Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies

ISSN: 1463-6204 (Print) 1469-9818 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjsc20

"Is there a future in this past?" Analyzing 15M's intricate relation to the Transición

Kostis Kornetis

To cite this article: Kostis Kornetis (2014) "Is there a future in this past?" Analyzing 15M's intricate relation to the Transición , Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies, 15:1-2, 83-98, DOI: 10.1080/14636204.2014.938432

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2014.938432

Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies, 2014
Vol. 15, Nos. 1–2, 83–98, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2014.938432

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

"Is there a future in this past?" Analyzing 15M's intricate relation to the *Transición*

Kostis Kornetis

Center for European and Mediterranean Studies, New York University, New York, NY, USA

Abstract:
The current economic recession in Spain prompted a need to reassess post-authoritarian phenomena, as in moments of deep social, political and economic crisis the recent past tends to become an issue of contention. A key question of the *indignados*' self-representation and understanding of self revolves around their relation to the past and, in particular, the transition to democracy. The present paper aims to analyze how these social activists perceive their relation to the *Transición* and the so-called *memoria histórica*, thus exploring the complex ways in which the troubled past is being re-signified and re-framed by social actors in the present. Based on a close reading of oral testimony, in conjunction with written and visual sources, this paper highlights the movement's rebellious attitude vis-à-vis the hegemonic memory of the "model transition." At the same time, it underlines the *indignados'* dependence on models of activism that emerged during the very years of the transition to democracy.

Keywords: Transition, memoria histórica, *indignados*, 15M, radical chic, framing.

The new Great Recession and the European sovereign debt crisis triggered an important public rereading of the Spanish political transition from authoritarian to liberal democratic rule. Those who were born during this transitions are most likely to be today's *indignados*, the movement that shook Spanish politics with an unprecedented mobilization throughout the country in 2011. While these people are united by the vehement denunciation of their increasing political and economic disenfranchisement, questions arise about whether some of these ills had in fact begun as birth defects of what was erstwhile known as the "second wave" of democratization (Huntington). The Spanish paradigm has been constantly evoked as a "model transition," as the triumph of political will and negotiation. Influential political scientists, such as Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, created a hagiography of the Spanish transition that followed the 30 years of Franco's dictatorship. Ever since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, Spain has been endlessly put forward as the ideal prototype of the democratic transition to be replicated. The antithetical social memory that is emerging through the current protest wave challenges precisely this model of "exemplary transition," in terms of both the official and the academic narrative. What is more, the fact that the new movements underline the failed attempt to close the historical, heartfelt wounds in Spanish society offers "a patina of exceptional scientific attractiveness to the 15M" (Tejerina and Perugorría 90).

Past imperfect

The Transition started soon after General Francisco Franco's death in 1975, with his successor as head of state, King Juan Carlos, carrying out a rapid liberalizing process in 1976–77, aided by the young prime minister Adolfo Suárez. Political liberalization and mass mobilization processes intersected to generate a "renovating legitimation scenario." Pivotal elites associated with the old regime (King Juan Carlos and post-Francoist premier Adolfo Suárez) acted out of "fear of a vacuum of authority, of a sudden transfer to the then quite radical opposition forces" (Linz and Stepan 92). As political liberalization was partly the result of an agreement between the King, reformist members of Franco's regime, the socialists, and the communists, proponents of this process called them "pacts of reconciliation," while critics described them as "pacts of silence."[1]

In the words of historian Ruth MacKay, "the Transition was an elaborate, delicate, even dangerous series of agreements and mechanisms that would result in the writing of a new constitution, the holding of democratic elections and the establishment of a plethora of national and regional institutions and laws" (200). Three kinds of strains emerged as the result of this process, which were not dealt with by the institutional agents of political change. The first one was between official and social memory regarding the past. The political leaders were not primarily concerned with healing the wounds of the conflicts or the dictatorships, but rather with how to generate a specific political project designed to bridge the divides in society and forge a national consensus. Instead of reappraising the civil war and dictatorship periods, they were focusing on meeting the political exigencies of the time and consolidating democratic norms and practices.[2] They did not deal with the enormous traumas that the repression of four decades left behind. However, the needs of societies concerning the healing of traumatic memory do not (necessarily) coincide with the needs of politicians. Therefore, a stark discrepancy emerged between the official account and the social memory of the transition, which Paloma Aguilar qualifies as potentially dangerous (2). This imbalance of memory, which was concealed through silence and oblivion during the actual transition years, is powerfully reemerging in the context of the current crisis.

The second disparity was between many people's expectations for democratic transition and its actual outcome. People dreaming of a radical new beginning were deeply frustrated by a process that was "imposed" by political and economic elites from above, thus acquiring the stigma of an elite-driven transition. Critics saw obscure motives and aims behind the pacts of silence: they rejected them either as the product of political engineering by politicians organically connected to Francoism or as part of the Left that longed to become institutionalized in order to have a share in the new power structure. In fact, Spain did not experience the radical socialist mobilization of Portuguese industrial workers and peasants, nor did it see the ringleaders of the old regime being tried and convicted as in Greece (Bermeo, "Sacrifice, Sequence, and Strength" 308–309; Siani-Davies and Katsikas 566–567). However, between 1976 and 1977, Spanish political life was anything but peaceful or elite-dominated. Spain's elite-engineered *reforma pactada*, indicatively, took place against the background of nationalist and worker mobilization. The widespread violence was triggered by the armed wing of the Basque separatist movement ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*) and by government reprisals that led to a state of emergency in the Basque country in 1976. Wave after wave of assassinations, kidnappings and police shootings ripped through the fabric of Spanish political life between the adoption of political reform laws that gave Spain a multi-party system, and

the organization of the first free and fair elections in 1977, with political killings rising steadily until 1980.[3]

