobson theorized that all literature caused an “estrangement” that forced the reader to view their world in a different way, Suvin further qualifies the term. “Estrangement” in sf is a process that implies mental reasoning and creativity as ways in which literature takes us from the world that we inhabit. Therefore, Science Fiction is cognitive because it “sees the norms of any age, including emphatically its own, as unique, changeable, and therefore subject to a cognitive glance” (57). Furthermore, Suvin defines sf as a narrative that allows for a dialogue with the reader providing a “complex optical system in order to see oneself” (Positions xi).

My own definition of how Science fiction as employed in Spain encompasses Suvin’s idea of cognitive estrangement as well as Ferreras’ understanding of the genre as a response to a crisis. Sci-fi writers understand the lived world as something that is impenetrable through the word and therefore do not try to textually represent physical reality. Rather, they only desire to reference it in order to pose narratological questions that explore psychological constructs. In so doing, the alternative reality that references but does not represent real lived communities and crisis reflects back to the reader the “real” position of the same individual consuming the narrative.

Therefore, if objects of technology come and go with the demands of economic progress, our human identity as subjects and objects of a lived system of exchange that supersedes all others (state, family, class, community) must also follow the same ebb and flow of consumer-driven technological innovation. Furthermore, if genre literature is included as a fashion of technology, as it certainly must be, then writing a fashionable piece of literature also means that whatever criticism is makes will only be viable for as
long as people are willing to buy it. This poses a certain limitation to the shelf-life of sf as a useful tool for criticizing the economic and spatial systems. But all is not lost. Literature, even “genre” literature is a viable way to represent these shifting identities, especially when observant narrative writers figure out how to weld adept cultural criticism to technologies of fashion. Moreover, Science Fiction is a rich genre with many different variations beyond the very facile dichotomy of “hard” versus “soft”.

Helpful here is a return to Suvin and his coupling of the idea of “creative destruction” necessary for the continued growth of capitalism to literature’s relationship to this economic system. He begins by describing how, when working under capitalism, literature, instead of looking for “inner aesthetic truth (determined both by the fictional narrative’s inner logic and by its referential richness),… is wedded to quantic shocks of season fashion” (Position 9 emphasis in original). To his understanding,

[I]therefore, in the final analysis, the fashionable and fashion-like type of fiction novelty is oriented ‘rather [toward] its themes’ salability than [toward] their cognition’ … . In literature, use-value is significant aesthetic cognition, while exchange value is to be understood as the narrative domination of infinitely recurring superficial strangeness, a ‘hypocrisy of quality’. (ibid 14 emphasis in original)

Additionally, when the market asks for literature pertaining to a genre, those that do not coincide with market pressure naturally take on a critical distance to the culture of which they speak (ibid 18). This means that sf whether it is in the center through market demand
or whether it remains in the margins, as it traditionally has been, is able to effectively undertake its conceptual impulse to criticize.

We can further expand on the idea of Science Fiction as a marginal literature by returning to Ferreras. Historically, Sci-Fi was born from journalists and amateur writers who criticized the economic crisis of the late 20s in the United States. It was during this time that the values of capitalism and its ties to fascism and dictatorships were questioned. He states that,

No hay, pues, solamente una crítica, sino algo más grave y de más, digamos, extensas consecuencias. La CF no intenta salvar la sociedad en crisis por la sencilla razón de que ha dejado de creer en ella. En este sentido, pero solamente en éste, podríamos considerar a la CF como una literatura marginal, porque voluntariamente y muy conscientemente se sitúa al margen de al sociedad que niega, y no porque la sociedad negada la haya colocado al margen. (68)

In agreement with Suvin and Ferreras, Science Fiction is a literature that marginalizes itself in order to establish a critical distance from the society that it is rejecting. However, here we are encountered with an interesting tension: that of keeping a literature marginal enough to be able to criticize yet marketable enough to be able to reach a significant audience.

Ferreas comments that sf grew out of a need to explain the new situation created out of economic crisis and its intent was to reach a equilibrium through exploring the new reality created out of crisis (63). He goes on to state that by putting traditional values into
doubt an artist is also able to achieve a critical distance from it. This critical distance has been reached in the past, especially in peninsular literature, through the use of dark humor, as in the theatre of Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca or through the use of irony as in the “new” novels of the 50s and the 60s. In all these manifestations of social texts, the narratorial voice uses a discourse device meant to distance him or herself from the space (metaphorical or literal) meant to be criticized while at the same time making the reader a conscious agent in the criticism.

What Suvin also implies is a series of mediations between the author’s imaginative framework and the reader’s socio-historical perspective. We can understand the critical distance that the temporal or linguistic markers in addition to the spatial imagination at work in Science Fiction as an effective cultural appropriation that Spanish sf writers use much in the same way as Valle Inclán used el esperpento or as Luis Martín Santos used irony to establish a critical distance between subject matter referenced, the narrative form and the reader. By understanding how de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig are appropriating the Sci-Fi construction and transforming it from a marginal to a popular form is critical to understanding contemporary Peninsular literary movements. Moreover, understanding this newly popularized form is critical to understanding how contemporary literary movements adapt to the same capitalist system that they are criticizing. Both of these notions will be further developed in Chapter Five.

While there are previous valuable studies on contemporary Science Fiction in Spain, namely Vanessa Knights, there has not yet been a study that has undertaken the reasons as to why this genre is appearing now. The alternative worlds that de la Iglesia,
Bustelo and Reig create are played out in the space of the metropolis as a place where “creative destruction” creates shifting spaces and technologies that parallel the creation of social spaces for shifting post-national identities. This study will serve as a first look at how a literary sub-genre reflects national concerns and is then consumed as popular culture. Specifically, it will look at how the three authors presented are mixing sf with three very different popular narrative forms: the dark comedy of de la Iglesia, the “chick lit” of Bustelo and the hard-boiled detective novels of Reig. By using the medium of already established popular fiction constructions superimposed with sf language and devices it allows the authors to create diverse spaces of identity that work to counter established, traditional identities and common-held cultural and economic beliefs. Moreover, in the analysis of how three structurally distinct forms of popular fiction that converge as SF are sold as consumable cultural artifacts we will be able to see how the literary projects of these three artists use capitalism to undermine it while, at the same time, reaching distinct segments of the consuming public.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four will be arranged chronologically by author and their internal structure will be organized around three main points of departure. I will begin with a short biography of the author and the evolution of their narrative production. By placing the work pertinent to this study into the trajectory of their previous and subsequent works we can understand how the sf genre allows for a unique mode of criticism. This brings us to the second point where I will delve into the unique relationships between form and content in each narrative. This will lead us to point of analysis, how the imaginary cartographic imaginations function to criticize “real” space.
As for the content of each chapter, Chapter Two will analyze the film *Acción mutante* (1993) by writer-director Alex de la Iglesia. This film from the beginning of de la Iglesia’s career has since become a “cult classic” in Spain. Although de la Iglesia references Science Fiction in content and image in many of the films following *Acción mutante*, this work from the beginning of his cinematic career is the purest example of the genre in his oeuvre. The movie’s utopian construct is that of the chaotic, colorful, erotic and perverse image of Spain created by Pedro Almodóvar beginning during the “movida” in the 1980s and that persists now. De la Iglesia structures his sf tale around a voyage that moves from the center, Madrid, to the periphery, an imaginary planet called Asturias. The idea of inhabiting a spatial center or periphery corresponds to the idea of how the individual identifies to a social center or periphery. Both spatial and social concerns get played out in the movement of the plot which follows the kidnapping of a beautiful woman by a group of physically handicapped and disabled men who inhabit the physical and social periphery. The narrative tension works in many directions; within the film there is the tension stemming from the movement that the center of economic capital (Madrid) and the periphery, where the money and the labor come from (planeta Asturias). Running parallel to this is the corresponding movement of the aesthetic center and periphery of Spanish identity that is symbolized as a fight between beautiful people and “mutants”. This struggle is analogous to the struggle to overcome or balance out the new Spanish identity that the films of Almodóvar created of a post-national Spain. Therefore, I will focus particular attention on the tension between spatial concerns as it relates to the construction of the individual in society, the creation of communities and
national identity during the early 90s in Spain. Also, these various narrative tensions within the film will serve as an excellent introduction to the tension of center and periphery in terms of literary genres and will be a valuable segue into the next authors.

Chapter Three will analyze the fiction of Gabriela Bustelo, specifically her sf novel Planeta Hembra (2001). Bustelo can be classified also as a writer of the novela rosa – chick lit – which allows her to reach a different sector of Spanish society than does the “cult classic” gore films of de la Iglesia. In Bestelo’s sf novel the story is told through the first person narrative of Báez, a woman who is to become the next president of the planet that has been divided into Women, politically the XX party, and Men, the XY party. The plot-line closely resembles that of the Russian Evgeny Zamiatin’s We (1922), Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World (1932), and George Orwell’s 1984 (1949). The protagonist, Báez, is part of the ruling political party but finds that she is progressively more doubtful in the legitimacy of the social system. This situation allows the text to criticize the feminist utopia imagined by Second-Wave Feminism. In the future of 2069 men and women no longer need each other for procreating and so homosexuality has become a social and, moreover, a legal mandate. Báez’s movement through the public and private city spaces of New York and Paris is motivated by the narrator’s need to uncover and destroy a group of political insurgents, the last group of heterosexual hold-outs.

As readers of Bustelo’s fictional dystopia we are introduced to a world arranged according to gender where the utopist ideas of second-wave feminism have transcended the level of ideas to become the law. Of particular importance for understanding Bustelo
will be Don Mitchell’s works on the creation of sexuality under capitalism, Cindi Katz’s works on how social reproduction and capital affect the lives of women and children, the cyborg theories of Donna Haraway, and the creation of a visual culture. The highly technological world devoid of interpersonal relationships where cyborgs and computers erase all the borders between public and private life is a world created out of the idea that the manipulation of visual culture and of identity politics work to further alienate the human from his/her lived space.

Chapter Four will analyze the sf detective series by Rafael Reig, especially *Sangre a borbotones* (2002) but will also include his later novel in the series, *Guapa de Cara* (2004). Reig has been, among the three authors presented, the one that has most consistently incorporated marginal forms of literature into his narrative style. In his detective series Reig dismantles the utopia of “Americanization”. He does this by changing history in subtle and reasonable ways in order to allow for a full American military invasion after the socialists win the elections. To explore this alternative world, *Sangre a borbotones* uses a Sci-Fi world superimposed over a hard-boiled detective structure and also includes elements of the Western.

Carlos Clot, the first-person narrator, is a private detective who tries to solve crimes that the openly corrupt police force will not touch. As he follows the clues of the case he also unites the crime to the city where it was committed. In the case of this first novel of the series, his narrator, Carlos Clot is motivated to tell the story of his search for three lost women – a cheating wife, a drug-addict daughter and a character escaped from the pages of her novel – because of the ultimate effect that solving these cases had on the
health of his daughter afflicted with cerebral palsy. At the climax of the detective structure of the novel Clot must make a choice between saving his daughter but knowing that he is then responsible for the death of many at the hands of an evil corporation, or saving many from the hands of the evil corporation at the expense of his daughter. This situation gets resolved, along with the other disappearances and murders, rather quickly in the space of a few pages. However, the novel doesn’t end until the narrator himself becomes a writer of another novel, a Western called “Sangre a borbotones”.

As seen here, Reig, even more than de la Iglesia and Bustelo, questions the concept of genre as his novel is part sf, part Western and structurally and thematically calls to the forefront a dialogue on the difference between High and popular literary classifications. Therefore this chapter will focus particular analytical attention on genre considerations as well as the construction of the cartographic imaginary projected into the flooded, dystopic Iber-American world of “contemporary” Spain.

Perhaps because these texts, especially those by Bustelo and Reig, are so recent, there is scant critical literature on this topic in general and on the Science Fiction in these authors. The critical literature done on other sf narratives that have also been the stylistic and thematic model for Spanish Science Fiction, the United States, will help alleviate this lacuna. The work done on the novels of Margaret Atwood, Ursula Le Guin and Philip K. Dick will serve as valuable critical reference points. One such example is the critical work done on the works of Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) in relation to the narratives of Bustelo and Reig. In Atwood’s novel the narrative voice employs a similar technique as Reig’s in changing the course of history in minor but
logical ways that have grave consequences on all levels of society. In Atwood’s novel, history changes after Ronald Reagan becomes president and an unnamed and scantily referenced war breaks-out between the extremely conservative sects of American society and the leftist side. In Reig’s novel, he changes Spanish history after the socialists win the elections in the early 80s. This political event causes an American invasion and the imposition of an Iber-American state. Although the two novels differ greatly in form (Atwood’s narrator tells her story in the form of a diary, Reig’s narrator is a private detective), by not dedicating a great amount of narrative space to historical process and change, the way that the new history is narrated becomes natural and forces the reader to quickly assimilate to the changed world. This works on the readers as, remembering Suvin, a mirror that reflects the contemporary moment and current ideological, social and economic questions upon the individual.

Additionally, at the level of what is narrated, Atwood creates a world where many of the projects of second-wave feminism are allowed to develop. This works to criticize those ideological constructs that, when allowed to be implemented, the narrator shows as contradictory to the actual utopist project of feminism. Gabriela Bustelo employs a similar technique in her novel and the autor has admitted that her intention in creating Planeta Hembra was to “…escribir una novela provocadora políticamente muy incorrecta, porque me parece que es el momento de empezar a revisar esas viejas actitudes feministas (o femeninas) que se derivan de las posturas de los años setenta” (Mora).
Chapter Five will conclude by underscoring those themes that are most common in all the narratives in question. For example, one of the most salient formal themes is the layering of narrative genres in order to undermine physical and social constructs. On the level of what is told in the visual and textual worlds, one of the most common themes is the use of the female body as a narrative device to symbolize the fight over space and national memory. The female body is hyper-sexualized, distorted, fragmented, made into a cyborg and mutilated in each the sf works of Bustelo, Reig and de la Iglesia. These bodily concerns are congruent to spatial concerns played out in city of Madrid in post-national Spain. These formal and contextual concerns work together to form a new narrative construction borrowed from outside national borders that remains very tied to a “traditional” or historical discursive practice centered on the role of the woman in Spanish history and identity.

After traveling through the different alternative dystopic spaces of the three authors, the dialogue opened in this introductory Chapter on the “real” lived Space of Madrid will be revisited in Chapter Five in order to underline the impossibility of transferring utopist ideologies into city spaces. Like the narratives presented in the dissertation, David Harvey, as an urban geographer, is unable to imagine what an utopist space would look like because he understands the problems inherent in its construction. In Spaces of Hope (2000) Harvey cites Sir Thomas Moore’s Utopia (1516) as an example of a place where “the internal spatial ordering of the island strictly regulates a stabilized and unchanging social process. Put crudely, spatial form controls temporality, an imagined geography controls the possibility of social change and history” (160). The
authors to be discussed in this study are cognizant of the control that both philosophical concerns and economic functioning have over spatial constructions and use their narratives to dismantle problematic, although well intentioned, progressive ideologies.
ÁLEX DE LA IGLESIÁ’S ACCION MUTANTE AND THE LIMITS OF FASHION AND TECHNOLOGY

Álex de la Iglesia was born in 1965 in the city of Bilbao in the Basque region of Spain. As Carlos Heredero described in his seminal Veinte directores nuevos españoles (1999), de la Iglesia comes from the first generation of directors formed under an “audiovisual promiscuity” where narrative codes taken from comics, advertising, videos, fashion, rock music and all levels of popular culture permeate the filmic narrative (66). This chapter will more fully develop a theme that we will see throughout the three narratives to be analyzed; namely, that of popular culture as a fundamental influence in narrative from the 90s and the first decade of the Twenty-First Century. De la Iglesia started as a comic book writer in his twenties and studied philosophy as a university student at the Jesuit University, Duesto. As a film-maker his most successful films have been co-written with Jorge Guerricaechevarría with de la Iglesia as the sole director. After the team made their first short film Mirindas asesinas (1991), they went to Pedro Almodóvar and his production company El deseo to finance their first feature-length film: Acción mutante. In turn, they also received money from the French production company Ciby 2000, as well as financing from the Minister of Culture (Heredero 192). The film, while it did not make a great quantity of money when it was released, has since become a cult classic.

The young director achieves his Sci-Fi classic through the construction of a dystopia that closely resembled contemporary Spain of the late 1980s and early 90s. The utopist enterprise that de la Iglesia attacks through parody is a two-fold attack on the dominant cultural paradigm that grew around the most enigmatic director of Spain since the 1980s and by extension, the socialist government’s sponsorship of it. Secondly and
fundamentally related to the first, de la Iglesia criticizes the capitalistic cycle of creative destruction in fashion and technology that began in the late 80s as the dominant political party, PSOE, shifted priorities and, then, handed power to the PP (Partido Popular) in the 1989 elections. Both of these cultural and economic situations are played out on the body through the dehumanization and de-territorialization of labor power, a situation that quite literally translates into a plot line that pits the handicapped versus the able-bodied and ends when the planet that mines fuel to propel the future is exterminated by a fusion bomb. The future, as the film understands it, is ever-increasingly based on modernity’s aesthetic which has turned the body into a commodity. Wrapped up in this is the individual’s relationship to the city which is mediated primarily through the mass media and controlled through violence and strict governance of the body. Because of these diverse concerns we must be able to contextualize the film through what it represented as a cultural object within its own time and space. Furthermore, we must also understand how the narrative language of the film worked to resist the dominant cultural forces of its time. Therefore, the following pages of this chapter will weave together the historical, political, and sociological staging of the narrative together with an analysis of the narrative as a discursive means of resistance.

De la Iglesia must be understood in the context of the film industry in Spain in the 1980s and La Ley Miró. As a director he very consciously tried to work against what La Ley Miró promoted as Spanish film and, consequently, what de la Iglesia saw as over-done themes in Spanish cinema: childhood, the civil war and literary adaptations (Buse et al. 10). As Peter Buse, Núria Triana-Toribio and Andrew Willis stress in their
collaborative article, “Esto no es un juego, es Acción mutante: The Provocations of Álex de la Iglesia”, de la Iglesia as a director belonged to the “desencanto” which they define as a feeling corresponding to “the period of disillusionment with politics in general and with the leftist parties (PSOE) in particular, which had failed to deliver the changes they promised” (10).

The 80s was a decade marked first by the promise of a new Spain and then disappointment when that promise was not fully fulfilled. When the socialist party won the elections in 1982 the expectations for a political, social and cultural over-haul were high. The new political party understood the film industry, much as their French neighbors to the north did, as a “bien cultura” (Jordan 181). In 1982 Pilar Miró Romero was appointed Director-General of Cinema. She was a socialist activist and had a long and successful career in film and television. As a member of the government she established a law that sought to appropriate more government funds to national filmmakers with the goal of raising the home-grown writer, directors and actors profile in their own country. Barry Jordan assesses that La Ley Miró was a political effort to nationalize the cinema in order to produce new cultural artifacts that were, “a crucial element in the state-sponsored, PSOE inspired re-education of the Spanish nation” (181). This move was not only to sell the movies abroad, but also to market the movies to national audiences that were more interested in Hollywood blockbusters then in Spanish cinema. In agreement with Jordan, John Hopewell asserts that film in the 1980s is marked by apathy. Even those citizens that went to the cinema to see Spanish films were
“atheists” that sat in the back of the theatre criticizing the nationally produced, directed and acted films and, especially, criticized their themes as tired and overdone.

The Socialist party’s decree promoted realism as the style of Spanish national cinema and sought to fund films from new directors that best represented their vision of “good” Spanish film (Buse, et al. 11). They did this to promote films that represented the post-Franco Spanish customs and values in response to what the ruling party regarded as the decidedly non-Spanish presence of popular genre films still being produced since Franco’s regime in the 1960s. Núria Triana-Turbio in her text Spanish National Cinema (2003) states that “[a] series of genres reminiscent of the undesirable past had to be killed off in order to ‘modernize’” (114). To qualify her point she quotes from Ramón Pérez Bordó, the President of the Association of film distributors in 1982: “‘80 percent of this country’s film output is not culture’” (114).

Under these circumstances we see two distinct types of filmic production in the 80s. One trend is marked as “B” cinema of genre films that had little to do with the nation or with re-building it. The second class of films were “nation-building narratives that would paper over the cracks and debunk the myths of Francoism” (Triana-Toribio 2003, 115). We must, then, contextualize Acción mutante as an “all-out attack on the genre cinema” that had plagued the national cinema of the 1980s – soft-core pornography, sex comedies, horror films, gore, etc (Jordan 2000, 181) as well as on the realist new foundational films that PSOE promoted. De la Iglesia combats the Miró decree’s emphasis on realism in Acción mutante by creating an alternative reality; he combats the stereotypical two-dimensionality of genre films by playing with structure and
conventional expectations. Again Buse et al.: “If anything, his films are rather a bold statement that anything can be Spanish cinema, or better yet, forget the idea of Spanish cinema as some discrete and bounded entity” (13 emphasis in original). Indeed, it is through his playing with convention, expectation and image that de la Iglesia is able to confront societal problems in a much more creative, effective and entertaining way that has gained the director a devoted fan base of Sci-Fi or counter-cultural fans and academics alike.

Even though de la Iglesia worked against the government standards, PSOE’s intentions with the law were reasonable. What la Ley Miró hoped to combat was the ever present tension in Spanish narrative since it entered the international market: how to make a product that sells well at home and abroad but that is also of high artistic and socially analytical quality. De la Iglesia’s critique of the La ley Miró was aimed not at the intention, rather at the practice. While the decree opened up space for many new directors, even de la Iglesia (Heredero “Cosecha” 25) it was not without its problems. Essentially, La ley Miró was not completely effective in resolving the difficult intersection between producing popular film and political film. John Hopewell wrote that one of the unforeseen effects was that while the law opened up money for national filmmakers who had been historically underpaid, it also released those filmmakers from market pressures (119). In this regard, Spanish audiences that already preferred American films were not going to be tempted back into national film by art-house endeavors, especially those that repeated histories, plots and discourses that had already been done before. Indeed, John Hopewell wrote that the challenge for filmmakers of the 1990s was
“how to make quality films that reflect individual creation and preserve cultural traditions without making works that nobody wants to see” (119), as was the problem with much of the cinema from the 1980s. In agreement with Buse et al., in terms of its cultural significance as a Science Fiction movie, they write: “Acción mutante is an all-out assault on what de la Iglesia has called the ‘conspiracy of boredom’ (Ordoñez 1997, p. 73) in Spanish cinema, by which [de la Iglesia] means the hegemonic literary-political cinema of the 1980s” (11). Even if some critics might disagree, Ación mutante is a representation of how to successfully walk the line between national and global issues so as to attract an audience on both sides of the Atlantic.

Carlos Heredero says of de la Iglesia’s first full-length film that it was as “unsuccessful as it was creative” and that with his next film El día de la bestia (1995) that de la Iglesia finally found a directorial balance of pastiche, creativity and image (190). Although Heredero ultimately calls de la Iglesia’s first film a failure, in the following quote the critic does not miss the importance of the cinematic experiment undertaken:

Su habilidad para jugar con los géneros clásicos, para mezclar la fantasía más abigarrada con negras pinceladas satíricas de raíz esperpéntica, le convierten en un caso singular dentro del cine hispano: heredero posmoderno de algunas de las más ilustres tradiciones del humor español…sus historias – siempre cargadas de violencia – exhiben un saludable cinismo irreverente, no exento de una cierta vocación realista
tamizada por una mirada distante que juega a placer con la complicidad del espectador. (191)

These themes of realism (despite being sf), violence and dark Spanish humor, along with those relating to the culture, the body and the fashion of Spain in the 1980s and 90s will all be treated in the following sections and are indicative not only of de la Iglesia’s filmic trajectory but also of similar themes that will be seen in the work by Bustelo and Reig.

Heredero places de la Iglesia in a generation of filmmakers that were more concerned with image than with story-telling (27). While this is true to a certain extent, the story of the first film should not be disregarded as it is a necessary narration to images that together speak of the post-transition moment. Additionally, although Carlos Heredero, Núria Triana-Toribio and Peter Buse have implied that pieces of the film could have been improved under a more experienced director, as an entire production the film did what it intended to do in an excellent way. It makes a valuable social and economic commentary on Spanish society and it does so through a cohesive visual and stylistic structure. It breaks the reliance on genres by, ironically, resorting to a genre previously un-touched by national directors and bending its rules in an unexpected way. De la Iglesia becomes, then, one of the first directors to make a purely Science Fiction film which he shows to be a perfect medium through which to recreate a Spanish cinema that remains popular (i.e. can be profitable) and makes a cultural and economic criticism.

A valuable comparison can be made between Spanish Sci-Fi and that of the United States. In a recent study of the changing urban spaces of California after WWII and the sf narratives of Ray Bradbury, Aldous Huxey and Philip K. Dick (likely some of
the most influential sf writers of the twentieth century), James Brian Mitchell argues that Science Fiction offered a way to undertake the “nightmarish visions of suburban existence that belied the sunny mythology of easy golden state living – the ‘California lifestyle’ – that had by mid 1950s already become a commodity” (11). In this same way, de la Iglesia’s first narrative engages the technologically and culturally evolving city of Madrid through a parody of its social and economic constructs. Although the film sets up a series of dichotomies of pretty/ugly; capitalist/laborer, center periphery, Acción mutante does not make take these discourses at their face values. The film’s linear structure frames the final encounter of discourses as inevitable and, moreover, as necessarily violent. The story does not rely on facile stereotypes but on those who are able to understand and participate in cultural frameworks versus those that are unable to engage the dominant paradigm successfully. The subversive nature of the film is how de la Iglesia directs the narrative attention to these spatial and cultural paradigms and then breaks them through visual and discursive means. Subsequently, the conclusion of the film does not re-order the binary hierarchies. Instead, they are fused together to make something truly new. In order to more easily understand this, it would be helpful to pause on the filmmaker and his artistic trajectory. From there we will be able to analyze the visual and audio constructions of his first film and its relationship to the discourse presented throughout his oeuvre to date.
There is a Science Fiction subtext that runs through all of Álex de la Iglesia’s movies that deal with the city space of Madrid.\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Acción mutante} is different from his later films in that Madrid is not imagined by highlighting its cartography through images of buildings or iconic places. Rather, the city that is emphasized is composed of psychological and interpersonal relationships of the urbanization of capital and consciousness, especially its relation to the individual and family and community. Although \textit{Acción mutante} is his only film that is explicitly Sci-Fi in its structural, visual, linguistic and discursive components, it is here that de la Iglesia is finding his directorial legs. Many of the motifs, images and tropes that will appear throughout his career can be seen in this first feature-length film. Those themes that are most important are, especially in his first two films, a criticism of the socialist government and, secondly, and seen as a strong critical motif that only grows stronger as his career as a writer-director progresses, a criticism of the mass media and consumer culture. Although his films do fault PSOE for selling-out to capitalist interests, the government and other forces of enforcement and vigilance are a damning parody of the right-wing party’s homophobic, fascist, xenophobic and racist policies. In the end, in all of de la Iglesia’s movies there is no tier of Spanish culture that can escape his parody and criticism.

