

When the Bubble Bursts: A Spatial Interrogation of Spanish Crisis in José Ángel  
Mañas's *Sospecha*

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The relationship between crisis and literature in contemporary Spain is rooted in the catastrophic events of the global recession that began in 2008 and lingered over the peninsula for well over five years. A decade later, Spain continues to slowly claw its way back to economic and political stability after years of high unemployment, housing market woes, and serious doubts as to the viability of the Spanish welfare state. In response to this enduring crisis, many authors have sought to catalog and describe the effects that everyday citizens have weathered, while also attempting to define a new role for literature's response in carving a path forward in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

This literary response can clearly be seen in the critical attention paid to the novelistic production of crisis in Spain since 2008. Pablo Valdivia argues for the permanence of a "crisis simbólica" 'symbolic crisis' as well as "un proceso de reajuste de estructuras" 'a process of structural readjustment,' in other words, a crisis that disconnects itself from numerical economic performance while fanning the flames of social and cultural change (22).<sup>1</sup> Central to this ongoing situation is Valdivia's claim that these narrations "habiliten no sólo espacios de resistencia y de consumo diversos o propicien la posibilidad de ámbitos discursivos alternativos, sino que además construyen y describen la realidad cognitiva en la que nos inscribimos social e intelectualmente" (22) 'enable not only diverse spaces of resistance and consumption, or provide for the possibility of alternative discursive spaces, but rather that they also construct and describe the cognitive reality in which we define ourselves socially and intellectually.' Crisis literature therefore becomes fundamental to creating a symbolic resistance to ongoing economic stagnation, both in its ability to lend visibility to the effects of the crisis and in its creativity in contesting and resisting the power structures that foment cyclical recession. Similarly, Jochen Mecke's analysis of several crisis novels notes that ". . . no se limitan a contar la evolución individual de un personaje, sino que establecen relaciones con la Historia colectiva de la crisis" (204) 'they don't limit themselves to narrating the individual evolution of a protagonist, but instead establish connections with the collective History of the crisis.' As a result, the crisis itself becomes a central overarching character in these novels, which in turn underscores the presence of the precarious in both everyday life and literary production. Specifically, some of the most salient forms of crisis literature reacting to 2008 can be found in the well-established genre of detective fiction.

José Ángel Mañas's 2010 novel *Sospecha* ('Suspect') is one of the first examples of Spanish detective fiction that deals directly with the root causes of the crisis.<sup>2</sup> The author is well-known for his debut novel *Historias del Kronen* ('Stories from the Kronen'), which captured the skepticism and discontent of youth following Spain's economic success during the 1980s and the end of the *movida* cultural movement.<sup>3</sup> However, *Sospecha*, despite being a clear example of the popular *novela negra* 'hard-boiled' detective genre, has received very little critical attention compared to Mañas's earlier novels. The novel begins in December 2005 and closely follows Pacheco and Duarte, detective partners in the homicide unit of the *Policía Nacional* 'National Police,' based in Madrid. As is often the case with detective fiction, the initial investigation—in *Sospecha* a young woman's savage rape and murder—soon fades into the background, although Duarte is arrested when it is revealed that he tried to seduce the victim on the night of the crime and his hair follicles are found on the corpse. Despite the setback, Pacheco continues to investigate off the record to try and clear his partner's name. With the help of his police contacts, Pacheco's persistence pays off when he finds the true killer, Daniel Campuzano, but not before he flees Madrid for Hendaye in southwest France. Although Duarte is exonerated, his wife files for divorce when his adulterous sex life is revealed, while Pacheco pursues Campuzano to no avail. While the investigation is never formally resolved, the novel's details involving construction scandals, rising real estate prices, and aggressive development practices reach a boiling point as the 2008 crisis looms over the nation.

Given the growing popularity and critical acclaim of crisis literature in Spain, my goal in this article is to examine how *Sospecha*, as an example of both *novela negra* and crisis literature, presents a critical investigation and condemnation of the spatial practices of land development and speculation in Madrid's suburban communities. Through my analysis, I posit that the novel shifts in focus from the city center to the peripheral spaces of Madrid in order to interrogate the neoliberal foundations of the 2008 crisis and to question the sustainability of Spain's economic and political models that rely heavily on foreign investment, immigration, and unstable practices of construction and home ownership. In the process, Madrid emerges as a microcosm of Spain's political and economic struggles at the start of the twenty-first century, exposing the tensions between fractured regional movements within the country and global flows of commerce, trade, and tourism. Mañas's ability to interrogate Spain's trajectory towards the 2008 crisis stems from this spatial investigation that presents the Madrid periphery as not just a possible suspect, but as the crime itself.