The third thorny issue had to do with the residues of authoritarianism. Social conservatism and cultural repression were not eliminated. Political discrimination did not disappear overnight either.[4] The police, the most persistent element of the old order, alongside the Army, did not change its tactics. Some of the most violent episodes of the late 1970s involved police forces, again the last arm of the state to be democratized. The numerous deaths of protesters throughout the transitional period have been obscured by what has been termed as "collective amnesia" (Aguilar 17). The cooperation between the political leaders was agreed specifically on the premise of an attempt not to revive the memories of the civil war – an endeavor in which voters seemed to acquiesce. Eventually, this officially induced oblivion ended up including the transitional process itself.[5] As historian Paul Preston aptly put it, "the determination of the great majority of the Spanish people to secure a bloodless transition to democracy and to avoid a repetition of the violence of another civil war not only overcame any desire for revenge but also saw *the sacrifice of the desire for knowledge*" (Preston 12, my emphasis). Any critical analysis of the *Transición* was seen as a criticism of democracy itself (Cardús i Ros 18).[6]

All this careful sealing of the past was overturned decades later. In October 2000, the first exhumation of a mass grave containing the remains of 13 civilians killed during the civil war period and the reburials of the remains were carried out by the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH), a Spanish nonprofit organization of volunteer archeologists that investigates abuses of the Franco era. This inevitably resurrected suppressed memories, "unearthing" Spain's well-kept secret of so many years, and breaking the silence on the past (Davis). In 2007 socialist prime minister Zapatero introduced the so-called "historical memory law," recognizing the rights of victims of violence during the civil war. He did this not only because of the passage of time but also due to Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)'s new team of progressives. Mariano Rajoy, leader of the opposition People's Party at the time, reiterated that he was "against reopening old wounds."[7]

But contrary to Rajoy's wishes, historians, sociologists, political scientists and journalists started to reevaluate the past. Spain was deluged by magazine investigations, broadcast inquiries, biographies, memories and testimonies that acted as vehicles of memory. Cristina Moreiras Menor's *Cultura herida*, Teresa Vilarós' *El mono del desencanto*, Alberto Medina's *Exorcismos de la memoria* and Germán Labrador's *Letras arrebatadas* are but a few examples of a renewed interest in the *Transición* from a cultural perspective that to a great extent challenged its idyllic image. By the end of the first decade of the new millennium only a few writers had not produced their own civil war or post-civil war novel, after conducting exhaustive historical research that often blurred the boundaries between history and fiction.[8] There is an avalanche of television serials set in those turbulent times ranging from the Second Republic (1931–1939) to the late 1970s. In particular the popular soap-opera "Amar en tiempos revueltos," a fictionalized saga of the civil and post-civil war period, which screened Mondays to Fridays in the after-lunch slot and was watched by over three million spectators, contributed greatly to this memory boom.

The opposite phenomenon can be observed in the popular television series, *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, which introduced a retro-fashion that somehow aestheticized the late Francoist period and made it appear "cool." This series, featuring a "typical" middle-class Spanish family is catered to nostalgia (Labanyi 291), trivializing the authoritarian character of the last stages of the regime – an attitude that had been internalized by the

larger part of Spanish society (Cardús i Ros 20). Novelist Isaac Rosa – in his mid-30s at present – has been a very vocal critic of this nostalgic turn to the recent past. As he mentions in his much acclaimed novel *El vano ayer* (2005), "mediocre novelists, industrialized cinematographers and some television series … have completed the disintegration of historical memory, imposing their definitive replacement by a repulsive nostalgia" (24). Silence has been replaced by an overemphasis on the past, something that I call the "Transición Syndrome" (202). It is precisely this nostalgia for the transition years that was so prevalent in the early 2000s, when the series appeared for the first time, that the current crisis is challenging, leading to a re-examination of the recent past and a quest for a better understanding of its shortfalls. This critique of the past was not so much the case in previous social movements in the country, namely the "insumisión," the "No a la guerra" of 2003, the social reaction to the terrorist attacks of 11-M in 2004, the "V de Vivienda" movement in 2006 or the mobilization against the "Ley Sinde" of 2009.[9] In the summer of 2011, the trend of evoking Francoism as a direct precedent of repression and accusing the transition of creating weak democratic foundations and a feeble political system was consolidated as a protest frame with the appearance of the *indignados*.

From the Transición Syndrome to transition radical chic

The new activists were labeled *los indignados*, taken from Stéphane Hessel's manifesto *Indignez-vous!* It called on young people to resist apathy and reject the de-democratization of the state and a global economic system considered as the cause of the increasing gap between rich and poor (Hughes). The landmark moment for young peoples' politicization was directly linked to the economic crisis. The year 2011 proved to be a moment of politicization, a rite of initiation and a springboard for the emergence of a new political subjectivity. The movement that started from the *acampada* at the Plaza del Sol in Madrid in May 2011 – otherwise dubbed 15M – seemed to capitalize on the general enthusiasm that the recent Arab Spring had generated in terms of social action. 15M made direct democracy appear to be functioning for a while and made ordinary citizens feel more involved and increasingly politicized, expressing the lack of representativity in the current parliamentary system. Its participants "c[a]me together directly as equal citizens – not as members of interest or identity groups, or through representatives – to debate the fallacies of current policies under the main slogan "Le llaman democracia pero no lo es"" (Baiocchi). This colorful display of togetherness was a formative experience for many young people in terms of collective non-violent action. As a female student noted, "He aprendido más en diez días que en años de un sistema educativo que no me ha enseñado a pensar" (Ribas). This social movement became a real phenomenon, breaking decades of impasse in terms of collective action from below in Spain, even spilling over to Portugal, Greece, Israel and the USA.

A special dimension already denoting the importance of the past is the generational conflict. Pepe Ribas, founder of the extremely influential countercultural magazine *Ajoblanco* in the 1970s was among the first people who tried to analyze what the new movement was all about – as opposed to much of the mainstream media nonchalance. Ribas interestingly noted that all these people who were calling the Spanish youth uninterested, paralyzed, fatalistic and demotivated – because of the effects of postmodernism, the end of History, hedonism, and the fact that there was no possible alternative to existing capitalism – proved to be entirely incapable to diagnose this impressive potential of young people to invent new forms of political involvement (Ribas).