The film that followed \textit{Acción mutante, El día de la bestia} is, to date, the most commented on of his films. It won six Goya awards, the Spanish equivalent to the Oscar, which legitimized the young director, his brand of humor and directorial style in the cinematic community. Besides winning critical acclaim, it also can boast to having had

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} De la Iglesia has also directed a number of films that take place outside of the national boundaries. Namely, \textit{Perdita Durango} (1997) and his most recent film \textit{The Oxford Murders} (2008).}
726,000 spectators in Spain, a number that amounts to a coup in national numbers (Hereder 34). *El día de la bestia* also accomplishes the goal that la Ley Miró hoped to achieve: a venture that combines valuable social criticism plus made money through national audiences. In de la Iglesia’s second feature-length film the city space of Madrid acts as a protagonist and although it is set in the same time period contemporary to its release, the invented group “Limpia Madrid”, a fascist militia that hunts and kills the homeless as well as foreign immigrants, adds to the dystopic feel that blurs the genre line between fantasy, horror and realism.

Following his first commercial and critically “successful” film, his next script dealing with Madrid is *La comunidad* from 2000. The opening credits cite Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and the first image of the film is of the protagonist, Julia (Carmen Maura), a real estate agent standing in the rain in the shadow of a tall urban building. It is a scene reminiscent of the first scene from Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*. Again, this movie is not explicitly sf but it does visually cite a number of famous Sci-Fi movies like *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix* as well as famous American thrillers from Hitchcock. As we will discuss in the coming pages and chapters, these filmic references should not be judged as random images used for comedic affect. They are a vital aspect of the film’s message. His latest film about Madrid, *Crimen Ferpecto* from 2004 is another dark comedy where the protagonist Rafael (Guillermo Toledo) works in a large department store in Madrid. Although this thriller takes place almost entirely inside the walls of a

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12 For an in-depth analysis of how Madrid as urban environment is used please read Malcolm Alan Compitello’s “From Planning to Design: The Culture of Flexible Accumulation in Post-Cambio Madrid”.
fictional retail giant’s Madrid flagship-store it is a clear reference to the department store giant El corte inglés.

The first sentence of Nuria Triana-Toribio’s introduction to Spanish National Cinema very aptly describes the importance of de la Iglesia, “The director … is, in many ways, the present and possibly the future of Spanish national cinema. At the same time his films may also be the death-knell of the very idea of a Spanish national cinema” (1). She goes on to describe how his films are a juxtopositon of images and styles of American directors and, a deeply Spanish cultural sensibility that makes it very difficult for an outsider to understand the societal parody. Almost all of the critics who have analyzed de la Iglesia acknowledge the dichotomy he has created of using a repertoire of international, predominantly north-American, styles and genre constructions in order to tell a very Spanish saga. It is in the understanding of these genres, how they are constructed and what they mean that becomes a sticking point for many academics.

Like the other two narratives to be presented in Chapters 3 and 4, Acción mutante is world designed out of desire for change. Frederick Jameson has described Utopias in as trying to fulfill a wish for a “negation of the existing order” (72) in order to bring about social justice or political balance. Instead of achieving this dream though imagining a positive recourse of action, the narratives by the artists in this study chose to illustrate the errors of wish fulfillment. They showcase the faults in the anti-bourgeoisie blue-print that so many social theories design. The blue-print for Utopia that Acción mutante destroys is that of Tierno Galván and Almodóvar’s movida. To reach this end de la Iglesia chose the structure of sf, a fact to which many critics have reacted negatively.
While all the critics to-date seem to understand the unfavorable assessment that *Acción mutante* makes towards the political and cultural super-structure of society, they fail to recognize why the director chose Science Fiction as an outlet for a serious engagement and judgment of the Spanish contemporary moment. This shows a misunderstanding of sf and consequently of de la Iglesia’s film on a fundamental level. Indeed many critics have hesitated to call the movie Sci-Fi, and have made great analytical strains to separate the narrative from the genre as a way of recuperating the social message contained within. In an essay from Teresa Herrera de la Muela the author writes:

De la Iglesia seems not to want to elaborate a purely sf universe, but a hybrid, a multilayered mélange of icons of Spanish culture. […] Although de la Iglesia uses special effects to create a dystopian illusion; he later uses irony to undermine that illusion. […] Rather than anchoring itself in the fantastic world typically associated with sf, *Mutant Action* repeatedly refers to patently Spanish icons. The irony places the viewer closer to the world portrayed and prevents him or her from feeling sf’s usual effects of distancing. (103-105)

She continues by giving examples of humorous cultural situations that make the movie too Spanish and too ironic to be Science Fiction. Likewise, in this quote from Núria Triana-Toribio sf is relegated to part of the film’s cultural referencing: “[h]is films … promiscuously mixes science fiction and comedy, film noir and western, Almódovar and Ridley Scott” (9). Or this one from Buse et al. “Obviously, much of the emphasis in
Acción mutante on the limitations of technology (and by association of special effects in sf films in general) has to do with the film’s comic thrust, which consistently and deliberately undermines the fantasy prerequisite to sf” (14). In fact, Herrera de la Muela and others dedicate so much critical space to undermining the Sci-Fi nature of the narrative they are seemingly uninterested in developing a theory as to why the director would use this popular style in his works.

Their refusal to attempt an understanding at the nature and the history of the Science Fiction genre results in sf being just another aspect of the film’s overall pastiche instead of a vital part of its construction and message. Apart from the fact that there is no reason why sf cannot be adapted to a particular culture, we must remember that sf is precisely about the limits of technology rather than its potentialities. Therefore to write that Acción mutante cannot be Science Fiction because as a genre it can only refer to one type of homogenous future space and human condition or because the technology of the film is “not good enough” is not a valid argument. Furthermore, while the level of suspension of disbelief involved in a sf narrative may be different than in a realist narrative, this is not the same as Sci-Fi having a “fantasy prerequisite”. The Science Fiction narratives that Herrera de la Muela, Buse and Triana-Toribio must be referencing are the Hollywood blockbusters first popularized in the 1970s that divide the world into easy Jungian binaries of good versus bad and served primarily as a vehicle for showcasing new and innovative special effects. Perhaps the most accessible example of this is George Lucas’ Star Wars trilogy that began in 1977 and revolutionized special effects technology as well as presented a very simple delineation between good and evil.
The components of the story are a fight between good and evil that is played out in a future world through an epic journey and battle. The American sf example presents many ethical situations but also is, moreover, a visual spectacle.

Although Acción mutante reenacts those precise components of an epic journey and battle in the future world, it did so sarcastically, often times by directly referencing those films. Furthermore, we must counter-act the mass-media vision of sf that the previously cited critics reference with what was, in fact, the most enigmatic and influential American Science Fiction of the last half century. Like the works of de la Iglesia, the Sci-Fi paradigms of the modern North American city narrated by Philip K. Dick or Ray Bradbury were more often than not very much rooted in place and, indeed, reality. We can begin to have a more nuanced view of de la Iglesia’s first work if we make more valuable comparisons between his sf project and those of similarly minded North Americans.

Science Fiction is a highly descriptive genre, as is realism, and when it works it is because of its diligence in extrapolating a world that is alien from our current reality but that retains a high level of verisimilitude to a constructed internal structure. The seemingly invented world must also remain recognizable enough so as to inspire a connection to the lived reality of the spectator. This internal structure, to reiterate what Suvin has written, must necessarily have a real link to the technology and ideological superstructure that it is criticizing. In this way viewers can recognize their lived world as functioning in a manner similar to the fictional world projected to them. To speak on the level of narrative intention, the Science Fiction of de la Iglesia in the 1990s reflects a
trend in sf that Patricia Melzer describes in her text, *Alien constructions*. While Melzer focuses specifically on gendered sf from the 70s to the present, many of the tropes used in feminist Sci-Fi discourse to structure an argument are also seen in the sf that has been adapted to Spanish discourses of the post transition. For example, de la Iglesia frames his societal critique as “soft” sf in much the same way as feminists that critiqued the status of women in the US in the 70s. Both the feminist narrators in the U.S. and de la Iglesia speak of a politics of “identity and difference” as well as “critiques of science and technology; and the relationship between gender identity, body, and desire” (13). Furthermore the following quote from Melzer about feminist sf discourse in the 70s is easily transferred to the dichotomies presented in the sf project of de la Iglesia in the 90s:

Key political elements that shape these debates are global capitalism and exploitative class relations within a growing international system (relationship between First and Third Worlds, postcolonial relations); the impact of technologies on women’s lives (Internet, global industries, medical establishment, reproductive technologies and posthuman embodiment (biotechnologies, body/machine interface, the commodification of desire). (13)

In fact, if we replace “women” with “post-transitional Spain” it becomes a perfect description of how Science Fiction has been used in Spain. As Melzer’s quote demonstrates, the importance of sf as a structuring and visual narrative paradigm is what it references and how that referencing reinforces or confronts dominant paradigms. It is important to understand that the American sf tradition – feminist and otherwise –
beginning in the 1950s is a criticism of all the aforementioned issues and it equally undertakes a profound criticism of space, particularly urban space, as well as the technology, science, economy and ideology that creates it.

Returning to the dissertation from James Brian Mitchell, “Estranging places: The Small Town, Suburb, and Megalopolis in Post-War California Science Fiction” (2007) the author builds a bridge between the changing urban spaces of California after WWII, He argues that sf “fits L.A. because they both have evolved in response to the contingencies of a post-industrial era” (33). As importantly, sf was an excellent narrative fit for L.A. in that time-period for its ability to explain the cultural and geographical situation of the post-war period. Mitchell convincingly argues that the architecture of Southern California’s post-war economic dream of prosperity more than inspired sf, the built environment estranged the inhabitants of the quintessential post-war city, Los Angeles, from their urban space in much the same way that Science Fiction narratives estrange the reader from the text. We can extend this bridge between North American Sci-Fi and a particular city space to Spanish sf and the city space of Madrid. To begin, de la Iglesia’s first narrative engages the technologically and culturally evolving city of Madrid through a parody of its social and economic constructs. As Malcolm Compitello explains, just as the intent of La Ley Miró was in the best interests of Spanish people, so were the original efforts at re-building Madrid based on resolving issues of social justice. PSOE focused on fixing the problems of urban decay and while emphasizing the city center, they paid little attention “to the idea of Madrid as an urban region” (Designing 405). As Compitello further explains, this approach that focused on the center rather than
the city as a whole “opened the door for later city governments … to use design over planning to effect a different kind of change in the city and urban region, one predicated not on social justice but on urban boosterism and selling place” (ibid).

Madrid, mediated through a sf structure, is an urban nightmare, a violent, dark place where government agents enforce institutionalized policies that are based on aesthetic values translated into ideological mandates. Madrid has become, in de la Igelsia’s dystopic vision, a dense, violently consumer driven culture of haves and have-nots while the provincial Asturias becomes the exploited, bleak and just as violent Axturias. The two cities criticized are narrated as distinct planetary bodies that are analogous to the consumer and the labor body. The only way to “cure” the disorder caused by the extreme alienation and fragmentation of this situation is through apocalyptic destruction. I will begin the analysis of the film by way of comparing Álex de la Iglesia’s textual strategies for resistance with those strategies of other authors from outside of his time and space. Primarily I will focus on Science Fiction from the United States as well as avant-garde resistance literature from Spain.

The earlier connection between post-war American Sci-Fi and post-1992 Spanish sf is again important because it offers a more precise commentary on the references that de la Iglesia so heavily relies on and parodies. The importance is not as much in the internal narrative structuring – although this is also important – rather in the why the genre was chosen as indicative of a particular time and age. This type of comparative analysis of how Science Fiction represented a transitional period in the U.S. versus how it projected a similar cultural paradigm in Spain allows us to understand de la Iglesia’s use
of sf as a response to similar situation: rapid economic growth and those that it leaves behind. Science Fiction is not a genre bound to place and is, rather, a form that is easily adaptable to other spaces, times and cultures. Sci-Fi speaks to a rapidly expanding urban environment that is often times beyond the cognitive grasp of its inhabitants. Also in agreement with Mitchell,

Science Fiction, which tells us more about the present than the past than it does about the future, offers revelatory insights about municipal spaces that postmodern theory often overlooks. We should read sf stories and films, then, with a critical awareness of how they can contribute meaningfully to our understanding of social space. (44)

Just as California in the 50s was undergoing a rapid transition of growth and expansion due to economic conditions, so also did Madrid in the 90s. However, whereas California’s growth was, from its inception, aligned with corporate sponsors, especially the automobile industry, Spain’s growth paradigm was not. Spain’s transitional moment was not as well-fueled as California and despite PSOE’s best interests, later governments “opted for economic [strategies] based on privatization and internationalization and workers found their jobs eliminated when Spanish owners sold out to foreign concerns for quick and high profits” (Compitello “Designing” 406). As previously discussed at length in Chapter One, 1992 is a watershed year for the economic, social, cultural and technological progress in Spain. It is the end of a transition into democracy which signals a complete entrance into full market capitalism. This brings with it the ambivalences of the modernized economy and the moral and cultural dichotomies of globalization. With
this new national and world order, there also must come a new way to represent that world. By continuing the comparison between how sf fit the time and place of L.A. can further our understanding of why de la Iglesia as author chose Science Fiction to represent new urban and societal constructions in his home country. Additionally, in terms of textual referential distancing, Science Fiction as a narrative strategy fits Spain now (meaning post-1992) when in other times different types of vanguard methods were used in order to produce a similar effect. Because of this, it is important to also made diachronic comparisons between the avant-garde literature of de la Iglesia and that of his national predecessors.

Another valuable and nationally based comparison is of the discourse used in Spain’s most recent push towards modernization is to an earlier push in the 1960s while Spain was still under the dictatorship. During the first push towards capitalism and technological modernization tried by Franco and his Opus Dei technocrats, writers responded to the increasing consumer and urban culture with the “nueva novela”. This type of narrative employed a highly self-referential language steeped in irony as a discursive strategy in order to criticize the historical transition and to work under the radar of censorship. In 1992 we see a different type of external pressure on the artist, one quite different from the governmental censorship imposed throughout Franco’s reign: neoliberal climate that juxtaposes apathy and fear of homogenizing forces. However, although the two time periods — the late 90s and the mid 60s — differed in the terms of the atmosphere created out of the situation of the economy, government, technology and cultural situation, the way in which native authors concerned with the climate of the 60s
and the 90s have dealt with their particular moment has been very similar. Additionally, in both time periods we see, on the one hand, a push for “realism” either by other authors, as in Goytisolo’s time, or by a governmental institution like La ley Miró, as we have discussed, in de la Iglesia’s time. On the other hand, there is a concentrated effort to resist the “realist” pressures of the government and consumer market by means of the employment of ironic discourse.

We will take as an example Señas de identidad by Juan Goytisolo (1966). This was a narrative composed by a self-exiled author from Barcelona writing from Paris who created a self-exiled protagonist who returns from Paris to his natal city of Barcelona. This geographic shift is motivated by the sickness and death of the protagonist’s father but it allows that during the time spent in Barcelona the protagonist also explores what connections or threads of identity might still connect him to his former city and country. What Álvaro, the central figure, discovers and narrates is an urban environment that has forgotten its past and is consumed with consumption and tourism. The painful Civil War past had been modified, re-packaged and sloganized by the government in order to attract tourist dollars. This was an endeavor mandated by the Franco government and willingly implemented by the mass media. David Hertzberger in “Language and Referentiality in Señas de identidad” wrote that the relationship of language to space served a specific function. Namely,

Since the world invented and propagated by the press is formulary and reductive, its purpose is to obliterate perceptions that are spontaneous and complex. For Goytisolo language functions as an instrument of the
writer’s refusal to accept life as it is. Hence his attack against Spanish reality begins by laying bare the automatized language that controls and shapes that reality. He appropriates the language of the press and places it in a literary context that first exposes, and then contradicts, its intention.

(615)

Goytisolo used a discursive strategy that was able to reveal the artificiality of seemingly natural processes of mass media language. In much the same way that the author from the 1960s used the written language itself to distance his work from “realism” and “reality” as a paradoxical way of bringing the reader closer to that lived reality, so has the filmmaker Álex de la Iglesia in the 1990s. However, instead of employing a written language, de la Iglesia makes use of a visual language to first cognitively estrange the spectator from what she thinks is only a superficial viewing of reality. The shifted perspective of reality is used to disentangle the viewer’s lived reality from the potentialities and dangers of what lurks beneath. When David Hertzberger wrote of Señas, “[h]ence as we observe at close range the language of Franco’s culture, we see as well the way in which that culture can be redefined by a subversion of its linguistic intent” (616). We can easily adjust this idea to fit de la Iglesia’s narrative of thirty years later: by observing at close range the language of the mass-media culture, we can see the way in which that culture can be redefined by a subversion of its visual intent.\footnote{Similarly, as Goytisolo and de la Iglesia use language, they also have similar geographic circumstances. They are both “de-centered” – Goytisolo from his urban space of Barcelona through a self-imposed exile; de la Iglesia is de-centered from Madrid given that he is Basque. In both cases the artist has taken the lived material of the city – linguist and visual – and found a narrative structure to accommodate a criticism of the problems present through and by it.}
These comparisons between Sci-Fi from the United States, a Spanish writer from the 1960s and a film-maker from the early 90s are important for various reasons. While coming from very different generations of narrators, all have dealt with the progress of capitalism by skewing the audience’s referential stand-point. Also, as stated in the previous pages, establishing a narrative link between de la Iglesia and international and national authors weaves together important ideological and narrative threads. One of the resulting products that this dissertation wishes to prove is a historic and artistic contextualization of what de la Iglesia, and other Spanish Science Fiction artists of his kind, has done. Therefore, while academic scholars of Spanish literature have tired to de-emphasize the Sc-Fi nature of his work, de la Iglesia pieces together a distinctly Spanish form of sf that incorporates visual and narrative play and Spanish culture. Consequently, while the particular form employed has its roots in the United States it has been reborn as Spanish and de la Iglesia – indeed, all three authors to be presented in this dissertation – transgresses cultural boundaries through the intertextual and historical structuring of the narrative. As we will see, de la Iglesia was only the first to combine discursive strategies in order to show the viewer the complexity and intricacies of a very Spanish culture through an iconically American form.

Accion mutante is a film deeply rooted in time and space. The dystopia created by Álex de la Iglesia in this “Wild, grossed-out and steamy” sf does not center on advances in science and is therefore not “hard Sci-Fi”. Instead, the paradigm that Acción mutante wishes to destroy was extracted from political tranformations, specifically,

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14 This is the tag-line on the English version of the film. It is quoted from The Scotsman.
exaggerated aesthetic ideals of the body that correspond to the creation and governance of space and place in Madrid pre-1992. The film is a parody premised on parallel social and economic circumstances of the transition into a full democracy. The film in its visual, audio and ideological discourse reflects a distorted image of the post-transition nation. The themes in the film that are most germane to this study are particular constructions of the culture in Madrid and how they are played out through the body, as a crisis of fashion, technology, labor, and energy. We can understand how these constructions are dismantled in the film through Harvey’s understanding of the urbanization of capital and of the consciousness, Tim Armstrong’s work on modernism and the body, Donna Haraway’s theories of the body in relation to space and technology and Thomas Frank’s work on cultural appropriations.

Returning to Teresa Herrera de la Muela’s previously cited article, after the pages of text explaining why the *Acción mutante* is not Science Fiction, she makes an important argument that the film is a criticism of the economic schism between wealthy capitalists and poor manual laborers that the socialist party was not able to correct during their tenure in the 1980s. Likewise, others who have analyzed the film also have commented on the connection between the film’s content and the socio-economic situation it references, adding important analysis to the small but growing body of criticism around the film. Buse et al. write extensively about the criticism of the PSOE government but because of their insistence on undermining the Science Fiction qualities fail to see certain economic relationships. For example, they mention the presence of robots but see them as a failure of the SF: “[t]he mechanical bouncers, musical trio and priest at the wedding are
hardly sophisticated in their actions, less cyborg or android than shop-window mannequins” (14). They fall-short of seeing this mechanical out-sourcing of manual labor to low-quality robots as part of the socialist critique of the film. Indeed, the technological backwardness in the sf may not so much be a circumstance of a comparably low production budget compared to American Sci-Fi as it is also works as an intentional comment on Spain’s technological backwardness in the pre-1992 situation. Helpful here is to return again to Mitchell’s dissertation on U.S. post-war Science Fiction.

In his analysis of Ray Bradbury’s criticism of small-town America he wrote, “[o]ne of the reasons sf resonated so powerfully with contemporary readers was because of its faithful reproduction and subsequent subversion of the widely recognized mythology of the small town” (73). Moreover, these criticisms penetrated the mass consciousness as they acted as a “reminder of what the post-war small town failed to be” (ibid emphasis in original). De la Iglesia satirically reproduced the Spain of the 80s and reminds the viewer through the story and images of what PSOE had failed to accomplish. The low-tech robots and something-to-be-desired special effects are a signal of a greater failure. In the represented Madrid towards the end of the 80s space was becoming more bound up in the concerns of flexible accumulation and real people were losing real jobs. As a result, the city as space was becoming ever increasingly stratified according to communities of money and capital interests. As we will see in the representation of Madrid, Axturias/Asturias as the labor periphery is an apt metaphor for a greater social ill being that the mining industry of this northern Spanish region suffered under the importation of cheaper, foreign coal throughout the 70s and 80s.
The structure of the film signals the estrangement-recognition belonging to Science Fiction and the content works to convey a severe criticism of cultural, economic and political structures. In this way we see that, while de la Iglesia certainly visually references famous American sf films, as critics we cannot take a visual reference only at its face value; for to do that is to confuse individual image with message and, consequently, to fail to fully understand the discursive power behind structure and content. The film’s utopist construct references that of the colorful, erotic, sometimes beautiful, fetishized and perverse image of Spain created by Pedro Almodóvar beginning during the movida in the 1980s and that persists now. Moreover, de la Iglesia is attacking the commodification of that image as representative of the nation as a whole. De la Iglesia structures his sf tale around a voyage that moves from the center, Madrid, to the periphery, an imaginary planet called “Axturias”. The choice of Madrid as cultural center is obvious and the choice of Asturias is also natural, as explained previously. The spatial importance has a direct relation to the construction of the individual identity. The idea of inhabiting a spatial center or periphery corresponds to the idea of how the individual identifies to a social center or outer circle. Both of these geographic and social concerns get played out in the movement of the plot which follows the kidnapping of a beautiful woman from the economic, social and geographic center of Madrid society, Patricia, by a group of physically handicapped and disabled men who inhabit the physical and social margins of Spanish society.

15 Barry Jordan defined the Almodóvar effect as a visual and narrative construction that while “equating ‘Spanishness’ with sex and sexual perversion (however playful and camp) may have reinforced some rather unhelpful, negatively stereotypical perceptions of modern Spain and Spaniards” (73).
The plot advances with no temporal disruptions and is spatially and temporally driven movement through three main places: Madrid, outer space, and the distant planet Axturias. In this way we move from the revanchist city to the space of labor with the region of disconnect, or no-man’s land, in between. Additionally, the plot is structured so as to acknowledge itself as film. We the viewers are first drawn into the narrative world and then occasionally reminded that we are watching something that is not real and that knows that it is not real. This is one of the ways that de la Iglesia fights against both the over-used “realist” filmic structures promoted by PSOE as well as by market demand for “B” genre films.

The story is driven by the actions of the militants and from the beginning scenes we as viewers are drawn into sympathetic alignment with the rebel group. The structure for this emotional plea from the narrative world is a built through real time scenes of a terrorist action and a satire of a nightly news anchorman commenting on the event. The scandal hungry anchorman is a motif that will also be important throughout Acción mutante. The opening sequences of the film are of a botched kidnapping attempt that segues into a newscast of the same event. In the sensationalist re-enactment of the events, the back stories of the each of the men in the terrorist band are given through a brief retelling of their criminal histories belied by their social and physical inadequacies.

Even though the news anchorman’s telling of the saga of the members of Acción mutante’s inspires the viewer to their cause more through pity than through ideological motivation, the emotional play for our allegiance is successful. The history of the heroine,

\[16\] Almodóvar also employed the same news-man parody in his early films, specifically in Matador, as well as later films like Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios.
Patricia Orjueo, and her wealthy family is also given through the same nightly news story. Patricia is presented as an aristocrat and filmed with the back-drop of a traditional Castilian ranch with pure-bread horses. This scene frames her and her husband-to-be her as economic and cultural royalty. Although many characters are introduced in this beginning montage, the story of *Acción mutante* has four main protagonists: Ramón, the leader of the militant group, Acción mutante; Álex, the only one that survives Ramón’s purging of the group for his personal gain; Patricia, the beautiful heiress to a prosperous health-food industry that her father, Orujo, built and directs.

From the sequencing of the kidnapping event to the re-telling of the event there is a musical bridge that brings the viewers out of the fictional world and into a moment of narrative play. The band Def Con Dos sings the title song to the opening credits while the members of Acción mutante conspicuously act-out their parts as revolutionaries for the viewing audience. The montage includes the presence of stage-hands who help with mis-firing weapons and the men breaking character to receive direction from someone beyond the space of the camera. From the musical montage the editing fades back into the fictional world.

Still in the city, in the grounded Spaceship, we view the planning and undertaking of Patricia’s kidnapping. Acción mutante plans to carry out their plan during her wedding. Perhaps one of the most infamous scenes of the film, it is also the crux of the criticism of Almodóvar. The successful kidnapping leads to the groups escape and the second movement of the film: the revolutionary group’s flight from Madrid in a spaceship “La Virgen de Carmen” with Patricia. In the third movement we arrive with the
three surviving members on the planeta Axturias. This planet is inhabited by only miners, all men. Their only function is to labor and their world becomes one of extreme alienation and violence. The barrage of gore finally ends, suitably, with an apocalypse when Álex accidentally sets off a fusion bomb and Patricia and Álex are the only ones to survive (beside a group of singing miners who direct the closing credits of the film).

These three spatial movements are important structurally to build the story and also to construct the future world and its internal paradigms. The story is born from the injustices that the extreme polarization of labor from space and whole-bodied from fragmented-body have wrought. The plot moves from internal to external spaces but in every sequence there is an undaunted forward drive towards the end where all the narrative threads meet. These elements of the plot are separated stylistically primarily through color and shot but are all linked through a color scheme where blue, black, red and the yellow of flesh or fire predominate.