In the novel, Madrid as an ever-expanding megalopolis becomes the central focus of the investigation. Yet while the Madrid urban area experienced rapid growth prior to 2008, Susan Larson points out that Madrid "seems . . . to more reflectively construct and critique life on the periphery of what was once previously

the center of an extremely centralized state” (397). A clear example is María del Mar Rodríguez’s aptly titled 2003 news feature “Madrid, camino de Los Ángeles” ‘Madrid, on the road to Los Angeles,’ which showcases the massive housing expansion under construction along the urban periphery (4-6). The article also highlights the “operación Chamartín,” a large land reclassification and urbanization project that would completely remake the northern Madrid cityscape. Both Larson and Rodríguez’s characterizations of Madrid’s urban growth provide a stark precursor to the 2008 economic crisis that would disproportionately affect peripheral urban spaces, as Raquel Rodríguez Alonso and Mario Espinoza Pino highlight in their critique of the large empty housing stock located outside major cities (60).

In order to further examine the novel’s critique of these peripheral urban spaces under development in Madrid, I employ Edward Soja’s idea of the postmetropolis, where the city “can be represented as a product of intensified globalization processes through which the global is becoming localized and the local is becoming globalized at the same time” (152). Soja stresses that the postmetropolis is a new evolutionary form of the urban city, not a replacement of the modern, manufacturing-based urban core (238-39). At the same time, Soja affirms the “regionality” of these city spaces, a configuration that “tends to be dynamic and expansive in its territorial domain” (16). Given Spain’s rapid urban and suburban development since the transition to democracy in the 1970s, I argue that Soja’s postmetropolis allows for an expansive yet localized method of analysis for interrogating these contemporary spatial formations. Indeed, with the start of the twenty-first century, Soja highlights the “increasing blurriness . . . between the real and imagined city,” allowing us to investigate the fluid spatial boundaries of Spanish urban areas, especially following the economic crisis of 2008 (150). To that end, the novel engages a wide variety of interactions that occur in these peripheral spaces, from the effects of foreigners, immigrants, and prostitution rings to globalized shopping centers and forgotten shantytowns serving as magnets for the illegal drug trade. *Sospecha*’s ability to adapt the regional and fluid nature of Madrid’s urban space to the detective genre and the 2008 crisis underscores a clear demarcation between the winners and losers of the Spanish capital’s turn towards global investment in reconfiguring these peripheral communities.

Specifically, it is the ebb and flow of the detectives’ spatial trajectories through the Madrid urban area that allow *Sospecha* to develop its critique of the 2008 economic crisis. The presence of innumerable trajectories suggests a highly mobile relationship with space, coinciding with Henri Lefebvre’s dialectical triad, which illustrates that our conceptualization of space moves from personal experiences to cultural representations to symbolic interactions between space and its inhabitants (33). This dynamic interaction emphasizes that space is a process instead of any given fixed category or position, therefore moving space beyond the visual. Additionally, Lefebvre’s dialectical process incorporates everyday life

experiences—oftentimes indiscernible, banal practices such as commuting to work or inhabiting a certain neighborhood—that are inseparable from the constantly present cultural artifacts of postmodernity (40). In literary analysis, the usefulness of Lefebvre’s approach is in the acknowledgement of a production of space that is in constant motion within and beyond the text. Indeed, the investigation that Pacheco and his team undertake is invested not just in built spatial areas, but also in the constant retraced trajectories that the detective must map out in search of the true criminal. Here, space is revealed as more than just a static product—in the form of a shopping mall, for example—but rather what Lefebvre terms a “means of production”; these productive forces include both the state as well as the labor forces that actively build the communities being investigated (85). As a result, the productive forces reshaping the spatial fabric of the Madrid periphery are revealed and identified by the investigation’s movement through the urban space under scrutiny.

A similar dualistic process can be seen in the critical view of detective fiction in Spain, and in particular the *novela negra*. The genre has reconciled its identity as mainstream, low-quality, and violent with its critical examination of both the long decades of totalitarianism and the new experiences of Spanish democratic society. In particular, Malcolm Alan Compitello’s succinct article on the “new *novela negra*” summarizes the narrative and critical applications of the genre’s structural adaptability, especially how *novela negra* authors of the 1970s were “problematizing the boundaries and structures of detective fiction . . .” (189). Additionally, Compitello examines how the genre’s realistic credibility serves as a vehicle for both critiquing and describing the transition period (189). Several decades later, criticism on the *novela negra* continues to underscore the genre’s unique creation and subsequent popularity due to specific conditions of Spanish politics and society. For example, Renée Craig-Odders asserts that Spanish detective fiction was helped by both “a more liberal collective perspective” and “the gradual popular acceptance of democratic ideals” (39). Similarly, Augustín Cuadrado underscores the *novela negra*’s uniquely Spanish identity, as well as the relationship between the genre and the *novela social* ‘social novel’ of the 1950s (161). More recently, José Colmeiro has examined the *novela negra*’s tendency to subvert the genre’s own heteronormative and patriarchal standards (“*Novela policiaca*” 18). Consequently, the *novela negra*’s postmodern adaptability of structure and form that Compitello describes is precisely what allows the genre, and *Sospecha* in particular, to analyze and critique the social and political changes occurring in society. Specifically in this case, *Sospecha* interrogates the production of peripheral urban space in the Madrid area as a contributing factor of the coming crisis.

