PRISON LIMITS: INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURE AND IMPRISONMENT

IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SPAIN

by

SARA JENNY BARNARD

B.A., The University of Bristol, 2001

M.A., Universidad de la Complutense, 2010

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Abstract

This thesis explores the presence of prisons in contemporary Spanish culture, investigating both their portrayal and the place of cultural projects in current and former prisons. I consider how the selected films, written texts, sites of former prisons, and performance art shape attitudes about punishment and its alternatives. The first part focuses on portrayals of the prison experience, as fictionalized on screen in *Azuloscurocasinegro* (Daniel Sánchez Arévalo, 2006) and *Celda 211* (Daniel Monzón, 2009) and as witnessed in writing and theatre work by prisoners, through the work of Elena Cánovas and *Teatro Yeses,* and Andrés Rabadán's *Historias desde la cárcel* (2003). The second part moves into a discussion of transformations – firstly exploring former prison sites (in Carabanchel, Segovia, and Palencia), and then considering how imprisonment is represented through performance art in the work of Abel Azcona and Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca.

Through mapping the prison and its relation to contemporary Spanish cultural production, I consider how the presence and portrayal of prisons shapes perceptions and experiences of exclusion and belonging in Spain today, engaging with the wider issue of movement, immigration, and borders. Using notions of 'borderland' and liminality to interrogate points of encounter between prisons and culture, this project looks for ways that these intersections can offer potential for movement, dialogue, and connection.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores how prisons are discussed in contemporary Spanish culture. The first part considers the portrayal of prisons in films, theatre, and writing. The second part discusses the repurposing of former prison sites and performance art. It shows how notions of belonging and exclusion relate to the prison experience, as well as looking at broader issues of immigration, movement, and borders. The project argues that the meeting points between culture and prison shape perceptions of punishment and imprisonment, creating the possibility of a 'borderland' space that offers transformative opportunities.

Preface

This dissertation is an original, unpublished, and independent work conducted by Sara Jenny Barnard.

Table of Contents

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Chapter 1:   Introduction

Prisons, the institutions themselves and the versions portrayed in cultural production,

are crucial to our understanding of how societies function or fail to function. The varied

meeting points of prisons and culture reveal political, social, and cultural priorities. In this

thesis, I approach the subject from two perspectives – the ways in which prison and

imprisonment are portrayed in contemporary Spanish culture and the place of cultural

projects in contemporary and former prisons in Spain. The first part focuses on portrayals of

the prison experience, as fictionalized on screen, and as witnessed in writing and theatre

work by prisoners. The second part moves into a discussion of transformations relating to

prisons and imprisonment – firstly exploring buildings formerly used as prisons, and then

considering how imprisonment is represented through performance. Through mapping the

prison and its relation to contemporary Spanish cultural production, I consider how the

presence and portrayal of prisons in contemporary Spanish culture shapes perceptions and

experiences of punishment, exclusion and belonging in Spain today, engaging with the wider

issue of movement, immigration, and borders.

As such this project is both a study of art and culture relating to prisons and the

penitentiary system itself, and a more general consideration of movement through place and

boundaries, and across borders. The walls and barriers evoked bring to mind borders, limits,

and frontiers.[1] Prisons are one of the most significant locations in which these concepts are

embodied and thus call attention to the physical signs of symbolic divisions which, due to

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[1] These terms are often used interchangeably yet their distinct meanings have been much theorized and
problematized – there is discussion of their differing definitions both further on in the Introduction and in Part
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their very ordinariness, often go unnoticed. Indeed, this 'unnoticing' is typical of aspects of

prison life and of prisons themselves. As such, an exploration of the discrepancy noted by

Angela Y. Davis in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) – the "simultaneous presence and absence"

of prisons in the social and cultural imagination – threads through my research.[2]

Acknowledging that prisons are taken for granted as a normal part of life, but that, at the

same time, there is a reluctance, indeed a fear, of confronting the realities they contain and

reveal, is, she suggests, an opportunity to recognize the role of ideology and its part in how

we see and interact with the world around us (15). Prisons and borders are ever present, yet

rarely considered relevant or noteworthy until either a personal connection arises or a scandal

thrusts the issue into the public consciousness. For most people, portrayals on screen and in

print, or perhaps visits to former prisons-turned-arts/cultural centres, are the closest contact to

be had, making such texts and sites fundamental to shaping an understanding of the

implications of and assumptions about imprisonment. Symbolic representations found on

screen, in literature, and in the visual and performing arts, provide an opportunity for critical

engagement with topics such as exclusion and inclusion, belonging and marginalization,

policing and criminalization, safety and (in)security, surveillance, resistance, and consent.

This thesis considers the contribution to these debates made by Spanish cultural production

connected to prisons and imprisonment, navigating hitherto under-explored avenues to

illustrate how the meeting points of prisons and cultural production can be fruitfully

understood as a borderland setting.

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[2] In her discussion of the place of prisons in the public imagination, she is primarily referring to the U.S. prison system, but while that country is singular in its reliance on mass incarceration, many of her points are applicable to any country where prisons are accepted as the norm for punishment.

1.1: Theoretical framework

Although it is an understudied area of Spanish cultural theory, elsewhere theorists have considered the relation between prisons and borders from various angles. Crucially, the work of Angela Davis and Gina Dent (2001) reconceptualizes the relationship between the prison industrial complex and globalization. They argue that the prison industrial complex "underwrites the social problems that it purports to solve" (1238), discuss the notion of prison as the "paradigmatic institution of democracy" and consider its role as a border (1236). Challenging assumptions that prisons and borders work together to create safety and order, the two have been framed as an interconnected process of criminalization, producing and policing social difference (Loyd et al, 2012; Aas & Bosworth, 2013), while studies have also demonstrated the connections between prisons and the boundaries of nation (Kaufman, 2012). Borders, often understood as barriers with the purpose of restricting and containing, can, of course, also be viewed as points of connection or bridging (Vega Durán, 2016). Attention has often turned to the concept of b/ordering, and the function of borders – where the focus is less on the border itself and more on what it does and how it operates (van Houtum, 2005; Paasi, 1998 & 2009). The border both informs understanding of what lies on either side and affects what happens on both sides.

The relationship between prison and border is productive for understanding the place of prisons in contemporary life and politics, and leads me, in my analysis of prison-related texts, to consider the relevance of the notion of borderland to the meeting points of prison and cultural production. Borderlands – "the place where state meets society" (Zartman 2) – have been the subject of study and exploration in multiple disciplines. Framed by movement,

3

they can be understood as places produced by the presence of borders, comprised of people

who are affected by their proximity to the border, which are in a constant state of 'process'

(Zartman 9) or 'performance' (Pickering, 2006). Within cultural theory, borderlands have

been articulated by theorists as sites of subversion, hybridity and even the carnivalesque, and

despite often grim, violent connotations, borderland is sometimes held up as a site of

potential and possibility, of hope and imaginings (García Canclini, 1995; Bhaba, 1994).

Guillermo Gómez Peña, whose work is preoccupied with the notion of border crossings and

meeting points between cultures, has described how:

> Border culture can help dismantle the mechanisms of fear. Border culture can
> guide us back to common ground and improve our negotiating skills. Border
> culture is a process of negotiation toward utopia, but in this case, utopia means
> peaceful coexistence and fruitful cooperation. (1995, 20)

Gloria Anzaldúa uses words like vague and undetermined to describe the nature of

borderlands, emphasizing their contradictory, ambiguous nature, and points out different

types of symbolic borderlands (psychological, sexual, spiritual, racial or class-related): "the

Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other... where

the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (1987, Preface).[3]

Borderlands can be viewed as frontiers of the nation state, but also as temporary

autonomous zones, antagonistic buffer zones, spaces of transition and integration, sites of

insecurity or locations for supporting security, places where nobody belongs or everybody

belongs.[4] Whatever the interpretation or definition, the idea, if not the reality, of movement

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[3] Further reading of Gloria Anzaldúa, while preparing for the defence of this dissertation, showed how she developed her thinking regarding liminality and the borderlands. Her articulation of the museum as borderland is particularly relevant to this project (Anzaldúa, 2015).

[4] See van Wijhe (2010) for a useful overview including these and other terms and definitions. Kurki (2014) also gives a helpful background to the study of borders and borderlands as they relate to cultural studies.

pervades the space of borderlands and brings with it a fragility, but also a potential for change and transition. As liminal spaces, places on the threshold, they forefront the marginal and the forgotten, in an evolving 'throwntogetherness' and the people in the space are inevitably also part of that being thrown together (Orley, 2012). As such, the emerging interstitial sites become venues for negotiation of cultural value and identity (Bhaba, *Location of Culture*, 2). Prisons and borderlands can also be thought of as what Pratt terms 'contact zones' – "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical power" (1991).

Using the idea that cultural production constructs a borderland space within the framework of the prison provides a rich field from which to consider movement and ways in which it is surveilled and prevented, especially in its relation to notions of belonging, exclusion, and borders. Recurrent images in many of my texts, perhaps unsurprisingly given the subject matter, are on the one hand those of barriers and division and, on the other, suggestions and examples of negotiating and crossing these divides and barriers, leading me to consider the theme of movement and its limitation.

The partial "de-bordering" of the western world effected by economic globalization was accompanied by a "re-bordering" to protect against migration (Pickering and Weber, 2006), with an emphasis on the need to restrict freedom of movement in the interests of security. Bauman (2005) suggests that the key division in contemporary times is exemplified by those who can move easily and freely (global characters) and those who are limited in their ability to move freely and are thus "trapped in the local" (Bigo, 2005, 3). Bauman emphasizes the privilege and power that accompanies the potential for free movement held

by those who are able to choose to ignore the authority of national boundaries. The figure of the prisoner epitomizes an extreme inequality and inconsistency of access to movement, people for whom "there are neither unguarded exits nor hospitably open entry gates" (5). Likewise, the structure of the prison building or complex exemplifies some of the barriers in place. Despite the, at least supposedly, temporary nature of imprisonment, prisons tend to be considered sites of immobility and static confinement, further emphasized by the continued barriers to movement encountered by former prisoners such as difficulties in obtaining passports and crossing borders. In the cultural imaginary, we envisage dark, small, barred rooms, with little or no connection to the outside world. The way prisons are portrayed thus reinforces punitive assumptions about the purpose of prisons and limits their potential. Yet in research inspired by Bauman's proposals, Bigo considers how the people Bauman locates as anchored in the local move "nevertheless", and discusses how their moving restructures and resists relations of power (2005, 3).

In the act of being imprisoned, accompanied by numerous other deprivations, prisoners are primarily deprived of movement: the ability to move freely – through a town, through a country, through the world; the ability to cross thresholds, to reach the other side, to move between and around. At the same time, movement and barriers to movement are shown to be an inherent part of prisons as they present in the cultural sphere. In particular, they give us an opportunity to reflect on the ideal of social and actual mobility versus the reality, the prohibiting or imagining of movement, the surveilling of movement, and resistance through place and movement. Understanding of landscape and place is constituted by looking, but more importantly, by moving. Moving is central to the global contemporary

reality. At a time when there is a growing preoccupation, indeed obsession, with the right to move (for both people and products), what happens when movement is limited and restricted? While the outsider figure is often portrayed as a 'drifter' and associated with aimless moving, the contemporary reality is more nuanced. Belonging can be exemplified by the ability to move on an international scale (Bauman, 2005), as much as on a local one, as illustrated by bell hooks in *Belonging: A Culture Of Place*: "Walking, I will establish my presence, as one who is claiming the earth, creating a sense of belonging, a culture of place" (2008, 2). We belong, I suggest throughout this project, at least in part, by moving, consensually, freely. The relationship between belonging and (in)visibility is tangled, and further complicated by use of surveillance. Sometimes to belong is to be able to move, unobserved but visible, for at times invisibility is reserved for those who do not belong. Perhaps, too, to belong is to be able to move, but to choose not to. Almost certainly, to belong in society is to have the privilege of being able to move with less concern about the consequences of surveillance (those who belong are often able to ignore or benefit from it its constant presence, or the consequences of being 'caught' are less severely punished), not needing to question consent, not feeling the urgency of the need to resist.

Cultural theorists have found within the subject of prisons rich ground for exploration and social critique, most famously Michel Foucault – whose *Discipline and Punish* (1977) discusses aspects of law and order to consider how humans interact within power structures and how the penitentiary system is a key insight into the workings of these power structures – and Giorgio Agamben, particularly for his work on the ban and concentration camps in *Homo Sacer*.[5] In general prisons have been used to consider and move between identity

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[5] Others, of course, such as Gramsci and Negri, have developed much of their key thought from within prison.

politics, civil or human rights, and political systems with specific reference to how bodies (and societies) are controlled and ordered.

The work of Michel de Certeau, particularly *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), provides an important theoretical framework for my discussion of incarceration and frontier-crossing where I explore theories of space and place. This connects, too, to cultural resistance, the use of cultural practices to challenge and critique unjust systems and power structures, often explored through the vocabulary of freedom, community, and escape. In *The Cultural Resistance Reader* (2002), Stephen Duncombe suggests that among other functions, cultural resistance can provide a 'free space': "freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture, you can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance" (5). Of particular relevance to the Spanish context, Julia Ramírez Blanco develops the idea of the "espacio liberado" in *Utopías artísticas de revuelta* (2014) which informs Chapter Four.

Surveillance theory grounds much of my discussion, particularly in Chapters Two and Five. This vast field burgeoned towards the end of the twentieth century, with technological developments and their implementation making critical thinking on the subject ever more necessary and prolific. While Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon designs in *Discipline and Punish* dominated the discussion for some time, this served, as various contemporary thinkers point out, to overshadow other aspects of surveillance. The panopticon, an architectural idea intended to allow "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example" (Bentham 1) relies on the invisible and

"apparent omnipresence of the inspector", a "fundamental advantage" of the design according to its creator (Bentham 45).

In fact, the ubiquitous presence of the panopticon in discussion of surveillance is somewhat ironic given that the designs were never fully put into practice. Numerous prisons, however, have, to some extent, been modelled on them, including, in Spain, *Carabanchel* (Madrid, now demolished)*, Palacio de Justicia y Cárcel de Vigo* (Vigo, now *Museo de Arte Contemporánea*), and the still functioning *Prisión Modelo* (Barcelona). It is impossible to approach the topic of prisons and surveillance without some mention of the panopticon, and its spectre looms large over the texts I study, but it would be a mistake to focus too much on this one aspect of surveillance. Various studies push at the boundaries of contemporary thinking and understanding of surveillance and its impact on and place in everyday life (Lyon, 2006; Hier & Greenberg, 2009; Monahan, 2006). I approach my case studies with these debates in mind, looking for ways that my texts contribute to the discussion and alert to possibilities of rooting the thinking specifically in Spain. Additionally I lean on Queer Theory to help my understanding of the role of performance art in queering approaches to the body, consent, rehabilitation, and transformation.

1.1.1:   Considering belonging – theoretical and cultural background

My discussion of borderlands, borders and movement develops out of the starting point of considering notions of exclusion, inclusion and belonging. The notion of belonging immediately alerts us to the idea of unbelonging and exclusion, and furthermore carries with it an inherent question of the identity of the object following the preposition 'to'. Belonging

9

to whom or what? Who belongs where? As such it is, of course, possible to view the prison as a site of exclusion and marginalization, and simultaneously a site of belonging and inclusion. When people feel belonging in a particular space (whether the cultural sphere or prison) it is often because of the inclusion or exclusion of particular people or types of people. Furthermore, belonging can incorporate multiple sites and identities, just as exclusion can, and it is productive, therefore, to reflect on exclusion and inclusion as influenced by different arenas, where exclusion from one can signify inclusion in another. (Fangen et al, 2010). How is belonging experienced in prison? Does the experience of belonging in prison come at the expense of belonging in 'society'? How is belonging experienced in public spaces and cultural institutions? Who or what poses a threat to the notion of belonging and how does this relate to law and order in Spain? How does resistance to the notion of belonging transpire in Spanish culture? How is surveillance used to determine who belongs?

In a context inherently associated with exclusion, the notion of belonging is undoubtedly complex. By the very nature of their status as prisoners, those imprisoned do not, apparently, belong. Whether because their own actions or due to errors of the legal system, they have been placed inside to keep them outside of society. Deprivation of liberty is accompanied, seemingly inevitably, by exclusion from normal daily life and circumstances. For many of those imprisoned in contemporary Spain life has been marked by marginalization: rather than it being introduced into their lives on their arrival into the penitentiary system, marginalization and exclusion are, if not their starting points, experiences with which they are already well-versed by the time they enter the prison gates: illiteracy, drug use, mental illness, and poverty are common key factors for the majority of

prisoners (Gallizo, 2013, 50-52). Rooted in the custom of banning and excluding from the *polis* in Ancient Greece, prisons of the past were often located at the edges of towns and people were jailed in the towers by or beyond the town gates. Even taking into account Foucault's argument that the prison is centrally integrated into society, not marginal, it is impossible to fully shed this image of separation. Still today, in contemporary Spain, with some exceptions, prisons tend to be located at a distance from the centre of large cities. Migrant prisoners, in particular, often find themselves isolated from family and community as a result of their detention (Loyd et al, 2012). Isolation and separation from society – physically, emotionally, culturally – seem, at first sight, to be part of the essence of the prison experience, both cause and effect.

What does it mean to belong to or be excluded from society? And what is culture's role in this relation? Thinkers and theorists involved with Cultural Studies have grappled with these questions throughout its relatively recent development as an academic field, and this is not the place to enter into an in-depth debate nor an entire overview of the questions they raise and discuss, but a brief consideration provides useful background. My understanding of the term culture is influenced by the definition given by Graham and Labanyi (1995) in their influential *Spanish Cultural Studies,* one of the first forays into combining the field of cultural studies with studies into the Spanish peninsula. They follow the ideas of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart, of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, in their aim "(to) go beyond the restrictive, non-dynamic notion of culture as a collection of set texts" to arrive at the meeting point of a series of "lived practices and artifacts, performances, symbolic systems" which together can be read as

culture (Intro). These thinkers reframed the idea of culture as being, rather than merely high art forms to be appreciated, sites of action and engagement where relations of power are negotiated and complicated. I take my lead from Diana Taylor's insistence on "the everydayness of culture", the idea that society can be read as culture, "the site in which symbols and identity are forged, negotiated and contested" (1994, 12).

The idea of people as not only consumers of but also producers of culture is explored, too, by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), a staple theoretical framework for my project. He argues that people's creative resistance exists alongside repressive structures and systems. His formulation of the idea of tactics and strategies – where the tactics used by the weak are means of resisting the strategies of the systems and organizations with power – challenges us to reconsider culture, moving away from the idea of a fixed product to be consumed or purchased and towards the concept of an interaction and a moving-away-from expectations. Undoubtedly, this formulation is significant when considering the 'culture of prisons' and the way that marginalized, disaffected groups engage with culture within and outside the penitentiary system. Just as individuals walking through a city subvert and complicate the space in ways that the producers or planners of that space did not intend (Certeau, 97-99), prisoners navigating their way through the penitentiary system individualise their experience through various tactics, one aspect of which can be found in their involvement with cultural projects. Furthermore the interweaving of various cultures becomes apparent – drug culture, prison culture, the culture of the barrio, Roma culture, religious culture, and artistic culture. Each contains a web of practices that shape the prison experience. So while the official systems in place aim to create a specific kind of prison

culture, prisoners through their daily lived practices inside create others, and the introduction of cultural projects into the prison system adds another dimension, whose results may or may not match the intentions and hopes of their organizers. Indeed, the cultural activities within prisons can perhaps best be interpreted as a series of in-between places, frontiers or bridges, where humanness is made possible. These cultural spaces within prisons establish a border-space between legitimacy and exteriority. The places on either side can perhaps, through prisoners' cultural tactics, become challenged spaces. These tactics – "the art of the weak" according to Certeau (37) – of inhabiting a place (prisoners on a stage, say, or the words of a prisoner on the shelves of a bookshop or on a website) potentially subvert and challenge established domains, invading territories and through these practices conveying the power struggles and hierarchies present in the structure of the penitentiary system.

While this broad approach to what it means to be involved with culture helps us understand the term as a web of interactions and is beneficial in acknowledging the varying and various cultures at work within prisons, it is also useful and relevant here to consider the more specific meanings implied in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. In "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction", where he introduces the term, Bourdieu is concerned with the role of the education system in maintaining the status quo, through the ways in which it reproduces and continues relationships based on power structures (1973, 71). The three aspects of cultural capital developed in his theory – embodied, objectified, and institutionalized – combine to prohibit or promote social mobility depending on their presence or absence. As such, society is considered as a hierarchical framework, where certain behaviours, gestures, clothes, vocabulary and artistic knowledge ensure the likelihood

of 'succeeding' or 'doing well'. The majority of the Spanish prison population does not 'belong' within conventional notions of Spanish society, and a lack of cultural capital is evident, particularly connected to education or a scarcity thereof, along with limited economic power, few professional qualifications, limited Spanish language skills (Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias 28). Belonging to or exclusion from society, according to this theory, is often determined at birth, and later life 'choices' are, to a large extent, dependent on and shaped by these initial factors. A low level of education, growing up in impoverished neighbourhoods, or in particular ethnic groups dramatically increase the likelihood of going to prison.[6]

Some theorists, however, question the idea that cultural habits are entirely determined by early life experiences and instead view cultural socialization as a lifelong process. Shying away from the determinism of Bourdieu's theory, they suggest that factors such as cultural institutions, amicable sociability and the ambiance of urban neighbourhoods can challenge the notion of cultural habitus, which is vital to our understanding of how prisons can and/or do currently work. Work on cultural institutions is especially relevant, explaining the way in which, as sites where collective identities are "expressed and crystallized", these can become spaces where norms and values are learned, functioning as socializing spheres which can either consolidate or deny previously learned norms and values (Fleury xxii).[7] In arguing that the work of cultural institutions has the potential to subvert cultural habitus, there seems to be

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[6] "La población penitenciaria a menudo padece marginación y exclusión social con anterioridad a su privación de libertad, al provenir en su mayoría, de ambientes sociales o familiares conflictivos" (Miura, quoted in Cánovas et al, 2001, 9).

[7] Referring predominantly to museums and art galleries, Fleury's research considers qualitative and anecdotal reports gained through cultural surveys of people who attend and are involved with cultural projects at certain institutions in France. Additionally, it is interesting to consider that as Fleury notes "information on cultural behaviors derives from three main sources: surveys on the use of time... on expenditure... and, lastly, on activities." (Fleury, 24) – three specific aspects of prison life that prisoners have little control over. As such, we note another clear exclusion of prisoners from cultural research.

an implication that, as such, cultural work in prisons could do the same. This would substantiate the mainly anecdotal reports from those leading cultural projects within prisons about the benefits to the prisoners. Changing the predominant 'culture' of prisons through artistic and educational projects could lead to changed attitudes and moments of revelation and thus, potentially, the possibility for avoiding the cycle of prison stays that constitutes the life of many Spanish prisoners. Conversely, this theory also appears to substantiate the claims that prison culture can lead to 'prisonization' – the term used to describe the situation many prisoners who have spent a disproportionate amount of their lives within the penitentiary system find themselves in, where prison is the norm, and life outside is bewildering and incomprehensible.[8] The implications of such theory for the prisons system, for the relation of culture to prisons, and for the issue of rehabilitation and reinsertion are important, suggesting that in the right conditions, cultural activity can significantly change life in prisons. This approach forms the backdrop for reimagining the meeting points of imprisonment and culture as sites of movement, with potential as creative borderlands.

1.2: Research questions and methodology

The central preoccupation of my research is how the meeting points between cultural production and prisons/imprisonment in today's Spain can help us think about the role of prisons and alternatives to incarceration. What do the intersections of cultural work and imprisonment teach us about how people are organized to prevent or encourage freedom? How do the physical spaces of these meeting points articulate a discourse on freedom and imprisonment and how do they form part of this organizing-controlling function? What

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[8] This relates to the idea of 'institutionalization' that occurs in mental institutions discussed by influential sociologist Erving Goffman in *Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (*1961).

strategies are used to do this organizing? What suggestions can we find for other ways to increase understanding of punishment, imprisonment and freedom?

To answer these questions I consider how using the metaphor of 'borderland' can help us better understand what happens at these intersections, and ask of my texts how these meeting points – the presence and portrayal of prisons in Spanish contemporary culture – shape and inform perceptions and experiences of freedom and belonging. The roles of surveillance, resistance, and consent demonstrate how the concept of imprisonment is used in Spanish cultural production to reflect contemporary concerns about community, movement, immigration, and borders. As much as what is shown, it is imperative to consider what is lacking, what is not being explored in these portrayals, what is being missed out of cultural dialogue on the subject of prisons and borders. Just as borderlands are initially defined by their borders, but become something else, prisons are defined by their walls, but can we see them as something else? Is there potential for prisons to become an impetus for mixing and removing limits, or do we need to imagine alternatives? How can cultural practices help with this re-imagining of punishment?

This thesis, then, combines close readings and analysis of contemporary cultural texts relating to prisons and imprisonment with discussion of cultural and critical theory on topics of incarceration and related themes (surveillance, resistance, cultural and social capital, spatial theory, borders and borderlands). Many of these themes enjoy a rich, sometimes almost overwhelmingly so, history of exploration in philosophy, cultural theory and social critique. Clearly this project does not thoroughly detail these entire histories, but rather represents an intention to engage with them with respect to their interplay with the subject of

Spanish imprisonment, using my case studies as contributing voices to the dialogue. Furthermore historical and sociological background provides an important perspective which helps focus attention on the specifically Spanish setting, whilst also allowing a reading which takes into account the global and international context.

1.3: Background and existing work in the field

1.3.1: The relevance of prisons in today's Spain

The prison is an understudied institution in Spanish cultural studies yet is relevant to many contemporary issues and debates. The recent history of prisons in Spain echoes political and social changes. The assertion that "toda España era una cárcel"[9] has been used to describe life during at least the first two decades of Franco's dictatorship. At that time, there was a focus on the importance of reforming delinquents, with "la recuperación del preso" the official objective of sentencing (Gómez Bravo & Lorenzo Rubio 73). The Transition brought with it not only a time of hope and excitement about the pathway to democracy, but various changes to the penitentiary system, including various pardons and amnesties, legal reforms, and the organization of a protest group by common prisoners, who campaigned for their freedom (Lorenzo Rubio, *Cárceles en llamas*, 2013). At the same time, there were discussions about how to make prisons places of education to aid reinsertion into society, following the model proposed by Victoria Kent during the Second Republic.

The Criminal Code of 1995, referred to as the "código penal de la democracia", raised the penal age to 18 and introduced alternative punishment options, such as suspended

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[9] This statement was made by one of the former prisoners quoted in the book of the same name: (Serrano, 2003).

sentences. However it also included stronger sentencing for property crimes and drug trafficking, "los delitos más habituales y más perseguidos, cometidos precisamente por pobres y marginados"(Ibañez 143). By 2005, a study based on reports and data from 1996 to 2003, concluded that the Spanish penal system made excessive use of imprisonment, that prison conditions improved considerably after reforms in the 1990s, but that overcrowding threatened those improvements, and the legal framework did not support a practice based on rehabilitation (Cid). Overcrowding was a serious problem, with, in 2008, 78,342 prisoners for 55, 421 places (Gónzalez Sánchez). In 2009 the Spanish prison population reached a record high of 76,000 people incarcerated and the country remains one of the European countries with the highest percentage of prisoners – in April 2016, for example, reports showed that the number of prisoners was thirty two percent higher than the European average (Gallizo, 2013 14).

In recent years although efforts to find alternatives to incarceration resulted in empty cells and the financial climate prevented the opening of newly built macro-prisons, the rhetoric of the 'threat of prison' appears to have increased within the media as part of the discourse on civil rights, the effects of the financial crisis, and changes in government legislation. Meanwhile, at a time that Spanish prisons are internationally recognized as leaders in mother and family facilities, issues of corruption, drugs and violence continue to muddy the picture, media headlines sensationalize the luxury of new 'five star prisons' and question government spending priorities, and mental health and addiction issues further complicate the situation, with one in four prisoners suffering from mental health problems (Gónzalez Sánchez). Furthermore, broader issues of public resources and privatization come

into play, bearing in mind that since between 2012 and 2013 eleven Spanish prisons had their external security transferred to private security, in breach of the law (Aranda Ocaña, 2013).

Issues of law and order, civil disobedience, violence, and control, came into sharp focus with the protests organized by the 15M movement, better known in the media as "*Los Indignados*", which started in 2011. A noteworthy aspect of the organizational structures of this movement was the liberating nature of the assemblies which were used to allow everybody a voice (Castells, 2012) as well as their inclusive use of public space for protest and community-building. This was met with police violence and arrests, the threat of prison ever present. After years of social unrest and protests the implementation of the *Citizen's Security Law,* commonly referred to as the *Ley Mordaza* (or Gag Law), was seen by many as an affront to human rights, making organized protest difficult and endangering free speech. Summarizing the first year in which the law had been in effect, the *Plataforma en defensa de la libertad de información* describes how freedom of expression has most suffered, detailing journalists who had been fined. Although, according to Jorge Fernández Díaz, Spain's ex-Minister of the Interior and curator of the Citizens' Security Law, the law "no recorta libertades; las garantiza más y mejor" (Rodríguez & Duva, 2015), United Nations human rights experts issued a statement criticizing the changes to the Criminal Code and drew attention to the manner in which they threaten to attack citizen's rights and liberties (PDLI). As a result of these changes, criminality incorporates ever more everyday actions, and the threat of incarceration and fines rendered prisons more visible in the media and increased its presence in the cultural and social imagination. Additionally, and of relevance to my discussion of surveillance, protestors looked to find alternative and new ways to dissent and

resist, including organizing what is believed to have been the first "hologram demonstration" opening up a dialogue about the meeting point of political, online and physical spheres.

In early 2015 a petition organized by Amnesty International called for charges against two actors from the puppetry theatre group *Títeres desde Abajo*, Alfonso Lázaro de la Fuente y Raúl García Pérez, to be dropped. It stated that the 2015 reform of the Criminal Code created ambiguity around certain articles such as the right to freedom of expression, and that it was because of this ambiguity that the actors were detained. It continued by calling on the Spanish authorities to change the Criminal Code because of its disproportional restrictions on human rights. The repercussions of the arrest and detention of the two actors were seen during the Madrid *Carnaval* celebrations in a protest held during performances to demand their release with placards proclaiming that "La sátira no es delito" (Rodríguez). This collision between theatre, prison, protest and punishment exemplifies the tensions which inspired this research project – the role of culture in questioning or resisting official values and the law, the ways in which culture and the penitentiary system clash or work together to critique or reinforce issues of incarceration and modes of punishment. Changes to the Criminal Code made in 2015 have been criticized by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations for, amongst other things, infringing on freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly, and expanding the range of offences that constitute acts of terrorism.

Discussion of prisons and imprisonment has also featured in the media in recent years related to corruption charges and trials. The problem of corruption is central to the contemporary political scene, and inspired a new phase in Spanish politics. *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* both ran on anti-corruption manifestos. *Podemos*, in particular, succeeded in

engaging people who had been unimpressed by the two main parties, the People's Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). Their interest in replacing the corrupt parliamentary system with consensus-based voting and local assemblies grew out of the *Indignados* movement. A number of high profile figures, primarily from the political and banking spheres, have been imprisoned or put on trial for cases of fraud and corruption, including Carlos Fabra, Jaume Matas, Rodrigo Rato, Luis Bárcenas, and even the King's sister, the Infanta Cristina. Their apparently preferential treatment and the way in which they have managed to control their image in the public sphere further complicate our understanding of the role of prisons in Spain today.

The legal reforms, in their treatment of refugees and the renewed emphasis on Spain's place in 'Fortress Europe', underscore the relevance of the issue of borders and movement as a crucial aspect of the presence of the prison in Spain.[10] The law insists on the presentation of identity documents at Internet cafés, and expulsion of migrants from Ceuta and Melilla to Morocco (FIDH, 2015). From the year 2000 the SIVE (Servicio Integral de Vigilancia del Estrecho) was introduced by Aznar's government, designed to better protect the border. Some of these border enforcement measures, which include policing, data collection and surveillance, have had partial success in preventing entrance along some routes, but overall they have had very limited impact on irregular migration into Spain, and have in fact diverted migrations to other routes which in turn requires further surveillance and control (Lutterbeck, 2006). The relationship between immigration and crime is complicated, with a report in 2003 showing that nearly 20% of all crimes were committed by immigrants (Calavita, 2003). With

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[10] Thank you to Dr Jon Beasley-Murray for pointing out the relevance of 'Fortress Europe' to my study of prisons which led me to consider further the role of borders and their relation to Spanish prisons.

the 1990s representing a huge change in the makeup of Spanish society, the number of

foreign residents increased from 400,000 to nearly 800,000 between 1993 and 1999, an

annual growth rate of 10%. At the same time the number of non-Spanish prisoners held in

Spanish prisons nearly doubled (Buonanno & Montolio, 2008). Studies point to root causes

such as isolation, deprivation, marginalization, racism, and criminalization in the labour

market (Calavita, 2003; Buonanno & Montolio, 2008). *Centros de Internamiento de*

Extranjeros have become sites of protest and repression in contemporary Spain, while studies

have discussed the radicalization of prisoners and its connection to terrorist attacks, such as

occurred in the case of the Madrid train bombs in 2004, highlighting the fact that competing

practices for prisoner transformation are in place in today's prisons (Hamm, 2013; Alonso,

2012).

1.3.2:   Prisons in Spanish culture

Prisons and imprisonment have long been a compelling presence in Spanish

literature: Cervantes, famously, writes in the prologue to *El Quijote* that the work "se

engendró en una cárcel, donde toda incomidad tiene su asiento y donde todo triste ruido hace

su habitación¨ while Diego de San Pedro's fifteenth century classic *Cárcel de amor* is

another early literary reference, along with the anonymous *Romance del prisionero*. Poets

have written on the subject since the Middle Ages, many while incarcerated or exiled,

reflecting on freedom, others using the idea of imprisonment symbolically.[11] The *jácara*

genre of the Spanish Golden Age told stories of villains and delinquency, while Cela's *La*

familia de Pascual Duarte stands out as a more modern study of marginality, violence, and

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[11] See the anthology *Poesía castellana de cárcel* compiled by José María Balcells, for example.

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crime. In recent times novels featuring life within prison, such as *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón and *El lápiz del carpintero* by Manuel Rivas have received attention within literary studies, along with critical and commercial success. The focus has tended to be studies of the narration of prison conditions and experiences resulting from the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship, with reference often to the growth in critical and public interest as a result of the *Ley de memoria histórica* in 2007. Research has been undertaken into the conditions of these prisons and the lives of the prisoners within them, along with investigation into the testimonies left behind, by figures such as Lidia Falcón, Tomasa Cuevas, Dolores Ibárruri, and Luis Puicercús Vázquez, and collections like the aforementioned *Toda España era una cárcel*.

The body of literature and that of filmic production are closely linked, with screen versions of prison novels – *La voz dormida, El lápiz del carpintero,* and *Celda 211* among others – proving to be of both scholarly and popular interest. While there are relatively few Spanish films with a focus on prisons, there is a small body to explore. Those films that do approach the subject of prisons often do so with a focus on the prisons of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, for example *El lápiz del carpintero* (2002) and *Trece rosas* (2007). The more contemporary setting of *El patio de mi cárcel* (2008) has a predominantly 1980s focus. *La fuga de Segovia* (Imanol Uribe, 1981) tells the story of the famous prison escape planned and executed by a group of mainly Basque political prisoners, while Luis García Berlanga's comedy *Todos a la cárcel* (1993) explores relations between former prisoners of the Franco era as they re-engage with the prison institution. The figure of the criminal as semi-nomadic petty thief is explored in the *quinqui* genre of the 1970s and 1980s, where

notoriety and deviance go hand in hand.[12] The life of infamous prisoner "El Lute", Eleuterio

Sánchez Rodgríguez, is explored in two films by Vicente Aranda (*El Lute: Camina o*

Revienta, 1987, and *El Lute 2: Mañana seré libre,* 1988). The themes of captivity and

imprisonment are explored in varying ways in the films of Pedro Almodóvar including *Tie*

Me Up, Tie Me Down (1990)*, Talk To Her* (2002)*, and The Skin I Live In* (2011)*.* The 2016

neoquinqui film *Criando Ratas,* directed by Carlos Salado, depicted *barrio* and street life,

with prison a key element.

Recently prisons have become a popular television presence, perhaps inspired by the

success of the American women's prison hit, *Orange Is The New Black*. The 2015 *Antena 3*

series *Vis a Vis* is one of the few Spanish television series to have been successfully exported

to the UK. Its thriller/drama style is in contrast to the comedy style of the American series,

and its contemporary setting and storyline provide a significant addition to the portrayal of

Spanish prisons on screen. The 2013 documentary series on *La Sexta*, *Encarcelados,*

explored the experiences of Spanish prisoners in Latin American prisons. Prisons on screen

are generally used to discuss not only realities and experiences of life in prison, but also

expectations and biases around this subject, providing insight into how portrayals actually

shape public understanding and attitudes (Wilson & O'Sullivan, 2004; Crowther, 1989;

Yousman, 2009). However until now there has been little research into the prison genre

within the Spanish film and television industry, probably reflecting the relatively small

corpus compared to that of the USA. One clear exception is the study of the *quinqui* genre,

found for example in *Fuera de la Ley: Asedios al fenómeno quinqui en la transición*

española (Florido Berrocal et al, 2015) which incorporates discussion of criminality, prison

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[12] Noteworthy directors are Eloy de la Iglesia and José Antonio de la Loma.

treatment and other relevant topics. Although not specifically about prisons, in her book *Spanish Spaces* Ann Davies explores places of crime and law in contemporary Spanish films, pointing out, pertinently to this project, that "when a film addresses mattes of law and order, it is in fact invoking the nation" (86). While certainly there is increased attention in recent years[13] there are currently no comprehensive studies of contemporary Spanish prison films.

Increasingly attention to prisons and their place in Spanish society is shown from a historical, sociological perspective. Recent studies have tended to focus on the penitentiary system during the Transition, prisons during Francoism, and historical overviews of Spanish prisons (Oliver Olmo et al, 2013; Rodríguez Teijeiro, D, 2011; Lorenzo Rubio, C., 2013). While these refer to cultural activity – particularly representation in the media and the production of magazines by prisoners – their interest is primarily historical and sociological. Another developing area of focus for research and publications comes from a gender-specific approach, investigating women in prisons, both during the dictatorship and in Spanish history (Ramos, 2012; Hernández Holgado, 2003). Elisabet Almeda has been a prolific researcher in this field with *Corregir y castigar: El ayer y hoy de las cárceles de mujeres* (2002) and *Mujeres encarceladas* (2003) providing comprehensive overviews. Until very recently there has been little published in the academic sphere about contemporary women prisoners, although Elena Cánovas and *Teatro Yeses* have appeared fairly regularly in the media.

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[13] A paper on *Celda 211* was recently published: "Surveillant Filmmaking, the carceral and the transnational: image and viewers in Celda 211" in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies (*by Eva Woods Peiro). A book chapter considers the issue through the lens of gender: "La cárcel. Cuerpos femeninos de resistencia en la prisión: aproximación al cine de Azucena Rodríguez y Belén Macías." de Ana Corbalán (in Zecchi, Barbara, ed. *Gynocine: Teoría de género, filmología y praxis cinematográfica.* Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza y University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2013) and a recent Spanish book talks about prisons in film, but is not specifically focused on the Spanish industry.

There have been relatively few efforts to study the impact of prisons on Spanish cultural production or overviews of the role arts and culture have inside prisons today. Some sociological studies have considered related aspects of prison culture, such as the presence of literary programs and libraries in prisons, but for the most part they have tended to focus on subjects such as immigration, religion, family life, drug use and violence within prisons. In *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain* (Labanyi, 2002), Parvati Nair considers the flamenco competitions held in Cordoba prison and their relevance for *gitano* prisoners, in order to discuss issues of ethnicity and social order. While it has proven difficult to find studies of the presence of prisons in cultural life specifically relating to Spanish culture, a wealth of informative and thought-provoking works exist on the subject in other countries, particularly, perhaps unsurprisingly given its penitentiary system, the United States. Sloop's *The Cultural Prison: Discourse, Prisoners, and Punishment (2006)* looks at media representation and its impact on our understanding of prisons. Michelle Brown's *The Culture of Punishment* has helped to shape my thinking on the spectating of imprisonment, and the place of the prison in the cultural imaginary. The afore-quoted *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Davis, 2003) again provides an example of an approach that combines the reality and the portrayal of prisons. My consideration of prisons as both actual and symbolic cultural presences, in a way that has not yet been fully explored in Spain, is inspired by these and other similar works.