Figure 1. "Franco ha vuelto." Graffito from the Tabacalera, Madrid. Author's photograph

An interesting aspect of the *indignados* is that they also involved in some way a radical reconceptualization of the past. The 1970s themselves became an issue of open contestation, instead of the civil war or the Francoist period, as had been the case thus far. Capitalizing on the aforementioned Transición Syndrome, this new generation of protesters rejected the most well-known and widely accepted topoi that shaped the "hegemonic" memory of the country, namely the foundational myths of Spanish democracy. Many powerful slogans refer to the famous televised statement by Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro on 20 November 1975, announcing the death of the dictator, "Españoles. Franco ha muerto" – for some people the foundational moment of the *Transición*. Current versions such as "Franco ha vuelto" or "Españoles, la política ha muerto," not only subvert but somehow "correct" the original phrase.[10] Similarly, in *CT, o Cultura de la Transición*, a collection of texts by some of the most influential and visible *activistas-pensadores* of 15M, the most notorious phrases by the Caudillo are inverted – the most typical being his memorable "atado y bien atado."[11] So, without being the only resource, history was undeniably *one* of the movement's major sources of inspiration. As Pierre Nora famously wrote, "the task of remembering makes everyone his own historian" (Nora 15); this is precisely what young activists aspired to through their everyday practices and intellectual quests (see Figure 1).

Re-framing the past: "we are the victims of Franco's heirs!"

Apart from focusing on instances where the movement's banners and slogans act as vehicles for this revival, it is important to zoom in on some of the actors themselves, to investigate activists' relation to the past. I conducted four qualitative interviews in Madrid with three key activists – Patricia Orrillo, Stéphane Grueso, Ana Bastero – who were engaged directly in the events of the 15M, and one grassroots participant, Patricia Martín Diaz. My informants, aged from 29 to 37 years old, belong to the *Transición* generation. Desk research on the issue of the transition was simultaneously combined with this empirical study so as to form a more coherent picture of the way the past is renegotiated in the present. Even if the sample is undoubtedly limited and the interviews examined at face value, and therefore with very little discourse analysis, this study points to further issues regarding the intricate and complex relation of activist to the recent past.

Journalist Patricia Horrillo, one of the leading figures of the 15M movement in terms of media promotion (although she rejects this designation) is adamant about the transition gone astray. In her testimony, what stands out is not just the idea of the model transition as a means of deceit on behalf of the authorities, but as an entire inter-generational betrayal:

> A nosotros nos han vendidos, como generación. Yo soy nacida justo en, soy del 77, con lo cual soy hija de la recién democracia, *hija de la Transición*. A nosotros nos han vendido, a mi generación, la idea de la Transición es la Transición modélica, europea además, mundial. La Transición de una dictadura a una democracia sin ningún conflicto grave, resuelta con racionalidad. Y entonces tu piensas, qué orgullo, no, porque claro, eso te lo cuentan de pequeña, ay que bien que aquí no se derramara sangre, que no hubiera tal, que no hubiera violencia, qué democracia, qué constitución, que todo es maravilloso. (Horrillo)

Stéphane Grueso – a blogger, one of the pioneers of the *acampadas* at the Plaza del Sol and a chronicler of the movement,[12] shares this attitude and uses the same word ("maravilloso") to indicate the idealized image of the transition:

> Aquí tenemos un problema con la memoria histórica y es que aquí no hemos procesado nada, aquí ha sido todo muy ejemplar, nos cuentan, y todo muy maravilloso, pero es mentira. (Grueso)

The issue of the entire *memoria histórica* as part of the current youth disenchantment with transition politics is reiterated by Horrillo. In her narrative the transition as unfinished business focuses on the idea of not having the courage to tackle the thorny issues of the past head-on. There has been no reckoning with the past, no closure, and this is experienced as an open wound:

> No se puede abrir una compuerta y dejarlo ahí, o se toman las riendas de decir realmente qué pasó, es decir, hay que hacer una revisión de la historia, evidentemente, pero ¿por qué? Porque hay mucha gente que la mat[aron], joder. Yo no tengo gente que mataron, yo no tengo gente en las cunetas, pero tiene que ser muy heavy que se hable pues eso, de la democracia no se qué no se cuantos, y no se haya hecho una puta revisión de que es que al fin y al cabo aquí se ha matado a mucha gente, se mató, la represión franquista mató a mucha gente y eso no se ha juzgado, se ha dado y muchos militares que habían tomado esas decisiones y que habían firmado sentencias de muerte, el propio Fraga, bueno, con vítores desde el PSOE, desde el PP, de todos los políticos, el gran Fraga, el gran Fraga, me caguen la puta, que era un ministro franquista, por favor, ¿ de qué estamos hablando? (Horrillo)

Horrillo's rage regarding the treatment of the past goes as far as to claim that the death of Franco did not automatically mean the passage to a real democracy – a typical reference to the 15M signature slogan that demands the return to a somehow utopian form of "authentic" democracy (*Democracia Real Ya*):

> ¿Qué pasa cuando tu primero te das cuenta de que en España no se acabó con la dictadura? El dictador murió en la cama, eso fue un punto muy importante, no es ninguna tontería, es decir, eh, eso nos define como sociedad. No se derrocó a un sistema totalitario; el sistema totalitario vio la manera de que una vez muerto el dictador, había que reconducir la situación para no quedarnos a la cola de Europa; no por una cuestión ni moral ni de principios, no no, fue una cuestión de tipo económico y para seguir viviendo bien, o para vivir bien. Pero no creo que tuviera nada que ver con una cuestión de verdadera Transición, ¿por qué? Porque una Transición sin revisión es una Transición fallida, es decir, ¿que ha pasado en otras dictaduras? En Argentina, en Chile, tal. Se hacen juicios contra la gente que mandó matar.