An investigation of the built environment and the productive processes behind space is another trait often found in the Spanish *novela negra* genre. For

example, Colmeiro posits that *novela negra* detectives act as filters in observing reality and therefore in narrating the spatial layout of the urban environment (*La novela policiaca española* 171). The detective as filter must operate not via a fixed position within the built space but instead via constant movement between the geographic points under investigation. Consequently, it is the detective's spatial trajectories that lead the narration, and ultimately the reader, to identify the built environment rooted in reality as well as the productive forces behind their construction. *Sospecha* modifies the more common singular detective filter by employing an investigative team in which Duarte is both detective and suspect, while Pacheco's open homosexuality yet rugged masculinity challenges the hard-boiled heteronormative stereotypes of the character. This doubling of the police protagonists allows the novel to capture and critique the complex, hybridized spatial tapestry of the Madrid urban area.

As a result, the spatial investigation undertaken in *Sospecha* is also doubled as the novel depicts the effects of globalization on the Spanish capital while also localizing the action in Madrid's suburban areas. It is important to note that the changes *Sospecha* represents do not supersede the localized representation of identity inherent in the Spanish *novela negra*, but rather infuse this perspective with the globalized tendencies that continue to manifest themselves in both the economic and social sectors of everyday life in Spain. As *Sospecha* shifts the spatial investigation towards the Madrid periphery, this underlying duality between the local identity of a community and the global forces of capital and exchange is exposed, with the shadow of the economic crisis constantly looming on the horizon.

Another way that the novel underscores the dual nature of its investigation is through its use of epigraphs from famous authors and celebrities at the start of each chapter. These short quotes ground Mañas's novel in the self-reflexive tendencies of global crime fiction, while also highlighting regional contributions to the genre. For example, many of these epigraphs come from Spanish authors active in the genre, such as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (183), Carlos Pérez Merinero (119), and Eloy Cebrián (165). Mañas also includes quotes from international authors such as Fred Vargas (75) and G.K. Chesterton (253), as well as a quote from the infamous criminal Eleuterio Sánchez, popularly known as "el Lute" (367) and, most surprisingly, Mañas's own novel *Historias del Kronen* (93). Aside from their function as an homage to detective fiction, these epigraphs also serve as unambiguous reminders of the fictional nature of the novel, breaking, in a way, the verisimilitude of the narration by interjecting a variety of outside voices, Mañas's own writings notwithstanding. As a result, the novel's self-reflexive conceptualization forces the reader to distinguish between real and fictional evidence, creating a dual investigation targeting both the criminal case and the city the novel inhabits.

This textually-imbedded investigation continues just before the first chapter, where the author copies a brief summary from the Spanish-language Wikipedia site on Navalcarnero. As one of the largest towns in Southwest Madrid, Navalcarnero embodies the Spanish capital's peripheral expansion during the construction boom prior to 2008. The author's Wikipedia summary provides basic information such as population, transportation links, and a brief paragraph on the town's touristic interest. By reducing the community to a brief encyclopedia entry, the novel digitizes Navalcarnero and underscores the changing nature of space that this historic village embodies. However, the currently accessible Wikipedia article on the town differs from the novel's version in many ways. For example, the current article is much longer than the novel's version, and the population appears to have increased from 20,161 inhabitants in the novel's article to 27,570 inhabitants as of 2017 ("Navalcarnero"). Keeping in mind the ever-changing and unreliable status of information present on Wikipedia, this virtual introduction to Southwest suburban Madrid provides the reader with a digital snapshot of the accelerated changes in population, society, and economy taking place over less than a decade.

