

## **Retrospective Future Perfect: History, Black Holes and Time Warps in the Films of Los Hijos and Luis López Carrasco**

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By adopting the name Los Hijos, the members of this Madrid-based filmmaking collective appear to deliberately draw attention to the concept of inheritance and to their condition as heirs. Indeed, Los Hijos' creative non-fiction cinema is distinguished by an acknowledgement of their generation's uncomfortable relationship with its predecessors and one predicated by the archive.<sup>1</sup> These films are also – in part owing to the collective nature of their project – distinguished by a variegated subjectivity whose singularities are difficult to reconcile, marked by the morphing and expansion of concepts such as authorship and autobiography, whose diffuse signature challenges conventional notions of the film *auteur* in ways that might be termed – to paraphrase Derrida – *autography*.<sup>2</sup> In both instances – the generational and the autographic – the filial link, looks both forward and backwards in time, and temporalities become charged with oblique – seemingly impossible – political commentary, a “bond” which, to cite Elizabeth Rottenberg in her definition of the spectral, “links what will not be linked” (*Negotiations* 5).<sup>3</sup> In the same knowing way, exemplary of the ambiguous and highly conditioned paradigm of their legacy, Los Hijos' films are often dedicated to their parents or their families. In what follows, I will argue that lineage and genealogy in the work of Los Hijos disturb claims to historical lineality and that this is the result of a critical discourse concerning representation. This might be expressed, in filmic terms, as a beam of light projected from one generation to another, variously condensed, refracted and diverted by

the obstacles of temporality that thwart its continuous flow. J. Hillis Miller reminds us that the word “aporia” derives from the Greek “no passageway.” “An aporia,” he writes “is a blind alley in a logical sequence, an impasse that forbids going any further” (303). In my discussion of the films of Los Hijos I will discuss the aporias of legacy and the interruptions, produced by technologies of vision and audio, that exemplify it. The immediacy of film, the particular instantaneity of its form of representation while suggesting presence and a present, in fact always points to a present that is always already past, whose nowness is always other.

Formed by three members Luis López Carrasco, Natalia Marín Sáncho, and Javier Fernández Vázquez (all born between 1981 and 1982), Los Hijos are among the most distinctive and interesting of the cohort of young filmmakers that has emerged in recent years in Spain.<sup>4</sup> Almost all the members of this new generation of cineastes shoot with digital technology, a medium the integrity of whose signifying components – as has been exhaustively documented – has been cast in doubt.<sup>5</sup> I refer here, of course, to the material relation in the filmmaking process between the object filmed whose imprint engraved on the celluloid is, in turn, transferred to the retina of the spectator; the indexicality that Andre Bazin proclaimed as ontologically distinctive of the photographic image.<sup>6</sup> While this observation is not new, in the case of Los Hijos it is of particular importance: at the heart of their work is an engagement with the encounter between nature and technology. There is, further, a direct correlation between the political aspects – the *content* – of their films and the material form of its production, the technology – the apparatus, the *materials* – they employ. I will return to the question of digitality towards the end of this article but I want first to reiterate that the key argument of this essay turns

on how form and content historicized through Los Hijos' preoccupation with non-linear temporalities might be read as political critique.<sup>7</sup> Further, I suggest that these films complicate but also negotiate a passageway between the traditional oppositional division of *physis* and *technē*. Film's technology not only modifies and adds prosthetically to nature, as all technology does by definition, but its specific mode of disclosure also brings concepts of 'the natural' into question. The tenuous but suggestive connections between contraries apparent in Los Hijos, constitute, I will argue, what Hillis Miller terms "an encounter with otherness" (309), a dialogue suggested by black holes that, in different ways within the texts of these films, connect, absorb, and dilate distinct temporalities. To this end, I will offer a reading of two of the three features that Los Hijos have made to date and conclude with a discussion of López Carrasco's individual debut, the 2013 *El futuro*.

As children of the generation that brought "representative democracy," free market economics and neoliberalism to Spain, the complex national, historical and sentimental legacy of Los Hijos has provided the primary sources for their films but an additional inheritance is filmic, both in national and international terms. Highly literate cinematographically, Los Hijos draw deeply (critically, ironically and, at times, irreverently) from their antecedents. The combination of archive material and citation gives their work its particular resonance. The films of Los Hijos are charged with a particular tension produced of the recursive combination of national historiography and filmic materiality that, at the same time, eludes allegorical readings. In spectral terms, these films express a critical spirit of the age and their generation but one that while harking backwards simultaneously leaps forward in time. Their critique is of the tradition

(the national, the filmic and the national-filmic tradition) with which they are associated. The results are jarring, dissymmetrical encounters between generations and between modes of representation. Representation here is constituted by forms, genres, or modes (in this instance the modes of non-fiction or documentary film) and by the technologies of sight, visuality and tele-technology. Derrida, referring to such technology, alludes to this “irreducible difference of generation” and adds,<sup>8</sup>

From the moment that I cannot exchange or meet a glance, I am dealing with the other, who comes before me; an absolute autonomy is already no longer possible. And I cannot settle my debt, I can neither give back nor exchange because of the absence of the other, which I can't look in the eye. Even if I do it or think I do it, viewer and visible can only succeed in one another, alternative not be confused in the other's eye. I can't see the eye of the other as viewing and visible at the same time (*Echographies* 122).

This “heteronomy,” inseparable from yet critical of the national-political heritage to which it is bound and belongs to is the principle characteristic of *Los Hijos*. Their early experimental shorts engage with their immediate forebears from the archive of Spanish film from which they draw and that they clearly, though critically, consider themselves indebted. Exemplary of this critical inheritance are *El sol en el sol del membrillo* (2008), a lighthearted but lucid dialogue with Víctor Erice's 1992 documentary on painter Antonio López, and *Ya viene, aguanta, riégume, mátame* (2009). This latter film returns to certain emblematic scenes and locations of the recent history of Spanish film (Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena*, Montxo Armendáriz's *Historias del*

*Kronen*, Pedro Almodóvar's *La ley de deseo*, and Vicente Aranda's *Amantes* ) and recreates, in the form of subtitles, the disembodied dialogue of the original films (a technique, as we will see, also deployed in *Los materiales*). By revisiting, in these pieces, the precise locations and recreating with absolute exactitude the original sequences, in the physical absence of their original protagonists, both the places and the "original" films become haunted. The displacements produced in the space that opens up in the time that has lapsed point to a ghostly asymmetry, a disjoining of place, person and time. Originality itself – that of the work of art or of the national sign – is put in doubt as these antecedents are conjured up from the past as both homage and disavowal, and whose debt cannot be settled "because of the absence of the other, which I can't look in the eye." In a sense, *Los Hijos* constitute the unconscious of the national tradition to which they ambiguously subscribe in a relation that might be described as chiasmatic, a derridean *spacing* that emerges in order to disturb unitary or unproblematic ancestral affiliation. The relation of *Los Hijos* to the national canon might be described – in the words of Hillis Miller in a rather different context – as being "other to itself" (xi). Furthermore this notion of spacing has formal filmic implications: it holds together and complicates questions of surface and depth, horizon and vertice. Filmic time (and the tradition seeks to codify such time), its iterative quality, functions as vortex or abyss, a spiraling apparent groundlessness framed within and by the spacing that delimits and disrupts it.