> Aquí se ha matado a mucha gente, ¿que pasa? Que eh, aquí todos estamos gobernados por un partido que no ha no ha dicho el franquismo era una dictadura y estaba mal, habla del régimen como El Régimen y habla de Franco como el General. (Horrillo)

It is important to note that references to the *dictadura*, and comparisons between past and present, did not start in the 15M from day one. Grassroots movement activist Patricia Martín Díaz, for example, maintains that in the beginning this was not present but that it was only later in the day that people got radicalized and started drawing parallels:

> Al principio la potencia del movimiento que aunque era muy político era apartidista, no tenía una ideología política detrás, a medida que fueron pasando los meses y que ganó el PP, la gente que seguía protestando se fue asumiendo de izquierdas y por lo tanto se vuelve a las viejas consignas a pesar de que, bueno, todos nosotros o todo el que tiene un poco de cabeza lucha contra ello, pero no, no, no lo puedes evitar. Entonces ahora sí que se hace más referencias a fascistas, falta de no sé qué, vuelta a la dictadura … Ahora sí, pero en esos primeros meses no salía la palabra dictadura, no salía. (Martín Díaz)

Stéphane Grueso goes a step further in condemning one of the pillars of "false democracy": the 1978 Constitution that became the cornerstone of the post-transitional Spanish state, through the general amnesty and the recognition of the several nationalities. A key issue regarding the constitution was its supposed definitive nature. When in 2012 the Constitution was changed in order to accommodate new stricter regulations regarding the national debt, this gave rise to even more anger on behalf of the generation that was born and raised with the myth of the perfect transition that set the inviolable rules. Grueso uses the crucial word "engañado" (fooled) to express his deep disillusionment with the entire process.

> Ha habido un momento […] que además fue una cosa donde yo personalmente yo me sentí como engañado directamente, que fue una Reforma Constitucional que hicieron PSOE y PP y que era una reforma que la hacían para blindar la deuda, para la deuda que tiene España darle una protección especial, con lo cual ahora mismo la Constitución de mí país dice lo siguiente: que el dinero del país tu lo gastas como quieras pero primero tienes que pagar a la Caja Real y a la deuda extranjera, y después puedes pagar el resto, los hospitales, los profesores, los no se qué. Bueno, el tema fue ese cambio de la Constitución, yo tengo 39 años, yo nací dos años antes de que muriera el dictador, pero vamos, soy una persona de la democracia y llevo toda la vida oyendo el rollo este de *Constitución forjada en la sangre de los españoles, no se qué, nos pusimos todos de acuerdo, fuimos capaces, de, no sé qué y tal*, y la Constitución como ese ente inmutable que no se puede tocar, que está ahí y ahora de repente PSOE y PP que llevan enfrentados y no hacen nada juntos, en un fin de semana cambian la Constitución para la deuda. Yo me sentí engañado, me sentí engañado. Y ese día salimos a la calle también y eran unos día de un enfado. (Grueso)

The altering of the Constitution shook the very foundation of the era of which it was supposed to be the guarantor, becoming itself a metonymy for the collapse of all past certainties, if any. This was experienced as an unpleasant but definitive change of paradigm.

This critique was intensified a year later when large demonstrations against austerity measures led to an unprecedented crackdown by police: preventive arrests, random beatings with clubs by policemen in the streets, shootouts in railway stations. The daily *El Diario* came out with a special edition on the end of the Spanish Transition, whereby a number of intellectuals – many of whom were born *during* the transition years – provided a dissection of the *Transición* and a ferocious critique of its shortcomings.[13] The director of the newspaper, Ignacio Escolar, attacks the idea of the transition as one that was

Figure 2. "1976 – history repeats itself" (2012)

"conceived without *original* sin" – in his own words (*sin pecado concebida*), pointing to the almost theological belief in its benign attributes. The economist Alberto Garzón summarizes this attitude neatly: "El relato de la Transición conseguida por hombres brillantes de Estado dispuestos a ceder espacios ideológicos en pos de la unidad común, se ha caído. Los que hemos nacido después del 78 no podemos interiorizar aquel relato," only to add with manifest irony the rhetorical question: "Es el modelico político, económico y cultural que parió aquella Transición el fin de la historia? No hay nada más?" Isaac Rosa, another contributor, reiterates: "Ojo con las palabras: cada vez que oigo hablar de una nueva Transición, pienso exactamente en eso: otra vez la Transición, repetir la jugada 40 años después […] Por eso ahora, cuando me cuentan lo del proyecto Transición 2, digo: 'No, gracias, ya vi la primera y no me gustó.'" There were a few less critical voices, like the ones of veteran Comisiónes Obreras leader Nicolas Sartorius, who tried to give credit to the *Transición*, insisting on how crucial those moments were for the consolidation of democracy. The generation divide here is, once again, clearly worth noticing.

It is clear, nevertheless, that for the younger generation in protest this was the time of the complete dismantling of the model transition myth. Ana Bastero, an e-activist, a dynamic participant of the first acampadas and a member of the Comisión de Difusión en Red de Acampada Sol, notes on the frequent juxtapositions of the past with the present:

> Cuando fue lo de la primavera valenciana, los estudiantes y demás, había a nivel gráfico, hay una foto, bueno un montaje bastante interesante en la que se ve una montañita de gente, digamos, una aglomeración de gente, y unos policías pegando indiscriminadamente y la gente sentada en el suelo; y se montaba otra imagen que era de los años de época de Franco en los cuales se veía otro montoncito de gente y los grises pegando. Entonces las fotos están las dos montadas y era exactamente la misma imagen, el mismo recuerdo. Entonces otras veces por ejemplo, a nivel redes sociales y demás, el empezar a criminalizar a, bueno, la intención de empezar a criminalizar la resistencia pasiva, es decir, la respuesta a eso es la dictadura, es un hashtag de quema la dictadura que muchas veces pulula por Internet. Igual cuando ganó las elecciones Rajoy, bienvenidos a 1944.

And she adds:

> No sé, hay mogollón de cosas que no tienen sentido. Entonces los recuerdos se hacen eso, de forma más puntual, […] No es que hay un análisis de ah, pues en una dictadura pasaba no se qué no se cuantos y ahora pasa no se qué; no, hay como más puntual, oye pues mira, el día

> que tenemos un partido pues eso, con mayoría absoluta, pues esto es dictadura esto es, el que se aprueben leyes sin debatir, que se cambie Constitución y demás, esto parece más dictadura; la represión que hay, pues eso, ir buscando fotos en las que encuentras ese paralelismo y demás. (Bastero)

Stéphane Grueso shares this feeling of a certain revival of 1970s-style authoritarianism at present:

> Cada vez que nos juntamos vienen y nos echan. Es impresionante. A parte de la violación de derechos fundamentales y civiles y ese tipo de cosas que también estamos trabajando en ello, no, porque aquí estamos ahora mismo en una carrera *de volver a la dictadura* que es acojonante. Usan distinto tipo de violencia con nosotros y siguen desconcertados, que a mí es lo que me hace gracia. (Grueso)