For *Sospecha*, the new media elements of presenting this community as an intertext create a hybridization of styles that provides the novel with an updated, contemporary feel. Michael Riffaterre comments that "[t]he urge to understand compels readers to look to the intertext to fill out the text's gaps, spell out its implications" (57). Indeed, the intertextual Wikipedia introduction has more in common with a smart phone user conducting an instant search for information than a novel's traditional narrative presentation of story. By limiting this introduction to a single page, offset from the text, the novel blurs the lines between the static printed word and the virtual monitor or touch screen of the information age. Here we can see Lefebvre's dynamic sense of space take shape as the novel moves between the actual built environment and the spatial representations that inhabitants interact with on a daily basis. In addition, the use of Wikipedia proves these communities exist beyond the novel, yet the act of obtaining information from an open source with multiple authors is in itself questionable.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that Sagrario is the scene of the crime and the epicenter of the novel, its fictional nature dictates that it has no corresponding Wikipedia entry. However, the novel establishes that, much like the actual surrounding villages of southwest Madrid, Sagrario retains its own unique history dating back several centuries. This unique yet fictional identity is punctuated throughout the novel by the developing crisis of land speculation and the lurking shadow of a future economic collapse.

For Pacheco, Sagrario evokes the nationwide problems of astronomical values placed on property in Spain, forming part of the growing accusations of economic scandal and mismanagement across the country, evidence of which can be found in the town itself (55). Sagrario therefore sacrifices some of its local

character and identity in order to cash in on the real estate boom, a common development across Spain, but more noticeable in peripheral communities where previously empty or underdeveloped land is rezoned for construction. In fact, as Pacheco arrives at the scene of the crime, his attention is drawn towards “las filas de chalecitos con aspecto vacacional que iban asomando a uno y otro lado, y la imagen se le antojó repentinamente espectral” (56) ‘the rows of small vacation-style homes that appeared on each side, and the image suddenly seemed to him to be quite ghostly.’ These single-family homes, a luxurious use of space compared to the more common apartment living found in most cities in Spain, represent new arrivals to Sagrario, dramatically altering the spatial and social layout. These lifestyle changes are underscored by longer, faster commutes possible via car and Spaniards investing in property on the urban periphery, mimicking Soja’s model of the “exopolis” with inside-out patterns of movement found most often in North American suburban development (241-42). The spectral nature of the image attests to the mutability of the scene: a globalized, repetitive construction of homes that could belong to any place, now sprouting along the main avenue in Sagrario. The novel’s inclusion of these homes reinforces twenty-first century Madrid as a postmetropolis, while also critiquing the inherent loss of unique configurations of space as boundaries become blurred and repetitive. In a similar vein, Raquel Rodríguez Alonso and Mario Espinoza Pino underscore the fundamental shift in market dynamics that embodies the 2008 housing bubble and crash: “El hecho de que gran cantidad del stock que sale al mercado se desvíe hacia la inversión, perpetúa una demanda oculta de viviendas cuyo mejor reflejo es un grotesco parque vacío” (33) ‘The fact that a large quantity of [housing] stock that is placed on the market is diverted towards investment income perpetuates a hidden demand for homes whose most obvious reflection is a grotesque empty housing stock.’ These authors pinpoint the 1998 “Ley del suelo” ‘Law of Land Use’ as the catalyst for rampant speculation and aggressive construction in Spain, as it allowed rezoning vast swaths of land for urbanization, much of it located in peripheral areas outside of traditional city centers (39).

This spatial reconfiguration creates a source of tension between village residents and city-center emigrants. Besteiros, the Guardia Civil ‘Civil Guard’ chief, quickly clarifies that the victim, Inmaculada, and her partner are longtime residents of the area: “No son colonos de estos que nos habéis ido echando a los pueblos, expulsándolos con precios desmedidos, las primeras víctimas de toda esa jodida especulación” (65) ‘They aren’t those type of new arrivals that you guys have been kicking out of nearby towns, pushed out by exorbitant prices, the first victims of all of this fucking speculation.’ Even though the urban emigrants are also “victims,” their status as colonists underscores their complicity in fomenting the rapid spatial and social change that serves as a backdrop to the crime. Indeed, Besteiros quickly develops the distinction of Inmaculada as a local victim, the

horrific crime therefore partly explained by the changing demographic conditions that Sagrario and surrounding communities must withstand. Consequently, the novel presents the dual crimes—Inmaculada on the one hand, speculation and overdevelopment of the urban periphery on the other—as a means of critiquing both the economic and social factors that led to the financial crisis and burst the bubble of assumed prosperity and expansion that Spain had cultivated since the start of the twenty-first century. These seemingly disparate crimes are presented as intertwined problems borne out of the local tensions of the periphery and the overarching developments of both space and capital on a global scale.

