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## **The Long Goodbye of Marca España: Affect, Politics and Modernity in Marta Sanz's Crime Novels**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Halfway between a paean to Spain's accelerated modernization and prosperity and an overcompensating denial of its economic implosion in 2008, Marca España is the state-sponsored initiative to promote a positive image of Spain as an international brand. Marta Sanz's noir writing locates the instances of the violence that founded such triumphant representation. Hers is both a tribute to Raymond Chandler's model and its dismantling within a peripheral modernity. This essay asks whether the deployment of *noir* tropes allows for the critical examination of social attitudes toward the socially vulnerable, or, on the contrary, betrays a desire to belong to an imaginary global middle class. Where natural and man-made spaces, traditional and modern, bear the inscription of a nondemocratic global market, how does crime fiction hierarchize, negotiate and/or articulate affect, economy and politics? I claim that within the conventions of noir, Sanz speaks to the economic nonviolent crime upon which Marca España is founded.

### **KEYWORDS**

Crime fiction; Marta Sanz; Marca España; Affect theory; Cruel Optimism

“There ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks,” Ohls said. [...]

“You sound like a Red,” I said, just to needle him.

“I wouldn't know,” he said contemptuously. “I ain't been investigated yet.”

Raymond Chandler

“Frenchmen are not [simple and direct like the Anglo-Saxons], nor are other writers of Latin descent. A different conception of beauty of style makes it difficult for them to tell a tale in which the ingenuity and subtlety resides in the plot itself and not in the expression”

José Fernández Montesinos

In 2012, executive order 998 created the High Government Commission for Marca España or “Brand Spain.” It tasked the commission with deploying the nation as an international brand to promote, in this order, Spanish economic, cultural, social, scientific and technological interests abroad. As of 2018, if you go to [marcaespana.es](http://marcaespana.es), you will find a short clip that states that “Spain is culture” over a montage of skyscrapers, some nondescript beaches, windmills, the Guggenheim museum, Gaudí’s Sagrada familia and serrano ham. If you have the patience, other montages will follow: Spain, seemingly, is technology, innovation and talent as well. Nowhere does the economy, the first of the supposed beneficiaries of Marca España, feature—surely hypostasized but pervasive within each of those images. Marca España is an exercise in “soft power”: diplomacy for the private sector that provides and enhances an image of modernity grounded upon recognizable, exportable, modern and modernized signifiers in order to attract foreign investment and project an image of efficiency and quality to the exterior and promote exports

1. For that very reason, it is a desirable image to identify with.

It also reflects a compensatory strategy. 2012, of course, was four years into the worst economic crisis that ever hit democratic Spain. Unemployment tripled, from 7 to 22%. Where real estate had previously been the main source of profit, the value of new houses decreased by 20%. The Labor congress and the new center-Right government approved several rounds of budget cuts to social safety nets (and new ones cannot be ruled out). This move was mandated by the European Union in exchange for the financial rescue of eight savings banks. That Barcelona’s biggest landmark is presented as being part of Marca España, as is well known, is hardly without question in a state whose citizenry is deeply divided over issues of national identity. Spain’s reputation abroad, on the rise since the political transition, suffered a hard blow (Leiva Soto): the crisis was a financial one, but also one that shook the country’s external and internal image.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than directly tackling the crisis<sup>3</sup>, *Black, Black, Black* (2010) and *Un buen detective no se casa jamás* (2012b), by Marta Sanz, can be read as a response to the narrative pushed by the Marca España initiative. They point to the less glamorous process of accumulation at the root of Spanish modernity. Sanz dissects the narratives that preceded the housing crisis by casting upon them a split gaze:

one that is built upon reference to noir, embodied by the gay, highly educated detective Arturo Zarco and one that deconstructs its conventions, embodied by Paula Quiñones, Zarco's ex-wife, a Spanish IRS agent. This double gaze allows Sanz to build up and dismantle Spanish culture's desired inscription into global modernity, while showing at the same time to have been shaped by that desire.