1.3.3:   Cultural projects in Spanish prisons – some context

Cultural projects within prisons have an important part to play in creating and changing prison culture (as Chapter Three of this thesis explores further), as has long been

recognized by Spanish prison reformers. The writings of Cesare Bonesana de Beccaria,

Jeremy Bentham, and others, advocating that punishment should be used as a means to

improve society, were to be evident in the drafting of the 1822 Criminal Code. Reformers

such as Concepción Arenal (1820-1893), Victoria Kent (1898-1987), and more recently

Mercedes Gallizo (General Director of Prisons from 2004 to 2011) built on and extended

their ideas, emphasizing the importance of education and other types of activities to improve

conditions for prisoners and help prepare them for life after incarceration.[14] This kind of work

aims to put into practice the rights expressed in the Spanish Constitution about access to

culture (art. 44.1) and the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states

that prisoners should have access to culture.

Despite common assumptions, reinforced by many portrayals, about the purpose of

prisons as places of punishment and deprivation, and in direct contrast to this apparent *sine

qua non* of prison life, Article 25.2 of the Constitution specifies that the purpose of

imprisonment in Spain is to rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners into society:

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[14] When in 1774 the pioneering 1764 work by Italian Cesare Bonesana de Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments (De los delitos y las penas)*, was translated into Spanish, it had an immediate and profound influence on many Enlightenment thinkers. Although banned three years later by the *Tribunal de la Santa Inquisition*, it became a key text in the history of prison reform and objectives, and the first to argue for the importance of education of criminals to prevent crime, alongside its condemnation of the death penalty and the torture of prisoners. His work and the idea that punishment should be used as a means to improve society, influenced Jeremy Bentham, whose writings were also to have an impact on Spain's prisons, both in terms of architecture, but also from the humanist point of view and the emphasis on attempts to provide better conditions for prisoners. In fact, it is suggested by some scholars that penal thinking in Spain can be divided into 'pre-' and 'post-Beccaria' stages. Concepción Arenal, in her roles as *Visitadora de las Cárceles de las Mujeres de Coruña* in 1863 and *Inspectora de Casas de Correción de Mujeres* from 1868, witnessed prison life first- hand and wrote regularly about prison conditions and the penitentiary system. Her 1877 work *Estudios penitenciarios* was a crucial text in the study and understanding of Spanish prisons, particularly given the lack of other studies at that time. Considered one of the most important penalists of the 19th century (Alameda, 69), she campaigned to help prisoners through education, rather than further isolate and exclude them. Her suggestions to "Odia el delito y compadece al delincuente" and "abrid escuelas y se cerrarán cárceles" are well-known. Her regular participation in conferences ensured that her ideas reached a larger audience, and gained Arenal international respect as an expert on the Spanish prison system. As well as the need for education, she proposed other activities such as music and other arts, religious education and physical activity. Victoria Kent, as General Director of Prisons from 1931 to 1934, continued many of the prison reforms introduced or suggested by Concepción Arenal, and both these women were to be a big influence on Mercedes Gallizo, considered to be "la gran impulsora del cambio en la institución penitenciaria desde la transición democrática" (Ronzon, 169). She, too, focused on the importance of the ability for change, the need to hold the notion of social reintegration central to penitentiary life, and the emphasis on these concerns in the Spanish Constitution and Penal Code (Gallizo, 2012, 53).

Punishments entailing imprisonment and security measures **shall be aimed at rehabilitation and social reintegration**, and may not consist of forced labour. The person sentenced to prison shall enjoy during the imprisonment the fundamental rights contained in this Chapter, except those expressly limited by the terms of the sentence, the purpose of the punishment and the penal law. In any case, he or she shall be entitled to paid employment and to the appropriate Social Security benefits, as well as to **access to cultural opportunities** and the overall development of his or her personality. (Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias, 5, my emphasis)

Legally, then, however paradoxical it may appear, exclusion from society is not intended to be an intrinsic part of the Spanish prison experience. This is further emphasised in the preamble to the *General Penitentiary Law* of 1979:

the law tries to avoid the convict's exclusion from Society, considering him or her a person who remains an active part of it, even if subject to a particular regime, consequence of his or her earlier antisocial behaviour, aiming at preparing him or her for the release to a free life in the best possible position, within a social context. (Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias 7)

Education and cultural projects can help prisoners move towards social belonging despite their experience of exclusion from mainstream society, and can bridge the inside-outside division, improving the success of reinsertion (Hawley, Murphy & Souto Otero, 2013; Farley & Pike, 2016). They can simultaneously make the prison experience "present" for those who have little understanding of its realities (Franganillo, 2006). A further function of these kinds of projects is to render visible individuals and their stories, acknowledging their role as representative of wider social problems without ignoring the personal circumstances. Getting a sense of the person behind the prisoner can create compassion and improve understanding. Furthermore it makes the plight of prisoners harder to hide under sweeping statements about social deprivation and delinquency, while also highlighting common circumstances central to incarceration such as domestic violence, drug addiction, poverty, and immigration.

From the relatively common presence of libraries and reading or writing groups to photography projects, flamenco competitions, in-prison magazines, blogging workshops or film and theatre groups, cultural projects can provide a space for prisoners not only to escape the daily drudgery of prison life, but to make their voices heard in a system where little attention is paid to their stories and where there is scant interest in their contribution to society (Martínez in Cánovas et al, 2007, 7). Because of high levels of illiteracy and non-native Spanish speakers, libraries and their associated programs can play a key role. Studies point to their significance as a hub of the educational and cultural life of a prison, and notice improvements in their provision in recent years. Since 1999 they have been managed under the cultural department of the prison management system and increasingly are points of contact with the cultural life of Spain through activities such as book clubs and author visits, with the aim of contributing to the cultural and personal development of prisoners (Burgos Oliván et al, 2007).[15] Indeed, it has been noted that those who are able to read and write competently "enjoy a certain level of prestige" within prisons and are more likely to participate in cultural activities, be employed within the library and sometimes help or advise their peers (Pérez Pulido, 2001).[16]

Prioritizing literacy and education projects is regarded as an important part of preparing prisoners for reinsertion into society, attempting to navigate the distance out of the

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[15] "En los centros penitenciarios de Cataluña, la biblioteca se concibe como un centro cultural, un punto de encuentro para internos y profesionales. En este nuevo paradigma de biblioteca penitenciaria, cabe entender la tradicional función informativa, educativa o de entretenimiento, como parte de un concepto más amplio, en el que la biblioteca no sería sólo un agente cultural, sino un elemento integrador y dinamizador para el desarrollo personal y sociocultural de los internos" (Burgos Oliván et al, 2007, 103)

[16] The privileging of literature as an important cultural tool is pointed out in Pilar Mártinez's introduction to Elena Cánovas' *La balada de la cárcel de Circe* (discussed in Chapter Three) hence the benefit of publishing the play's text in book form: "El núcleo medular de la vida cultural es desde hace siglos el libro, fuente y soporte de los conocimientos y la comunicación que hacen libres a los seres humanos. Por eso es preciso recoger en forma de libro el trabajo cultural y las voces de los sectores de la sociedad desde los que nos llegan las demandas de atención; porque así perduran, porque así se convierten en una llamada permanente a la conciencia de la sociedad" (Pilar Mártinez, 5).

marginalization and disadvantaged circumstances from which many enter the penitentiary system. Encouraging an ability to read, write, and competence with computers and the Internet is a starting point, according to these kinds of projects, to achieving a more successful reintegration into society after leaving prison, and improving social and cultural life within prison. Prison newspapers and magazines have been produced over the years with differing levels of success. These and blogging projects, a way to enable the sharing of prisoners voices in a wider, public, context, can significantly increase "la posibilidad de tener presencia —y, sobre todo, voz y diálogo— más allá de los límites obligados de la prisión (Franganillo, 2006, 104). The dialogue and voices these kinds of projects introduce into the cultural sphere offer an alternative perspective on prison life, and explore issues of exclusion and belonging from a different viewpoint.

1.4: Hypothesis

I propose that through analysing the points of encounter between prison and cultural production, we can better understand attitudes to punishment and imprisonment, particularly as they relate to belonging in today's Spain, and simultaneously discover alternatives to existing models. Cultural portrayals of prisons point to a tendency to uncritically showcase incarceration as a depoliticized inevitability for certain excluded groups, and conversely as an impossibility or at least distinct unlikelihood for others with cultural and social capital. This sense of the inescapability of the presence of prisons for some combined with the absence of any direct contact with penal institutions for others in turn apparently foregrounds the privileged position of those who 'belong' to cultural and political life over those who

don't, enhancing suspicion and fear about the figure of the 'criminal'. Those who are on the 'inside' become outsiders and vice versa.

While some texts fail to reckon with a changing legal situation in which criminality encompasses everyday behaviours and strengthen assumptions about penal punitivism, others question the purpose and presence of prison. Simultaneously, dissent often finds itself pushed 'outside', beyond the acceptable inside space of culture, to forge new understandings of belonging and community. I look for examples too, then, of meeting points that lead to a creative and exploratory dialogue, thereby blurring the lines between the culturally-constructed figures of 'the criminal' and 'the law-abider', and which provide a potential space for understanding, compassion, and offer resistance and alternatives to criminalizing power structures and laws. I suggest that the meeting points of prisons and culture examined in this project engage with debates about the necessity of exclusion and stronger borders to protect the Spanish nation state and its place in Europe. Using the metaphorical framework of borderland to understand the role of these meeting points (between prison and culture) proves helpful in considering how artists and creators can question and provoke dialogue about possible futures for prisons and borders.

1.5: Selection of time-frame and corpus

Selecting works to represent Spanish culture is a sensitive and complex challenge. My understanding of 'culture', as noted above, means that although the case studies in this dissertation will comprise of close readings and analysis of artistic and literary texts, reference will also be made, where relevant, to other practices and fields such as protests, and

traditional/social media. I incorporate relevant texts by artists who are interested in exploring prisons and imprisonment rather than specifically discussing regional geography. As Graham and Labanyi point out "Spanishness is a shifting concept encompassing plurality and contradictions (and) identities are strategic constructions – neither inherent nor imposed, but negotiated" (1995). The presence of prisons in Spain and Spanish culture – the intersection of notions of exclusion, belonging, barriers, surveillance, resistance, and consent – is one of the locations for these kind of negotiations. It simultaneously points to a Europe-wide, indeed universal, preoccupation with issues of crime and punishment, human rights and borders, shifting the conversation from a discussion of regional identities to one of international relations.

As well as a shared thematic content in my chosen texts, they represent an era: all date from the second half of the 1980s to the present – years which have witnessed changes in democratically elected governments, 'la crisis económica' develop from a mere possibility to an increasingly experienced reality, huge technological advances and developments, and in which changes in the Criminal Code and the penitentiary system have affected the nation's relationship to human rights. This era begins with Spain joining the European Community in 1985 and the Schengen Agreement of that same year. Just three years later, on November 1st 1988, the first dead bodies of 'illegal immigrants' were found on the coast of Tarifa. Until then the rhetoric surrounding those crossing the Strait of Gibraltar insisted on the role of narcotrafficking, but subsequent deaths and news stories began to discuss the issue of immigrants. As the Socialist Party's *Ley de Extranjería* was introduced at the end of the

1980s, it became clear that the issue of border crossings was a substantial one for Spain and directly relevant to the country's prison population.

1.6: Outline of structure and chapters

This thesis is divided into two parts. In Part One (Chapters Two and Three) I pay attention to portrayals of prison and prison life to explore the ways people and place interact to prevent or encourage freedom and/or imprisonment. This follows on from the discussion about exclusion and belonging in this introduction to consider how the voices of fictional and real prisoners make their way into the cultural domain, and specifically how these voices explore issues surrounding marginalization, movement, and cultural meeting points. Examining the ways voices move freely (or otherwise) between cultural, sociological and political ambits is informed by discussion of interstitial and liminal spaces. The articulation of life at the threshold, as discussed in this first part, provides an opportunity to consider the notion of borderlands and their relevance to prisons and vice versa.

My analysis begins, in Chapter Two, with a discussion of fictional screen portrayals found in two recent Spanish films, Daniel Monzón's *Celda 211 (*2009) and the 2006 film *AzulOscuroCasiNegro* directed by Daniel Sánchez Arévalo. I refer to surveillance theory to consider its role and relevance in prison and beyond, and ways in which screen portrayals increase or limit the viewer's understanding of belonging, criminality, and freedom. I initiate the discussion of place and movement, thinking about the types of spaces portrayed – both how they are used to organize people and how they are or can be navigated.

I continue in Chapter Three with a study of the words of prisoners themselves: case studies on the work of Elena Cánovas and the theatre project she founded and directs, *Teatro Yeses,* alongside a reading of Andrés Radabán's *Historias desde la cárcel,* published in 2003. My discussion of *Teatro Yeses* considers both the project itself, examining its impact on the cultural sphere, and analysis of some of the texts that the group has produced to further understand their focus and voice. Both case studies introduce discussion of the role and impact of prison cultural projects, which leads into consideration of notions of visibility, the 'outsider' figure as evoked through the reworking of the picaresque myth and evocations of other literary traditions, and the theme of movement and meeting points as connected to prisoners.

Having introduced the importance of liminal space and borderland in Part 1, in Part 2 (Chapters Four and Five) I discuss literal and figurative transformations. Movement and thresholds present themselves as opportunities for resistance and I ask: what can a prison/borderland look like? While in the discussion of portrayals in Part One I consider some of the systems used to organize, imprison, and limit freedom, here I consider what else could be useful in understanding freedom. In Chapter Four I move to prison buildings and the significance of the real walls and barriers of the physical locations of prisons, which leads to debate about marginalization, the neutralizing of contested spaces, and cultural centres as spaces of potential movement and flow. Discussing the stories of three former prisons – Carabanchel, Palencia and Segovia – Chapter Four takes inspiration from recent interdisciplinary works that discuss prison buildings combining social, theoretical, political, historical, cultural and architectural perspectives (Wilson, 2008; Draper, 2012; Ortiz García,

2013) to delve into contemporary use of former prison buildings with a uniquely Spanish focus. It combines spatial theory and theories about public space, with an emphasis on contemporary studies by Manuel Castells and Julia Ramírez Blanco, to explore the notion of cultural resistance as it can relate to prisons, borders, and borderlands.

A further challenge that prisons and borderland sites must negotiate is the notion of consent, and the texts I discuss highlight how cultural projects about imprisonment question cultural values through grappling with this concept. In Chapter Five I discuss performance art by Abel Azcona and Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca that shows consent and movement meeting in thought-provoking ways, exploring its relation to prisons and imprisonment, as well as its place outside of prisons. Prisons are clearly a place where consent is a debatable presence, provoking questions about who is guaranteed 'human rights' – the imbalance of power between imprisoner and imprisoned creates a fertile ground for violations of rights. Yet consent is a questionable and misunderstood, yet crucial, term even outside prison walls, and my discussion of the notion, as represented in the cultural texts I study, shows its ambiguous nature. This chapter explores the relation between understanding consent and creating free, liberated spaces through queered kinship and connection.

Finally, the conclusions tie together the connections between the previously explored ideas relating prisons to borderlands, the assumption of the role and existence of prisons and borders and, above all, the challenge for the cultural sector to consider and reframe their place in contemporary Spain.

1.7: Summary

While their very existence and the manner of their existence point to failings in society, prisons also carry with them stories of success, achievements, and resilience – human connections that grow out of prison life, works of art and literature, and award-winning theatre companies. How cultural texts engage with the ideas and realities of prison life is indicative of common fears, misconceptions and judgments about prisoners and criminals, and fuels debates about law enforcement, punishment, policing, repression, human rights, social disorder, addiction and violence. Prisons, and their portrayal can certainly be a site within which to observe society's problems,[17] yet these problems are intertwined with stories of friendship, love, art, self-expression, and resistance, rendering the prison, and the portrayal of prisons, a site where all aspects of human behaviour are revealed.

Through the lens of prisons/imprisonment in Spanish culture, issues of borders and movement comes to the fore, and our understanding of barriers, surveillance, consent (or lack thereof) and resistance is enhanced. In considering the impact for Spanish society, notions of social exclusion, inclusion, belonging and marginalization are encountered. This project suggests that studying prisons as they appear in contemporary Spanish culture reveals much about each of these concepts and their relationship to incarceration and symbolic imprisonment, issues found at the heart of contemporary anxieties in Spanish society connected to borders and movement of people. While there are existing studies considering immigration and borders as they relate to cultural production, and while prisons are often

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[17] The prison is "un observatorio privilegiado de las males de la sociedad en la que vivimos" according to Mercedes Gallizo (2013, 12). This idea of prison as an observatory can be traced back to the picaresque tradition, in works such as *Segunda parte de la vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana.*

discussed in relation to Spain's history, there is currently a lack of debate to consider how these themes are connected in contemporary Spain. With this joint focus, I show how prisons continue to be spaces of conflict and how cultural projects incorporate and negotiate these conflicts. The project is, above all, however, a challenge to rethink prisons, their place in Spanish culture, and their role in understanding movement within, into, and beyond Spain.

Chapter 2:   Windows, cells, and surveillance: the criminal worlds of *Celda 211* and *Azuloscurocasinegro*

2.1:   Introduction

The way prison metaphors are used in all kinds of films and screen portrayals, not just in those that belong to the prison genre, exposes their "ideological underpinnings", providing a commentary on both prisons and the "free world" even if sometimes the mixture of positive and negative messages ensures the film's message is not entirely straightforward (Alber, 229). It has been suggested, too, that many people's primary awareness and understanding of prisons is mediated through cultural productions, which thereby function as an important, but often misleading source of information (Yousman). My readings of *Azuloscurocasinegro* (Daniel Sánchez Arévalo, 2006) and *Celda 211* (Daniel Monzón, 2009) consider what these portrayals of prisons tell us about attitudes towards punishment, strategies and systems used to organize, control and limit freedom, and how that feeds into understanding about belonging in today's Spain.

I ask to what extent these portrayals represent contemporary concerns and understanding of the penitentiary and legal systems in Spain, following on from suggestions that prison films often represent the social concerns of the time and share ideas about understanding of prisons (Wilson & O'Sullivan 55). My analysis considers surveillance and its place not only in Spanish prisons, but more widely in daily life, and its role in the control of people's movement. The underlying message of *Azuloscurocasinegro* is that criminality and legality are subjective, illusory concepts. Certain types of criminal behaviour are

suggested to be more acceptable than others, depending on who commits them and why. The function of space is shown to influence, underline, and encourage particular kinds of behaviour, while opportunities for resistance, although rare, are also suggested to be place-specific. In *Celda 211* there is a blurring of boundaries between the concepts of 'criminal' and 'non-criminal', that represents a widely held concern about corruption and distrust of authority, and shows some of the problems inherent in the prison system. The film dialogues with Foucault's suggestion that the prison breeds delinquency (1977), appearing to support this notion, while also providing its own addition to theoretical debates about panopticism and surveillance.

2.2: Spanish prisons on screen – some background

There are few existing studies of the prison movie genre in Spanish film, despite a not insignificant body of films either set in or referencing the prison world. Likewise there is no clear tradition showing what constitutes a Spanish prison film, with a tendency to rely on the definitions of the genre used in other countries' film studies disciplines. *Celda 211* fits fairly neatly into the 'prison movie' category, including and subverting stock characters and plot elements: a large cast that includes "convict buddies, a paternalistic warden, a cruel guard, a craven snitch, a bloodthirsty convict, and the young hero...(and) usually a riot or escape" (Rafter, 119-120). As one of few recent Spanish films to confront the theme of contemporary prison life and conditions, as opposed to portraying a historical setting, it incorporates various elements found in the prison film productions of other countries. *Azuloscurocasinegro* fits less easily into the category – while two of the main characters are

in prison and many key moments take place within its setting, it is not easily defined as a prison film, rather a drama which includes the subject of prisons.

Those Spanish films that approach the subject of prisons often do so with a focus on the prisons of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, for example *El lápiz del carpintero* (2002) and *Trece rosas* (2007). This contemporary cluster of prison films was made possible because of the changing democratic nature of Spain and the post-dictatorship transition to democracy (French, 2011) which in part explains the lack of an established prison drama tradition in Spanish cinema. Even the more contemporary setting of *El patio de mi cárcel* (2008) has a predominantly 1980s focus. While this is often to examine what was happening at that time and critique repression and treatment of the prisoners, it is, of course, worth noting that "the prison of the past can be used to put pressure on the standards of the prisons of the present and the future" (Wilson & O'Sullivan 185). In *Trece rosas*, for example, one study focuses attention specifically on the prison (la Cárcel de Ventas) and comments that "el objetivo inicial de esta prisión era el de rehabilitar al preso, sin embargo durante la posguerra se convirtió en un lugar de castigo y humillación", showing how the portrayal of the prison as a space of "la crueldad y la miseria" was central to the film. (Iglesias Botrán 200). Although prisons in Spain have improved considerably since the end of the Franco regime, similar concerns about current prison conditions in Spain still exist – overcrowding has been an ongoing problem, for example, and there are concerns about violent treatment of prisoners and the over-use of solitary confinement (González Sánchez, 2012).

While in films of the 1950s, portrayal of crime and criminality increased with the growing number of films made in the genres of *cine negro* and *policíaco*, there was little

opportunity for in-depth debate about moral questions because of limitations on what kinds

of characters and behaviours could be portrayed (Huerta Floriano 133). By the 1970s, while

still not fully exploring the idea of prisons and the penitentiary system, there was much more

freedom and variety in the type of cinematic approaches to themes of criminality found in the

growing number of thrillers, film noir or detective films, reflecting the enthusiasm of the time

and the desire to address previously taboo topics such as police and government corruption

(Jordan & Morgan-Tamosunas 89). While not specifically about prisons, many of these films

treated related issues such as juvenile delinquency, including drugs and marginal lifestyles,

and plots based on real life crime incidents aiming to debate or complain about social and

political problems (Huerta Floriano 149). Another key inspiration for crime films and

thrillers was the huge growth in crime fiction in the 1970s and 1980s, whose popularity was

rooted in and reflective of a mistrust of institutions and authority (Jordan & Morgan-

Tamosunas 91).

A brief look at some of the threads running through Spanish prison and crime films

provides helpful context to understand how my selected texts fit into the on-screen dialogue

surrounding these themes, and *Celda 211,* in particular, leans on earlier Spanish prison and

crime films in its exploration and portrayal of similar content. The way in which the

institution can transform and corrupt those who enter it, including the staff, is evident in

García Berlanga's 1963 film *El verdugo* (Perales 138 and Mira).[18] Questioning authority,

[18] The protagonist of *El verdugo* shows an individual with relatively simple hopes for his life who ends up having to give up
his dreams and his ethics to take on a job, that of executioner, which he is initially disgusted by, thus 'surrendering' to the
world he lives in (Perales, 138). While stylistically appearing to have nothing in common with *Celda 211,* this focus on an
individual being corrupted and changed by, and eventually integrated into the society around him is an early example of
how society in general, and the prison and judicial system in particular, asserts a transformative power over individuals,
however strong their initial ethics and values. The executioner will no doubt settle into his job, against his ethics,
becoming even nonchalant about the acts of violence he has to commit. just as it is likely that Juan would have done had
he entered the prison as a prison guard in normal circumstances. Similar to the executioner, who takes on the job for the
sake of his wife, child, and in order to have a better standard of living, Juan, in *Celda 211,* is shown to be working as a

critiquing corruption, torture, and prison conditions continued to cause problems for

filmmakers into the 1970s, so there are few explicit attempts to do so, but they do exist

(Jordan & Morgan-Tamosunas 89). Pilar Miró's *El crimen de Cuenca* (1979) exposes

institutional violence, corruption, and repression, whilst dialoguing with Foucault about his

perception of "the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle" (1977, 7).[19] It is

furthermore an example of the extreme violence typically found in Spanish films according

to Kinder. *La fuga de Segovia* (Imanol Uribe, 1981) discusses ETA prisoners, while

Berlanga's *Todos a la cárcel* (1993) discusses the cynicism and disenchantment with the

workings of authority, the hypocrisy of those in power, and the way in which corruption

dominated Spanish society (Perales 324).[20] Finally, another tendency is to portray squalid

living conditions and dirty cells, as seen in Martínez Lázaro's *Trece rosas* (2007).

2.3: *Azuloscurocasinegro*

While not following many of these specific prison genre tendencies,

Azuloscurocasinegro, winner of three Goya awards,[21] contributes to the viewer's

understanding of punishment and criminality. The purpose and effectiveness of surveillance,

the role and use of the image, and the ethics of looking are problematized. It delves into

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funcionario in prisons mainly because he needed any job to be able to care for his pregnant wife and maintain their life together. His initial pre-prison non-violent, gentle nature is made clear in the flash-back scenes with his wife, Elena.

[19] Despite a lifting of censorship after Franco's death and during the transition to democracy, the film was still prohibited because of its clear critique of Spanish power structures and their role in preventing modernization and social justice (Pavlović et al, 146).

[20] Much like *Celda 211* would later do, it highlights the thin if not non-existent line between the imprisoned and those imprisoning them, and shows how status, power, and connections are as important within the prison as on the outside, the corruption of prison guards and the ways in which prisoners, depending on their status, can pull strings and influence proceedings. The end result, a riot which ends with the prison director fleeing the prison, and some of the invited guests being held hostage by the prisoners, again blurs the boundary between prisoners and non-prisoners. Something of a similar confusion will reign in the unplanned presence of Juan in amongst the prisoners as they begin their uprising in *Celda 211.*

[21] It won Best New Actor, Best Supporting Actor, and Best New Director. It was also nominated for: Best Actress, Best Original Screenplay and Best Original Song in the 2007 Goyas.

symbolic representations and embodiments of imprisonment – through portrayal of illness, disability, and sexuality – and discusses who benefits from the contemporary state of democracy in Spain. Developing this first feature length film out of a previous short film (*Física II)* which explored intergenerational relationships and unfulfilled desires, the director affirmed that his main interest was the relationships between the characters rather than making 'cine social' (Cendros, 2006). Jorge (Quim Gutiérrez) is frustrated by his life caring for his father (Hector Colomé), who suffered a stroke seven years earlier and is now, to all intents and purposes, imprisoned in his apartment by the resulting disabilities, relying on his son or friends to move him around. Having taken over his father's job as porter of the building, a role which involves both symbolic imprisonment and a certain amount of surveillance as well as taking place in various liminal spaces, Jorge studies part time, aiming to find a job more appropriate to his qualifications in Business Studies, and more appropriate to his desire for social ascent. Meanwhile his brother, Antonio (Antonio de la Torre) is in prison, where he meets another prisoner, Paula (Marta Etura), in a theatre class. They start a relationship, inspired, on Paula's part at least, by the hope that she can get pregnant and be moved to the maternity module where she will get a better, safer experience, a reference to the exemplary family and mother modules in the Spanish penitentiary system at the time the film was made.[22] When they discover Antonio is unable to father a child they ask Jorge to step in to get Paula pregnant. The viewer is shown a web of sometimes somewhat contrived

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[22] Spanish legislation recognizes the right of imprisoned mothers to keep their children with them until they are three years old. The subject of mothers and children in prison was a focus of media attention at the time this film was made: Mercedes Gallizo had proposed and started plans for the 'Unidades Externas de Madres' and in 2006 there were nine internal 'módulos de maternidad' (although by 2014 there were only three). Life in these módulos is adapted to the schedules and needs of the children. Of the Unidades Externas which she introduced Gallizo said "This is a pioneering experience in Europe, whose aim is to create a suitable environment for the emotional and educational development of children during the time they have to stay in the centre, while promoting their mothers social reintegration" (Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias, 2014).

interactions, then, in a variety of settings. Indeed, the use of place in the film is central to its messages about restrictions on movement and limits to freedom, contributing to my discussion of borderlands, liminal spaces, and meeting points through its varying articulations.

2.3.1:   Barriers and boundaries

The viewer's attention is immediately drawn to barriers to movement and the subject of freedom in the opening scenes when Jorge runs away from the *portero,* his father Andrés, after setting fire to a rubbish bin outside the apartment block. Jorge jumps over the perimeter of the apartment compound, and they talk 'through' the wall, each reaching out as if to touch the other, their hands, but for the barrier, almost meeting, when the camera shows them from above. When Jorge says he wants to leave and the father suffers a stroke, Jorge, who has 'escaped' by jumping over the wall, easily crosses back to the other side to assist his father, the first step in many years of care that will follow. What appears to represent a substantial obstacle is shown to be quickly and immediately passable, in both directions, turning this first scene into a representation perhaps more connected to the notion of thresholds than true barriers, despite the initial impression. Seeing Jorge jump back over into the shadowy, streetlamp-lit interior, and as the pan-in shows bare bricks, drains, and barred windows, reminiscent of prison-style settings, the viewer is presumably meant to understand that this represents a return to some kind of imprisonment, although what that entails is yet to be discovered.

The next scene moves into a shot of the apartment building, seven years later, taken through trees, moving closer in a short series of stills. The prison metaphor is extended with this sense of passing from the wild, natural, free outdoors into an enclosed, man-made, characterless construction; a banging noise, reminiscent of cell doors shutting, accompanies the zooming in. It is quickly revealed to be the sound of a wheelie bin being dragged up the interior back staircase as Jorge goes about his duties as the *portero*, the viewer's first sight of the interior rather than entering through the front door. Liminal spaces make their presence known then immediately, and the marginal spaces in between the official or public spaces are a constant and significant presence throughout the film. In this first scene, Jorge again crosses with ease between the private and public world of the apartment – collecting the rubbish, travelling down in the elevator, and taking the wheelie bin out to the street to be collected. With their suggestion that thresholds are all around and moving-through can occur effortlessly, both these initial 'border crossings' (traversing the wall first, then moving from back staircase to semi-public entrance hall to totally public street) contrast with Jorge's ongoing sense in the film that he is stuck and has no options other than the life he is living. The existence of a liminal space necessitates the presence of some kind of boundary, and each boundary necessitates the possibility of its confrontation (Thomassen 21). Cultural projects can often problematize this notion, turning the border from a line to be crossed into a site of resistance and transformation, with the potential for rehearsing and testing capacity or learning how to navigate constraints (Cocker 56). The main theme of the film, Jorge's dissatisfaction and trappedness, is thus, to some extent, positioned as a self-imposed lack of liberty, as after the initial attempt, his interest in trying to navigate this boundary is minimal.

Representative of his generation, Jorge embodies the problems of many Spanish young

people who became casualties of the high unemployment rates in Spain during the end of the

twentieth- and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, their university qualifications

meaningless in the restricted job market, unless accompanied by the right contacts and

sufficient social capital. The film illustrates this issue, but at the same time, suggests a certain

amount of personal responsibility. Augé's characterization of the modern world as a place of

empty spaces or non-places shows how the liminal can come to represent the norm (1995).

For Jorge, liminality, living in the in-between spaces, becomes a disappointing but familiar

way of moving through the world.

A dutiful, possibly admirable, sense of responsibility to his father stops Jorge from

moving into the life he wants, even deserves. His ongoing search for a suitable job is

hindered by his availability and time-restrictions, due to being his father's primary carer. His

ongoing desire to buy a particular suit in a local shop window (the colour of which gives the

film its title and draws attentions to the importance of appearances) is thwarted by his lack of

money. In contrast, the portrayal of the two prisoner characters, Antonio and Paula, suggests,

at least to some extent, potential for energy, curiosity, and movement. The first word directed

to Paula is as a prison guard opens her cell door saying 'Sal', and she is then shown walking

down the corridors of the prison with other prisoners, before arriving in a theatre hall where a

group of excited and rowdy male prisoners and a drama teacher are waiting. The prisoners all

sit down in the seats to listen to the workshop leader seated on the stage, with the suggestion

that the spectacle of punishment, so often associated with prison films, is to some extent

subverted here. It seems likely that the relevance of these characters, whatever it turns out to

be, is dependent on something other than their violence, criminality and the fact of their incarceration. Indeed this feeling is strengthened when during the next minutes the scene switches between the dark, tense atmosphere of the kitchen where Jorge angrily tries to make sure his father eats lunch properly, and the smiling, flirtatious faces of Antonio and Paula in the theatre, chatting to each other as the theatre workshop starts. The viewer is left in no doubt that a comparison is being made between the spaces and lifestyles inside and outside the prison, and currently at least, life in the apartment block looks grimmer.

This blurring of lines between the imprisoned and the supposedly free continues to be an important aspect of the film. When the presence of violent behaviour in the prison *is* made apparent a few scenes later, the focus is on Paula as the victim of other prisoners and the spectacle is of her suffering literally at their hands, with a close up of her face, the mouth covered by one of their hands, another hand pulling at her hair, and another holding her down by the shoulder. Seen in the aftermath of the attack, she is lying alone on the bathroom floor, while apart from a brief viewing of a face, the attackers are not made fully visible. Their absence reiterates Paula's victim status, separate from the 'normal prisoners' she does not really belong here in prison unlike these violent others, and encourages the viewer to relate to her story and not at all to those of the attack's perpetrators. The scene immediately following that of Paula lying on the floor shows Andrés being strapped down to the bed by Jorge, to watch a film, the method he uses to keep his father safe while he leaves the house. Again, there is an intention to show parallel suffering and limitations between characters inside and outside the prison walls. The film he puts on (*Lo verde empieza en los Pirineos,* Vicente Escrivá, 1973) feeds into the idea of desire and missing out that represent Jorge's existence.

Short clips are included, playfully addressing the idea of fulfilling desires and experiencing freedom, and the colourful gaudy dancers and laughing, exuberant characters provide a stark contrast with the lives of Jorge and Andrés.[23]

2.3.2:   Navigating and belonging in public space

References to journeys further draw our attention to the theme of movement, contrasting with the trappedness that Jorge experiences: Paula ended up in prison after unknowingly carrying drugs into Spain from Venezuela; Natalia, Jorge's long-term friend and on-off girlfriend, sends a postcard from Leverkusen with the message "una ventana más para tu cuarto"; the first time we see Jorge travelling anywhere (we don't see the journeys, for example, to job interviews) he is on the bus to the prison at Soto del Real to visit his brother (the Centro Penitenciario Madrid V). The message of the film about travel and journeys is mixed: Natalia is seen as successful for having worked abroad (elsewhere in Europe), while Paula's experience of working abroad (in Latin America) ended badly. While Jorge never really leaves the neighbourhood apart from visits to job interviews and the prison, and is filled with envy or shame for not doing so, the director talks in an interview about the importance of the barrio to Spanish life and stories: "la vida transcurre en los barrios, ya sean de ciudades grandes o pequeñas. Ahí es donde están las historias. Los transatlánticos se los dejamos a los americanos" (El País, 2006). There is both something of an insistence on the importance of staying in and belonging to one place, as well as a recognition that this can hinder freedom and enjoyment of life.

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[23] The friends of a man whose sexuality is psychologically trapped in some episodes from his youth plan a trip to cross the border to France to escape the censorship and taboos of Spain and enter a land of sexual freedom and adventure.

The director's interest in emphasizing the importance of the *barrio* as representative of a supposedly authentic 'Spanish life' is not reflected in the content of the film. This is not a glimpse into life in the *barrio*, as much as glimpse into the life of somebody who doesn't actually want to be in the *barrio* in the first place. It is reduced to a few unrecognisable and anonymous if familiar locations – a shop window, a shop interior, a doorway to a building, an anonymous street corner, the inside of a bank. The main evidence of this being set in Spain, alongside the landscape seen from the bus journey, is the iconic panoramic vistas of the city skyline from the roof of the apartment building, showing the Torrespaña (the 'Pirulí' tower built in 1982), framed by a Mahou table-umbrella and colourful graffiti. Mahou's sponsorship of the film reflects an interest, I imagine, in depicting a certain type of Spanishness, which along with the director's insistence on the importance of the *barrio* (and the very limited view offered) reinforces a particular image of what it means to belong in Spain. And here, that belonging, is, perhaps above all, based on a sense of familial duty and lack of opportunities to go elsewhere, but equally on a desire to maintain an uncomplicated view of how a Spanish person looks or behaves. Other, more "precarious" ways of being, particularly any associated with the type of underground cultural scenes which have been pointed out as being spaces of intersections between *barrio*, immigrant and Roma culture and which house the "emergence of subaltern identities" (Labrador Méndez 275), are neither explored nor referred to.

Public space is almost entirely lacking, and with it, opportunity for mixing and changing. Public space can be defined through certain common identifying features: a physical place, accessible (as in non-exclusive and demographically open), multi-functional

including functions valued for their own sakes, with its own identities created by the combination of its physical characteristics and its use (Cunningham 86-87). The closest we get to the sense of a public place in this film is probably the rooftop, which replaces the town square or neighbourhood bar as the hub of Jorge's social life, but which also reflects the fear of otherness that can ruin public places by "turn(ing) places to play into places to hide, thus perpetuating closed-mind attitudes and exacerbating them with a fortress mentality" (Cunningham 96). A safe distance, or so Jorge and his friend Israel believe, from 'otherness' or difference, the rooftop both limits and offers freedom (it is contained and offers limited opportunities for adventure or the unknown, whilst also unthreatening, familiar, and providing privacy for intimacy). The presence of the goldfish in its bowl emphasizes this joint-meaning: restricted, it swims around oblivious to what it is missing out on.

In fact despite clearly 'belonging' to this world in every conceivable way – having been born and grown up there, having continued to live there with his father, having taken on the job of doorman, knowing better than many who lives where and details of their lives – Jorge is unable to feel fully integrated. There is no depiction of community beyond his friend Israel, and the two of them spend most of their free time on the rooftop, looking out, over the neighbourhood rather than being in it amongst the streets, walking their way through the world. From the rooftop, sitting on their named seats that remind the viewer of the director's seat on a film set, they witness and occasionally reveal (through their conversations), but never really integrate with others. We are reminded of Certeau's "Walking in the City" and his articulation of the panoptic vision, the voyeurism that lifts the viewer out of the city's grasp, disentangled from the "murky intertwining daily behaviours" and allows them to read

the city from above (92). Jorge and Israel, at these times, are not the "ordinary practitioners" who walk through the city, and as such they avoid or miss out on the many intermingling, subversive opportunities offered, according to Certeau, by the streets.

Bauman discusses in *Liquid Life* how the contemporary threat is within the city's boundaries, not separated by walls and moats – "inside the city battlefields are marked and front lines are drawn" – resulting in a primary purpose of much architecture (he specifies gated communities) being to block out strangers (73). Strangers are unpredictable and risky, he points out, and yet avoiding them to increase security results in boredom (76). He suggests, furthermore, that this tendency to retreat from public spaces into "islands of sameness" eventually becomes a hindrance – if there is no opportunity to practice dialogue and negotiation, learning to live with difference becomes impossible (78). Up on their tower, watching the world beneath but not fully participating, Jorge and Israel are preparing themselves for a life of sameness.

To be part of a city, however, is to always be affected by the city, its people and their behaviours, to never fully retreat from others and their effects (Turmel 151) and such is the case with Israel and his father. The voyeuristic nature of their looking is reinforced in the sub-plot, another representation of symbolic boundaries and limits: from the rooftop Israel watches the window of a masseur who offers sexual acts as part of his service. Seeing his own father there one day, Israel takes photographs and uses them to anonymously blackmail him, but this is also the start of recognizing his own homosexual leanings. Surveillance, here, then is multi-faceted and takes numerous forms, incorporating the hard to distinguish different levels of looking, voyeurism, and spying (Rush, 2005), and it is not always clear

where the boundaries lie, although it seems clear that questions of consent come into it. The moral response to witnessing others lives is not really explored. There is no debate about the ethics of what Israel does, and no corresponding debate about the ethics of surveillance. It is, for the most part, accepted as a normal, unquestioned aspect of public life, represented here both through technological apparatuses (the security cameras in the garage where Jorge is offered a job as a security man) and in more human ways (through for example the figure of the *portero* who knows much about the lives of his residents).

2.3.3: Rebel or conform?

In this film, despite its interest in border-crossings and liminal spaces – places of potential, as will be discussed in other chapters, offering opportunity for resistance – instances of resistance and rebellion are limited for the most part, to personal advancement. While rules are bent (using the theatre class as a chance to have sex, for example, or the whole idea of Paula trying to get pregnant just so she can move modules), broken (literally in the case of Jorge deciding to smash the window to finally obtain the suit he wants), and ignored (Antonio finding ways to collect his father's money), collective or community resistance is non-existent. Community is shown to be decided by long-term friendships and immediate family ties, rather than any sense of possibilities of other groupings or collectives. When resistance does take place it is in personal individualistic acts, with the purpose of social advancement or fulfilling a personal desire. While there are discussions about how to fulfil them (Natalia for example blames Jorge for never taking risks and seeing himself as a victim, while Israel is annoyed that Jorge wouldn't let him buy the suit as a present), these personal

desires are never problematized, either to discuss their validity as desires or to discuss the inequality exposed by the inability to fulfil them.