Although Sagrario is a fictional model of the changing demographics and spatial layout of the urban zone, the same reactions can be found in the actual towns and developed areas of southwest Madrid. Yet, despite both the warning signs of an impending bubble bursting as well as the dramatic changes in identity that the urban periphery faces, the novel depicts the public's perception of urban expansion in a positive light. For example, Duarte, growing up in nearby Alcorcón, views Navalcarnero favorably due to what he calls the “pelotazo urbanístico” ‘the urbanization boom’; the town therefore “se había remozado y se estaba convirtiendo en una de las poblaciones más prometedoras del suroeste” (120) ‘had revitalized itself and was becoming one of the most promising towns in the southwest.’ Even with the tensions in patterns of immigration and the constant scandals involving politicians and developers, land speculation and economic expansion are sought after by the urban periphery as a means of increasing population, production, and quality of life. Duarte's positive tone indicates that the promise of urban development, even to a true local resident of these peripheral communities, outweighs the spatial and demographic tensions that the urbanization of these historical towns entails. Nevertheless, the novel's spatial investigation underscores that a developing town on the periphery means opening the doors to development, welcoming urbanization, and attracting urban settlers, thereby indelibly altering the town's own spatial and social identity.

Another example of urban transformation is found in the nearby town of Arroyomolinos, which also forms part of the southwest Madrid urban periphery. Similar to Navalcarnero, the town is experiencing astronomical growth and development despite a humble historical past. As the narrator notes, “aquel había sido, de siempre, un pueblo minúsculo. Pero había sufrido una transformación radical . . . lo que se empezaba a ver era un sinfín de gigantescas garzas de hierro recortadas contra la noche” (182) ‘This had always been a tiny town. But it's undergone a radical transformation . . . what could now be seen was a never-ending landscape of giant construction cranes counter-imposed against the night sky.’ Consequently, it is not just the urban transformation of turning once-empty land into developed buildings, but also the ongoing and seemingly endless process of construction that impacts the town's own spatial identification. The “steel birds”

that rise over the village become part of the natural landscape, signaling that construction is not just a side effect of urban development but also an industry of its own, constantly self-expanding. Here in Arroyomolinos, the spatial reconfiguration allows for several benefits, such as a multi-use sports arena and a luxurious auditorium, as well as a state-of-the-art headquarters for the Guardia Civil (182). The tongue-in-cheek narration suggests that these pricey amenities are overkill for a small, relatively obscure village on the outskirts of Madrid. In effect, reading the novel after the onset of the crisis, these new buildings and the nighttime appearance of giant construction cranes move from a promising image of future prosperity to an ominous warning against overexpansion and speculation.

Alongside the spatial development of the Madrid periphery, the novel highlights the increase in immigration to Spain from the developing world. Daniela Flesler, writing on immigration's influence on Spanish Cinema, underscores this movement as both a confirmation of Spain's more privileged European status, due to its desirability for arriving immigrants, and a challenge to the country's own hybrid identity as a historical and contemporary crossroads between cultures (103-04). *Sospecha* expands on this idea through an ongoing debate on immigration's impact on society, presented by both mass media and Pacheco's colleagues. Indeed, even by casually listening to the radio, Pacheco is engaged with the question of immigration: a passionate talk show host confirms the link between construction and the arrival of more immigrants "con los beneficios evidentes no solo para el ladrillo . . . sino también para quienes gracias a ello subimos un escaloncito más en este peculiar sistema piramidal que es nuestra sociedad de consumo" (98) 'with the evident benefits not only for the construction industry . . . but also for those of us who, thanks to that industry, have gone up a step in this peculiar pyramid scheme that is our consumerist society.' The radio outlines that the construction boom is fed by immigration, which in turn creates the need for further construction—homes, government services, retail, hospitals, etc.—fueling the fire of a system that appears unstoppable. Yet the host also acknowledges that better economic conditions for many Spaniards have come at a high price, including the fact that "han tenido que hipotecarse las familias de una manera tan exagerada" 'these families have had to take out mortgages at an alarming rate' as well as abuses against the immigrants who represent the base of the social pyramid, representing that the "inyección demográfica es el secreto de que nuestra economía . . . no se haya estancado" (98) 'population injection that is the secret of our economy . . . has not stagnated.' These political platforms represent an ominous foreshadowing of the financial crisis that will come to fruition in 2008, especially the perilous economic position of the construction industry that relies on immigration for both labor and demand.