In this essay, I take Sanz's deployment of *noir* to constitute a reaction to the image of Spain as peripherally modern, rather than mere vehicle within which a particular content is described. In this sense, it mirrors and distorts Marca España's rejection of the nation's peripheral status within world culture. Sanz's noir, in its dialogue with modernism, is a different response to the same anxieties that Marca España is trying to assuage. Formal estrangement both removes Sanz from the narrative of an assured place for Spain within World History and betrays her desire to belong to global culture, if indeed it is a desire to belong differently. I will first focus on the *detective*. While the detective protagonist is one of the main conventions of crime fiction, both Zarco's individual characteristics and his relation to Paula somewhat complicate received conventions of noir. It is not only that Zarco is a strange detective; he and Paula become the means by which these novels state that the relation between knowledge, truth and power isn't one in which the "Private" (I/Eye) has the upper hand. Second, I will examine the *setting* of the novels. Rather than simply constructing a psychological atmosphere, the geography of the setting itself is an instrumental component of the crimes investigated by Zarco. Urban and coastal places become objects of desire, which reveals that Spain's political economy since the '70s is not a story of insertion into global circuits, but precisely a story of that which prevents it. Third, I will deploy concepts from affect theory (affective capitalism, emotional hegemony, cruel optimism) to explain some characters' unstated commitment to a fictional sense of contemporary capitalism that Marca España is aligned with. Issues of gender, race, class arise when emotional identification is interrupted for the characters but also the reader. Finally, I will point out how Sanz's modernist noir is a negotiation with the pleasures and the pitfalls of the genre.

**Arturo Zarco, P.I. (and associate).**

Noir narratives, strongly identified with American popular culture, didn't enjoy regular production in Spain until the 1970s. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who penned the exploits of Spain's most famous fictional detective, Pepe Carvalho, simply denies the existence of such a tradition in interview with José Colmeiro (1987, 19). Why? Colmeiro himself describes (and rightfully dismisses) essentialist claims about the straightforward, thoughtless, passionate, Spanish criminals and about the writerly limits of the "Latin spirit," more prone to stylish sentences than plot twists (1994, 133-135). Rather, it seems more reasonable to point to the loosening of censorship and the rise of an educated middle class as the driver of consumption as the enablers of an incipient culture of crime fiction (Janerka 2010, 59; Buschmann 245-246). Postmodern revaluing of popular culture also helped surmounting prejudices about the genre (Colmeiro 169). Given how recent noir is as a local discourse, Hollywood adaptations and translations played an important role in its constitution (Valles 88).

The imaginaries of the detective and the city are inextricably linked. In an environment in which the multiplication of social contacts corresponds to the weakening of social links, the detective is entrusted with restoring or unveiling the deeper meaning of social relations (Piglia 81-82, Balibrea 29). The frictions of seemingly identical, disconnected, anonymous lives awakens the desire to find small, meaningful patterns, differences and relations. The city's massive, homogenized life doesn't correspond to a more cohesive social body; on the contrary, it only atomizes it. Through reason, experience, or luck, a detective traverses backdoors and corridors, mansions and shantytowns, dive bars and city halls, as his voice threads together the fragmentation of evidence and the fictional accounts of the witnesses (either malicious, prejudiced, or misguided) into a seemingly truthful and totalizing narrative. A detective is the supplement of modern surveillance, replicating its function but also intervening where it may falter and weaving together knowledge and control. The detective's knowledge, as such, tends to reproduce, willingly or not, the directions in which power tends to be exerted: e.g., in Sanz's *Black, black, black* (2010), the parents of the victim, Cristina Esquivel, a wealthy geriatric physician, pay Arturo Zarco to investigate her husband, an Arab immigrant, in order to confirm their prejudices.

We first meet Arturo Zarco<sup>4</sup> when he visits them, at the beginning of that novel. He paints himself

as a sophisticated, present-day Philo Vance: well-pressed suit, sunglasses on, confident, sophisticated, somewhat cynical. But if Sanz's novels, like many postmodern renditions of the archetype, "fagocitan [...] las estrategias manidas de la narración de detectives" it is only to "desmantelarlos con ironía y sugerir un oportuno distanciamiento de la tradición noir, en la que paradójicamente fincan sus raíces" (Gutiérrez 112). Certainly, Zarco, like Spade or Marlowe, is an outsider, which, as inconvenient as it may sometimes be, grants him critical independence from social norms (Balibrea 34). But his social position comes from his failure to embody the archetype of the detective as a normative model of masculinity; he soon discloses the twist: "No puedo evitar ser una persona pulcra ni que me gusten los muchachos de baja estatura y de complexión débil. Ni que se me vayan los ojos" (13). Much of the bibliography on the novel (growing yet understandably limited due to its very recent publication) focuses on Zarco's sexuality, which the novels themselves emphasize in their text and the very synopsis in the back cover (see especially Gutiérrez, but also Álamo 375, Bardavío Esteban 152, Sánchez Villadangos 42, Martínez Quiroga 19-20s). He does indeed soon fall for Olmo, a barely legal neighbor of the victim, and Zarco's interest in young men is surely one of the ways in which Sanz undermines the conventions of the genre, but I want to focus first in a different one: the fact that the detective himself doesn't solve much. The witnesses' fictions and his own are too interesting, too alluring, too noir, for him to resist; to solve crimes, he needs his ex-wife.