As we have seen, despite being based in the *barrio*, community is not really a part of this film, indeed it can be seen as a portrayal of the insistence on the nuclear family at the expense of other types of community. This reiterates the notion of who or what belongs within a respectable, acceptable notion of Spanish society. As the behaviour of Israel's parents demonstrates, it is considered better to hide secrets (uncomfortable or discomforting aspects of one's personality) and therefore fit in rather than to publicly explore and celebrate aspects of personality, such as sexual orientation. Even poverty and disability seem to be cause for truth evasion: "Hay que aprender a mentir" instructs Antonio, when Jorge admits he discussed his responsibilities to his father in a job interview. Rather than critically evaluate this message from one of its central characters, the film furthers its impact as a suggestion on how to get by and be successful. If one assumes the final image is supposed to place Jorge – now suited, in a new job, having left the care of his father to his brother and now proud in his role as 'padre de familia', still circling job opportunities in the newspaper – in a position of hopeful social ascent, it celebrates or at least reinforces the need for rule-breaking and deception to gain success.[24] While social critique of contemporary Spain is in evidence (the very real difficulties for many young people to find work, the trap of needing experience to get a job, the lack of well-paid jobs available, the difficulties of caring for disabled family members) it seems that the solution offered is to learn to fit in, to wear the

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[24] It is entirely possible that the final image can be seen in a negative light: despite the suit, his proud role as father, his new job, his prospects are still limited and equally hopeless, which would insert a more critical intent on the part of the director. It is a little unclear, but the general atmosphere (music, bright colours, etc.) tend to make me think it is meant to show that his life is now going to improve.

right clothes and look the part, to stop feeling a sense of duty or responsibility to your parents and, in short, to fake it until you make it.

Belonging is thus represented as fitting in and being similar rather than celebrating and sharing difference and otherness. Accepting social inequality and trying to ascend a hierarchical scale of belonging, represented by financial security and opportunity, is celebrated over attempts to change those inequalities. It is not impossible to imagine some alternative circumstances and messages. There is a moment, for example, when Jorge breaks the shop window to get the suit, where it seems that the suit is fake – stuck to the mannequin it almost looks like it is made of paper or doesn't have a back. What if Paula had seen the value of the theatre group in and of itself, not just as a means to find a man? What if Jorge took the risk of heading out, into the community, to look for help with his father's care or to find people in similar positions? The possibilities and potentials are there, but not explored by the director who prefers instead to reinforce the idea that success can only be measured with established goalposts, even if it takes deception and rule-breaking to reach them. The prison depictions suggest that 'real' criminals are nasty and violent 'others', while deserving people like Paula and Jorge end up breaking laws because they are tricked or desperate. The affectionate and humourous depiction of Antonio, something akin to a modern day picaro, points at the notion of a particular kind of 'acceptable' criminal, who through his 'Spanishness', likeability and comic style is seen as cheeky, but acceptable, and portrayed sympathetically. The violence and bullying connected with the other prisoners suggests, it seems, that 'real criminals', real prisoners, are other.

The majority of the film depicts the characters in 2005. Until 2000, according to Makin's (2013) identification of the main stages of the Spanish criminal justice system since the transition to democracy, there was a focus on securing and expanding civil liberties, while the criminal justice system was increasingly used to instil trust in the government and its ability to protect the people. Penal populism came into play in the 2000 elections when the rhetoric of "prison works" and "tough on crime", modelled on election campaigns in the United Kingdom and the USA, became a big part of the campaigns of the PP and PSOE. Both rationalized increasing punitive policy, in an unstable economic situation, as a means to safeguard the Spanish people from security threats, such as terrorism and street crime. A key aspect of this growing penal populism was discussion of the relations between immigration and crime and economic insecurity (Calavita, 2003).

Azuloscurocasinegro engages with this issue in a couple of ways. Firstly, it attempts to humanize the notion of criminality, particularly through the characters of Jorge and Paula, thereby disputing the government's discourse on the need for protection from criminals. If these are what is meant by criminal, it suggests, the promise of ensuring the public's safety is a diversion from other more important social problems, like unemployment or unequal opportunities for young people. Secondly, on the one hand, it suggests the government and media focus on the links between immigration and crime are missing the point of who commits crime in contemporary Spain, while on the other, its brief glimpse into prison life still suggests that 'real' criminals (although we don't really know who they are) are to be feared.

While benefiting from the use of the prison presence metaphor, and perpetuating certain assumptions about incarceration (much as occurs with its portrayal of disability), alternatives to current styles of incarceration are not usefully explored. At the time the film was made Mercedes Gallizo, General Secretary of Penal Institutions, was pushing reforms emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration, with an interest in cultural projects, education, and improved facilities for women, in general, and mothers in particular. In this film the theatre workshop is shown, more than anything, as a well-meaning but insignificant attempt to improve and educate the prisoners (a situation easily exploited by Paula and Antonio). The portrayal of the mother and child unit, on the other hand, does suggest a more positive, hopeful prison experience, although its idealization of motherhood detracts somewhat from its usefulness in considering how prisons could be improved for everybody. As such, there appears to be a mixed response as to the effectiveness of prison reforms. The film's main contribution to a discourse on penal punitivism is to suggest that time spent in prison does little to change attitudes or moral values, and that it is purely chance who ends up in prison, a discussion developed in relation to the next film.

2.4: *Celda 211*

Celda 211 tells the story of a prison riot, after beginning with a graphic depiction of a prisoner committing suicide. A new guard Juan (Alberto Amman), who has just passed his *oposiciones,* arrives at his new place of work a day early to get used to the set up before starting work. After being injured by a piece of falling debris from the roof and being taken to a cell to await medical attention, Juan is abandoned by the prison guards when the riot begins. The cell's walls are covered with graffiti left by people who have died or committed

suicide – something which Juan will later attempt, failing only when the belt he tries to hang

himself with breaks. Realizing that his only safe option is to pretend to be a newly arrived

prisoner, Juan navigates his relationship with the other prisoners who are rioting under the

direction of Malamadre. Throughout the rest of the film, we move between Juan and the

prisoners, watching how Juan gains their trust and tries to fit in, initially to save himself,

earning himself the nickname 'Calzones', his pregnant partner Elena, both in the present time

and flashbacks as Juan pictures his life with her, and the prison guards, who, along with

government negotiators and the *geos*[25] are working from within and around the prison

building to work out how to bring the uprising to an end. During protests by the prisoners'

relatives, Juan's pregnant wife Elena is accidentally killed after being struck by a guard, and

when Juan discovers this, it triggers his full integration into the prisoner's world.

A review lists some of the typical prison movie tendencies included:

> the fair but weak governor, the contrasted good and bad warders, the charismatic
> convict leader.... the old lag, the slimy informer, the destructive riot, and the
> familiar message that the trouble is due to overcrowding, penny-pinching and the
> lack of either creative work or serious attempts at rehabilitation. (French)

The film, based on the novel of the same name by journalist Francisco Pérez Gandul, has

been described as "a film with Spanish identity that is driven by character, and that doesn't

simply pay homage to American and British prison dramas of years past" (Slarek), won eight

prizes at the Goya awards[26] and was shortlisted to represent Spain in the Academy Awards.[27]

Alongside its clear Spanish feel and ambiance, perhaps another reason for its popularity and

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[25] Members of the *Grupo especial de operaciones,* special operation forces of the national police force who deal with terrorism.
[26] Awards were for Best film (beating Aménabar's internationally better known *Agora)*, best director, best actor, best supporting actress, best adapted screenplay, best new actor, best editing and best sound.
[27] In the end Icíar Bollaín's *También la lluvia* was the Spanish film put forward.

success is due to its perceived originality and uniqueness, standing out, as it does, from other recent prison films because of its contemporary setting. It builds on the existing corpus of Spanish prison-related films, combining their traits with many of the trademark features, both stylistic and thematic, of American prison films, resulting in a film at once national and transnational (Woods Peiró). What it introduces into the genre of Spanish prison films is, however, most useful to my analysis, as I consider how it updates and innovates the existing preoccupations of prison films in keeping with contemporary concerns. The theme of surveillance is crucial to these considerations, as is the detailed presentation of the figure of the 'criminal' compared to the 'non-criminal'.

2.4.1: Impact and reception

Reviews of the film tend to focus on the storyline and characters, and the excessive or extreme violence. There is no clear intention to bring the viewer to empathize with the prisoners, rather to judge and critique the people who control them, the prison guards and the government. As a result of its insistence on critiquing Spanish authorities, the realities of prisoners and their lives are overlooked, as stereotypes and caricatures mainly inhabit the cells. "There is something melodramatic and soapy about Cell 211 occasionally, but it really is exciting" according to the review in The Guardian (Bradshaw). Noting how it is "pitched with gusto at a commercial market", compared to Jacques Audiard's French film of the same year *A Prophet,* there is no obvious sense in the review that it has any purpose other than to entertain and thrill. The Telegraph spots something of a social critique in the "heavy-handed riot police brutality" (Robey), but again predominantly focuses on the less socially engaged aspects of the film. The review in The Scotsman also mentions the political angle,

specifically referring to the presence of the ETA prisoners and the effect they have (2011). In fact, most English reviews do make some mention of the political or social critique aspect, but often as something of an aside or an afterthought. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Spanish reviews in newspapers and on websites make no mention of this aspect of the film, to the extent that a letter was written to the editor of *El País* reflecting on the need for penal reform and suggesting that by being read as "un espectáculo de aventura y suspense 'a la americana'" an opportunity was missed to investigate its relevance to contemporary prison conditions in Spain.[28]

Certainly, as already discussed, there is some social criticism found within the film, and a clear effort to criticize aspects of the penitentiary system, seen in the treatment of prisoners, the conditions of the building, the torture scenes, and the references to suicides. The theme of corruption is ever present, at all levels of authority, in the deals made between prison guards and prisoners, the bending of rules, the dishonesty. Little faith is placed in the government negotiators, and there is an emphasis on the fact that the ETA prisoners get not only preferential treatment, but are seen to have a higher value than other prisoners. The treatment of ETA prisoners, 500 of whom were in Spanish prisons in 2012, draws attention to an aspect of penal punitivism much apparent in the media around the time the film was released. At the end of 2010, preparations began for restorative encounters between ETA terrorists and victims. These processes were accompanied by an alarmist reaction in the media, which has been pointed to as detrimental to the projects (Varona, 2013). Invoking the

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[28] "El merecido éxito de la excelente *Celda 211,* refrendado ahora con ocho *goyas,* debería ser la ocasión para un serio debate sobre la situación de nuestras cárceles. Pero no observo señales de que vaya a ser así. La película es vista como un espectáculo de aventura y suspense 'a la americana', pero nadie parece querer averiguar en qué medida la situación de torturas, corrupción y abandono que en ella se denuncia tiene algo que ver con la realidad." (Cartas al director, El País)

threat of ETA reprisals through the representation of these ETA prisoners' treatment contributes to this discourse. The director pointed out that rather than being aimed at criticizing specific governments or political parties, his interest was exploring the place of power, how the penitentiary system fails people, and how some lives are seen to have more value than others depending on their political significance.[29]

Celda 211 was filmed in an abandoned prison, using former and current prisoners as extras, and as such the aim can be seen, to some extent, to be to create a realistic portrayal of life inside a Spanish prison. Certainly, as noted, it has been praised for bringing a particular Spanish character to the prison movie genre. The setting in Zamora's prison, the use of colloquial Spanish language, the generic market where Juan's wife Elena is buying tomatoes, the typical bar where she is eating tortilla and bread with coffee, the news presenter from Tele5, all point towards an attempt to make it instantly recognizable as Spanish, without being instantly recognizable as anywhere specific in Spain. There are no iconic landmarks to mark the city, and even someone who has visited Zamora might well not distinguish the town from the few scenes shown. If this represents any and every Spanish town, the prison could be seen to represent any and every Spanish prison. The presence of ETA prisoners does not point to any specific location, as they, along with women, are one of the few groups who are are regularly transported to prisons outside their home towns and moved around, following a deliberate policy of dispersing of ETA prisoners (Varona, 2013). The very first scene, where we witness "El Morao", the previous occupant of Cell 211 commit suicide (because the

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[29] "El componente político o sociopolítico no está en primer término. Lo interesante para mí es el retrato de seres humanos que está en la historia... La película apunta, más que a los gobiernos de uno u otro signo, al poder, cómo para éste muchas veces unas vidas tienen más valor que otras según el beneficio político que puedan obtener y me gustó mostrar esa carga política, pero no en primer plano" (Quote from an interview with the director, Alcazár, 2009).

suffering caused by cancer was becoming too much to bear and he was ignored by the prison workers,) as well as telling a specific person's story can be seen as representative of any one of many suicides within Spanish prisons. The 2008 report on prisons from the *Defensor del Pueblo* discussed a worrying increase in the number of suicides within prison, between the years of 2005 and 2007, which it connected to a huge increase in the number of inmates in Spain and the associated problems of worsening living conditions and overcrowding (Defensor del Pueblo, 2008).

As previously mentioned, there are few comprehensive studies of Spanish prison films, but various books and articles survey and review the theme of prisons in British and American cinema, with a particular emphasis, often, on their relevance to penal reform and public perception of prisons and criminals. Some critics argue that films about prisons can create empathy, by humanizing the prisoner, telling stories about their crime and life, and reminding the viewer of the life before and beyond the crime they have committed, and that furthermore this very humanizing functions as a part of penal reform by widening understanding of first hand experiences and moving past the demonization of prisoners (Wilson & O'Sullivan 182-185). Others have argued that prison films can actually serve to reinforce the status quo, and merely provide a voyeuristic insight into prisoners' lives which does nothing to effect reform or meaningful change in public perception. Bennett suggests that is more useful to "start from the premise that prison films do not perform a single specific function, but that different films perform different functions" (355). In the case of *Celda 211,* it would perhaps be more accurate to assert that the *same* film performs different functions. While apparently criticizing the negotiation methods used to try to bring the riot to

an end, it creates sympathy for the negotiators. While questioning the morality of the prison guards, it stereotypes the ideas of honour amongst the prisoners. While praised for humanizing and individualizing the prisoners, it simultaneously demonizes and stereotypes them, a contrast which can be seen in the promotional posters, interesting for offering a framework to the viewer within which to view the film, and for showing what is deemed marketable in terms of prison portrayals on screen.

The Spanish poster shows a closeup of the face of Malamadre, the leader of the prisoners, and the English language poster shows the back of the same character's head with the film title apparently tattooed onto it – a more stereotypical image to depict a criminal would be hard to find. Similarly the trailers for the film focus exclusively on the human drama aspect of the film, but, again, with some significant differences. The American voice-over, for the English language trailer, uses language and image to pit Juan against the prisoners, with scenes showing them at their most frightening and savage:

> "When he arrived for his first day as a prison guard, he was assigned to the most dangerous block. But when all hell broke loose, he got left behind. Now, to survive behind bars, he will go under cover, he will sabotage their plans, and he will fight them from within..."

Strangely, it uses the initial image of a car driving towards the prison, suggesting a great distance (metaphorical and actual) between Juan and the prisoner/prisoners. This directly contradicts the approach in the film of first introducing Juan to the audience when he is already inside the prison. The Spanish trailer gives a more balanced view, better representative of the film in its entirety. Rather than holding Juan up as some kind of hero, as the English language one attempts to do, it shows something more of the complexity and

various agents involved in the situation, as well as introducing the idea of the blurred boundaries between criminals and non-criminals: "Él perdió su libertad. Ellos no tienen nada que perder. Su única salida: ser uno de ellos."

2.4.2:   Creating criminals

The implication of a lack of division between criminals, members of the public and prison guards begins right at the start of the film, appearing to support Foucault's notion of the carceral logic that incorporates all of society (1977).The viewer first sees Juan through prison bars, as he watches a new prisoner arriving, being stripped and searched as is the process for all new inmates. Immediately the roles are reversed because of this camera angle, and for a moment it appears to be Juan who is being imprisoned. The scene continues with the new guard accompanied by the two members of staff who are showing him around enclosed in an elevator, again surrounded by bars. The metaphor of the staff themselves also being imprisoned is echoed in their conversation:

> Guard 1: "En cuatro días te acostumbras"

> Guard 2: "Más te vale, porque estos cabrones se van saliendo, pero tú, te vas a pasar aquí toda la puta vida"

The same scene continues to emphasize this notion, as seconds later the guards are inside, with Juan looking out of a barred window watching the prisoners playing football in the sunshine out in the patio, then the three staff walk down an eerily empty corridor, appearing to be the only inhabitants of this prison. These initial camera shots and comments foretell the rest of the plot and point at the 'imprisoned' nature of both the prisoners and the guards:

firstly, that Juan will end up having to pretend to be a prisoner and living amongst the inmates, and secondly, that the rest of his (shortened) life will be spent in this prison.

The private world of the home seems, at first, to be suggested as a space that to some extent escapes this carceral logic. Juan's wife, Elena, something of a generic figure whom we see primarily through Juan's idealized flashbacks, represents this private life. In these flashbacks the lighting and camera style differ from the prison scenes, introducing a softer, warmer light and creating a dreamlike tone. The speedy, chaotic movements of the camera views in the prison are replaced by a gentle, slower pace. The private, personal life portrayed is offered as an idyllic, homely contrast to the situation in which Juan currently finds himself. Even in the market or to a lesser extent the cafe-bar, Elena appears to represent innocence, purity, and happiness, in stark contrast to the array of violent or cowardly characters who inhabit the rest of the film. This apparent contrast between private and public life (the private life at home compared to the lack of privacy everywhere else) is emphasized by the presence of cameras, telephones, and security cameras in almost all the other scenes and their absence in the home scenes. The film holds up an ideal normative situation (husband and pregnant wife, comfortable, pleasant home) which has little or no connection to the harsher realities of the prison lifestyle and spaces or indeed the lives the other prisoners have known outside prison, according to the little personal information they share. By juxtapositioning these scenes with the interior of the prison, it creates the effect of alienating Juan and the viewer from this idealized, bright, almost imaginary world, which suddenly appears false and unreal, while simultaneously showing how easy it is to cross between these two apparently unconnected worlds.

Both Juan, and later Elena when she makes her way to the prison to try to find out what is happening to Juan and gets caught up in the protests outside the prison gates, cross from their safe, non-criminal world into the world of the prison, and for both of them crossing back becomes impossible. Elena, along with other members of the public, is shown clamouring at the gates, again, the camera angle suggesting for a moment that it is they who are behind bars. Once there, she is fully integrated, against her will, into the violence and chaos which is consistently linked with the prisoner and prisoners in this film, and is beaten by the riot police and prison guards, in a clear criticism of the prison guards, their indiscriminatory violence, and the similarities between them and the inmates. The potential free space, apparently unaffected by the prison system, is thus drawn into the world of criminality and penality, along with the Foucauldian message that nobody is free of the prison's hold.

Juan's rapid transition from civilian to prison guard to criminal is exemplified in two key incidents: firstly, when he is made to cut the ear off one of the hostages (after arguing not to kill him) and secondly, when Utrilla, the guard who beat Elena who ends up dying from her injuries, comes into the prison and is attacked and killed by Juan. After cutting off the hostage's ear Juan washes his hands. While cleaning the blood from his hands, he looks into a broken mirror on the wall above the sink, which reflects back his distorted face, an image of his fractured sense of self, showing the destruction and transition of his character. His clothes reflect the changes: he begins in respectable, tidy, professional attire. As the film progresses his look becomes more unkempt, more in keeping with the prisoners and less like the guards, until the final contrast, when he drags the dead body of Utrilla into the main

room, where Malamadre is liaising with a government negotiator. Covered in blood, wearing a once-white vest, and with a wild, angry expression, it is clear that Juan has fully entered the world of the criminals and no longer belongs in the prison guards' camp. He demands rights for the prisoners with more passion than they have been doing themselves, and refers to himself and the prisoners as 'nosotros'. While at the start "his life depends on his ability to suggest that he's capable of terminal violence; by the end of the film... he's no longer acting." (Walsh). His apparent discomfort with violence at the start is erased by his experience inside. By the end the world is 'turned upside down' for Juan: his wife is dead, his view of Malamadre being shot is shown from upside down, the way Juan sees it from his position on the floor after being fatally injured. Even after the apparent restoration of law and order, we are reminded of his transformation to criminal by the graffiti on the wall of the cell: the message "aquí murió Calzones" paralleling the previous messages from prisoners on the walls.

It is Juan's place at the centre of the prisoners which so quickly brutalizes him. Yet the guards too are shown to be violent and aggressive, suggesting that as an institution, the prison has this effect on all who walk through its doors, echoing the words of Foucault that "although it is true that prison punishes delinquency, delinquency is for the most part produced in and by an incarceration which, ultimately, prison perpetuates in its turn" (301). The film's parallels with Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment suggestion that prisoners internalize their role, and that behaviour is situational rather than caused by the prisoners' or guards personalities. Had Juan actually had time to work as a guard, the process would have been less dramatic, less immediately obvious, but there is a clear correlation drawn between

the prison and violence, a violence which is embodied as much by the staff as the prisoners. On the one hand we witness the animal-like behaviour of the prisoners (fighting, arguing, greedily grabbing supplies, causing injury), while on the other, we see violence, albeit of a generally more controlled nature, from the prison wardens (inflicting violence on prisoners, attacking the public at the protests). The thin divide between the figures of warden, prisoner, and member of the public is emphasized particularly in the scene of the protests outside the prison, where the public form an angry mob, shouting and pushing each other, the wardens attack them, and the supposedly rioting prisoners watch the scenes, in a fairly orderly manner, on the television news.

While we witness Juan's transformation from 'normal' law-abiding civilian to criminal, some critics have suggested that we simultaneously glimpse the human underneath the 'monster' that is Malamadre. The first sighting is from above looking down on him in the patio, then the back of his head as he paces round the patio. Similar to the image in the promotional poster above, it anonymizes the character, portraying him as simply as 'criminal' rather than 'individual'. Supposing him to be violent and dangerous, we are shown, to some extent, as the plot progresses, the more gentle side of this character, gaining insight into his character and empathizing with his situation. That said, he is never somebody we are to trust: he is shown too many times smiling whilst threatening to kill Juan or making a thinly veiled threat. Even when comforting Juan after the death of Elena, he is alert and preparing to give the order to attack Utrilla. This is not a portrayal intended to gain our sympathy, though perhaps there is some intention to impress the viewer with his evilness and toughness.

Likewise, the first real sighting of the other prisoners, apart from them playing football, is the initial riot scenes in which they throw things around, cause chaos and damage, smash up the washroom, set fire to things, and generally are shown as a mass of madness. The rest of the film continues in a similar vein, with mainly violent, chaotic crowd scenes to show the group en masse. The frenetic pace of the often hand held camera, in constant motion, and the non-stop noise and action within the prison, add to this chaotic, confusing atmosphere, which invades even the quiet, peaceful staff room through the views on the televisions, filmed by the security cameras.

Apart from the slight exception of Malamadre, and as we have seen this too is minimal, there is no attempt to create individual characters out of the prisoners. There is Apache, who is in charge of the Colombians, and a couple of others who have names (Releches and Tachuela) and therefore stand out slightly, but in general there is no attempt to show anything of the prisoners characters other than their function in the plot or their part of the rioting mass. Armando, the guard, says to Juan at the start "Lo importante es que no te confíes. Tú no te olvides nunca de donde estás" and this seems to be the message for the viewer too – the prisoners are not to be trusted and not to be understood, their criminal nature is not to be forgotten. This is emphasized even in Malamadre's order to the negotiator of 'gambas, farlopa, y speed'. These are not 'normal' people, living 'normal' lives, the message appears to be, but criminals, living criminal lives. So while for much of the film we witness the blurring of distinctions between those on both sides of the law (the prisoners and the imprisoned) showing how the penal system incorporates all in its pervasive hold, there is a

simultaneous suggestion that detracts from it, about the extremes of criminal lives and the dangerous otherness of criminals.

2.4.3:   Examining criminals

The theme of observation and surveillance is ever present throughout the film, and again, functions to blur the distinctions between the imprisoned, the imprisoners, and the 'free' members of the public, showing how it impacts society at all levels and in all spaces. As imprisoned criminals, they are constantly examined and scrutinized, and even in a riot situation this surveillance continues as well as it can. *Celda 211* appears to contradict Foucault's discussion of the role of examining and cataloguing prisoners:

> The prison... is also the place of observation of punished individuals. This takes two forms: surveillance, of course, but also knowledge of each inmate, of his behaviour, his deeper states of mind, his gradual improvement. (249)

Surveillance is constant, but there is no obvious deeper knowledge of the prisoners' states of mind. The prisoners, as we see at the start of the film, are examined on their arrival, and there are, presumably, files kept on each of them in the offices, but it is often through anecdotal 'evidence' that the guards categorize and identify them. Cameras (be they security or television) and screens (televisions, phones, and the monitors showing the security camera footage) are a prominent part of the film. From the beginning, there is a switching between views from camera angles taken from within the riot itself and the black and white views on the security cameras monitors, as we watch the rioting prisoners attacking each other. All this surveillance, however, appears to have little effect on the outcome of events.

For the prison guards, the prisoners exist as much on screen as in reality, and when the riot begins, their existence is purely on screen, except for the brief visits from the negotiators. Although the prison is not set up in the same style as Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a design developed in the late eighteenth century and made famous in the twentieth by Foucault's analysis, wherein the building's structure allows for all the prisoners to be observed by a single guard, without ever knowing whether they are being observed, the same impression is created, using the gallery and overhead camera shots, looking down, to create a sense that everything is being observed and surveilled. Yet Bentham's notion of a "visible and unverifiable" power (Foucault 201) and the suggestion that purely by knowing they are being observed in this way, prisoners will behave themselves, is subverted in *Celda 211*. Regarding the limitations of panopticism, it has been suggested that the more one knows about how and when one is being surveyed, the more possible it is to resist this surveillance by pretending to conform, denying the causal link between knowing how you should behave and behaving as such (Simon 8). Yet in this extreme situation of a prison riot there is no need to feign conformity. Indeed the prisoners use the security cameras for their own benefit, destroying many of them, but keeping one central camera to use to communicate with the guards. This they cover and uncover at will, depending on what they want the guards to see, for example to prove that the ETA hostages are still alive. The notion that the guards can control the prisoners through observation and surveillance is therefore challenged, with the prisoners having control over what they choose to show.

Furthermore, the presence of multiple cameras and observers adds a further twist. Suddenly it is not just the prison guards observing the prisoners, but the media observing the

prison guards (during the public protests outside), the public observing the prison through the media, and as a result, the prisoners observing the public and the guards via the television. Images on a mobile phone show Juan the moment is wife is beaten. The radio, newspapers, and television news programmes all join in to create a network of surveillance, observation and information, which radiates out well beyond the prison and the control of the prison guards, reflecting the contemporary situation much better than the image of the panopticon can:

> Arguably, the massive development of public surveillance by closed circuit television, and the introduction of passports and identity cards using biometric identification techniques, potentially extends the 'disciplinary gaze' beyond the deviant and juvenile to all citizens. (King 95)

In this respect, too, then, *Celda 211* narrows the gap between the criminal and the non-criminal world to show that surveillance is not just a one-way process from prison guard to prisoner, but rather, that everybody is at some point being observed and their actions recorded.

2.5: Blurring lines?

Through the presentation of the characters and the concept of 'criminality', as well as through the commentary on surveillance, one of the main effects of this film is to blur the divide between the figure of the criminal and the non-criminal. Juan's transition from innocent, hard-working, gentle husband, to wild, angry, dangerous inmate shows the transformative effect the prison and prisoners has on him. He is identified throughout with the previous inhabitant of cell 211, El Morao, who is seen committing suicide at the beginning. A number of moments draw the two characters, who never meet, together: firstly

the repetition of the bloody hands (El Morao's held over a sink filled with water as he bleeds to death, Juan's washed over a sink after cutting off the Basque prisoner's ear), secondly, the actual and attempted suicides, thirdly, the way their situations are both made unbearable by the guards (El Morao's by not being treated for his headaches, which turned out to be cancer, Juan, initially by being abandoned in the prison by guards, and then later by not being saved by them and seeing his wife killed by one of them) and finally, the graffiti on the walls of cell 211: "Aquí murió el Morao por su mala cabeza", and "Aquí murió Calzones". While it is the suffering of cancer that leads Morao to kill himself, for both characters it is as if the prison itself, as an institution, is the disease that kills them. Within it, violence and corruption grow and spread. The prison itself, along with its inmates and guards, is what appears to transform Juan into a criminal. This rapid change of character, caused by a situation of heightened violence, can be understood to be a natural consequence of the institution of prison itself.

Yet although the suggestion is that prison can corrupt and create criminality, the view appears to be bleak for the possibility of reform or rehabilitation. While *Celda 211* includes a political and social commentary, highlighting the problems of violence and corruption within the penitentiary system, ultimately its focus on the transforming of the character of Juan works to further alienate and distance the viewer from the other prisoners, by making them constantly 'other', exaggerated examples of abnormal people, which echo the kinds of sensationalist media coverage often given to criminals. Despite suggesting a thin line between 'normal' and 'criminal', this is primarily shown as a boundary which is only crossable one-way, providing no opportunity for the 'criminal' to return to 'normalcy' or mingle and mix in a way that challenges these rigid definitions. If this boundary can be

considered a borderland in any way, it is because of the violent, restrictive elements that can also represent borderland, where the threat of violence and the insistence on surveillance is keenly felt.

Bearing in mind that prisons represent not only the state's power to punish, but also its failure to include and integrate all of its citizen into its system of norms and expectations (Crewe, 123), this film suggests the failures of the Spanish penitentiary system towards its prisoners. Its ability to rehabilitate and ensure reinsertion is questioned. The portrayal of prisoners en masse with little individuality echoes the way they are regarded, both inside and outside prison. But crucially, by showing the prison's effect on guards and prisons, it questions the aim of the penitentiary system to educate and reform invidividuals to become productive, integrated members of society. If guards and prisoners share a common fate, susceptible to corruption and violence, individual reform becomes irrelevant. Brown discusses how penal spectatorship provides a space from which to consider "the proliferation or minimization of violence by choosing how we imagine and build structures of exclusion" and suggests that "the possibility of acting outside of or otherwise to punishment's violence and the violence that drives punishment can only occur through this kind of critique"(35). This film's emphasis on violence and its effects shows how the violence of the penitentiary system is not restricted to its prisoners. The official restoration of order at the end of the film, where everything is neatly described and explained in formal interviews, leaves out the lasting effects on Elena's life, and those of other bereaved relations. The distinction between the criminal and the law-abiding figure which has been consistently blurred is revealed,

ultimately, to be at its clearest in the need to frame what happens when things go wrong in prisons, and who gets to have the final say in that process.

While issues of corruption and violence within the penitentiary system are highlighted, a blurring of difference occurs which erases the differing realities for contemporary prisoners and existing inequalities at the heart of contemporary Spain. While there is an acknowledgement that particular lives are valued more than others, shown through the negotiations regarding the ETA prisoners and their treatment in general, by focusing on this specific group of prisoners there is an erasure of many of the more stigmatized groups in Spanish society, such as drug addicts, Roma, and prisoners from other countries. The fairly straightforward and acceptable discussion of the privileges awarded to ETA prisoners avoids other problematic imbalances. This is reinforced to a large extent by the treatment received by Juan and Elena – by suggesting that they are equally endangered by the violence of the guards, the film fails to acknowledge that certain types of people are much more likely than others to face police brutality and violence.[30] In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler urges the reader to consider the potential for political implications of grief and the varying ways in which people are exposed to arbitrary violence. Specifically she raises the question of "what makes for a grievable life?" (20) and discusses how the type of representation or lack of representation afforded to certain faces results in a lack of affect at the eradication of those faces, thereby indefinitely postponing their "grievability" (XVIII). Despite efforts to show similarities between Juan and El Morao, the grievability of the former is greater and taken more seriously than that of the latter. The guard's violence to Elena is considered more

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[30] Consider for example the kind of treatment politicians and bankers have received in prison and the types of sentences and privileges offered, compared to the treatment of immigrants and other stigmatized groups.

shocking than the violence shown to prisoners, representing as she does respectability (through for example her motherhood and her social capital), and reinforcing a whole host of behaviours, characteristics and symbols deemed acceptable (marriage and devotion to her husband, the family, the private home, cleanliness, whiteness, Spanish-speaking, etc.). In its efforts to show the harms present in the penitentiary system in general and by framing the lives of Juan and Elena as most precarious and grievable, *Celda 211* avoids initiating a discussion about the reality of those who are actually most likely to be stripped of rights and experience violence, not only in Spanish prisons, but also within Spain and outside its immediate borders. More than that, because of the presence and role of Apache, the Colombian prisoner linked to drug trafficking, at the end of the film (he kills Juan), it ultimately, if only as a side theme, reinforces connections between racial tension, immigration, foreign otherness and violence (Woods Peiró 12). While showing concern, then, for the state of Spanish prisons and the treatment and conditions experienced within them, the film offers no alternative discourse to the ongoing discussion of immigration and crime advanced by the government and media.

2.6: Conclusion

Both films, then, simultaneously question the idea and value of authenticity and the essentialist nature of criminality, whilst also at times perpetuating notions of difference and otherness concerning criminals. Authenticity in *Azuloscurocasinegro,* on the one hand, is revealed to be impossible to ascertain, and easy to manipulate, confuse, or bypass, as the characters find ways to cheat the system and break the rules. The 'authenticity' of illegality (What is illegal? Who can break the rules? Who are the laws for?) is shown to be subjective

and illusory – circumstance and bad luck, it suggests, are behind many criminal acts. But it seems often we are meant to sympathize with the criminal at an individual level, without necessarily taking into account the wider implications of their situation. When Paula tells her story of working in Venezuela, falling in love, and being tricked into carrying drugs to Spain, she accepts full responsibility and is repentant, refusing to blame the drug-trafficker who took advantage of her: "Soy yo la que subió al avión, soy yo la que llevaba la maleta". The focus on her sense of guilt appears to absolve any other parties of guilt, and ignores the fact that choice is not always a part of the drug-smuggling trade for the women involved. As with the implication that Jorge's social ascent would be easier with a better attitude, there is, here, an emphasis on the individual's problems at the expense of offering insight into a wider structural problem.

Makin's discussion of popular punitivism in Spain concludes that its effects have been "mediated by the core reintegration philosophy of the penal system" (261), but this is not particularly apparent as a positive force in the prison life portrayed. Made at at time when the prison population was increasing dramatically, *Celda 211* suggests that prison life offers few opportunities for positive personal or societal change. While suggesting the ineffectiveness of prisons as places for rehabilitation and reinsertion, it however, to some extent, follows the popular discourse with the implication that violence, danger, and criminality go hand in hand, despite the fact that the vast majority of prisoners in Spain are incarcerated for non-violent crimes. Thus although they point out failings of the prison system, these screen portrayals also feed into the perception that criminals are a threat to security, adding to a generalized fear of crime and an assumption about the necessity of

prisons because of their value in excluding dangerous individuals from society. They suggest

that prisons foster violence, but there is no particular move to offer any kind of alternative

and nor do they portray the realities of a system where alternatives to exclusionary

imprisonment already exist, in the form of weekend and open prisons. Makin (2013)

questions whether the use of these systems will continue to increase or whether a fear of

crime will undermine such efforts. Similarly, in emphasizing the failings of a system that

officially emphasizes rehabilitation, reintegration, and justice, and contributing to a discourse

about fear of crime, such screen portrayals, whilst rightly critiquing much that is wrong with

Spanish prisons, ultimately risk helping to undermine some of the more humane aspects of

the country's penitentiary system.

Chapter 3:   Meeting points: theatre and writing in Spanish prisons

3.1: Introduction: voices at the threshold

Chapter Two discussed fictional on-screen portrayals of prisons to consider their contribution to understanding of prisons and criminality in today's Spain. This chapter focuses on portrayals by prisoners and the ways that prisoners' voices and artistic work circulate in the cultural sphere. I analyse the work and texts of the theatre company *Teatro Yeses*, directed by former prison *funcionaria* Elena Cánovas, and the 2003 publication *Historias desde la cárcel* by prisoner Andrés Rabadán. Both can be fruitfully considered in their relation to the role and impact of cultural projects in prisons, while also exploring the themes of belonging and movement. The latter, particularly, is key to these texts: my analysis of the treatment of this theme, and the ways these voices move freely (or otherwise) through the cultural ambit dialoguing with Spanish cultural and literary traditions, is informed by a discussion of interstitial and liminal spaces which drives my understanding of prison and cultural meeting points forming a borderland setting.

While frontiers are understood as sites which formalize boundaries of empire and are theorized from a spatio-territorial perspective (Feldman, 2010), and borders, likewise, are considered expressions of spatial, sovereign divisions crucial to the formation of nation states,[31] theorizing of margins and borderlands has tended to take a more sociological, cultural turn. Borders themselves (spatial or symbolic) have a clear role in shaping the groups

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[31] Although as Brunet-Jailly (2005) notes, nowadays it is more common to consider borders as government boundaries at various spatial levels, not only nationally but taking into account policy from municipalities, local governments, and regions, among other border-formers.

who live on either side of their lines, leading to the formation and strengthening of distinct identity groupings (Zartman, 2010; van Houtum, 2005). The notion of margins, and the accompanying understanding of marginal spaces and marginality, offers a space from which inclusion and exclusion can be considered (Feldman, 2010). Considering prisons as marginal spaces is, however, problematic in terms of their role as upholders of the legal system – indeed, while they of course become sites where marginalized people are housed, the prison itself can perhaps more usefully be thought of as a focal location for lawkeeping and ordering, rather than a marginal site (Loyd, J.M. et al, 2012).

Taking into account the changing nature of borders and their social function of control, organized by legal and normative systems (Feldman, 2010) helps draw attention to the fluctuating borders which control the prison, determined by changing laws and shifting articulations of criminality. The border between the inside and outside of prisons, the boundaries of legality and illegality, obviously impacts what happens on either side of the divide, and by dividing, encourages certain types of self-identification or expectations of particular types of belonging and behaviour. Understanding the prison as borderland acknowledges prisons as an ongoing meeting point between these two 'cultures', those of permitted and prohibited behaviour, those who are on the side of the law and those who are not, those who fit neatly into acceptability and those who belong to marginalized, criminalized groups. Sites of constant change and transition, according to Gloria Anzaldúa, borderlands are home to "the prohibited and forbidden... los atrevesados ..: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead" (1987, 3). Gómez Peña, whose entire body of performance and activism explores

literal and symbolic border crossings points out the connection between margins and movement in his description of diasporic Latin Americans, referring to them as:

> deterritorialized citizens of everywhere and nowhere, the inhabitants of the so-called "margins" and crevices, los vatos instersticiales, the hybrids, exiles, and renegades. (2000, 8)

Similar descriptions fit with the kinds of descriptions of prisoners challenged and explored in the texts analysed in this chapter. Along with borderland, terms such as interstitial, liminal, and threshold are appropriate to our understanding of intersections between culture and imprisonment, as introduced in the previous chapter. They are spaces which are neither one thing nor the other, where marginality becomes central, where law encounters criminal, and notions of the acceptable and the unacceptable meet in a constant clashing and complex intertwining. For Bhaba, "it is at the level of the interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (*Frontlines*, 269). He asks us to consider "what collective identifications become possible in the overlapping, or displacing, of domains of difference?" (*Frontlines*, 269).

Belonging is perhaps best understood as multiple, hybrid, and changing. As with borderlands, movement, or lack thereof, constitutes a fundamental part of the meaning of prisons. They are, at once, places in constant flux and places of 'stuck-ness', defined by the ability or inability of their inhabitants to move on and through, and constantly renewed or altered with changing inhabitants. This notion of movement which pervades prisons and borderlands introduces a fragility, but also a potential for change and transition. My analysis of the texts and projects in this chapter advances my discussion of the notion of belonging, developing the introduction's references to cultural capital and Chapter Two's reflections on

Spanishness and otherness. It explains their role in shaping a borderland – a meeting point between cultures, both physical and symbolic, and a space in which new cultures are formed.

3.2: Education and cultural projects in prisons as points of cultural exchange and connection

Educational and cultural projects within prisons, as discussed in the introductory chapter, clearly have the potential to effect change in prison culture, and it hardly seems controversial to accept that, as some qualitative studies have shown (Franganillo et al, 2006; Pérez Pulido, 2011; Wilson, 2013) and numerous anecdotal reports have described, they can significantly help with improving life inside, as well as in the process of preparing prisoners for a return to life outside the prison walls. Former Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales, Anne Owers, for example, points out that even in times when population pressure is a reality, prisons should be seen as places where education is "central, not peripheral" (10). An important contributing factor to this process of preparing for reinsertion, as was already suggested by Concepción Arenal and more recently argued by Mercedes Gallizo (2012), is to narrow the gap between inside/outside, prison/society, increasing the presence of prisoners in society and the presence of the non-prison world in penitentiary institutions. How do the voices of prisoners make their way into the cultural domain, and how do these voices enrich our understanding of issues surrounding barriers, exclusion, and movement?