Yet Pacheco's personal encounters with immigrants and foreigners, as well as his colleagues' own experiences, depict a deeper sociocultural rift between these new arrivals and Spanish residents. This is underscored by a Sagrario resident's

initial reaction to Inmaculada's rape and murder, quickly concluding that "seguro que ha sido un suramericano, que allí la vida no vale lo mismo" (149) 'clearly it was a South American, because there life isn't worth the same as here.' This desire to accuse an unknown immigrant of committing the crime is illogical given the lack of foreign immigrants in Sagrario. Nevertheless, public opinion, and even the police themselves, cannot fathom such a horrific crime against a local girl being committed by a local resident: there must be an outsider, whether from the city center, or from another country, to blame.

For Pacheco, the sight of immigrants and foreign tourists is a daily occurrence in his neighborhood of Atocha in the heart of Madrid. Yet the striking difference between the two groups reveals the protagonist's distrust of the former and tacit acceptance of the latter. Regarding the tourists, Pacheco and his brother Pablo know what to expect when they visit the Plaza Santa Ana, "el lugar de salida favorito para los guiris" (49) 'the favorite place for foreigners to go out.' Yet the predominance of German or English speakers in the popular tapas bars is noted more as a bad joke than an insult: one local waiter even pretends to not understand Spanish (49). Music in English follows Pablo and Pacheco everywhere, suggesting the omnipresence of North American and British popular culture in a historical section of Madrid given over to foreign tourism. However, despite these nuisances, the novel paints the Plaza Santa Ana in a very favorable light, exclaiming that after a recent construction project the plaza "había pasado a convertirse en un espacio coqueto y de una fotogenia que no tenía nada que envidiar a cualquier rincón de cualquier capital europea" (49) 'had gone on to become an attractive and photogenic space that could rival any corner of any European capital.' The apparent photogenic draw of the area, not to mention the saturation of bars and cafes, is enough for Pablo and Pacheco to spend their evening there among the tourist crowd, implying that this type of spatial makeover is not only profitable but can also be desirable in the eyes of local residents themselves. Especially given Spain's own peripheral relationship to the dominant countries of the European Union, local residents such as Pacheco and Pablo are willing to tolerate the loss of unique places given over to tourism and its purported economic benefits. Yet in highlighting spaces such as the Plaza Santa Ana, *Sospecha* foregrounds the power, but also the danger, of globalization's perceived benefits in rejuvenating urban space while erasing unique local identities and neighborhoods.

On the other hand, both Pacheco and Pablo's reaction to the "other" foreigners, namely immigrants from developing countries, is one of distrust and anger. This is illustrated by Pablo's reaction to the immigrants' presence, especially now that he lives outside of the city center: "En los noventa no había tantos panchitos, tanto chino, tanto hindú, tanto negro. . . . Si hasta se han especializado. Los chinos en los supermercados, los negros el top manta y los pandilleros latinos, como esos, a jodernos la marrana a los españoles" (51-52) 'In the 90s there weren't

so many Latino gangbangers, or Chinese, or Hindus, or Blacks . . . but now they have specialized roles. The Chinese in the supermarkets, the Blacks selling wares on the street and the Latino gangbangers, like those over there, making life miserable for us Spaniards.’ Here, much like the tacit acceptance of tourists, the argument against different groups of immigrants is overwhelmingly economic; their specialization in certain areas is a threat to native Spaniards’ own recent financial ascendance. Culturally, too, this specialization has impacted daily life, changing customs and routines. For example, the proliferation of Chinese-owned “all purpose” shops has put pressure on Spain’s traditional business hours. Yet Pablo’s rant expresses a commonly held view that the immigrant presence is an economic and cultural threat, as he chooses to ignore the benefits they provide to the construction boom, such as cheap labor, increased population, and more tax revenue. Instead, from a cultural standpoint, the new arrivals are viewed as competitors, their industries quickly becoming dominated by their presence. This anti-immigrant reaction is not limited to Spain, yet Pablo’s negative reaction to immigrants’ economic role signals a unique aspect of this human migration connected specifically to Spain’s financial bubble and the coming 2008 crisis. In this way, *Sospecha* questions both the economic model of the construction boom that facilitates spatial reconfigurations caused by immigration as well as the long-term consequences of immigration in Spain in the shadow of economic recession.