*Los materiales* (2009)

The menu of the DVD of *Los materiales* displays a shot of the mist descending over distant mountains, a veil of cloud behind which we can just discern the outline of the landscape.<sup>9</sup> It is a shot repeated periodically throughout the subsequent film. Los Hijos' following film, *Circo* (2010),<sup>10</sup> has a similar shot and their third, *Árboles*, also uses this shot as its starting point following a prologue. In a second recurring technique in *Los materiales* the camera films from the interior of a car outwards through the windscreen. Reminiscent of the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami, the shot captures slanted sunlight filtered through the transparent glass barrier muddied by the trace of the wipers. Both these shots suggest and symbolize a contradiction: a direct line of vision impeded by a screen, a translucent curtain that partially obscures sight, that filters and befogs it, a barrier and a bond. The car's glass windscreen draws attention to the horizon of its own technology, it provides an additional frame, a frame within the filmic frame, an extra limit that demarcates the border between reality and representation.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the Spanish word for windscreen, *parabrisas*, recalls Hillis Miller's acute analysis of the prefix *para* in what is probably his most celebrated essay, 'The Critic as Host'. "“Para,”” he says “is a double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something inside a domestic economy and at the same time outside it.” (Miller quoted by Asensi 186).

There is a third shot in *Los materiales* that correlates to this and, as if to emphasize its significance, it is reproduced on the box cover of the DVD: a photograph of the dirt track of the film's initial sequence.

**[Figure #1]**

The unpaved road leads to nowhere, or rather (as we see in the film proper) it comes to an abrupt stop at the edge of a reservoir. A second example of this occurs towards the end of the film when the filmmakers (who are shooting once again from the interior of the car through the windscreen, this time though on the highway and at night) are obliged to pull over and turn back owing to the wild fires that light up the skyline and illuminate and silhouette the dark mass of the surrounding hills. These are “disquieting impasse[s]” (Miller 435); they are, to recall the earlier definition, literal aporias. However, they are also examples of film technique in the combination of artisan-like (and artless) tracking shots with the very real tracks of the road itself. Tracks – like documents or documentary film – are also traces and the traces here are imprinted – man-made or scorched – on the landscape, constitutive of the filmmaking process itself.<sup>12</sup> However, such traces of human incursions and shaping of the landscape are also thematically important to *Los materiales*. In this play between lightness and darkness, it is significant that this film is shot in black and white.

Deliberately flooded in 1987 to build the reservoir that dominates the film, Riaño, in the province of León, is also the ancestral home town of one of the members of Los Hijos, Javier Fernández. The historical fact of the construction of the reservoir – and the resistance to it (at one stage the filmmakers discuss the rumour that the local residents had considered approaching the separatist organization ETA to bomb the dam) leads to an ironic and understated historicization, history as underlying suggestion, temporal parallels, and subterranean allusion, history as spectrality. In spite of the modernizing associations of such construction projects with the Francoist regime that this kind of state-funded intervention in rural life and landscape conjures up, and particularly the

dictatorship's visual telematic representation of the inauguration of reservoirs as emblematic of NO-DO broadcasts, the Riaño dam was in fact constructed in 1987 in the democratic period by a Socialist government presided over by Felipe González.<sup>13</sup> But the analogy is pertinent, the democratic period is indeed haunted by its predecessor. And Riaño is populated by ghosts. The new town ('Nuevo Riaño'), built on the banks of the artificial lake, is filmed as if stricken by urban blight, neglect, abandonment. Newness is rendered as dilapidation and decay, haunted by absences. In a couple of lengthy sequences the camera dwells on the geometry – the angled windows that parallel the frame of the screen in Mondrian-like compositions – of the seemingly uninhabited apartment buildings: the flaking paint, empty flowerpots, the crumbling brickwork and masonry. Throughout the film such sober images are accompanied by a silent written commentary comprising of subtitles whose text – independently of the visual track – functions as a spectral supplement, in counterpoint to the visual images themselves. We hear no voices, only the hollow echo of the wind ricocheting, the sound of emptiness. The ghostly effect of the written text is reinforced by its disturbance of chronological temporality, the means by which it disjoins time. Two comments in the written text illustrate this. The first is the realization by the filmmakers that their presence at the site of the ancestral family home of one of their members is anomalous, the generations are reversed: "Es que nosotros somos más viejos que el pueblo" proclaims a subtitle. The second is the explicit sense of loss: "tradiciones y estas cosas quedan pocas. Se han perdido." The unattributed nature of these flecks of written conversation – we can only guess as to which of the three filmmakers's voices is contained in each fragment of text – contributes to the tenor of incompleteness, of the lingering, latent unspoken meaning, of

unfinished business. The collective and individual parties – authorship itself is slippery – vie with each other throughout the film. The filmmaking processes – the disputes and alliances between the three – form part of the diegesis of the film. It is also a kind of *spacing*, the *différance* that holds the three filmmakers together as a unit while retaining that which separates them individually. Even the phrases most evidently and identifiably attributable to autobiography – those we assume to be Javier Fernández’s, whose grandfather, we have been previously informed, had died in Riaño as did his father having opted to stay in the town after the family moved to Bilbao following the flooding (“Mi padre se quedó. Y murió aquí”) – posit, by virtue of their anonymity, an element of uncertainty, of missing links in a sequence marked by loss, a ruptured chain that uncomfortably binds family to location.