Following on from Agamben's assertion of exclusion, the ban, as the foundation of political and social life, Brown emphasizes that

the punished mark in many ways ***the ultimate stranger***, those who are criminalized within deeply individualized frameworks and thus must bear often sole responsibility for a spectrum of harmful acts, including violence. Interpretive frames that have dominated penal decision making emphasize individual responsibility and the positioning of the imprisoned as monstrous while simultaneously organizing their relocation across geographies of aggregate segregation and exclusion. These individuals and the groups we assemble them in, consequently, mark the limits of desert and worth in social life. (40)

As we saw in the previous chapter, the fabricated divide between criminals and non-criminals informs understanding of this 'ultimate stranger' with on-screen portrayals often at once reinforcing and challenging the idea of the division's existence. While criminality is seen to be subjective, the assumption of a division between those who experience life as prisoners within prison walls and those who do not continues to be a central part of many portrayals of prisons. The possibility of a two-way path between prison and the outside has been demonstrated at least partially successfully, however, in other ways in Spain; volunteers participating in prison-visiting projects, for example, and less often by prisoners themselves.[32] The Internet has also functioned, as would be expected, as a site for potential interconnectivity, movement, and virtual circulation between the two spheres (in- and outside prison) and various online projects, such as blogging projects and developing websites, have been undertaken within prisons.[33] Reports on these projects stress the importance of bridging

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[32] Notably, this was found in the *Unidad Terapéutica y Educativa* in Villabonna, Asturias, where prisoners were encouraged to set up businesses (such as gardening and maintenance) to connect with communities beyond the prison perimeter. In *La libertad está dentro,* her study of this innovative project, Idoya Ronzón describes the model centre as "un espacio educativo. Es la alternativa a la escuela de delincuencia que representa la prisión tradicional"(156). The hopes for a space of learning and community-building were guiding principles in the founding of that centre, which inspired further similar units. Funding changes and lack of government support have affected the success of this unit, a move away from 'un espacio educativo de reinserción'. A different project – *Caminos de Libertad 2014* – involved a group of prisoners walking parts of the Camino de Santiago.

[33] One website, for example, helps new prisoners and particularly their families and friends better understand how the prison system works and what they can expect to find when they visit: http://www.infoprision.com/   Written in a friendly, down-to-earth tone it is less intimidating than the official sites available and includes a blog and advice about prison conditions and rules. The online magazine *La Oca Loca (*founded in the Daroca penitentiary centre in 2005, which now involves forty prisons in Spain and five in Latin America) emerged from this idea of opening a symbolic gateway between prisons and society outside. Another digitial cultural project *Bloggers In Prison,* a "taller de dinamización cultural" which took place in the Juvenile Detention Facility in Barcelona between 2006 and 2008, involved teaching prisoners about computers, the Internet, and helping them create their own blogs. Its intention was to help prisoners connect to the outside

the gap between the 'two worlds' through education, the role and relevance of new technologies, and the potential of prison libraries as a central point for this kind of work (Franganillo et al, 2006). Online projects, like this, can be used as a symbolic means of escape or temporary imagined freedom – a dialogue with non-prisoners on subjects of their choosing, the sense of exchange being emphasised further through the comments section – and as virtual space to analyse and reflect on imprisonment and the nature of liberty, articulating emotions and discussing penitentiary issues from a rarely heard perspective, perhaps challenging or enhancing the reader's understanding of prison life. By creating a voice for prisoners, this kind of project, at its best, not only benefits prisoners in providing an opportunity for self-expression, but also shows other prisoners that dialogue with the 'outside world' is possible (through the comments section on blogs, for example) and, furthermore, enhances the cultural sector in general by adding texts and voices that differ, sometimes substantially, from the perceived cultural norm. Nevertheless, censorship can become a stumbling block as uncensored and consistent Internet access is not a typical feature of prison life in Spain. Bypassing these kinds of limitations, off-line educational projects are also popular when offered, and art and theatre projects, among others, have proven to be a fitting vehicle for prisoners to find an outlet for self-expression, and to introduce these 'other' voices into the cultural sphere. One such gained international recognition when it became the subject of a television show: *El coro de la cárcel,* showing the story of prisoners forming a choir in the El Dueso prison (Santoña, Cantabria) screened from 2006 to 2009. Portrayals that centre the voices of prisoners, as we will see, tend to look for ways to connect and bridge

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world thereby aiding rehabilitation.

the constructed divide. Rather than stressing their 'otherness', they portray their stories to show common ground and connection.

3.3: Elena Cánovas and *Teatro Yeses*

Various prisons hold theatre classes, but none has been as successful or long-term as *Teatro Yeses,* founded by prison officer Elena Cánovas in 1986 in the now closed women's prison *Yeserías* in Madrid. The theatre company later worked from Carabanchel shortly before its closure, before settling in their current base, the women's prison at Alcalá de Henares. Their first performance took place on the occasion of *La Merced*, national day of prisons in September. Performing works they have written and created themselves (under the leadership of Cánovas) and existing plays, and working with professional actors to make up for the absence of men in the group, their focus gravitates towards texts that forefront themes of liberation and imprisonment in its various forms, specifically in their relation to women. In 1990 their theatre piece, *Mal bajío (escenas de una cárcel de mujeres*) won the *Calderón de la Barca* drama prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture. During subsequent years the group has performed in theatres in Madrid, toured Spain, and participated in The Third European Conference on Theatre and Prison in Berlin in 2001. The 2008 film *El patio de mi cárcel*, directed by Belén Macías and produced by *Deseo* tells the story of their beginnings and brought their work to a larger audience.

Elena Cánovas' work with the theatre company now spans thirty years and as such her insight and experience into the changing role of cultural projects in prisons is unequalled in Spain. From the hopeful, forward looking times of the Transition, to years defined by

heroin and AIDS in the 1980s, to a pronounced increase in Latin American prisoners in recent years, her work with female prisoners has borne witness to and helped share, and indeed shape, the story of life inside. In recent years government funding and support has been limited, affecting the ability of the theatre company to produce their performances. Despite budget cuts, the group continues to present plays and tours, and thus provides a useful example of the role of theatre in not only improving the lives of people in prison, but its power to educate and critique societal norms and values (Foley Buedel, 2009).

Cánovas is outspoken about the need for penal reform and the importance of education, in particular the arts, in helping prisoners prepare for reinsertion into society:

> Victoria Kent nos demostró que era preciso establecer lazos con el mundo libre para que las prisiones no fueran los agujeros negros de la sociedad, ¿por qué no hacer esos lazos con las cuerdas que sujetan las bambalinas de un teatro? (Quoted in Martín Baroja, 2006, 22)

Taking part in performances necessitates the prisoners exiting the prison boundaries and integrating, to an extent, with 'normal society'. This 'bridge' between prison and society is an aspect of their work that manifests not only in discussion about the project,[34] but also in the texts themselves, and in their performances. As the introduction suggests and this chapter further argues, Spanish cultural life in general reaps the rewards when alternative, non-mainstream voices are heard. The tone, style, character and content of creative work by prisoners enhances the cultural scene, thus incorporating a breadth and depth of voice and experience otherwise ignored or misunderstood. Despite an emphasis on bridging or connecting different worlds, they work to unpick the notion of this division, showing how its

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[34] "Teatro Yeses es varias cosas, pero una de ellas, y probablemente la que más nos llena de satisfacción, es haber hecho de un grupo de teatro una plataforma de reintegración social. Desde la cárcel a la sociedad hemos construido ese puente de piedra" (Canovás quoted in Martín Baroja, 2006, 27).

existence is constructed through inequality and criminalization of certain behaviours, rather than essential qualities on either side. The opportunity for these voices and faces to be heard and seen is as important for the viewer as for the performer, offering a differing perspective which can subvert, challenge, resist and poke fun at misconceptions and assumptions. Their performances have, from the start, not shied away from critique both of Spanish society and the prison system. In early plays, in particular, characters controversially and humorously impersonated prison staff and demonstrated the treatment received by prisoners.

Attempts to reveal the inner workings of prison life are a common part of their work and this focus on rendering visible the unknown is central to the texts. *Quién le puso a mi vida tanta cárcel* (2001) is a collection of prose, based on stories told to Elena Cánovas and her co-authors by women who have passed through the theatre company, illustrating the apparent cultural and social divide between those in and outside prisons. The recurring themes are typical of the life circumstances of women prisoners in Spain, so while creating an intimate portrait of the women described, there is a wider social critique of the factors that lead to many women being in prison: drugs and trafficking, poverty, domestic violence, bad luck, and dysfunctional families abound. Latin Americans and Roma are prominent, and an idea that there are 'different laws' for certain social and ethnic groups, distinct from the laws of the nation, is also evident.

Confronting their own invisibility and the stereotypes associated with them, the characters in these plays, and the actresses themselves, breathe life into 'the prison problem' and humanize what can otherwise be viewed as a theoretical topic. The common assumption that prisoners are a threat and dangerous to society is challenged through their performances,

as well as through the associated press interviews and their attendance at public events. The intimacy of the connection between actor and audience, combined with the personal nature of much of the content, serves to create an emotional response on the part of both performers and viewers which bridges rather than othering. The two texts I explore here – *La balada de la cárcel de Circe* (2000) *and El más preciado bien que nos dieron los cielos* (2005) – draw attention to the concept of 'threshold' and the subject of movement itself, especially as it relates to border crossings, both literally and symbolically. Both plays address questions of presence/absence and exclusion/belonging, discussions central to this thesis, showing how prison is a constant and pervasive presence for some of these women, while for those outside the penitentiary system these lives and circumstances are almost invisible, but at the same time, fascinating:

> La cárcel es un murmullo, un bullir de vida que a menudo se ignora porque ocupa la trastienda de nuestro mundo, el rincón sombrío donde guardamos perezosos los trastos que nos sobran. Pero cuando echamos una mirada, o acercamos al oído, descubrimos que esa imagen, o ese latido, nos fascinan como lo hacen nuestros miedos, o nos inquietan, como lo hacen nuestras esperanzas. (Cánovas et al, 2001,199)

Although the spectacle of prison, as found particularly in television or film portrayals, but also in prison museums and visits (Brown, 2009), does not always sensitively approach or successfully navigate the potential 'openings' or 'crossings' between the two worlds, through cultural projects the door to this 'backroom', the "trastienda" of the previous quote, is potentially opened, thresholds can be crossed, and points of connection can be found. Cultural projects, in particular the kind of work being done by *Teatro Yeses*, can bring the prison into the main room, or indeed, into the public space, and provide a visible, meeting

point between apparently different cultures which shows the importance of connecting rather than dividing.

3.3.1: *La balada de la cárcel de Circe* (2000)

The 2000 piece *La balada de la cárcel de Circe,* whose title was inspired by Oscar Wilde's The *Ballad of Reading Gaol,* is a second part to the award winning *Mal Bajío,* and engages with similar questions, telling life stories to show how different characters ended up in prison. While *Mal bajío* attempts to portray the reality of prison life, this piece aims to address the reasons for the women being imprisoned.[35] The project was suggested by Asunción Miura, then *Directora General de la Mujer* in the Community of Madrid, who wanted to see a work in which the lives of the women prisoners involved with the theatre company formed the content. Once again, building better understanding and communication between the prison world and society outside was central to its aim, and the project was envisaged as "una ventana de comunicación" (Cánovas, 2000, 9). Re-education and social reinsertion were key aspects of this, along with improving visibility of the women: "Que se sepa que estamos aquí" (Cánovas, 2000, 9). A similar sentiment is expressed within the play by the character Estrella: "Que se sepa, que se sepa por ahí arriba... que en las cárceles hay mujeres haciendo cosas, por primera vez haciendo algo para que a una le aplaudan y no para que la castiguen" (17).

The stage notes to the one-act play, which introduces itself as being "basado suavemente en las aventuras homéricas de sus interpretes", describe an old boat centre-stage

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[35] "la balada era la construcción en forma de teatro, de la respuesta a la pregunta "qué he hecho yo para verme en éstas..." (Canovás quoted in Martín Baroja, 2006, 94).

and a cyclorama in the background, onto which are projected diverse seascapes. It begins

with a group of prisoner-actresses waiting to start their performance, with the character

Felicísima quoting the (apparent) beginning of the play to be performed, describing the

arrival of Ulysses and his troops at the Isle of Eea[36], an island from Greek mythology in the

Mediterranean sea, home to the sorceress Circe recounted by Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*.

This arrival – "acercamos silenciosamente el barco a la ribera, haciéndolo entrar en un

amplio puerto... saltamos a tierra" (14), is contrasted with the non-arrival of an unnamed

person – "alguien, sin cuya presencia en el patio de butacas no puede empezar el

espectáculo" – to the performance, a kind of Godot figure whose presence or lack thereof is

a constant reference in the play, a trope which emphasizes something of the relentless

monotony of the 'stuck-ness' often experienced in prison – an environment in which

prisoners are constantly waiting to find out their next movement (whether it be a transfer to

another prison or cell, being allowed out for day release, or going to court) whilst at the same

time experiencing the continuous sameness of their limited and ordered daily movements

within the prison building. Immediately, then, the subject of movement – journeys, travel,

staying in one place – become the focus of our attention, and continues to be of note

throughout the play.

    The play centres on the actresses waiting for the arrival of the unnamed important

member of the audience – referred to as 'nuestro Godot particular' in the title to the final

scene (66) – and practising their parts, interspersed with flashbacks showing their pre-prison

lives, as well as portrayals of the auditions undertaken to be allowed to participate in the

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[36] The mention of EEA, for English speakers, is notable too in the context of migration, as an abbreviation for European Economic Area, especially when combined with the reference to a boat arriving on a shore.

theatre group. The names of the characters – for example África Memory of Angels and Zulema – and their stories suggest an eclectic group of mixed nationalities, religions, and cultures, with experiences of social exclusion, marginalization and movement in common. Characters include Regina, who was tricked into going to Spain from Brazil to work as a prostitute in a "club de carretera", Candela, a *gitana*, whose husband is a violent drunk, and Flor, a Columbian, who wanted to earn money to care for her family and ended up getting arrested for carrying drugs. Journeys of immigration are a recurring theme: that of the character of Zulema is particularly evocative, describing a boat travelling across what is presumably the Strait of Gibraltar: "*Sonido de olas y viento. Llegan a tierra en plena noche. ¡Mi sargento, moros en la costa!*" (59). The use of this phrase neatly evokes historical and current fears, connecting immigration and people arriving from other lands with danger, violence, and crime.

Not all the journeys involve immigration. *Barrio* life is summed up in phrases like "la banda sonora de mi barrio eran los golpes de futbolín y las rumbas de Los Chichos" *(42)* and the apparently un-crossable boundaries between the *barrio* and the 'rest of the world' is illuminated through the discussion of trains which pass through although "en mi barrio nunca han parado los trenes importantes" (38):

> Felicísima: ¿Cómo es la gente que va ahí dentro?
> Julián: Como todo el mundo
> Felicísima; ¿Cómo es todo el mundo? (38)

This notion of trying to get a glimpse of life outside the *barrio*, but with no reference points to be able to understand or imagine that life, with no ability to cross the line, is a two-way 'blindness'. Those on the train may be asking the same question, looking into the

neighbourhood from the train windows, just as those who have never been in prison might ask similar questions when considering the life of prisoners. There are echoes here of Michel de Certeau's discussion of frontiers, but it also brings to mind his writing on *Railway Navigation and Incarceration,* the train as a site of incarceration, but also as a place of disruption of order, and connection between elements:

> It not only divides spectators and beings, but also connects them; it is a mobile symbol between them, a tireless shifter, producing changes in the relationships between immobile elements. (113)

He suggests an idealized notion of imprisonment, a kind of break from reality, which ends at the point people leave the train and go back to work:

> The incarceration-vacation is over. For the beautiful abstraction of the prison are substituted the compromises, opacities and dependencies of a workplace. ... There comes to an end the Robinson Crusoe adventure of the travelling noble soul that could believe itself *intact* because it was surrounded by glass and iron. (114)

The relevance here is twofold. Firstly, for the traveller on the train, looking out at the *barrio*, there is little sense, according to Certeau, that they have any involvement with the places they pass. While the windowpane and the rail can "invert the stability" of the "immobility of the inside and that of the outside" (112) they also determine a lack of closeness, a necessary distance, and a determined exit from the landscape. Whatever feelings and imaginings are created from this vantage point there is an inevitability about leaving. The viewer of the *barrio,* like the non-prisoner 'viewing' the prison, through, for example, the lens of a film or a newspaper article, feels that they are safely apart and detached. The theatre performances of *Teatro Yeses* with their immediate and intense affective bond are perhaps one way past this detached viewing, a way to force open the train window, or better still, an

opportunity for the passenger to exit the train, disrupt the timetable, and enter a seemingly new territory, that, in fact, they are already part of.

Simultaneously, Certeau's articulation of the train as incarceration adds to our understanding of the problem of prisonization. The strange comfort, he describes, of being contained, intact, with no real option or need to exit is surely experienced in other settings. The timelessness of this kind of incarceration where the 'traveller' is dependent primarily on the machine and the system of movement in place, which takes away the need for agency and action, has something in common with the real life experience of being incarcerated. While the kinds of backgrounds related in this play, and in *Quién le puso a mi vida tanta cárcel* are probably for many theatre-goers and readers portrayals of an 'other', unknown world, which seems to hold more in common with fiction than with reality, for others, the women featured, their families, many in their neighbourhoods, this is the stuff of everyday life. Prison, for some, is the norm, and becoming institutionalized, prisonized, is a further hurdle to successful reintegration into 'outside' life, with the realization that each day now needs to find its own structure, a conundrum described with sea travel imagery: "Cuando salen es como un barco que se hubiera quedado sin brújula, que navega porque le empuja el viento pero no sabe dónde va. Sí, se da a veces" (Cánovas et al, 2001, 68). For those with prior commitments, a train carriage can offer an enjoyable separation from 'real life' – "these places of laziness and thoughtfulness, paradisical ships sailing between two social meeting-points (business deals and families, drab, almost imperceptible violences)" (Certeau, 113) – an extended period of confinement, with its accompanying disempowering and dulling of the senses, makes the end of the journey somewhat disorientating.

Hence the role of cultural and educational projects in sharpening those senses, in keeping present the understanding of what it means to get off the train. Humour is used effectively in the theatre of *Teatro Yeses*, perhaps as a means of jolting awareness both for the performers and the audience. Cutting through clichés and stereotypes, re-framing tired repeated phrases about their circumstances to freshen and enliven the prison experience and its portrayal. Self-referential humour works to make these 'others' part of the 'we': 'we can laugh at this too, and yes, it's a stereotype, but yes, it's real' they seem to say. This technique of making a nod to the thoughts of the audience is central to the final scene of *La balada de la cárcel de Circe.* The scene, which engages directly with the idea of stereotypical portrayals of prison life, sensationalist media reports and the ill-informed public reactions these create, involves the characters looking out at the audience, reciting a series of comments and statements which suggest what those in the audience might be thinking: "Pobrecita, mira qué flaca está", "La qué más me ha gustado ha sido la chica extranjera. Porque para ella pronunciar es muy difícil", "Si tienen de todo, televisión, piscina, polideportivo. Si están mejor que los de fuera"(70-71).

Its effectiveness can be found, perhaps, if we return to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and his theories of cultural distinction and taste. The ability to acknowledge, predict, and imitate members of the audience subverts the power dynamic in the theatre. If cultural taste and distinctions, gestures and language can be so easily articulated by the 'other' on the stage, perhaps the same could occur in 'real life'. Perhaps cultural standing, the status implied by being appreciative of the 'right kind' of culture, is in fact so simple to copy that it loses its meaning, and threatens the social order. The humour can not fully cover up the

discomfort at hearing one's (secret, of course, because it would be socially and culturally inappropriate to voice them) thoughts being projected aloud, so publicly. The kind of humour that might be made about prisoners or those from the *barrio* suddenly sounds different coming from those actual voices, and likewise, the kinds of things that might be said in a meeting or a press conference acquire an ironic tone when imitated by the 'they' being referred to. Other moments in the play create a similar effect. Consider for example this exchange:

> Felicia: El caso es que en nuestra historia, es el amor el que hace que se desvanezcan los muros de esa prisión que contiene los cuerpos y los espíritus de los mortales .....

> Justina: Y salen todos reinsertados y resocializados. Y se van a casa tan contentos (16).

Or this statement: "Nosotras somos la mejor noticia que dan las cárceles, creo que la única noticia buena que dan las cárceles" (69). Again, the uncomfortable humour is caused by the prisoners voicing and acknowledging the kind of statements more usually made about them, not by them. Suddenly, they are disturbingly real, three-dimensional, living beings, about whom simple solutions and throwaway comments are less easy to make. The theatre becomes the meeting point between two 'cultures', who at least temporarily gain insight into what lies on the other side of the wall and realize, perhaps, that the differences are not as predictable as anticipated.

This, too, is the effect created by so many literary references in the play. As noted, the references to Homer's *Odyssey* are central, and the relevance of Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol* to the thematic content and not just the title is underlined by the inclusion of

94

the final stanzas, recited by the character África.[37] Other playwrights are briefly mentioned

(Arthur Miller, Shakespeare, Berthold Brecht, Benavente), alongside the ongoing Godot

reference, and quotes from the poet Miguel Hernández.[38] A scene portraying Zulema's life is

entitled "Un cuento de los mil y un días". The effect is a kind of 'throwntogetherness' of

cultures, to use Orley's term describing what happens in liminal spaces, with the meeting of

prisoners and these giants of the literary world creating unexpected connections between the

prison and the 'outside' world, which prompts the theatre-goer to reconsider prior

assumptions of distance and difference. The performance, the stage, and the text itself to

some extent, thus creates an interstitial space, a space 'between', which is neither entirely of

the prison world, nor entirely of 'free' society. Much like a borderland, the event of the

performance, and its repetition and recreation through reading the text beyond the

performance itself, becomes a place of meeting and mixing, where cultures come together

and create new possibilities and hybridities, where nobody is fully at home, but everybody

who is present belongs.

3.3.2: *El más preciado bien que nos dieron los cielos* (2005)

Similar themes and techniques appear in the one act play *El más preciado bien que*

nos dieron los cielos (2005) – written and performed to celebrate the four-hundredth

anniversary of the publication of the first part of Cervante's *Don Quijote de la Mancha* –

whose title comes from a reference to liberty in the book's second part. No doubt because of

this specific connection to Cervante's work, the play's dialogue with Spanish literary history

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[37] "I know not whether laws be right/Or whether laws be wrong; All that we know who lie in gaol/Is that the wall is
strong;/And that each day is like a year/A year whose days are long." (68)
[38] I discuss this poet in Chapter Four in relation to Palencia prison.

is substantial and constitutes the main focus of its themes and plot. Its structure also echoes the famous work, with a similar episodic narrative with characters and events appearing in no clear order, and no obvious 'destination' or conclusion.

Here the characters Don Quijote and Sancho, introduced to the audience moments after fighting the windmills they believe to be giants, come across a group of prisoners in a van who are being transported by *Guardia Civil* from the prison of Alcalá de Henares[39] to that of Alcázar de San Juan. The well-known scene, one of the most famous and most oft-represented from *Don Quijote*, is, then, interrupted and altered by this arrival, an unexpected presence in an otherwise unsurprising, familiar theatre/literary setting. This meeting of old and new creates a comic setting as it introduces characters such as "El Pateras (inmigrante ilegal)", "La Limpiadora de Pisos (mujer gitana)" and "La Traficante (mujer suramericana)" and sets the stage for another parallel with the plot of *Don Quijote*, when the protagonist liberates prisoners. Like *La balada de la cárcel de Circe*, this play engages with social issues and factors affecting the penitentiary system: domestic violence, poverty, gypsy culture, drug trafficking and addiction, Morocco, Latin America, and migration for economic purposes are all referenced and discussed, drawing attention to the environments familiar to the prisoners prior to their imprisonment and some of the reasons for their incarceration.[40]

As well as the unexpected meeting between characters, the physical setting for the first two scenes is itself something of a borderland – between prison and the 'free' world.

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[39] Alcalá de Henares holds double significance here, both home of *Teatro Yeses* and supposed birthplace of Cervantes.
[40] As evidenced in the following quotes: "La traficante: Yo estoy aquí por necesidad. En mi país, Colombia, no hay trabajo, ni dinero, ni paz; solo violencia. Vine a España engañada... El Makoy: Eso dicen todos." (120) "Fede: La mayoría de los que se encuentran presos están por lo que usted llama finas hierbas. Cuando la prueba se convierte en una necesidad hasta el punto que algunas personas roban, matan, mueren, o están apresados por ella."(122). "Migrar para España. Trabajar, mandar dinero a mi familia... yo querer vivir en mi casa con mi familia; no poder, luchar por comer hasta morir si es preciso" (124).

Poised between imprisonment and escape, the group of prisoners arrive into the scene where

Don Quijote has just finished 'fighting' the windmills and is lying exhausted under a tree.

Chained together until Don Quijote sets them free, they are neither fully incarcerated, nor

(yet) free. The notion of this being a representation of a cultural meeting point is reinforced

by the combination of old fashioned language appropriate to Don Quijote and Sancho Panza

with modern prison slang,[41] a juxtaposition which provides humour but also creates the effect

of jolting the audience out of the comforting familiarity provided by the literary characters.

While the beginnings of the first scene, with Don Quijote and Sancho, is an entirely expected

theatre setting, the arrival of the prisoners, accompanied by the sound of sirens and flashing

lights – causing Sancho to exclaim that "¡Esto es el mismísimo infierno!" (111) – disrupts

that sense of ease, inserting an 'unknown' element, a textual echoing of the unusual presence

of prisoners in the actual performance. The comedic othering of the prisoners is immediate,

as Don Quijote and Sancho discuss their strange appearance – "¡Qué gentes más extrañas!"

and referring to them as "singulares especímenes" and "bestias" (112) – and speculate about

who and what they are. Meanwhile some of the prisoners show their 'otherness' through their

language, and incorrect use of Spanish grammar.[42] Others, however, recite proverbs and play

with familiar phrases (119-120), a humorous technique already seen in *La balada* and also

important in *Don Quijote,* which functions in the same way as the literary references,

whereby an established, accepted 'order', a familiarity with comfortable linguistic and social

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[41] A glossary accompanies the published text (103).

[42] Seen, by way of example, in the following quotes from the character El Pateras: "Yo querer carnet, querer trabajo, necesitar papeles" (116); "Yo venir a España, cruzar el estrecho, pasar penalidades, casi ahogar, morir... " (123); "Yo tener necesidad de comer; allí, mi país, pobress, muy pobress, migrar para España. Trabajar, mandar dinero a mi familia, ellos también pasar hambre" (124).

rules and norms, is subverted and challenged through humour, playfulness and the unlikely combinations of phrases and characters.

Functioning in much the same way as Bahktin's notion of the carnivalesque, much of the humour found in this play represents a subversion or a challenge to the dominant order, both on a meta-theatrical level (offering alternatives to questions about who is normally found in theatres or what is suitable theatrical content) and at a more general cultural level, challenging ideas about to whom culture belongs, whose lives are worthy of being portrayed and considered in cultural production, and how they should be portrayed. As in the literary work that inspired the play, humour is used effectively and surprisingly to make the reader/viewer question and re-examine assumptions, but there is likewise a certain amount of confusion as to what we are laughing about.[43] In the article "Don Quijote and the art of laughing at oneself", using Milan Kundera's suggestion that the laughter is because "a reality is abruptly revealed as ambiguous" the writer draws attention to the idea that "laughing *with* Cervantes, we realize how, complicit in sustaining illusions, we are, in certain ways. not so different from don Quijote"(Scham, 34). Here, as in *La balada de Circe*, the initial laughter at the language and the style of the prisoners turns to an awareness that there is more to the characters and the situation than we originally recognized or anticipated.[44]

References to historical and literary characters pepper the play, and each contributes to this mixing and mingling of cultural references, forging an ever stronger connection with Spanish literary history. Several scenes, for example, take place in *la Venta del Zurdo*

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[43] Some suggestions as to what we are laughing about are outlined by Scham: "a decadent nobility, a Spain that refuses to relinquish antiquated chivalric and pastoral ideas, the hubris and injustices of imperialism, repressed sexual inclinations.." (32).

[44] "A trace of pathos arises along with a broadening of our knowledge: we sense there is more to the laughable character than we originally judged" (Scham, 35)

(scenes 3,4, 5 and 7) where the proprietor is the Catalan bandit Roque Guinart who appears in the second part of *Don Quijote,* and in which the Muslim Cide Hamete Benengeli, the supposed narrator of *Don Quijote,* is a key character. Likewise, the character Aldonza Lorenzo is here given a voice used to humorous effect to give Dulcinea's side of the story and discomfort at being used as a 'love interest'. As an added comic twist she is planning to emigrate, an element that is also part of the Picaresque tradition.[45] A further famous scene from *Don Quijote,* "The Pastoral Episode", is represented through the figure of *la Pastora Marcela* (scene 6, 142). This character in *Don Quijote,* and her defence of a woman's right to choose her own life, is representative of women's freedom and known for its feminist discourse, and as such her inclusion and discussion of freedom in a performance by *Teatro Yeses*, whose work has a distinctly feminist focus, is unsurprising.[46] Heard, however, from the mouths of prisoners it encourages the audience (or reader) to consider further the themes of freedom and imprisonment as they relate to the lives of the actresses, representing women prisoners in general.

Throughout the play, then, we experience these and similar kinds of cultural tensions, where the juxtaposition of characters, words, and concepts nudges the viewer, guiding them to consider the notions of freedom and imprisonment not only as they relate to Spanish cultural and literary history, but as they are being played out in front of them, on the stage. Furthermore, characters provide commentary on who belongs where, as we see for example in Roque Guinart's words that "La patria está allí donde uno se siente bien" (138) and the assertion from Cide Hamete Benengeli that "La tierra no es de cristianos, ni de moros, ni de

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[45] "Pienso embarcarme rumbo a las Américas donde hacen fortuna y viven felices unos primos de mi padre que allá emigraron ... Estoy harta de esta tierra plana donde solo corren los galgos mientras el tiempo está quieto¨ (133-134).
[46] "Yo nací libre, y para poder vivir escogí la libertad de los campos" (144)

judíos. La tierra es de todos los que han bebido en ella la leche de sus madres. Y el paraíso se

lleva en el corazón" (145). As a result, the play speaks to contemporary issues of border

crossing and immigration, nationalism, and women's rights, using Spanish literary traditions

and history to demonstrate the cultural meeting points that the theatre project is itself

embodying – the connecting and bridging between cultural spheres and groups. It holds up

key characters from Spanish literature to show how these issues still shape Spanish life.

When the character of Don Quijote exclaims:

> ¡Qué injusto es este mundo! ¿Cómo algunos lugares del mundo que gozan de
> riquezas y abundancia son capaces de cerrar sus puertas a los necesitados y no les
> tienden la mano? Pues sabed que toda persona tiene y debe luchar por su
> dignidad sin importa el lugar donde nazca" (124)

the audience is likely to draw the parallel between the situations of these on-stage characters

and those of the actresses themselves. At the same time, we are reminded of the prostitutes

Don Quijote meets in the scene at the inn, who represent criminality and the idea of a

depraved life, and yet show kindness to him, illustrating how criminal law and moral law are

not always intimately connected.[47]

Indeed, Don Quijote, book and character, is of course inextricably linked with issues

of the law and criminality, making it of particular relevance to this theatre company.

Furthermore the constant quest for truth serves to explore perceptions of justice and injustice

and the boundaries between truth and lies. In his article "The Knight as Fugitive from Justice:

Closure in Part One of Don Quijote", Gónzalez Echevarría discusses the "pervasive presence

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[47] This is a recurring theme, as we are reminded by Gónzalez Echevarría: "the goodness of delinquents within the rules of
their own world and independent of their being outside the law" (4).

of the law" (124), tracks the contrasting discourses of chivalry and the picaresque, and argues

that these "underlying legal stories" are what give shape to the first part of Don Quijote:

> Don Quijote is the first hero in the Western tradition to be a fugitive from justice,
> and whose life is defined by flight from the authorities of an organized state.....
> The pícaros, Lázaro, Guzmán and Pablos, lack the heroic grandeur to which Don
> Quijote aspires, but they do provide a close model and ambience, a world of
> criminals and representatives of justice within which the mad hidalgo will
> attempt to revive chivalric adventures. Don Quijote's flight and capture are cast
> within the discourse of the law because he is now the citizen of a body politic
> whose morals and mores are at odds with his heroic aspirations and his outdated
> concept of justice. (123)

This aspect of his character, and his presence in this play, reminds us of the changing

nature of 'the law', a concept we sometimes conceive of as static and set in stone. It adds an

element of relativity to understanding of criminality and law and order, and forces us to

question the taken-for-grantedness of aspects of the criminal and legal system – prisons, law

enforcement, the laws themselves. Similarly, the inability of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza

in *El más preciado bien* to comprehend the prisoners' situation is not only humorous, but

also shines a light on the idea of a division between the prison world and the non-prison

world – unable to comprehend what the prison world is about, on one level the character's

confusion echoes the general public's lack of knowledge and understanding of the

penitentiary system, but at another level, it again challenges the extent to which certain

aspects of the legal system and assumptions about criminality and incarceration are taken for

granted and assumed to be undisputed and unquestionable. "Por qué lleváis a estos hombres

y mujeres atados con grilletes como si de bestias se tratase"(112), asks Sancho of the Guardia

Civil officers accompanying the prisoners, and a little later Don Quijote exclaims: "Me

parece duro caso hacer esclavos a los que Dios y la naturaleza hicieron libres" (128) – in

their confusion about and disapproval of something so natural to the audience, a space is created for wondering why, in fact, it seems so normal and obvious that some people should be deprived of their liberty.

The meeting points in both plays, then, are multiple and varied. Simply seeing prisoners performing in a theatre is unusual, but witnessing prisoners who are so at ease interacting, dialoging, and playing with Spanish literary and cultural history can help with an awakening, or a jolting into awareness for those members of the audience who have assumptions about who engages with Spanish culture and to whom it 'belongs'. Such expectations are also challenged by the next case study I consider, where similar questions of normalizing or muddling assumptions of incarceration are encountered.

3.4: *Historias desde la cárcel* (2003) by Andrés Rabadán[48]

To continue this reading of contemporary prison-related writing and cultural projects in dialogue with Spanish cultural and literary traditions, my focus now moves to *Historias desde la cárcel.* Written by Andrés Rabadán while serving a twenty-year prison sentence (for murdering his father using a crossbow and derailing three trains), this text addresses many of the same concerns and themes touched on by the work and writing of *Teatro Yeses*. Although his story serves as a contrast to the kind of group projects that we have considered until now, and does not have the same focus on issues connected specifically to women prisoners in Spain, the way in which this book also dialogues with Spanish literary traditions creates a striking common ground between the texts.

[48] As I used a Kindle edition of this book, I have referenced section headings and paragraph or pages to show locations of quotes, in keeping with current MLA guidelines.

102

The author is the subject of two films[49], has written two novels and has held

exhibitions of his art work, which was also published in the comic *Las dos vidas de Andrés

Rabadán. Historias* is a series of prose portraits, illustrating various aspects of prison life and

the characters found inside, written from "este pequeño infierno en donde estamos metidos

tantos pequeños y extravagantes demonios" ("Suponiendo un final, ¿qué hare?", final

paragraph). There are descriptions of the confusing, Kafkaesque systems of rules and

regulations, unique to each different prison, that mean, for example, that something banned

in one place is sold freely in another, or which make requests almost impossible with all the

paperwork to complete. The anecdotes, often darkly humorous in nature, describe, for

example, cell searches, daily routines, the view from a window – the daily 'reality' of life

inside, but told in such a way as to make it appear both normal and surreal. There is no clear

plot to the text which, in addition to an introduction and a concluding part, is divided into

three main sections ("Dentro de la cárcel", "Pequeños retratos", "Diligencia con los Mossos

D'Esquadra") each made up of a series of short "relatos", about, as the author tells us in the

introduction:

> situaciones que me han parecido desorbitadas o irónicas. Formidables
> incongruencias en la dirección de las cárceles.... Personajes irreales en vuestro
> mundo, pero que aquí están presentes, vivos.

As with the previously mentioned cultural projects, an attempt to bridge the division

between inside/outside is central to his narrative, with the hope of being better understood

and choosing how he is represented 'out there': "Si solo una persona al leer estos relatos,

tiene una imagen mejor de mí, dormiré feliz." ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 40).

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[49] *El perdón* and *Las dos vidas de Andrés Rabadán,* both directed by Bonaventura Durall.

The inability to hide and the lack of control of his own 'image' is an added incentive to choose how to display himself, regaining some agency in his own story:

> permanecer escondido en una cueva alimentandome de raíces hasta que el tiempo y la sociedad me hayan borrado de las listas negras no funciona, porque la prensa y la televisión tienen el usufructo de aquellas imágenes dantescas.... Se me ha ocurrido por lo tanto aprovechar la última opción que me queda: dar la cara, decir algo. ("Una introducción necesaria", section 2, paragraph 1)

The narrator/author's constant efforts to find connection between himself and his readers is striking and again jolts the reader out of the comfort of reading about this figure of apparent otherness. His insistence on his awareness and understanding of the problems experienced by his readers on the 'outside' is a recurring feature, serving two purposes: to form connection and to highlight, perhaps, how little the outside world knows about his world.[50] This emphasis on the universality of the characters and the common ground between prison and the outside is surely disconcerting to the reader who is perhaps looking for a sensationalist insight into the life of a 'freak', just as the weird and grotesque descriptions of the *funcionarios* subvert the reader's sense of order.

At times, Rabadán employs something of an esperpento style to describe fellow prisoners and *funcionarios*. Turning the 'spectacle' of prison on its head, it is the staff here who are described in particularly monstruous terms, who become the freak show, the object of study: he calls Don Ambros "un monstruo", laughs at the fact many of them wear ill-fitting uniforms ("Que un porcentaje de ellos no cabe en su uniforme o siempre le sobra"

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[50] As illustrated, for example, in these two quotes: "Todo el mundo tiene sus propios problemas. Vosotros, los hombres y las mujeres libres, los que vivís fuera de este lugar, los tenéis a montones. Lo sé. Soy un hombre consciente de esa realidad que no es la mía" ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 41) and ¨He visto los peores abusos y las muertes más absurdas. Pero eso no quiere decir que de lo que me rodea no se pueda extraer el lado cómico. Siempre está. Los hombres son hombres en todas partes. Y las mujeres. Hacemos todos las mismas tonterías." ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 49)

("Pequeños retratos", "Preludio", paragraph 16), points out that "aquí no conocemos la marginación. Se acepta a todo el mundo" ("Pequeños retratos", "Don Ambros", final paragraph) and pities them for their loneliness. To emphasize the point he adds: "Todo eso es para que entendáis la parcialidad y diversidad humana que me rodea.... Que la familia Monster solo son unos cuantos. No todos ni tampoco la mayoría" ("Pequeños retratos", "Final de los pequeños retratos", final paragraph). The descriptions of the prison staff are often based on the kinds of biological criteria used to indicate criminality in the past, such as head size and "deformities":

> Yo no podía imaginar de ningún modo era que llegaría a encontrar funcionarios
> que a veces sobrepasaron a mis propios compañeros en cuanto a deformidades y
> defectos psíquicos ("Pequeños retratos", "Preludio", paragraph 7)

Similarly to the aforementioned examples from *Teatro Yeses*, here the kinds of observations are ones more commonly heard to describe prisoners, not made by them. Reading such comments from the perspective of a prisoner – detailed descriptions of physical characteristics for example, or discussions of their background to explain how they ended up working in prisons – challenges and subverts the more normal expectation, that of analysis of prisoners rather than staff. The long history of physical studies of prisoners and criminals is somewhat normalized and expected, yet here all these kind of comments seem absurd and sensationalist when we read them about the staff, even if they are exactly the kind of commentaries we are still accustomed to reading in media reports of prisoners or hearing on television shows about prisons. The voice of the prisoner here exposes the absurdity of the way prisoners are often discussed.

This text differs from the aforementioned cultural projects in its portrayal of the positive and beneficial aspects of group activities. During his years in prison, Rabadán read extensively and learnt Catalán, but his description of participation in cultural projects and other activities – a list of passing enthusiasms and hopes that are quickly dashed or given up – shows that involvement is not always as successful as the organizers might hope. Instead of the community and connection provided by cultural and educational activities, as seen in the previous case studies in the online writing and theatre projects, this is a prisoner whose life is defined by isolation and limitation: "No puedo hacer nada ni ir a ninguna parte dentro de la propia cárcel, dentro de mi propio módulo; incluso dentro mi propia celda me hallo más limitado. Es de aislamiento total." ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 4).