In Madrid the story is told through an intermingling of the aforementioned T.V. newscaster and direct action of the *mutantes*. These scenes are shot in close-up to medium shot and the mise-en-scène narrates brutally enforced urban space illuminated by an artificial, discomforting blue light. The external images of Madrid in medium shot frame the city as a claustrophobic violent and burning disaster. The darkness is also mirrored in the interior “family” space of the mutants: a poorly-lit, cluttered and unkempt Spaceship. When we arrive at the private, elite space of the wedding, the dark hazy blues

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17 This situation is reminiscent of Ridley Scott’s adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s SF short story. In *Blade Runner*, the mining and manual labor is all done by androids. The notable difference is, then, that in de la Iglesia’s world the de-humanized and de-territorialized bodies are humans instead of human-like inventions.
and black of the street and ship interior transform into vibrant blues and reds of the
garishly costumed guests at the wedding. These scenes are shot in medium-long to
medium close-up so as to accentuate the parody of Almodóvar, as we will address
shortly.

In the movement from Madrid to Axturias and the number of characters in the
film dwindles through the violent betrayal of Ramón, the enveloping blackness ends
along with the brutal voyage. The darkness finally cedes to the blaring whites of the
mining planet Axturias and of Patricia’s tattered wedding gown. Architecturally this film
style resembles a compression of premeditated violence and dark colors to a release into a
whiteness symbolizing chaotic brutality. This movement and change of color also
highlights Patricia’s transformation from dim-witted rich girl in Madrid to a woman who
is able to manipulate the conclusion of her own kidnapping. The camera perspective also
changes on the distant planet; we now view the action through long shots, even
sometimes extreme long-shots as though to underscore the vulnerability of the “de-
centered” characters on the planet dominated by insane miners.

The spaces and places of the film communicate a political and social message by
way of a film style that stages irony through the conjunction of visual framing and verbal
and kinetic discourse. The beginning scenes of the mutantes role-playing with props, the
soundtrack of Def Con Dos singing the theme song and the ironic reflections seen in
motivation for leadership and subservience to power structures are all structural plays
used to influence the viewer’s opinion. De la Iglesia plays with the stereotypically two-
dimensional structure of main-stream sf film to emphasize that what may seem to be two-
dimensional societal problems based on binaries are never so easily categorized. Congruently, he also underscores that what we take as progress and modernity can act as double edged swords.

Our entrance into the film is through the ironic use of sound. We begin in a visual darkness and the sound of a man screaming in tortuous pain. The scene abruptly opens to an extreme close-up of the fatal attempted kidnapping of Matías Pons, a health and fitness guru, and of a pair of hands, placing a ball in his mouth and tape over his lips and nose to stop him from making noise. The camera pans backwards to reveal the whole scene: a group of handicapped and mechanically assisted men are trying to subdue Pons and, on a heart-shaped bed behind them, a woman lies naked in a pool of blood. Presiding over the situation is a poster in black and white of the body-builder while the theme song to *Mission Impossible* is the extra-diegetic soundtrack conducting the action. The group is unsuccessful in their kidnapping and end up killing Pons and his female companion. From this sequence the music acts as a carry-over into the news coverage of the event. At this point, the music abruptly changes again, this time to Spanish heavy metal band Def Con Dos. This diegetic music plays as the members of the underground organization shoot their guns and put on a terrorist show in front of a camera. While the lyrics declare, “Justicia Ciega! Somos peligrosos! Somos guerrilleros” we see images of the guns misfiring and stage-men helping the actors with their props. This Spanish sound-track bridges us back into the story-line of the film.

The U.S. and heavy-metal Spanish sound bridges underscore the global and national cultural parodies at play. The iconic American song from a 1960s network
television program about an elite government force that uses high tech devices and covert operations to unmask criminals is obviously part of the ironic message of the film used for comedic effect. The musical score written specifically for the film by Def Con Dos plays to a mise-en-scène that is violent but it is conspicuously a spectacle, not to be taken seriously. This aspect of violence as entertainment is especially carried-out through another structural device de la Iglesia uses throughout the film, the mock television reporter and news footage. From the supercilious newsman’s suit covered in the name of the show “Sucesos”, to the ticker-tape used to inform the audience of the ransom amount, to the sports-like coverage of the money exchange on the miner’s planet, the message that the popular media makes spectacle of social and economic strife is clear from the beginning sequence. Indeed, the same audio-visual language used to report on Patricia’s wedding is also used to comment on violent repressions in the street. All action is reduced to the same level of spectacle through the mass media outlet.

The editing style also suggests parody and is essential in the construction of a series of ideological symmetries between opposing political structures. The most consistent montage elements are jump cuts with only a few instances of fades. In order to show simultaneity of action, an important aspect of the many symmetries the movie introduces, de la Iglesia makes frequent use of cross-cutting. As we can see, the editing style is not complicated, which is necessary because the visual framing is a cluttered and raging mash of blood and gore.

Although there is no absence of naked skin, the body is not presented as an object of erotic desire except in a few circumstances at which time it is undermined by
esperpentic farce. For example, in the opening scene Matías Pons and the unidentified women on the bed are both naked. However, they are covered in blood and she, in fact, is decapitated. The viewer’s expectations of the pre-transitional “Sexy celtibérico” (Ballesteros 176) are devitalized in this 1993 film through dark humor. Indeed, the movie takes all of Almodóvar’s camp, kitsch and fetishized sexuality and showers it in gore and filth. Whereas sexual perversion and fashion are core visual themes in Almodóvar’s early films about la movida, violence and deformity are highlighted in de la Iglesia. All of the people –pretty and mutant – continually get covered in blood, random fluids of the space-ship and dirt. The fetishization of designed beauty, as seen in Almodóvar, becomes a fetish of torture and violence in de la Iglesia. We can understand this shift not only in terms of culture but of economy.

Remembering Lefebvre, as culture depends more and more upon technology, cultural shifts consequently depend upon the individual’s ability to read and interpret information and to then be able to insert more information back into society. The malfunctioning of this system is the key to understanding de la Iglesia. Culture, economy, technology and the consumption practices that capitalist forces spawn are essential to the message in all of de la Iglesia’s work. In his first film the narration focuses not only on the facile dichotomy between the haves and have-nots but a more sophisticated structure of those that are able to understand and participate in cultural frameworks versus those that are unable to engage the dominant paradigm successfully. The filmic situation of those that are able to be successful in society, represented by Orujo and Patricia, or those that are aesthetically and economically located too far outside of the cultural and
economic center to be able to participate, reflects to a degree the situation of the director and his financer and anti-hero, Almodóvar.

The culture that Almodóvar gave image and expression to evolved from an expression of an alternative movement to be the dominant center construct. As suggested in Chapter One, Almodóvar has been much more than a film-maker, he took a cultural moment and directed its movement inside and outside of national borders. However, as Almodóvar became more popular internationally, he began to set his sights on Hollywood. Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios (1988) fully marks his break from fringe director to international success. In this film, the Madrid of Matador or La ley del deseo, two of his earlier films focusing on the movida, was dramatically altered in order to sell Spanish space to an international audience. The sexual content changed from perverse critique of an incestuous Spain to a campy and kitsch progressive country. The story lines changed from chaos conceived out of a lack of unity to melodrama. The drug and rock-n-roll of Madrid of the early 80s transformed into vibrant, often beautiful, colorful images of the capital city that framed the story under a happy, if not also sexy and fun, national image.

De la Iglesia read Almodóvar’s utopia of this later, commodified and globalized version of national space as an individualized product in the neo-liberal economy. Instead, however, of individual freedoms, this new balance of individual, class, family, community and state and created matrixes of people whose value in society was based solely on adaptability of appearance which in turn worked to determine economic mobility. Therefore, the way that one is able to modify their “look” determines one’s
productive and consumptive ability and agency in the economic system. The members of *Acción mutante* were all born with physical deformities that translated directly into social and economic impossibilities. Interestingly, Ramón, the leader, was not born a mutant himself but through his disfiguration capitalizes on his follower’s misfortune for his own economic gain.

Tim Armstrong parses the relationship between the body and modernism. He begins by establishing a history of how perceptions of the body were altered through technology and scientific progression in the nineteenth century. Like Lefebvre, he understands the body as becoming more entwined with the “machine culture” and therefore a site of regulation and crisis (2). He states that “[m]odernity, then, brings both a fragmentation and augmentation of the body in relation to technology; it offers the body as lack, at the same time as it offers technological compensation” (3). This increasing interdependence of the body on technology is, logically, “offered as a part of capitalism’s fantasy of the complete body” (ibid). The perceptible experience of the body, he argues, plays an important role in this process, “[e]ven film can be seen in these terms: as a visual illusion which exploits the limits of perception, but which also offers the cinematic body as recompense for the fragmented body of technology” (5). Again, internal to *Acción mutante*, the director takes the relationship between body and technology and breaks down the codes that align them. De la Iglesia does this through a distorted symmetry based on a binary of the body as whole/fractured. By laying bare the seemingly natural constructs of fixing a broken body (Labor and individual), *Acción mutante* also rejects entirely the dream of technology filling in for a fragmented body.
The interaction between the body, technology and capitalism is part of de la Iglesia’s visual and narrative play. He takes the reigning cultural paradigm established by Almodóvar’s Oscar worthy packaging of the *movida* and places it in the estranged world of a dystopic sf future. We easily recognize the faces and the look of *la movida* but the context establishes a parody such that the juxtaposition of the disabled and fragmented bodies of the men of mutant action in turn enfeebles technology and moreover, the socialist party’s desire for a whole city based on notions of social justice. The nightmare vision of alienated labor and mechanized culture vis à vis the wedding robots are direct reflections of all that Madrid lost when PSOE’s plans for the city lost out to the neo-liberal runt in their own party and then their loss to the PP in the 1979 elections. De la Iglesia’s film visualizes an urban process that would only become stronger throughout the 90s. Namely, “a lack of balance between form and content, a loss of engagement with social transformation and resistance to capital [in] the rush to commodify and sell everything” (Compitello “Designing” 410).

This economic situation plays out not only in the portrayal of labor and consumption as distinct planetary bodies separated by time, space and culture but also through the discourse of the body. Namely, Almodóvar’s “beautiful people” that he used through his early and later career are mirrored in the film as garish and more costumed than fashionable. The body, in the dystopia envisioned by De la Iglesia, is the foreground of discourse and works as a signifier for one’s place in society. In this way the external body is seen a consumption practice, a fractured or faulty entity that must be made whole.
The severely disabled and disfigured are at a disadvantage unless they have the money to assume more esteemed aesthetic images.

Perhaps the most prominent staging of the body-technology politics that de la Iglesia is reproaching as faulty is found in scenes of Patricia’s wedding. This sequence of the movie is one that critics have often cited as the famous “biting the hand that feeds him” scene.\textsuperscript{18} Luis Martín-Cabrera describes it as the destruction of the happy years of the 80s where Almodóvar’s kitsch succumbs to the marginal and the freak (“Nuevas representaciones culturales” 80). As Buse et al. succinctly aver, “[t]he pleasure that Almodóvar’s films take in modern, democratic Spain is forthrightly rejected here, from a self-proclaimed position of marginality vis-à-vis the stylized, design-conscious world inhabited by Almodóvar’s characters” (17). While the costumes that the revelers are wearing are the most dominant visual presence of this event, what this sequence illustrates so abrasively is the irony of fashion and the limits of technology.

To fully grasp this scene we must look at the sequence preceding the wedding when Ramón makes his oft-cited declaration:

El mundo está dominado por niños bonitos e hijos de papa. ¡Dios! ¡Basta ya de mierdas ‘lite’! ¡Basta ya de colonias, de anuncios de coches, de aguas minerales! No queremos oler bien, no queremos adelgazar. Todo el mundo es tonto o moderno. Somos mutantes, no pijos de playa ni maricones-diseño. (13:47-14:28)

\textsuperscript{18} Also in Buse et al. “Given that Acción mutante owes an enormous debt, both financial and stylistic, to Pedro Almodóvar, is de la Iglesia not literally biting the hand that feeds when he has his heroes massacre pretty much every last one of the “Almodovarian” characters who appear in the party scene? (17)”
This very anti-neo-liberal tirade will be later negated when we see Ramon’s motivations are for personal gain in order to assume a place of power in the modernized world. However, at this initial moment in the film we know upon entering the dining hall all of the reasons why Ramón hates the upper-class and why the *mutantes* feel compelled to action. A jump cut takes us directly from Ramon’s monologue in the poorly lit space-ship of the terrorist group to an extreme close-up of a jarringly white juke-box and a hand selecting the festive music. As the camera pans back, we see that the machine stands in the place of a live band and plastic robots turn while the bridal party and guests dance. Rossy de Palma, one of Almodóvar’s favorite actresses – billed as an “*invitada de lujo* in the credits of *Acción mutante*”, is gossiping with another bridal guest about who in the room takes drugs while she is framed in center screen from waist to head highlighting a ridiculous red dress that parodies the couture fashion of the 80s. The camera shifts from them and moves to a medium shot of a different conversation, this time between an androgynous character wearing an even more preposterous blue gown with extremely exaggerated breasts and asymmetrical, overly accentuated hips. The dress is “female” but the person inside is more than likely male.

To enter the upper-class fortress of Orujo’s daughter’s bridal party the handicapped men enter though a modified Trojan horse. In this case, though, the attacking force uses a giant wedding cake that allows for the slaughter to begin. Although at first glance it might seem odd that the party goers do not question anything as amiss given that all the other service laborers – guards, music disc jockeys, waiters, even the Priest – are mechanized and this group of laborers come in as not only severely
handicapped, malformed and mentally slow but not as robots. Upon considering the atmosphere and the fashion in the scene, the group’s seemingly easy adaptation and intermingling with the party is not difficult to understand. The red and blue gowns previously mentioned are an automatic reference to Almodóvar. However the outfits more than showing health and vitality – values to be expected in a society obsessed with the condition of the body – instead express a disturbed figure, immobility and imbalance. This is also important later when acción mutante strikes because the fashion impedes their fleeing from the scene.

Although emotionless robots have replaced labor power and although engineering can accommodate physical deformities through mask and machine (the mutante Quimicefa’s floating wheelchair), the body is never whole. The mutants are neither robot nor human. They are a cyborg construction that, in agreement with Donna Haraway’s theory, “are hard to be seen politically or materially” (6). They inhabit a threshold between human and machine, between artificially whole and organically fractured that cannot be breached. Although not explicitly working towards gender equality, Acción mutante as film anticipates Haraways 1994 “Cyborg manifesto”. The film breaks binaries through an ironic political and social strategy that is able to build an “ironic political myth” that clearly shows that the boundary between “Science Fiction and social reality is an optical illusion” (8).

Wholeness is a paradoxical quality that can never be achieved, even if one already has a “whole” body. The wedding scene works as a series of reflections and disturbed symmetries that subvert dominant cultural and economic values. The party goers in the
film reflect the style seen throughout all of Almodóvar’s films of the 80s and many 90s but put into the context of a Sci-Fi dystopia, their kitschy, campy nature becomes absurd and decadent. As viewers we can see that the style is an exaggerated version of Almodóvar done for comedic effect but it is employed in such a way as to also reflect disability. This brings us to the process of capitalism’s fashion re-appropriations, a fashion symmetry that can be understood though readings of Thomas Frank, Stephen Duncombe, Sharon Zukin and others who have documented capitalism’s ability to take a subversive counter-culture movement and their style and appropriate it first into high-end fashion and then into main-stream culture. To pause on Thomas Frank, in his informative *The Conquest of Cool* (1997), the author defines the ability of the bourgeoisie to take from the economic sub-classes as a trend proselytized by the author Norman Mailer, i.e. to “live with a burning consciousness of the present” (12). This theory was co-opted by the capitalist machine that finds continual new profitability in the subversive. It takes the counter-culture and markets it to a youth hungry for a “hip…adversary to the joyless, conformist consumer capitalism” (17) thus making the rebellious the main-stream. This is the same way that the subversive commentary of Almodóvar and the *movida* had, by the 1990s, become the institutionalized.

The beginning binary is based on fashion that has taken on the hegemonic battle between whole/fractured as its inspiration. The hip becomes, then, the disfigured. Understanding this, we can also see a second binary that centers on issues of family, community and class. Specifically, we are drawn to questions of control, agency and possibility. The members of acción mutante are the political “losers” who seek agency
through community as they have no family structure on which to rely. In the group of the “winners” we have Orujo and his biological family as the head of a giant corporation. This is a two-dimensional set-up but that manages to overturn conventional binaries. What we expect to be a simple good versus evil is instead personified in Ramón (good although violent) versus Orujo (evil although healthy). Furthermore, these forces that we as viewers could expect to stop at this initial reversed binary, through de la Iglesia’s imagining, do not stand on opposing ends of an ethical spectrum but are, rather, reflections of the similar economic impulse. The first set of binaries that become equalized through de la Iglesia’s imagination are Orujo and Ramón. The second important set is Patricia, Orujo’s daughter and Álex, the last one standing after Ramón kills off all the other members of the group.

In the first set of doubles – Ramón and Orujo – there are visual and discursive structural symmetries that clue the viewer in as to their pairing. Both the entrepreneurial health-food business mogul and the despotic, revolutionary leader share much in common. The director pairs them first through their discourses which joins their motivations. The most vocal link between the two men is the repetition of the phrase “Ésto no es un juego”. We first associate this with the terrorist group by way of the Spanish rock bank Def Con Dos. In the opening credits while the different members of Acción mutante pose in front of the camera, the theme song to the movie plays. While the members ham-it-up for their audience at the climax of the song we see for the first time Ramón and the lyrics chant: “¡Ésto no es un juego! ¡Es acción mutante! ¡Acción

19 This search for the family is a trend scene throughout the 90s and has been commentated on extensively by Marsha Kinder, Isolina Ballesteros and Carlos Heredero.
mutante!” In this scene, Ramón enters from the right in a medium shot where his body is framed by the red of the back-light. From the beginning we audio-visually associate the power and the brains of the organization with the mutilated face of Ramón.

The same line, “ésto no es un juego” is later repeated in the film by Orujo, the head of the whole-wheat bread company. In this scene he and his associate have just arrived on planeta Axturias and Orujo’s man tells him that is useless and too difficult to cross the terrain because the explosion on *La virgin del Carmen* has most likely killed everyone on it, including Patricia. While we have a close-up of the second man’s face on the left side of the screen, Orujo is on the right side, in a long shot so that we can see his whole figure. He stands back from his assistant, framed by the facial profile and by the bleak sky of the mining planet. We cannot make out Orujo’s features, but his kinetic energy is one of a dark, caped enemy. The menacing figure shouts “ésto no es un juego” and that they will continue their search despite any possible dangers. The discursive repetition between the two leaders also signals an ethical resemblance between the mutant and the captain of industry.

Both the dominant and the subversive leaders are capitalists whose agenda is to make profit from a perceived need in society to make the body whole. Orujo fills a need for health food for those who are closer to achieving the image of a fashionably perfect body in an visually obsessed world. Ramón fills the need for a leader of those who are genetically and financially unable to access even the image of a “whole” body. Orujo and Ramón are also similar in that they do not base their ‘utopias’ according to a desire for change, rather a desire for money. This situation calls into the fold questions of to what
ends both men would use their money and capital power. Orujo works for an institution that promotes an elite status quo of which he is king. Ramón, on the other hand, appears to be fighting for social justice. However, in killing off his rebel army one-by-one in order to keep all the profit for himself, he negates any possibility that he is using his capital gain for social justice. This situation reflects the problems created by the neoliberal economy that had permeated Spain and corrupted the Socialist political party by the 1990s. It is essentially a chasm created out of deferring the differing interest of neoliberal theory and intention to practice. A lengthy but useful quote from David Harvey is helpful here:

We can, therefore, interpret neoliberalization either as a utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites. In what follows I shall argue that the second of these objectives has in practiced dominated. Neoliberalization has not been very effective in revitalizing global capital accumulation, but it has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances….creating, the power of the economic elite. The theoretical utopianism of neoliberal argument has, I conclude, primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimating for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal. (A Brief History 17 emphasis in original)
This practice that outweighs the theory of economic design is witnessed in Orujo and Ramón. In Orujo’s informative monologue given in the final sequences of the film in Garcia’s bar the health-food mogul declares that he is going to kill off everyone, including himself, in order to seek revenge for what has happened to his daughter. His rationality for doing so is that he has worked for forty-five years to build an empire in a business that he hates. Now, because his family – all that mattered in the economics of Thatcher neoliberalism – has been corrupted, he intends to seek revenge by destroying an entire planet.

Likewise, Ramón makes a similar confession as to his true motivations. Although they are already suspicious as soon as he starts killing off the members of the organization that he headed, he directly states his corrupted morals once he believes himself to be alone with Patricia. Earlier in the film Ramón rallied his bickering troops before battle with three big questions that began with “Who were you when we met?” The group answers in unison: “Garbage, hospital refuse”. The second question is: “Who made you what you are?” to which the members, again in unison, sing “You, Ramón!” The final question is “And who are you now?” and all of them chant together “Mutants! Mutants! Mutants!” Now alone in his endeavor, Ramón repeats these three questions to Patricia but all the answers are radically different. To answer the first question, he was not born a genetic aberration; he was born the favorite son of his mother. For the second question, he answers that he alone made himself who he is and to respond to the third: what is he? He is not a mutant but “El puto amo”. Through these echoing monologues that recall Orujo and Ramón’s ascension to power we see that they never arrived to their
position of control in order to amplify their follower’s agency through healthy living or social revolution. Indeed, the only possibility they were truly concerned with was their own personal profit.

Our second set of doubles is not so easily recognizable until the end of the third movement. When the motley crew reaches the distant Axturias the resemblance between the invented peripheral planet and the Spanish community is through name and economic purpose only. Asturias, the northern, now autonomous community is in reality a lush, green area surrounded by mountains and bordered by the Bay of Biscay in the Atlantic Ocean. It is an agricultural area but its main income has come from mining. In the 1990s this industry was being deregulated as nationally mined coal become less viable economically (Economist 66). This very real situation is alluded to through the plight of Álex. When Álex first arrives on the planet, his dead Siamese brother still attached to him, a lonely, blind miner gives him shelter and food and offers to take him to the bar where Orujo and Ramón will meet. However, when Álex first asks to be taken to the “bar del minero perdido” his new friend tells him that it is not worth going there, its all gone down-hill since the gas prices have dropped and the all-ready crazy miners have been losing their jobs.

Álex and Patricia are both introduced with other doubles, the former’s brother and the latter’s husband but at the end of the movie are brought together through circumstance and necessity brought on by their radically changed social agency. Álex, who has miraculously survived Ramón’s purging, was born a double. He was a Siamese twin joined at the shoulder. Patricia is the only child of a wealthy bread baron who is to
marry a man who perfectly illustrates the type of person Ramón has set out to defeat. Luis Maria de Ostolaza is a petite man, blonde and always wears coordinating outfits for whatever event he is attending. Perhaps one of his most comical designs is the safari outfit with jeweled pith helmet that he brings to Planeta Axturias. These two hip and modern rich kids have a certain amount of control because they have access to money but their agency is dependent upon societal constructions, a fact that Patricia succinctly analyzes in the third movement of the film. Álex, as an economically and socially impoverished mutant had no other recourse for social agency than revolution, at least as seen in this film. Even though he is deformed, weak and not mentally bright, he is more motivated by romance than with the money. His true goal for seeking out Ramón is not only to avenge the death of his dead brother but to save Patricia, with whom he has fallen in love.

In fact, we do not see Álex truly concerned with politics at any moment of the film. Instead, it is Patricia that finds motivation in social and political circumstance. Despite her initial ambition to uphold patriarchal structures, when she is taken prisoner those priorities change. Much like Patty Hearst, the American heiress who was kidnapped and ended up aiding her captors with their domestic terrorism, Patricia also is easily turned to other side.

After the ship has crashed and Ramón and Patricia emerge from the rubble to make their way across the desert landscape, Patricia tells Ramón that she thinks that she’s had a terrible nightmare. This nightmare wasn’t related to her kidnapping, but to her life before. She expresses concern for her captor and is willing to help him steal from her
father, even to kill him. Ramón Yarritú, who is physically strong, intelligent and masculine although more concerned with money than with sex, does not view the new situation as positive. He bemoans another one of his victims suffering from Stockholm syndrome. Ramón, the archetypical male aggressor, physically restrains Patricia’s hands and drags her up the side of a mountain by her hair. All the while Patricia is declaring her reasoning for her change of allegiance. She begins by saying,

La represión intelectual de las minorías es evidente. Las medias de comunicación mascaran la realidad para adecuara a los intereses de los poderes fractales. Resulta increíble hasta que punto el sistema puede lograr alienarte. (53:50-54:46)

Surprisingly, while Patricia is making these statements about the unjust and exploitative economic system of which Ramón has surely been a victim of, he is unmoved. As leader of a revolutionary group he is assumedly motivated by her new found ideology. However, while Ramón is pulling her behind him up the mountain he is more concerned with his location on the map and their distance from the meeting point for the money exchange. Patricia, however, is convinced that Ramón’s plight is politically motivated. She tells him that her life before had been a lie, that the system had alienated her and that her father only tried to buy her love with gifts and a “poni rosa”. In comparison to her father she tells Ramón, “por eso te admiro ahora Ramón. Tú no te has dejado engañar. Sabías que hay que reaccionar y sacar a la luz las contradicciones del sistema” (56:00). Patricia is even in agreement with his destructive methods, she tells him that she understands that he must “destruir todo para empezar desde zero un mundo nuevo más
justo”. She is even willing to deform herself to be part of the movement, “la mutilación nos haga igual y la belleza no contará, solo la persona” (57:38).

The power of this sequence is the irony of the framing and discourse. She has been physically restrained, her mouth stapled shut, a powerless victim to the violence surrounding her. Finally able to speak, as she is being pulled by her hair in a tattered wedding dress, at times yelping in pain, she rationalizes the terrorist group’s actions and everything that has happened to her through a Marxist discourse. This framing of her situation indeed mirrors the political situation of Spain itself. She is representative of a political class that is blind to the reality of how the Socialist political party in the transformation of socially justice minded PSOE to neo-liberal PSOE and PP had sold out their ideals of social equality for a monetary pay-off.

After the fusion bomb has exploded, Álex and Patricia are two of only a few people left alive on the planet. They become paired by need and by their now equalizing mutilations. The falling rubble of the bar allowed Álex to break free of his long-dead Siamese brother and it also amputated one of Patricia’s arms. They are now both deformed in the same way and as the crazy miners in foreground sing a traditionally Spanish song in the final sequence of the film, Patricia and Ramón with their new status as lone survivors framed by the rubble around them, march decidedly up the stairs and out of el Bar de García into an uncertain future. Ironically, Patricia’s notion of revolution, although conceived from a mental illness, is exactly how equality is born.