This sense of unresolved trauma is returned to again and again. Its iterative quality condenses – formally, technologically and thematically – in the film’s central sequences (central both in terms of their importance and because they occur midway through the film). Pedro, one of the locals, agrees to guide the filmmakers into the woods of the surrounding hills where Republican guerrilla fighters sought refuge in the aftermath of the War, he explains in one of this film’s rare moments of audible diegetic speech. Off-screen Pedro promises to lead them to where the *maquis* were summarily executed by Francoist forces in the 1940s and to take them to a well where the bodies were reputedly dumped. Communication between the filmmakers themselves, meanwhile, is once again transmitted telegraphically by means of subtitling. In a strikingly lyrical sequence, while Javier Fernández and Natalia Marín accompany Pedro, López Carrasco opts to remain behind with the camera in a copse.<sup>14</sup> The following footage has all the feel

of an experiment, shot and preserved as if unedited, constitutive of the raw materials of the film's title. The sequence begins in silence. Pedro's outstretched arm emerges from the right-hand side of the frame. He walks across the screen. The light catches the lower left-hand corner of the frame, revealing its translucent but also its artificial condition (like the reflected beam of the sun filtered through the car windscreen earlier). Then we hear a sudden eruption of sound: the whir of the camera, the wind, the rustle of leaves. The camera focuses on the branches, the shimmering light filtered through the cover of leaves, – the mottled, porous light tellingly reminiscent of the ripples of the man-made lake beneath which the historical Riaño lies – before a violent pan leftwards captures Marín and Fernández, laden with recording equipment disappearing beyond the trees. The lyrical naturalism of the leafy bower, filmed by the unmoving camera, is rudely punctuated by zooms, by the sudden jerk of the same static camera, the consequent loss of focus, the clanking noise of the equipment, and mis-matched illumination. What seemed unedited material is, it transpires, highly edited or at least the artifice and the apparatus chime violently with what purports to be the placid depiction of nature. López Carrasco changes lenses to produce not only a distancing effect but also in the light hole with its black surround, a visually telescopic effect, or that of a microscope. Although, we are in fact watching the same leaves as before we seem simultaneously to be a witnesses to a cosmological, galaxial effect – as if viewing through a telescope – and that of the microcosm, the detail. In the circle of light at the heart of the black screen distance and proximity conflate. Such a technique is both contradictory and foreshadows the black dot that breaches the celluloid of López Carrasco's own film *El futuro* discussed below.

[Figure #2]

This prolonged sequence serves as a kind of interlude in a film whose rhythm is marked by lulls and tensions. The tensions that arise are frequently between the three filmmakers themselves. Significantly, this particular meditation – López Carrasco’s work alone – suggests an individual crease in the fabric of authorial collectivity, personal style that contrasts with yet complements Fernández’s autobiographical influence on the film. These formal features, moreover, that give the film its very particular tempo – this sequence functions like an adagio – have a curious thematic correspondence. Just as the naturalism of the initial shots is disturbed by the jarring deployment of technology (camera movement, sound of the motor, loss of focus, etc.), so too the subject matter of the set of sequences that constitute this central passage of the film deals with the disturbance of nature.

The untimely deaths of the Civil War and post-war periods that lurk undiscovered under the ground and the traumatic legacy of the old town beneath the surface of the reservoir, point to a disturbance of nature by technological intervention, the *physis-technē* dichotomy. These unnatural deaths line the substrate of the landscape and of the film. It is significant that in a film about frustrated pathways, Hillis Miller’s “blind alleys” and “impasses” that Pedro fails in his endeavors to find the well where the *maquis* corpses were concealed and that the filmmakers experience technical difficulties while filming him.

Very early on in *Archive Fever* Derrida links documents (and *Los materiales* is a “documentary”) and topology to the notion of the archive; the archive, that is, subject to

dispute, necessarily guarded by an authority, the archons: “The archons,” he writes “are first of all the documents’ guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence” (2). A significant element of Los Hijos project in this and other films is to dispute that “hermeneutic right.” Here the substrate – topological and cultural, *physis* and *technē* – is open to multiple interpretations. It is palimpsestic, the unburied corpses, the elusive signs of the unresolved national trauma that lie beneath the surface making its absent presence. It is also the altered landscape, the human/technological assault on and shaping of nature and natural form. And, finally, for Los Hijos it is the filmic legacy that, in turn, connects the impossible aporia of the *physis-technē* binary. In the film’s introductory sequence, shot with an unmoving camera, we see the shadowy figure of a woman (Natalia Marín) set against the bleak image of an imposing snow-flecked mountain landscape; we hear the sound of the zip of an equipment case and see a dirt road leading towards the mass of water. Marín ambles to the water’s edge at the end of the road and pauses before finally turning back and walking towards the camera. The first words expressed on-screen, once more in the form of unattributed subtitles, are: “Esto es el plano más Angelopoulos que he hecho en mi vida –Sí, ¿no?” Immediately following this the screen fades to black to reveal the title of the film. The rhetorical question posed seems, like an echo, to demand a response. The prefix *eco* derives from the Latin *oeko* and, in turn, from the Greek *oikos*, importantly the institution that houses the archive. *Eco*, though, is most commonly associated with the environment, the natural environment, as in ecology. Its homonym *echo*, meanwhile (again, to recall the archive) conjures up notions of resonance, repetition and citation (Angelopoulos in this case, followed

moments later by references to Hitchcock and Antonioni), of reverberation, reflecting waves, of outwardly spreading ripples, like those of the reservoir, or the wild fires in the hills around Riaño that spread like viruses (and that light up in the darkness – in *contre-jour* – and impede forward movement), of echographies and hyperlinks, of black holes. Eco and echo suggest an impossible and intangible aporetic connectivity and coexistence between nature and the archive of filmic citations. I will return to the notion of *eco* in the discussion of *Árboles* but for now it is notable that both *Los materiales* and *Árboles* are structured, divided and linked, chapter-like, by black screens.

### *Árboles* (2013)

*Árboles* (2013), begins with a black screen that opens up to reveal not an image of a tree but a human portrait: a black and white silent medium shot of a young woman (Diana Tijerín). Eduardo Cadava, writing about photography, has detailed the correlation between trees and human faces, the marks of the passage of time inscribed on their respective surfaces. Faces, like trees, contain the imprint of their past in the present, their distinctive signature. This suggestive parallel is extended in *Los Hijos* most recent full-length feature from the trees of its title and the portrait of its prologue, to Spain's colonial past in West Africa and the effects of the contemporary crisis on the residents of the outskirts of Madrid. Both faces and trees – impossible correlates – are, like archives, depositories of the past. The paradox is, as Cadava has pointed out, that they “are both singular and never simply themselves” (12).<sup>15</sup> The portrait, the face, is singular-plural, whose paradoxical surface-substrate is charged with archival force, like the individual trees in the forest. The young woman of this first sequence is, moreover, clearly engaging

with someone else. At this stage we do not know with whom but the encounter could be with the off-screen filmmaker(s) or the camera itself. The self-consciousness of the woman's demeanor, the nervous, embarrassed smile, the pensiveness, draws out this sense of the presence of an Other, reminiscent of Derrida's description in *Echographies*, cited earlier, of the dissymmetrical experience of being watched. Even the glint of the light on the glass of her spectacles (like the interior car shots from behind the windscreen of *Los materiales*) indexes another elusive translucent presence. Again, like the muted subtitling of *Los materiales*, the invisible, inaudible presence of otherness, (off-screen, elsewhere) is emphasized through formal composition and points to what is absent, of what lies beyond the frame, the discomfort of meeting the gaze of someone off-screen watching unseen. After nearly two minutes the shot shifts to another portrait: a man's bald head bowed denying us an immediate view of his face, the flicker of the woman's hand on the far left side of the frame reminds us too of her partial presence. He (José Alberto Vallés) lifts his head for the portrait shot; his eyes stray away from the camera into mid-air, displaying a similar awkwardness before the camera to that of the woman moments before him, the same avoidance of eye contact. The screen dissolves to white and the word *Árboles* in stark black font appears. The film proper commences thenceforth in color.