To what extent our narrator is reliable, is, of course, impossible to confirm. The fact of being written by a prisoner neither necessarily authenticates nor falsifies the content, but it undoubtedly injects at least the appearance of reality, an alternative voice to the official one of the prison administration, which regularly mocks and draws attention to the empty nature of their words when compared to his situation:

> En este momento llevo ocho meses en una celda de aislamiento, con registros continuos, desnudado por quien quiera hacerlo, despojado de todas mis pertenencias a excepción de tres mudas y diez libros, despertado varias veces en plena noche... La Dirección General se apresurará a decir que nada de eso es cierto, que lo que ocurre es únicamente que vivo en una celda con un estilo de vida personalizado, adecuado a mis necesidades, pensado solo para facilitar mi rehabilitación, resocialización, reeducación, reintegración, remineralización, y reanimación. ("Suponiendo un final, ¿qué hare?", 23rd page)

In doing so, combined with his descriptions of the staff as discussed above, the text pushes us to question not only our understanding of prisoners and prison life, but our assumptions

about how 'the system' and Spanish society in general behaves and functions. As such, along with its clear connections to the esperpento tradition, it can perhaps be better read as a reworking of the picaro myth.[51] While it includes many of the typical characteristics of the picaro genre, other aspects are substantially different or absent, resulting in a kind of parodying of the genre, in an updated version for twenty-first century Spain, perhaps having more in common with the idea of *neopicaresque.* The figure of the picaro is an outsider, usually a small time petty delinquent rather than one who has committed serious crime (such as murder), although in *neopicaresque* texts, this convention is not always strictly adhered to. Typical features of the picaresque genre include the narration of a life which explains a final situation, satire reflecting the author's social bias, and a picaro as protagonist (Ardila, 2015, 15). Normally the protagonist would be expected to progress through a series of situations to reach his final place, going through a psychological change as is seen in the quintessential picaro, Guzmán de Alfarache, or Lazarillo de Tormes. Identification between the author and the main character is a key aspect, combined with a critical observation of society, a level of discontent with the social order, and at the same time a desire for social ascent. The tendency to use the picaro character to convey a political message is important, but as much as a political statement it a journey of discovery and development for the protagonist: "a form of Bildungsroman that reflects on men's place in society and how they came to understand and accept their status" (Ardila, 2015, 16).

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[51] Critics such as J. A. Garrido Ardila in *El género picaresco en la crítica literaria* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008) and Claudio Guillén, in *Literature As System* (Princeton University Press, 1971) have discussed the difference between the picaresque genre, where certain tropes and themes are incorporated, and the picaresque myth, which includes the idea of the picaresque as inspiration, but not all the defining characteristics. This is discussed further in "The Neopicaresque : The Picaresque Myth in the Twentieth-Century Novel" by Shelley Godsland in *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature* (Cambridge University Press: 2014).

Keeping in mind this and the description of the picaresque as a "first person narrative in which a poor individual reflects upon and criticizes a society obsessed with keeping up appearances, and in which the lower classes are despised" (Godsland, 261), it becomes clear that *Historias* can be understood as dialoguing with the genre and myth of the picaresque, a genre which itself is based on movement. The picaresque character moves through the world, trying to find his place and improve his position, until ending up stuck in prison where he writes his story. Andrés Rabadán, the narrator, is undoubtedly an outsider, a 'drifter', although one unable to move very far alone, who never quite finds his place, as seen for example in his varied attempts to create a career or area of expertise for himself. As with the figure of the picaro, his protagonism parodies the traditionally accepted notions of heroes, and, to some extent, he fits the model of social outsider who criticizes the establishment.[52] The failings of the picaro's family to provide a safe and stable 'home' are equally present here: Rabadán's mother committed suicide when he was fourteen after which time he lived with an abusive father, who he then killed. Another typical feature is the manner in which the narrator addresses his narratee: the very first line of the introduction evokes this typical trait as he introduces himself by name, and regularly addresses his readers directly: "Hola, me llamo Andrés Rabadán, así como suena en castellano, que era la lengua hablada desde mi infancia en hogar (hogar, por decir algo)" ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 1).

Like the meeting point between actors and audience that takes place at performances by *Teatro Yeses*, this interaction with the reader constitutes to some extent a mixing and delimiting, a changing of boundaries. When the reader is so clearly evoked, there is a call, perhaps, to be more than a passive witness. The witnessing is being addressed and

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[52] These are two of the key picaro traits identified by Ardila (17).

acknowledged, the 'viewer' of these scenes is implicated and held, to some extent, accountable for the situation. A threshold is made obvious, opening up a space for a reaction or action. The reader here is challenged to contemplate the nature of the writer's criminality. How do we resolve the conflict between the illegal behaviour of this narrator's prior life and the emotional reaction we may have to his current situation? As we may ask of the picaro myth, what is the purpose of this coming together of delinquent and reader? To sympathize? To empathize? Is there a moral obligation for the reader who has now been challenged to engage and react to the apparently unjust situation the protagonist finds himself in? It seems likely that this coming together is at least in part intended to nudge the reader to consider assumptions about law, order, and criminality, to question what makes somebody a criminal, to notice who is punished for breaking rules and who is not. In much the same way Samson questions to what extent *Lazarillo de Tormes* is really a fictional autobiography or whether we should "see it as more akin to a legal deposition, witness statement or relation?" (34), we can read Rabadán's text as a criticism of Spain's penitentiary system, a witness statement, where the reader is forced into the task of re-witnessing and choosing what to do with their new or reinforced knowledge about prison life. The narrator-author, in the introduction, states his intentions as being to merely tell his story, reaching out to his reader and reassuring them that he is not seeking to get their pity or add to their stress:

> Conozco el agotamiento que vivís, el estrés y la depresión, la cruel y horrible frustración continuada de aquellos que se van percatando de que la vida no será lo que habían soñado. Conozco vuestras lágrimas, amigos míos, y por eso no deseo añadir más pena a vuestra vida. No os lo merecéis. Vosotros no sois responsables de mi pasado, y, por lo tanto, no tenéis que cargar con mis disculpas ni tristezas. Mi intención ha sido sencillamente la de contaros .. algunas cosas que he visto en la psiquiatría penitenciaria catalana. ("Una introducción necesaria", paragraph 43).

Of course, this stated intention does not negate or exclude other possible intentions or effects – the narration of a series of events is hard to read without forming some kind of opinion about the kinds of things that are shown to happen in prisons. The reader has to make up their own mind whether these are actual occurrences and, likewise, whether they are acceptable occurrences, but the continued reaching out to the reader on the part of the narrator suggests that he is hoping they will view events as unfair, look favourably on him rather than the treatment he receives and question the way the prison system works.

The picaro protagonist, an outsider oppressed by society who exposes social injustice and corruption, tends to be repentant by the culmination of the story. Certainly here we have an outsider figure, but it is unclear to what extent he is penitent. In the third part we hear some of his feelings towards his experience, when describing his personality as:

> torturada en extremo, y por lo tanto, los peores castigos los he recibido de mi propia consciencia: por las noches inflingidos en forma de pesadillas; por el día, con la fuerza de los vivos recuerdos ("Diligencia con los mossos d'esquadra", "Larga conversación dentro del juzgado", 9th page)

In some regards the text can be read as something of a distorted bildungsroman (chronicling a life and the learning that has taken place along the way), there is no moment of truth or change of opinion from the start to the finish of the text itself. He begins by recognizing that "no tendría ningún sentido buscar una justificación ni intentar que mis crímenes resultaron comprensibles ni intentar minimalizarlos. Siempre serán horribles" ("Una introducción necesaria", Section 2, paragraph 3) and stating that his intention is to find the funny side of it. By the end he is still pointing out that he tries to find the funny side of it. His moment of epiphany has occured previously to the telling of his story – he knows the realities and has

made his peace with it – but for the reader, there is probably a different reaction to these same words after having read the text.

In some reworkings of the picaro myth, particularly for example in modern examples such *A Clockwork Orange* or Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum*, crime is not prompted by need, but certain elements bind them to the genre (such as their satirical tone, or the unstable family background of the protagonist) along with the focus on revealing how status and honour are revealed to be based on a hypocritical illusion and are merely a means to justify social inequality (Samson, 2015, 32). Here there is little discussion of what prompted the narrator-author's crimes, but the satirical tone and the emphasis on social commentary (in the form of critique of the prison system) are certainly present. In a kind of subversion of the genre there is no end result. The concluding part "Suponiendo un final, ¿qué haré?" reflects on various prisoners the narrator-author has known who either died before or shortly after being released or reoffended and found themselves back in prison. As such, the narrator concludes "No tengo planes para el futuro. Lo siento mucho, amigos míos, si esperabais un final glorioso" (penultimate page). Reflecting the reality of prison life both for the author and for many others caught in the penitentiary system in Spain, we and the narrator are left in a kind of limbo, hanging on, stuck, wondering what will happen next, with no clear resolution but the likelihood of simply more of the same.

3.4.1: Windows, boundaries, movement

Like the two texts by Canovás and *Teatro Yeses*, the meeting points between people within the prison world and those outside the prison institution are created in multiple ways

in *Historias desde la cárcel* – dialogue with Spanish literary and cultural traditions is one aspect of this as can be seen above in the consideration of the presence and significance of esperpento and picaro references. The physical meeting between prisoners and non-prisoners is again enabled through cultural work – in the theatre project it is through the actual presence of prisoners within the theatre setting, here it is through the words of a prisoner entering the reader's world through the book they are reading. These meetings help us view the intersection of prison and cultural production as a kind of borderland, and the descriptions of travel along with those of space and place contribute to this understanding.

For a text whose focus is the nature of imprisoned life, the emphasis on movement, albeit with certain restrictions, is striking. Certeau tells us that "every story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (115) and it becomes clear that this applies equally here, even with the apparent themes of imprisonment and restricted movement. The sense of circulating and moving is created through references to multiple locations (including various prisons in which the narrator-author has spent time – Brians, Quatre Camins, la Modelo, Tarragona and La Roca), the incorporation of other locations in anecdotes about other prisoners, and primarily in the descriptions of how days inside are punctuated by movement:

> A las nueve nos bajan de las celdas para desayunar. A la una comemos y nos
> suben otra vez a las celdas hasta las cuatro de la tarde. A las cuatro nos abren la
> puerta y de nuevo al patio hasta la hora de cenar, a las siete. Después de cenar,
> vuelta a la celda. ("Dentro de la cárcel", "Haga una instancia", paragraph 1)

There is a constant sense of movement and moving, but no sense of really going anywhere. All paths appear to lead back to the prison or the cell, specifically the dark solitary cells with no sunlight and the dark cold prison building. ("La puerta gigante del muro se cerró a

nuestras espaldas, y la negrura del garaje nos engulló como un pozo. Frío." ("Diligencia con

los mossos d'esquadra", "Vuelta a "casa"", paragraph 6).

Throughout the text, setting is important, but it is in the third section that movement

and travel become central. Its title, "Diligencia con los mossos d'esquadra" refers to the

"pequeñas excursiones" known as "diligencias" to take prisoners to complete "las múltiples

exigencias de los tribunales" (paragraph 1) when they have to make statements to courts.

After a description of the typical nature of one of these outings, the remainder of the section

consists of aspects of a particular trip, and gives us opportunity to consider the nature of

maps and how space can be disrupted.

Viewed from the car that is transporting Rabadán to visit the doctor, the Spanish

landscape passes by. Unlike the temporary peace of the train travel Certeau describes,

however, here the journey is disrupted through the dangerous driving of one of the guards;

what is visible outside becomes less important than the physical and emotional sensations

produced by the roller-coaster ride. The route they take, the track if marked on a map, would,

as Certeau reminds us, "only refer ... to the absence of what has passed by. Surveys of routes

miss what was: the act of passing by" (97). Of interest in this journey is the dynamics within

the car: the fact it is an old, uncomfortable car, the anger and impatience of the driver, the

driving on the wrong side of the road, the curves taken at breakneck speed, the prisoner's

head bumping against the roof of the car, the moment of conspiracy between guard and

prisoner ("me propuso que pusiéramos una queja juntos para ver si les mejoraban el

transporte" – "Diligencia con los mossos d'esquadra", "Diligencia del 24 de octubre: mal

comienzo", 5th page). Then when they get lost (because of the poor quality of their

photocopied map and the driver's impatience), another colourful disruption to the order of

the tracked journey comes in the form of a street market:

> Después de haber salido marcha atrás de un callejón que había resultado no tener
> salida, nos dimos de bruces con una magnífica concentración de personas, sobre
> todo mujeres bajas y gordas, y ropas que ondeaban de muchos colores, y una
> cantidad importante de negros y marroquíes, que trajinaban de un lado a otro
> ("Diligencia con los mossos d'esquadra", "Diligencia del 24 de octubre: mal
> comienzo", 8th page).

Pedestrians who, literally and suddenly, disrupt the vision in unexpected ways: "these

walkers make use of spaces that cannot be seen, ... the paths... elude legibility" (Certeau 93).

These walkers resist the colonizing power of the map by existing, at once, in conjunction and

in conflict with the photocopied map, and by surprising the all-seeing eyes of those in power

(here, specifically, the prison officers): "The long poem of walking manipulates spatial

organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be" (Certeau 101). Surveillance and

panoptic vision can not prevent the interruption to routine caused by an unexpected market.

The straightforward outing to the doctor has become a carnival of confusion and

unpredictability: moments of intimacy between guards and prisoner, surprising encounters,

unlikely stories (told while waiting for the doctor) and emotional responses to landscape and

sights.

The voyeuristic view offered by the window of Certeau's train carriage, disconnected

and peaceful – "the travelling noble soul that could believe itself intact because it was

surrounded by glass and iron" (114) – is here challenged by descriptions of physical

discomfort, confusion about the route, the tension between imprisonment and freedom

offered by the chaotic journey and the little moments of disorder which seep in to challenge the authority of those supposedly in control.

Rabadán in his telling of the events wins back some power from the map – which normally "colonizes space" and overwrites the journeys and stories that make the map possible (Certeau 121) – and thus decolonizes the power of the official map, a map which here shows itself to be useless, disrupting the official descriptions and expectations of what should happen on this route and these spaces. He becomes a tour describer, to use Certeau's term, and his story of this outing, like all the stories in this book, subvert and challenge expectations of what we can do and make out of a space:

> If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is to live not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces, if it is characterized by the privilege of the tour over the state, then the story is delinquent. (122)

The story and the delinquent, here, become one, and offer alternative readings and understandings of a supposedly very structured, ordered event. Although the narrator's own movements are strictly controlled, likewise his ability to wander or walk through space of his accord – "Hace años que me he dejado arrastrar por olas caóticas" ("Una introducción necesaria", 6th page) he reminds us and the aforementioned prison transfers take place with no say from him about when or where he will go – his storytelling about his movements clears the way for an unstructured, resistant reading of space.

3.5: Conclusion

Reading these texts and projects within the context of the educational and cultural life of prisons in Spain, whilst taking into account theories of cultural capital, the role of cultural institutions in cultural engagement and Certeau's notions of tactics and strategies for practising culture and spatial resistance, reveals how cultural activity in prisons provides a place to develop agency and voice for prisoners. The texts share an interest in evoking well-known Spanish literary traditions and characters, with various intentions, including to enter the dialogue as equals and to create a sense of historical relevance.

Cultural activity in prisons appears to offer, to some extent, inbetween-spaces, where there is space for resistance and subversion of the established order. Choosing to be on stage or choosing to show one's face in the lines of a published book or blog post is a proactive decision to be looked at. The empowering nature of the decision to choose to be observed when one's life is lived under constant surveillance should not be underestimated, likewise the decision to tell one's story, even when much of that story is heavily controlled by other people and circumstances. These cultural acts of partial escape are an opportunity to reclaim one's story and move from being a statistic, part of a mass, to being seen and heard as an individual.[53] They can offer one of the few spaces within prisons to gain agency and autonomy, to genuinely give consent, to resist, challenge, and subvert roles. They suggest

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[53] While cultural projects and organized educational activities form a platform for the prisoners involved, it would of course be naive to assume they are the only outlets for cultural production in prisons. The act of creativity in prison, as on the outside, occurs at numerous points of interaction and connectivity, but also from conditions of isolation and solitude. Sites of creativity and creative resistance are undoubtedly multiple and should not be simplified or under/overestimated. Not every prisoner will benefit from personally taking part in an organized workshop, but, from the reports and studies analysing such projects, it becomes clear that prison culture, in general, will benefit.

that in the creation of a borderland space, other ways of being and doing can emerge, and that their emerging challenges what happens on either side of the borderland.

If we accept that books and reading promote freedom, functioning as a "ventana liberadora y libertaria"(Gutiérrez, 2009, 97), then it seems appropriate to see the creation of books or theatre (or indeed any kind of cultural activity) as a means to not only open a window to look through, but to allow some movement through it. Indeed, images of windows feature in all three texts. In the story of Zoraida in *El más preciado bien que nos dieron los cielos* the window is the site of her first interactions with the captive Christian and the catalyst for her escape and conversion (146-154). The train windows in *La balada* offer a view into other lives. In *Historias* the window in the narrator's cell connects him to the outside world and offers the idea of movement and threshold, not only for its surprising, everchanging, view. More than just a viewpoint, it carries with it possibilities, like the time he sees another prisoner on the roof during a riot: "la realidad es.. que mi ventana sorprende al espectador" ("Dentro de la cárcel", "Una cara conocida", paragraph 3). As symbols of visibility and threshold, they suggest that the barriers and divisions are not entirely impassable, or, indeed, through their presence the notion of the barrier is diminished or even negated.

Voices that dissent from the official declarations about prison conditions and circumstances creatively resist the archiving, categorising and ordering that the prison system entails. Although caution is necessary to avoid an overly positive, romanticized notion of the prison population, by challenging and deepening what is considered culturally 'normal', these voices add to our understanding of who and what belongs in Spanish culture, and by

117

implication, who and what belongs in Spanish society. Spain itself, of course, is often considered a 'gateway country', because of its shared borders with Africa and its close historical and contemporary ties to Latin America, and these messages of cultural movement and mixing evoke images of other journeys and cultural encounters. The itineraries described in these texts, the constant moving without ever arriving at a new destination, combined with the portrayal of meeting points, invoke the notion of borderland, exploring ideas of movement, stuckness, and mixing. Within the texts, characters are changed through their meetings and encounters, just as the reader/audience and creators are changed through the meetings and encounters produced by the production and distribution of these cultural works. Through these cultural activities (writing and theatre) the notion of belonging is challenged – creator and receptor are irrevocably changed through these encounters and find themselves, to some extent, between two worlds. This articulation of the borderland concept, a meeting point between cultures, argues for the importance of cultural and social exchange, and shows how prison populations provide a place where dialogue could, if conditions allow, lead to improved shared cultural understanding and formative experiences for those inside and outside the prison walls. Foucault states that the "self-evidence of the prison is also based on its role, supposed or demanded, as an apparatus for transforming individuals" (233), but perhaps more than anything these texts show how cultural work can transform understanding of the prison experience. Borderlands are places of extremes, but also suggest a life beyond their boundaries. Ultimately, these projects and texts, whilst illustrating their own relevance, simultaneously hint at the limitations of the prison system and the inherent contradictions of their own existence.

Chapter 4: Freed spaces? The transformation of former prison buildings

4.1: Introduction

Former Spanish prisons have found themselves linked to cultural production and cultural life in sometimes unexpected ways, becoming film sets, art galleries, and visitor attractions.[54] The spectacle of prisons is no doubt a significant part of the appeal of re-purposing these spaces (Brown, 2009). While converting historical buildings into cultural or community spaces can be an admirable use of public space and a useful way to conserve structures, transforming buildings used as prisons within living memory complicates the dynamics. In this chapter, following on from my discussion of movement and meeting points in prison portrayals on screen, stage, and page, my focus moves into the theme of transformations, specifically discussing the terrain of prison buildings as physical spaces. I explore the stories of three former prisons – Carabanchel (Madrid), *La Cárcel* (Segovia) and *Lecrác* (Palencia) – which throw light on debates about how decisions are made about these contested sites and what happens when the physical presence of a building is removed (as is the case with Carabanchel) or altered (as is the case with former prisons in Segovia and Palencia).[55]

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[54] The closed prison at Zamora, for example, was used as the film set for *Celda 211,* and now, standing empty, has become a canvass for graffiti artists. In Extremadura, the old prison of Badajoz houses a contemporary art gallery. The building which holds the *Museum of Contemporary Modern Art in Vigo* (MARCO) was a jail, built in the nineteenth century. In Teruel, Aragón, tourists can visit 'The Prison Route', which includes buildings used as prisons dating back to fifteenth century.A sixteenth century jail houses a 'Casa de la Cultura' in Carrión de los Condes, and, in the same province of León, in Saldaña, the old prison is now the site of the library and a space for cultural activities. The contemporary art gallery *Domus Artium* in Salamanca is housed in the former prison, built in 1930.

[55] The conversions of the Segovia and Palencia prisons have followed quite different processes with distinct outcomes, thus the consideration of both cases offers differing examples of the ways in which cultural activity can be used to create

My analysis of cultural centres as places of potential movement and flow, and discussion about the process of neutralizing contested spaces, contributes to and continues the previous chapters' discussion of marginalization and belonging, and potential for borderland 'mixing'. Susana Draper's comprehensive work on former prisons in Latin America provides a useful theoretical framework from which to consider Spain's former prisons, while Andreas Huyssen's articulation of memory, ruins, and memorializing also proves helpful to my consideration. Architectural theory about prisons and museums enables a reading of these buildings as symbolic and physical spaces, and furthermore indicates how their uses can be restricted, controlled or aided by their design, sometimes contradicting the proposed intentions for these 'new' spaces, sometimes helping increase understanding of the building's purpose.

Controversies over decisions on what to do with the former prisons point to a continuing power struggle and an ongoing marginalization of prisoners which evokes the previous lives of these prisons. Unsurprisingly, these power struggles also lead to examples of resistance and protest and I consider Julia Ramírez Blanco's notion of 'liberated spaces', outlined in *Utopías artísticas de revuelta* (2014), to reframe understanding of the afterlife of Carabanchel and rethink the function and methods of memorializing these sites of past conflict and abuses. As part of this, I discuss the architecture of public spaces in a broader sense, contrasting the 'public spaces' that these cultural centres are intended to represent with other public spaces, whether physical or virtual, where creativity and community are found today, and where understandings of imprisonment, freedom, and democracy are negotiated. Referencing the notion of liminality, I consider the role and potential of former prison sites to

encounters and dialogue with historical and contemporary issues relating to prisons and imprisonment.

act as borderland sites, points of encounter which bring together people from different spheres within their boundaries, where understanding and assumptions about criminality, belonging and exclusion can be challenged and informed.

4.2: *Meeting points between past and present*

Arising from my emphasis on meeting points, an initial focus here is the encounter between past and present. In *Afterlives of Confinement* (2012)*,* Susana Draper, who has written extensively about former prisons in Latin America as ruins or recuperated spaces, uses the prison as "a problematic nucleus from which to rethink and question the histories that mark the 'post' in postdictatorship" and discusses how the re-functionalizing of particular sites can be used to assert power over both the present and the past as stories are ordered, controlled, or invisibilized (8). It is difficult to consider the physical locations of my three case studies without acknowledging and understanding their historical context and how it affects their contemporary relevance. The need to link the present to the past becomes particularly compelling when their connections to Franco's dictatorship are established. The historical framing, or lack thereof, of former prisons in their new capacities, might, for example, point to attempts to diminish or dim their significance as part of his legacy and suggest a continued imbalance of power, whereby an attempt is made to erase or overlay collective memory of past injustices with culture's 'clean slate' in keeping with the efforts of the Transition and its project of amnesty and forgetting. Equally important is the need to consider the connection, or failure to connect, with the present – if the wider social setting in which these converted prisons operate is ignored, at the same time as white-washing the past,

contemporary questions of criminality, punishment, violence, and exclusion are potentially

forgotten.

Draper hypothesizes that in the process of converting and repurposing prisons,

whether into shopping centres, places of cultural memory or museums, certain types of

control and power are privileged, possibilities are limited and shaped: "by turning any act of

the past into available material, memory becomes an artifact and factum that evades the

question of what type of memory citizenship is implied by the systems that govern the

politics of and about memory" (16). The notion of making acts of the past "available

material" causing "memory (to become) an artifact" is of especial interest when we consider

that 'artifact' can carry with it an implication of artifice. The repurposed prison is devised for

the apparently practical purpose of encouraging cultural activity or in the case of Draper's

study where prisons are turned into shopping malls, consumerist activity, which is, of course,

also a factor in the process of encouraging cultural activity.[56] The practical purpose of the

memory connected to the space is less clear. Its artificial nature, on the other hand, is evident,

if we consider artificial that which is created, by humans, to appear natural. The type of

memory evoked in the newly determined functions of these old spaces is carefully shaped,

selectively prescribed, potentially an artificial nod to the past, whilst simultaneously ignoring

and directing attention away from multiple existing personal memories and possibilities.

So it becomes clear that we need to also bear in mind the notion of memory (and

history) when considering these transformations. It is, of course, precisely because of the

differing memories associated with these spaces that their current forms become of such

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[56] Josep María Montaner notes in *Museums for the 21st Century,* *"*the museum has become a place for the massive influx of an active public, for stimulus and interaction, and also for consumption in its broadest sense" (148).

relevance. Huyssen reminds us of the important role remembrance plays in how we link ourselves individually and as societies to the past and the future. He stresses, furthermore, the political dilemma central to decisions made about what to do with former buildings with traumatic histories, such as those considered in this chapter, when asking how memories – local, regional, or national – should be represented, and emphasizes the relation between these decision and notions of the public sphere, democracy, citizenship and identity (2000, 35). Who, for example, within the public sphere gains the privilege of having their personal memories and history marked, recognized and validated? Who finds no formal recognition of their past, thereby finding themselves marginalized or excluded from collective memory? How do decisions about the renovation or future lives of former prisons – sites of controversy, violence, and trauma – consolidate a sense of belonging to contemporary Spain or, conversely, emphasize a lack of ability to participate in today's officially legitimized social landscape?

Personal memory proves to be at the root of much of the controversy surrounding the transformation of former prisons in Spain, a controversy which points to another salient feature of these case studies: in creating debate about repurposing the former prisons, resistance asserts itself as an unavoidable offshoot. The debates open up a new space for opposition, thereby, to some extent, offering increased visibility for former prisoners, despite the official lack of recognition. Collective resistance grows as a result of the solidarity formed by neighbourhood groups – it can be seen, particularly in the case of Carabanchel, but also in the debates about the Palencia prison renovations, in the protests against government plans, and in the combined efforts of former prisoners for whom the plans to

demolish or transform prison buildings created a platform to be heard and form a collective voice.

4.3: Carabanchel: a temporary site of encounter

Perhaps the most famous former prison in Spain is one which, physically, no longer exists, but whose position in personal and collective memory, current state, and future combine to form a controversial and powerful presence in the popular, cultural and historical imagination of Spain. Because of its visibility and symbolic status it seems apt to begin my analysis with an overview of what happened at Carabanchel, the *Prisión Provincial de Madrid,* to consider my other case studies in this context. I then continue by analysing some of the graffiti, street art, and later uses of the site to explain my understanding of the site as a 'borderland space'.

A huge construction covering approximately 170,000 square feet, the prison was built between 1940 and 1944 using forced labour after the destruction of the former Madrid prison (*Modelo*) left an urgent need for a new site of imprisonment for the huge number of political prisoners. It was inaugurated on 22 June 1944, although some sections were never completed, and work continued for some time after its opening. As it was the only men's prison in Madrid almost every political prisoner during the dictatorship spent at least some time there while waiting to be transferred to other locations throughout Spain, adding to its huge symbolic character. Acts of violence, torture and executions were commonplace.[57] It gained notoriety and became, according to Carmen Ortiz García, editor of the most

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[57] It is worth bearing in mind, too, that another key location for questioning, torture, and executions, as referenced in various testimonials, was in *Puerta del Sol*, in the basements of the government buildings. These buildings currently house the government of the *Comunidad de Madrid,* with no official recognition of their significance in previous times. (Thanks to Dr. Raúl Alvarez Moreno for pointing this out.)

comprehensive book on the subject, (*Lugares de represión, paisajes de la memoria: La cárcel de Carabanchel),* "una presencia cercana y muy continua en nuestro paisaje cotidiano, en nuestro imaginario social y en nuestra experiencia o inexperiencia política como joven democracia" (14). After the dictatorship it continued to enjoy an unfortunate fame for its abusive and violent style and dismal conditions. It reached, perhaps, peak visibility during the Transition as the site of prisoner protests organized by COPEL ("la Coordinadora de Presos en Lucha"), a group founded within the prison which led the protests of the late 1970s.[58] Common prisoners continued to be imprisoned there in unpleasant conditions up until its closure in 1998[59] and the prison and neighbourhood – home to various marginalized and 'othered' groups like *gitanos*, *quinquis*, and drug dealers/users, and the site of *chabolas* – were closely connected through their shared reputation as sites of danger and deviance.

The controversy connected to the prison continued after it stopped being used, with debate about what would become of it and it became something of "un patrimonio incómodo e indeseable" (Puicercús Vázquez 29). After it officially closed its doors the *Dirección General de Instituciones Penitenciarias* organized guided visits inside the museum and organized a photography exhibition to mark its history, then it was gradually inhabited by squatters and graffiti artists among other members of the public. People took what they could use or sell, such as metal bars and other building materials, from the structure. Local neighbourhood organizations organized memorial events and demonstrations asking for it to

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[58] It was described as "más un ideario que una organización estable" in *El siglo de los castigos* (Lorenzo Rubio, 103).

[59] In his "insider's exposé" of life inside, Christopher Chance, one of the last prisoners detained there before it closed, describes the prison variously as a "hellhole", "the most sinister prison in Europe", "the dead Spanish beast", and "Europe's most evil dungeon", imagining that: "Carabanchel was the bogeyman used by the mothers of Madrid to keep their children on the straight and narrow... I know very little about this prison but I could feel the malevolence here. I knew in my heart that I had entered a different world, a dangerous, evil world where officials rule with violence and impunity" (11). While certainly sensationalist, his descriptions demonstrate something of the emotion and spectacle associated with the institution, as well as providing a recent, lively echo of a number of references to be found in memoirs and descriptions of the prison which add to the prison's 'aura'.

be turned into a memorial site, a hospital, a community centre, or some combination thereof. There was a particular effort made to save the emblematic cupola, the largest of its kind in Europe, an effort supported by the Madrid College of Architects. Artists, photographers and documentary makers, aware of its historical significance, recorded the deterioration as they realized its days were numbered. *El Foro por la Memoria Histórica* organized public tours, during which ex-prisoners identified their old cells and took photos posing in the various parts of the building, such as where they received family visits.[60] Rosendo Mercado, a famous rock musician from the neighbourhood of Carabanchel, performed in the recently closed prison in March 1999.[61] At the same time, in the context of the governing People's Party push to privatize public enterprises, as prime, expansive real estate there were unsurprisingly numerous demands on this land from businesses and the local authorities, who wanted to use it for housing development. As such the debate about its repurposing became emblematic too of a broader national debate about public spaces and privatization, alongside its specific relevance to the penitentiary system and its business model of growth and privatization.

The prison gradually turned into a ruin, and contained within this process were the beginnings of new forms of memorializing the space, with artistic projects suggesting new ways of seeing and viewing the site, alongside appeals to convert and rebuild rather than demolish the building. The last prisoners had been moved out in September 1998 and it was not until 2008 that demolition took place, started unexpectedly to try to avoid protest, when pleas were still being made in parliament for the approval of proposals to preserve parts of

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[60] See photos in *Propaganda ilegal: Itinerario de prisiones 1972-1975* by Luis Puicercús Vázquez
[61] The concert was recorded to create the album *Siempre hay una historia.*

the building. The space left behind has been described as "una gran cicatriz que no ha sido regenerada" (Ortiz García, 2013, 71), although, as I will suggest later in the chapter, it is possible to view its recent history more positively. As a result of its history and the long strange process of ruination, its presence continues today as a powerful patrimonial landscape (Viejo Rose 24), an "anti-monument" (Gónzalez Ruibal, 2009) and one of the most recognizable symbols of repression in Spain. Indeed, the prison became not only representative of the political repression which took over Spain throughout Franco's dictatorship, but also had an enduring fame as a site of punishment and violence into the Transition (García García 150). Built at the centre of the neighbourhoods of Carabanchel and Aluche (adjoining working class neighbourhoods with very different reputations) which had been a frontline during the Civil War, the prison came to be the overwhelming undesirable identifying factor of these *barrios* although it was particularly associated with Carabanchel despite its proximity to Aluche (García García 141; Ortiz García, 54). Certainly its imposing physical presence had much to do with this and both its design and materiality are referred to, and indeed a focal point, in memories of the prison and campaigns for its future use. The architecture of Carabanchel, so tied to the ideology behind its creation, is now one of its most discussed features, both in terms of its original design and the ruins it became.[62]

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[62] Luis Puicercús Vázquez, a former prisoner who talks about his experiences in Carabanchel in *Propaganda ilegal: Itinerario de prisiones 1972-1975,* describes how it was visiting the ruins of the building, walking the corridors and visiting the cells again, that helped him consider how his own memories of being imprisoned there could become part of a collective memory (20). In calls to save the prison, its architecture was mentioned as part of its emblematic nature: "un monumento de primera magnitud, el espacio arquitectónico más impresionante (con mucha diferencia respeto a cualquier otro) que hay ahora en Madrid" (A newspaper article published in El Público, quoted in *Lugares de represión,* Ortiz García, 56).

4.3.1: Prison design and the panopticon

Architectural design, a central consideration of the penitentiary system since its outset, is a key facet of the symbolic and actual presence of Carabanchel, its impact and relevance functioning as a crucial aspect of any study. While, as we shall see, design and space in each of my three case studies (Carabanchel, *La Cárcel,* and *Lecrác*) is an important factor to consider, in the case of Carabanchel it stands out as being fundamental to the site's public perception.

Prison architecture, while different in different countries, shares some common points. For most of history the main requirement for prisons was that they be strong and secure (Johnston 44), but as a result of prison reformers the requirements were increased to a list which continues to be of relevance in the present day:

> "1. punishment; 2. security from escape and defense from outside force; 3. systematic supervision of both guards and prisoners; 4. prevention of corruption arising from prisoners' mutual contact; 5. good health of the occupants; 6. reformation by means of labor, religion, and possibly education." (Johnston 44)

Three main types of prison design became common in the years following demands for penal reforms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – rectangular, circular and radial, the latter being by far the most frequent. While other designs have become more common in contemporary prison architecture, the design of Carabanchel was firmly rooted in the eighteenth and nineteenth century sense of prisons needing "an architecture of surveillance" which was intended to discourage contact among prisoners and to enable their control (Johnston 66). The design that most fully attempted to realize this 'architecture of

128

surveillance' is Bentham's Panopticon.[63] In 1860 a report published by the Spanish

government discussing prison construction stated a preference for panopticon and radial

designs, although most prisons opened at that time simply reused former military or religious

buildings (Johnston, 107).[64] While sometimes described as being panoptical, Carabanchel

was actually a radial design, with a large cupola at the heart of the star-shaped complex and

wings radiating out from that central point, reflective of the vast majority of new designs in

Spain prior to the 1950s. Its design was already considered to be outdated at the time it was

being built, and the election of the radial style has been interpreted as evidence of both the

ideological and practical needs of the prison (Gónzalez Ruibal, 2009, 118).

The design is certainly influenced by the panopticon model and although visibility

from the control tower is restricted (and other detailed parts of the designs were not

implemented), the focus on surveillance is embodied by the structure. As such,

Carabanchel's design represented "a powerful metaphor of the new totalitarian regime of

surveillance that would characterise the post-war period" (Gónzalez Ruibal, 2009, 68).

However, surveillance as a means of control, as explored in further detail in Part One, has

been pointed out to be 'imperfect' in its mechanisms of control, unable, for example, to

prevent escapes and riots. While former prisoners include descriptions of the architecture that

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[63] Interestingly, although the Panopticon is probably one of the first images to come to mind when considering prison design, it is in fact a relatively rare and sometimes falsely identified phenomenon. That said, Spain is one of the countries which paid most attention to the model and used it as inspiration for various prison buildings Numerous prisons in Spain have, to some extent, been modelled on Bentham's designs including the Palacio de Justicia y Cárcel de Vigo (Vigo, now Museo de Arte Contemporánea), and the still functioning Prisión Modelo (Barcelona). Bentham's philosophical and political relationship with Spain is discussed in "'A Great People Struggling for Their Liberties': Spain and the Mediterranean in the Eyes of the Benthamites" by Gregorio Alonso, which perhaps helps explain the attention his designs received there.

[64] The religious connection is furthered by the tendency in Spain, unlike in other countries, to create an architectural design that enabled prisoners to partake in religious ceremonies (eg mass) without leaving their cells. A chapel was often central to the design.

give some sense of the affective nature and impact of the design,[65] they also point out that, in

Carabanchel, the attempts at surveillance were ineffective, due to the inability to easily see

all the prisoners at once (Puicercús Vázquez 27). Inmates, particularly the political prisoners,

were easily able to gather in various out of the way spots, to debate, educate, and plan for

uprisings. As a result, as well as its image as a site of surveillance, repression, and control,

emblematic of Franco's regime, Carabanchel has come to embody resistance in the popular

and political imagination.

4.3.2:   Carabanchel as site of resistance and unease

Because, as previously noted, all the anti-Franco activists and political prisoners

passed through Carabanchel, it has gained a double symbolism as representative of Franco

and resistance to his regime (Ortiz García 54) and the role of literature and culture is evident

in that resistance. Various testimonial accounts tell of the talks, seminars, reading groups and

classes that took place within the prison, to study and share knowledge about political and

economic theory, and the history of the workers' movements, and it became known as the

"Carabanchel University" or "Escuela de libertad".[66] A sense of solidarity and collectivity

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[65] These two quotes are representative: "Para llegar a la séptima galería había que atrevesar forzosamente el centro de la
prisión, donde convergían las ocho galerías y que consistía en un gran cilindro hueco de más de treinta metros de diámetro
y unos veinte de alto, coronado por una inmensa bóveda realmente impresionante. En medio se encontraba la oficina,
también llamada "Centro", donde se gestionaban las pequeñas cuestiones administrativas de la prisión. Era redonda y
concéntrica al cilindro principal pero bastante más pequeña y de una sola planta, elevada sobre el suelo y a la que se
accedía por una pequeña escalera metálica. Otra escalera conducía a los sótanos de la prisión que comunicaba con todas
las galerias y donde se encontraban las cocinas.... un solo adjetivo me viene a la cabeza: suciedad." (Puicercús Vázques,
32-33). "I sensed the pervading corruption hiding in the concrete. My thoughts were racing as we followed our echoing,
haunting footsteps along this eerie corridor with its daunting ceiling high above us. Whose ghosts were trapped up there?
God only knew. The corridor opened out into what can best be described as an amphitheatre, with one single tier running
around the perimeter wall, which rose from the black-and-white, shiny, tiled floor to a domed roof high above me. A glass
window high up in the wall just beneath the glass dome filtered the last of the daylight down onto the control tower in the
centre of the atrium.... Architecture often delights me, but this building exuded evil. The message here was quite clear:
intimidation by design." (Chance, 15)

[66] The experience of Puicercús Vázquez – "Creo que nunca leí y estudié tantos materiales teóricos como en la cárcel" (58) –
appears to apply to that of many of the political prisoners detained there.

was created as a result and, partly because of its location, Carabanchel stood out for not only its political activity, but the availability of books and other resources (Puicercús Vázquez 91). Added to this, opportunities for protest and dissent were greater inside than out, where the threat of imprisonment for illegal propaganda was a stronger concern – once imprisoned, there was less control of such behaviour.[67] It is hardly surprising, then, that the prison became a focal point for discussion and anti-Franco sentiment, as writing from former prisoners, such as those referenced in the introduction, describes.

During the Transition, as previously mentioned, it continued to be a place of resistance, with the work done by COPEL projecting Carabanchel into the public and political consciousness, and inspiring protest in prisons throughout the country. COPEL's aims were varied, but central to their protest was a demand for better conditions, less violence and torture, a reform of the Criminal Code, and amnesty for *presos sociales,* a new way of referring to 'common prisoners' to highlight that they were imprisoned because they had been forced into delinquency because of the regime. Much of their protest was performed through the written word (flyers and newspaper and magazine articles), but when requests for dialogue were refused, protests intensified and became more focused on spectacle, including riots, hunger strikes, and self-harming (Lorenzo Rubio, *Cárceles en llamas*, 104).[68] This resistance gained visibility and awareness, but did little to improve or change conditions for the common or social prisoners, who were left behind after the political prisoners were granted amnesty. Indeed, after the short-lived media attention, which

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[67] "Era en las cárceles donde quizás más se podía hablar."(Serrano, 35) "Lo que a un español en libertad le podía costar la cárcel por propaganda ilegal, a un preso no le suponía ni una mínima sanción" (Serrano, 335)

[68] Descriptions of these times are filled with implications of theatre and spectacle: "Las llamas iluminaban las cárceles de media España. Subidos a los tejados de las prisiones, los presos comunes salían de la sombra a la que habían estado relegados durante la dictadura" (Lorenzo Rubio, *Cárceles en llamas*, 15). In both my chapter on prisons in films and that on performance art, I will be discussing further the idea of spectacle, punishment, and visibility of prisons.

unsurprisingly after the spectacle was over all but disappeared, awareness of these protests seemed to get lost in the celebratory nature of the Transition. Nevertheless, some recent attempts have been made to render these struggles visible, and connect them to problems in the penitentiary system today (Lorenzo Rubio, *Cárceles en llamas*, 16).