From the moment we first see him, Zarco is enjoying newfound freedom following his failed marriage to IRS agent Paula Quiñones, but he invests part of that freedom in tormenting her with the stories of his sentimental exploits. Either a voice over the phone or an interiorized stern critic, Paula is Zarco's ever-alert interlocutor. They are an odd couple on several grounds. First and foremost, their codependence belies their sexual incompatibility: "Yo no sé vivir sin que Paula me mire" (2012a, 296). Their gazes traverse each other and challenge each other's self-image and image of the world around them, particularly Zarco's, whose own gaze filters life through the lens of his own sophistication: films and books, noir and otherwise. Paula, on the contrary, is brutally direct (both are amusingly sarcastic). Where Zarco describes a cleaning lady's knees, worn after years of scrubbing, she snarks: "Ya nadie

friega de rodillas. No sabes nada de nada. Todo lo que dices es falso, Zarco, no porque seas un mentiroso, sino porque una película, un filtro, empaña tus ojos” (2010, 46). She does not condone Zarco’s self-aggrandizing narratives: “[U]n manto cae encima de mí fundiéndolo todo en negro. Paula diría, con mucha menos pompa, que me quedo profundamente dormido porque aún estoy medio borracho” (2012a, 101). More interestingly, neither does she let go of the hackneyed commonplaces, even rhetorical ones, that crowd Zarco’s narrative and tie it into noir rhetorics: “Marcos [...] finge no darse cuenta de que Marina y yo estamos como cubas. Un tipo educado –¿Un *tipo*? Tú eres tonto, Zarco...” (2012a, 74–emphasis in the original).

Hers, on the contrary, is a disenchanted gaze: “Tengo mis hipótesis y la mente despejada. No uso lentillas de colores. Sé leer por debajo de las volutas metafóricas. Por debajo de las capuchas de los contribuyentes que me quieren engañar” (2010, 225). The IRS agent’s humbling gaze teases out the culprits. In her role, Paula is smart, honest, efficient, if a little bitter. This is an idealized portrayal, especially considering that she is, after all, a representative of the state: one of the specific trends of Spanish crime fiction, particularly in its earliest manifestations, but still current, is to show the institutional police force as “backward, unscientific and thus incapable of carrying out a rigorous murder investigation” (Vosburg 2). Sanz almost turns this trope upside down—“almost” because Paula is no policewoman; she is an IRS agent and she asks about material relations, property and financial interests<sup>6</sup>. The kind of questions that Paula asks (in person or in Zarco’s imagination) lend the series a hermeneutic structure: “originating in the practices of the American hard-boiled detective novels, this kind of narrative puts the tools of detection created by the modern state at the service of uncovering the criminality of this very state and/or those who benefit from it” (Balibrea 36). Zarco and Paula’s is an uneasy association of private/public agents, but not one in which the private eye has an autonomy that the larger surveillance and administrative power of the state lacks, as in the Philip Marlowe/Bernie Ohls binary. If post-Francoist crime fiction can’t entirely trust the state (Buschmann 249), neither does Sanz trust the market, the “privateness” of her detective’s “I.” Instead, the relationship between the private and public agents is characterized as intimate yet resentful.

### **Housing Boom: Space as Motive**

Without wanting to impose a strictly allegorical reading on the novels, I insist that Paula does not represent just any sector of the state. As an IRS agent, her knowledge does not suss out psychological motives (pathological or not): she asks about wealth and its source and wealth is central to the setting of both novels. Space is not only the backdrop, but also the incentive, if not motive, for crime: it is also “the stuff that dreams are made of,” and not precisely, or not only, because of its symbolic power. Coinciding with the growing production of crime novels, the value of urban real estate increased exponentially in Spain from the 1970s until 2007 and had become the main driver of the economy<sup>7</sup>. In the wake of a late but massive rural diaspora from 1950 to 2000, membership in the European Union (which granted low interest rates) and the widespread concentration of modern economic and political power in the cities, urban development came to be identified in Spain with progress, modernity and a new sense of global relevance: construction seemed to correlate with wealth, democracy and international recognition. Early into the 2000s, construction accounted for 20% of GDP growth (Akin et al. 2014). Having left small, rural communities behind, atomized neoliberal subjects identified with homes and identified housing development with the insertion of Spain in World History, because homes seemed to be their only guaranteed asset. The cliché was that a house never loses its value (EFE). However, “For sale” and “For rent” signs widespread through the neighborhood in *Black, black, black* begin to tell a different story (22). One of Zarco’s suspects, a neighbor of the victim, states: “Lo único que tengo es mi casa” and Paula comments “Y parece que su casa es como su cuerpo” (2010, 240). Such existential identification of house and body has a clear explanation: her house is her dwelling but also an asset that safeguards her imaginary belonging to the middle class.