The porous nature of the word portrait in relation to temporality illustrates its internal aporia. Its *por* looks forward to a future that is yet to arrive (*a porvenir*) while the *trait* harks back to a past, a residue, a trace. Behind these portraits – the *background* – that book end *Árboles* (the silent images of this prologue set the stage for the final images accompanied by sound, by audible explanatory dialogue), exists a domestic homescape

and a family lineage (the talk of a small child and of grandparents) and with it the metonymic political trait of the portrait – like the expanding ripples of the Riaño lake – reverberating beyond it. The surface – *sur-face*, a supplement to and of the face – that comprises the portrait points to a paradox, to an underlying depth; which emerges, as if from the mist, to mark the bare outlines of Spain’s current economic catastrophe, record unemployment and, most notably, the country’s housing crisis. The surface-depth parallel of the portrait that opens and closes this film acts as a cypher for the ghostly contemporaneity of national history particularly that concerned with contemporary urban space, the *superficie* of new construction projects, the surface of the city, and the gruesome colonial past that haunts it. Furthermore, the fade to white gives way to the signature sequence previously alluded to of the descending cloud veiling the landscape. On this occasion, the landscape is not the bleak mountainous terrain of León shot in black and white that dominates *Los materiales* but lush greenery, the vegetation of the dense Equatorial Guinean forest.

In another archival substrate related to this, the aporetic images of *Árboles*’ visual surface are supplemented by the deployment of a number of discursive registers in written and oral form: storytelling, legal documents, historical testimony; texts that emerge from the darkness of the screen, from behind the steamy mist draping the mise-en-scène.

In the central block of *Árboles*, shot in Equatorial Guinea, two young women (Antonia Silebo and Pilar Loheto) travel around the country before arriving in the capital, Malabo. These shots of everyday life have all the characteristics of ethnographic film. A static observational camera films children playing, the rain-drenched streets, a market

place, a religious procession, the vibrant colors of the clothing, in combination with shots of the thick forest. Meanwhile the two women tell stories to each other. These stories – recounted in a mixture of Spanish and an indigenous language – relate anecdotes regarding the history of Spanish colonial domination of Equatorial Guinea and the intimacy that the indigenous people have had with the forest. One story, told by Pilar in the doorway of an abandoned prison building, tells of how people lured to the city as it was being constructed – “La Ciudad Nueva” – would simply slip away into the trees at night and disappear. The attempted urban conquest of the forest was undone, the constructions capitulated in the face of encroaching vegetation, the new city became a ghost town. As in *Los materiales*, nature and urban development – *physis* and *technē* – combine spectrally, in the oral narratives. In startling juxtaposition to the spoken word narratives and in ways that return us, once again, to questions of film technique, technology and to the archive, to the texts that appear reproduced variously in black letters against a white background or white letters on black screens. The whiteness of this montage – whose texts derive from archival documents, logbooks and legal treatises dating from 1778 and 1953 and which refer explicitly to the original condition of Equatorial Guinea as penal colony suggest a ghostliness – a sinister bond between temporalities (18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) held together by the discourses of legality, corrective punishment, racism and urban development.

“La ciudad nueva” – as in the doomed, corrupt urbanism of colonial Guinea – returns in the final third of *Árboles*. Switching back to black and white of the film’s commencement, these sequences are shot in the ‘Ensanche de Vallecas,’ the utopian urban extension – another spectral supplement – of Madrid, constructed in the early

2000s, that extends the traditional working class district of Vallecas towards the east of the city.<sup>16</sup> The portrait shots of *Árboles*' first and final sequences are integrated within an urban landscape (we assume that this is where the couple live). If though Equatorial Guinea was a penal colony hacked out from the forest, the trees in the Ensanche de Vallecas – the bare metallic lines of electricity pylons, street lights, stairwells, networks of grates, wires, frames, and steel bars – also possess all the characteristics of incarceration.

**[Figure #3]**

Further, while the buildings of the new colonial city (and the prison) in Guinea, were abandoned by the local workforce – shipped in, press-ganged, conditioned to European temporality – for construction purposes, this new appendage to the metropolis – its extension into what was until recently farmland – is also (like Nueva Riaño) under populated. Here though, it has been reduced to a ghostly imitation of its original conception as a direct consequence of the collapse of the Spanish housing market in 2008.<sup>17</sup>

The utopianism of the Ensanche de Vallecas is signalled by an architectural experimentalism concerned (in an echo of the earlier discussion of *Los materiales*) with ecology. The encroachment of the city into nature is the focus of the first shots of *Árboles*' final section. The cage-like structures captured in these black and white shots are, in fact, attempts to create giant patches of greenery amid the sparse and spartan desolation of the *meseta* landscape.

**[Figure #4].**

Variouly called “Eco-bulevar” or “Bulevar bioclimático,” – as works in progress – these artificial “trees” line the officially named street, the “Bulevar de la Naturaleza.” The use of human technology to conquer nature is charged with irony as the metallic images demonstrate the manifest absence of human beings: the catastrophrophic results of Spain’s “burburja inmobiliaria.”