Significantly, there is in fact, still a type of prison on part of the site. The *Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros de Aluche* is located in what was the prison hospital. Called 'de Aluche' rather than 'de Carabanchel', in attempts to escape from its connections with the former prison, it represents a new phase of repression and injustice, where criminality is now linked to 'others', not neighbours from the *barrio:* "ya no estamos ante un *barrio culpable*, sino ante un *barrio víctima* amenazado por los nuevos delincuentes de génesis externa" (García García 152). The 'myth-like' nature of Carabanchel prison and its closure and demolition, in part perhaps due to an excessive nostalgia for the era when it was known for its political prisoners, has served to render almost invisible this contemporary imprisonment, depoliticizing the current situation. There are reports about the poor state of hygiene, cleanliness, heating, use of free time and services showing that conditions in these kind of centres are often even worse than in the prisons despite the image they have tried to create. Specific to the CIE in Aluche-Carabanchel, complaints have been made about unhygienic living conditions, the use of solitary confinement, abusive language and violence from the custody police including racism, lack of access to the patio, and lack of legal support during detention (Trillo-Figueroa Calvo 311-313).

While there have been local protests about the internment centre, the focus when discussing the former prison, both in popular and academic spheres, tends to accentuate its

historical connotations as a place of repression without, for the most part, engaging with this present reality. Draper notes that there is a greater comfort discussing issues of human rights relating to the past than paying attention to present circumstances in prisons (2012, 2015) and in Spain, in fact, even this discussion of human rights violations connected to the authoritarian past is a cause of distinct unease. Struggles and abuses are conveniently wiped over, in a kind of cleansing of history, more reminiscent of the *Pacto del olvido* than of the attempts of the *Ley de memoria histórica* to recognize the problems of the past. This was evidenced with Carabanchel in terms of the official decisions made about its closure, demolition, and use of the site post-demolition[69] and in other former prison sites, for example, the *Isla de San Simón*, in Galicia – a former leper colony used as a concentration camp during and after the Civil War. At one stage there were plans to turn it into a place of memory, but it eventually became a cultural centre instead, and it has been suggested that culture was used to invisibilize conflicts (Sánchez Carretero, 35).

Yet, returning to my focus on the time between its closure and demolition, it becomes clear that during this liminal stage of existence, where the 'betwixt and betweenness'[70] of the site were fundamental to its function and meaning, the cultural strategies used to animate and engage with the building and grounds demonstrate a dialogue with its history and memory, both collective and personal. As well as plentiful atmospheric images showing the prison's

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[69] An anecdote which tidily illustrates this is found in *Propaganda iilegal*: "Cuando se cerró la cárcel de Carabanchel, se posibilitó que cualquier ciudadano pudiese visitar tan siniestro centro. Para facilitar aquel 'turístico' recorrido, se contaba con un guía que iba explicando cada una de las instalaciones y su funcionamiento. En algunas ocasiones se le preguntó a aquel diligente guía por la ubicación de las celdas de castigo o celdas bajas. El tipo, mal informado o, por el contrario demasiado bien aleccionado, respondía que "jamás habían existido tales instalaciones en Carabanchel". (Puicercús Vázquez, 188)

[70] I use here Victor Turner's famous phrase, from the essay "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" (1963).

decayed interior, graffiti and public art was captured and thus retained, despite its destruction at the time of the demolition.

The work of a photographic group *El Colectivo Expresidiarios* (a group of five photographers – Antona, George, Orozco, Socayo, y Sonia) exemplified this kind of meeting point between culture, prison, history and present. They spent time in the ruined prison, taking the opportunity to capture its decay and signs of its past life, emphasizing the personal touches (a lipstick, book, or photographs on the walls) to ensure the inhabitants were remembered as part of the space. Their photographs online, and those of others, have become the record of a site that is no longer accessible, and thus mediate our experience of Carabanchel in its final days. Combined they produce a complex mixing of emotions and effects. The photographs by 'Sonia' are dramatic, with the building's architecture as the protagonist, creating a sense of absence and lack. In these images, the graffiti is incidental, while the structures, walls, bars and window frames predominate. Her muted use of colour, mainly black and white, or limited tones, suggest a kind of mourning, echoed by the choice of graffiti she highlights, such as a woman's face with a red streak, like blood, coming out of the mouth. The site's violence is suggested through this image, and others with moody skies, while her focus on iron bars and other obvious signs representative of prisons maintains a clear focus on the past use of the site. In some of Socayo's images, on the other hand, the graffiti and art work on the walls is intentionally foregrounded, becoming a colourful focus which leaves any obvious sign of the prison out of the frame, thereby suggesting a new, unofficial life of the building beyond its decay and ruin. Much of the graffiti integrates famous cultural references and figures, such as a picture of Salvador Dalí, a work inspired by

Picasso's *Guernica,* and another with cartoon police officers from *The Simpsons*, again emphasizing the potential for cultural encounters in this space and a life beyond its repressive, official function, full of characters, memories, and fantasies.

Efforts to commemorate former prisoners can be seen in 'actions' or performances that took place after the demolition where participants attached photographs, candles, flags from the Second Republic, and names to the perimeter fences (AAVV Madrid, 2008), read poetry, created sculptures discussing the site's past and possible future (in one, for example, they placed an ironic first 'stone' for the building of the hoped for hospital) and held demonstrations and gatherings to voice their hopes and demands (see Socayo, 2007). One photograph in particular, used in various media reports, perfectly captures the notion of new life, and the mixing of cultural encounters and community action which represents this stage of the site's history: the interior of the prison, the famous cupola, is filled with crowds of people of all ages, milling around, talking to each other, and looking at the building. Strengthening the framing of prison as 'borderland', the crowds are seen mingling and mixing, moving around but not going anywhere, seen from above by the camera which captures their images. Taken before the destruction of the panoptic centre of the building, the image shows the demand to save "una parte de la cárcel de Carabanchel para la memoria, por un destino social de los terrenos. ¡No a la especulación!", with another banner stating "Sí equipamientos, no pisos". This combination of neighbors and community members, in this dramatic setting with the political and social context so clearly framed, creates an image that neatly demonstrates the active afterlife of Carabanchel (Photographer Unknown, 2008).

The cultural use of the space (through photography, graffiti, and public art or demonstration) regenerates and revitalizes this former prison, creating a space of cultural and social encounter. Through these interventions, annual gatherings with symbolic and artistic performance elements, the site becomes to some extent a liberated space, revealing the potential for resistance between the formal, official uses of the building. At their best, they become points of encounter between different spheres, the marginalized and the mainstream, and educate, inspire, or invigorate debate through enhancing knowledge and understanding. While the official decision was to hide the memory of the site, the unofficial happenings and actions tell another part of the story where culture, memory, the present, and the future are combined, and conflict avoids being invisibilized.

4.4: Culture, contested spaces, and museum architecture[71]

Similar factors come into the adaptation of former prisons in Segovia and Palencia, where the challenge to actively engage with the former life of the buildings in which they are housed is a significant one, and where the concerns of those hoping for some kind of memorial or meaningful recognition of the past are apparent. Likewise, the extent to which they acknowledge connections to the current penitentiary system in these spaces filled with multiple meanings is relevant to understanding their intentions and purpose.

In *Afterlives of Confinement* Draper continues her examination of the correlation between prisons and malls by considering the function of the mall in the development of neoliberal states after dictatorships. Emphasizing the importance of prison architecture for

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[71] Clearly museums and 'cultural centres' have differing functions and purposes, as I mention later in the chapter. Much of the writing about museums and their architecture, however, is relevant to my discussion of these cultural centres, blurring the lines between strict categorization, as their content also does.

consolidating ideas about imprisonment, she suggests the mall, imported to Latin America,

represents a similar role in consolidating the ideas of consumption at the heart of notions of

neoliberal progress and freedom (25).

The mall as representative of consumerist freedom becomes symbolic of freedom

more generally. The architectural similarities are immediately obvious when we consider

images from Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* – the long wings with shops off to the

sides could easily be confused for prison wings with cells, such as those found in Segovia

and Palencia. In Spain, where the role of culture to consolidate the transition to democracy

has been well-documented, it is perhaps not surprising that the same connections can be

made between prisons and cultural centres.[72] Does the repurposing of prisons as cultural

centres constitute a true 'opening up', evidence of an established democracy? Is there a

possibility that culture, used as part of a Spanish rhetoric of freedom, becomes merely

another mode of consumerism, reinforcing the neoliberal ideal of individual freedom and

reiterating existing power structures with no real effort to integrate and involve marginalized

'others' who don't easily fit into the consumer model?

As we shall see, 'culture' in the following case studies can potentially manifest as

consumption, rather than as creativity or dialogue. While the role of these cultural centres

can be seen as an attempt to validate the existence of freedom and democracy, there is always

the possibility that they become merely another means of control and limitation. In his early

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[72] In *Collections and Corrections: Architectures for Art and Crime*, Joe Day draws various parallels between the architecture and uses of prisons and museums, describing them as "holding spaces for art and people, and pointing out their "share(d) agendas of accumulation and logics of visual hierarchy" (64). He describes their function as being to organize (people or treasures) for viewing, contemplation, and understanding, and that therefore an inherent part of their purpose is to make decisions about what is seen, who sees it and how they see it, accompanied by challenges of how to secure their contents(5). His is not a Spanish focus, but is obviously relevant to this discussion.

study of surveillance, *The Electronic Eye* (1994)*,* David Lyon reminds us of the function of particular venues, like prisons and hospitals, in not only removing the disobedient or deviant from public spaces, but in upholding and realizing ideas about order and control (31). Cultural centres, fairly uncontroversially, can be considered places whose intentions are to uphold and realize certain cultural ideals, whether or not they actually fulfill this aim, but we can perhaps read them, at the same time, as sites that contain and reform deviancy, bringing order and structure to city life. What or who needs reforming according to these places and what needs to be kept hidden? What other functions are they fulfilling whilst consolidating the myth of cultural freedom in a comparatively new democracy?

While *La Cárcel* (Segovia) and *Lecrác* (Palencia) are described in their marketing as cultural centres rather than galleries or museums, they both contain exhibitions and exhibits (not least the buildings themselves, which play the role of both exhibitor and exhibit in a similar manner to many contemporary art galleries and museums[73]) and function as galleries or 'museum-like' spaces. As such turning to discussion of museum architecture provides fruitful context and focus. In general, architectural theory, and specifically museum architectural theory, has found inspiration in the theory of Pierre Bourdieu (particularly his notions of taste and cultural capital) and Henri Lefebvre (and his notion of how space is socially produced, particularly the idea of 'differential space'). Accordingly contemporary museums are often recognized as "social and cultural productions, constitutive of social relations and active in the production of identities, networks, and social being" (Macleod 177) where the relations between the objects on display and the people viewing them and

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[73] A tendency noted by Montaner in *Museums in the 21ˢᵗ Century* and Layuno Rosas in *Museos de arte contemporáneo en España.*

using the space generate meanings. The focus, then, turns to questions about who occupies museums and to what ends, the role of the visitors in influencing the space, and issues of belonging. It is useful to consider, for example, who these centres are for, and whose story or culture or history is celebrated within, and what that tells us about cultural priorities and values. These precise considerations are crucial to my understanding and interpretation of the cultural centres in the former prisons of Segovia and Palencia.

As cultural centres that also have galleries and exhibition spaces, they are, in fact, representative of a tendency in contemporary museums to move from being spaces for passively absorbing expert knowledge to being venues that encourage dialogue and exchange (Macleod, 6). Numerous new cultural centres and art galleries in Spain have taken up the challenge to encourage active participation from their visitors, rather than merely a passive experience of the consumer or viewer, evidencing two tendencies of the contemporary museum (or cultural centre) – its role as symbol of culture, but also its role as creator of culture (Layuno Rosas 13). Both centres acknowledge these kinds of functions, but, as we shall see, to differing extents, struggle with the challenge of how to successfully implement and achieve real dialogue and exchange.

4.5: *La Cárcel: Segovia Centro de Creación* – a case study

Designed by the architect Joaquín de Odriozola who died before it was finished, construction on this prison began in 1891 and took twenty years. It was completed in 1914 under the direction of architect Benito de Castro, but not opened until 1925. By the end of the 1990s it became clear that the prison was no longer adequately meeting the various

expectations of facilities in modern prisons and a new prison was opened on the outskirts of Segovia in the year 2000, at which point the City Council started negotiations with SIEP (Sociedad de Infraestructuras y Equipamientos Penitenciarias, the public business created in 1992, under the direction of the General Secretary of Penitentiary Institutions) to buy the land. Funding has been made available primarily by the City Council (Ayuntamiento de Segovia) and the Regional Council's employment programme (Junta de Castilla y León).

Described on the cultural centre's website as "un edificio con cicatrices", its design is rectangular, with four galleries in a cross shape. These corridors meet in an octagonal rotunda, which is the site of the chapel and the centre of surveillance, functioning as a panoptic style feature. There were also four patios outside. Perhaps most famous for being the site of the 'fuga de Segovia' in 1976,[74] its history is varied, with different stages of use showing changing opinions and priorities about delinquency and crime: a reform house for women (1925-1932), a tuberculosis hospital and male asylum for "inútiles" and those aged over 60 (1933-1943), anti-tuberculosis sanitarium for women (1943-1947), women's prison (1947-1956), prison for 'fallen women' (1956-1969), prison for male political prisoners (1970-1976), general male prison (1977-1999). It was the location where anti-Franco prisoners with the longest sentences were detained, and at least for some of its history was considered to have good conditions for prisoners, particularly in terms of the individual cells and for allowing prisoner circulation through the building (Serrano 334). Nevertheless, at

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[74] 24 ETA prisoners and 5 Catalan prisoners successfully tunneled out of the prison, escaping into the Spanish countryside. They were later mostly caught and arrested, one died, and four fled across the border to France. This event was portrayed in the 1981 film of that name by Imanol Uribe.

other times the prison was known for its repressive nature and bad living conditions

(including lack of running water, lack of toilets, religious and political indoctrination).[75]

The renovation of the building, initiated by the Segovia City Council, to turn it into a

cultural centre, a centre of creation as the byline of its new title asserts, carries with it a

strong rhetoric of freedom, as can be seen in the website's promotional material:

> El proyecto de rehabilitación conserva la estructura y distribución de la antigua
> prisión, pero dando un nuevo sentido a los espacios para desarrollar la metáfora
> que este proyecto quiere construir: la imaginación, la innovación, la creación, van
> a hacer a Segovia y a todos los segovianos más libres. (Venue Website)

This emphasis on the building's history is repeated in other promotional material:

> Que se recuerde que fue un espacio de represión y encierro de personas, y que
> ahora lo es de libertad y apertura, gracias al fomento de la creación, la
> imaginación, la vanguardia. (*Historia completa* 8)

The design company responsible for the branding, *erretres*, put an equal focus into their

efforts to incorporate the site's past into its 'new look'. "Desde el principio buscamos lo más

gráfico de la cárcel, jugamos todo el rato con la idea de barrotes, construimos un montón de

bocetos, vimos el juego entre el eslabón de una cadena y una cárcel", according to Gema

Navarro, the artistic director, while the blue colour in the logo is to represent the sky:

"Incluimos el celeste porque es el color que veían los presos cuando estaban en la cárcel"

(Hurst 2011).

While the website and branding has been in operation since 2011, and two exterior

auditoriums have been opened for theatre productions, the main wings of the former prison

continue, for the most part, in disuse, apparently unchanged from when they housed

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[75] For example, when Eva Perón visited Segovia in January 1949, one of the journalists accompanying her got permission to speak to the women prisoners. After one of them complained about the regime and the living conditions, she was punished. Other prisoners went on hunger strike and were also punished (*Historia completa*)

prisoners. Opening the venue in the middle of the financial crisis, the building's administration made the decision to open the space to the public from the time the first gallery was restored, rather than waiting to fully complete the renovation. In fact, the state of partial-renovation is beneficial to the aims of the venue. While there is not, perhaps, any obvious in-depth engagement with contemporary political or social issues, the interior which continues to resemble a prison provides an informative and educational environmental in which to raise questions and provoke curiosity. In its unfinished state it becomes a liminal space, a threshold through which to enter another sphere, a doorway into another time, but equally a doorway into another type of world. For people who have never entered a prison, or have no direct connection to the penitentiary system, the prison's presence is elusive, conjured up through exposure to fictionalized television or film settings or through media reports. While those existing impressions are no doubt hard for visitors to forget, and almost certainly influence their perception to some extent, by maintaining the prison's structure and style those entering the centre can gain some first-hand unmediated impressions, gaining empathy and awareness. The often absent reality of the prison is in this setting a little more tangible.

Of the renovated parts, two new blocks outside the main structure of the prison have been opened (Salas Ex.Presa 1 and 2), one a small auditorium for performance and audiovisual arts and the other for multifunctional use. Thus far they have been used for theatre, concerts, children's shows, lectures and presentations, workshops and exhibitions. More interestingly, however, the spaces within the main prison structure are used for micro-theatre, dance and concerts. Taking place inside the cells or in other small locations within

the corridors, these provide further opportunity to interact with the idea of imprisonment in thought-provoking ways. One of the early performances was by a local theatre company, *Nao d'amores,* and took place in the panoptic dome. Their theatrical version of María Josefa Canellada's testimonial novel *El penal de Ocaña* describes the experience of working as a nurse during the Civil War.[76] This powerful play must surely have been made even more so by the atmospheric prison location, but moreover, its social and political message can only be strengthened by the venue and the significance of the subject matter (the Civil War) to a place known for its political prisoners and post-war treatment of inmates. That said, the historical setting and theme could likewise imply a distancing, privileging attention to past problems over an engagement with those of the present day. While the moral questions raised in the play about personal responsibility are timeless, the emphasis on Spain's history potentially alleviates the sense of responsibility felt by spectators to engage with contemporary issues connected to imprisonment or social injustices.

Another key project that stands out as providing a stimulating interaction with the building and its past whilst simultaneously connecting to the present day is the *Galerías* initiative where young artists are selected to create site specific works for the cells. This has been an opportunity to consider notions of imprisonment and freedom from a more multifaceted, multi-media based perspective, through theatre, dance, audiovisual installations, photography, painting and sculpture: works have, for example, explored stories of prisoners, the passing of time in the cells, how people change within them, and the repressive nature of the space. Although they are only exhibited for approximately a month

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[76] The novel, based on the writer's diary, was censored until 1985. The play was directed by Ana Zamora, Canellada's grand daughter, and performed as a monologue by Elena Rayos with piano accompaniment from Isabel Zamora.

each year and thus for visitors arriving outside of that time there is sadly no trace of any of the thought provoking work, certainly, this kind of project as well as encouraging and promoting young artists and creativity, points at what could be a real strength of this kind of centre. Bypassing the 'spectacle' of the prison itself, the art produced can provide an unusual and powerful way to interact with the notion of incarceration or imprisonment, whilst also moving away from the specific past of the place to open up a broader dialogue and thought process through the art. As Brown notes about the role of art in former prisons in *The Culture of Punishment,* a study of penal spectatorship in its various forms, "exhibits are compelling in the manner in which they encourage visitors to rethink prison spaces and make broader reflective connections than a tour of empty prison space alone invokes" (103).

To some extent the promotional materials available online foreground the sensational, dramatic aspect of prisons, with music and camera angles typical of a television drama. At the first public open day in April 2011 visitors could get their photographs taken in a mugshot style and were encouraged to tag themselves on social media with their pretend police record. Echoing Brown's assertion that "penal engagements are at once historical and informative, voyeuristic and spectacular" (87), there is perhaps here a sense that the morbid attraction of being inside a prison is the selling point, rather than a deeper interaction with issues of incarceration and liberty, resulting in an 'othering' of imprisonment and criminality in the very place one could hope to feel most engaged and connected. Furthermore, at least partially public engagement with the work of the centre appears to have been reduced to a simple consumerist model, where visitors attend theatre, film or music events, without necessarily gaining any real insight into the history and significance of the venue. This

commodification and sensationalization of memory epitomizes the idea of art and culture as consumer lifestyle, detached from any social, historical or political context.

Nevertheless the intention is to become "un punto de encuentro para todos",[77] and a real strength of the centre is its efforts to engage with local residents, in a disadvantaged part of the city not known for its cultural life. It has an accessible pricing system for many of its shows including free entry, and hosts a variety of events and festivals, some privately organized but in keeping with their social goals (for example, aimed at families or young people). Various groups are based there, such as the Segovia Symphony Band (*Banda Sinfónica Tierra de Segovia*), *Titirimundo* (offices for the International Festival of Puppets), Segovia Film Office (the contact for filming taking place in Segovia, such as *Trece rosas* and *Torrente*), and 'Creative Citizen Laboratories' who organize community workshops for different ages and groups. Furthermore, there is an effort to create and maintain a relationship with prisoners in Segovia's current prison in Perogordo, including plans to organize an exhibition of their work.

There is still much planned for the venue, including further development and renovation of the site. Interestingly however, in its current state, with much of the building unused, empty patios, and no garden or café, the resulting sense of something missing, an 'absence' right in the centre of being present in the prison, contributes to the effect of the space. Some historical and political context is provided, particularly for those visitors on coach tours, but otherwise it is mainly left up to the visitor to find information about the site's past-life. While there is potential for an invisibilising process to occur when prisons are

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[77] On their website they state: "La Cárcel quiere ser un punto de encuentro para un público muy amplio: creadores, emprendedores y público habitual de la cultura, estudiantes universitarios, jóvenes, escolares y familias, vecinos del barrio, visitantes de Segovia… La Cárcel quiere convertirse en un lugar habitual de encuentro y ocio cultural para todos."

converted to other uses without taking into consideration the power structures at play in their former lives, nor their social, political and human context, by not providing simplified plaques or information boards, the venue minimizes the risk of missing somebody out of the story. They clearly acknowledge some of the more troubling aspects of the site's history, but also leave a space for opening dialogue, learning, and creativity to enable further questions and answers. The half-done liminal state the prison currently finds itself in, between prison and arts centre, between past, present, and future, allows for a personal engagement with the space in a way that a more developed space does not. Its very incompleteness raises the potential for curiosity, imagining, and questioning. As the next case study will show, a more complete renovation does not necessarily lead to a more interesting engagement with a former prison. The efforts of this venue's administration to create a point of encounter and a memorable and thought-provoking experience for visitors are important, but it is the undoneness of the building that perhaps most makes this space a true meeting point, at the intersection of culture and imprisonment.

4.6: *Lecrác* (Palencia) – a case study

In Palencia the former provincial prison dates from the end of the nineteenth century. Built in 1890 and designed by the architect Mariano Goñi Rojas, its outer walls are in the typically Spanish Neo-Mudéjar style with four wings of two storeys and one one-storey wing. Its architecture was closer in style to the Segovian prison than to Carabanchel, but unlike the prison in Segovia it has been extensively renovated. The facade remains almost unchanged, giving a reminder of its past, but the inside has undergone an architectural transformation. Nevertheless, the wings remain in place, reaching out from a central rotunda,

in a fairly typical radial style. Inside the new centre's structure hints at the former prison

design, making for an architectural mixing of old and new.

After a call for proposals from the City Council, it was remodelled by the

architectural firm EXIT, between 2007 and 2011, but it was not until 1ˢᵗ July 2014 that it was

inaugurated as a cultural centre in controversial circumstances. The architects described their

work as "una intervención respetuosa con el edificio que nos encontramos, al que se le dota

de una apariencia más moderna, más ligera y donde la luz va a ser la protagonista" (EXIT

brochure, 5). The architectural team incorporated aspects of the former prison, while aiming

to re-energise the building. It still maintains the look of a prison from the outside, with its

functional, stark style, but the light entering the spaces illuminates the interior and implies an

'opening up'. With the prominent use of glass and clean, white walls, however, it is difficult

to imagine its former condition.[78] The booklet produced by the architects to document this

project includes photographs of the building before its renovation, along with one of the only

easily available descriptions of the interior of the prison detailing what different areas were

used for, along with floor plans and other information of historical interest. Within the new

centre itself, there is no reference to any of this information. The redesign and its

implementation seem to be successful in re-imagining the prison building, but do not

incorporate much historical context.

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[78] "Se trataba de una prisión muy pequeña y vetusta, de aspecto bastante tétrico, con las puertas de las celdas pintadas de gris... triste... Me designaron una celda individual situada en la planta baja, donde, nada más que entrar, observé que la ventana enrejada no tenía ningún cristal y unos cartones tapaban lo que podían. Paredes sucias, un retrete y un lavabo en condiciones similares, una especie de taquilla de madera y un cajón como estantería completaban el mobiliario de aquella "chabola" (Puicercús Vázquez, 341) Puicercús Vázquez was transferred there after spending time in Carabanchel and Ocaña. Political prisoners were regularly moved around different prisons: "The prison tour was certainly one of the means used by Francoism to break the prisoner's will and capacity for resistance. They also gave the inmates an idea of the character of this new Spain, dominated by surveillance and control". (González Ruibal, 2011, 58)

This situation continued into its new life, what then happened to the newly renovated building and how it is now used. Prior to the renovation, there was evidence that this was not going to be a completely smooth transition, given the unclear plans and other ambiguous circumstances of the project's beginnings, such as no clear director for the renovations and confused objectives, outlined in the 'Diagnóstico Cultural' a study undertaken by a university team to try to determine what was needed culturally in Palencia (89). As such there was much debate and discussion and confused expectations about plans for the centre, with various local groups requesting particular spaces and uses and apparently arbitrary allocations of spaces. Despite recommendations that they engage a manager with experience of cultural leadership, with strategic, innovative vision (Delgado Hertos, 90), the city council decided to manage the centre themselves, and held meetings with various interested parties about possibilities. The result is something of an uninspired mixture, with little feel of the innovative, creative space that was hoped for by many of those interviewed for the above-mentioned study, and with limited efforts to follow the recommendation that the cultural centre should become a space of "encuentro y reflexión que sitúe la cultura como motor y epicentro del desarrollo de la ciudad" (Delgado Hertos 90).

The building is currently the seat of the council's Culture and Youth departments, has exhibition rooms, an auditorium, a study room, and a reading room for elderly people. Somewhat more surprisingly, and to protest from former prisoners and local residents, the former prison also houses the *Centre for Historic Studies of the National Police* which includes their archive and exhibitions about contemporary and historical policing. While the original plans (as stated in the architectural proposal) were to house a public library in the

148

wings radiating from the central cupola where the cells had been – a nod, perhaps, to the freedom to be found for many prisoners, particularly political prisoners, in the written word, as noted with reference to Carabanchel above – no doubt because of political and financial incentives the police archive and exhibitions were prioritized over public services and now take over this space, which is, significantly, the most emblematic and 'prison-like' part of the building.

In the years prior to the opening of the centre, a collective of former political prisoners and local residents petitioned for the building to become a cultural centre and place of Anti-Francoist memory, a space for "el desarrollo de la cultura, la creatividad, y, en definitiva, la libertad y la diversidad", which would constitute "un ejercicio de afirmación democrática que dignificará al pueblo y las instituciones palentinas" (Arainfo 2014). Instead the space has been given to the National Police to celebrate and commemorate their work at the centre of the repressive state which imprisoned and tortured these same former prisoners. Alongside their archive there is an exhibition about the history of criminality (placing criminality and definitions of criminality in a historical context thereby avoiding the need to address contemporary questions about who is incarcerated and why) and various objects relating to crime and punishment, a space illustrating contemporary policing practices, a memorial to those police who died in service during the twentieth century, and a temporary exhibition area. The room of displays connected to twenty-first century policing includes the statement on one information board that the police represent "un elemento integrador imprendiscible" on the streets. Along the corridor a wall is covered with a quote from Balzac: "Los gobiernos pasan, las sociedades mueren, la Policía es eterna". On another staircase a

quote from Beccaria's *De los delitos y las penas* of 1795 – "la tortura un medio seguro para

absolver a los criminales robustos y condenar a los inocentes débiles" – is probably the only

reference to torture to be seen in the building. The purpose of these quotes is not entirely

clear – the formal, serious nature of the police archive, where visitors have to sign in and

provide identification, seems, perhaps, to be questioned by their probably ironic presence.

Nevertheless, the privileging of the police department's needs over those of former prisoners

and local residents is problematic, and the lack of critique of or dialogue about the previous

or current role of the police in Spanish society is keenly felt.

There are parallels between what happened at Carabanchel and the more recent

situation in Palencia.[79] As with Carabanchel, although to a lesser degree, throughout the

dictatorship numerous political prisoners passed through the prison, most famously the poet

and playwright Miguel Hernández. He had been in various prisons, including Ocaña where

he led poetry and literature classes[80] and was imprisoned in Palencia prison from September

to November of 1940. Proposals to preserve his cell as a homage were rejected by the council

because, they said, of the old wounds it would open. Instead a quote of his is displayed

prominently, but without context, in the entrance to the centre. From "Nanas de cebolla"

(Onion lullaby) it reads: "Tu risa me hace libre/ me pone alas./ Soledades me quita/ cárcel me

arranca." Inspired by a letter from his wife saying she was surviving on a diet of bread and

onions while Hernández was in prison, the poem counterpoints the desperation of the mother

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[79] An article in *El Público* states, "Si la cárcel de Carabanchel, penal por donde pasaban todos los presos políticos de la dictadura, fue borrada del mapa por Gallardón y Rubalcaba en 2008 ahora es la cárcel de Palencia la que puede quedar vacía de contenido memorialista" (Torrús, 2014).

[80] "Miguel Hernández daba clases de poesía. Éramos más de 700 jóvenes y nos daba clases de literatura." (Serrano, 54) Another anecdote about Miguel Hernández shows the often complex relationship between culture and politics – "A Ocaña llegó un día el falangista Ernesto Giménez Caballero. Quería hablar con Miguel Hernández para proponerle su puesta en libertad. Quería aprovechar su imagen de poeta para demostrar que el régimen era generoso con el enemigo.... Hernández se acercó a la ventana y llamó a Giménez Caballero. Le mostró el patio donde estábamos los presos y le dijo: "Mira. Ésos son mis hermanos. Con ellos he luchado y con ellos me quedo." (Serrano, 55)

which the childlike innocence and hope of his son. Although arguably one of his most famous poems, it is less obviously politically engaged than others and the isolated quote displayed at the entrance to the civic centre serves, to some extent, to depoliticize the presence of the poet and his work, although it is at least a clear connection to the building's history, perhaps the only one.

4.6.1: *Lecrác*'s architecture, public space, and control

If there seems to be a wish on the part of its administration to keep politics out of *Lecrác*, what then are their intentions, stated or otherwise, for the space? How does a building encourage particular behaviours? In the case of a prison it is fairly obvious that its design is intended to reinforce certain modes of behaviour and specific outcomes for its inhabitants, as we explored in part previously in this chapter. Such apparently inherent features as the single, separate cell were originally designed with a focus on the effect on the prisoner, following work by Quaker reformers and others such as Jeremy Bentham and Beccaria, who saw in isolation and quietness an opportunity for spiritual contemplation and repentance. As increased understanding of psychology and the negative effects of isolation was gained, there was a move away from separate cells towards more sociable, pod-based accommodation and ideas about prison architecture started changing according to the idea that prisons should take into account the effects of the environment on their inmates (Spens, 11). But what does the cultural centre expect of its visitors and 'inhabitants'?

As we saw earlier in the chapter, consideration of museum architecture is increasingly concerned with the idea that museums are social and cultural productions, shaped by the way

they are used, and through which identities are forged. The visitor to these sites of history is to some extent responsible for the way they approach and contemplate these new articulations of past and present, and a level of subjectivity is always introduced by their looking (Huyssen, 2006, 31). Alongside this subjectivity, museums and cultural centres aim to impart a particular kind of control or authority over their visitors, even while these same visitors are 'producing the space' through their own behaviour. Bourdieu suggests in his study of Algerian workers migrating to cities that "having been made for the 'modern man', the apartment demands the behaviour of a modern man" (Webster 16) while Lefebvre's formulation of the relationship between power and space and how space is 'produced' is also relevant here. Cultural belonging can be enhanced by the feeling of being 'cultured', educated and informed, a sense of security and fitting in, improved status and cultural capital, the pleasure of seeing and being seen, of being in the know and up to date with a finger on the pulse, and enjoying the opportunity to exercise critical judgment and discuss cultural values, whilst simultaneously being entertained. All of these can be part of the museum visit, adding a perceived value to the experience. And what does the fact the centre is in a former prison building add to this, as is the case with *Lecrác*? Perhaps the visitor feels like they've had an educational and 'authentic' experience. Perhaps there is an added frisson of excitement to be in the same space that held prisoners. Certainly the knowledge of being in a former prison brings with it connotations which lead to an affective impact on the visitor – a degree of curiosity and intrigue for example.

Nevertheless, the potential for learning is mediated by the design and administration of the renovated building. In *La ciudad cautiva: Orden y vigilancia en el espacio urbano,*

José Miguel G. Cortés discusses how public space, architectural design, and urban planning combine to create conditions of surveillance and control. Although since its publication use of public space in Spain underwent a massive and unanticipated development mainly witnessed in the 15M movement, some of his comments are pertinent and useful to our consideration of former prisons, and particularly the case of *Lecrác* in Palencia. According to the proposals by the architects, the plan for *Lecrác* was made with the public and their interests in mind. Yet what has happened since its opening speaks of different priorities, a predicament which echoes other examples of use of public space:

> el espacio público debería ser el lugar de representación y de expresión de la sociedad, el espacio donde la masa se hace visible y donde el simbolismo colectivo se materializa. Sin embargo, muchas veces se entiende que el espacio público ideal es el que está prácticamente vacío, donde no se puede hacer casi nada, ya que no existen las condiciones necesarias para ello. (Cortés 130)

Lecrác and its public engagement illustrate this phenomenon. Its clean, bright interior is divided into separate spaces with specific uses. In some ways it successfully functions as an inclusive, community space: the study room is well-used, as is the room for seniors. The exhibition space, depending on the temporary exhibition in places, appeals to visitors of different ages and demographics, and the dramatic nature of the architecture which includes trees growing within glass sections, and interesting shaped walls, creates a light, bright space. The section housing the police archives and exhibitions is structured more like a traditional museum or gallery, where the visitor is expected to walk quietly and attentively through the space, observing and studying the exhibits. Unlike the unfinishedness of the Segovia renovation, this building is complete and designed for very specific uses.

Glass in architectural design clearly has both symbolic and practical uses as is pointed out in *La Ciudad Cautiva*: suggestive of availability and limitlessness, frontier-less worlds, its allowing of light into a space could certainly be connected with an implication of freedom and a space free, or freer, of restrictions. While tending to invoke cleanliness and openness, it can be seen to represent wishes for transparency and clarity, yet it can also equate to loss of privacy and failing to acknowledge private or intimate worlds (Cortés 167). Security cameras, windows, and security staff ensure visitors are monitored at all times. The building's architectural design holds within it an effort to guide (or control) the visitor, as the architects point out in the following description of the large entrance area:

> Todo el edificio está estructurado a torno a un gran vestíbulo que enlace los cuatro pabellones de la antigua prisión. Es un espacio diáfano sustentado únicamente en unos leves patios cilíndricos de vidrio que iluminan y vertebran la estancia. Por su ubicación central en relación a los pabellones, este espacio actúa como un centro neurálgico y distribuidor de los usuarios que, atravesando el pabellón de entrada y recepción se dirigen hacia el resto de las salas del centro. (EXIT 5)

Draper talks about malls being places of security, where the visitor can freely walk around, but is protected from the threat of violence and 'the other' given the controlled and secure nature of the space (2012, 29). The cultural centre can perhaps be regarded similarly, creating a space for creativity, freedom and the possibility of open interactions, but one where the experience is necessarily limited by the demands of the space and its contents, the kind of behaviours permitted by the venue, and the kind of people who visit. The depoliticization in the transformation of the old prison of Palencia into a cultural centre continues in the new venue's day-to-day administration. This was exemplified recently when various groups complained that they had been refused use of the building for their events. Amnesty

International, a local environmental group, and other community groups were among those affected by the decision, which according to the Council spokesperson was because of a policy to not allow the use of council properties by political or trade union groups, which none of those groups are.

Some protest has been in evidence and behaviour that is not permitted within the cultural centre's walls has moved outside the boundaries. Graphic artist Javier Ayarza and the Palencia Association for the Recuperation of Historic Memory, organized "un muro de la memoria" (Álvarez, 2013) in which the exterior walls of the prison were covered with the names of 2532 local people who had spent time in prison or been executed between 1936 and 1945. Their aim was to at least temporarily recuperate and make visible the story of what happened in the building, in a way that the official bodies were failing to do, and the result was a creative, collective action that acted as a focus for mourning and memory, that neatly illustrates Huyysen's concept of lived memory as active, human, and embodied in the social, not merely stored or expressed by monuments (2000, 38). Resistance manifests, too, in disengagement, in online campaigns for the Police Museum to be removed from the centre, and in efforts to change the artistic direction of the venue (Sanz, 2016).

4.7: The former prison as site of resistance

Of the three former prisons, Segovia's has proved to be the least controversial and thus the place least associated with resistance and protest, which can probably partly be attributed to the fact that it is still very much a work in progress, partly because 'history' is still visible to the visitor due to the interior remaining virtually unchanged, and partly

155

because of the efforts and vision of the centre's administrators. Unsurprisingly, due to its history and the unique circumstances of its closure and demolition, Carabanchel has been the place where protest has been strongest. As previously mentioned, Carabanchel as a site of resistance has experienced various stages – we noted, firstly, the connections and knowledge-sharing between political prisoners detained during the dictatorship and, secondly, the protests of the social prisoners and the work of COPEL. The third stage of its role as a centre of resistance and collective action was in the time between its closure and its demolition, when it provided a focus for neighbourhood action and solidarity. And currently, the site still serves as a point of protest because of the *Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros de Aluche*.

Interestingly, while it has been suggested that contemporary museums have become important public sites due to their "collective dimension" (Montaner 148), as we have seen thus far the new museum-gallery spaces in Segovia and Palencia have not yet fully reached their potential as truly public spaces. This, I suggest, contrasts with the recent tendency in Spain to 'reclaim' and 'liberate' public spaces such as squares. In Carabanchel, today, as well as in other parts of Madrid, numerous neighbourhood projects are based around this idea of reclaiming the *barrio* for the people, and, alongside protests against the C.I.E, this is where the 'collective dimension' is most visible.

If in 2010 Cortés was able to state, fairly uncontroversially, that the streets and public space had become threatening and suspicious places (40) and bemoan the disappearance of the public square as a meeting place and the movement of public activity into malls (35), this was to change in 2011 with the 15M movement. Better known in the media as *Los indignados,* this movement prioritised public space and collectivity, while using the non-

physical space of social media to organize, disseminate information, and encourage participation. Although there were numerous camps throughout Spain, and marches, grounding the movement in the local sphere, the so-called *Acampadesol* in the *Puerta de Sol* in Madrid became the symbolic centre of the movement,[81] where daily assemblies were held by the temporary residents, to discuss plans, objectives and for group decision making, in the setting of their makeshift 'city': "a la propuesta de una política por y para todos se corresponde la de una arquitectura por y para todos" (Ramírez Blanco, 2012).

Manuel Castells points out the importance of finding and creating shared physical urban space for the protests, which combines with the use of digital space to emphasize "autonomous communication" (11). The using or taking over public space which tends to be controlled by dominant elites, he suggests, ensured these protests were able to become socially visible in a way that a purely digital movement could not necessarily achieve. A reliance on social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and others) is evident in the protests about the transformation of the Palencia prison and is instrumental in making dissent known and visible, but there has been less 'physical' activity to strengthen understanding and recognition of reasons for the controversy about the site and likewise limited public collective activity with effective alternatives to the disappointing notion of 'community exchange' currently permitted inside the building.

In *Utopias artisticas de revuelta*, her study of new social movements with a focus on *los indignados*, Julia Ramírez Blanco formulates a hypothesis for 'liberated spaces' which

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[81] This is something of an ironic juxtaposition of two important locations, given that the Dirección General de Seguridad, where most political and common prisoners were held after their first arrest is at Puerta del Sol.

become utopian artistic expressions of revolt, exemplified by the *Acampadesol*. Features of

these spaces include:

> apropriación física de un espacio e intervención estética del
> mismo...cuestionamiento de la propiedad privada y disolución de la autoría...
> multitud heterogénea y creatividad ecléctica... tradición activista y estética
> contracultural...política no profesional y creación artística no
> especializada...ideales revolucionarios y arte utópico de revuelta ("Concluir? A:
> De arte hacia una estética del espacio liberado")

Furthermore, she suggests, they generally have a temporary nature due to their location 'in

the cracks' with an ever present possibility of disappearing. They can function like art "al

realizar una escenificación simbólica de un mundo soñado". Finally, they represent "una

desobediencia espacial, o de lugares desobedientes, donde se ponen en marcha toda una serie

de anhelos que normalmente han estado reprimidos"("Concluir? A: De arte hacia una

estética del espacio liberado"). Much as in Lefebvre's *Right To The City,* in this articulation

the city becomes the project of the collective, where the priority of urban reform is to

question, challenge, and defeat dominant strategies and ideologies in existing society

(Lefebvre, 154). Street life, participation, and opportunities for spontaneity are privileged.

Ramírez Blanco's reference to the 'resquicios' is equally rooted in Lefebvres's articulation of

where change can happen. In destructuring and disintegrating existing frames, sites of

potential open up – "the places of the possible" (Lefebvre 156).