Because Science Fiction tends to break social hierarchies and cultural dichotomies down into representative pieces, we can see the characters as functions of the capitalist
system: Ramón is the likely capitalist who, like Orujo, creates opportunity for money and growth out of misfortune; Álex is the unwitting laborer, motivated to violence by necessity not desire. Likewise, Patricia, the only woman in the narrative, is representative of an educated upper-class who becomes a willing participant in her own destruction. The purpose of these uneven symmetries is, on the one-hand, an attack at both Revolutionary groups namely, the Socialist party and certainly the Basque ETA, and those that blindly follow even at great deficit to themselves. Additionally, the commentary on mining establishes an economic paradigm of exploitation between central Madrid and peripheral Asturias. This cinematic attack extends also to the dominant cultural paradigm of Almodóvar and the government that sponsors him. According to de la Iglesia’s imagination, the ruling structure’s well-intentioned utopian creation had evolved into a vapid world of health food and image obsessed elites who control access to power through beauty standards only attainable through technology and money. They care nothing for the laborers who make their life-style possible.

The government is only seen as a disciplinary force that leaves no other recourse to gain social agency then through violent revolt. Moreover, under the neo-liberal capitalist system, every part of the political and social spectrum becomes a commodity and motivations are easily corruptible. In fact, the only one who maintains his dignity and moral compass throughout the film is Álex. This is perhaps because of physical or mental situation but it should not be disregarded. In fact, the theme of the socially handicapped underdog who though his good nature but rough or ugly exterior saves the day is a motif that will be repeated through de la Iglesia’s career. We can see similar circumstances in
the characters of José María (Santiago Segura), the heavy metal Sátanico de Carabanchal, in El día de la bestia and Charly (Eduardo Antuña), the modest Star Trek junkie who dresses like Darth Vader in La comunidad.

De la Iglesia’s “dark comedy” uses Sci-Fi as visual and narrative structure but it does not preclude him from using story-line that places him in a similar narrative vein as Cervantes, Quevedo or Valle-Inclán. Like his native-born literary antecedents, de la Iglesia makes a social commentary of Spanish society by way of narrating a hostile world where an underdog hero – Álex – fights injustice. To focus on only one of these literary “dark comedy” antecedents, almost all the analytical references to de la Iglesia’s oeuvre make mention of the obvious similarities between the director’s films and the Quijote. These similarities are both overt in the content of the films and, as I just mentioned, also in the plot. Like the Quijote, Acción mutante plays with referencing and distancing of time and space through the tropes of madness and science. Both narratives use this to both pose and answer questions about cultural structures. For example, Don Quijote sees monsters where Sancho sees windmills because his madness from being immersed in a world of fiction has made him believe that there are individual evil forces in his world. What don Quijote does not see, but the readers do, is the very real societal evil around him that he mistakes for good. We could argue that Quijote’s madness is a narrative diversion that, quite purposefully, undermines itself and works to highlight the real societal problems that Cervantes was not allowed to speak about because of fear of religious and governmental persecution. De la Iglesia does not have these extensive institutionalized restraints to his creative process but, rather, a much more insidious
censure device: culture. What De la Iglesia, like all the great Spanish black humorists, has been able to identify and dismantle are the prejudices and injustices that are naturalized through the construction of space and image. His pastiches and his use of sf as a discursive strategy serve the purpose of cognitive estrangement in that they make the viewer read the city in a different way.

While the Science Fiction features of his famous directorial pastiches are attributed to North American influence or popular culture, we must consider that de la Iglesia does not take random references and citations. The molding together of signs, from popular culture and from high literary culture, is a highly codified language and the words and works that he chooses to form his message are dependent upon the denotative as well as the connotative value of the image. For example, robots explicitly reference the future as well as main-stream Science Fiction. However, their presence in the film denotes a criticism of neo-liberals failings in the previous decade.

To contain ourselves in the same time period of de la Iglesia, the more canonical texts of the 90s generation (Bigas Luna’s films and Mañas novels) also cite international and national popular culture. However, they are, as Christina Moreiras Menor wrote, unable to narrate “the desire that gives rise to them in the first place” (139). Although the locus of the criticism made by Generation X writers appears to be the city space as “unable to provide shelter, yet at the same timed closed in by an overwhelming feeling of restriction… In this Spanish city, which at the same time could be located in any part of the world, acts of extreme and senseless violence occur. (Morieras-Menor “Spectacle” 139).” When faced with this spectacle of violence, the novels of the Generation X present
characters that are discontent and bored rather than called to revolution as their parents were in the 60s.

In *Acción mutante* there is no absence of desire to re-shape the world and no absence of an underclass to take on the revolution. De la Iglesia certainly does acknowledge the boredom and discontent of the 1990s but he does not narrate apathy, rather a confrontation of consumer motivations that exploit those that most are in need of support. Ramón, despite his own corrupted motivation, is able to find an ideological and monetary motivation that propels his rag-tag group to overcome apathy and injustice. In the end the revolution somehow works and, the rich, beautiful Patricia and the intellectually humble and not-so-conventionally attractive Álex work in allegiance as mutants towards a new future. This engagement with the present and the action to change the injustices present is an important indication of change in the substance of Spanish popular fiction, a theme we will more thoroughly explore in Chapter Five.

*Acción mutante* expresses a deep contempt for the modern world where consumer culture defines citizenship and participation in society. Technology, a major function of the consumption practices of modernity, could serve to help the disabled through futuristic wheelchairs and other contraptions meant to overcome disability. Instead, from the first sequence of the film mechanized methods to overcome disability acts as a visual signal of an imperfect body that can never attain wholeness and is restricted from participating wholly in society. Therefore, perhaps the most appropriate manner for de la Iglesia to reformulate the viewer’s perception of the world driven by consumer culture and global pressures where the youth movement is ruled by a disinterest in the world
around them is by fighting fire with fire. The creative blend of literary and musical references re-appropriates the spectacle of violence for its own ends.

The content of Acción mutante realigns the design and image of neo-liberal Spain as being a place of terror. The extreme alienation and fragmentation of the working class and their bodies from centers of power, consumption and culture is framed through a filmic structure that uses Science Fiction to fictionally exaggerate these very real tragedies. Much like the Sci-Fi that de la Iglesia references, his film speaks to the processes of the present and to their consequences. Much like his national precursors from Calderón de la Barca, Quevedo, Valle-Inclán and Juan Goytisolo, the contemporary director criticizes national space through a home-grown mix of dark humor, esperpentic farce and irony. In conclusion, whereas in de la Iglesia the revolutionary group, as sung by the theme song, is motivated by societal perceptions, in our next chapter it will be the act of perceiving, the act of seeing and being seen that plays a decisive role in the structuring and symbolism and ultimate social criticism of the narrative.
In Gabriela Bustelo’s 2001 novel *Planeta hembra* the world has been reduced to two political parties, one consisting of lesbians and the other of homosexual men. The female party, known as XX, is in power and dominates the entire Western world from their headquarters in New York City’s Rockefeller center. In the story-line of the text Madrid is not mentioned and the national entity of Spain is only mentioned as an agricultural producer so it can be difficult to see how this novel fits into the scheme of Spanish urban novels. However, it is a highly visual text and the images, language and discourse employed reference the time and space of Madrid since *la movida* and especially the 90s. Where *Acción mutante* dealt with the world created out of *la movida*, Bustelo’s novel responds more effectively to the 90s post-national environment.

If we continue on the assumption that the notion of the city encompasses more than a geographical location we can more easily see the contemporary Madrid in Bustelo’s Science Fiction novel. If we further refine our definition of the city to understand it as the tangible space of social, cultural and economic relationships and consider the urban as the process towards making that space homogeneous through neoliberalism (Delgado cited in Fraser 60), we can understand that the narratives seen until now – *Acción mutante* and *Planeta hembra* – are directly criticizing the process or rather, the urban, more so than the city itself as space. In this way, even in the temporally and spatially distanced *Planeta hembra*, the tangible space of Madrid is essential to understanding the development of the urbanized consciousness that is the most relevant aspect of the story. This play of time and space is different from Gabriela Bustelo’s first
novel, *Veo veo* (1996), where she focused primarily on the cartographic image of contemporary Madrid with the process of globalization and homogenization being a strong leitmotif found in the linguistic and referential tones of the work. In *Planeta hembra* it is the urban that predominates. The paradigm that Bustelo is criticizing in her second novel is of the abstract space of contemporary Madrid re-conceptualized as future, global, absolute space. Through this transformation *Planeta hembra* is able to reveal the fallacies of both neo-liberal process and the construction of a feminist false consciousness. However, the text does so based on mis-representations of feminist theory and the construction of the novel acquiesces to the most insidious of neo-liberalism’s lies about the lack of any viable alternative to capitalism. In this chapter we will first trace the novelistic trajectory of Bustelo as it relates to the theoretical formulations that the author criticizes in her first two novels. From there we will focus on the historical materiality found in the content of *Planeta hembra* before discussing the structural components of the narrative itself.

We will begin the discussion by defining ‘abstract space’ through a quote from Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*:

> Space so conceived might be called ‘organic’. In the immediacy of the links between groups, between members of groups, and between ‘society’ and nature, occupied space gives direct expression – ‘on the ground’, so to speak – to the relationships upon which social organization is founded. Abstraction has very little place in these relationships, which remain on
the level of sex, age, blood and, mentally, on that of images without concepts (i.e. the level of speech). (229)

In this way, abstract space relates to our ideas about and imagination of the city as well as what we as individuals in the lived or absolute space of the city take as common sense practices of daily life. Therefore, the process by which that city is formed and sustained through both abstract and absolute space, as in the difference between public and private, becomes natural. This idea is similar to Harvey’s notion of urbanization of consciousness and capital. However, Bustelo’s first and second novels do not create individuals as much as they critique practices and processes of consciousness creation. However, I will be using both Lefebvre and Harvey’s terms throughout the chapter to refer to how processes are formed and how they are realized in the individual.

Gabriela Bustelo was born in 1962 in the city of Madrid. She studied English Literature and besides the three novels she has published thus far, she has also translated many works from English to Spanish. Most notably, she has translated children’s novels from Beverly Cleary as well as detective fiction by Raymond Chandler and feminist speculative fiction by Margaret Atwood. Apart from writing satirical novels, she also is a contributing editorialist for the Spanish journal La Razón. In a 2003 interview with Candace Bossee, Bustelo remarked that she uses her own narrative as a type of catharsis and as a way to write about things that worry her greatly. Through her narratives

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20 These terms are described in The Urban Experience (1989) and describe the way capital is a “geographical movement in time” and reproduces itself through the continual appropriation of space into a commodity and, in turn, how an individualized consciousness becomes “urbanized” (19). Though the urbanization of capital, vis a vis the formation of place, personal identity is based on how and at what level one is able to “consume” the city.

21 Bustelo’s most recent novel is a satire of Europe’s leftist culture, La historia de siempre jamás from 2007.
she wants to “denunciar la mentira y los prejuicios” to a national and global audience (107).

*Planeta hembra* follows the lives of four main characters through the last seven days of Earth’s existence. The quartet is embroiled in a series of dangerous and, according to the new world order, illegal, love triangles. Báez is the central figure and, already a prominent member of the ruling faction, on the sixth day she will become the President of the XX party. Alva is Báez’s lover despite being the sister of one of the leaders of the terrorist faction, heterosexual Comando H. This difficult love situation persists until Báez and Graf, a leader from the XY party, fall in love. Dillion, our fourth central character, is a young girl who befriends the *hombre* Graf and follows him to Paris, where his party is planning to over-throw the *hembras*. The lives of the four characters are played out in the not-so-distant future of 2069 and, like the project of all socially critical Sci-Fi narratives, corresponds to events and processes that Bustelo already sees at play in the absolute and abstract map of Madrid and the western world.

Bustelo’s most commented novel thus far, *Veo veo* (1996), takes place in the streets, bars, cafés and interior private spaces of Madrid. Vania, the protagonist, is convinced that she is being followed and finds that, yes, her apartment is under surveillance. With the help of a private detective they both move through the city’s public and private spaces trying to figure out if Vania is really being followed or if it is all part of a paranoid delusion. The locales of the novel are recognizable to those familiar with Spain’s capital and we can follow the protagonist on a map through the city streets. This closely resembles the structure of a detective novel, which *Veo veo* certainly intends to
mimic. In regard to her development as a character, Vania’s personality and interior thoughts are framed not as much by interior monologues brought by the narrative voice. Rather, the narrative voice constructs an “anti-psychological” character whose personality is communicated through the connotative value of popular culture references to Western movies, songs by British and American bands and the expensive European fashion labels that she buys and wears. This way of constructing a character’s reference horizon in relation to their mass media and consumer environment is important in much of the narrative from the 90s and we will return to this idea in the coming pages. However, for now, from the interplay between the absolute space and the abstract consciousness of space in *Veo veo* we can quickly conclude that the protagonist’s place of being is local (the absolute), but her understanding of herself in that environment (the abstract) is global. Moreover, Vania exhibits a very urbanized consciousness which neither the protagonist nor the narrator question. What is questioned and critiqued throughout the text is the correlation between Vania’s sexual identity and how she relates to men.

In the same interview with Candace Bossee, Bustelo admits that Vania, the protagonist of *Veo veo*, is a fictional precursor to the characters that we find in *Planeta hembra*. Vania primarily resembles Báez and the other women from the second novel in the construction of how all the female leads understand the world both as individuals and as women and, to that end, in their employment of their sexuality. In this way, Bustelo

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22 Gonzalo Navajas explores this idea more in depth in his article, “A Distopian culture: The Minimalist Paradigm in the Generation X” found in *Generation X Rocks* (3-14).
has taken many of the tropes and ideas about the contemporary space of Madrid that she
developed in her first novel and expands them in her second. These tropes pertain to the
notions of identity and citizenship that have been in tension since the death of the dictator
in 1975.

Specifically, the identity of her heroines is part of the evolution of the youth
culture beginning in the “heady excesses of a suddenly liberated post-Franco Spain” in
the 80s (Allison 265). This _movida_ inspired identity was not wholly replicated in the 90s
as it was diffused of its image as rebellious and hegemonic. This is partially to blame on
the 90s generation’s criticism of their predecessors failed social and political revolutions
as well as on the very real and generational persistent problems of unemployment.
Therefore, while many of the problems have remained the same throughout the late 70s,
80s, 90s and early part of the Twenty-First century, the way youth populations responded
to them has been different. While earlier generations responded through political and
cultural activism, as Mark Allison explains, the way that 90s youth have responded to
their post-transition environment has been marked by apathy and evasion (267). Part of
this evasion is certainly a continuation of the drug culture. This time around drug-use and
abuse is not as an acting-out against constricting social mores as the _movida_ thought itself
to be, rather it is a mode of escapism through consuming practices. Indeed, Allison
attributes the drug abuse to being “the ultimate product, part of a whole youth culture
based on the consumption of nightlife, alcohol, music and fashion” (268). In this way,
textual emphasis on drugs in Bustelo’s first and second novels is a fictional situation that
reflects a real problem endemic to Spain’s youth. Again, this is not a problem that
Bustelo is fighting against or criticizing. The author includes these aspects of youth culture as part of the backdrop of contemporary life without showing its more dangerous effects or consequences.

For the party ruling the purse strings, the political apathy of the 90s generation coupled with their intense desire to participate in a consumer driven culture was convenient. The situation suited the economic needs of Madrid as geographic location that by the 90s had abandoned its desire for rebuilding to bring about social justice and was being re-mapped to suit the needs of consumerism and urban boosterism (Compitello Designing 405). Bustelo laments how this situation relates to female and feminine identity in Spain. Namely, that they too have been joined under the banner of consumption. She states in her interview with Bossee that “todo es consumo” and that contemporary women do not use the freedoms ceded to them after decades (centuries) of protest in an effective or truly “sincere” manner. Instead, contemporary women in Spain, according to Bustelo, defy their hard won social and economic agency by spending hordes of money on clothes and on self-compromising sexual behavior.

Bustelo defines women’s relationship to consumerism as a double edged sword that offers an equal amount of opportunities and dangers (Bosse 104). For the author this has been especially the case since the 90s and Spain’s entrance into the globalized market. Moreover, according to the story in Planeta hembra, when rampant consumerism becomes coupled with a “feminist” consciousness culled from post-structuralist thought from the 70s, women become even farther removed from what Bustleo would call a sincere consciousness formation. However, as this present analysis of Bustelo’s fiction
sustains, *Planeta hembra* as critical social commentary undermines its own intent by re-affirming neo-liberalism and its process. This presents a difficult juxtaposition of Bustelo as author declaring that her intent is to write against these processes and Bustelo’s narrative creation upholding the very system that enables them. The difficult nature of the relationship between author and narrative deserves closer scrutiny. However, because we can see that de la Iglesia, Buselo and Reig all exhibit the same quality of public persona using literature as social catharsis I will save this particular aspect of the analysis for my conclusions in Chapter Five.

Returning to Bustelo’s novelistic trajectory, *Veo veo* as text was much more concerned with this real-time process of economic and theoretical change in Madrid. Indeed, while the first novel allowed Bustelo to communicate the problems of an urbanized consciousness of contemporary Madrid though what some have called ‘dirty realism’, her second novel is able to comment more effectively on the ultimate consequences of what a female urbanized and “radically feminized” psychology could evolve into. More concretely, because Bustelo uses a Science Fiction discourse to map the spatial fix of the neo-liberal urban process along with progressive feminist ideologies, the narrative voice can critique processes already in motion in Madrid.

The Sci-Fi discourse in *Planeta hembra* allows the narrator to describe a world where the global has completely overpowered the local and where the most radical of feminisms has met with the most exaggerated of neo-liberalism policy. The constructed

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23 For more on this, please read Cintia Santana, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Dirty Realism in Spain” in *Generation X Rocks: Contemporary Peninsular Fiction, Film, and Rock Culture* (2007).
absolute space of the future world has been designed to maintain a highly individualized society. The spaces of work and leisure have all been built so as to naturalize the new order of compulsive homosexuality as well as the erasure of the family and patriarchal structure. In order to legitimize the process of this radical lesbianism, historical memory has been artificially cleansed of its heterosexual past in order to support the new global mythologies. The language, vocabulary and tropes of the world’s heterosexual, phalocentrist past have been re-appropriated and adjusted to fit the new female, homosexual and gynocentrist paradigm. This shift from male to female is relayed to the reader as the only difference that is important in the construction of a new world order. Indeed, notions of community, family and economic class and race have been reduced to only two categories: the individual and the state. This matrix of individual - space – biological hegemony – memory –language is maintained through a theatre of sexuality constructed in the text though the use of a highly visual or “filmic” register. The purpose of this construction is to relate how the feminist Utopia of process accommodated itself in the spatial fix of neo-liberalism. As a consequence, the degenerate Utopia eventually descends into apocalyptic violence which destroys the planet. For the reader, this closed ending leaves little optimism for a future very different from the present we currently live.

Vania, the central character of Veo veo as well as Báez of Planeta hembra take recreational drugs and live in the moment of popular culture, music and phraseology as much from the United States as from Spain and Europe. The important difference between the two women is the construction of their sexual identity. While Vania is
unabashedly heterosexual and promiscuous, treating sexual partners as conquests, Báez is not interested in the state-mandated homosexuality. Both protagonists are marked as different in their narrative worlds. Vania is marked for being a heterosexual woman “acting like a man” in a man’s world and Báez for being a hembra “not acting like a lesbian” in a lesbian’s world. The situations of both characters can be read to be subverting the dominant patriarchal paradigms. At least in the case of Veo veo, Bustelo would disagree.

In the interview with Candice Bosse, Bustelo answers this exact question by saying that her character’s actions are not so willful as to be considered an attempt to subvert paradigms. She states that Vania’s sexuality, and female sexuality by extension, is much more contradictory and subtle. The sexual life of her protagonist is not as much a combative “subversive” stance on the hierarchy of patriarchy as much as it is a method for Vania to better understand her own body (Bosse 106). This responds to Helene Cixoux’s notion laid out in “The Laugh of the Medusa” of a woman knowing her body as a way to know her own self. The logic given in Veo veo would hold that while in theory using the body (the material) to know oneself (the intangible) and seeking pleasure from this new self has a positive function that in the shift from theory to practice the fundamental notion of empowerment for the sake of equality is lost. Bustelo comments that Vania, “al no querer someterse al hombre, se comporta como un hombre y sucumbe en el intento” (Bossee 106). Ultimately, Bustelo as author and the narrative voice she produces argue that empowerment lies elsewhere and outside the body. Moreover, in both
novels the performance of a false consciousness that prompts her characters to “act like men” forms a substantive part of the narration.

In both novels the narrative space given to describing the performance of the radical notions of gender identity effectively establishes that if to be a powerful female means finding that power in the sexual, than sexuality is the beginning and the end of empowerment. As seen in many current popular culture examples from the American pop group The Pussy Cat Dolls to the series of Videos “Girls Gone Wild”, women in “control of their sexuality” and who use that sexuality by “behaving as men” as a way of empowering themselves, does not enable women to be in control. Rather, in agreement with what Bustelo has said and what her novels project, the situation created by second-wave feminism or, more specifically, a misunderstanding of those theories, creates a false consciousness of empowerment. Ultimately, whether in male-centered patriarchy or female-centered radical feminism, the body has been essentialized through the same organ, only now women are the one’s who control the discourse of their submission to a distorted patriarchy. In Planeta hembra this situation is the narrative crux of the sf discourse, plot and structure of the novel. Remembering Darko Suvin’s “cognitive estrangement”, Science Fiction’s function is to reflect the present world to us through a distorted mirror. The world presented through the sf discourse of Planeta hembra is one that is able to play the lines between feminine/masculine, global/national, foreign/local. It does this in order to teach the reader a lesson about process. Specifically: simple inversions of power do not work and any theory that attempts to make it happen in a real-world situation is doomed for catastrophic failure.
By only changing the sexual preferences of the political body in power while maintaining the same power structures, especially those that are carried out through linguistic and visual means of state and social surveillance, we only superficially alter what kind of world we inhabit. The narrative of Planeta hembra serves as a double warning for women to first, not essentialize the body and second, to not “act as men” do because we will be doomed to repeat patriarchy – which I understand here as the unequal distribution of wealth and goods based on gender constructions. To reiterate the problem stated in chapter one, what the novels suggest and this dissertation argues is that socially progressive ideas cannot effectively re-formulate social structures for the ends of justice without first having a mechanism to control the production of the space of their employment. Utopias of process must take into consideration the spatial and temporal aspects of the thought that inspires them and, moreover, make themselves adaptable to change otherwise they will be doomed to reshape themselves in the image of capital.

Planeta hembra effectively demonstrates that capitalism controls the spatial and the cultural. There can not be any real changes in power structures and the same system of control and dominance will reproduce endlessly until it annihilates itself. The criticism of capitalism, especially neo-liberalism, is carried out through the text in the relationship of the women to the city, their spaces of leisure and habitation. Consequently, the first error that the women who took over the power structure made is that they never changed the space or the relationship of capital and consumerism to that space. Therefore, all attempts at creating equality are squashed as inverted systems of sexual normativity.

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24 This definition comes from Sallie Marston “The Social Construction of Scale”.
become accommodated into the neo-liberal system. The narrative voice makes especially clear the attack on feminist discourse through explicitly showing how if radical body feminism were to become the political norm, all cultural productions would be reduced to the vaginal.

This novel, perhaps as effectively as any critical essay on gender, relates that gender and sexuality is a social construct that must be played out as a role in society if one wants to openly and safely participate in the world around them. In the feminist discourses of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Monique Wittig, the female body became the battle-ground for reaching gender equality. These writers worked to re-inscribe the female body as a way of combating the always-already phallo-centric essentialization present in all discourse. What these feminist, theoretical descendents of Freud and Lacan have tried to accomplish is to make explicit the implicit (or naturalized) phallo-centric discourse of the modern era. Their gyno-centric discourse has sought to de-naturalize our thinking of gender and sexuality. For Bustelo’s novel, this translates into a world where explicit sexuality is the only discourse available.

Marta Altisent has defined *Planeta hembra* as a “pornotopia rosa”, a mix of romance novel and sexually charged Sci-Fi (93). The sex visualized through discourse is

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25 I define “body feminism” as that which came from the feminist thinkers of the 70s. Where first-wave feminists were concerned with the public rights of women – voting, being active citizens – the second wave feminists also started to tackle the social consequences that the patriarchal paradigm of power has wrought. Were we to trace the line of how, as feminists, we arrived at “body” feminism, we must begin with Freud and Lacan. Freud’s insistence on the phallus as the center of meaning and women’s suffering from “penis envy” was carried to his student, Jacques Lacan. The student then expanded this theory to say that true female joissance “pleasure” is impossible and taught this theory of psychoanalytical discourse to his students Helene Cixous and Luce Irigary. In an attempt to reformulate the mid-set that places the phallus in the middle of all meaning – psychological and discursive – these two women wrote the initial theories on possibilities of the re-appropriation of power for women. According to them, just as men gain power through their biological organs, women must do so in the same way.
meant to destabilize our notions of sexuality such that we see that “normal” is not natural but instead a function of power structures. The first utterance of *Planeta hembra* establishes the inversion of sexual normativity. It is an act of defiance to the political order of the XX party: an extreme close-up of heterosexual intercourse. The dialogue that immediately follows the image instructs the reader that we should find such acts appalling and we are further informed that the insulting couple only arrived as image through the hijacking of official media outlets.

Descriptive and pornographic this scene serves as a shocking introduction to the space and time of the novel. Bustelo originally wrote the text as a screenplay and we must concede that by remaining textual, it allows her narrative to reach its intended audience. Surely, a filmic visualization of the majority of the events told through the narrative would make the narrative too explicit for mainstream audiences, even in sexually progressive Spain. While the highly eroticized nature of the images might make the movie more appetizing to the gaze of male audiences, the message would not reach its intended audience of women.

Like many of her contemporaries, Bustelo builds textual meaning through visual constructions rather than psychological ones. The way the reader is introduced to the characters is through the connotative value of their musical and filmic tastes such as their hair, clothing and the visual construction of their presence in society. In *Planeta hembra* these descriptions also map the place and time of 2069. As Báez and her companions gossip and move through the city readers are introduced to the importance of the performing of sexuality to and for one’s peers. Indeed, through the “acting out” of sex in
certain spaces we see the combination of the vital elements of our annihilation cocktail – neo-liberalism and radical body feminism – and we end up with a world where the battle of the sexes is played out through a society that has replaced the external biologically masculine “phallic” with the internal female “vaginal”.