An emblematic cartoon that circulated in the online edition of *El Diario*, entitled "The Mysterious Spanish Black Hole, 1974–2012," encapsulated the feeling of total déjà vu, with an implicit critique of both the transition process of the 1970s (which was more violent than people were led to believe) and the promotion of the idea that authoritarian residues are still visible through police repression. In the cartoon, a tear gas canister thrown by police in distant 1974 breaks the time barrier and lands on today's protesters.[14] Similarly, when in late 2013 the Spanish Government publicized its intention to resume using water canons on protesters, people spoke of the revival of the repressive methods of Francoism. Even the socialist spokesperson Soraya Rodríguez accused Rajoy of using the same repressive methods as Franco – even though water canons had been used by the socialist government of Felipe González in as late as 1987.[15] Déjà – vu coupled with indignation and the feeling that nothing has changed: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (see Figure 3).[16]

This conclusion is reverberated not only in the 15M movement and the alternative press but also in the arts and especially in cinema. Young filmmakers start to deal with the moment of the *Transición* – either its beginning or its end – with a critical eye. Luis López Carrasco's *El futuro*, about the celebration of the socialist victory of 1982, and Daniel Castro's *Ilusión*, a comedy about a young filmmaker who tries to produce a musical on the Moncloa Pacts, are typical examples of this new trend – that also breaks a long cinematographic silence regarding the *Transición*. In a joint interview with the newspaper *El Confidencial* they are both dubbed the "hijos cabreados de la Transición" – as Carrasco was born in 1981 and Castro in 1972. In the interview both provide a

Figure 3. Manel Fontdevila, "Viaje al pasado." *El Diario* 6 Dec. 2012. Courtesy: Manel Fontdevila

ferocious critique of the films produced in the era of the Cultura de la Transición that focused on Spanish history as essentially Manichean and simplistic.[17]

A number of short avant-garde art films under the rubric "Spanish Revolution?" made by prominent audiovisual artists who could also appear under the label of the "angry kids of the Transition" take this tendency one step further, attributing all roots of disaffection, disillusionment and apathy that followed the 1980s to the frustration of youth with a new power system that had a strong connection with the old oligarchies.[18] The continuities between Francoism, the late 1970s, and the present are the main subject of *Historia monumental de la España contemporánea*, by David Varela (2013). In Flavio G. García's *Video-Dérives: Sol* (2011), yet another film of the same series, one young activist interviewed in the street put it bluntly: "We are the victims of Franco's heirs!"

The 1970s as a (conceptual) prison

Despite the image of the absolute rejection, there lurks a strong rapport between past and present. Apart from coming consistently under attack by the protagonists of contestation, the crucial decade of the 1970s also became a powerful source of inspiration. And this is not just because people like Ribas, and others, who shaped the countercultural landscape of the late 1970s, were among the most lucid analysts of the movement, thus blending the historical with the personal archive.[19] The 1970s are present in all sorts of ways in terms of social movement genealogies. The past is prominent a widely circulated genealogy produced by activist Marga Padilla. In this so-called "conceptual map" of the movement, we witness the influences and inspirations of 15M, including conscious references not only to "domestic progenitors of remote, more recent and even contemporary ancestry," but also foreign ones, including May '68 and the 2001 crisis in Argentina (see Figure 4).[20]

The legacy of the *movimietos del barrio and the asociaciónes de vecinos* are definitely the most powerful precedent to 15M and its various reincarnations (from *Toma el Metro* to *V for Vivienda*), all of which can be considered to be influenced by the public memory of this contentious past and its afterlives.[21] Moreover, the manifesto of 15M "How to Cook a Non-Violent Revolution" is a direct, albeit subversive, allusion to the famous *Anarchist Cookbook* by William Powell that was published in 1971. Similarly, in Basilio Martín Patino's film *Libre te quiero*, based on the eponymous poem by Agustín García Calvo, a famous 1979 orchestration of the song by Amancio Prada from his album *Canciones de amor y celda* is reproduced endlessly throughout. The song is set against images of 15M, highlighting this interesting mixture between past and present militancy, a blending between the conceptual landscape of 1975–1978 with 2011.[22]

Hence, the Spanish *indignados* – just like their Greek counterparts who make direct reference to the military dictatorship claiming that the Junta did not end in 1973, and the Portuguese who are singing the hymn of the 1974 revolution, *Grandola Vila Morena*, as part of the anti-austerity struggle repertoire – are constantly using direct interpellations of the 1970s in their discourse and action, not just as a negative model. Political sloganeering, symbols and protest music from the past are making a comeback in an interesting chronotopical transfer. In many respects this is a powerful revival of the "new sensibilities" that developed during the transition period in terms of contentious politics, that later seemed to be disintegrating with a few notable exceptions.[23] In this respect, I believe Amador Fernández-Savater's contention that the *indignados* inaugurated modes