The danger was clear. The 2008 crisis brought about a huge amount of human suffering in lost jobs and homes. But it also struck at the heart of the master narrative of modern Spain: that progress meant urban development, which meant Europe, which meant the democracy instituted in 1978, which meant free markets. Faith in the so-called *Cultura de la Transición* crumbled<sup>8</sup> and massive disaffection



towards the political-legal apparatus emerged. In 2011, not only did congress enact the massive budget cuts mentioned above, it approved, with the senate, a widely unpopular constitutional amendment that institutionalized debt surveillance. Massive protests questioning the representativity of Spanish politics had already erupted by then. The police, along with new legislation undercutting rights of expression and assembly, soon repressed dissent. New parties arose, left and right, resulting in a splintered and antagonistic electoral map in which electing a government became challenging. While nothing new, corruption scandals became prominent in many major political parties, at national, regional and local levels. Pre-existing anti-Spanish sentiment grew in Catalonia, creating an ongoing challenge to the institutional framework of the state, which was harshly repressed by the then center-Right government.

Many of the phenomena surrounding the economic crisis point to the same asset, whose symbolic value cannot be underestimated and which will be central in Sanz's narrative: housing was at the heart of the very visible foreclosures and evictions, the organization of squatters, rancor at tourism and online hospitality services, corrupt land policies and more. *Black, black, black* and *Un buen detective* take aim at the exaggerated value of housing in Spanish culture as a singular asset but also within the larger economy. If both in the classic model of Chandler (see Jameson 41) and in its Hispanic iterations (see Nichols 99-100), the physical, the ideological and the psychological coalesce in crime fiction's urban space, in Sanz it doubles as both the setting for and the object of the detective's search for motives.

I am afraid that this is the point where I must undertake my own (nonviolent) crime: I must spoil the novel. The victim of *Black, black, black*, Laura Esquivel, is also the culprit of her own crime. As a private geriatric physician, she provided care for elderly people, who, like the neighbor that I quoted before, only had their homes. She became the emotional support of those left behind by an atomized community, many of them rural *déracinés*, some prey to chronic neurodegenerative diseases, some addicted to the legal drugs she too generously provided access to (311). She loyally provided her services to her patients for life in exchange for one thing: their homes.

-Alojamiento, comidas sabrosas especialmente ajustadas a sus dietas, compañía, asistencia sanitaria, un buen ambiente, compañeros agradables, conversación, higiene. De por vida.

-Y, todo eso, ¿a cambio de qué?

-De sus casas. Es lo habitual. ¿No le parece a usted un trato justo, señorita Quiñones? (284)

The victim had amassed a small fortune taking advantage of those whom the state failed to protect. In the best entrepreneurial manner, Esquivel's maneuver crystalizes forty years of Spanish social

life: the social alienation of a generation displaced to the city, the impoverishment of the social safety nets that could have rendered her services obsolete<sup>10</sup>, and the accumulation of wealth by means of housing<sup>11</sup>. The grandson of one of her victims, enraged at the loss of his grandmother's property, kills her. Esquivel's nonviolent, possibly affectionate form of abuse is the motive of her murder, but, as Paula reflects, the victim and the killer shared not only the will, the desire, the predatory remorselessness to pursue their ends, but "También compartían algo mucho más pedestre: querían el mismo piso, cien metros exteriores en el distrito centro que ahora –Dios se burla, los especuladores se burlan, los propietarios se burlan– ya no valen tanto como hace un año" (313). If Marca España prolongs the libidinal attachment to an obsolete economic model, *Black, Black, Black* diagnoses it. If Marca España willfully forgets Spain's political-economic past and pretends that it was always already modern, *Un buen detective no se casa jamás* remembers it.