The line between masculine/feminine is inverted through sexual norms. The play of global and foreign overpowering the local and national is shown through a series of shifts of power that are also constantly infused with sex and sexuality. Beginning from the top-down of how the novel structures the new world order, New York is Zone 1, the XX stronghold and the center of all economic, consumer and political discourse. Paris is Zone 2, the XY command center and the second most important city. Not only is it symbolic that the Rockefeller center – a phallic skyscraper – is used as the center of female empowerment, by displacing the action of a Spanish novel to the United States the narrative realizes spatially the linguistic and fears of cultural homogenization already in process. Moreover, the shift to a building used for media and commerce rather than, say, the White House is also representative of Harvey’s claim that, in the end, the economic is always more important than the political. Additionally, the paradigm that the built power structure represents is continually acted out in popular leisure activities as well as what qualifies as spectacle in the public and private sphere.

To speak of a divide between public and private is problematic in the highly regulated space of the future city. Neither street nor home promises what was once a traditional reprieve of the watchful eyes of the government. Planeta hembra is a novel that constructs its critical discourse on the process of urbanization through an alternative
sf city life. The traditional Spanish street-life and café culture with their façade of being public space are no longer the strong-hold of social existence. Instead, with the change of essentializing discourse and the exaggerated neo-liberal globalized economy, virtually all life has moved into the extremely exclusive private, interior space. In one such place, the spa Gineceum, women are offered cocktails, narcotics and instant orgasms through machines. Marta Altisent writes of this,

En guisa foucauldiana, el suministro de goce y represión del Gineceum forma parte de un sistema reglamentario de poder que busca la máxima rentabilidad y estabilidad del cuerpo social. Este spa recreativo provee a la élite ejecutiva de una sexualidad asistida por androides… (93).

The true nature of the spa is more regulatory than leisurely. The watchful eyes of the android bartenders who remember everyone’s favorite drink, birthday, government position and intimate details of their likes and dislikes paired with the critical eyes of the other women in the spa work to stabilize and replicate the political at the social scale. In agreement with Altisent, the openness of the body for pleasure is not a freedom rather it is a mandate. In the radical feminist Dystopia the body is a site of obligatory pleasure and one must at once consume drugs and sex as well as be able to be visually consumed by others. This situation readily exemplifies that the XX party, by seizing control of the “phallic” power structure through its images, buildings and discourse only amounts to only a shift of essentialism (phallo to gyno), not a true revolution.

The novel is divided into seven days and our introduction to the aforementioned sites of power and regulation is the content of the first day. The first thirty pages of the
110 page novel that pertain to “El primer día” work to define the rules of the new world order and, moreover, to establish our heroine Báez as an outsider to it. Towards the end of the first day Báez goes to the Ginecum to relax with one of her peers. While there Báez admits to her fellow government official, Quinlan, that she does not want to give or receive any sexual pleasure from humans or androids. Báez tells her that “no [siente] la necesidad” (29). Furthermore, we are also informed that Báez, instead of watching and participating in the “appropriate” activities for a woman in her position, that she “[pasa] horas viendo esas películas prohibidas donde salen [hombres] medio desnudos” (29). In this way, Báez as a hembra who prefers to watch Hitchcock films, can relate to music from David Bowie (even if she doesn’t know who he is), and will eventually prefer men over women locates her personality as contrary to the project of the future dystopia. As readers we are sympathetic to Báez because through her recognizable popular culture attributes she is a woman with whom the intended reader in contemporary Madrid can relate.

Spectatorship works in two ways in the novel’s alternative reality. First, as we have just seen, it is an essential aspect to the internal structuring of the Planeta hembra’s society. Secondly, seeing and being seen is an integral plot motivator. Throughout the narrative the act of seeing sexual performances, prohibited information, and, especially the viewing of prohibited heterosexual sex is what prompts the characters to act and is what causes the eventual collapse of the empire. Spectacle as a structural motif of the story is important on one level as a scopopilia that is used to maintain the patriarchal structure vis a vis Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. On a larger
scale the visual part of the social and governmental control is an important trope throughout feminist speculative fiction.

Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, writing about American Science Fiction authors Joanna Russ, Margaret Atwood and Sheri S. Tepper, states that the theatricality in transformative utopias and anti-utopias of feminist speculative fiction are there to “make ideology visible” (114). In the American texts, “female protagonists become, if they are not already, keenly aware of their own theatricality” and upon realizing the power of performance are able to recharge that very gender performances with irony. Thus, “theatricality…becomes a mode of agency and opposition” (114). This is not the case in Planeta hembra.

Here we are drawn to an important difference between American sf feminist dystopias and the Spanish one under consideration. While in American Science Fiction spectatorship, sexuality and feminist thought also play similarly important roles as they do in Planeta hembra, the way the character’s use their knowledge about feminism, sexuality and spectatorship to their benefit in Atwood’s novel is absent in Bustelo’s production. In The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) the main character Offred manipulates the theatre of sexuality to her advantage. In Atwood’s dystopia a strict dress code plays an important role in the fictional Gileadian society. The protagonist Offred’s use of the different costumes of gender performance, both legal and subversive, reveals the power and hypocrisy of the extreme right-wing Christian fundamentalism that governs the future, dystopic United States. However the narrator’s criticism is not one-sided. Throughout Atwood’s text, Offred’s first person narration given through her journal often
openly criticizes the short-falls in feminist thought. These signaled errors respond to feminism’s inability to adequately respond to the hegemonic patriarchal discourse. The counter critique of feminism is a way of recognizing faults in the feminist theories of the 70s both in the creation and the perception of those theories. In contrast, in Bustelo’s novel, the characters are all acting out their parts but no one, not even Baéz, questions why or how to use gender performance to for the purpose of change or revolution. Only once do we see Graf, the man, play with gender perception. In order to escape the XX party he dresses as a woman. The effect, however, is not as ironic or as subversive as it is comical.

We should note that Baéz does not embrace the politics of theatricality. She is more voyeur than performer. Indeed, this stance, as well as her love of banned “hetero” films puts her in danger of being suspected of “heterosexuality” by Quinlan, the hembra in charge of surveillance. This suspicion is warranted, because despite Baéz taking a lesbian lover, her true romantic tendencies are towards men. Báez’s sexual construction is ultimately gendered as heterosexual and female which, like with her popular culture tastes, places her more closely in line with the status quo of today’s post-feminists than yesterday’s radicals.

We must also note that it is not only sexual gender that performance that has been altered in Planeta hembra. Biology has been brought in line to support ideology. In Judith Butler’s Bodies that Matter she deconstructs woman’s essentialization as “mother”, “wife” and “womb” meant to reproduce physically and socially the tradition of male-dominated patriarchy. In Planeta hembra science, under the doctrine of radical
feminism, has done away with these irksome material differences, it has “corrected” women’s place in society and hembras no longer have the ability to menstruate let alone to have children. Their gender is not based on the productivity or the “rentability” of their sexual organs through child bearing or wife-dome, rather only through their ability to give and receive pleasure.

In conjunction with re-defining gender and gender roles, the novel also describes an inversion of interpersonal relationship paradigms. Monique Wittig was perhaps the feminist philosopher who most passionately articulated the need for a radical reversal of power structures which she called radical lesbianism. This quote from Wittig’s “The Category of Sex” could serve as the political manifesto for the world of Planeta Hembra,

> The category of sex is the political category that founds society as heterosexual. As such it does not concern being but relationships (for women and men are the result of relationships), although the two aspects are always confused when they are discussed. The category of sex is the one that rules as ‘natural’ the relation that is at the base of (heterosexual) society and through which half of the population, women, are ‘heterosexualized’ (the making of women is like the making of eunuchs, the breeding of slaves, of animals) and submitted to a heterosexual economy. For the category of sex is the product of a heterosexual society which imposes on women the rigid obligation of the reproduction of the ‘species,’ that is, the reproduction of heterosexual society. The
compulsory reproduction of the ‘species’ by women is the system of exploitation on which heterosexuality is economically based. (5-6)

Throughout Wittig’s essays on sex and exemplified in the above quote she consistently equated biological sex with economic class. In this way, all relationships between the sexes are pre-disposed to be exploitative. Were we to stop here, as the XX party did, we would miss Wittig’s conclusion. She sought the destruction of heterosexuality and homosexuality so that new, equal, natural systems of gender and sexuality could evolve. Moreover, the importance of Wittig’s theory did not remain inter-textual. As Louise Turcotte wrote in the forward to a 1992 anthology of Wittig’s essays, the idea of radical lesbianism spawned an ideological and a spatial movement. She states, “…the groundwork of a critique of heterosexuality as a ‘political institution’ has already been laid at the beginning of the 1970s by certain lesbian separatists in the United States. (ix)”

The aim of these groups was to form lesbian communities that lived apart from mainstream heterosexual society as a way of seeking empowerment. This ‘real’ history is incorporated into the world of Planeta hembra but for more nefarious reasons. When young Dillion helps Graf to dress like a woman in order to escape the XX leaders, who have just discovered that he was plotting to overthrow the ruling party, the two flee to Paris. While in this city, the seat of the XY government, Graf takes the ever-curious and skeptical Dillion to meet one of his friends, Moritz. Moritz is an old man who still remembers the pre-XX, XY history that the XX party has so carefully tried to erase. While Dillion barrages him with questions about the past, an attempt to fill in what she
has always suspected was missing from the official history books, he tells her of what the old days were like and women’s rise to political dominance.

[Las mujeres] aguantaron hasta la década de los setenta del siglo pasado, cuando empezaron a trabajar fuera de casa. Entonces hubo unos años curiosos en que simultanearon su espectáculo teatral con su independización del Hombre. Y así, progresivamente, se fueron organizando. […] Al final del siglo pasado y principios de éste…hubo un aumento desorbitado de la homosexualidad, que hasta entonces era perseguida y minoritaria. La homosexualidad masculina optó por una postura abierta, incluso exhibicionista, para obligar a la sociedad a aceptarlo. […] Las Hembras homosexuales se organizaron discretamente, como un panal de abejas, y cuando los Hombres se quisieron dar cuenta, ya era demasiado tarde. Se habían hecho con el poder. (172)

In this quote we see first that the authoritative voice of Moritz equates the entirety of the women’s movement as being complicit in the degenerate Utopia. He also signals the move from theory to spatial enactment as the decisive moment of society’s downfall. As we have seen, the abstract radical lesbianism described –albeit only partially based on reality – by Moritz into the political and absolute realm of lived life has already happened as a spatial movement. It tried to define spatially what was so hard to implement abstractly: subverting the dominant patriarchal configuration in order to seek a new way. Moreover, it was a move to initiate control and mobility in the political and economic sector. As Doreen Massey has written, the power geometry under capitalism is not simply
a question of mobility and control rather a question of how some people’s mobility and control can actively weaken that of others (Space 150). In the future told by the narrator of Planeta Hembra, the women have not changed the geometry of the equation. They have forgotten about equality and have only taken over the uneven balance of power. While the textual world is not necessarily representative of the author’s true opinion, the error of thought that the novel demonstrates is built on the mis-perception of stereotypes of feminist theories as well as by not addressing some of the more potent lies of neoliberal propaganda. Moreover, because the novel ends so dramatically it closes off any path for alternatives outside of the exaggerated and inverted status-quo. Again, in agreement with Altisent, Planeta hembra does not reconsider psychological gender determinations nor does it reposition feminine desire (97). The ultimate effect of the narrative discourse imagined by Bustelo is to damn all feminist projects before they have had a chance to evolve on their own in real time and space (104). From this point on we must more closely examine the faults of logic in the novel through which the narrator and Bustelo build their critique of feminism.

The theories of Cisoux, Irigary and Wittig did not intend to wipe men off the political map, only to re-assert women’s power. In popular culture these theories often seem to have been read half-way and have then been viewed as “anti-man”. Women who define themselves as feminists have been seen as, even more pejoratively, “femi-nazis”. Therefore, Bustelo narrates not the implementation of a complete theory, rather the consequences of the cultural perception of the gyno-centered discourse as that which is responsible for a feminist false consciousness. A false consciousness in Marxist terms is
defined in relation to economic class and to behaving in a way which runs counter to one’s best economic interests. In terms of feminism, this would be for women – or men – to act in such a way that runs counter to the fight for gender equality. A clear example of this is Vania from *Veo veo* feeling empowered though her sexuality by acting as men do. Her behavior is extended into a whole alternative reality in *Planeta hembra*. However, in Bustelo’s Sci-Fi world the inverted sexuality is satirized as being possible only if it is compulsory and, as a consequence, the alternative (heterosexuality) is reaffirmed as natural.

Moreover, it is important to note that the narrative voice does not report the lesbian sexual acts as erotic. The lesbian sex is shocking but it is not necessarily sexy. Indeed, when Baéz watches as a fellow politician, Quinlan, is serviced by a sexual robot the effect on the reader to this situation is more shock than awe. The narrator, in graphic detail, informs the reader that it takes 173 seconds for the android to do its job. Relating intense sexual pleasure as being reduced to a mathematical formula is much more about a parody of sexuality as consumer good than it is about exploring feminine jouissance. While not openly commentating on this situation, the matter-of-fact reporting of *Planeta Hembra*’s narrative voice issues an implied judgment through the way it reduces sex to an emotionally sterile commodity. However, the judgment rests not as much on the process of commodifying sexuality rather than on what type of sexuality is commodified. In fact, all readers are shown of the city space through the reported movements of the protagonists are the places of sexual leisure and an isolated, lonely home life. If the city
has been built in the reflection of radical feminism and commerce, we can see that the only commodity that sells in a feminist Utopia are drugs and the mechanization of sex.

Returning to the city as being built in the reflection of commodity helps to reorient us again to the links between body and self and city and identity. We have a material body, we live in a material city. How does the material, tangible aspect of the body and the city correspond to constructed imaginaries of what that body means and what the city means? In agreement with Judith Butler, the basic underlying principal between the imaginary construction of the body and the material construction of the body are the societal norms that govern us. In _Planeta hembra_ these norms are based solely on the performance of gender. Butler defines gender and sex as a material reality and that biological sex is “not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the ‘one’ becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (2). However Butler also develops a subtle argument about the difficulties of being able to leave the phallo-centric paradigm through a criticism of Irigaray’s gyno-centrism, where “the remnant of the feminine survives as the inscriptional space of that phallogocentrism,…without making any contribution of its own” (39). This part of the theoretical discussion that cautions against trading one thing for another is ignored in the narrative and Bustelo takes the shifting of essentialization at face value without exploring a third way.

The structural, visual and ideological situations thus far analyzed in Bustelo’s novel leads us to two contradictory explanations about the visualization of gender and economic critiques in _Planeta hembra_. First, if explicit lesbian sex acts must naturally be
a part of the new world order of radical feminism then they are perhaps shocking to the reader because they remain unseen in main-stream culture. Therefore, the scenes narrated perhaps only feel more explicit. If this is the case then the conclusion to which we as readers are to arrive is that the un-sexy sexuality serves the purpose to awaken the reader from the false promise of a feminist utopia. However, we again must remember that, as feminist and queer theory has proven, the cultural norms of abstract space are constantly in flux. Additionally, the absolute moral geography of normative sexuality includes erotica that has been naturalized through gender practices and performance. In this way, we must question if the sexuality of the Other is, as the novel shows, inherently more explicit than the known. Additionally, what are the consequences of making homosexual acts a structural focus of a narrative meant for the main-stream?

Even academics and geographers today have a difficult time in defining the abstract geographies of sexuality – hetero and homo – and the materiality and physicality of the body. Jon Binnie stresses that in talking about sexual and erotic geographies, especially those pertaining to homosexuality, we risk essentializing and, moreover, strengthening the “erotic excess” already inscribed on gays and lesbians (30). In this way Bustelo reinforces some unkind portrayals of homosexuality in locating the downfall of a feminist utopia in the perceived excess of lesbian sexual desire. Moreover, although Bustelo’s critique of a feminist false consciousness as harmful to women is valid, when she has the opportunity to correct the portrayal and understanding of the theories she criticizes as responsible, she fails to do so.
In this way she is criticizing a theory, not through the rules of the theory itself or through an informed understanding of lesbian desire. Rather, she builds the narrative world through feminist and lesbian mis-interpretations in popular culture thereby succumbing to what she as personality and author is criticizing. Although Bustelo intended to be both politically incorrect and provocative with *Planeta hembra* ("El Pais.com"), her novel ends up reinforcing status-quo patriarchy. By not allowing for any third-way out of gender construction or economic system, *Planeta hembra* also reaffirms neo-liberalism’s claim that “there is no alternative” (Harvey *Spaces* 175).

This leads us to the second contradictory conclusion which relates to what the narrative leaves out of its visualization. Neoliberalism pretends that all individuals are equal and that all people have the same access to opportunity and education. In this way, the very real racial and economic inequalities in contemporary society are to be blamed on individuals, not on the capitalist system that exploits them. In *Planeta hembra* the only mention of race that the narrator makes is of Dillion being dark skinned. Additionally, the only brief mention of an economic underclass is described as a result of its sexual marginality. In this way, the narrative voice, on the one hand, criticizes the loss of cultural differences through homogenization by reducing the world to New York and Paris, lamenting no culture beyond that of commerce. On the other hand, the narrative upholds the notion that individuals and their personal ideologies are what produce class difference, not neo-liberalism. As we have seen, the only difference that matters in the text is that of biological gender. In this way, Bustelo’s narrative ignores the “tragic
outcomes” of very real uneven geographic development that is the nature of globalized, flexible accumulation capitalism (Harvey *Spaces* 175).

The criticism that Bustelo is making is to say that all constructions of gender and sexual normativity have equal opportunity to become forces of control and dominance. In this sense her novel works well to uncover what is lost between theory, representation and practice in feminist thought. Moreover, *Planeta hembra* describes a dystopia born from the coupling a false consciousness of feminism with neo-liberalism’s claim that individuals and how they consume is the most important motivator of society and politics. Let us further define this second point as it relates to the construction of the novel and to neo-liberal thought.

Bustelo takes the primacy of the individual already in neo-liberalism and exaggerates in into an extreme rejection of love and partnership. David Harvey defines this aspect of neo-liberalism through the political career of Margaret Thatcher:

> After Margaret Thatcher was elected she moved to a more ‘supply-side’ monetarist solution to England’s problem with stagflation. “This entailed confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility (such as those expressed through municipal governance, and including the power of many professionals and their associations), … There was, she famously declared, ‘no such thing as society, only individual men and women’ – and, she subsequently added, their families. All forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family
values. The ideological assault along these lines that flowed from Thatcher’s rhetoric was relentless. ‘Economics are the method’, she said, ‘but the object is to change the soul.’ (Neoliberalism 23)

The individual in society – abstract and fictional – takes precedence over all other constructions of family, community and class. Bustleo understands that, therefore, just as ‘real’ government must be set-up so as to maintain the status-quo most helpful for the growth of capital; it must also be this way in her narrative world. In Planeta hembra we see this through the extreme isolation in which the characters live as well as through the strict surveillance of space and thought. Everyone in the fictional future lives alone in high-rise city apartments. There is no space of the city that is outside the reach of the ruling party, not even the abandoned subway systems where Comando H reside. The closest thing to kinship or community that Baéz and others have is their relationship to their personal computers. Margaret Thatcher again is important as Baéz names her computer MaggyMae after the former British Prime Minister.

This historical referencing of names brings us to the importance not only of the regulation of space but also of knowledge and language. Moreover, this aspect allows us to see how the narrator manipulates the employment of history for both commercial and structural ends. Indeed, whatever hierarchy that structures domination through social engineering must also restrict knowledge in order to control discourse. We can see this in the novel played out through the representation of historical heritage. For example, Baéz’s name comes from the folk-singer, Joan Baez. However, all Baéz knows about her namesake is that she was a famous female singer. Her leftist historical context has been
ignored at best, intentionally erased as worst. Baez’s personal computer, MM, short for MaggyMae is named after “[l]a única Hembra rescatable del siglo pasado” (15). But even in the remembering of this woman we see the priority given to the selective memory of history. In the previously mentioned quote, Thatcher said that society should value the family, the XX party in Planeta hembra conveniently forgot this part of the “changing of the soul” that the original Maggy May envisioned. Instead, it is her idea of the individual in society, her quotes such as “las guerras se ganan” (15), and her status as a female that gain her historical transcendence.

Additionally important to the emplotment of history, but especially important to selling the narrative to contemporary Generation X audiences, MM communicates with Baez often times through quotes from the past. These are primarily songs from David Bowie, Kurt Cobain and other rock stars also popular throughout Spanish narrative of the 90s. Understandably because these quotes belong to men, their histories have been restricted, their audio origins amputated from the emisor. To correct this, the narrator adds footnotes in the text to explain the origin of the quote and to translate them from their original English to Spanish.

Finally, in order to understand the narrative construction of historical memory, the character of Dillion plays an important role in the critique of a Utopia turned feminist nightmare. She is the vehicle through which the questioning of the historical memory of the XX party is delivered. She has always been skeptical of the official history of the party and her curiosity and intelligence permit her to hack into private government databases. Dillion is a trouble-maker for the ruling party. She questions too much,
especially the compulsive, obligatory homosexuality. Her skepticism not only works to show the cracks already in the political system but also as a comment on the importance of language in the creation and naturalization of political dominance. In one of her forays into the XX hard drive, aptly named the UTER, Dillon finds a cache of abolished words that are all derogatory to homosexuals. Next to it she finds how all these words have been systematically replaced to refer to heterosexuals.\(^{26}\) Of course, the historical or linguistic nature of the feminist dystopia are necessary components of the artificial world but are always overpowered in the narrative by the political being excessively visual.

In order to ‘sell’ any doctrine, homosexuality in the case of *Planeta hembra*, the visual becomes very important. Lefebvre wrote of the process of the urban and the importance of the visual that,

> A further important aspect of spaces of this kind is their increasingly pronounced visual character. They are made with the visible in mind: the visibility of people and things, of spaces and of whatever is contained by them. The predominance of visualization (more important than ‘spectacularization’, which is in any case subsumed by it) serves to conceal repetitiveness. People *look*, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. We build on the basis of papers and plans, We buy on the basis of images. (*Production* 75-76).

In the novel, the explicitly visual references are required to reinforce the power structure of the character’s world. Moreover, as part of an excessively visual culture, this ‘selling

\(^{26}\) On the same note, the use of the word *hembra* instead of ‘mujer’ linguistically equalizes everything. Planeta H could stand for hembra, hombre, heterosexual, and homosexual.
of doctrine’ through display and spectacle is an imperative that cannot be ignored by the characters or the readers. Ultimately, the effect on the reader is to criticize the type of feminism that focuses on the female genitalia, the pleasure one gets from it and the definition of all interpersonal relationships as sexual.

In terms of narrative structure, all the reported events and descriptions, sexual and linguistic, suggest destiny. The narrator constructs a world where the conclusion that we must come to is that women – radical lesbians – are destined to implode the very world that they may dream of if they employ the same methods of enactment that men do. The extremely linear narration and the separation of the novel into seven days reminds the reader of Genesis. God created the world in seven days for Adam and Eve. Likewise, in seven days humans who have negated that “naturalness” destroy the entire planet.

Here it becomes important to mention what the narration leaves out. While the reader is barraged with images of homosexual mechanized sex or sex as political manipulation, the only act of sex as act of love is not described. In the second-to-last day of the Earth’s existence, when Graf and Baéz are alone in Baéz’s apartment we see them flirting and then the narration, like a camera, cuts to a different scene. This change is marked by a chapter ending. The reader is made aware of their sex act through the surveillance of Quinlan, who had doubted Baéz’s party affiliations from the beginning. We are shown the couple not by direct narration but through Quinlan’s surveillance screen, and only after the act has finished. The narration informs the reader of what Baéz is thinking moments after her first heterosexual encounter, “Baéz suspiró, los ojos fijos
en el techo de su salón. No se atrevía a mirar a Graf. Tampoco sabía que decir. La experiencia había sido aplasante. Mucho mejor que [la droga] Virtux, ni que decir.” Then the narrator turns to the inner thoughts of Graf,

“Era verdad”, pensó Graf. Todo lo que había leído sobre el sexo H era cierto. La perfección, la pasión, la plenitud, la paz. Aunque había que admitir algo absolutamente irrefutable, en el amor hetero, el Hombre mandaba. Baéz tenía que haberse sentido, quizá por primera vez en su vida, domeñada, reducida, ensartada. Graf sonrió a pesar suyo. (212)

Framed in this way the narrator affirms heterosexuality and patriarchal sexuality as “natural”. This narration emphasizes that, despite technological manipulations, inventions and surgical processes to remove non-homo normative sexual inclinations, heterosexuality and male dominance are innate to humans. In Quinlan’s anger at Báez, the jealous hembra spreads the illegal act and image throughout both zones. As the homosexual world descends into chaos and nuclear war at only the image of their leaders descending back into hetero-sexual intimacy, the four main characters are sent off into a shaky future in a spaceship commandeered by Dillon.

Bustelo, as well as other Generation X authors, presents narrators and protagonists that are passive before the city, before the space of narration. The cacophony of visual and audio input that surrounds the characters has erased the historical and social process of the urban space. This is indeed one of the great preoccupations that Bustelo has commented on in her interviews with Candace Bosse and with Miguel Mora in “El
País”. Moreover, in constructing *Planeta hembra* as “destiny” the narration reveals that, even in the future, we are powerless to the processes already at play.

Science Fiction offers a narration that is highly descriptive, similar to more traditional realism, but that creates an extreme reduction of those societal and economic forces that surround the protagonists. In this way, the audience/reader’s interpretation of the altered reality is mediated through an exaggerated, seemingly two-dimensional interpretation of the physical space of the city. The narration of *Planeta hembra* creates explicit and implicit value through this structure. Explicitly consumerism is a dangerous tool of homogenization and feminism is shown as a theoretical fascism. Implicitly, the text furthers the popular culture misconception that these issues are black and white and that there are no methods to react against them. The seemingly two-dimensionality of the future city is made not only through the vertical hierarchal structure or the use of New York and Paris as the only places that matter but also the very two-dimensional construct of society: man vs. woman. All other qualifiers for identity have been obliterated.

However, while this cautionary tale is done in the light of Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and other feminist speculative fiction, this study also cautions that Bustelo is representing a fundamental misunderstanding of feminism and only a cursory criticism of neo-liberal theory. Margaret Atwood tells a cautionary tale about the character of Offred, a young woman partaking in contemporary freedoms but who did not believe that feminism was still necessary. Before the political takeover, she was a product of what Shirley Neuman describes as the “post-feminist” era (862). Bustle self-describes as a neo or post-feminist and uses her narrative to caution against only a certain brand of
feminism and her narrative’s closed structure has the effect of restoring patriarchy as most natural. Bustelo forges a world born out of popular culture stereotypes of feminism, not out of actual feminist thought. Bustelo herself has remarked that she sees second-wave feminism in Spain now as a necessary step in the process to other types of feminist thought. As she has said, “Soy feminista desde siempre” and that what she has tried to do is criticize “la globalización uniformadora, la sectorización, la desaparición de la cultura, el uso infame de la tecnología, la muerte del amor…” (El país). It becomes problematic, then, how to resolve Bustelo’s public feminism and progressive persona with a narrative that seems to work against those ideals. We will leave this part of the analysis for the concluding chapter being that the close relationship between author and narrator is an integral aspect of the three authors presented in the study.
RAFAEL REIG’S SANGRE A BORBOTONES: CITY PRESENT REINVENTED

On the dust jacket Rafael Reig’s 2003 novel Sangre a borbotones the possible reader is posed with the question “¿ha muerto la novela”? The answer is “muy al contrario” because the Spanish novel of the Twenty-first century exudes a healthy diversity of pastiche and cross-national style. As the back cover proclaims, Sangre a borbotones shifts through the narrative genres of detective fiction, Science Fiction, and Western all the while questioning the literary value of each one, “Rafael Reig demuestra que [la novela] goza de excelente salud con esta suerte de Blade Runner madrileño filmado por Woody Allen”.