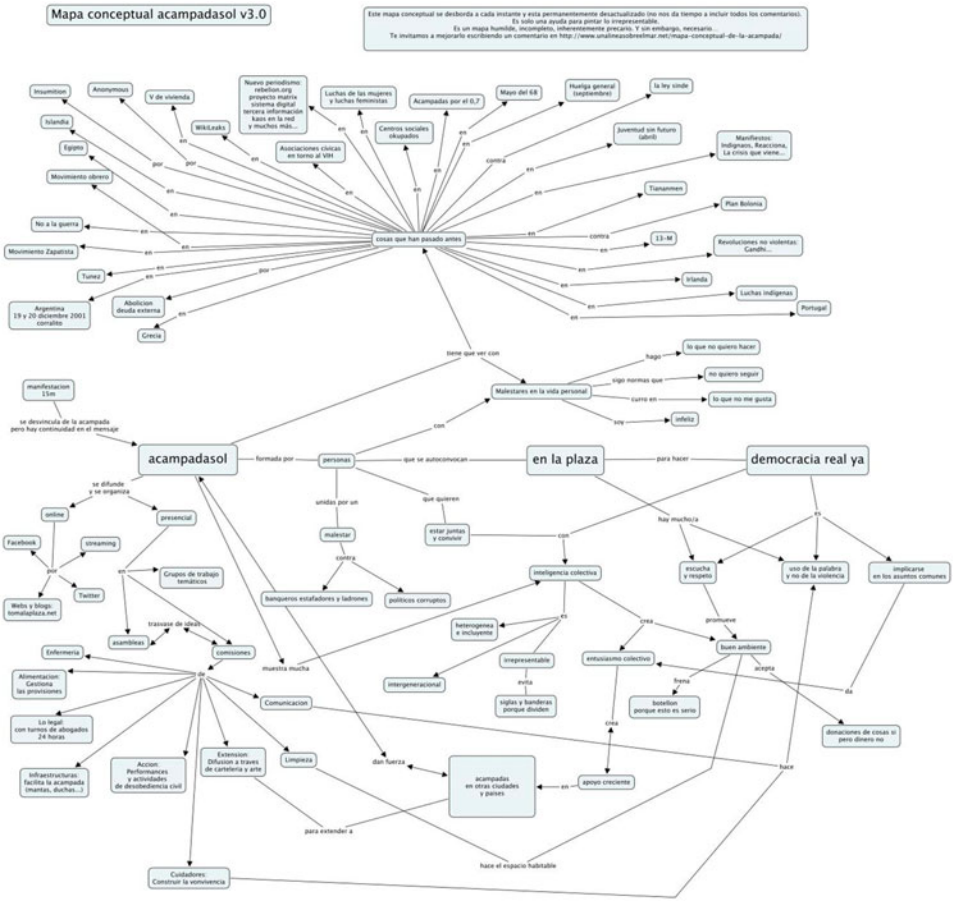

Figure 4. Conceptual map of the Acampada Sol

of politicization that do not correspond to either old or new social movements is largely inaccurate.[24]

An additional interesting affinity between past and present activism involves radicalism. In the short Catalan film *La matança del porc* (Isaki Lacuesta, 2012), the issue of the aforementioned continuities instead of ruptures with the *Ancien régime* is a constant topos. The film's main premise is that the transition took place at exactly the same time in which the ritualistic killing of pigs in Spanish households was forbidden. Using this as a starting point, the film concludes that the entire process was not as radical as it should have been. "Si no hay sangre, no hay butifarra," concludes Lacuesta, with the help of an intellectual montage that juxtaposes images of people in the streets in 1976–1977 with the pouring blood of slaughtered animals. In an almost Jacobin way, the film juxtaposes the assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco in December 1973 that posed an end to the Francoist regime's aspiration to *continuismo* to current social apathy, posing the rhetorical question of why people do not shoot bankers at present just as ETA-Militar killed Carrero then. Here too the frame is still the 1970s – now pushed further back, to the pre-transitional period in 1973. "Transition Syndrome" is being replaced with

the "Transition radical chic" protest frame and style.[25] Both nostalgic drives run parallel to the creation of an affective drive that privileges past scripts over present circumstances or, one step farther, national-historical narratives over international contemporary ones.

Moreover, beyond the rhetoric of the 15M and its actors that reaffirms them against the hypocritical essence of the transition perceived as a sort of game in the hands of an elite, it is also worth exploring the ways in which the movement reuses certain topoi from the transition. Above all, there is an interesting relationship between the drive to absolute inclusion in the two moments. Amador Fernández-Savater's words regarding the question "who are the indignados" are quite telling: "¿PSOE o PP? ¿Izquierda o derecha? ¿Libertarios o socialdemócratas? ¿Apocalípticos o integrados? ¿Reformistas o revolucionarios? ¿Moderados o antisistema? Ni una cosa ni la otra, sino todo lo contrario. No hay respuesta a la pregunta (policial) por la identidad: ¿quiénes son?"[26] So, what if we see the despised "consensus" of the transition as just a flipside of the "cualquiera" in the 15M – meaning the idea that potentially everyone can be a part of the movement? This would point to a telling affinity between the two that few of the participants in the movement would be ready to recognize.

In the same way, the striking links and similarities between the radical depoliticization that marked the final transitional years and the systematic refusal of politics or ideologies within the 15M Movement should not pass unnoticed. In post-1977 Spain the absence of radical changes and the official silencing of the past gave way to yet a new attitude: that of disaffection and disillusionment. Apathy was partly owed to the frustration of youth with a new power system overtly controlled by the fact that a young generation of politicians had a strong rapport with the old oligarchies. This was the era of the so-called "desencanto." However, Fernández-Savater too talks of people's "desafección con respecto a la cultura consensual" of the Cultura de la Transición, ironically called CT, at present.[27] The very word that he uses – *desafección* – is strongly reminiscent of that same disaffection of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As political scientist Nancy Bermeo reminds us, *desencanto* in reality meant "disenchantment with party politics," involving a 10% drop in voter turnout by 1979 and a rapid drop in party identification ("Myths of Moderation" 619).

Guillem Martínez – one of the writers in *CT o la cultura de la transición* and inventor of the term "CT" – rightly wonders regarding the current situation: "Is there any future in all this past?" (¿Hay un futuro en todo este pasado?).[28] His rhetorical question could be applied to the entire movement, despite its irrefutable innovative aspects. The multiple temporalities that point back to the 1970s make this signature decade look like a prison; it seems impossible to escape it despite all the efforts in this direction.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to highlight the fact that a key issue of the *indignados*' self-representation and understanding revolved around the transition to democracy. It attempted to trace the reconceptualization of the *Transición* that ranged from amnesia to the Transición Syndrome and all the way to transition radical chic. Using several different types of data, including interviews, books, poems and films, the article further tried to analyze how these social activists perceive their relation to the *Transición* and the so-called *memoria histórica*, thus exploring the complex ways in which the troubled past is being re-signified and reframed by social actors in the present. Constant interpellations

of the 1970s in the discourse and action of 15M activists point to the intricate modalities in which collective memory operates in this particular social movement.