Marca España is part of the fantasy that mobilizes and maintains the doubling of space into setting and motive. Contradictorily, it both results from the crisis and is a strategic exercise in its denial. The fantasy didn't originate with Marca España, but Marca España adheres squarely to it: it claims Spain's particular insertion in a global modernity affluent in financial but also cultural capital, at the expense of concealing the deep imbalance of an economy highly dependent on the creation and development of urban space. It is in the name of this modernity that the social place of the modest apartment buildings shown in *Black, black, black* transforms. So too did this modernity raise a hypertrophic tertiary sector based on tourism, which is the background of *Un buen detective*. That is why if Zarco, as the private eye, ties Spanish reality into the cultural discourse of modernity, it is important that the novel counters him with Paula, a public agent of the law that locates and makes explicit the social signs of wealth, from the deliberate decoration of homes as an expression of taste and distinction to the position (and therefore, the value) of the victim's neighbors' apartments to deeds in the land registry.

The second novel of the Zarco series, *Un buen detective no se casa jamás* transports the anxiety of the Spanish, real-estate-centered process of accumulation to a nonurban landscape. Zarco's new (young) boyfriend has been sleeping around and, brokenhearted, Zarco travels to some touristy

Mediterranean town to avoid confrontation both with his lover and his ex's knowing gaze. There, his old friends, twin sisters Marina and Ilse Frankel await him. They are the inheritors of the Orts family fortune, the genealogy of which is the genealogy of their family and of their town: a rural past and an urban present, mediated by Spanish migrants in Northern Europe, Northern European tourists visiting Spain<sup>12</sup>, and Latin Americans migrants in Spain, which is to say: the uneven accumulation of wealth and secret desires. About a third of the way into the novel, Marina Frankel disappears.

“Rural” may be a misnomer, though: the Mediterranean basin responds to the same rationale of urbanization as the cities, if the form that real estate took there was different: “Marina observa la inmensidad azul. El cielo, el mar y la masa violeta y verde de la montaña contra la que se encajonan los rascacielos” (2012a, 25). The description sounds very much like Benidorm, the author's birthplace. Not that Benidorm is ever mentioned, which reinforces the sense that corruption at the town- or city-level is paradigmatic, rather than exceptional—as does *Black, black, black*'s unnamed setting, which may or may not be Madrid. In response to dwindling fishing work in the small town, the mayor of Benidorm, Pedro Zaragoza Orts, began to transform the city to cater to tourism: rather than working the land, they would grow cheap houses for the visitors. The maneuver proved profitable: Benidorm (again, not named in the novel) is, as of 2018, the city in Spain with the most skyscrapers and has the most skyscrapers per capita in the world. Whereas the killer and the victim in *Black, black, black* target the apartment downtown as a source of wealth, the object of desire in *Un buen detective* are the Orts family's *chalets* and *riurau*. They have a peculiar relation to one another. Not only has the *riurau*, the traditional rural Valencian family house, once read as *paleto* or hick, now become chic: “su *riurau* ya no es un almacén de pasas, sino una mansión sobre la que voy a sentirme muchísimo más cómodo que en cualquier camping —castrado gato doméstico sobre aterciopelado cojín” (2012a, 23). This transformation stands in opposition but in direct relation to the appearance of *kitsch chalets*. The *riurau* changed in value and condition as *chalets* appeared, bearing testimony to another transformation: the Mediterranean coasts of Spain, spurred by tourism, went from being defined by the agricultural lifestyle that the *riurau* was part of, to being shaped by a hyperinflated tertiary sector, tourism:

su familia le dejó a él, al hermano tonto, los terrenos próximos al mar. Le dejó la sal, las algas y el viento de levante. Lo condenó a una existencia de redes tejidas con agujas. Al hermano listo le dejó las tierras fértiles donde ahora se asienta ese fingido *riurau* perfectamente acondicionado. Poco a poco el tonto del abuelo Orts fue vendiendo terrenitos junto a la bahía. Después llegaron los edificios de doce plantas y las inversiones, y el tonto del bote [...] acabó por comprarle al hermano listo los terrenos fértiles del interior de la comarca para asentar allí una finca de recreo donde cultivar nísperos. (2012a, 52)

This passage is key to understanding why the novel repeats the signifier *riurau* compulsively. The architectural and geographical specificity signals an identity relation between family and household, but also the remnant of a traditional, communitarian lifestyle that is no more. It is now “fingido,” fake, a *simulacrum* like the whole town (2012a, 46): it is recreational rather than productive housing; it expresses wealth, rather than peasant modesty and functionality; its owners are the owners of the more demanded, yet cheaply made, *chalets*. If *Black, black, black* was a novel about the middle class in which a home was life, *Un buen detective* is a novel about the upwardly mobile class that enriched itself by exploiting the middle class’s fantasy (Becerra calls it “nueva burguesía,” 153). The genealogy of Mediterranean *chalets*, in the passage above, is also the genealogy of the Orts’ wealth: cheap, unusable land in an impoverished agrarian and fishermen’s community increased in value as tourists, first from Northern Europe, then from Spain’s growing middle class as well, started to pour in.