Reframing the site of Carabanchel in the time between its closure and its eventual

demolition as a "place of the possible", a liberated space, or even an artistic utopia, is one

way to celebrate the dissent and entangled, fractured narratives of memory and resistance that

occurred there. A little like Bahktin's suggestion of the carnival as a "world inside out"

(Duncombe 88) the prison site came to embody a celebratory disorder as a rebellion against its former repressive nature. That this could only ever be temporary in nature, understanding this very temporariness as an essential aspect of the 'liberated space', is perhaps helpful to remember when considering what happened to the prison site. After the demolition, some of these protests and movements developed into other neighbourhood projects celebrating personal memory and collective action such as the group *Carabancheleando* who organize walking tours with varied viewpoints and speakers to describe the relevance of particular sites, as well as compiling an online 'dictionary' which gives a 'new reading' of the neighbourhood through the use of language describing how certain words and concepts resonate in unusual ways in the neighbourhood (Carabancheleando), Since 2011 the *Assemblea de Carabanchel* (which grew out of the 15M movement) has continued to meet regularly on Sundays in the *Plaza de Oporto* and the neighbourhood is full of community spaces that encourage creativity, exploration and participation, housing various neighbourhood organizations.[82] These efforts combine in-person interactions, local space, and social media to forge identity, inclusion and instances of insurgence in the locality. One of the ex-prisoners quoted in *Toda España era cárcel* suggests, wistfully, that "a lo mejor, todos los que fuimos a la cárcel, lo que buscábamos era eso: mirar más allá, buscar el horizonte." (Serrano 352). Current formulations of resistance connected to these former prison sites have perhaps, in their movement into the streets, taken this idea to heart, moving their focus from the former repressive sites to occupy, transform, and celebrate other spaces,

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[82] A radio show recorded in Carabanchel showcases many of these people and groups while discussing aspects unique to the neighbourhood (Barrio Canino).

yet in doing so, the contemporary issues connected to the penitentiary system are easily ignored.

4.8: Conclusions

In keeping with Draper's concern that the focus on former prisons can easily turn to a discussion of the past with no recognition of contemporary predicaments relating to the penitentiary system or civil rights abuses,[83] reactions to Carabanchel by academics in recent times have sometimes emphasized the need for some kind of memorial site or recognition of its history (for example Hepworth, 2015;[84] González Ruibal, 2009) without necessarily acknowledging its contemporary controversial status as a site of a C.I.E. or the temporary but meaningful markers of its past performed and articulated by a heterogeneous group of protestors and locals. In light of the weaknesses of the *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* it is of course unsurprising that calls have been made, in relation to museums and public spaces connected to the dictatorship, for efforts to create a visual, spatial, and material recognition of the past (Monegal, 240).

Museums, as various cultural critics have pointed out (Deótte, 2007; Bennet, 1995; Bolaños, 1997), are as much about forgetting as remembering, choices about what to memorialize as well as how to achieve that inevitably carry with them not only omissions and gaps, but can tend to homogenize stories, failing to give credence to all the possible

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[83] A concern related to the one voiced by Jo Labanyi in 2008 with regards to research in Spain: "I have become increasingly uncomfortable at the number of studies of representations of the civil war and its repressive aftermath that engage in textual analysis with little or no mention of the public debates inflecting the texts' production and reception." (120)

[84] Andrea Hepworth (2015) discusses, for example, "the pressing need at both sites... for some form of an exhibition or information centre explaining each site's history during the dictatorship in order to centre these marginalized narratives and open up a space of memory for them. By adding an explanatory and performative aspect to these already existing sites, they would be turned into living milieux de mémoire and be part of an inclusive discourse of national identity and historical memory in Spain" (291).

narratives, covering up differing versions and testimonies, dismissing fragmented diversity. Furthermore, museums and memorials can actually serve to erase "the sense of the irrecoverable absence that the ruined prison used to evoke so powerfully"(Vatulesco in Butler et al, 2013, 317). In two of my three case studies, the principal point of controversy is the lack of recognition of past injustices and inequalities, the perceived absence of justice, which Huyssen points out is always the challenge of preserving memory (2000, 37). Efforts to focus on these prison sites as places of memory and culture can serve to promote local and national memory, rooting the buildings in time and place, but mainly for those that are already interested enough to look into their history or those who lived through their former existences as prisons.

Yet although it is hard to disagree with calls for memorial plaques, centres of memory, and other methods of marking history, and indeed, my reading of the reappropriated prison site in Palencia is critical of the lack of acknowledgment of its history, there is something to be said for leaving a ruin, the site of an elusive and complex past, an 'open ground' with all the potential for interpretation that this implicates, a liberated space to be occupied by personal narratives which reach well beyond those that are the result of official wording, where community-building, collective action and creative acts of solidarity and resistance allow space for a dialogue around new intended uses and aspirations as much as historical occurrences. The years between Carabanchel's closure and its demolition, and the after effects in the local neighbourhood may be a more meaningful 'process of memorialization' than anything an official body might write on a plaque.

Given, however, that the role of cultural centres is to work with the present, and perhaps help imagine and create the future rather than commemorate the past, in this sense, Segovia's *La Cárcel* shows, today, the greatest potential to be a space of genuine dialogue and creativity. In its current state it allows, to some degree, for subjective personal experiences as the visitor's gaze works to render visible some of its past and encourages thought about the present and future. The less 'transformed' a former prison is, the more potential there seems to be for personal and collective memory, and personal and collective imagining, attached to the site, and as such Segovia, of the three prisons, offers perhaps the most useful suggestion of a potential way forward for sensitive approaches to the co-opting of former prisons into the cultural sphere. In its non-developed, only partially-renovated state, it allows some room for an imagined space of ever-present imprisonment. This creates a space from which to contemplate punishment and community, recognizing societal failings and problems of the past and present whilst also imagining possibilities for transformation. Future exhibitions and artistic events may help to continue and develop this potential. *Lecrác*, the site of most extensive renovation, can be understood to be the least 'free' of these three examples – there is little space for the entangled, interwoven network of imagined versions of the present and future of punishment or recollections of the past. Counternarratives are inevitably pushed out, beyond the building's bright new walls. The freedom of co-existing in spaces where difference is recognized and valued seems to be prevented by reluctance to acknowledge past inequalities. Brown discusses how "social dynamics and interrelations in penal contexts are built fundamentally upon exclusionary practices and ideas of difference which divide rather than unite, turning citizens against

162

citizens" (6) therefore undermining democracy. *Lecrác,* in its failure to include and welcome particular citizens whilst strengthening ties with others, and because of its lack of interest in acknowledging past inequalities represents only a very limited version of what a 'free' space could be. The notion of the contact zone and its uses is again relevant here. The challenges for public spaces are complex and numerous, but to realize the depth and width of the 'stakes' held by different groups and navigate their involvement fairly is central to their success as community spaces.

The examples in this chapter, then, illustrate the often uneasy relationship between culture, memory, and architecture to illuminate the continuing power struggles to be found connected to prisons. They show how culture is used from a formal (governmental) and an informal (community associations, graffiti artists) standpoint to hide or draw attention to historical and contemporary issues relating to prisons and punishment. These contested spaces risk becoming depoliticized: their political, social and historical context, along with any conflict or dissent, is potentially neutralized, and as such they, at first sight, do nothing to strengthen civil liberties or democracy in today's Spain. Yet culture helps us see other ways of being and doing, and these spaces have the potential to show how accessible creative and community-based culture could be possible, offering alternatives to elitist, exclusionary models. They can provide a physical or symbolic site for revolt, resistance, utopic creativity and community building, sometimes beyond the anticipated limits of their official capacity, where the real efforts and values of a democracy can be seen in action.

Reframing our understanding of these protests and cultural achievements to view these sites as 'liberated spaces', helps put into perspective the important 'processes of

memorialization' and recognition of past and current injustices that have already taken place, tied to these spaces. Many of these processes have also resulted in collective actions and community groupings moving out, beyond the prison and museum walls, into the streets and squares of their neighbourhoods, representing a kind of 'freedom in action' which exists beyond the prison's shadow. Something like Bhaba's Third Space concept (discussed in Rutherford) these spaces in transformation represent important sites of translation and negotiation. As liminal spaces of throwntogetherness, the reformulations of former prisons can create a meeting point for people from all walks of life, an entry point to another world (that of imprisonment), where understanding of belonging is questioned and navigated. At their best, they provide a place of encounter, a point of coming together, which educates, challenges, and provokes open dialogue and exchange.

Chapter 5: Questioning boundaries: consent and community in performance art

5.1: Introduction

Having, in the previous chapter, discussed literal transformations of prisons, here the focus moves to personal transformations to discuss how performance art debates punishment and offers alternatives to imprisonment. I consider what it tells us about surveillance and belonging, alongside its relation to concepts of freedom, and physical and symbolic meeting points. Performance art, a genre whose very existence is concerned with questions of liberation, boundary-breaking, and "destabilizing traditional concepts of culture, art and performer" (Taylor, 1994), perhaps more than any other art form has asked questions about the body's limitations, boundaries, and possibilities under imprisonment.[85] A tendency towards the experimental, the innovative, and the controversial is typical, along with questioning the status quo and attempting to challenge the established order. Artists and theorists regularly comment on its boundary breaking nature (Alcázar y Fuentes 14; Beuys 10). Through its process, a physical space is created for debating and challenging the legal and moral holds over the body (Johnson 144). If prisons and their portrayals can be understood as "laboratories of the self where control is directed precisely at the regulation of individuals and individualism" (Brown 59), invocations of prisons and imprisonment in

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[85] Since the 1960s body art, specifically, and performance art, more generally, has pushed to expand and extend the things that bodies can do or have done to them. The body – often connected to ritual, ritualised pain, self-abuse, violence, transformation and autobiographical subject matter – is central to the genre and the artist's body becomes a living, changing canvas through which the performance is expressed. The body often becomes a space of resistance and challenge, wherein the artist refuses to accept imposed boundaries and restrictions, or questions and critiques assumptions. As such there is a constant quest to test and challenge the body and its capabilities (Goldberg; Taylor).

performance art challenge how this control is asserted and experienced. As such the role of performance art from Spain in helping us understand imprisonment is key. Indeed, whether in a room, some kind of cage, or through restrictive clothing or accessories, confinement has been a regular component of performance art explored by artists of various nationalities.[86]

In this chapter, I focus on two prominent contemporary performance artists, Abel Azcona (Pamplona) and Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca(Catalonia) to consider what punishment and imprisonment look like in their work, what questions they ask through its lens, and how this contributes to our understanding of prisons and borderlands. Meeting points and boundary crossings are an essential ingredient of their art: they both explore, for example, the intersections of body and technology, along with meetings between artist and spectator. What questions do these performances ask or inspire about who has rights over imprisoned or restricted bodies and who is responsible for them? Who controls the imprisoned body and what is the connection between performance art and acts of escape or resistance? What can their art teach us about connecting and meeting points in today's Spain? In approaching these topics, I analyze the role of performance art in making visible the invisible, in blurring the

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[86] American artist Chris Burden's *Five-Day-Locker-Piece* (1971) saw him locked in a small space without spectators. In 1974 Joseph Bueys spent three days in a room in an art gallery in Coyote. In Tehching Hsiel's *One Year Performance 1978-1979* (*Cage Piece*) the artist was confined for a full year to life inside a cage. A few years later in *Rope Piece* he would spend a full year attached by rope to Linda Montano. Regina José Galindo's *America's Family Prison* (2008) involved the artist spending twenty fours hours in a prison cell with her husband and daughter. In 2009 in Bogotá, the artist Álvaro Villalobos spent forty hours in a black box in his work *Caja negra*. In Spain, *Arte en Sitio* was a series of actions which took place in Madrid's Carabanchel Prison in 1994 and focused on issues characterised by the location – surveillance, control, and isolation. A documentary video, *Siete cuentos para la cárcel de Carabanchel,* was made by two of the artists, Jaime Vallaure and Rafael Lamata (better known as Los Torresnoz). Nel Amaro highlighted the idea of the art gallery as prison in *Por favor, no me encierren en el museo* (2011), performed posthumously in homage by Yolanda Pérez Herreras, Julio Fernández, Sergi Quiñonero and Domix Garrido, in Vigo, Galicia. Félix Fernández tied himself to a chair in *Puro teatro* (2003). In *Últimas palabras de un traidor* (2010) John Otazu was trapped in a web of chords hanging from the ceiling which the public could pull thereby moving the artist around. Pepe Espaliú explored the symbolic imprisonment of those living with AIDS in various installations and sculptures of cages, and through his performance *El nido* (1992) in which he spent eight days living up a tree. In *Cinco minutos de crítica de arte* (2004) Javier Núñez Gasco took the theme of imprisonment in a different direction by handcuffing himself for an hour to the art critic Víctor Zamudio-Taylor. In order to be set free the 'prisoner' had to write a critique of the performance. Clearly, then, there is a wealth of relevant art, drawing attention to the dynamics of imprisonment and constraint.

boundaries between public and private, in debating the role of surveillance and voyeurism, and in understanding belonging and community. Questions raised about consent and ethics within performance help us focus on the bigger issues of consent and ethics outside the performance. Through contemplating the theme of imprisonment within contemporary performance art in Spain, this chapter furthers our grasp of the dynamics at work when we frame the intersection of culture and prison as borderland, broadening understanding of factors inhibiting change, and outlining potential for transformation of individuals and attitudes towards punishment.

5.2: Performance art, boundaries, and belonging

Performance art's concern with freedom, imprisonment, and boundary-crossing, has manifested both symbolically, in its exploration of what bodies can be and do, and literally, in terms of its place within and relationship to the art establishment as it pushes to expand and extend the way art is created and exchanged.[87] Breaking free from the institutionalized art world improved the potential for individual autonomy in decisions about where and how to perform art. Many artists chose to move out into public spaces (streets, parks, town squares, or any number of other sites and locations).[88] Performance developed as an art form that could be created by anybody, anywhere, with any kind of spectator or action. Nobody

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[87] Until recently relatively little attention has been given outside of Spain to Spanish performance art, or even within Spain outside a small circle of performers, academics and art critics. Internationally *Fura dels Baus* and La Ribot are perhaps some of the few names to be recognizable, and even that is likely to be within 'art circles' as opposed to being almost household names in the manner of Orlan or Marina Abramović. Performers have tended to also theorize their work, while academics are only recently beginning to notice the significance and relevance of performance art to studies of Spanish culture. Histories of Spanish performance point out the lack of official support for the genre, the fact that many of the key figures (among them Esther Ferrer, La Ribot, and Santiago Sierra) have chosen to live outside of Spain, and a tendency to focus on the absurd, 'lo cotidiano' and self-referential discussion of the nature of art (Álvarez; Baena; Casellas).

[88] Expressed neatly in this quote from Gómez Peña: "las calles resultan meras extensiones de nuestro laboratorio de performance; galerías sin muros" (2005, 203)

had to give permission or award funding: as such it developed as a 'liberated' form of art, often able to defy censorship and escape the need for somebody's approval.[89]

In recent years, as we see in the work of Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca and Abel Azcona, performance art has been welcomed into the established art world through museums creating performance spaces and organizing festivals curated around live art, thereby legitimizing and formalizing the art world's connections with this genre (Taylor, 2012, 147). This recognition from the institution can be seen in the form of grants and awards as well as in artists being welcomed into traditional art galleries and venues and causes some friction with many of the original aims of the genre. Despite these changes, Phelan's statement that "performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital" (148) continues to be relevant to some extent: the aesthetics of performance still demand a focus on space, time and presence, even if postcards are made or books published, even with artists creating documentaries and websites that showcase their performance work. Increasingly performance artists and their work are entering willingly into the flow of capital, without obviously challenging that structure, yet often their work continues to disrupt and question the acceptable face of bodily representation to expose the demands of the standards used to deem bodies commercial or desirable (Schneider). Now part of the established art world/market, and therefore no longer so obviously rebellious at the structural level, the content of performance art continues to disturb and provoke, and, while not necessarily offering answers or solutions, has a role to play in raising questions, initiating and

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[89] Of course, it is unable to entirely escape the hands of authority – various artists have found themselves arrested during or after their performances, as discussed later in the chapter.

contributing to debates relating to belonging, limits, and freedom, through their exploration

of restrictions and boundaries.

While in the art of previous centuries the lower rungs of hierarchical society were

brought under the gaze of the artist – rendered visible through their art, but only as viewed

object, interpreted by the artist – in performance art there is an attempt to avoid and deny

such distinctions, and indeed often the artist identifies closely with those considered to be

deviant or criminal, disrupting and refusing to accept legal and social frameworks.[90]

Although it is not clear that the privileged artist position is entirely negated by performance

art, lifting the physical and metaphorical barriers between bodies is central to the work of

most performance art, and introducing questions of who and what is acceptable or accepted

behaviour is crucial. Whether physically or symbolically, actions and performances often

strive to effect closeness. At the same time, the focus on often hidden types of behaviour can

evoke images of otherness, undesirable behaviours and persons, perhaps bringing to mind the

kinds of people and actions – violent, depraved, sick, crazy, drug-influenced, messed up –

that are most often kept separate, invisibilized, removed from 'normal' society.[91] Actions

often condemned as immoral are showcased, and behaviour often deemed 'inappropriate' –

nudity, drug taking, sexual interactions, masochism and sadism, for example – is typical.

Framed as art, these behaviours are at least partially accepted into the cultural sphere, often

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[90] "As the subjects of modern "masters," lowlife (prostitutes, criminals, savages) could be framed—the socially
inappropriate could be appropriated under the auspices and ultimate explications of a master's eye" (24), Schneider
reminds us. Compare this engagement to that described by Beuys: "I am interested in the creativy of the criminal attitude
because I recognize in it the existence of a special condition of crazy creativty. A creativity without morals fired only by
the energy of freedom and the rejection of codes and laws. For freedom rejects the dictated roles of the law and of the
imposed order and for this reason is isolated. And related sentiments expressed by Gómez Peña: "A menudo nos sentimos
atraídos hacia aquellos que apenas sobreviven en las peligrosas esquinas de la sociedad: prostitutas, borrachines, lunáticos
y prisioneros son nuestros hermanos y hermanas espirituales. Sentimos una fuerte hermandad espiritual con ellos.
Desafortunadamente, con frecuencia se ahogan en las aguas en que nosotros nadamos, son las mismas aguas, pero se trata
de diferentes niveles de inmersión" (2003, 210).
[91] The kind of language often used to comment on social media posts (eg YouTube) showing the art of Abel Azcona.

to some extent legitimized by the venue or the festival at which the performance is taking place, on the one hand illustrating inequalities and privilege, and on the other serving as a reminder of those who are not so acceptable or accepted.

Body art in Spain has typically been less prominent than in other countries and less extreme in its use of pain and violence, often using irony and humor instead (Baena 219), but as we shall see Abel Azcona is an important exception to this generalization. When he cuts his skin with broken glass and rubs sand into it while contained in a glass room within an art gallery, the spectators on the other side of the glass can clearly see this is not sanitized or solely symbolic – there is actual blood and, presumably, actual pain.[92] Through exaggerated or extreme actions, and the complicated relationship between artist and audience, the public can feel uneasy or uncomfortable (Wheeler 40). Emotions are employed or provoked in unusual ways, causing audiences to feel either distanced or too engaged. Order is disrupted through making public the intimate and the usually private. Invisible dilemmas suddenly become visible – if somebody chooses to leave a performance it is obvious to the artist and the remaining audience, if somebody is disgusted or shocked these emotions become public, private thoughts or emotions are more likely to be expressed or witnessed. Indeed, the spectators at the aforementioned Abel Azcona performance can be heard and seen to gasp and turn away, visceral reactions to extreme physical behaviour. Participants in group projects organized by Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca have left early because of discomfort about their involvement in certain actions. There has long been discussion of the strange combination of fascination and repulsion experienced when spectating violence and infliction of pain, and this performance art both relies upon, but also experiments with these feelings.

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[92] This occurred in his performance in December 2013 as part of the Cuarto Público Festival in Santiago de Compostela.

Crucially, when considering the body, performance, it is often suggested, breaks down the division between performer and public, creating a bond between the bodies of the artist and the spectator. The interactive, live nature of this dynamic relies on the presence of both groups and it is their encounter with each other that results in the performance (Fischer Lichte 38). The body, central to performance, is not only that of the artist then, but those of the audience too, whose presence helps create the conditions necessary for the performance, and in doing so become part of the performance. This process, the autopoietic feedback loop, denies the idea of the autonomy of the artist or the lack of responsibility on the part of the spectator, and relies on "mutual determination" and co-creation of the artistic experience (Fischer Lichte 164-5). It constitutes a move away from the passive neutrality of the spectator towards implicated witness of the event or action of the active artist.

It is not, however, always entirely obvious in all performance. In the aforementioned example of Abel Azcona's work the glass divide changes the nature and possibilities of the spectator's presence, dramatically reducing potential for connection and interaction. In other performances, such as the section of *Útero* performed at the Spanish Embassy in Berlin in November 2013, the use of a conventional theatre-style venue implicitly suggests that this is not for interaction, that the audience is purely an audience and that their behaviour has no relation to what is happening on the stage. Indeed, spectators can be seen arriving late and moving seats, suggesting a more traditional style theatre performance rather than the intensity and connection suggested here by Fischer Lichte.

Yet, through performance art, particularly when it is not set up to mirror conventional theatre-style performance, an element of connectedness and joint creation is often revealed

171

which should bring into being some kind of empathy. Partly because of this connection, the body of the artist is brought "into view in new ways, engaging questions of ownership, property, self determination, legitimation, repression and control" (Heddon 184). The body of the spectator is also impacted by these questions and together these considerations serve not only to self-referentially debate the role of artist/spectator, but more broadly to critique and oppose conventional morality and legal control.

5.3:   Criminality and imprisonment in the art of Abel Azcona

In general Spanish performance art has been more law-abiding and less obviously political than that of Latin America, where performance has been closely associated to social movements.[93] Of course, sometimes simply transgressing moral codes and questioning conventional expectations about the body and its interactions with others is a political act (Alcázar & Fuentes 11). As Spain transitioned out of Franco's dictatorship with its emphasis on traditional Catholic values into a more liberated, 'modern' country, exploring desires and exposing bodies represented a new found freedom and a chance to play with ideas of liberation. Perhaps in keeping with the *Pacto de Olvido* in the years following the dictatorship, or perhaps because the Transition brought with it a new and exciting hope for the country and its future, it is difficult to find evidence of direct criticism of the regime or human rights abuses from performance art in Spain, although it is equally difficult to imagine that this criticism was not present, if not always explicitly.[94] Given that most performance artists refrain from providing an explicit analysis of their work, it is left to the spectator to

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[93] It is useful to note the differences Diana Taylor draws between performance art and public art in "Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin America": "It (performance) is often political in a different, more private way." (12)
[94] Feldman (1998) discusses the specifics of Catalan politics, language and censorship.

make associations and connections. Any introduction of violence would immediately conjure up memories and associations in the spectator, as any example of bodily harm or suffering implies multiple versions of harm and suffering. Abel Azcona, whose work has embraced the excessively personal, dismisses the debate about whether his art is political or not with his assertion that: "Yo he sido un objeto politico desde que nazco... no debería haber nacido. La sociedad heteronormativa, patriarcal, y ultra-católica me obligaron a nacer, ya nazco como objeto político".[95]

The cultural, social and political networks and framework within which the performing body exists are impossible to ignore, as the work and example of Abel Azcona illustrate. Furthermore, the performance artist, is, of course, never entirely free from the law (Johnson 146), even if there is sometimes something of an 'anything goes' attitude with regards to taboo, violent, discomforting, or illegal behaviour, in which certain behaviours can be seemingly legitimized (Ward 2). In 2016, for example, Azcona was charged with profanity by the Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers for his piece *Amén,* in which he obtained communion hosts by attending church services and then used them to spell out "pederastia" (Peral 2016). Focusing on freedom of speech and the right for respect for religious activity, the case brought to attention the increasingly uncomfortable tension between legality and art, ever more apparent since the introduction of the *Ley Mordaza* as referenced in my introduction. While in the 1980s and 1990s Pedro Almodóvar could be celebrated and held up worldwide as a flamboyant Spanish success story, representative of the official image of the new, liberated Spanish cultural scene, today's changing political landscape and changes to the Criminal Code in recent years means that these kind of legal

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[95] This quote is from a presentation at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid (HoyEsArte, 2016).

tensions are becoming more apparent for artists in contemporary Spain. The performing body can never fully escape its role as an embodied subject, but it simultaneously functions as an active autonomous being, inscribed by, resisting, and rearticulating identities and relations (Heddon 176). Azcona, in fact, framed his court appearance as part of the performance process, and the scenes of the opening of the exhibition where concerned Catholics gather to pray at the exhibit is easily read as another part of the performance (Telebista), which simultaneously provided increased publicity for the exhibition and resulted in high visitor numbers.

Until now, at least, Azcona's encounters with the Spanish legal system have been for the most part integrated into his art and publicity, gaining him international attention and a certain kind of celebrity status, and he has avoided prison. His performances, however, have regularly explored the subject of imprisonment, and when, as we have seen, any space can be used as a performance space, the choice of 'stage' or space for an action or performance event speaks clearly to the intentions and purpose of the artist. Like many performance artists Azcona uses the vocabulary of freedom and imprisonment to discuss the role of the artist and the importance of the artist escaping the confines of the studio to integrate with the world: "Si uno se encierra en un taller, nadie viene a buscarte. Y, desde allí, no vas a cambiar nada. El arte ha de ser un virus que se propaga, y el artista, un ser voluble, viajable, en movimiento" (Díaz Guardiola 2015). Azcona's work takes him out into the streets, literally in the case of recent projects such as *El Miracle* (2016) and *La Calle* (2014), and he takes the idea of movement to heart through constant travel to perform and work in countries other than his native Spain. At the same time he is firmly rooted in the established art world

through collaborations with galleries, museums and teaching institutions, and his work tends to be curated and commissioned by those in the art world – a team of professionals creating a piece together in which the execution is about more than just the presence of the performer.

A focus on constraint and confinement recurs through much of his work.[96] His 2013 piece *Cage,* curated by Patricia Razquin, performed in Pamplona, involved the artist standing with his head in a birdcage and an egg in his mouth. *Cage* was intended as a commentary on abortion and the artist's background. Born to a prostitute and abandoned after birth, with his mental health compromised by his mother's drinking and drug-taking throughout the pregnancy, Azcona aimed here to reference the womb, then the cage of suffering in which he found himself after birth. Imprisonment is problematized as a personal autobiographical experience – a metaphorical confinement due to illness and suffering – and rendered visible through actual restrictions in movement and prison-style symbolism.

The project *Útero* took place over the course of nine performances between 2012 and 2014. It continued this theme of exploring the artist's personal history, with enactments of a birth-style scene in cities around the world (Seville, Caracas, Madrid, Santander, Berlin, Pamplona, Santiago de Compostela, Lyon, and Houston). There are two sections: in the first, representing the moment of birth, the artist uses a rope, clearly representative of the umbilical cord, which he ties round his neck or other parts of his body, and repeatedly runs until the rope is stretched as far as possible, causing him to choke or fall over; in the second part, representing the time spent in the womb or also, perhaps, the immediate aftermath of birth,

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[96] Many of his performances involve imprisonment or confinement in some way, in addition to those discussed in this chapter. *Submitted,* for example, was a performance in 2012 in collaboration with the photographer Daniel Chong, which took place in Pamplona, in which he was tied up with rope for ninety minutes and displayed to the public outside the cathedral. Another collaboration with Daniel Chong, *Spaces without freedom*, took place in the same city and year. *Las Horas* (2015) takes place in a hotel room.

he has a bucket full of a brown coloured liquid (apparently formed of mud, alcohol and heroin) which he covers himself in, dips his head in, and which ends up covering the floor of the performance space. This performance clearly engages with physical confinement (the restrictions of the rope, which stops him moving, and also makes breathing hard at times thereby weakening his ability to move freely, plus the inability to easily move due to the brown liquid matter) and symbolic forms of imprisonment (by referencing the drugs and alcohol consumed by his mother, for example). The use of the rope, the naked body, and the desperate and confused efforts to move around evoke childbirth, and simultaneously carry connotations of erotic invocations of power relations. In this unlikely coupling of submissive vulnerability with self-directed aggressive action the artist appears to do battle with himself, forcing himself into situations from which he needs to recover, briefly, before re-attempting the obviously impossible apparent effort to escape the hold of the rope.

The spectator is, in theory, placed in a dilemma about whether or not to intervene to help the performer. The repeated running and jolting caused when the rope stretches as far as possible provides multiple opportunities to assist or attempt to prevent further pain or injury. In the performance at Houston, for example, which takes place in a gallery setting, with the audience milling around the area, spectators, fairly half-heartedly, try to block his way. At other moments, he reaches out to them for help, for example, to pass the rope so he can tie it to the bucket. The spectators are thereby, at least to some extent, ethically implicated in the performance and its results. The viewer must choose whether to overcome their repulsion at the bodily matter surrounding them in order to intervene. Kristeva's notion of abjection as theorized by Elizabeth Grosz helps clarify how the presence of such matter reveals how

boundaries and limits put on bodies are socially constructed rather than inherent: through

their presence, these normally hidden aspects of bodily function disrupt the expected division

between the inside and outside of the body causing disgust to the viewer. This state of

reaction helps evoke the "impossibility of clear-cut borders, lines of demarcation, divisions

between the clear and the unclean, the proper and the improper, order and disorder", thereby

disturbing fixed of ideas of identity and order (144). But even with this disturbed order, the

viewer must confront their own reactions. Sontag's discussion of the ethical quandary one is

placed in when 'watching the pain of others' clarifies the dilemma:

> There is shame as well as shock in looking at the close-up of a real horror.
> Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of this
> extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it—say, the
> surgeons at the military hospital where the photograph was taken—or those who
> could learn from it. The rest of us are voyeurs, whether or not we mean to be. In
> each instance, the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable
> to look. Those with the stomach to look are playing a role authorized by many
> glorious depictions of suffering. Torment, a canonical subject in art, is often
> represented in painting as a spectacle, something being watched (or ignored) by
> other people. The implication is: no, it cannot be stopped—and the mingling of
> inattentive with attentive onlookers underscores this. (34)

By watching the spectacle, particularly as part of a group, the sense of impossibility to

prevent further pain is created, yet performance art can offer an opportunity to delve further

into the seeming impossibility of intervening. In other venues, such as the example of Berlin,

the staged setting narrows the likelihood and potential for spectators to involve themselves in

the piece and, without such close proximity to the artist's body and the bodily fluids, are

distanced from the shared physicality of the piece. Despite the intensity of the physical

reactions of the artist, it is unclear to what extent the audience perceive themselves as being

in an ethical dilemma, and the distancing effect caused by the layout of the venue (raised

seating looking down on a staged area) creates a barrier between performer and audience.

With the performance art taking place in the established framework of the Houston

International Performance Art Biennale, the audience is arguably for the most part well-

honed in the techniques and devices of this style of art. Film of the performance show

members of the audience standing around, drinking beer, taking photographs, and engaging

with each other alongside their engagement with the performance. Photographs from other

performances in the series also show members of the audience taking photos with cell

phones, witnessing rather than engaging with the situation.[97] It seems likely that the repeated,

if slightly different, performances of the same piece dilute its impact to some extent – if the

audience has already read or heard of the piece and its content, they know what to expect and

can perhaps relax, knowing this has happened before and everything turned out alright.

Nevertheless the implications raised by the style of its delivery and documentation bring to

the spotlight the spectacle of punishment and the ethical obligation (or lack of obligation) felt

by those who witness it.

A similar dynamic occurs in *Primal Wound*, another piece with multiple versions

(performed in Pamplona, 2012, and Málaga and Bogotá in early 2013). The performance in

Málaga was live-streamed, again changing the nature of the artist-spectator relationship

(Hidden Gallery, 2013). The artist's body is seen lying on some kind of white surface,

possibly a bed, (later it is obviously a black bench covered in a sheet) and is apparently

naked, but completely contained in tight plastic wrapping, apart from a small hole for his

mouth. The fourteen minute footage shows the artist wriggling and squirming, snake like, to

try to break free of the plastic. It is at once horrifying and addictive – the audience, from the

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[97] Photographs can be seen on the artist's website (http://cargocollective.com/abelazcona/utero).

safety of the screen, watches the desperation of his movements as if it were something in a science-fiction film. The unhumanness of his appearance, created by the transparent, plastic skin and exacerbated when a hand breaks through, wriggling like some kind of strange alien creature escaping from his stomach, is gripping yet disturbing. It may conjure feelings or memories of claustrophobia or the fear of being deprived of oxygen for others, made clear through the audible gasps and attempts to breathe and move freely. Again, while the piece explores the thematic of confinement and escape, the consequences of it being live-streamed for its audience introduces notions of spectacle, voyeurism, and surveillance. The venue for the performance (Hidden Gallery) describes itself as a creative laboratory, which is not open to the public, but which connects with the world through the Internet and by inviting artists to perform and collaborate there. The notion that the 'presence' of both artist and spectator is an essential part of performance art is challenged, and the spectacle of imprisonment is prioritized over its potential for interaction and connection, with the extent to which the spectator is able to empathize or feel personally implicated severely limited.

The nine-part project *Confinement in Search Of Identity* (2013-2104) again enters into the dialogue and exploration of imprisonment found throughout the performance sphere, and continues the somewhat self-focused, sensationalist approach to Azcona's treatment of incarceration. Consisting of different stages commissioned by galleries and festivals, the project explored identity, abandonment and how the body fares when deprived of its freedom. In February 2013 the first part *Confinement* took place in La Galeria Santa Fé de Bogotá (Colombia). In April he joined forces with the Portuguese artist Regina Fiz Santos in a gallery in Madrid. The next part, *Dark Room*, I discuss in further detail below. In Lyon, he

performed *Nine Container,* during which the artist spent nine days in a trash container as part of *La Biennale De Lyon*. Azcona returned to Madrid in December 2013 for the fifth part, followed by performances in Pamplona, Houston, San Francisco and Berlin in February and March of 2014. As with much of his work, the project combined live performance with photography, film, and installations, and the photography and film produced during the performances was then displayed in other gallery settings.

The third part *Dark Room*, curated by Victoria Sherman, involved Azcona spending forty two days (of a planned sixty) in confinement, again in Madrid, enclosed in a space of six square meters, with no light, no technology and no contact with the outside world, and, unusually, the audience experience was entirely virtual. Six infrared cameras allowed the curators and a medical team to permanently monitor the 'prisoner'. Throughout the forty two days the only public viewing of the performance was through live streaming and social media updates. Some visits were possible to the secret location (in Fuencarral, Madrid), but those visiting saw the video set up and live streaming, not the artist himself. The way in which spectators interact with his work is again thrown into the spotlight. By viewing film or photographs, whether in a gallery or through his website, the performance aesthetic changes – the feedback loop between performer and spectator breaks and the audience becomes merely a viewer, a traditional spectator of art, with no means to interact with the outcome of the performance. There is an impression of interaction, but the great innovation of performance art, the physicality of the artist – the blood, sweat and tears of it – is sanitized through this distancing. Watching live streaming of a confinement deprives the spectator of

the reality of the physical embodiment of confinement – the smells, the sensations, the bodily sounds, the quality of the air, the restricted movements.

Azcona described his motivation as the opportunity to seek his 'essential' self, the inner identity free of outside contamination, and to break free from assumptions about time and his own identity (artist's website). The title, *Dark Room,* alludes to this idea of stripping back to the ''negative'', of revealing an 'authentic' image. Impossible to ignore, too, although the artist appears to make no direct comment to this end, are the connotations, both in the project's title and those of the parts, and in the performance events themselves, of prison torture rooms and solitary confinement imposed on prisoners, emphasised further by the knowledge of the outside viewers who are monitoring the 'inmate' at all times. The curators are also keen to point out the connections with Plato's *Allegory of the Cave,* in which it is suggested that it would be almost impossible to safely return to the cave of ignorance and darkness after leaving, and frame the piece as a challenge to this idea. So what can be said of this 'authentic, non-contaminated' identity sought through imprisonment? What is is like to return to the cave?

Firstly, it is remarkable to realize the extent to which surveillance informs this work, and how normalized the expectation of being watched and watching. Everything is tracked, coded, and surveilled – we are encouraged not to worry about being observed and we participate willingly, obsessively, in the surveilling and tracking of the lives of others through social media. There is a sense that there is only harm in this visibility if you have you done something wrong, otherwise openness, sharing, and 'following' each other's every move is the norm, indeed valued. Azcona's body of work and career is best understood with

an awareness of his place as the recipient of this social-media based 'gaze'. Social media, home of click-bait journalism and instant responses, encourages drama, heightened emotions, and confused judgements.[98] While, as we have seen, performance art can create a space outside of this world, Azcona's art also relies on it. The connection between spectator and artist becomes influenced by this online relationship – the artist runs the risk (intentionally or otherwise) of being viewed as unattainable celebrity. The interaction between artist and spectator reverts to one of performer and witness, rather than the combined effect of artist and spectator creating the performance. The audience in this situation, although nominally able to interact through social media, has no real impact or individual effect on the artist, rather they become a 'mass' of public to entertain, shock or impress. Their controlling gaze becomes the means to gaining popularity or criticism. The notion of 'them and us', whether referring to criminals or artists, is, here, not fully challenged.

Famously Peggy Phelan considered "performance's independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically, (to be) its greatest strength" (149), but in recent years the relationship between live art and its representation and dissemination has changed dramatically. As mentioned above, the growth of 'documents' of performances is one indicator of this change – with widespread use of YouTube and social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Vimeo, and Twitter it becomes possible to see evidence and archives of performances shared by spectators, the media, and often by the artists themselves. Also in evidence is the increased use of film and photography as part of the performative event with its associated increased incorporation of potential for mass

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[98] The speedy nature of information flow through social media and the accompanying crowd-mentality in responding en masse to news items results in quickly made assertions and opinions which rarely take the time to objectively and critically engage with the mass of information available.

reproduction into the performances themselves; in the case of the work of some artists this is integral to the performance. *La Calle*, for example, relied on photography as its means to share the 'performance' with an audience – in this investigative project Azcona immersed himself in the life of the Santa Fé neighbourhood in Bogotá, Colombia, then took female hormones and worked as a prostitute in the streets there – the performance was considered to be not only the 'doing' but also the 'documenting', with the documenting, the 'archive', being the only way that this particular performance can reach its 'public'. At the same time, the artist exerts his role in the panoptic order by surveilling not just being surveilled.[99]

Rather than distort the 'authenticity' of performance, this method of documenting or recording the work functions to liberate the performance, making it available to a wider audience, carrying its message further afield. Breaking away from the privileging of the aura of the performance – the idea that to be a spectator one must be present in the same space and time – through the use of technology and methods of reproduction, artists are increasingly concerned with reaching a wider public beyond those spectators sharing the performance space. Indeed for many critics and scholars writing about performance art, myself included, much of the material available to work with is the documents of the performance rather than the live event itself.[100] In itself the fact that many artists want not only to be seen, but also followed and liked on social media could be considered part of the rebellious nature of those involved in creating performance – while the concepts of time, space and presence remain vital to performance art, understanding of those terms has changed irreversibly with the introduction of elements such as live streaming. There is perhaps no strong sense of needing

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[99] Thanks to Dr. Raúl Alvarez Moreno for pointing this out and raising the interesting question of how this surveillance could be used by others, not in keeping with the artist's intentions.

[100] See for example the discussion of the untimely connection with the art of La Ribot by Gutiérrez-Albilla.

permission from an older generation or needing to follow the guidelines they established for their work. In other cases, it is probably merely a symptom of performance art legitimizing itself through entering the stream of capital. More pertinent, however, is the idea, proposed by McLuhan in 1964 and explored by Ward in *No Innocent Bystander,* that the body in the age of new media has been extended into a continuously connected network. Performance art is threaded through with dialogue about the use of technology, sometimes using it to create freedom, sometimes to imprison.

Surveillance art, any kind of art or cultural product or action, that incorporates surveillance to critically consider its place in our lives, tends to challenge or help the viewer question its pervasive presence in everyday life. Ideally it strives to disrupt the established relationship the public has with surveillance techniques by offering moments of connection, and gaps in between current frameworks of control to suggest other possibilities (Morrison 257). Azcona's performance relies heavily on the existing, established methods of surveillance, without necessarily questioning their place or potency. While the boundary between public and private has been blurred, there is no real attempt to break the divide – through 'seeing' the artist through other media rather than in person, the work risks falling into the entertainment traps of reality television or other voyeuristic types of spectacle. Azcona's 2014 project *Voyeur* again navigates the boundary between public and private, and again runs the risk of creating a celebrity-style division between audience and artist. Voyeurism, as defined by Fischer Lichte, is when spectators watch something that is "not meant for their eyes or when they willingly watch something which is unethical by universal criteria" (209). This is a somewhat tricky way to approach the subject with regards to

performance art, intended, as it is, for an audience, and with no clear verdict on what actions are ethical or unethical in the name of art. Phelan comments that "the silent spectator dominates and controls the exchange" (163). This is problematized by *Dark Room,* to the extent that the 'silent spectator' is unknown and invisible – neither the artist or the medical and curatorial team can know exactly who is watching the performance. The artist's team, in the end, hold the power here to control what will happen during the performance. It is unclear what discussions took place between the artist and the team beforehand to decide at what point they would intervene. The public audience may feel like voyeurs, however, witnessing this dynamic as it plays out, and wonder at what point they should look or walk away. Knowing there was a support team monitoring the artist, the public audience may have had fewer concerns about his health or circumstances, believing that the team would take responsibility in the event of any kind of emergency. The ethical responsibility of the viewer was in this way compromised and unchallenged. They could voyeuristically watch the artist suffer and struggle, assuming that somebody else would take charge if needed, in much the same way that suffering and violence can be witnessed, objectively and 'distantly' through the media, on television news for example. At the same time the 'monitoring team' used the notion of the artist's safety and health to carry out their surveillance, similarly to how surveillance is used in today's cities. The notion of surveillance increasing safety goes unchallenged.