Between these two ghostly locations, the tropical African rain forest and the artifice of a Madridian arboretum, a third geographical locality is inserted within the diegesis of *Árboles* as a bond, a hingejoint in the body of the film, exemplary of the *spacing*, the chiasmus, to which I earlier referred. Titled “La Casa de la abuela” and shot in Águilas, Murcia, this intermediary section is distinguished – between the steam-drenched oppressiveness of Equatorial Guinea and the monochrome of Vallecas – by luminosity, by the sunlight of the Mediterranean coast. It also contains in condensed form all the elements of the film in its entirety, albeit elliptically. This section begins in bright color with a close up of leaves imprinted on the sleeve of an elderly woman’s housecoat. While the camera of the other two lengthier parts of the film barely moves, objective in its register of what occurs before its lens, the first minutes of this fragment are marked by a staccato subjectivity. Moving in and out of focus, it lingers on various members of López Carrasco’s family, among them the eponymous grandmother of this section’s title. The camera hones in on mottled skin, feet, a profile, a mane of hair, the dappled light cast by the shade of the slatted blinds. In its claustrophobic interiority, in the non-verbal sonic effects of the disjunctive acoustics (while human conversation is elided, we hear the sounds of the street, the chirp of birdsong), and we catch a glimpse of López Carrasco’s

brother (close in age and appearance to Luis) mouthing inaudibly, a skewed self-portrait emerges, marked by difference and deferral, one that again complicates and diffuses the autobiographical while retaining the signature as autography. Here the off-screen other is the filmmaker himself, invisible on-screen but technologically intrusive with his probing camera as in the sequence of *Los materiales* when he is left alone in the forest to experiment.<sup>18</sup> More significantly, the presence of the filmmaker's close relatives reminds us not only of the natural but also the genealogical associations of trees: family trees.<sup>19</sup> Slowly and intermittently the camera switches to an exterior, to a woman (López Carrasco's mother) sitting on the apartment terrace framed by fertile green leaves, a canvas awning speckled with petals that have dried in the sun. A low-angled shot reveals the apartment block and a palm tree in the foreground. The section ends with a return to the objective camera, shots of housing blocks open up onto the cityscape of Águilas at dusk. The sequences of López Carrasco's family foreshadow the final passage of *Árboles* in Madrid. Here we return to Diana and José Alberto, now shot in dialogue, a discussion represented – like the forking limbs of a tree – as a double portrait. The couple talk about the future, that of their unseen absent daughter. In a double iteration (an echo of the stories told in Equatorial Guinea and a future hereditary repetition), Diana recalls a book of tales she had read as a child at her own grandmother's house (a recursive story that unravels in its own telling, whose plot is to be found – performatively – in the very act of its recounting) that she, in turn, wants her daughter to read. If the silent images of the film's opening pointed to an off-screen other beyond the frame, its audibility upon closure – its references to the future to come and the return of the past – discloses the other as now. Like the aporetic “blind alley,” from out of the film's disjoining technology and the

sense of social-economic crisis the uncertain promise that emerges from the portrait's background gestures towards a *porvenir*.

*El futuro* (2013)

As a coda and a conclusion to this essay I would now like to read *El futuro*, the first feature that Luis López Carrasco has directed alone. Derrida, in *Archive Fever*, glosses Freud's archivist method as "retrospective future perfect." The phrase resonates well with *El futuro*, a film that engages directly and critically with the archive. Made in 2013 *El futuro* is explicitly located in historical discourse. And, in juxtaposition with its title, it is clearly and unmistakably – and unnervingly – located in the past. The film is set in 1982. We know this for a number of reasons but first and foremost because of how it begins. The film commences – in prologue – with future Prime Minister Felipe González's victory speech resonating out of a black screen, in confirmation of the Socialist Party's success in the 1982 general elections. The words of the speech are significant, haunting, not only the film itself but also present day Spain: "Ningún ciudadano debe sentirse ajeno a la hermosa labor de modernización, de progreso y de solidaridad que hemos de realizar entre todos" says González, in one of the rare sequences of the film in which the dialogue is audible. We might recall at this point that the three members of Los Hijos were all born between 1981 and 1982 and López Carrasco himself was less than a year old when González made his victory speech.

It is in this context, as much as that of the 1982 Socialist electoral success, that *El futuro* was made and might be read. In many ways the film's critique of representation lies in its performativity, in that it conforms to Hillis Miller's succinct definition

expressed as a “performative statement brings into existence the condition it names” (305). What lies at the heart then of *El futuro* – and what it addresses both directly and allusively – is once more a generational legacy (as we have already observed, Los Hijos do not call themselves Los Hijos for nothing), drawn from an archive (radiophonic and filmic) whose inheritance, rather than posterity, lingers on as a sense of afterness – or belatedness – accompanying the successes and the failings that one generation has passed on to another – not so much into the present, as constitutive of that bifurcating element of otherness that, as we have already seen in the earlier discussions, disjoins the present from the contemporary and facilitates political critique; the other, that is once again, of now. It is no coincidence that the film proper, following the recording of González’s speech, should commence with what seems to be the hangover of the host of the party, a dulled and disagreeable aftermath. The party itself comprises almost the entire film. Equally well it is significant that the end of the film should see the camera move outside (for the only time in the 68 minutes of its duration) to an urban exterior, to focus on the streets and buildings of a Madrid neighborhood clearly set in the present (as signaled by the presence not only of air-conditioning units not available in 1982 but also of apartment blocks constructed in the late 1980s and early 1990s).<sup>20</sup>

*El futuro* is a film that is neither historical document nor, apparently, a fiction film. Like the other films made by Los Hijos, it disavows such classification. In many ways, it takes on the appearance of an amateur production, an artisanal home movie. Shot over a weekend using (unusually) a 16-millimetre camera employed to provide an anachronistic, material “authenticity,” *El futuro* films, either in a neutral fly-on-the-wall style, or intrusively close to the participants, the course of a party set – we assume – in 1982

(coinciding with the Socialist election victory, and perhaps celebrating it). We are privy to a group of young members of the Madrid bourgeoisie who have descended on an apartment to drink, dance, flirt, take drugs and exchange inane and inconsequential conversation. The decor of the apartment, the fashion of the clothes, the makeup worn, but, above all, the musical soundtrack, recreate the atmosphere of the period of the *Movida madrileña*. But it is not a costume drama. There is no plot, no narrative beyond the improvised onscreen action. And though it could be confused with the period piece genre, it shares none of the commodification of pastness that Mark Fisher in his critique of contemporary pastiche has dubbed (following Simon Reynolds) “retromania,” none of the nostalgia that inundated Spanish screens and particularly the country’s television screens throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in which recreation of the past was reduced to temporal disjuncture deprived of its uncanniness, or “taken for granted,” heralding, to cite Fisher once more (this time quoting Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi), “the slow cancellation of the future” (9).