The dust jacket uses a language that construes Sangre as a pastiche, as play and as breaking traditional conventions to make the text a “post-modern” antidote to an emergency in narrative. First, selling as the novel as a counter measure against a crisis that may-or-may not exist is a problem that will be dealt with more fully in the conclusion. Second, selling the text as post-modern implies a question as to if the novel illustrates how Roland Barthes in his classic S/Z defined texts: is the only thing told in a text is the act of telling itself? If this is the case, Sangre’s narration would represent a narrative play-ground of intertexts and citations whose referent is discourse itself. This definition would exclude any relationship with the material reality that it pretends to embody. How to define Sangre is complicated further upon consideration that all of the genres – Western, detective and sf – that Reig as author employs to build the dystopic Madrid are literary formulas unreservedly tied to the space that they reference. In conjunction with the tension between representation and discourse that the line of
editorial thought suggests as crucial to the novel’s inner workings, it also prescribes Reig’s fictional creation as an antidote to “conventional narrative”. These editorial and consumer ideas about modern pastiche and play helps frame an approach to Sangre a borbotones and the novel’s importance as both literary and social criticism. Additionally, this referencing and resolution of a literary crisis as a consumer selling point alludes to a larger question of the nature of novelistic discourse and the material reality it represents.

As with de la Igelsia and Bustelo, Reig as author chose to employ sf in the content and as structural component of the novel. The city of Sangre is linguistically built through a manipulation of space and time and a confrontation between text and context. Structurally the novel is permeated by canonical Hispanic and international texts as well as by the movement through space particular to a detective novel. The narrator Carlos Clot frequently cites the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez and the Peruvian César Vallejo. The action and the discussions included in the narrative space are motivated by similar philosophical concerns as the Spaniard Miguel de Unamuno and the North American Ray Bradbury. Science Fiction offers a way to bring together these varied, international, a-temporal, voices in an altered space to outline a criticism of a contemporary time and place.

This Chapter argues that Sangre does much more than dialogue with other texts, as the dust jacket would suggest. Sangre –and by extension Acción mutante and Planeta hembra – plays a similar role as did realist/nationalist texts of previous generations. As Jo Labanyi writes of Realist texts of the nineteenth century in Spain,
If we call a novel ‘realist’ it is not because we believe it narrates events that really happened, but because it constructs an ‘imagined community’ that corresponds to the illusion of a homogenous society that is the modern nation. In both cases, we are dealing with a fictional construct.

…[Realism] is based on an awareness that modernity is in various ways constituted by representation. (7)

The imagined community that Sangre references is an unstable nationality that can no longer be represented by purely Spanish citations or stable ontology. Sangre references Madrid as a national space that is linguistically, socially and economically penetrated by global influences. Sangre is a post-modern text that simultaneously affirms a deeply Spanish cultural sensibility through nostalgia and rhetoric and fictionalizes a lost culture. “Spanishness” as a cultural and spatial mode paradoxically remains materially viable even though in flux with external globalizing influences. Equally, the novel acknowledges the economic material tragedies that the physical process of neo-liberalism brings with it. In this way, Sangre a borbotones carefully traverses the positive potentialities as well as the negative side effects of capitalism as cultural and physical process. The internal discourse and the external selling of the novel encapsulate an opportunity of either/or, the basis of Harvey’s imagined Utopia.

Similar to the way that the nation is an imagined community so is the community of money that builds the modern nation. As Bob Jessup summarizes, “To understand the political character of the capital relation as an articulation of the economic and the extra-economic, we must ask why market forces alone cannot reproduce capitalism” (162). For
Jessop the answer “is linked to the fictitious nature of land, money, and above all, labour-power as commodities and the dependence of accumulation on various non-commodity forms of social relations” (152). Capital depends upon a spatio-temporal fix that, like the community it invades, are both dependent upon necessary fictions. Sangre toys with these invented, fictitious constructions in order that the reader might more clearly see the relations between them through time, space and representation of social scales. Reig’s Sangre a borbotones functions equally as post-modern theoretical inquiry into a contemporary national problem and as a discourse that negotiates a way to act.

Sangre as a narrative is structured by the North- South movement of our narrator Carlos Clot on el Paseo de la Castellana in Madrid. In this way, the reader can recognize culture as being affected by material space and also the city itself as a built process. Reig does this through slowing down time and playing with notions of production time and monopoly rent. Moreover, by changing the evolution of cultural time in Sangre a borbotones Reig is able to more clearly illustrate the very real cultural and societal consequences of the built process. Sangre and Reig’s subsequent novel, Guapa de cara (2007), approach the city through a process of thought that uses Science Fiction as a filter and a playground for constructing a consciousness that allows the reader to begin to understand the relationship between space and place and then to form a path of resistance. It is necessary to emphasize that the text that Reig has written represents the beginning of his process of consciousness formation in the reader, not a coherent answer of how to escape. This chapter will map the textual structure that the narrator lays out for fighting neo-liberalism and in the following one I will tease out how Reig, as well as his
sf contemporaries also use their public persona as a platform to continue their consciousness formation.

_Sangre_ balances many either/and dichotomies that mirror what Harvey has called for in the construction of alternative worlds. In this first novel of the series the narration introduces the time and place of Madrid and then focuses on crimes that further educate the reader on economies of absolute process and abstract social reproduction. At the end of the novel, the resulting action brings the reader to conclude that the time and space of dystopic fictional Madrid is not so far off from the contemporary city that it references. Reig achieves this through developing a series of novels of play with a purpose: he is not presenting narrative dead ends. He is, rather, finding a pathway through the scales and spatiality’s of economic constructions. Like the previous narratives analyzed in this dissertation, Reig achieves his goal of disabusing us of our socially progressive ideals through deconstructing philosophical and material notions of urban space. The Utopia of process paradigm that the narrator dismantles is the very discourse of a neo-liberal democracy as Utopia and the (post)modern discourse of science. Rather than ending the novel in apocalyptic holocaust, like the previous authors have done, Reig is able to engage a particular moment of how the city was built through the process of neo-liberal thought and its spatial fix. The ultimate effect is to reveal the inherent contradictions in capitalism as imagined process and capitalism as spatial form. Namely, that capitalism’s desire to be a Utopia of process vis-à-vis Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) is

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27 Harvey in *Spaces of Hope* deconstructs Sir Thomas More’s Utopia gave us “spatial form but not process, Hegel and Marx give us their distinctive versions of the temporal process but not the ultimate spatial form” (174). Marx was drawn to a “dialectic of ‘either-or’ rather than ‘both-and’” Harvey ultimately opts for an open dialectic rather than the closed ‘either-or’.
not coherent with the reality of uneven geographical development and the tragic inequalities that it produces across all scales of the social spectrum (Harvey *Spaces* 181).

Quite ironically, the hard-boiled Sci-Fi narrative voice constructed by the author is able to actively engage the past, present and future of Spain by undoing the last thirty years of its history. In *Sangre a Borbotones* the history of the Iberian Peninsula as we know it was dramatically changed after the 1979 elections that put the socialists into power after Franco’s death. The real-life attempt at a political take-over in the Spanish parliament by Colonel Antonio Tejero Molina in 1981 was the moment, according to Reig’s fictional Madrid, when the United States invaded. This change of historical course has significant ramifications on how the city space looks and on the telling of the space in the moment of narration – the contemporary space of Madrid. As well as taking creative license with a very real political crisis, Reig also re-tells the global petroleum crisis of the late 70s. In his fictional tale, oil has run out in by the early 80s. Since car transport is no longer an option, the streets of Madrid are flooded and all transportation is by boat and bicycle, and foot.

The story takes place along the Castellana canal with Atocha and the Torres Colon being important narrative anchors for the story presented and the text’s social commentary. In the new space of Madrid la Castellana, much like the real city, is the social and economic center of urban life. However, the Castellana becomes a space manipulated by the processes of condensation and metaphor. *Sangre*’s re-telling is able to magnify the consequences of geographical inequalities. As the narrator Carlos Clot informs us,
El Canal Castellana atravesaba la ciudad de norte a sur y ya se había convertido en la principal vía de comunicación entre el centro y el resto de la península. También era un lugar apropiado para depositar a los sabihondos, los entrometidos, los deudores y los bocazas. (12)

In this passage Clot as narrator of Sangre has visualized a condensed layer of spatial scale. In a contemporary Capitalist city, the grandness of commerce and communication and the tragedy of those left behind is usually a dichotomy that city managers try to spread out over an entire city and its neighborhoods. In this passage the transparency of the water realizes the uneven geographical development in a localized fictional space.

Whereas spatial process of economic inequality is exaggerated in a smaller space, processes of cultural evolution are temporally elongated. The US invasion of the Peninsula in 1981 in tandem with the flooding of the streets alters the historic flow of cultural movements. Logically, the US invasion prohibited the historical evolution of Spanish popular culture after the death of the dictator. Since one political regime –Franco – was followed by another – The Ibero-American Federation –, there was only an aborted destape cultural. In the six years following the death of the dictator there was time for a drug culture to develop but not for a full-grown movida. Consequently, in Sangre much of the Spanish cultural history of the last twenty years is conspicuously irrelevant. However, the city, although not culturally experienced the same was as it is in the “real” 90s, still looks the same in the novel’s reenactment of place.

Madrid’s altered cartography is similar if not equal to the city’s current geographical situation. Sallie Marston defines the cartographic scale as “the relationship
between the distance on a map to the corresponding distance on the ground” (220). Although there are some notable differences (the flooding and layering of social inequality) there are more than similarities than not. For example, although the streets have been flooded, the building process of the last thirty years was not stopped. This brings us to one of the most salient of Sangre’s critical points in relation to the production of space. I will delve more deeply into this momentarily. Before leaving the cultural constructs, Sangre’s abstract or social scale is primarily informed by fictional creations from before the founding of an Ibero-American federation. As this cultural history informs a great portion of the content and construction of the novel, we must now briefly look how and why the citations and references have been used.

Throughout Sangre the narrator cites directly and indirectly the poetry and prose of many Hispanic as well as American, German, and Brazilian authors. These citations are incorporated word-for-word into the narration without mention of original authorship. In other cases a verse from a poem or part of a text is cited directly directing the reader to a set of symbolic and metaphorical poetic codes. The references work on many levels as parody, irony and as a questioning of the nature and consequences (societal and theoretical) of textual discourse, including Reig’s own narrative creation. They also help to insert Reig and his text into a line of Vanguard authors that use narrative to respond to philosophical and social problems. These references work to establish meaning as well as to work as shifters that bring the reader in and out of the story constantly.

Sangre a borbotones is written in the first person from the perspective of private detective Carlos Clot who investigates missing person cases in Madrid. He works in
conjunction with another detective named Dix. While Dix is responsible for finding cheating spouses, Clot recovers lost people. From the very beginning the reader senses that Clot is a detective that investigates links between lost people and those that seek them as well as between people and the literature that tries to represent them. For example, the narrator relates the work of the detective team to the work of an author, “Dix, pirandelliano, solía ocuparse de los personajes en busca de su autor y yo, más bien unamuniano, todo lo contrario: de los autores que perseguían a sus personajes” (24). Clot is not the typical “hard-boiled” handsome and well-dressed private detective. Quite the contrary, Clot is extremely well-read, often citing poetry fragments and relating his experiences to writers both real and fictional. Dix, the partner, is the cool, good-looking detective and often scolds Clot to dress better. The narrator, Clot, describes himself as unhealthy and overweight. However, what he does have in common with the “traditional” gum-shoe detectives in line with his literary precedents like Sam Spade or Pepe Carvalho is his borselino hat, his love of whiskey and his movement through the city in order to solve crimes. Only, instead of doing so on his feet or in an automobile, Clot travels on his old Spanish-made Orbea bicycle. Moreover, Clot is an ethical man, emboldened by sentimentality and justice more so than money or fame.

Indeed, the novel as narrative is motivated not to tell of the cases themselves rather to relate how through their resolutions they brought Clot to an either/or decision that changed his life, primarily his relationship to his ex-wife and daughter. The text’s movement follows Clot’s involvement in the cases of three women: Carolina Carvajal, a housewife cheating on her husband; Lovaina Leontieff, a drug-addict daughter gone
missing; and Maribel Martínez, a character from a Western novel written by Phil Sparks and who has magically become infused with a social consciousness and escaped from the pages of her book.\textsuperscript{28} It is the family patriarchs (husband, father and writer) who bring the cases to Clot’s attention. All three women, whose cases seem to be unconnected, are actually embroiled in a conspiracy that involves an invented giant pharmaceutical company, Chopeita Genomics, the real Spanish national telephone company Telefónica and a clandestine drug trial known only as Protocólo 47. The experiment involves a mysterious green pill. It is a drug that kills healthy functioning brains but is a miracle cure for those born with brain defects. In this way the pill also encapsulates many of the dichotomies inherent in space formation under capitalism. The pill represents an either/or situation that is based on both natural and artificial inequalities, the experimentation that will eventually bring the help to many people depends upon the cultural speculation of a dramatically different underclass of drug uses alienated from their space both socially and cognitively.

One of the many internal contradictions necessary to maintain the neo-liberal economy could be termed as a spatial and temporal compulsive disorder. On the one hand is the ritual to homogenize space in order to speed up production. This is held in anxious balance by the stress of retaining a certain level of monopoly rent which must exist in order to sell place to create long term investments. In Sangre, the monopoly rent that is capitalized on is human lives and bodies. When the American forces invaded, the

\textsuperscript{28} I must note that a feminist reading of the situation of telling his story about his relationship to women through the exploration of a different set of wives and daughters and an imagined female object of sexual desire mixed with social conscious would be extremely worthwhile and interesting. However, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this work.
governing power was transferred to a bio-engineering company, not a political government. The company – Chopeita genomics – harvests the city’s plethora of late 70s drug addicts as experimental fodder. In this way we can see that Madrid becomes sold to the pharmaceutical company, not as a progressive “everything under the sun” as it was under PSOE. Rather, it became a place prime to capitalize on economic and spatial inequalities left-over from the dictatorship and whose roots were in the economic transformations of the 60s resulting from the lifted economic ban by Western countries like the United States.

The transformation of the 60s towards free market capitalism also brought on an era of speculation and city growth in Madrid that further remolded the city in the image of capital. Clot’s movement up and down the contemporary Sci-Fi Castellana canal and its conjoining neighborhoods is, then, an ironic way of documenting the real historical process of inequality and deterritorilization that began ten years before the death of the dictator. Additionally, Clot’s movement, more than initializing a resolution to the crimes, is a realization of his sentimentality and curiosity about the unfortunate relationships between space and its inhabitants. Therefore, the text tells us as readers that if only we open our eyes to looking for real consequences within the visible process we will see the tragic consequences of capitalism’s internal contradictions.

29 Here we can make a clear comparison between the structuring of this novel and a novel from the 60s that linked the city with its literary past as well as its contemporary economic process. Namely, Reig’s Science Fictionally displaced Madrid resembles that of Luis Martín Santos’ Tiempo de silencio from 1961. Indeed, much like Martín Santos’ referencing of Cervantes informed the reader that science in Spain during the dictatorship was the equivalent to tilting at windmills, Reig’s referencing of Gabriel García Marqués’s 100 años de soledad is a way to inform the reader that the scientific discourse in the post-national Spain is its own type of magical realism.
Clot, more than solving a crime, is curious enough to happen upon their resolutions. For example, through the course of his investigations of Mabel Martínez, he comes upon documentation that proves the links between Chopeita, Telefónica and the mysterious pill. Manex Chopeita, the mysterious CEO of the genetics company, learns that Clot has more than theories but real incriminating evidence and offers to help Clot’s family in exchange for the detective’s silence. The climax of the novel, logically, seems to hinge on whether or not Clot will sacrifice his daughter Clara, who suffers from cerebral palsy, in order to save humanity from an Evil Empire. Or, will he compromise his ethics, use the green pill to save Clara from her debilitating mental handicap, thereby acknowledging that exposing the company for what it is will only slow its nefarious plans but not actually help to stop it?

Like many contemporary detective novels, solving the crimes and tracing the path of corruption does not mean that the detective has resolved the crisis presented through the criminal acts. Indeed, revealing the webs of responsibility is reduced to an affirmation of what is already known about society. In the end, even though Clot chooses to save his daughter, he receives no credit for it and his ex-wife moves with her new beau to on the Spanish coast which means that he will not be able to see his daughter as she emerges from the brain damage. Clot’s first either/and decision to save his daughter is one that forces him to break an ethical code but that also allows him to continue working.³⁰

³⁰ In the second novel, Guapa de cara, Clot’s reluctance to use the evidence to bring down the company is harshly judged by the voice of the woman who is killed and who also narrates the story. Clot is investigating her crime, but the story is told by the woman’s ghost, a situation that allows the reader a secondary perspective not only of Clot’s actions but also of the relationships of scale in the city. For the purpose of this study I will only analyze Reig’s first novel but understanding the relationship between the novels is necessary to comprehending the author’s project.
However, although the text does reveal the culpable parties as well as the place and motivations of their crimes, the true crux of the narrative is quite different. *Sangre a borbotones* cannot finish until Clot can end Sparks’ Western novel – also titled *Sangre a borbotones* – and send Mabel and Spunk McCain (the protagonist of Phil Spark’s novels) back into the book.31

Each one of the popular genre forms incorporated into the narrative – Detective, Western and Sci-Fi – is a type of story that seeks to uncover a hidden or obscured truth about society. For example, new detective fiction relates crimes to the city spaces where they happen, it recounts the nature of criminality and that the problem stems not from individuals but from corrupt institutions; a western novel is about spatial frontiers and making one’s own destiny. Science Fiction is a way to criticize contemporary space and provides a cognitively estranged map of the city and its historical moment in order that we may re-read the present and how we arrived here. The sf narration used in this novel, one that involves manipulating time so that we may more clearly present time, is an innovative way to respond to Madrid’s contemporary material space.

To begin, in order to comprehend the ultimate social or material consequences of *Sangre a borbotones*, the first of his Sci-Fi detective series starring the disheveled Carlos Clot, we must understand how the narrator and the structure of the story draw the reader into the questioning of nationality and to the friction associated with the difference

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31 This narrative situation that relates real author (Peñuelas) with public persona author (Phil Sparks) and his narrative creations who take on a life of their own deserves a chapter all its own. Again, although outside the grasp of this investigation, Reig’s novel does bring up many interesting interplays of authorship. Not only at the level of texts but also of movements and, through the character of Manex Chopeitia, of life and DNA. This theme reminds the reader of Borges, Unamuno and many other authors.
between high and popular fiction. Moreover, through these two debates involving the construction of communities of understanding (nationality or literary standards and knowledge) Sangre finds a “structuralist” (materialist) twenty-first century pathway back into using narrative as social and economic resistance. This is not the same as to argue that the novel is itself an artifact of resistance; rather, Reig opens up a way for literature and literary endeavors of the post-transition to be used as both consumer artifacts and sites of resistance.

As noted in the introduction to this present analysis, Sangre presents a confrontation between text and context through the structuring of its story. The narrator focuses a great deal on discussions stemming from and relating to the act of narration and to the perception of literary standards. Additionally, these discussions frequently involve rhetorical questions about the condition of national culture and place. Clot uses global literary references in a very closed physical space that reinforce notions of the dangers of loss of culture in a neo-liberal climate. Clot’s word-for-word citations of Cien años de soledad as part of the telling of the story, his pausing to relate a romantic situation to a verse by Pablo Neruda or César Vallejo, as well as Clot’s integration into the plot of Sangre a plot from Unamuno’s Niebla work in conjunction to pose narratological and philosophical questions about nationality, space and time. Moreover, all of the citations in Sangre reference crisis of ontological instabilities relating to how the nation and the city are thought of as historical or cultural constants. Questioning the contemporary space of Madrid through these various texts does two things. First, the integrations of these hetero-cultural texts into a Spanish text that denies any claim to the continuation of a
historical, unified, homogenous, imagined community sloganized as “Spain is different”. Simultaneously, they construct a unity through difference of time and space. Let me try to be clearer. These textual citations that link altered modes of narrating to transformations of lived communities – be it Colombia, Industrial Spain, or post WWII California – juxtaposed on to a cognitively estranged, dytopic Madrid establish a new mode of thinking and of understanding the city and its social scales.32 Moreover, the distorted binaries of physical and cultural borders illustrate what Doreen Massey’s criticisms of binaries in that we can no longer think of nationality in terms of inside and outside of culture, history or border. Indeed,

Definition in this sense does not have to be through simple counter position to the outside; it can come, in part, precisely through the particularity of linkage to that ‘outside’ which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place. This helps get away from the common association between penetrability and vulnerability. […] Thus there is a series of tensions: a world characterized on the one hand by complexity and potential disorder, but on the other hand very clear and consistent directions in the geography of power. (155, 161)

The story of Sangre is narrated in a straightforward, linear manner, a structure that pertains to the hard-boiled detective novel which allows for movement though the city where personal crimes serve as paradigms for national crisis. The narratological job of a private detective in the hard-boiled genre is to connect spatial concerns to social

32 These many references provide interesting opportunities for future studies but that, unfortunately, remain out of the grasp of this present analysis.
ones. Clot’s movement through Madrid shows us that – like the bodies of so many dead junkies found in the automobile graveyard – the city is sick and infected with a severe disease. The notion of the body developed through the three cases of the women and, consequently, the notion of the city do not form holistic entities. The crimes all show fragmentations of the relationship of self to body, self to family, family to state and state to individual.

Through this melding of detective fiction and Science Fiction Sangre a borbotones tells the reader the hows and whys of built space. First, the story tells us about why the city looks the way it does and, moreover, what are the consequences of the scales and relationships of that space. The three focal points of the action of the narration are first, where majority of the crimes take place, the Castellana. Second and third are the neighborhoods set back from the Castellana where Clot spends the majority of his time: Chuecas and Lavapiés. Both of these places correspond to real built places and to ideas of what a city has been and should be. Moreover, La Castellana and its surrounding areas represent the hopes and desires of what Spain has wanted and wants to be in relation to retaining a historical identity while also promoting their international image as a modern and technologically advanced country. Reig, through the text, is toying with these notions by exaggerating some historic and economic realities and suppressing other cultural and ethnic ones. In order to understand the evolution of the Paseo de la Castellana and how the selective memory of Reig works, we must take a short trip back in time.

Soon after Spanish Civil war ended in 1939 there were plans in the making for how to rebuild the nation and, moreover, the capital city of Madrid as its center. The first
plan was that of 1941 which wanted to solidify the falangist power by material or architectural design that enclosed symbolic and discursive repercussions. Of the fascist party’s three main objectives was to first make Madrid the center of communications and industrial productions as well as to promote growth (Plan general 72). Among the plans from 1941 as well as with the Brigador plan of 1946 one of the main focal points was to elongate la Castellana as a center of power. It was this street as access point and city center that was to be representative of the new order in Spain. To ensure that this happened the government passed in 1953 the “Ley Castellana” that gave fiscal privileges in the form of tax breaks to certain zones and sectors in order to ensure the proper kind of growth (Azorín and Gea 217). The street was ideologically premised as the central nervous system “la espina dorsal de la ciudad” and the center of accumulated power (ibid 244). Throughout the many plans, the different areas of the street were cordoned off into subsets of activity like commerce, upper-middle class homes, middle-class homes, green areas and the like. The plan from the 60s was intended to make the Paseo a practical, open center of residences and commerce that retained a centralized scale coherent enough to communicate its importance. However, as Sofía Dieguez Patao comments in *La Castellana, escenario de poder*, when the time came to implement the Plan “que se utiliza como exponente de un momento político,… se cambia por otro planteamiento más ajustado a los intereses especulativos” (140). Indeed, the end result of the building up of this central corridor reveals its true character as one that pertains to a decidedly economic root.
La Castellana is a conspicuous center of economic power in Madrid. This is easily observed in the constructed environment on the street by the number of banks like Banco Santander and the emblematic banco Bilbao-Vizcaya. The street is a showcase of modern architecture and technology. It has the most advanced buildings, the tallest and those that are representative of centers of other power necessary to neo-liberalism. For example, the center of communication, the Télefonica building, incriminated in *Sangre a borbotones*, faces the banco Bilbao. The most recent constructions of the last twenty years, the Torres KIO (1996) also form an integral part of *Guapa de cara*. Encapsulated in each real building representative of the evolution of this street and also replicated in Reig’s Sci-Fi novel is a narrative that correlates to what Harvey has written about the preservation of space: “The preservation or construction of a sense of place is then an active moment in the passage from memory to hope, from past to future. And the reconstruction of places can reveal hidden memories that hold out the prospects for different futures” (*Justice* 306).

In *Sangre a borbotones* the Castellana is, understandably, the representative place of power and corruption. Carlos Clot’s office is located in the heart of El Paseo de la Castellana in the Torres Colón. The tower was built in 1976 and was designed by Antonio Lamela who later was the architect for the Santiago Bernabéu stadium and for the recent additions to the Barajas airport. Because of the location and of the historical significance of its being built we can easily see the significance of Clot’s office being in a building constructed in the beginning of the transition that was designed to form part of
an ideological superstructure. Moreover, right in front of this real building Reig has built the biggest and most well protected building in the hemisphere: Chopeita Genomics.

When Clot leaves the office to think about his cases he often walks along the streets, pausing to mention buildings, bridges or parks, such as Retiro Park. When Clot arrives at home it is “dos habitaciones en uno de los seis sotabancos de un edificio de la calle San Marcos. Era un estudio-mansarda de los que el Plan Urbanístico destinaba a artistas inéditos” (18). Much like the different neighborhoods of Madrid today, in Reig’s creation there is an Urban plan that places people in the city on a functional scale representative of commerce, labor, economic class and leisure activities. The fictional city of Madrid has Clot’s neighborhood being designated for writers. The real San Marcos where Clot’s apartment is located is in the middle of Chueca, a neighborhood close to the Colón Towers and also the contemporary heart of much of the art and literary (as well as homosexual) life of Madrid.