The most obvious iteration of space as a product in Spanish society comes to light during Pacheco’s investigation of José Carlos, the associate and sidekick of Campuzano. José Carlos’s unexpected job as a drug dealer allows Pacheco and his colleague Saluerto to follow him to a massive new shopping center just outside Arroyomolinos: a “macrocentro” (261) ‘large complex.’ The novel describes this commercial development, which actually exists, as “La república independiente de Xanadú, lo llamaban los vecinos por lo permisivo de los horarios” (261) ‘The independent republic of Xanadú, as the neighbors called it because it was open all the time.’ This self-sufficient shopping complex, entertainment center, and food court has no spatial connection to the surrounding villages. Built completely in a banal, repetitive international style, it evokes in Saluerto “algo de despilfarro perverso que le había hecho pensar en los grifos de oro de Dubai” (216) ‘something like the perverse excessiveness that made him think of gold faucets like those from Dubai.’ Just as the shopping center’s name symbolizes opulence and excess, its operating hours are extended by not closing at lunchtime and staying open for almost every holiday. This comes in contrast to the vast majority of commercial businesses in Spain and the Madrid Autonomous Community that had traditionally been limited by law to strict opening hours and days. Despite its excessive commercialization and complete spatial disconnect to surrounding communities, Xanadú has become a popular draw for locals and visitors due to its impressive offering of activities, most notably, an indoor ski slope (261).

Besides the building style and the imposition of near-constant operating hours, Xanadú also houses international brands and fashions, exposing another entry point for the globalization of Spanish culture. The “multinacionales de rigor” ‘usual multinational corporations’ include a Hipercor, Adolfo Domínguez, Timberland, and so on, all arranged in an interior space marked by “la agresiva iluminación artificial y una modernidad aséptica aderezada” (262) ‘aggressive artificial lighting and embellished, aseptic modernity.’ This plain, safe, brightly lit interior projects the blank canvas of postmodernity, showcasing the globalized brands with no regard for local customs or preferences. Yet this is exactly one of the main draws for the shopping complex: its selection of international styles and products ready for consumption. In fact, despite the novel’s criticism of this globalized space, there remains a begrudging acknowledgement of its success as a cultural and entertainment destination. The narrator notes that “la gente empezaba a cogerle el gusto a pasearse por aquellas catedrales contemporáneas, una costumbre justificada en verano por el aire acondicionado que, a falta de piscina, lo convertía en un auténtico oasis” (262) ‘people began to develop a taste for these contemporary cathedrals, a justifiable habit in the summer due to their air conditioning, which, for those without a pool, helped it become an authentic oasis.’ As the cathedral of the culture of consumerism, Xanadú offers sanctuary from the oppressively hot temperatures of a Madrid summer as well as constant access to globalized food such as popcorn and hamburgers even on the dreariest days of winter (262). The novel’s tension between criticism and justification of Xanadú underscores its power as a globalized cultural center that can offer so much on any given day and at any given time, fulfilling the consumerist desires of the Madrid periphery with access to a place that exists everywhere and nowhere all at once.

Xanadú therefore reveals globalization’s clearest manifestation in Spain’s construction and development boom: the production of an imitative, banal, sterile space of consumption that appeals not just to tourists but also to native Spaniards and the ever-increasing immigrant population. This modern shopping mall challenges even the stereotypical identities of Spain—sun, sea, sex—by incorporating the interiorized simulacra of postmodern consumer society into a cultural destination for families, adults, and even tourists. This corresponds to Soja’s exopolis by underscoring the diversity, economic investment, and increased globalization of the periphery instead of the traditional city center, suggesting a horizontal model of growth and expansion (250-51). For *Sospecha*, the relationship between globalization and the urban periphery must be questioned and investigated, especially because these concepts reflect the spaces of the hard-won spoils of Spain’s rapid development and entry into the pantheon of modern, advanced societies. The investigation reveals that Xanadú is the culmination of the construction boom that the Spanish government and society have cultivated and profited from over the last decade. At the same time, Xanadú as a model of spatial

production inherently complicates the center-periphery relationship between Madrid and the outlying communities while also threatening the local specificity of the historical suburbs.

Nevertheless, for all the modern sterility and international brands that Xanadú represents, the detectives are led here not for the ski slope or the shopping experience but instead because the shopping mall functions, for José Carlos, as an ideal location for selling and distributing drugs stolen from his family's pharmacy (263-64). Because his clients are employees of different stores within the mall, José Carlos is able to take advantage of Xanadú's massive size, allowing him to make several transactions in the same visit. The presence of drug trafficking underscores the spatial hybridity inherent in the globalized commercial spaces of the shopping mall and at the same time connects Xanadú to the forgotten, impassible spaces of the Madrid periphery.

In effect, if Xanadú is the shining cathedral of postmodern consumer society, then Las Barranquillas is the long-forgotten city dump. As a shantytown, Las Barranquillas remains in a constant state of motion between other squatter areas in the city, depending on the attention doled out by local police (299). As the novel highlights, the area operates as both a warehouse and point-of-sale for drug dealers, many of whom are gypsies. Thus, the population of Las Barranquillas represents the unseen minorities of Spanish society: junkies, addicts, dealers, and their families. Although now mostly abandoned, and with a construction boom occurring on all sides of the shantytown, the community appears as if it were a throwback to the urban expansions of Spanish cities during the 1950s and 1960s, when a lack of housing forced squatters to build their own dwellings on the edge of town.