The experiment and, in large part the interest of López Carrasco’s film, lies in its concern with filmic materiality and in its preoccupation with time, not only in its recreation of the historical period but also in its administration of filmic time and chronological time. If *Los materiales* plays on space delimited by frames, this film tests the limits of time and operates at its liminal edges, squeezing, concertening and syncopating temporality. Apart from the use of celluloid, as opposed to the habitual and much cheaper digital video that López Carrasco and the other members of Los Hijos have previously worked with, the director and his technical crew also deployed lighting and sound equipment of the period. The roughness of the editing, the abrupt cuts and the

blemishes of the film itself, add to the impression created of a film made in 1982 (except we know it was not). López Carrasco mixed professional and non-professional actors (many of whom were simply friends of the director and did not know one another prior to the shoot) and asked them to behave as if they were at a real party. Though there was an original script at the start of shooting, it was abandoned almost in its entirety as the party progressed (though, as we will see, there is one exception to this). It was filmed over two days. As an experiment, *El futuro* is clearly influenced by the work of John Cassavetes, in the clustered, seemingly improvised action, and the probing intensity of the camerawork, its dense and urgent quality, its prying and eavesdropping proximity. Likewise, there are overtones of Andy Warhol's experiments with time and human behaviour: the simple filming of what emerges before the camera lens, with little or no direction, and within which drama develops at the limits of the shoot, from the concept – another experiment – rather than a script. Indeed, dialogue in *El futuro* is practically impossible to discern because of the music and the deficiencies in direct sound recording (both the consequence the technology of the time and the natural cacophony resulting from the party itself). Cassavetes and Warhol are, of course, among those filmmakers who most influenced the generation of the *Movida madrileña*, notably Pedro Almodóvar and Iván Zulueta.

Indeed, Zulueta lends an important influence to *El futuro*, an influence that points to a connection between filmic materiality and cinephilia. To return to the initial moments of the film: having located its historical moment in the politics of the period, namely in Felipe González's speech, like the films of Los Hijos, *El futuro* proves equally indebted to cinephiliac antecedents as much as to that moment. In a recent interview

López Carrasco has said that *El futuro* was inspired – he describes it as the film’s genesis – by a fleeting few shots culled from a sequence of Zulueta’s cult 1979 film *Arrebato* in which we see Olvido Gara (better known as Alaska) – one of Pedro Almodóvar’s early muses and a central figure of the *Movida madrileña* – entering a room full of party goers with a birthday cake.

**[Figure #5]**

One of the key films of the *Movida madrileña*, *Arrebato* – in its darkness, its pessimism – stands in stark contrast to Almodóvar’s films of the same period. The sequence in question from *Arrebato* is interesting because it is in fact an extract from a film within a film: as part of the super-8 footage that Pedro P. (Will More) sends filmmaker José Sirgado (Eusebio Poncela). The footage was shot by Zulueta himself as personal memorabilia and incorporated into the montage of *Arrebato* later.<sup>21</sup> What we see then in *El futuro* – a film that purports to be a representation in the form of an impression, a recreation of the period (I will return to this point later) – is *mise en abîme*; a chain of hypertexts that form a tumbling cascade of citations of films inside other films generated by a network of references and generating more in turn: Zulueta’s home movie within *Arrebato* returns 30 years into the future, reincarnated or re-imagined as a film called *El futuro*. Again this suggests a visual spacing: *mise en abîme* conditioned or colored by *mise-en-écart*. Such an interpretation permits a furtively political reading suggested by Walter Benjamin’s 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> theses on the ‘Concept of History’ containing his most cited critique of progressive historicism. Benjamin posits “*Jetztzeit*” – “now time” – the charged revolutionary moment of the instant – that draws upon the past – “the tiger’s leap into that which has gone before,” – to interrupt – “explosively” –

“the continuum of history” (395). It is precisely this continuum of history, in its appeal to national citizenship, modernization, solidarity, to which González appeals in his victory speech.

There is an additional pointed reference to another film of the period – the only part of the original screenplay of *El futuro* to survive the actual shoot – when two of the guests at the party engage in an animated albeit amicable argument over political militancy itself (interestingly they are shot slouched beneath a table as if in a void, a vortex, a separate *abîme* of their very own that sets them apart from the rest of the party).<sup>22</sup> The dialogue here (which refers to ETA) is a direct, albeit unattributed, quote from an Andalusian worker resident in the Basque Country interviewed in the 1983 *Atado y bien atado*, the second part of Cecilia and José Juan Bartolomé’s suppressed documentary on the Transition *Después de...*<sup>23</sup>

**[Figure #6].**

Afterness here is once more out of synch with the time of its address, mobilized paradoxically through the *abîme* structure as political-filmic reference in ways that point, once more, to a discordant untimeliness, both the “pre” and the “re” of representation. A film shot in 2013 and set in 1982 quotes (impossibly) another film released in 1983.<sup>24</sup>

I want for a moment to speculate on two things that are prompted by the idea of *abîme*: firstly, the word *abîme* derives from abyss which, as Heidegger reminds us, means the absence of ground (*Abgrund*) and there is a tension here between recognizable historical specificity as provided by the archive and the unsettling feeling that representation born of the infinite quality of *abîme* produces in us: a sense of

groundlessness – the gap that spacing opens up – in the future anteriority of the film’s material historicity, both its cinephilia and its unspoken allusion to legacy. Secondly – like a surreptitious link in the chain of *mise-en-abîme* that I am trying to establish – just as Pedro P.’s super-8 film is a supplement to *Arrebato*’s diegesis, a foreign body, as it were, grafted onto the main body of Zulueta’s text (an artisanal production of the director’s other, his alter-ego), so too its appropriation by López Carrasco is parasitical – to return once more to Hillis Miller’s *para. El futuro* feeds off its filmic ancestor which in turn haunts its descendant. The spectral bond between past and future is maintained – aptly for the para-normal – in a place, an apartment that is itself an artifice, the location for a film – a site and a para-site, a virtual space haunted by the paranormal. Haunted by the ghosts of the *Movida madrileña* and Felipe González (whose presence, still felt today in contemporary discourse, provides a spectral connections between public sphere and private life), this private party, like all parties has its hosts – like the main body – and its guests – parasitical strangers, foreigners or outsiders – whose arrival, whose entrance through the doorway – the threshold between the exterior and the interior, between the public and private – is experienced once more as interruption.

“Interruption” – to recall, once again, Benjamin’s thesis on history as temporal disturbance, rupture or disjuncture, the sudden and unexpected appearance of ghosts – undergirds *El futuro*. Significantly, the film begins with an interruption with the voice of a radio broadcaster. At 2:30 am on the morning of October 29<sup>th</sup> 1982 and the radio DJ breaks into Juan Pardo’s rendition of “Suspiros de amor” to announce that the broadcast will switch urgently to the Socialist Party headquarters. The next voice we hear is that of Alfonso Guerra, the PSOE’s erstwhile deputy general secretary who, in turn, introduces

Felipe Gonzalez.<sup>25</sup> The interruption is important for a number of reasons: historically, the PSOE victory marked a historical political break-through: the first leftist government elected in Spain since 1936. It interrupts the continuum of center-conservative rule of the post-Franco era – breaching its consensus inheritance. It also came roughly 18 months after another televised and much-repeated interruption in the democratic process (an interruption marked by another interruption, the forced cessation of the live TV broadcast – its reduction to a black screen) when members of the Guardia Civil led by Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero burst into the Spanish parliament on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1981. An interruption that signaled the end to future right-wing plans to topple democracy and arguably marked the end of the Transition.