Secondly, to return to the question of what constitutes the 'authentic, non-contaminated' identity sought through imprisonment, *Confinement In Search Of Identity – Dark Room* appears to conclude that without the 'contaminating' factors of history and

personal experience, there is a void. The individual is shown through the piece to be a socially constructed creature, who relies on interactions and support of other to fully exist. In keeping with the oft professed stance of performance art, the social nature of the body is highlighted. The isolated body, it appears to suggest, has little value or competence. Personal autonomy is shown to be an illusion. *Dark Room* forces us to consider the notion of the passive artist. After forty two days, instead of the planned sixty, the medical team made the decision to remove the artist from his voluntary confinement in order to take him to hospital due to concerns about his health. It is not the audience who are empowered to intervene or interact with the performance, but rather a pre-arranged 'support team'. Indeed, the audience has little to no impact on the final outcome, and in this work, as a result, the division between artist and audience is not renegotiated or fully explored. However rather than maintaining autonomous active agency the artist hands over control to others, whose decisions will affect the duration and outcome of the performance. This handing over of control combined with the incessant presence of surveillance mechanisms in many of Azcona's projects is the key aspect of his work that leads us to consider ethics and consent within performance art, an aspect of the genre with which theorists and critics have yet to fully grapple. As noted performance art, as a genre, and specifically body art has a history of including torture, mutilation, and transgressive sexual practices, and as such issues of ethics and consent are perhaps of more urgent concern than within other art forms. Furthermore, as audiences are placed in situations where their values and sense of morality is challenged, it seems vital that critical engagement with performance art should interrogate this topic.

5.4: Audience interactions, ethics, and the art of Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca

To understand better the role of consent in performance art, I turn to the long and productive career of one its earlier proponents on the Iberian peninsula, the Catalan artist Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca, one of the founders of the renowned performance company *La Fura Dels Baus.* Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca has mainly worked in a solo capacity since the beginning of the 1990s, and is particularly known for his exploration of the body in conjunction with technology, evident in his combining performance, installations, drawings, and video. He reflects on relations and interactions between the body and fields such as biology, prosthetics, and technology, along with a constant preoccupation with their effects on human freedom and autonomy. Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca's work grew out of the performance art scene of the 1960s and 1970s, known for its exploration of extreme forms of self-punishment and discipline and his work, which includes frequent allusions to and invocations of sadistic or masochistic relations (bondage, torture, voyeurism, costume, fetishism) can, as such, be better understood by reading it alongside relevant queer theory about relationships based around power-play.

In 1992, Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca introduced the issue of control and agency with his robot *Joan*, described as "the technological prelude" in his work, and a "decisive manifesto in the integration of mechanics, computers and organic materials". A masculine figure, made with pigskin and cowhide, Joan moves in random sequences triggered by sounds made by spectators. Joan is controlled by these spectators, and yet, they too are experimenting and surprised by the movements caused by varying noises. For Ántunez this project was decisive:

Con *Joan* descubro que es posible dar un paso más allá en la gestión artística mediante la tecnología... Aparece así la interactividad. Se establece un nuevo ámbito creativo, una nueva forma de control de la complejidad. (69)

The 1994 *Epizoo* performance takes this interactivity a step further, enabling the spectator to control the artist's own body. A robot mechanism is attached to his body and these mechanisms can move various parts while he stands on a rotating circular platform. He is connected to a computer, and the spectators use a mouse in a kind of remote-control function, to manipulate him, along with the lighting and sound. The spectators become "usarios de la performance" (Ántunez Roca 69). The notion of the artistic action as either active or passive (as discussed by Baena, 42), – where passive is understood to mean that the artist lets things be done to him/herself[101] – is an apt starting point for considering ethics and consent. Performance artists often put themselves into submissive, passive positions, apparently handing over the power to the audience.[102] Passivity is a means to submission, which, beginning with a desire, the appeal of the potential of a more powerful 'other' (person, place, technology, knowledge), is no doubt a risky and unstable strategy. Commonly associated with loss or defeat, it can entail the disappearance or transformation of a prior identity. Reflections on relations based on power-play and domination/submission remind us that submission need not always be a sign of weakness, and that vulnerability and exposure can be empowering, transgressive, rebellious, even productive for the development of self and identity. Relationships of domination and submission are shown to be based on an exchange where "power is understood to be mobile, shared or routed between practitioners" (Weiss, ix). At its core is the idea of control, but crucial to that control is the idea of consent. In

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[101]An extreme example of this would be Burden's Shoot (1971)

[102]Consider, for example, Abramović's Rhythm O (1974) in which spectators had the choice of a range of objects, including a loaded gun, and could use them at their will.

Epizoo the action is not totally directed by the audience, and the extent of their fantasies is already limited and decided by the artist himself. While appearing to be out of control, he has of course previously decided how the machine will be set up, thereby limiting the extent of the spectator's control over his body. Although in the moment, he has no say in what happens to him, prior consent has been agreed.

Involving an informed agreement between practitioners, for consent to be valid both or all those involved should be of sound mind, free from coercion or outside influence, and extents and limits should be in place (Fulkerson). The balance of power is, then, a subtle one and more delicate than the terms 'dominant' and 'submissive' at first suggest. Starting with the initial choice to give up some element of control, in a consensual situation, the submissive figure is, whether consciously or not, involved in the decisions which lead to surrender. Most theory discusses the oft quoted 'motto' that interactions involving power-play should be "*safe, sane and consensual*" based on mutual respect and trust, and such explorations of submission and/or domination are often about testing, pushing, or transgressing personal boundaries (Bauer 234). Talking about masochism Halberstam suggests that "if taken seriously, unbecoming may have its political equivalent in an anarchic refusal of coherence and proscriptive forms of agency" (136) and this seems to fit with Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca's explorations of the body. Subversion of the norm or accepted behaviours, transgression of limits, and excess are a constant controversial presence in his work (Armengol). While this subversion and excess often seems to imply a lack of control, I suggest it is more fruitful to see it as an opportunity to consider the importance and meaning

189

of consent, a concept which functions as a background to his performance and installations, even if not specifically addressed by the artist.

In a genre that, as we have seen, can include violence, torture or physical harm and a blurring of the artist/spectator divide, it is unsurprising that the question has drawn attention from critics and scholars and it seems likely that it will be increasingly debated, particularly given that consent is now an area of increased debate and analysis in Spain, as in many other countries. The artist Bartomolé Ferrando explores the idea, focusing on the constant process of change involved for an event to be ethical:

> una actividad es ética, cuando existe una correspondencia o correlación entre conocimiento y acción, mediatizada por el otro, no individual. Y además, cuando dicha correlación o correspondencia es auténtica, es decir, está en relación con lo que uno realmente vive y quiere o desea hacer. Pero esa correlación no es fija. Está más bien en continuo cambio, como todo conocimiento o saber. Y así toda actividad ética, estará también en continuo cambio. (Performancelogia)

Taylor mentions that artists should consider ethical behaviour, but her main focus implies that its relevance is primarily to differentiate between what the performer can do to him/herself and what can be done to the audience: "Un artista/activista se puede cortar, mutilar o flagelar, pero no puede hacérselolo a otra persona sin su consentimiento" (2012, 140). Fischer Lichte goes a lot further in her exploration of the ethical in conjunction with the aesthetic. Putting spectators into positions from which they need to make decisions and act, there is, she asserts, a shared responsibility for the situations within which they find themselves. As participants rather than observers, there is no safe position, they are provoked to act, and as such performance art necessitates, she suggests, a "fundamental rethinking and

190

radical reconceptualization of the relationship between the aesthetic and the ethical" (Fischer

Lichte 171).

She discusses how the response from the audience puts both the artist and the

audience in an ethical/aesthetic dilemma. Should the spectator merely observe when an artist

is injuring him/herself in the course of a performance or should they intervene? With norms

transgressed and established standards invalidated, Fischer Lichte suggests, a radical liminal

space is established for spectators and performers, within which there is no clear correct

procedure for action. Aesthetic responses run the risk of becoming at best voyeuristic and

possibly sadistic, while ethical responses might interrupt or disrupt the artist's work. The

only way out of the dilemma is, she argues, to find new ways to behave even in the threat of

failure (176). In *No Innocent Bystander* Ward ponders similar dynamics, investigating how

these ethical challenges raised by performance artists offer a new understanding of audience

and the choices they must make, and distinctions between public and private (133).

Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca's 2006 work *Protomembrana* turns the spotlight on the

spectators, when during the performance, a camera captures the faces of members of the

audience and then inserts them into the performance as part of the subsequent animations.

Who controls their image? Have they consented to it being used in this way? Other projects,

shown in his 2005 film *El Dibuixant* involve workshops with members of the public – we see

them being encouraged to stretch and redefine their personal boundaries and comfort levels

in *Satel.lits Obscens*. The scenes are described on the artist's website as follows:

> (the artist) embraced, kissed, sucked and licked the participants without them
> knowing exactly what he was going to do. This violation of their affective

physical space was very intimidating and as a result the participants' reactions were very real. (See artist's website)

While celebrating the fact that the performance inspires 'real reactions', there is no apparent discomfort from the artist about being the figure who violates personal boundaries, and no clear concern about the ethics of this. Are the participants being pushed into behaving in ways they are not comfortable with? Certainly some think so and in fact leave the project. Is that always a bad thing? As discussed, Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca's art relies on stretching bodies and boundaries, usually using technological processes, to create opportunities for subversive, unexpected expression:

> Estamos frente a una forma diferente de producción, donde el proceso tecnológico no necesariamente coarta la libertad transformadora sino que permite su correción continua. La *sistematurgia[103]* propone otra forma de creación, otra forma de código abierto que, con todo, mantiene el espiritu del "texto abierto colectivo". (2006, 72)

Again we find a link with freedom and the understanding of art.[104] Certainly the artist gives his consent to becoming a passive figure, but what is not clear is whether the audience is fully able to consent to the emotions and experiences they will encounter. There is almost a celebration of the process of making the audience uncomfortable, as can be seen on the website information about the 2012 project, *Pseudo*:

> You won't find comfortable stalls here to comfortably relax while seeing what happens on the other side of the "fourth wall". On the contrary, you will also be part of a show which will keep you constantly in movement and where you will be surrounded by dreams, projections, sensors and autonomous mechanisms. (See artist's website)

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[103]This is the name the artist gives to his method of artistic production. "Literalmente significa dramaturgia de sistemas computacionales" (69)

[104]"No me gustan las convenciones, casi sagradas, que te obligan a pasar por las normas de arte, del teatro, del cine....Prefiero entender el arte como un territorio abierto, fluido, libre." (2006, 77)

Likewise in the interactive installation-film *Tantal* (2004), spectators are likely to find themselves uncomfortable with the use of their image. In this piece the spectator's face is captured and attached to an actor's body in a film shown on a panoramic screen and each new face starts a new scene. As more faces are added, the spectator sees their on-screen persona interacting with others. This piece in particular raises issues of agency and bodily control. With the body often functioning as a kind of "mobile border" between public and private, it is easy to falsely believe we have ownership of it and its actions and capacities (Ward 123). *Tantal* not only discomforts the spectator in an immediate sense – what is happening to their new identity? Who are they interacting with? – but reminds the audience of the lack of control they have, beyond the performance, over their personal image in this digital age. Furthermore it invokes an awareness of bodies who live under control and lack personal freedom to make autonomous decisions about how they move about their lives.

Most of Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca's solo projects appear to explore and offer solutions for freeing, liberating behaviour, often using irony, humour and fantasy, as can be seen, for example, in the 2011 film, *Peix Sebastiano.* This piece uses a combination of of artistic styles – stop-motion animation, documentary, cartoons, and techniques developed in the earlier project, Membranas – to construct a colourful and surreal world. Here, Didi, diagnosed by the "Doctor" as "suffering from fantasy", discovers how to use art and fantasy to create a new path: "What we are today comes from yesterday's thoughts, and today's thoughts build tomorrow". She is instructed to go on a journey of discovery - "let's see what you fish out Didi!" - and to head fearlessly towards whatever makes her feel uneasy. The music,

melodrama, extreme costumes and makeup, often imitating strange creatures, alongside the sexual imagery and references ensure this work is recognisably that of Antúnez Roca.

Yet while entertaining on screen, this playful fascination with self-expression and sexual liberation runs the risk in other works of becoming mere hedonism or shock-value in the eyes of spectators – when empathy and compassion are lacking in direct interactions, the jarring effect on the audience at once forces them to confront their inner boundaries and potentially jeopardizes the trust between performer and public. Plunging the spectator into self-doubt and confusion, the breaking of behavioural codes and expectations can trigger the beginning of an internal debate about consent and ethical treatment of those in vulnerable situations, but equally hazards the dismissal of these debates due to an affective state of discomfort or disgust. While the audience squirm in their non-consensual position, they experience an abuse of power. Perhaps they empathise with those in similarly disempowered states? But perhaps they simply become angry about being pushed into a place of weakness or ridicule? Perhaps they are embarrassed by their awkwardness and feel it is unfair? Their privileged position of comfort and entitlement to choose their own behaviour and emotions has been challenged, but there is no guarantee that they will take away anything from this other than their own unease. The blurring of the division between artist and spectator in many of these instances fails to take into account ethical concerns – while the artist willingly puts himself into the hands of his audience, the audience, after their initial choice to attend a performance, has little say in what is expected of them. If uncomfortable, their only option is to exit the performance. Ultimately much of this performance art fails to provide a solution to

mutually consenting freedoms, privileging the artist above the spectator, rather than providing an opportunity for connection and shared discovery.

5.5:   Consent, connection, community

We can perhaps navigate some of the differences between the work of Abel Azcona and that of Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca by seeing them as representative of a general shift in understanding of consent, and its role in performance art and society. The flamboyant approach to morality and consent of the generation of figures such as Pedro Almodóvar and Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca is challenged and problematized in new social, cultural and political contexts. Their spectacular, sensationalist approaches to the body contrast with the peeling back or revealing so present in Azcona's work. While, perhaps, Azcona's work may make spectators uncomfortable for its brutal, but vulnerable reality (such as witnessing sexual acts or watching self-harm take place), the work of Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca may alienate through its 'weirdness', ridiculous, or monstrous nature.

The result, however, can be similar – a turning away from the discomfort, a switching off. In their work, nevertheless, surveillance and consent are shown to be issues not only right at the very centre of performance art, but furthermore subjects of central importance to understanding imprisonment and freedom and the strategies used to imprison or liberate. The works discussed thus far raise, without necessarily definitively answering, questions about the normalizing of surveillance, the privilege of not needing to worry about being surveilled, and who gets the chance to consent – all questions at the heart of contemporary culture in Spain and beyond. Asked about the 'function' of performance art, Gómez Peña replied that:

> Los artistas de performance somos un constante recordatorio para la sociedad de las posibilidades de otros comportamientos artísticos, políticos, sexuales y espirituales... Ayuda a otros a reconectarse con las zonas prohibidas de su psique y de sus cuerpos, y a reconocer las posibilidades de sus propias libertades. (2005, 225)

Helping others recognize the possibilities of their own freedom, would, ideally, go hand in hand with an attempt to move towards a consent-based culture, an implementing of ethical behaviour alongside boundary-breaking efforts towards liberation. If as Goldberg states "bodies of work built over several decades are finally being understood as a rich catalyst in shaping cultural ideas" (2001, 24) then performance artists find themselves in a prime position to be able to advance our understanding of consent. In fact, without more careful attention to the question of consent and ethics from the artists, performance art's effectiveness as a social or political strategy is severely hindered. Provoking an awareness of (non)ethical behaviour in art without providing opportunities or encouraging the imagining of a consensual alternative can run the risk of performance art merely echoing non-consensual power situations or appropriating them, rather than destabilizing and questioning the motives of those committing unethical violations.

As we have seen performance art began with ideals about transforming society and many critics and artists continue to hold these hopes, although often the work of Azcona takes the focus to an individual level, suggesting that art liberates and heals the individual without necessarily taking into account any bigger picture of healing. Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca, while exploring ideas of freedom and liberation, often plays into existing abusive patterns and offers no new truly freeing alternative – freedom in his work apparently comes at the expense of empathy and compassion. Butler theorizes the importance of collectivity in

the quest for agency, in a way that is helpful to understanding what is sometimes missing in

their work:

> If I am struggling for autonomy, do I not need to be struggling for something else
> as well, a conception of myself as invariably in community, impressed upon by
> others, impinging upon them as well, and in ways that are not fully in my control
> or clearly predictable? (2004, 27)

Performance artists find themselves in a unique position to confront our understanding of

what it means to be free, but they do so from within the existing political and social spheres,

and may easily end up merely perpetuating power inequalities by trying to impose on others

their own beliefs and practices (Fischer Lichte 170). If performance artists could find a way

to integrate novel ways of sharing and understanding consent, demonstrating ways that

meeting points and boundary-crossings could function without merely reinforcing existing

hierarchical structures, the aesthetics and ethics of their art have the potential to be

powerfully transformative, at an individual, social and political level. Until then, despite a

desire to be a rebellious art form, they risk continuing to model frameworks that ultimately

favour the status quo, reinforce erasure, and disempower the vulnerable.

Foucault asserts that part of the problem of prisons is that is so self-evident as to be

impossible to see beyond:

> We are aware of all the inconveniences of prison, and that it is dangerous when it
> is not useless. And yet one cannot 'see' how to replace it. It is the detestable
> solution, which one seems unable to do without. (232)

Part of its self-evidence, he suggests, is its role "as an apparatus for transforming individuals"

(233). A strength of cultural activity is to offer other ways of seeing and imagining. What

might we hold up, then, as examples of performance where consent and meeting points

between artist and spectator are considered in ways that offer solutions for transforming punitive assumptions?

The trajectory of Azcona's work shows a growing interest in highlighting points of intersection between the private and the public, and the personal and the political, particularly where violations of consent have occurred, with an increasing tendency to tell other peoples' stories alongside his own, giving a voice to those who have been rendered voiceless or invisible. Reaching out beyond the art gallery setting, he uses social and traditional media, or simply the act of walking and engaging with a neighbourhood, to enable association and coming together. *La Calle*, for example, aimed to draw attention to transgender sex workers in Bogotá and increase understanding and awareness around their situations, while *Enterrados* (2015) brought together participants whose family members were killed during the Franco regime.[105]

El Miracle (2015), part of a cycle called "Corporeidad y resistencia", organized by The Grey Square gallery in Tarragona, is a useful example of how a grouping of people for performance can be done gently and with mutual consent. Motivated by the idea of 'walking to freedom',[106] the participants gather, dressed in black, having previously signed up to participate through the art gallery's mailing list. Azcona removes their shoes as they sit in a circle, he washes their feet, each person washes their hands, then they walk together through the streets to the beach named El Miracle. Walking into the water, fully clothed, they individually choose how far to go and how long to stay in the water, returning to the beach to

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[105]Its aim was to acknowledge stories and bodies that have been buried and hidden due to the limited attempts in Spain to acknowledge and uncover the country's controversial history. The victims' relatives lay down in rows in the square outside Pamplona's *Monumento a Los Caídos* and Azcona placed earth from the land of one of those killed on their bodies.

[106]It uses a translation of the famous quote from Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk To Freedom" ("Siempre se parece imposible hasta que se realiza") in its publicity and documentation.

fall onto or lie down on the sand, as if they were corpses or survivors coming out of the sea. A ritualistic semi-religious style predominates seen in the bare feet and washing, the way they process as a group down the streets, reminiscent of monks, and the name of the beach. There is no apparent discomfort or unease on the part of the participants, who are informed about what to expect and prepared for their part in it. It is framed, in the accompanying information and in the film created as part of the process, as a peaceful therapeutic journey, consisting of individual pilgrimages to address personal pain, but equally important is the joining together of their personal journeys as individuals creating a performance group, and more broadly with the context of immigration, refugees, and deaths at sea.

It is certainly a step towards an inclusive, consensual approach to an art project and doesn't focus on the artist any more than it does on any of the people taking part. The project's intention to "invita(r) a los espectadores a caminar, reflexionar y "mojarnos" en tono a un conflicto humano"[107] – along with facts about immigration, the numbers of deaths of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, and quotes connected to exile and immigration from writers and other public figures in the exhibition that was made with documentation from the performance[108] – frames the piece in a political context, without losing any of its personal and intimate intensity. It is neither shocking nor scandalous in the individual components, but the overall effect is disturbing for its connections to those who do not survive their journeys across and out of the sea. For any spectators who come across this performance *in situ*, the experience is likely to be an emotional, thought-provoking one, without causing extreme discomfort. For those who visit the exhibition, there is likely to be little to no unease about

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[107]This is outlined in the description shared with the Vimeo film (El Miracle de Abel Azcona, Vimeo).
[108]This included quotes from Isabel Allende, Gunther Grass, Yann Martel, Mercel Proust, Ernest Hemingway, René Rebetez, the Palestinian-Spanish writer-musician Marwan, Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, and Leonardo Boff.

what they see: photography and film documenting the performance, quotes about exile and immigration, a beach made of sand brought into the gallery setting, and artefacts from the day of the live performance (chairs, water, and shoes). The suggestion to consider connections to a complex political situation and the spectator or visitor's personal sense of responsibility and agency related to that are the most provocative aspect, but it is a subtle nudge rather than an awkward shove. It is no doubt a more inclusive, sensitive mode of performance, although it perhaps risks sentimentality, privileging a feel-good outcome over seriously engaging with the political situation or individuals affected by it. Likewise, there is the potential for erasure of the specific political and social factors causing problems for refugees and immigrants trying to enter Europe today. Despite the apparent attempts of the project to show connections rather than differences, it is problematic to equate individual healing (or pilgrim-style) journeys with the very specific circumstances in which current refugees find themselves. Insisting on finding commonality and disregarding difference risks failing to scrutinize one's own place in failing to address and acknowledge these specific inequalities and conditions: working towards acknowledging the "complicated balance of proximity and difference" would perhaps be a productive way for performance artists to address such circumstances (Dean, xxvii).

Two recent projects by Azcona – *The Shadow* and *Visibles* (2015) – explored issues of sexual abuse, working with individuals to share their stories, and as such model potential methods for art to enable healing and build belonging and connection. Compared to his 2012 piece *Dejad que los niños se acerquen a mí* which addresses similar content, but seemingly from a place of spectacle and controversy (Azcona poses as Jesus in various provocative

settings), these two projects suggest a growing interest in connection and community over and above shock-value and self-protagonism. In *The Shadow,* firstly Azcona visited playparks with people whose personal histories involved abuse to hear their stories. During these park visits photography and film documentation took place which was then used in the gallery performances which formed the second part of the work. Taking place in various cities around Spain, the performance included the installation of a two swings next to each other, one for the artist and the other on which members of the audience could sit. When a member of the audience sits down on the swing next to Azcona, he tells one of the stories to them, as a first-person narrative. This emphasis on exposing and rendering visible the normally hidden is a common theme in Azcona's work, as we have seen, but here the value of the communal aspect of exposure is vindicated, rather than being presented as an individual responsibility. Meeting points are enabled on multiple levels: the original meetings between the artist and the participants whose stories he works with, between survivors of abuse, between artist and audience, between the visible and the invisible, between the personal and the public, and between past and present. Temporary communities are thus formed.

These pieces which often foreground types of behaviour that are closely connected to punishment and imprisonment in today's Spain and related to its history (immigration, drug taking, prostitution, abuse) unpick some of the threads that make up the stories. Like the theatre projects and other cultural work discussed in Chapter Three, performance art, they suggest, can be used to work through issues of trauma, promoting catharsis and healing. Story telling and hearing emphasise the opportunities offered by valuing and encouraging

fragility and vulnerability, and they illustrate the choice to either alienate and distance, or move closer, to better understand each other. The imprisonment itself, in the numerous incarnations performed by Azcona, is shown to be torturous, restricting, dangerous – the enacting of these solitary confinements evokes the stress caused to prisoners by solitary confinement, which is the cause of most prisoner complaints about ill-treatment, humiliations, and abuse (Aranda Ocaña, 2013).The trauma is obvious, the sense of relief (for both artist and spectator) at each escape is palpable. The catharsis takes place not during the imprisonment itself, but rather, the moments when freedom is experienced, or connection is made. The artistic process reveals the cultural potential for bridging, leaning in, bringing people closer. Punishment, they suggest, does not have to be central to renewal. Breaking down barriers between the public and private helps explore the importance of consent, and expose the trauma, isolation, and marginalization often brought about by abuse, whether at an individual (*The Shadow*) or national level (*Enterrados*). Consent, almost impossible within the prison, is suggested as a means to considering other means of reaching justice.

Community relations are suggested to be a vital part of alternatives to the penal system. Various theorists explore what community actually means, adding to our understanding of belonging. Bourdieu discusses the possibility of viewing kinship as "something people *make*, and with which they *do* something" and the idea of it being practical, "because continuously practiced, kept up, and cultivated" (1977, 35). Judith Butler's work on kinship in *Undoing Gender* shows how it can incorporate a far wider network than the traditional concept of family, to include friends or community members and others not connected by blood or sexuality, to incorporate other types of dependency amongst

humans. It becomes clear that, viewed through a queer lens, kinship becomes a flexible,

fluid, potentially disruptive space that defies the normative assumptions usually connected

with the concept. In "Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory", Elizabeth

Freeman clarifies the connections between bodies and kinship, pointing out that kinship is

"resolutely corporeal" and that the limitations and possibilities of the body influence it as a

concept and provide its meaning (14). Drawing connections with Judith Butler's work in

Bodies That Matter, she discusses how the performance and repetition of particular practices

consolidate the notion and justification for those practices, thereby making other potential

behaviours unthinkable and impossible (13). Kinship, can, however, function as:

> a set of representational and practical strategies for accommodating all the
> possible ways one human being's body can be vulnerable and hence dependent
> upon that of another, and for mobilizing all the possible resources one body has
> for taking care of another. (14)

This vulnerability and mutual dependency is also articulated by Folkart, who traces the

emergence of a liminal view of Spanish identity in Spanish narrative:

> Such an identity is based not on the exclusionary politics of subject/object, but
> rather on a borderland awareness. Fundamental to this liminal construct is an
> ethical consideration of multiple others as essential to the existence of the self.
> (207)

Bhaba, too, suggests the importance of liminality, negotiation, and collaboration for
constructing community:

> These 'in- between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of
> selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and
> innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea
> of society itself. (*Location of Culture,* 2).

As Azcona's recent work seems to suggest, performance art can help construct this liminal

identity, and indeed, can even be considered part of the process of creating kinship. Alliances

are based on emotion and experience rather than shared blood. Bodies are connected and rejuvenated through opportunities for opening up, offering new possibilities for belonging, showing how inclusion rather than exclusion leads to healing and transformation, and suggesting that the existing power structures in prisons, for all their rehabilitation efforts, deny the possibility of consent-based culture. Performance art, through Azcona's group work, shows itself to be a valid possible method for dealing with traumatic, abusive situations caused by organizations such as the Catholic church, the Franco regime and political responses to it, and the vulnerable situation some marginalized groups experience. Pratt's contact zone theory is again helpful to seeing how the event of the performance art can become a model for community inclusion where "the sufferings and revelations" can be experienced by all participants. Equally the group performance work which Azcona has developed could function as a safe house to enable healing and allow shared understandings. If perpetrators of crime escape punishment through the legal system and victims of crime feel that their concerns are ignored, the performance artist reveals potential for alternative methods of exposing, navigating and healing past harms. Simultaneously, however, this suggests the potential effectiveness of similar artistic and community-based processes for the healing and rehabilitation of those who have perpetrated crimes.

Despite the reliance on prison for punishment, alternatives based on restorative justice and positive conflict management to promote reparation and healing have at times been attempted in Spain, in efforts to move beyond the assumption that social order needs punishment to succeed. Brown suggests that such a framework can model "the revitalization of civic life and democratic society necessary"(203). Mediation projects undertaken from the

1990s are one example, although they are still impacted by social inequality and cultural and linguistic differences. Such projects focus on social co-responsibility, whilst also attempting to resolve conflict using "dialogue and mutual recognition" (del Campo et al, 2011). While the existing criminal justice system primarily searches for the guilty party and works out how they should be punished, "creating safe and healthy communities requires different questions: who was harmed? How can we facilitate healing? How can we prevent such harm in the future?" (Lamble, 2011). Instead of the failing emphasis on rehabilitation processes to change the individual, without factoring in wider structural issues in Spanish society, these kinds of approaches could suggest ways forward based on dialogue and negotiation. The borderland created by the intersections of cultural projects, punishment and imprisonment can help us to see the benefits and possibilities. We are reminded of Gómez Peña's suggestion that "border culture can help dismantle the mechanisms of fear. Border culture can guide us back to common ground and improve our negotiating skills"(1995, 20).

5.6:   Conclusions

Through these types of performance art, then, the unstable and slippery notion of belonging is explored and negotiated. Through performing connection, community and kinship can be realized, if we accept that through these performances the queering of kinship is vindicated. The value of forming bonds beyond those acceptable relations so firmly placed, still, in Spanish daily life – those rooted in church-validated ideals of family and reproduction, or socially legitimized norms of wage earning, productivity and the private sphere – is extolled, showing how those recognized, legitimized relations are unhealthy for some, impossible for others. Performance art is seen, in this way, to push not only at the

limits of the body itself and our understandings of what it can do and how it functions, but also at notions of kinship and community and how people can use particular places to integrate and intermingle. Yet it is the meetings and intersections that occur through or between the transgressions and boundary-crossings that are revealed as being critical to our understanding of the transformative power of performance art and what it can teach us about imprisonment and rehabilitation.

In this reading of the bodies of work of Abel Azcona and Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca, the debatable presence of consent is shown to be central to our understanding of their art, but also to the potential of performance art to transform and renew, at an individual and societal level. Imprisoned bodies and bodies in literal and symbolic borderlands are often those who are most vulnerable and most likely to experience abuse, due to the imbalances of power so central to these locations. Through the exploration of varying types of imprisonment and confinement in their work, and through the exploration of what bodies are capable of, these artists provoke debate and reflection about personal responsibility and autonomy. The complicit acceptance or approval of the witness to violations is exemplified, and the performances themselves, along with the way they reach the spectator, illustrate the insidious acceptance of surveillance in contemporary life. While these artists run the risk of merely echoing abuses of power of which they are superficially critical, we have also seen some examples of moves towards creating a 'culture of consent' which offer a potential future for positive, forward-looking acts of resistance and efforts at healing and freedom from past harm. These examples teach us about alternative ways to connect, meet, and build bridges in today's Spain, showing how personal renewal and transformation can move beyond self-

focused self-care into a community of catharsis and connection. While currently separate

from the institutions that have too often failed people – the nuclear family, church,

government, legal and penal systems – the meeting points enabled by these performances

combine to suggest potential for transformation, possibly through cultural change within

prisons, but, more importantly, that paths to transformation other than punishment are

possible.

Chapter 6:   Conclusions: beyond the prison walls

6.1: Overview

My aim in this study has been to explore the multiple intersections of cultural activities and prisons to determine what these meeting points can teach us about imprisonment, and to question if and how they can affect our understanding of alternatives to current expectations about prisons, punishment, and the penitentiary system. Using the notion of 'borderland' to interrogate points of encounter between prisons and culture I have looked for ways that prison encounters can provide sites of movement, dialogue, renewal, and growth, where apparently fixed identities can be negotiated and changed. Prisons, as we have seen, are a critical issue in contemporary Spain in part due to changes in the legal system and the penal code, but also in their role as places that uphold notions of nation and belonging or exclusion. The connections between prisons and borders are ever more apparent with the current immigration crisis affecting Europe, and notions of movement and the ability to move and belong are being constantly challenged. Yet as an area of research, contemporary prisons and imprisonment have been infrequently addressed in Spanish cultural studies.

Gómez Peña reminds us that "all cultures are open systems in constant process of transformation, redefinition, and re-contextualization. What we need is dialogue not protection" (1994, 20). I take his lead, both in my readings of my case studies, and in my efforts to reconceptualize and if necessary suggest alternatives to the current dialogue about prison culture and culture connected to prisons. The lack of conversation around contemporary prisons in Spanish cultural studies represents an important omission from ways

of understanding how the country's society and cultural sphere works – who belongs, what is acceptable or not acceptable, who is not welcome, who is not considered to be part of society. While such topics have been discussed frequently in relation to the past, particularly with reference to prisons of the Franco era, parallel conversations have not tended to be as common about contemporary Spain.

I chose to examine a variety of different meeting points rather than focusing on one artistic genre, partly to see how the varying intersections could help complete a bigger picture and partly to search for areas of commonality or difference. I looked for examples of prisons that represented contemporary production in different genres which explored the breadth and depth of relevant issues, aware that there are many texts I am unable to dedicate time to in all the categories – film portrayals, cultural projects occuring in prisons and prisoners voices, the uses of former prisons, and performance art dealing with the notion of imprisonment or bodily limits and restrictions.

6.2: Content of chapters and main arguments

The combined analysis of this selection of case studies shows how cultural practices can transform and enhance our understanding of prisons, imprisonment, and life beyond the prison. Cultural representation and exploration of prisons creates a kind of borderland, where meeting points occur that can be transformative to individuals and society, whilst also pointing out the problems associated with the inherent borders. Cultural activity connected to imprisonment can show ways that prisons can achieve their goals of reinsertion and rehabilitation, but also challenge us to question the potential and reasoning for these aims.

Rather than the walls more normally associated with prisons and borders, if there is one key image that holds the various texts together, it is perhaps the window, in its literal and symbolic function. Whether closed, open, or broken, it allowed, in each text, a possibility of crossing a border in some way, of connecting or moving or looking; a fragile barrier denoting liminality and thresholds more than enclosure or imprisonment.

In the introduction I gave a general overview of some of the social, political, and cultural factors relevant to the discussion of prisons in contemporary Spain, and established some theoretical frameworks to enable my analysis. I offered some examples of historical connections and showed how culture's role in prisons has developed through the work of key prison reformers.

Chapter Two explored portrayals of prisons in films (*Celda 211* and *Azuloscurocasinegro*), to address questions about belonging and othering. Surveillance, observation, and examination were shown to function as a multifaceted, multidirectional, ever present network of circuits, rather than a one-way process in which the powerful (authority figures such as prison wardens or government figures) observe the powerless (criminals, inmates, the public). My analysis of these films brought attention to the role of surveillance in contemporary society in the ways it has moved beyond the panopticon, showing how the media and the internet have changed its nature, denying its function as a one-way tool of control, and suggesting its failure to exert power over the behaviour of both criminal and law-abiding individuals. My reading of these films showed, too, how public and private space can be used to influence, restrict, or enable particular types of behaviour, and

other ways in which criminal and non-criminal behaviour is affected by place, resulting in the privileging of particular types of voices and people at the exclusion of others.

Chapter Three moved onto depictions of prisons and prison life in the work of prisoners, with examples of current and recent cultural activities within prisons. In reading *Historias desde la cárcel* alongside the work of Elena Cánovas and *Teatro Yeses,* I established further dimensions to the understanding of the way in which prison life is portrayed and the projection of different perspectives into the cultural sphere. Cultural production runs the risk of exploiting the subject of prisons without direct contact or understanding of the people most closely associated with them, and certainly without taking into account the legal and constitutional framework which defines what Spanish prisons should be – centres for socialization and reinsertion. The connections often made between violence, danger, and criminality reiterate and strengthen the notion that the penitentiary system is for those who don't belong and don't deserve to belong – those who fail to contribute to and benefit society or who threaten the stability of society in some way, yet as we began to see, if viewed as spaces for education and rehabilitation, prison culture is or should be substantially different to this purpose.[109] The 'us and them' approach to delinquency and the 'othering' of the prison population – ever apparent in the media and in many on-screen portrayals of prisons leading to a situation where often the 'acceptable we' discusses the 'problematic they' – is challenged when the 'problematic they' gains a public platform for self-analysis and revelation. Furthermore as the voices of those who have been deemed unsafe and a threat to society's security, we are given an opportunity to better

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[109]Consider for example the project organized with the aid of La Casa Encendida in Madrid, in which members of the prison population wanted to find ways to raise money and support the people of Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Due to their low incomes and lack of personal funds, they produced crafts which were sold to the public through the centre.

understand precisely what we are being protected from. As such, the texts and projects in Chapter Three provided particularly helpful meeting points, where socially-constructed differences can be bridged and dialogue can begin.

The controversies arising out of the destruction, use, and re-purposing of former prisons (specifically those in Carabanchel, Segovia, and Palencia) formed the focus of Chapter Four in which I highlighted how the subject of imprisonment and the history of prisons continues to be an area of unease and conflict for Spain. The failure of recent Spanish governments and official bodies to recognise and memorialize past human rights abuses and systemic repression reflects a simultaneous unwillingness to address contemporary prison practices and problems at the heart of the penitentiary system, while also epitomizing the lack of power to be found in the 'public voice' despite the transition to democracy. Decisions made about the venues I studied both ignored the explicit wishes of former prisoners, community groups and cultural figures who spoke up to try to influence the future of these buildings. Official cultural bodies (often housed within local government structures and town councils) were shown to sometimes tend to favour the status quo, rather than creating a meaningful space for critique and thoughtful debate, resulting in a situation where culture can potentially be used to render (state and personal) violence invisible or insignificant. While 'official culture' can be used to minimalize and further alienate marginalized groups and to ignore, silence and/or discredit the voices of former and current prisoners and those speaking up for them, this chapter also explored the potentiality of cultural activity to be used as political weapon, a tool of resistance, and a space for dialogue and empathy-building.

Finally in Chapter Five, after considering public and private spaces in the previous chapter, I considered how the body, configured through the dissolution of the performer/spectator dichotomy as a social construction rather than an isolated entity, challenges the boundary between personal and public in the work of Abel Azcona and Marcel.lí Antúnez Roca. We saw how performance art can help show and maybe help explain aspects of human behaviour that we struggle to comprehend or engage with, or that tend to not belong in a narrowly constructed view of the nation or society. Whether explicitly political or not, performance art often uses the tactic of disempowering the spectator, toppling them from an entitled, privileged position of passivity, to question, challenge, expose and experience power structures. Artists transition between being passive and active agents to further complicate things. In doing so there is potential to activate a transformative, liberating function, yet it is debatable whether this function extends beyond the individual experience to impact the wider society beyond the performance itself. We saw how performances questioning and critiquing imprisonment, constraint and restricted freedoms are not in themselves necessarily liberating or freeing, and do not inherently teach anything new about imprisoned bodies, particularly if they fail to critically consider the implications of some of the typical strategies used as part of incarceration systems, such as surveillance and violations of consent. While artists run the risk of merely echoing abuses of power of which they are superficially critical, moves towards creating a 'culture of consent' offer a potential future for positive, forward-looking acts of resistance, efforts at real 'freedom of movement'. I found some examples of performance art where consent and community were approached

in such a way that bodies were able to bridge differences, and these offered potential for transformative approaches to punishment and healing.

A few key areas I discussed throughout the chapters were the importance of the role of memory and history in understanding the prison system and its place in cultural activities; how our understanding of private and public worlds is affected by surveillance, notions of liberated spaces, and networks of connection and community; the relevance of private and public ownership to land development and as a strategy to ensure security; the importance of considering consent in everyday life; how cultural productions can help navigate changing legal and penal frameworks; and considerations of barriers and movement in relation to who gets to move freely (literally and figuratively) through and beyond Spain. We saw how it is difficult to consider prisons in Spain without acknowledging the connections with immigration and borders, and I tried to point out ways these cultural productions could serve to argue the benefit of inclusion over exclusion, and openness over a fortress mentality.

While carceral logic and the apparent inevitability of prison continue to dominate thinking about punishment and social order, these intersections of culture and imprisonment construct a different zone, in the shadow of the prison, but not entirely of it. Through them we can start to see a way past the current system of exclusion and assumption of difference. Borderlands, sites of potential and change, are places of heightened experiences, whether repressive or liberating. In its very liminality, the borderland can suggest possibilities for transformation, at both a personal and societal level. Above all, these intersections draw attention to the limits of the current prison system in Spain, and suggest ways to think beyond those limits.

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