In the detective’s leisure time he goes to “El bar Tamayo, en la calle Ave María”. He describes it as a “local diminuto” where “los marineros de Puerto Atocha” go to unwind and it is also one of the last hold outs of the now illegal Spanish “no había crupieres ni se escuchaban el anglo” (37). Much like in the previous example of Clot’s home, his favorite bar also corresponds to a place easily located on a map of the city. It is a real bar in the neighborhood of Lavapiés. This neighborhood is located close to Atocha off the Paseo del Prado which, to the north, turns into the Castellana. More importantly,

this neighborhood in the text and in Madrid is battleground for Castilian culture. In the “real” Madrid Lavapiés is a place of tension between Spain’s large immigrant population and its Castizo past. In the sf context of Reig’s first novel of the series he has shifted all the real questions of immigration and ethnic, linguistic and cultural change that accompany it to one question of economic class. Moreover, he attributes the problem to a root cause of flexible accumulation and economic globalization, not to particular instances of the resulting economic Diasporas.

Deciphering the cases involves delving into the manipulation of scales in the very real city. For example, Clot first finds Lovy – the missing daughter – alive in the automobile graveyard and tries to get her to go back to her father. She does not want to return home, however not for the reason that Clot first assumes. Lovy is not afraid of what her father will think of her being a drug-addict. Rather than facing the trauma of fatherly disappointment, Lovina is afraid that her father, who deals drugs, will punish her for working outside of his hierarchy of illicit deals. Instead of reproducing the patriarchal community of money, she was trying to work outside of the system. In the end, she is found dead, killed by a green pill and her body is horribly cut up and disfigured, then put on display as a public warning of what happens to those who decide to work outside of the system. Indeed, addicts killed for their entrepreneurial ambitions are dealt with in a special way in Clot’s world. The mysterious Protocolo 47 mandates that s/he be exterminated with a pill and then various parts of the body are harvested for research: one of the eyes, the tongue, some fingers from one hand, as well as various pieces of skin from different place on the body. Clot finds Lovy’s dead body while walking home one
night and the case is, therefore, finished more than it is resolved. Although this mutilation does not happen to Carole, the cheating house-wife, she also ends up killed by a green pill.

Carole’s death is not prompted by drug abuse, or even because she is working outside of patriarchy. She is killed because she becomes involved in trying to find out about the devious relationships between Telefónica and Chopeitia Genomics. The man that kills her is not her middle-class lover (who is also involved in subversive activities) but an impersonator, and a high level official of the national communications company. We learn of the relations between her butanero Francis Laverón and Carole through a homeless man, don Jotabé. Again, Clot’s sentimentally motivated movement through the city allows him to stumble upon the answers. The only missing person to come out of her ordeal alive is the only “fictional” character: Mabel. Indeed, Mabel and Spunk have left the pages of their novels in order to help not only those that read them but also Clot.

As we can clearly see, Reig’s novel is very much rooted in space. Nancy Harstock has written that to understand both theory and space we must look at moments of time in order to understand them. The constant battle played out in Sangre between text and inter-text, high and low follows a map of Madrid. Although I will not enter into an analysis of his second novel of the series, these relations as well as the historical and cultural process that brought them to this point become more solidified in Guapa de cara which enables Reig to respond to different moments of time. In the end, the Sci-Fi detective series relates all the present built environment to a moment of history that may have altered the cultural and national history of the country but did not change the
geographical or the spatial relations within. We can see this in several specific examples from the text that make mention of particular places and their economic and social meaning.

The contemporary Spain narrated by Carlos Clot started out as a police state brought on by political crisis and the dystopia is, then, a logical consequence. This situation makes *Sangre a borbotones* unique in that it is the only narrative in this study that does not critically a popularly held image of Utopist thought like feminism or alternative culture as an antidote to the problems of neo-liberalism. Indeed, Reig is criticizing capitalism as Utopianism. Adam Smith’s initial definition of capitalist intention was one that will ultimately bring social justice and equality through the hidden hand of the market. This understanding of capitalism has remained until recently as a utopia of process. Moreover, Reig’s novel realizes the tragic consequences of what Adam Smith proposed in his 1776 *The Wealth of Nations*. Namely, the theory that led him to propose “…a utopianism of process in which individualized desire, greed, drives, creativity, and the like could be mobilized through the hidden hand of the perfected market to the social benefits of all” (qtd. in Harvey *Spaces* 175).

Reig’s neo-liberal dystopia demonstrates that the United States, by intervening at a moment of crisis, was able to use a neo-liberal discourse to take ownership of the critical time of the transition when chaos reigned. This allows the globalizing powers of the US flexible accumulation, being hatched in the 70s and 80s, to establish a type of monopoly rent on the cultural, economic and social situation of Spain. Much like the mafia bandits who steal the pretty girl’s head at the opportune moment of the magic
show, the neo-liberal discourse swept in at a time when Spain was trying to perform its own magic trick of transition from dictatorship to democracy. The analogy between text and context continues if we see that, much like the trick proposed in the book, the head is fragmented from the body and re-attached. Likewise, Spain as nation was in the process of reuniting missing parts. It was trying to heal the wounds of the past by re-joining the fragmented members of its political and cultural body (ie Cataluña, País Vasco, Galicia, etc). Reig questions not only the moment of transition but the wholeness of its enactment. His text puts into doubt the relationship between the head and the body vis a vis the Spanish sovereign government and the Spanish national people. In Reig’s world – indeed, outside of the textual boundaries as well – the only dominant player in the game are the forces of the economy. The text clearly illustrates, as we have seen, the relationship between the built space and its inhabitants, but also how the economy affects the flow of cultural time.

By owning the post-Franco crisis, the Ibero-American Federation is able to manipulate it for their purposes. As we already discussed in the structural analysis previously, the textual situation shows how time can be manipulated by economy. Not only is time slowed down culturally, it is also sped up scientifically. Specifically, by increasing the power that the bio-medical companies have, they need less time for development.

The question posed by the text is how to represent a present that illustrates the effects of capitalism and technology as the most important motivators of spatial and social change. First, Reig changed history in subtle and logical ways in order to bring
about a not impossible present. Indeed, Ray Bradbury commented in a 1999 interview that *Fahrenheit 451* is the only Science Fiction that he has written because it is “a depiction of the real” and is something that could happen.\(^{34}\) We can find a similar parallel in the very Spanish genre of the *esperpento*. The debate the surrounds sf’s relationship to reality is similar to how Valle-Inclan’s invention related to the late 1800 and early 1900’s. Like the *esperpento’s* of the turn-of-the-century, Science Fiction in the twenty-first century does not “stylize” or allegorize the present but rather affirms the deformed, absurd, monstrous and tragic of the everyday (Karageorgou-Bastea 67).

In much the same way, Reig’s novel is not a warning about a terrible future, it is an attempt to show us our present image in a distorted mirror. Moreover, this makes Reig’s novel much more than an exercise of post-modern pastiche and play. Indeed, the most important aspect to this study of his novel’s mixing and melding of genres and specific texts, is Reig’s use of sf. Specifically, using Science Fiction as a discursive strategy allows Reig to compose a Madrid that can filter the problems of the present in order to deal with questions of class politics that began with the dictatorship and have continued through the neo-liberal democracy built in the image of capitalism. The twenty-first questions of, for example, immigration are largely absent from his city. This is useful to the criticism of contemporary Madrid because it allows for a way to center the problematic on economic difference as the root problem of all social divisions. Filtering time and space is also a strategy that can deal with the post-modern tensions surrounding post-structuralist discourse – the root of the so-called crisis in narrative – and the creation

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of a “whole subject”. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a major problem with post-structuralism is that it is not able to actively engage material reality because it fights its battles through discourse, not through action. As Melissa Wright summarizes,

The postmodern ‘turn’ in art and architecture elevates anarchy over hierarchy, play over purpose, chance over design, performance over product, absence over presence, surface over depth, signifier over signified (Best and Kellner 1991). Within this literature, claims to the social order, constancy and steadfast reality are merely contributions to the constant interplay of representational forces that intersect in the social continuum.

They are no more or less real than any other set of claims. (85)

This is specifically played out in the story of Planeta hembra where the body is the theoretical discourse through which women find material empowerment. Unfortunately, empowerment begins and ends with the body. On a much wider scale, David Harvey in Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference examines this same problem by calling it “militant particularism”. Plainly put, if as a society we – through gender, sexuality, race, religion – are to accomplish goals of social justice through a particular embodiment of difference we are will be likewise doomed to remain within that difference. As Melissa Wright summarizes, “…loyalties to particularized identities are misplaced if the experience to those identities is one of oppression” (94).35 In this way, class identity is

35 Wright continues, “…Instead, we must interrogate our particular experience of oppression, turn it into militant politics, based not upon oppressed identities but instead upon a politics of liberation from systematic exploitation. This assertion restates Harvey’s central claim that an identity politics that begins with social difference cannot be the starting point for political change; otherwise it will be the ending point” (94).
the particularity that “given the globality of capital, bridges the local and global (Wright 94)”. Therefore, Science Fiction used as a filter in *Sangre a borbotones* is able to reflect a city caught in a moment of history, elongate that moment then reframe it through a unifying vision of class difference.

In the re-telling of the city Clot emphasizes the un-even development under neo-liberal processes that is not dependent upon systems of government. As the material struggles of the past thirty years illustrate, space and the right to the city is under constant debate whether the government is motivated by a socialist discourse or an outrightly neo-liberal one. Clot relates this uneven development of the city itself back to the fragmentation of the body, especially to the idea of beheading.

Like the confrontation between text and context and references that are not attributed to their author, *Sangre* narrates a confrontation between people and place. For not only are references “decapitated”, so are many narrative bodies likewise mutilated by, for example, their heads being stolen during a magic show. Equally, the fictional city is described as an infected body, fragmented in so many ways by social, cultural and economic lines and waterways. Clot, after witnessing the magician Boldini’s helper’s head being stolen in the middle of the act, poses one of his many rhetorical questions:

¿Y nosotros? ¿Nos damos cuenta nosotros de lo que nos pasa? A lo mejor nos sucede lo mismo y ni siquiera lo sabemos. A lo mejor estamos incompletos, somos un fragmento de algo mayor, una parte separado del resto. Y seguimos así, sin saberlo siquiera. (57)
Even though the girl is without a head she somehow continues to live, but only for a limited time. Important to the social commentary the novel enacts, this act of unconnecting the woman’s head from her body occurs in a place that is symbolic of what it means for a city to be connected. Clot witnesses the stealing of the head in his favorite bar, el bar Tamayo, on Ave María Street – also a read neighborhood close to Atocha. Much like the Paseo de la Castellana, the area around Atocha and the station itself is representative of both an idea about Madrid and of a conflicting reality. If the Castellana is the central nervous system of the city, then Atocha is the neurological center (Calvo Serraller no pagination).

The Atocha station was drastically remolded in the mid-nineteenth century. The Belgian architects designed its steel top resembling to resemble a ship (Plan general 173). In the 60s the government built the “Sclextric”, a large highway around the southern station. While it was able to transport 200,000 vehicles a day, it also caused a disturbing amount of environmental and “visual” pollution (Fuente no pagination). The sclextric came to represent all that was wrong with the economic development of the 60s and thus also represented all that Madrid hoped to become during its transition process. The mayor Tierno Galván commented that the American style must be eliminated also because “…durante años ha entorpecido la visión de una de las plazas más bellas de la ciudad” (El País 15/03/85). The station was returned to his previous state which is also as it appears in Reig’s novels. In the economic, social and cultural transition of the late 70s the area around Atocha, including the Prado museum and the Reina Sofia were also given makeovers to suit the hopes and desires of the new city. Since then the area has continued to be
the site of a battle between immigrants, speculators and those that resist the capitalist process through Okupas. These contemporary issues are largely absent from Sangre. However, the battle over the right to the city is what is at stake, and is at the core of the novel’s criticism.

Using Science Fiction as a narrative strategy allows Carlos Clot, the narrator, to describe a world where the political-economic situation that can manipulate time through strict control of space and movement which, therefore, has stalled certain social processes. While inhibiting the construction of space which, then, disallows the process of creative destruction to play out in the city, runs counter-intuitive to the needs of neoliberalism, the economic situation described in the novel allows for the discourse of science to act as predator on a nation in turmoil. Structurally, this allows the narrator to pause for introspection on the development of space in a particular moment and on historical process and consequence.

In order to build a true alternative space to capitalism that is able to bring about the wishes of social justice, philosophies must be able to actively engage both space and time. We can see in Sangre a borbotones what Marx first called “the annihilation of space by time” in a much different light. As Harvey has discussed in numerous texts (1989, 2003) capitalism has a series of internal frictions that adversely affect the construction of space. On the one hand, capitalism needs to speed up time which it does by overcoming spatial barriers through transportation or communication. On the other hand, capitalism needs to lengthen time which it does through long term investments. Bob Jessop summarizes,
Harvey also addresses the role in *buying time through fixed investments* in general conditions of production. He notes especially how crisis-tendencies can be overcome in the short to medium term through investments that absorb *current* surplus capital and increase its *future* productivity and profitability. This involves both sense of ‘fix’. For not only are these typically long-term investments, they also provide a potential escape from crisis via market expansion. (148 emphasis in original)

By making time and space function in dramatically different fashions from the present circumstances, the novel demonstrates that there is no hope for a better future, only the continuation of a terrible present. As Harvey has written, creating a map of the city in the material and the metaphorical sense is a discursive activity that incorporates power. These instances of mapping are “fundamental moments in the production of discourses” (*Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* 112). By water logging the city of Madrid and thereby making any physical change difficult to impossible is a way of also freezing that discursive power over what that space means. This situation effects not only what the space signifies metaphorically but also economically. There can be no real resistance if there is no way to make it take effect. This leads us to see the space of the late 70s and the political and social changes since that time in a different way. The cognitive estrangement offered by Science Fiction allow Reig to focus on the context of scale through fictional (metaphoric) and material (economic) constructs.
Because the moment of crisis is so lucrative to the genetics company, it is in their best interest to keep it that way. Owning the crisis allows the government and, moreover the genetics company, to scale the city according to their needs. This scale involves not only the built environment but also the social relations that are produced and reproduced within it. Sallie Marston argues that in talking about scale we must look at capitalist production, social reproduction and consumption as these three entities in tension with each other are responsible for the built environment which is, then, in tension with human agents (220). If societal relations are the “material bases upon which social life is premised” than the capitalist formed environment along the Castellana since the 60s is to blame for the dystopia presented by Reig (233).

In the last analysis, the most important reference in the novel is that of space and what it implies in the preservation of memory and hope. Because the very idea of Spain as a sovereign nation is told through the nostalgia surrounding a dying language, a loss of traditional names, and a sentimental attachment to very Spanish companies like the Orbea bicycle that Clot rides, the narrator affirms the importance of nationhood and national identity as still very strong in contemporary time. Moreover, this situation explains the use of the Western. In many aspects, Spain after Franco was the Wild West. Reig’s novel is an attempt at understanding Madrid as a neo-liberal place. The happenings of the city are very different in the novel and the city it references, and superficially the city itself appears different because of it has been flooded. However, the buildings representative of commerce are exactly the same. As further developed in Guapa de cara, the built environment that corresponds to the process of capitalism has not been hindered. Indeed,
in the second novel of the series the *torres Kio* make an appearance as the place of public punishment for those who try to work outside the mafia and the law.

Reig’s work with this series of novels and with the literary group Hotel Kafka represents an important turn in how authors engage their city. To this situation and to how the novels work as sites of resistance we will now turn in Chapter Five.
CONCLUSIONS

One of the overriding characteristics marking the novels of Generation X is the sense of apathy expressed by the protagonists towards their environment. In contrast, the characters of *Acción mutante*, *Planeta hembra* and *Sangre a borbotones* are all actively engaged in resistance and in finding alternatives to their conditions. Likewise de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig are also committed to consciousness formation as part of their literary careers. In Stephen Duncombe’s *Notes From the Underground* the American professor and culture critic affirms that for a radical movement to work in the zine sphere that it is essential that the author turn his/her readers into writers.

Rafael Reig has done just this. One of the most recent publications of sf from Spain is the result of one of the Sci-Fi-detective writer’s classes. Ibom Larrazabal Arrate published his first novel *Sero* in 2008 at Odisea Editorial. This publishing house is dedicated to the LGBT community and, according to their website (odiseaeditorial.com) they have become the biggest publishing house of “gay” literature for the Hispanic community. Briefly, the novel is about the prototypical Generation X slacker type who, in this case, happens to be a homosexual, and learns that he is infected with HIV. The novel is sf only in that it imagines a not-so-distant future after there is a vaccination for HIV and AIDS. It imagines what the social repercussions would be for those who did not get the vaccine and still have the disease. The protagonist Yurgi transforms from apathetic victim of his own careless life to militant combatant for gay and “seropositivo” HIV rights. The importance of Larrazabal Arrate’s novel rests not only in its Science Fiction discourse but in its formation of a new generation of writers who are turning away from
apathy and consent with the status quo and beginning to imagine possible outcomes to present conditions. In this way, Reig as author has not only written a series of novels that serves a growing and hungry-for-social criticism population, he has also helped the career of new authors in minority communities. This literary father-ship is, according to Duncombe, essential for a resistance to take place.

Throughout the previous four chapters I have left the question open as to if using a capitalist mode of production and distribution – such as a popular novel – is an adequate way to express opposition to that very system. As Malcolm Compitello asserts: “[r]esistance, while not futile, can be problematic” (“Recasting” no pagination). Compitello, Harvey and Stephen Duncombe all have signaled varied problems that resistance movements have encountered. These difficulties fall into two related categories: they as either descend into militant particularisms or spawn a “false consciousness”. In the United States these movements have been “woefully inadequate” in the face of capitalist forces (Duncombe 174). In Spain, this sense of disenfranchisement from both the dominant culture and the alternative is what has marked the writing of the Generation X. The inability of politics from either side to effectively change the status-quo also has the effect of creating a sense of apathy in those caught in the middle unable to assume a theory or practice that does not speak to the problems of the everyday. To create an effective resistance against neo-liberal theory and neo-liberal practice, the cultural medium through which this resistance is built “must speak in the tongue of people’s experience, not in the priest’s Latin of academia or the slogans of sectarianism” (ibid 178).
This quote from Stephen Duncombe aptly defines why the creation, discussion and distribution of alternative practices cannot stay hidden in the underground outside of the borders of capitalism. A resistance that does not only “sing to the choir” of a community of like-minded persons must necessarily move and participate in the very culture that it is resisting. Science Fiction offers a way that an alternative culture can recover and build relevancy in the minds and hearts of “alienated young people” (Duncombe 174). This also addresses why I have chosen to include descriptive and structural comparisons between the fiction of the mainstream Generation X writers of the 90s and first decade of the twenty-first century to the sf narratives of de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig.

Acción mutante, Planeta hembra and Sangre a borbotones are cultural productions united under the banner of a type of resistance discourse that to date has not seen the same popularity in Spain as it has in other countries like the United States, Great Britain, even in Latin American countries. At each level of the narrative, the capital and neo-liberalism practices of the real Madrid permeate the created “cognitively estranged” Madrid. The cultural productions discusses in the previous chapters employ Science Fiction as a strategy to counter the effects of the urbanization of capital and consciousness in the city and in the individual. De la Iglesia, Buselo and Reig use this alternative discourse for a myriad of reasons. The most important one is to relate phenomena of contemporary society and culture to its space of representation, specifically the city of Madrid. As the Generation of the 90s wrote of apathy and of the
disconnect between space, society and individuals who feel helpless to intervene, these new sf texts speak of action and movement.

Álex de la Iglesia and the novelists Gabriela Bustelo and Rafael Reig chose Science Fiction as a method in order that their readers understand why utopist thought is insufficient to bringing about real change. Returning to the first chapter, the thesis of this dissertation contends that all Utopias of process will be condemned to repeat the errors of the present if they are not able to also account for spatial processes. In the three narratives analyzed, all Utopias of process stemming from social theory descend into chaos and dystopic nightmare in the capitalist system. Sf provides a narrative sensibility that focuses on the estranging elements in society that direct the reader to the failures of social thought. It is able to accomplish this by being able to enter the mainstream, build a consciousness through an alternative vision of the world, and then track paths of opposition. The paths that the three narratives track serve as discourses of resistance against utopias of process. The narratives are able to pin point false promises of hope that appear as cultural, feminist or scientific ideologies. From there the texts are able to reveal how these ideologies presence in a national space and interaction with capitalist forces of spatial formation is insufficient to bringing about the very goals of social justice that those ideologies promise. The act of resistance that de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig attempt to build is a consciousness around not only particular philosophies meant to correct social disorders pertaining to specific groups – the movida, feminism, scientific innovation – but also the utopia of thought and dystopia of space inherent to the global presence of neo-liberalism.
Acción mutante, Planeta hembra and Sangre a borbotones are first-and-foremost social texts. As discussed in the first two chapters, sf is misunderstood and often criticized as a “foreign” genre. However, Science Fiction is a genre of fiction uniquely suited to relating contemporary ideological structures and struggles to material ones. It does so not through allegory or ‘realism’ but through displacing ideological structures so that they become more visible. Moreover, the methodology and personal style of each author places their particular narratives very much within a historical canon of texts that deal with social and cultural concerns at times of economic, political and technological cross-roads. This chapter will review the analyses of the cultural texts previously offered as a way to place them within a moment of resistance as well as in a historical trajectory of avant-garde fiction.

The structure of each novel is fundamentally important to the creation of an alternative vision of society. Acción mutante, Planeta hembra and Sangre a borbotones are structured through a language of estrangement to space and time. Although the texts create a feeling of alienation from lived reality, the anti-utopias remain ideologically tied to the abstract and absolute space of Madrid and Spain. The critical axis of each text depends on the interplay between projections of life of Madrid – including references to streets and buildings as well as to cultural constructions – and the access and mobility of individuals and communities of people in the city. In this regard, the representation of the body plays an important role in the extrapolation of each text. The body is deformed, fragmented, scientifically manipulated and harvested for experimentation. These bodily concerns lend an undeniable “esperpentic” farce and black comedy to de la Iglesia’s film
as well as in Bustelo’s feminist dystopia and Reig’s flooded, Americanized nightmare city. In *Acción mutante*, *Planeta hembra* and *Sangre a borbotones*, the relationship between the human body and material and social space fits into a set of national concerns that continues a historical narrative of confronting social, technological and epistemological change. Moreover, they address the fears associated with the most recent changes brought on by a globalized economy under capitalism. This last coming-together of themes is also realized in the very public personality of the authors involved. Their narratives play similar roles as that of a Romantic’s social and literary catharsis as well as the Realist project that “functions as a forum for critical debate” (Labanyi 5). The sf of contemporary Spain encapsulates these aspects of previous narrative movements in order to link issues of shifting perceptions and experiences in the city to the conception of the individual in a post-national society.

Besides the theme of the body, the importance of perception and gaze cannot be understated. In the twenty-first century seeing and being seen is the ultimate standard of truth. De la Iglesia’s film, Bustelo’s feminist dystopia and Reig’s altered Madrid all play with the image and sight as representations of a reality and as a mechanism of authority. *Acción mutante* revolves around symbolic shifts of time and space. The power of the visual is especially important in how Madrid society of the early 90s pitted beautiful versus ugly people as a way to establish economic, social and cultural mobility and access. A caveat of this is the character of Ramón, beautiful at birth but doomed to be with the *mutantes* because of a disfigurement suffered at some unknown point in his adult hood.
As the poster of the film suggests, Ramón is half mutant, half man. This enables him to play both sides of the new economic paradigm. He knows the language of the capitalists and can manipulate equally well the needs and desires of the political underclass. Ramón represents what Elana Gomel has identified as inherent in the Western Science Fiction post-human playground of terminal identities that “arise in the wake of the death of the humanist subject” (358). These new identities that balance both the human and non-human worlds are “overwhelmingly cast in the mold of Donna Haraway’s cyborg: fluid, multiple, virtual, viral… undermining binary logic” (358). Similar to the Utopist New Man that Gomel analyzes, Ramón is “simultaneously humane and violent, utopian and apocalyptic, familiar and strange” (358). However, he tends to be more violent, more apocalyptic, and more focused on the individual than the equal balance of traditional versus post-human utopist dream would call for.

Ramón is able to navigate the discourse of the powerful and that of the powerless and, as exemplified in the character of Patricia, the perception of his actions becomes an ideology and a set goal. Patricia goes from daddy’s little girl to political subversive and takes power in her own mutilation as a way to visually and ideologically join her to the superficial philosophy of her captor, Ramón. As with Gomel’s Utopist subject, the dystopic one envisioned by the Basque writer-director is dynamic and static, a fluid potentiality and a finishing point. He is able to live on both socio-economic planets, but is, like his counter-part, Orujo, motivated by economic goals rather than those of true social revolution.
De la Iglesia inscribes his film into history through a high level of cultural, political and historical references to the time and space of 1992 Madrid. The future dystopia he has envisioned is the unfortunate consummation of post-transition, post-Almodóvar Madrid which can only be resolved through atomic revolution.\textsuperscript{36} The filmic style of de la Iglesia since the 1993 release of \textit{Acción mutante} has remained tied to these issues that juxtapose very cultural “inside jokes” with very global fears of assimilation and national-dissolution. Like in \textit{Acción mutante} as well as in \textit{El día de la bestia, La comunidad}, and \textit{Crimen Ferpecto} the director posits the mechanism of over-consumption and the high cultural value placed on the superficiality of image in neo-liberalism as the agent of societal destruction.

Gabriela Bustelo’s \textit{Planeta hembra} utilizes a structure that builds meaning through narrated scenes that function to re-create the feeling of a film. As her text was originally intended as a script, the narrative flow depends upon the metaphoric construction also present in film. The highly descriptive nature of the text melds with the highly visual nature of the ruling party to give the novel a shocking impact on the reader. The feminist regime uses the visualization of sexuality as a way to legitimize their paradigm shifts, and the text itself is built through short chapters that are highly shy away from dialogue and psychological constructions. The space in between each of the short chapters represents a directorial jump, fade or blend that creates meaning through an editorial style that also directs the reader’s sympathies. The example discussed in Chapter

\textsuperscript{36} This idea is a paraphrase of Gomel’s analysis of the Soviet New Man: “Soviet Utopia inscribes itself in history as its inevitable consummation. On the other hand, Communism, as imagined in Soviet sf, cancels history and abolishes change. Thus, the Utopian subject is both dynamic and static, both a fluid potentiality and a set goal” (358).
Three was the high sexual content in the novel that emphasizes mechanization over humanness which results in a very unsexy description of the sex life of the ruling party. The only instance of a sexual union that is not used for political maneuvering is both heterosexual and left outside of what is told by the narrator. As readers we only know that it has happened through the reported action of other characters.