Furthermore, the insistent motif of ‘interruption’ in *El futuro* paradoxically approximates form and content, renders them indistinguishable: filmic diegesis and materiality, mise-en-scène and montage. Aside from the arrival of guests as interruption, at one point towards the end of the party, the frivolity and the free flowing movement of the montage are interrupted by a return to the past in the form of still photographs from a family album. These photographs, ironically shot against the ironic acoustic backdrop of Aviador Dro’s song *Nuclear, sí*, point to the Francoist family past – the childhood – of (we assume) the hosts and guests present at the party.<sup>26</sup> These photographs haunt the future of their own time, or the future as not what it was. Like the earlier conversation between the two men beneath the table whose references to the situation in the Basque Country of 1982 echoes with the current situation of resistance to the state, these still photos suggest a return to the future in ghostly form: a Francoist childhood that visually traces a disjointed link between the dictatorial past, the youthful democracy of the

*Movida*, and the present period distinguished by economic crisis, popular disenchantment and social fracture.

Interruption in the continuum of history of different times is produced as a result of the different technologies, each one in some way or another marked by temporalities: fading family photographs from the 1960s, still photography purporting to be from the early 1980s, the 16-millimetre film, the archive recordings, the soundtrack with its emphasis on minor, long-forgotten songs of the *Movida* (none of the enduring musical classics of the period are to be heard in this film). One could perhaps read this as a comment on the digital technology that López Carrasco and the Los Hijos have always used previously. While their work consistently revolves around temporalities and is notable for its distinct historical charge, its preoccupation with the past, digital technology (as opposed to analog or celluloid) arguably exists in a kind of permanent present. Unlike the dated family photos or the overexposed shots and other flaws that I will discuss in a moment, digital video does not deteriorate with age. It is, in a sense, impervious to the passage of time.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the instantaneity of the historical moment – the interruption – is shot against a black screen shielding and veiling the future that González addresses. The black screen of the film's commencement returns partially, in fragmentary mode towards the end of the film, in the form of interruptions, editorial breaches (what I earlier referred to as blemishes or flaws, signs of antiquated montage) the intermittent marks on the texture of the celluloid, the distorted acoustics suddenly silenced, the very historically-specific cinematic material that marks this film's pastness.

**[Figure #7]**

While these black dots reveal – in self-conscious fashion – the materiality of the film’s imperfect montage, they also have, I would suggest, a diegetic component. The black circle suggests a hole, a vortex and a void, a material correlation to the *abîme* of the film’s textuality, the references, the cinephilic citations. It suggests a quite literal black hole, like that mentioned earlier in this article, a time-tunnel, a conduit connecting the past with the future; a sign of the spectral bond that haunts and binds the elusive present, and thereby links – by means of disruptive interruption – not only the representation of different co-existing temporalities but also other apparently irreconcilable oppositions, the discordant materialities of sound, light and image, the modes of fiction and non-fiction, and analogue and digital technologies. These are the impure elements that bind and seal representation – one thing standing in for another – whether in *El futuro* or the collective work of Los Hijos as a whole. My argument here has been that these same elements that constitute Los Hijos imperfect cinema, shot through with critical cinephilia, extend beyond photographic materiality and politics – representation itself – to haunt and destabilize claims to national allegory.

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<sup>1</sup> Although cultural memory is not central to this essay, clearly the relationship between the generations of the democratic period is often complicated by both questions of memory and by its commodification or packaging for ‘official’ purposes.

<sup>2</sup> The conception here is of an authorial signature that is simultaneously identificatory while also disavowing the national legacy or the filial bond (an ambiguity central, I argue, to the work of *Los Hijos*). This is, of course, not only important in modern film theory but, rather differently, also imbues Derrida’s philosophical project, and not only in *Specters of Marx*. Hamlet deploys his father’s seal by use of his inherited signet ring in order to change his stepfather’s orders that he (Hamlet) should be killed on arrival in England, thereby *sealing* the fate of Guildenstern and Rosencratz (Act V scene ii).

<sup>3</sup> The full quote – highly relevant to this essay – is as follows: "Derrida calls the bond between singularities—the bond that links what will not be linked—*spectral*. To be spectral is to be neither present nor absent; it is neither to be nor not to be. Indeed the spectral, says Derrida, is what exceeds all ontological oppositions between absence and presence, visible and invisible, living and dead (...). A bond that is spectral is, therefore, something that cannot be contained within any traditional concept of community. It is a protest against citizenship, a form of political solidarity that is opposed to the border politics of the nation-states: it is what Derrida calls *the democracy to come*. In other words the spectrality of the bond affects the very essence of the possible. It makes possible the impossible, the coming of the other, the invention of the future" (*Negotiations* 5).

<sup>4</sup> Other notable contemporaries of *Los Hijos* are Andrés Duque, Virginia García del Pino, Oskar Alegre, Lois Patiño, and Elias León Siminiani among many others. Though not the primary concern of this essay, it is perhaps worth pointing out that the non-commercial nature of the work of these filmmakers has led to a certain spectrality in the exhibition and distribution of their films. In the last few years (coinciding with the economic crisis) a shadow network of film exhibition, at the margins of commercial outlets, has sprung up in Spain consisting of internet platforms such as plat.tv. or margenes.org, among others and festivals specializing in the promotion of new filmmakers such as ‘Punto de Vista’ in Navarra. Likewise, the Madrid Cineteca provides a new venue for documentary films unlikely to be screened elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> A significant exception to this is Luis López Carrasco’s *El futuro*, shot in 16 milimetre film for self-reflexive, or meta-filmic reasons, and discussed later in this text.

<sup>6</sup> See what is probably Andre Bazin’s best-known essay “The Ontology of the Photographic Image.”

<sup>7</sup> By political discourse I refer to the allusions, often expressed with great subtlety, in the work of *Los Hijos* both to the history of Spain (the Francoist dictatorship, the Transition, the country’s colonial past) and to its conflictive present upon which that past weighs. I refer here particularly to López Carrasco’s film *El futuro*, which was made in the aftermath (and is highly informed by) the 15M or “Indignados” movement that commenced in 2011. However, while connected to this in terms of

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my critique of conventional historicism, it is not the primary interest of this essay. I have written extensively about the films of the 15M elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> Los Hijos have recognised the legacy of political cinema of the 1970s and recently curated a cycle of films on militant politics of the Transition. To this end they have worked closely with filmmakers Cecilia and Juan José Bartolomé, among others. See too note 23.