Theorist Ofelia Ferrán rightly predicted many years ago that "Those aspects of Spain's past that had tried to be forgotten, repressed, will inevitably return, and they will function as 'lapses in Syntax,' 'resistances' to the official historical narrative of the transition that explains the past away" (198). This time is now, as the crisis acted as the catalyst for the "return of the repressed," contributing to the smearing of the perfect image that the Transition enjoyed for years. However, despite the vehement rejection of the 1970s and their legacy, the cry of the streets rendered the *Transición* a synecdoche for Spanish society agonizing between past and present, remembrance and oblivion, exemplary processes and unfinished ones, reconciliation and ongoing traumas. Finally, the multiple temporalities that point back to the 1970s also render this decade a repressive point of reference that is impossible to escape; even if – or maybe precisely because – one supposedly rejects it in its totality.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the *Journal for Spanish Cultural Studies* and, in particular, its editor Bryan Cameron for his kind invitation to participate in the special issue and for his help throughout the writing process. I am grateful to Jo Labanyi for bringing me into contact with the entire circle of talented people around Spanish Cultural Studies in New York. I am grateful to Cornel Ban, Eduardo Romanos, Hara Kouki and the anonymous reviewers for their precious comments on previous versions of this piece. Thanks also go to Margarita Markoviti for her help with editing.

Notes

1. See Kostis Kornetis and Cornel Ban, "Past (Im)perfect and Present (Dis)continuous? The Spanish and Greek Democratic Transitions Revisited," unpublished paper presented at NYU, Center for European and Mediterranean Studies, April 2011. This introduction partly reproduces some of the main points raised in that article.
2. See Field's *Spain's* "*Second Transition*."
3. See Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar Fernández (95–111). In their view the upsurge in collective action from below in those years was the only way people had to express their disagreement with the ongoing transition as it was orchestrated from above. Also see Ysàs, Sartorius and Alberto Sabio, plus the critique of this point, as expressed by Dolidier (39).
4. For example, in as late as March 1978, a military court sentenced four members of the Catalan theater group *Els Joglars* to 2 years in prison for "defaming the Army in a play." See Delgado.
5. See Kornetis.
6. A notable exception is Robert M. Fischman's work on labor struggles during the transition.
7. The reopening took unprecedented proportions when in 2008 the controversial magistrate Baltasar Garzón introduced retroactive justice to the conundrum by investigating crimes against humanity committed by Franco's regime, handing over to a Madrid court a list of the names of 114,000 victims of Francoist repression. Surprisingly – or maybe not, Garzón himself faced trial on the accusation by the right-wing civil servants' union of overreaching his judicial powers by breaching the official amnesty that drew a line under the Franco era in 1977. In the end Garzón was suspended by the Supreme Court, members of which had served as judges under Franco. He, nevertheless, managed to consolidate the "judicialization" of history, and the accompanying moral obligation to deal with the uncomfortable and cumbersome past.
8. Above all Javier Cercas who after stirring the waters regarding the civil war period with *Soldiers of Salamis* did the same with *Anatomía de un instante* regarding one of the most controversial incidents of the transition period, that is, Tejero's abortive coup on 23 February 1981. Cercas rejects the most well known and widely accepted topos of his country regarding recent events: that the transition succeeded thanks to Juan Carlos's firm condemnation of the coup.

9. See in particular the special issue of the periodical *El Diario*, entitled "El fin de la España de la Transición. Las lagunas democráticas, el desplome económico y la corrupción noquean el orden de 1978," edited by Isaac Rosa, Javier Gallego et al.
10. On the implications of this strategic use and semantic bouleversement of these past phrases, see Labrador Méndez. On the strategic use of humor in such instances, see Romanos' "The Strategic Use of Humor in the Spanish Indignados Movement" (7).
11. See, for example, Miqui Otero, "CT y humor: la risa atada (y bien desatada) O el paso del buen humor al desencanto y del al humor a la inteligencia."
12. See http://madrid.15m.cc/
13. See "El fin de la España de la Transición. Las lagunas democráticas, e desplome económico y la corrupción noquean el orden de 1978" (1).
14. See Manel Fontdevila's "Viaje al pasado."
15. See Jesús Duva's "Cañones de agua contra manifestantes."
16. In fact, Prince of Salina in Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Leopard* memorable dictum "Se tutto deve rimanere com'è, è necessario che tutto cambi (everything needs to change, so that everything can stay the same), albeit rather cliché is quoted by several theorists linked to the movement to denote the impasse.
17. See Luis López Carrasco's and Daniel Castro's "Hablan los hijos cabreados de la Transición."
18. http://www.pragda.com/films/events/spanish-revolution.
19. On the issue of this blending in general and the case of Ribas and *Ajoblanco* in particular see Labrador Méndez.
20. Quoted in Tejerina and Perugorria (99). On the connections between 15M and the tradition of the anarchist movement in Spain, see Romanos.
21. See in this respect Anguelovski (255).
22. http://www.pragda.com/films/events/spanish-revolution.
23. See Junco (413–442). Also see Romanos (335).
24. See Fernández-Savater's "Emborronar la CT (del 'No a la guerra' al 15-M)."
25. Framing according to social movement theory is a strategic rhetorical maneuver aiming to spread a message by using things that resonate. As the major theorist of frame theory, David Snow, has argued, it is irrelevant whether the basic premise of framing holds any truth or not. "Frame bridging," in other words taking some metaphor or theme from the past with a degree of resemblance to some contemporary event and making them overlap, can be witnessed in crisis ridden Spain too. Therefore, the past is being deployed by young rational actors aiming to mobilize against a polis that they no longer find legitimate. It is a strategic political action, a cultural toolkit, which is used in order to mobilize emotional resources. See Snow and Benford, Melucci, Laraña, et al.
26. See Fernández-Savater's "Emborronar la CT (del 'No a la guerra' al 15-M)."
27. Idem.
28. See Guillem Martínez's El concepto CT.

Notes on contributor

Kostis Kornetis is Assistant Professor at the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies at New York University. His research focuses on the history and memory of the social movements of the "long" 1960s, the history of authoritarianism in Southern Europe, the methodology of oral history, and the use of film as a source for social and cultural history. His book "Children of the Dictatorship. Student Resistance, Cultural Politics and the "Long 1960s" in Greece" was published by Berghahn Books in 2013.

Works Cited

Aguilar Fernández, Paloma. *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2002.