### **The Cruel Optimism of Marca España**

In both novels, Paula’s specific knowledge goes to the heart of the crime, even if in *Un buen detective* she isn’t there and her knowledge is belated: “Pauli supo, en tiempos, muchas cosas de esta empresaria [Orts]: los celos que Marina Frankel provocaba en ella la hicieron buscar debajo de las alfombras y debajo de los dobles fondos” (109). It is through her that Zarco learned the extent of the real-estate-based Orts fortune. Urban space is again the privileged site for the production of wealth because urbanizing space is the main source of profit in that world. However, space cannot be produced; it is limited by nature, with two consequences: a crisis of futurity (as shown in the obsession over inheritance above) and corruption. In several instances, Zarco suggests that at the source of the Orts wealth, lie bribes, embezzlement,

corruption. The urban development of the small town gave way to larger investments in lands and construction and, in the process, family, financial and political businesses started to permeate each other in dubious ways. “De eso ya te informaría en su momento Paula, la inspectora, la defensora de las causas pobres...” (67), guesses Marina before mounting a surprising defense of corruption in the name of the public good:

Mi tía puso alguna vez pasta sobre la mesa, pero habría que pensar quién es más inmoral: la empresaria que paga porque, en ese desembolso, ve un camino para que su negocio prospere, –y de su negocio dependen un montón de personas–, o el servidor público que coloca la mano para recibir. (2012a, 67-68)

Marina’s apologia for corruption is based on a narrative, which she has rehearsed often (“le ha salido de corrido, como una sola sílaba”) and with which she identifies: in her world, capital doesn’t exploit or merely provide profit; it produces labor and value. Capital is not a form of life, but its source and we should be thankful for its accumulation<sup>13</sup>. Frankel’s identification with capital is so drastic that minor disagreements are registered as moral inadequacies: their maid “siempre tenía cara de que le debieras y no le pagaras” (2012a, 116). Both Frankel’s emotional adhesion to capitalism and her expectations about her employee’s emotions signal a particular affective politics. “Emotional capitalism is a culture in which affective and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing [...] a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behaviour and in which emotional life –especially that of the middle classes– follows the logic of economic relations and exchange” (Illouz 5). Therefore, affective capitalism entails a particular “emotional hegemony.” “[W]e absorb the standards and values of our society in the very process of learning the language of emotion and those standards and values are built into the foundation of our emotional constitution” (Jaggar, 159). Subjective identification with a particular emotional regime is crucial to the reproduction of a cultural system. Emotions that preserve it (in the sense that they give it continuity) are encouraged, as ones that interrupt it–never mind oppose it–are discouraged. Frankel’s maid is paid to care for Frankel’s daughters. Her job is affective in nature and deploying the right affects

will only make her more efficient at her job. On the contrary, her unhappiness (or her perceived unhappiness) is read as an “outlaw emotion,” “distinguished by [its] incompatibility with the dominant perceptions and values” (166).

Affect theory can also help us understand the pervasiveness of the Marca España narrative, which I would argue is best understood as a form of cruel optimism. Affective capitalism and affective hegemony contribute to the creation of an atmosphere in which 1) subjects are pushed to articulate themselves affectively because doing so optimizes their service to capital and (or) productivity and 2) emotions are hierarchized, encouraged and discouraged, at the service of cultural reproduction. One of the results of this is what Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism.” Cruel optimism is an affective structure, the affective attachment not to objects, means, or identities but to desires (for objects, means, etc.) expressed in ways that, in practice, curtail their very attainment. The fact that it is “optimistic” means that it involves “a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way” (2).