<sup>9</sup> The presence of a similar shot in *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973) may be coincidental but, as we have seen, the interest of Los Hijos in their illustrious predecessor would suggest otherwise.

<sup>10</sup> Time is also an important element in *Circo* (particularly the time of labor, that of the working day). Although, for reasons of space, I do not discuss the film in detail here I will do so in a longer version of this essay that forms part of my current book project.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Conley reminds us of the French homonym between *limitar y l'imitar* (852).

<sup>12</sup> *Los materiales*, while concerned with the raw material of film itself – with such things as illumination, acoustics, and the physical apparatus of filmmaking – also has no narrative as such. The film is improvised, much of its footage seemingly consisting of outtakes that in a more conventional film would have been discarded in the editing process.

<sup>13</sup> Such was the degree of local opposition to the reservoir that there were many arrests (including the Riaño's mayor). One resident committed suicide, among the deaths that haunt this film:

[http://elpais.com/diario/1987/07/12/portada/553039201\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/1987/07/12/portada/553039201_850215.html)

<sup>14</sup> Although not mentioned in *Los materiales* – and the absence itself is striking – Julio Llamazares' 1985 novel *Luna de lobos*, which centres on the guerrilla warfare waged by fugitive Republican soldiers in the aftermath of the Civil War, is set in this region. The filmed adaptation of 1987, directed by Julio Sánchez Valdés, was shot in Riaño. It is an interesting example – from filmmakers known for their filmic literacy – of a non-citation or citation by means of omission or ellipsis.

<sup>15</sup> Cadava is here not writing axiomatically but referring to the specific portraits taken by photographer Fazal Sheikh. My point though is similar to and inspired by Cadava's correlation of portraits and trees.

<sup>16</sup> These sequences point to a long-standing filmic tradition – that of the city symphony – indexed and subverted in this film.

<sup>17</sup> In his blog Paul Nadal draws attention to the relation between *techné* and the city: “Plato understood politics as fundamentally belonging to the domain of *techné*, politics as first and foremost a political skill to be learned, an art or, better yet, a kind of technology of the *polis* (city).”

<sup>18</sup> The diffuse autobiographical references conditioned by technology recall the silent, subtitled sequences featuring Javier Fernández in *Los materiales*.

<sup>19</sup> Noteworthy here is the rhizomatic quality of the genealogical tree. In private conversation López Carrasco informs me that while his mother is not the daughter

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of his grandmother, the feet we see in close up are in fact those of his aunts (who otherwise do not appear).

<sup>20</sup> The substrate of *El futuro* is lined by a series of references and materials (buildings, photographs, archives) that combine and confuse different time periods: the Francoist dictatorship, the 1980s, and the contemporary period (including the indignation provoked by the current economic crisis and the failings of the political class. I suggest that form (both filmic form and the media support employed) disjoins content but that, in turn, is itself disjoined within the diegesis of the film. This, I would argue, is what lies at the centre of the critique of representation.

<sup>21</sup> There is an additional echo of *Arrebato* in *El futuro*: both films are primarily (with significant interruptions) located indoors. This both generates a sense of suffocating claustrophobia and gives significant weight to the occasional exterior sequences that appear in both films. The overall effect is to create another link between impossible and irreconcilable opposites (inside and outside).

<sup>22</sup> The muffled, inaudible quality of the dialogue – we hear snippets of conversation but it is virtually impossible to follow the gist of it. In this instance, for example, we have no possibility of knowing the substance of what is being said without the English subtitles or the explanation in interview that López Carrasco has given. It is interesting that this should happen precisely at the one point in the film that retains the original script. This is similar to the dissonance produced in *Los materiales* when we hear the crunch of gravel underfoot but large parts of the dialogue between the filmmakers goes unheard and yet is represented onscreen by subtitling.

<sup>23</sup> Divided into two parts (*¿No se os puede dejar solos?* and *Atado y bien atado*) and shot in 1979 and 1980, this film was subjected to a series of bureaucratic impediments designed to prevent its release. It was finally screened legally in 1983. [http://elpais.com/diario/1983/11/03/cultura/436662004\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/1983/11/03/cultura/436662004_850215.html)

<sup>24</sup> In an additional instance of temporal disturbance in the context of political mobilization, Elena Oroz reminds me that the dialogue also describes – in terms of location and activity – the encircling of the Spanish Parliament building on September 25, 2012: an action, once again, part of the popular reaction to the economic and political crisis and firmly located in the recent memory of many Madrileños. This, together with the shots of the anomalous 1990s housing, points to another instance not only of temporal discontinuities but also their inverse: persisting, insistent continuities in the form of ghostly returns. This ghostliness is further emphasized in the still photographs of the Francoist childhoods that visually trace a discordant link between the dictatorial past, the recently restored democracy of the *Movida* and the present period dominated by economic crisis and popular disenchantment. See too note 18.

<sup>25</sup> The figure of Alfonso Guerra himself is charged with spectrality. A former deputy-prime minister and a key figure of both the Transition and of the Felipe González's governments, he remains uniquely, to this day, the only surviving continuing congressman of those who entered parliament in 1977. Guerra's parliamentary longevity points to another "black hole" or time warp in Spanish history (he has recently been vocal in defending the unity of Spain in the face of the possible secession of Cataluña from the Spanish state). There is a skewed temporal

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correlation (disjointed time) between Guerra's ghostly "uninterrupted" 37-year tenure in Congress and the interruption of the announcement, of which, on this occasion he is a disembodied protagonist.

<sup>26</sup> The title of this song – pertinent, again, only with the benefit of hindsight – recalls, once more in form of an echo that reverberates in counterpoint through recent history, both the campaigns against nuclear power and the presence of US airbases in Spanish territory of the 1980s and 1990s, and the PSOE's ambiguous slogan during the 1986 referendum on Spain's entry into NATO ("OTAN, de Entrada, No"), an ambiguity clarified (and dispensed with) by Felipe González's decisive intervention shortly before the referendum.

<sup>27</sup> This assertion is, of course, open to debate. Other commentators have argued that digital reproduction does, in fact, deteriorate. My point (and the source of my doubt) is that what ages is the technological support rather than the substance (the digital code), which can indeed be preserved intact and seemingly unaffected by the passage of time, by updating both the software and the hardware that permits its reproduction.