Yet it is precisely the difference in geography that makes Las Barranquillas an important spatial reference point in Pacheco's investigation. Indeed, the community is well within the urban periphery; "incluso había un hotel de cuatro estrellas en una rotonda cercana. Pero bastaba con tirar por una callejuela lateral . . . para que de repente apareciera una larga avenida llena de socavones y transitada por auténticos despojos humanos" (308) 'there was even a four-star hotel located on a nearby roundabout. But it was enough to walk down an alley off to the side . . . to suddenly come to a long avenue full of potholes and inhabited by authentic human rejects.' The confluence of upscale hotel rooms and the mega-warehouses of Mercamadrid with the vast expanses of the shantytown underscores the rapid and continual forces of land development and construction reshaping Madrid during the 2000s. At the same time, with endless urbanization also come these pockets of forgotten segments of the population who either actively reject buying into the housing market—as *Sospecha* highlights via the gypsies in Navalcarnero with their rent-protected apartments—or lack the means or desire to do so (266). The residents of Las Barranquillas are portrayed as human waste: the discarded

remnants of development that function as a localized means of adaptation to a global system that has reconfigured the city around them.

Unsurprisingly, *Sospecha* follows the well-established pattern of the *novela negra* genre in refusing to provide a cohesive conclusion to this ongoing investigation. Although Pacheco is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, it is Duarte who underscores the impossibility of continuing: “¿No te has dado cuenta de que las historias solo se cierran en las novelas? . . . ¿Se ha enterado alguien de lo sucedido el día de los trenes en Atocha?” (406) ‘You haven’t realized that stories only have endings in novels? . . . Has anyone really found out what happened that day they bombed the trains in Atocha?’ Consequently, the true criminal’s escape parallels the lack of action or initiative in reining in corruption or avoiding the imminent financial crisis.

On the eve of Spain’s greatest economic crisis since the 1940s, *Sospecha* uncovers the root problems of overdevelopment, the tensions of a rapid increase in immigration, and the boom or bust attitude of a globalized Spain that has integrated itself, for better or worse, into the European community. However, Mañas’s lack of a resolution suggests both the absence of justice for those guilty of fomenting economic collapse as well as the impossibility of finding easy solutions to resolve the coming crisis. *Sospecha* therefore proposes a crime without a suspect: an impending crisis that lacks a single, easily understandable cause. As in other examples of Spanish crisis literature, the overarching aftereffects of 2008 themselves become the main protagonist. In this way, *Sospecha* highlights the spatial changes visible today in the Spanish urban periphery that underscore the profound cultural and societal change across the everyday lives of Spaniards, even as the economic crisis of 2008 has worked to destroy the lifestyle changes that the development boom provided. Mañas’s pessimistic, open-ended investigation of the urban periphery is one of the first perspectives that question Spain’s relationship with the 2000s economic boom and underscore the future consequences to come in a post-crisis world.

## Notes

1. In this article, all translations from Spanish to English are my own.
2. Since *Sospecha*’s publication, detective fiction centered on the crisis has risen in prominence. Valdivia places the genre prominently into his mapping of different literary examples of the crisis, citing Carmelo Anaya’s *Baria City Blues* as an example. Though Anaya’s novel predates *Sospecha*, it is centered on a fictional city. Other Spanish detective novels of note depicting the crisis include, but are not

limited to, Carme Riera's *Natura quasi morta*, Rafael Vallbona's *El tant per cent*, Andrés Pérez Domínguez's *Los dioses cansados*, and Lorenzo Silva's *La marca del meridiano*.

3. See Randolph Pope's article "Between Rock and the Rocking Chair: The Epilogue's resistance in *Historias del Kronen*" for a connection between the discontent of Generation Xers in Spain and the novel's ending. Also see Jorge Pérez's article "Suspiros de España: El inconsciente político nacional en la narrativa de José Ángel Mañas" for an examination of *Historias del Kronen* as a product of Spain's own identity transformation following the end of the Franco dictatorship and through the 1980s.

4. Purdy analyzes new media's impact on both the writing process as well as its role in creating and disseminating information. Purdy concludes that "Wikipedia champions a model of research where the goal is not efficient consumption . . . but generative production. . . . Knowledge for Wikipedia is necessarily unstable and impossible to crystallize" (365-66). Yet this instability is an advantage in that it allows for greater engagement and participation—underscoring potentially a new model of academic scholarship and exchange of information (366).

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