Alfredo Martínez-Expósito<sup>14</sup> points out that it is important that national subjects identify with the narrative implicit in branding the nation (72-73). Cruel optimism is one of the most effective means through which neoliberalism can enforce that identification, because it replaces the (individual and collective) subject’s own interests with those that preserve its reproduction. Marca España is both the result and the reaffirmation of the cruel optimism that characterizes Spanish neoliberalism: it betrays the desire to belong to the (hegemonically Western) global landscape of progress and modernity by means of the capitalism that feeds the inequality, instability and corruption that prevents that very belonging. Optimistic attachment to that narrative spurs initiatives like Marca España in which a very selective image of Spain aims at producing that Spain by effacing the inequalities, social immobilization and violence upon which it is founded. Sanz’s narrative focuses not directly on that violence but on its imbrication with the process of modernization that Marca España endorses. “[L]a violencia se inscribe, en la novela, en la lógica del capitalismo avanzado: la violencia forma parte del sistema y ambos términos – violencia y capitalismo– resultan del todo indisociables ... no importa quién ha cometido el crimen sino

bajo qué condiciones materiales –esto es: sociales y económicas– se produce” (Becerra Mayor, 148).

Zarco himself is a victim of the desire for (cultural) modernity, not entirely extricable from the fantastic nation imagined by *Marca España* (“imagined,” in that it is a *desired* image, but also because it is an *image* that mediates social relations). *Marca España* globally disseminates a carefully curated collection of local cultural signifiers, which synecdochically endow local culture with a coveted global modernity. By doing so, they are meant to turn the local culture (and its *locale*) into an object of desire, metonymically identifying it with international centers of capital. Zarco may cite a carefully curated collection of *global* cultural signifiers, but as a symptom of a similar disorder: they are synecdoches of modernity as an object of desire (to which I will return in the last section). That is, Zarco’s cruel optimism, one generation removed from an image of Spain that belies *Marca España*. And yet, the memory remains, projected upon the body and the work of the racialized migrant worker that serves the Orts family: “No hace falta que Pauli me brote desde la enterrada semilla de mi extracción obrera – ‘Zarco, tu madre cosía pantalones’. ‘Tu padre era camarero’ –para que la vocación de servicio y la fidelidad de Charly me repugnen. Le repugnarían a cualquier desclasado. A los que usan monóculos, gafas de pasta oscura o jipijapas” (2012a, 212). The *riurau*, the setting, may have accomplished its transformation from a constitutive element of agricultural labor, to a sign of real-estate wealth, but the migrant worker, belonging to the racialized underclass of the service industry, in charge of material maintenance (cooking, cleaning, running the household) and affective labor (caring for Ilse Frankel’s twin daughters), discloses the anxieties that give the lie to the narrative of progress without violence. The revulsion, *repugnancia*, that Zarco feels (insofar as “*déclassé*”) has a particular shape and unfolds socially in several ways. First, it is felt by a person in a particular sociological position: the son of a waiter and a seamstress, now a sophisticated detective, a profession associated with Anglophone modernity, one among several *déclassés* that literally wear their social ascendancy in their eyewear<sup>15</sup> or their straw hats. Second, the shape of disgust connects Zarco to the maid while, simultaneously, removing him from her: it is the product of recognition of something of himself (his ancestry) in the body of the Other, but that recognition, rather than bring them together, drives Zarco away from her all the more intensely. It denies

the imaginary link between the detective and a modernity that disavows its commitment to exploitation. And yet recognition of the emotion entails removal from it and even triggers new emotions: shame at the drive to remove himself from that recognition (as embodied by Paula's reminders, for once "unnecessary"). Francisco Álamo, relying on Juan Carlos Rodríguez, suggests that the novels' discourse is one of antiseduction, which breaks with the affective identification with neoliberal subjectivity (376). One can only surmise that the affective response of the reader will be equally complex, whether she is and/or recognizes herself in fact as one such *déclassé* and/or identifies with Marca España's cruel optimism.

### **Transporting Noir: the Politics of a Form**

What is the relation, if any, between *noir* and this kind of critique? As argued by Colmeiro or Renée Craig-Odders, rather than merely transporting an argument, noir, a genre named after a French word and heavily associated with American culture, transforms when applied to a Spanish reality and carries a particular valence. I would add that the anxieties and desires embedded in the Spanish appropriation of a genre mirror the very fantasy it strives to criticize. Sanz, again, is hardly the first one to undertake a social critique by means of crime fiction. Raymond Chandler, one of her explicit referents, could have anticipated that there would be something murky in the abrupt growth of the Spanish construction sector. In *The Long Goodbye*, the likable Ohls comments: "There ain't no clean way to make a million bucks" (Chandler, 187). Marta Sanz shares with Chandler the sense that rather than violence being a glitch in capitalism, capitalism is violence, since it is powered by the alienation of life and labor (Becerra 148). That is why she is not interested in psychopaths. Zarco himself is a detective, he says, "porque no creo que este mundo esté loco ni que sólo las psicopatías generen las muertes violentas ni que únicamente los forenses o los criminalistas [...] puedan ponerle un nombre a los culpables" (Sanz 2010, 82). Sanz points to a different genealogy of crime: "El crimen es banal. Yo escribo sobre el crimen que tiene una raíz económica" (Sanz 2012b, 47). Noir, following Chandler's model<sup>16</sup>, allows Marta Sanz to name this form of violence that is not typified as criminal.