It is important to note that rather than build an external cyborg that is fluid or adaptable, Bustelo’s female characters all represent a very static view of femininity. It is one that accentuates a slim, athletic, strong, healthy and women that are “[f]ascist in their perfection” (Russell 64). This aesthetic standard is built through tight fitting clothes, youthfulness through continual plastic surgery and the homogenization of “look”. Elizabeth Russell has described this as a very “pure and clinically clean” sensibility that projects superiority of gender through a unified image (64). The dystopia that Bustelo fictionalizes is the culmination of a globalized economy that neutralizes cultural differences to favor homogeneity. Planeta’s future woman is a potentiality of what could happen when society allows national cultural standards to be dictated by global trends.

However, as I argued in Chapter 3, Bustelo’s narrative fails in making a criticism of neoliberalism stick. The anti-utopia the novel presents has been visualized through a radical feminism. This 1960s and 70s stage of the evolution of feminist philosophy that attempted to create equality, in Planeta hembra, converts individuals and society into a deformed, unnatural expression of sexuality that is construed more as a result of its own internal flaws as opposed to being entirely due to a tragic result of feminism’s encounter with flexible accumulation. Furthermore, because of the highly visual nature of Planeta
and the importance placed on performance necessary to maintain gender differences, an ironic use of performance would have been a useful tool in deconstructing binaries. Bustelo does not use performance as a tool for creating pathways out of dystopia, only as a way to maintain the status quo of an unequal distribution of wealth and power in economy as well as in sexuality. This is equally true for the way in which the text stages the remembering of heterosexuality as well as its enactment of homosexuality.

Unfortunately, in the end, Bustelo undermines her own project. Russell also comments that Bustelo as public persona decries patriarchy as bad and Bustelo as narrator in *Planeta hembra* criticizes an “inversed” homosexual patriarchy as equally bad because both versions are preformed in the same way. However, in the final scenes of *Planeta hembra* the narrative voice re-affirms traditional male over female dominance as natural and “peaceful”. In agreement with Russell, “[t]he underlying ideologies of the novel seem to suggest a nostalgia for past gender politics rather than a sympathy for alternative lifestyles” (66).

Bustelo mixed three genres: film, Sci-Fi and the chick-lit novel in order to answer a question feminism posed in the 70s about shifting the phallo-centric discourse to a gyno-centric one. Something that both myself and Russell have yet to resolve is the disconnect between the very well informed public ensayista Bustelo and the narrative Bustelo. In Bustelo’s published articles, such as “El amor en los tiempos de autoayuda” from 2007, the author analyzes the predominance of self-help books, especially among female readers. She derides the books “simplificación de términos” and cites the Spanish philosopher Gustavo Bueno to say that this type of literature is destined “a débliles
mentales” (no pagination). Her 2002 novel serves as a warning against the false “self-help” that promise a perfect woman through self-defining titles like “Adelgazar para siempre, Manual de la imagen la mujer, Cómo ser una diosa del sexo, Cómo ser una mujer irresistible, El libro de la belleza, Lecciones sobre el lápiz labial y la felicidad” (no pagination). Bustle links these ideas to fictional representations of femininity in chick-lit texts. Moreover, Bustelo describes the trend of chick-lit or “literatura rosa” as being increasingly sexualized and about women that leave their traditional roles, like the international bestseller Escape that is about “una mujer casada y con dos hijos [quien] abandona a su marido, alquila una casa en un país mediterráneo, desconecta el móvil y se dedica al sexo desenfrenado” (no pagination). If this is the case and self-help and chick lit are for readers (read: women) who are more susceptible to pseudo-science and half-truths and motivated to buy by sex, it becomes difficult to reconcile why, when given the opportunity to correct theories half-read and misconceptions of feminist thought, Bustelo would write a novel that upholds that which she criticizes.

Rafael Reig’s Sangre a borbotones is also a highly visual text. The descriptions of a flooded, “bodied” Madrid are important to the narrative content and as a structuring device. The narrator, Carlos Clot, moves through the city re-joining individual crimes to societal and Institutional corruption. Reig’s fictional Iber-American government, like Harvey has proposed of all existing neo-liberal governments, is of much lesser, secondary importance to that of the power of the Corporations that are responsible for the creation of space. The three crimes of his first novel in the detective-western-sf series involve public and private scales of the family and individual. The three “lost” women are a
daughter, eventually found dead in the street, a wife found dead in her home and a fictional construct escaped from the pages of her novel, infused with the social consciousness of her readers. To cite the importance of the visual nature of these crimes is the example of Mabel Martínez. She is a fictional character and represents a shift from textual or discursive to a material form that acts and moves in society, and then back again to textual when Clot must re-write her back into the narrative space of the novel. Additionally important to the ultimate meaning of the novel is the way the narrator takes time and space to mention other visual disturbances: a sonnet that comes alive and crawls up his wall as if it were a spider, a machine that is able to translate written descriptions into visual ones and the importance of play with a purpose in the interpretation and incorporation of historical fiction. All of these images reinforce the interaction between discourse and space. More precisely, in Sangre a borbotones discourse and space interact and build each other rather than the lacanian impetus that would negate the possibility of discourse being able to penetrate lived reality and that likewise reduces all reality to mere linguistic representations.

Because of the manipulation of cultural time and built time through Science Fiction, the reader is able to more clearly see the importance of flexible accumulation and neo-liberalism. At first glance the Madrid that the novel creates is very different from the one that we experience now. However, through the narrator’s constant citations and use of rhetorical questions throughout, the reader is forced to see that the fictional and the ‘real’ are essentially the same. Much like the nueva novela of the 1960s, the novel’s use of a particular discourse – in this case, Science Fiction – forces a re-reading and re-
interpretation of what are traditionally thought to be static representations of culture, society and state.

A recent study by Benjamin Fraser of Goytisolo’s *Señas de identidad* looks at textual images and discourse in Barcelona and presents a useful paradigm to understanding Reig’s fictional Madrid. Like Goytisolo’s novel, *Sangre* links built landscape and our understanding of it “…through a process that is at once variegated (created through dissidence and struggle at the expense of difference), inclusive (neither during formation nor reflection considered as outside of our influence) and ongoing (never completely determined by the result of previous struggle or interpretation)” (154). As I argued in Chapter 4, this construction forces the reader to question the perception s/he has of their place within the city. Finally, in agreement with Fraser’s understanding of Goytisolo’s *Señas* “[w]hen this gaze [of the city] is properly understood – not as that of an individual, but rather as a collective activity – landscape change proves to be less about the memory of the past and more about contemporary power struggles” (154). Ultimately, *Sangre* is not about an alternative reality or an alternative history but very much about current processes at work in Madrid. Although there was no formal invasion in the 80s as *Sangre a borbotones* tells, the US and, moreover, the neo-liberal theory and process entered into the political process and disrupted a collective, historical understanding of Spanish/Madrid space. The result has been that the city of Madrid, despite political discourses that would have tried to stop it, has been built in the image of flexible accumulation and not in those of social justice.
This comparison of Sangre to a novel from the 60s as well as comparisons between Accion mutante and 1950s California sf or Valle-Inclán esperpento and Planeta hembra to A Handmaid’s tale and feminist Science Fiction have all been essential analytical points throughout the previous chapters. They served in part to fill in the critical void of criticism around these very contemporary texts. Additionally, the comparisons serve to link Acción mutante, Planeta hembra, and Sangre to previous works in the Spanish canon. Recalling the tension of Chapter One between using the marginal form of sf and popular fiction it is a familiar tension of playing the line between popular art and the vanguard. As Renato Poggioli explains in his seminal The Theory of the Avant-Garde this dichotomy is not particular to a time or space, but rather is a function of ideology and sociology.

We can express the difference by defining the romantic, nineteenth-century periodical as essentially an organ of opinion, exercising an avant-garde function only insofar as it leads and precedes a vast corps of readers in the labyrinth of ideas and issues; but the avant-garde periodical functions as an independent and isolated military unit, completely and sharply detached from the public, quick to act, not only to explore but also to battle, conquer, and adventure on its own. (23)

This quote raises three essential questions in how we are to define the sociological and ideological nature and function of the Science Fiction as a discourse strategy as presented in this dissertation. First, how do we define the “Romantic” and “avant-garde” movements in art; second, what is the nature of public and private in contemporary Spain
and third, what is the relationship between popular and vanguard art? Poggioli certainly
believes that, for the last question, the two art forms are intrinsically linked and
dependent upon each other. To answer the first two inquiries, we must look less at the
internal structures of the narratives and focus more the three works as cultural
productions.

From the end of the nineteenth century until now Spanish narrative has sought to
document the incursion of the industrial capitalist complex into space and culture through
Romantic and then “material” discourses of realism and naturalism. This eventually gave
way to the spiritual or intellectual trends or neo-romanticism or modernism whose focus
was the separation of the spirit from the body. Jumping ahead one hundred years, the
writers of the 90s until now display characteristics of both the Romantic and neo-
romantic emphasis on the mind and body as well as the Realist body to space matrixes.
Gonzalo Navajas writes that the protagonists of Generation X writers

lack a program of action and they move through the streets of big cities
such as Madrid without any specific design about their lives. They know
that the present replicates the past and that the future will not differ from
previous times. (6)

Much like tragic characters of Romantic poetry or Augusto Pérez of Niebla, the
characters of popular twentieth and twenty-first century fiction by Generation X authors
move through the city with no motive and the story is, then, occasioned by chance rather
than by willful engagement with their surroundings. The three authors presented in this
dissertation, much like the modernist novels of Unamuno, Azorín and Baroja present
characters representative of their time as well as novelistic structures that emphasize the relationship of the individual to their space. However, instead of engaging in a deep psychological study like the Spanish modernists, the Spanish Gen Xers have tended to be anti-psychological.

We can make valuable comparisons between the public persona of the Spanish Science Fiction authors and narrators from previous generations. Realist and Romantic writers, in particular Mariano José de Larra, presented historical figures who, like de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig, promoted a public discourse that was closely related to the social consciousness built in their narratives. As Vicente Llorens wrote of the Romantics, they felt a permanent dissatisfaction with their time and space, unable to return to a mythical past, unable to move forward. Much like poetry and essay fit the cosmovision of Romantics and narrative fit that of the modernists, Science Fiction fits those authors of the contemporary epoch concerned with relationships of society, culture, identity and space. To carry the comparison further, as the previous generations of texts often ended in suicide both of the protagonist and of the author, the narratives of the present end in the annihilation of the planet.

These narrative situations – both present and past – speak to a failure of the current system of values, morals and ethics. As I argued in Chapter One, the current neo-liberal system began in the 60s under the dictatorship but was not able to enter full-force until the early 90s. Indeed, the end of Utopia is a popular theme globally. Recently the essayist David Gray wrote of the current global financial crisis in *Harpers* magazine and notes that what is happening in 2008 stems from the politics and changes of the 60s.
Moreover, “[t]he irony of the post-Cold War period is that the fall of Communism was followed by the rise of another utopian ideology, which created the laissez-faire financial system that has now disintegrated” (17). The fall of capitalist utopian thought that we have seen in the three sf texts corresponds not only to national space, but also to the global consequences of a way of thought and a process of spatial production. The question about the relationship of responding to these crises through the very language of its founding ideology (capitalist distribution) is as irresolute as the relationship between the shift of alternative “public” texts and voices to mass-produced “privatized” ones.

If we understand vanguard or subversive and popular and mass produced texts as always being in constant flux with time and space, their relationship becomes less about friction and more about symbiosis. Vanguard texts stand in ideological opposition to mass distribution and to mass comprehension, their intended audience belonging to “conscious” elite that is constantly seeking public and open forums through which to disseminate ideas and resistance. Popular texts are intended to reach a large “public” audience and, also, to make profit. When a socially aware author desires to reach a mass audience that carries a social message, the two trends meet and for brief periods the vanguard becomes a useful strategy for building a critical consciousness both of its own method of distribution (capitalism) and building awareness of its external referent, in our case it being Madrid.

As Stephen Duncombe reminds us in his Notes from the Underground, the underground fanzines of an authentic contemporary avant-garde culture are conceptually linked to Science Fiction and to punk rock (177), both of which are important factors in
the three texts as well as in the trajectory of each author. Fanzines operate to a large extent outside of the capitalist system. However, the Sci-Fi of de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig is unique in that they have established publishers and have been marketed to a Spanish and, especially in the case of Reig, to an international audience. As with many Generation X authors the anti-establishment punk rock of the 70s and 80s is a type of discourse, a trope used to communicate a state of mind to the reader. In the same way, Science Fiction is a discourse strategy that allows the authors an “avant-garde” moment where they can engage a larger sector of the buying public – alternative sf fans and conventional “chic lit” and “detective” fans alike.

When Poggioli speaks of an “avant-garde” etiquette he cites more-or-less the anti-etiquette of perversion and “subversion of conventional deportment” (31). Certainly in the texts that we have seen, especially in the case of the de la Iglesia and Bustelo, the authors have intentionally eschewed the politics of political correctness and conventional cinema or novel in order to open a discussion about politics of space and place. De la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig all shift perceptions of cultural taboos and norms as well as put into play our ideas about public and private. This is not only apparent in the texts, for all three authors are also active social critics through the medium of the internet – a public venue that can be accessed by a large consuming public locally and nationally.

De la Iglesia and Reig have personal web-sites where fans can find information about upcoming projects, view clips of past projects and read the personal thoughts of the artists through their blogs. The entry page to de la Iglesia’s “página oficial” (www.alexdelaiglesia.com) allows viewers to choose between Spanish and English. Upon
entering the colors that dominate are anarchic red and black and the melancholy face of the writer-director who looks at us from behind his name, writ large over his figure. Fans can read his blog, “Confesiones de un neurasténico”, view trailers or read an interview between Álex de la Iglesia the artist and de la Iglesia the man. Additionally, there are links for “club cine, club literatura, club música” that direct the viewer to the homepage of fnac, the French media outlet.

In a recent interview with Rafael Reig the author commented that he finds the blogsphere an exciting medium. He comments,

[el blog] es una nueva forma narrativa cuyas posibilidades aún están por explorar. Yo combino, en el blog, las memorias con la crítica literaria, el cotilleo con la evocación sentimental, la reflexión con la narración de peripecias. (personal email with autor).

His blog – (http://www.hotelkafka.com/blogs/rafael_reig/) – is hosted by Hotel Kafka, a literature school in Madrid where Reig gives classes and directs new projects with other Spanish novelists like Marta Rivera de la Cruz, a finalist for the Planeta prize (personal email with author). In his blog he discusses his personal life including pictures of his daughter and girlfriend, his collaborations with other authors, his travels and stories and opinions about his personal life and the state of literature.

Garbriela Bustelo is, to date, the only of the three that does not have her own website. Her page on wikipedia is updated often and the version in Spanish includes links to essays the author has written in Spanish magazines and articles, commentaries and interview about the author. The personal websites of de la Iglesia and Reig and the fan-
driven wikipedia site about Bustelo offer readers and critics a more intimate view into the personality of the author. They provide an insight into the workings of their personal lives and professional motivations. Whereas de la Iglesia’s site is clearly geared towards promoting his commercial projects, it additionally offers him a space to speak about his relationship to his work. For example, in his “auto-interview” he asks himself to describe the theme of *La comuidad*, to which he responds: “[u]na historia simpática sobre algo muy triste” (no pagination). When he asks himself to delve deeper he refuses. The next question is “¿Dónde está el joven rebelde de *Acción mutante*?” At this point the “countertertulia” descends into fighting and the interview ends. As with many of the themes that I have been only been able to briefly touched up, the interaction between the author and the public that the internet provides opens up intriguing possibilities for future study.

Any novel that tries to make social criticism is formed (structure, production, distribution) by the circumstance that it tries to criticize. Indeed, a narrative’s success can be gauged by how well it undermines the structures that it tries to destroy. Martín-Santos or Juan Goytisolo and the *nueva novela* of the 1960s serve as perfect examples. Their use of language and of structure destroys the myths of the dictatorship while at the same time the structure of the narratives undermines authoritarian structures. To introduce a new historical comparison, *Tiempo de silencio*, published in 1961, in order to criticize its own time and space, shifted the story to 1941. However, the ironic language and denotative value of the citations, makes the reader aware of the criticism in the text. As in the previous discussion of Romantic and modern texts, the “new novel” of the 60s the sf of
the latest economic and cultural transition allows the authors a unique way to respond to their time and space.

Carl Freedman defines Science Fiction as a “social register” and in this lengthy but useful quote describes why sf is especially related to social theory:

If, then, the connection between sf and social theory is genuinely privileged (as opposed to merely contingent), the basis of that privilege must be located on the level not of thematic content but of formal structure. I have argued (especially in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* [2000]) that the very form of the sf text, which is based on the construction of a social world alternative to our own but not without a rational relation to the latter, does indeed make for precisely such a privilege; and I have further maintained that this principle of narrative construction in sf has enabled science fiction to approximate more closely than any other genre (since the post-1848 decline of the historical novel as established by Walter Scott) to the revolutionary dialectics of sociohistorical change and continuity. […] [To] propose a special formal relationship between sf and dialectical theory does, I think, imply that the general tendency of the strongest science fiction will probably be to invoke the social radicalism of dialectical thought on even the more manifest textual levels. (177-178 emphasis in original)

De la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig write through a dialectical process that takes past and present philosophical ideals and thinks them through to their possible outcomes. Sci-Fi
authors, through cognitive estrangement, frame the present as though it already belonged to the future. Moreover, recalling the way James Brian Mitchell relates California architecture and the science fiction of the 60s to the alienation of the individual in a changing economic situation, the structure and discourse presented in our three Spanish sf narratives estrange the reader from reality in much the same way that the architecture and cartographic scale of the city alienates the citizen. In this way, the discourse presented by de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig represent a type of vanguardist texts that uses Science Fiction as a way to access a discourse not available through the “realistic” adventure story, chick-lit or detective novel. How well each author carries out the task is a question answered by taking into account the relationships between author and text as well as discourse and story.

Álex de la Iglesia’s made his first film as a “joven rebelde”, a cultural outsider who caught the attention of Pedro Almódovar – himself a director who had made the shift from alternative to central through his filmic career. More than a way to use sf as a simplistic allegory, de la Iglesia employs the genre as a way of re-framing the present for the effect of social criticism. Axturias becomes a symbolic representation of a place and of a social and economic underclass. However, more than referencing Almodóvar to compare and criticize where a “network of topicality within itself to stand as the Real which it will undertake to neutralize” the sf anti-utopia of de la Iglesia relies on reference but, more importantly, on shared ideological assumptions (Jameson qtd. In Gomel Gods like men 359). Ramón the revolutionary and Orujo the venture capitalist are symbolic
representations of an economic discourse that homogenizes all struggles and devastates all opportunities for positive change.

In *Planeta hembra* Gabriela Bustelo takes a very satirical look at feminism in contemporary Spanish and global culture to serve as a warning of the dangers of essentializing the body. The problem with her novel lies not in its rejection of the culmination of radical body feminism in politics but rather in its rejection of a theory that has never had the opportunity to firmly establish itself in the first place. Rafael Reig finds a path towards popular consciousness formation as well as to subversive enlightenment through his artistic and social career. Reig achieves the difficult leap from discourse to actions though his fiction and through his work at Hotel Kafka. While his novel is offered to the public as “antidote” to a crisis, Reig would disagree. Indeed, of the so called “crisis in narrative” Reig responds that:

…la novela es un recipiente que puede contener casi cualquier líquido, una forma que evoluciona y se adapta. Se siguen leyendo muchas novelas, es lo que más se lee. Y si no se leen muchas más, es porque todo el mundo está ocupado escribiendo una novela. (personal email with author).

Reig’s comments echo what Poggioli and Duncome have also written about. Mainly, that there is a dichotomy repeated in every literary generation between defiance and acquiescence to the status quo. The three texts presented in this study come from authors that are inspired by mass culture and work against it but, at the same time, they are producing texts meant to sell and meant to be successful on the market. Although the three stories tell of different types of dystopias, there are several theme arches that we can
follow throughout. Namely, apathy against fighting for a different system, the failure of communities to adequately fight against neo-liberalism, the use of the individual body as representative of a greater societal whole, play between global/national and, finally, the resolution to problems being impossible except in total annihilation.

The conclusion of each narrative is that a single approach that depends upon a militant particularism will not work. As Harvey summarizes in *Megacities Lecture 4*, in order to bring a true Utopia of social justice, we must have a dialectical approach. We are confined to space and to solve its problems, we must undo its process rather than find a new form. We must, as Harvey describes, focus on the either/or situations already present in capitalism in order to turn the imbalance from market gains towards social justice (91).

The texts analyzed in this present study have not offered ways out, they only begin to tell of the problems at hand. To this end, de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig make use of sf as a discursive strategy to combat crisis. As Harvey states:

> While the outcome suggests there is no alternative, the starting point holds that there are at least a million and one alternatives as we seek to probe future possibilities will all the passion and imagination at our command. The dialectic of the imaginary and its material realization (mediated in most instances through production) locates the two sides of how capitalism replicates and changes itself, how it can be such a revolutionary mode of production in and for itself. If, then, capitalism is such a gigantic speculative system in which the fictitious and imaginary elements surround us at every turn, it necessarily thereby contains, often
unknowingly in its midst, the possibility of ‘growing’ alternatives within the interstices of itself. It is the task of dialectical and intellectual enquiry to extract the elements that make for the possibility of real alternatives. This is where a spatiotemporal utopianism must begin. (*Megacities* 91)

Science Fiction, then, serves as a mode of writing, thinking and cultural production (in terms of the work itself and as the output of a commodity) that enables these authors to be both inside and outside of the present moment. This dual vantage point endows them with the possibility of extracting or filtering from the present blinders that allow the narrative discourse to see the forest through the trees. Or rather, Science Fiction enables the audience of *Acción mutante*, *Planeta hembra*, and *Sangre a borbotones* to see the city, its problems and the social theories meant to correct them through the urban process. Again, we can find a useful comparison to this in the way other literary genres have been used in Spain and abroad.

Christine Henseler, in her discussion about women in the publishing industry, states that historical fiction is a way for women to make-up for their historical absence by inserting themselves into historical memory. In Henseler’s words,

> While historical narratives have been successful for many decades, their popularity skyrocketed at the end of the twentieth century because of the use of attractive frameworks that combine the historical genre with the detective, adventure, or erotic genres. Their popularity, according to the author Ángeles de Isisarri, resides in the changing constituency of a readership that studies less history and searches for its roots… (42).
We can see a similar process at work in the sf narratives of de la Iglesia, Bustelo and Reig. Each narrator mixes Sci-Fi with other popular narratives for the dual purposes of forming a discourse that criticizes but that reaches a large audience. Moreover, it offers the twentieth and twenty-first century artists a way to “historicize” the present. This feature of Science Fiction in particular offers a way to criticize space and time rather than space or time as separate entities. This provides a literary perspective that exposes the inability of particularized communities to fight against the system of their social and cultural injustices.

In a 2004 special edition of *Science Fiction Studies* the editors dedicated an issue to social Science Fiction – science fiction concerned with the social. The definition of sf is amplified in that it is described as an intellectual mode and as a social register. In the introduction to the issue Neil Gerlack and Sheryl N. Hamilton explore the relationships between sf and its uses both as a tool of pedagogy, as well as the parallel exchange of dialectical thought and discourse between social theory and social science fiction. According to their essay Science Fiction is no longer an alternative sub-genre but rather “has the potential to become a cultural epistemology” (164). While they caution against only seeing sf as a cultural production lest it become “a kind of pop-culture exotica, its generic specificity erased”, Science Fiction remains a powerful method of social science thinking (167). Moreover, sf is a “mode of thinking uniquely suited to comprehend the social conditions of late modernity: rapid technoscientific change, the increasing cultural focus on the future (and the consequent denial of history), and the emergence of posthumanist models of subjectivity” (168). For the purposes of this present study, the
application of “sf as a ‘mode of awareness’ is especially useful. Although the authors of *Science fiction studies* cite this understanding of Sci-Fi as falling out of popularity because it tried to work as a “predictive sociology”, I contend that the sf used by the Spanish authors presented works not to predict, rather, to reveal what is already present.

Additionally, the Science Fiction discourse in conjunction with the power of the visual in each text are together powerful tools to combat crisis both real and invented. As the previous chapters have sought to prove, the very real crisis of post-1992 Spain and Madrid has been caused by the rise of the neo-liberal market and flexible accumulation. Madrid becomes a place of consumption that takes all discourses – even those that seek to correct social injustice and imbalance and, like a negative feedback loop, converts those theories into greater material tragedy. The invented crisis pertains to the so-called “crisis in narrative.” Again, Christine Henseler also documents that the publishing industry is looking to resolve the death of the traditional novel at the hands of over-commercialization. However, she replies that the publishing industry in Spain is experiencing an unprecedented “statistical success” that is dependent upon not only the commercial sales of the novels but also the authoritative and legitimizing forces of book reviews, interviews, and academic articles (14). The publishing industry cites certain forces such as: the globalizing economy, insufficient distribution systems, problems of overstock, political tugs-of war, new technologies, the internet, heightened competition, and visual means of entertainment (2), as the culprits of a dying narrative form. Sf, like the harnessing of capitalist forces for good that Harvey images, is a narrative form that
allows authors to address a changing society through those same forces that are supposedly tearing it down.

Although there are only a few examples of Spanish Science Fiction that have made it to the mainstream or, as in the case of the narratives presented here, been legitimized by critics, publishing houses and scholars, there is a Sci-Fi element that can be found in many contemporary Spanish texts. Katherine Hayles and Nicholas Gessler refer to these not-quite SF texts and films as “slipstream fiction”. It is a type of narrative either textual or filmic that occupies “a borderland between mainstream and science fiction because they achieve a science fictional feeling without the usual defamiliarizing devices” (1). The authors cite American films from David Lynch as occupying a middle ground that show the present as malleable, fluid and always already in the future. Indeed, the SF and mainstream films that they analyze demonstrate that we already live in a science fiction world (1). Spain is not outside of this trend. As de la Iglesia’s style progressed he left the pure SF devices and instead relies on SF indicators, or SF registers in his films. Belen Gopegui in La escala de los mapas also relies on a psychological narrative construct bordering on fantastic discourse to tell the story of the alienated Sergio Prim in Madrid. However, perhaps the most adept at mixing SF filmic techniques without being labeled as SF has been Julio Medem. In these authors we find a treasure-trove of new techniques and discourses that are fertile ground for further analysis.

It is both an advantage and a tragedy that SF has been misunderstood and relegated to the lower echelons of the literary community. We must also admit that, on the one hand, maintaining its marginal status allows Science Fiction a more open forum of
criticism. On the other hand, being viewed as a lesser genre has, at times, precluded it from being accepted a serious Literature. In the final analysis, it is this unsteady balance that gives sf it power and intrigue and the true test will be to see for how long sf can maintain its critical distance from society and what evolutions it will take from here.
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