Anguelovski, Isabelle. "'Environment and health, yes … but for other reasons': Asserting control, sovereignty, and transgression in Barcelona." in *From Social to Political: New Forms of Mobilization and Democratization*. Eds. Benjamín Tejerina and Ignacia Perugorría, Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del Pais Vasco, 2012. 247–266.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo, and Ernesto Ganuza. "No Parties, No Banners: The Spanish Experiment with Direct Democracy." *Boston Review* 14 Feb. 2012.

Bermeo, Nancy. "Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions." *Comparative Politics* 29 (1997): 308–309. Print

———. "Sacrifice, Sequence, and Strength in Successful Dual Transitions: Lessons from Spain." *The Journal of Politics* 56.3 (1994): 601–627.

Cardús i Ros, Salvador. "Politics and the Invention of Memory. For a Sociology of the Transition to Democracy in Spain." in *Disremembering The Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*. Ed. Joan Ramon Resina. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

Cercas, Javier. *Anatomía de un instante*. Madrid: Plaza & Janés, 2009.

Davis, Madeleine. "Is Spain Recovering Its Memory? Breaking the 'Pacto del Olvido.'" *Human Rights Quarterly* 27.3 (2005): 858–880.

Delgado, Maria. *Spanish Theatre 1920–1995: Strategies in Protest and Imagination*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1998.

Dolidier, Arnaud. "Citoyenneté, Démocraties et laterite politique: le cas du '15-M' au sein d'el país et d'el ABC." *HAOL* 27 (2012): 29–44.

Ferrán, Ofelia. "Memory and Forgetting, Resistance and Noise in the Spanish tranistion: Memory and Forgetting, Resistance and Noise in the Spanish transition. Semprún and Vázquez Montalban." in *Disremembering The Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*. Ed. Joan Ramon Resina. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

Field, Bonnie N. *Spain's 'Second Transition': The Socialist Government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Fischman, Robert M. "The Labor Movement in Spain. From Authoritarianism to Democracy." *Comparative Politics* 14 (1982): 281–305.

Hughes, Neil. "'Young People Took to the Streets and All of a Sudden All of the Political Parties Got Old': The 15M Movement in Spain." *Social Movement Studies* 10.4 (2011): 407–413.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Junco, José Álvarez. "Movimientos sociales en España: del modelo tradicional a la modernidad postfranquista." in *Los nuevos movimientos sociales. De la ideología a la identidad*. Eds. Enrique Laraña and Joseph Gusfield. Madrid: CIS, 1994. 413–442.

Kornetis, Kostis. "Las transiciones democráticas griega y española en retrospectiva." in *Reevaluaciones. Historias locales y miradas globales. Actas del VII Congreso de Historia Local de Aragón*. Eds. Carmen Frías, José Luis Ledesma, and Javier Rodrigo. Zaragoza: IFC, 2011. 191–205.

Labanyi, Jo. "Review." *Screen* 48.3 (2007): 389–394.

Labrador Méndez, Germán. "¿Lo llamaban democracia? La crítica estética de la política en la transición española y el imaginario de la historia en el 15-M". Unpublished paper.

Laraña, Enrique, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield, eds. *New Social Movements. From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994.

Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

MacKay, Ruth. "History on the Line. The Good Fight and Good History: The Spanish Civil War." *History Workshop Journal* 70 (2010): 199–206.

Martínez, Guillem. "El concepto CT." in *CT o la cultura de la Transición: Crítica a 35 años de cultura española*. Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2012.

Melucci, Alberto. "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements." *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988): 329–348.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.

Otero, Miqui. "CT y humor: la risa atada (y bien desatada) O el paso del buen humor al desencanto y del al humor a la inteligencia." in *CT o la cultura de la Transición: Crítica a 35 años de cultura española*. Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2012.

Preston, Paul. *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge*. London: W.W. Norton, 2006.

Ribas, Pepe. "Crónica personal de un movimiento." *La Vanguardia* 15 Jun. 2011.

Romanos, Eduardo. "Epílogo. Retos emergentes, debates recientes y los movimientos sociales en España." in *Movimientos Sociales*. Eds. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2011. 315–333.

———."El 15M y la democracia de los movimientos sociales." *Books and Ideas* 18 Nov. 2011.
———. "The Strategic Use of Humor in the Spanish Indignados Movement." Unpublished paper.
Rosa, Isaac, Javier Gallego and Ignacio Escolar. *El Fin de la España de la Transición. Las lagunas democráticas, el desplome económico y la corrupción noquean el orden de 1978*. Madrid: El Diario, 2013.
Rosa, Isaac. *El vano ayer*. Madrid: Seix Barral, 2005.
Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio, and Paloma Aguilar Fernández. "Violencia política y movilización social" in *Violencias y transiciones políticas a finales del siglo XX. Europa del sur – América latina*. Eds. Sophie Baby, Olivier Compagnon, and Eduardo González Calleja. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009. 95–111.
Sartorius, Nicolás, and Alberto Sabio. *El final de la dictadura. La conquista de la democracia en España (noviembre de 1975-junio de 1977)*. Barcelona: Temas de Hoy, 2007.
Siani-Davies, Peter and Stefanos Katsikas. "National Reconciliation after Civil War: The Case." *Journal of Peace Research* 46 (2009): 559–575.
Snow, David A., and Robert D. Benford "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest." in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. Eds. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992. 133–155.
Tejerina, Benjamín, and Ignacia Perugorría. "Continuities and Discontinuities in Recent Social Mobilizations. From New Social Movements to the Alter-Global Mobilizations and the 15M." in *From Social to Political: New Forms of Mobilization and Democratization*. Eds. Benjamín Tejerina and Ignacia Perugorría. Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del Pais Vasco, 2012. 93–111.
Ysàs, Pere. *Disidencia y subversión. La lucha del régimen franquista por su supervivencia (1960–1975)*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2004.

Films

La matança del porc. Dir. Isaki Lacuesta. 2012.
Historia Monumental de la España Contemporánea. Dir. David Varela. 2013.
Libre te quiero. Dir. Basilio Martín Patino. 2012.

Interviews

Bastero, Ana. Personal interview, 13 Jun. 2012.
Grueso, Stéphane. Personal interview, 12 Jun. 2012.
Horrillo, Patricia. Personal interview, 14 Jun. 2012.
Martín Diaz, Patricia. Personal interview, 15 Jun. 2012.