Locating this violence fulfills an important role of crime fiction. Crime novels participate in the social imagination by posing a crime (e.g., a murder) as a problem that needs analysis and resolution. The detective mediates the reader's experience of this process, threading together people, places, objects and actions, through his reasoning or his experience (King 52-53). Sanz, first, breaks down the detective as unified figure of sense-making: Zarco's knowledge needs to be verified by Paula, who provides dialogical critique and the distant gaze of the state. Second, she uses the initial crime (Cristina Esquivel's and Marina Frankel's murders) as a red herring: if the reader at first can identify with the victim and feels herself to be a potential victim of the same crime (tacitly sanctioning the broken law), Sanz later removes that possibility with the twist: the victims are the culprits of the actual crime at the heart of the narrative. The transgression that needs to be worked through, which the reader must understand as a public and (at least potentially) shared one, is not individual-psychological, but collective-systemic. Sanz explicitly undertakes what Andrew Pepper's delineates as the "politics of crime" (fiction): while it may well have specific crimes and culprits, crime fiction is compelled forward by the question of *what* is to blame, moving from the subjective to the systemic: "[T]he *mystery* what keeps us reading, typically opens up to the nature of society itself and of the systems—of state power and capitalism—which simultaneously envelop and govern us" (12, emphasis in the original). By revealing the systemic crime underlying Spanish claims to progress and centrality in the world-system, or, rather, by pointing to it as deeper, more pervasive, previous, source of violence and exploitation, the novels' "hermeneutic structure" attempts to bind together a community anchored in economic justice.

And yet, there remains the question of the choice and possibility of deploying the conventions of noir as genre in Spain. As I mentioned in passing above, some critics went so far as to deny not only the existence of Spanish noir, but its very possibility. This position was premised on a vaguely nationalist-romantic Spanish *Kriminellgeist*, for *camisa vieja* doctor and intellectual Pedro Laín Entralgo, or, more interestingly, on the basis of form, for then exiled literary critic José Fernández Montesinos. The premise of the latter is that noir must be an easy read, yet packed with plot twists and action. Spanish literary expression, for Montesinos, tends to be stylistically sophisticated, yet plot-weak: "A different conception

of beauty of style makes it difficult for them to tell a tale in which the ingenuity and subtlety resides in the plot itself and not in the expression” (Fernández Montesinos 9)<sup>17</sup>. This reasoning shouldn’t be blindly accepted not only regarding Spanish literature, but also classic crime fiction. However, the claim is an interesting one, because the Zarco series, very much crime narrative, also conforms to precisely the style Montesinos describes, if he fails to recognize the potential of considering style as factoring in the Spanish appropriation of noir: while Montesinos’ essentialism is now untenable, he points at a relevant tension between “beauty of style” and “plot ingenuity and subtlety”<sup>18</sup>. Sanz aims at superseding such tension. The very much realistic object of Sanz’s novel does not correlate with an intentionally uneventful, transparent language. Structurally, both novels turn in on themselves in the manner of a Deleuzian fold. In *Black, black, black*, Zarco receives Luz’s manuscript, which narrates the events leading up to the murder of Cristina Esquivel, if from a distorted, derailed perspective. In *Un buen detective*, the succession of words in a game of *Scrabble* (*cachorro*, 139; *frasco*, 140...) are also the metonymies of a fragmented story: the hidden emotional miseries of the otherwise successful Orts family. The thematic conventions of noir (a detective, a mysteriously disappeared or murdered person, victims that aren’t so innocent after all, people who aren’t who they say they are...) frame passages in the second person, metafictional sections, stream-of-consciousness narration, apparently random flashbacks (hardly recognizable as such), abrupt changes in the point of view, etc. Sanz breaks with conventional forms, has the literary text implicitly question itself, and demands active participation from the reader—in sum, a “demanding expressive form of style” that we could summarize as modernism is every bit a part of Sanz’s crime novels’ as noir. If Sanz’s noir is modernist, “sophisticated in its expression,” rather than stemming from any innate positive Spanish proclivity, it is, *pace* Fernández Montesinos, precisely because of a Spanish lack (the same that makes the use of the term “modernism” a disputed one when it comes to Spain, as any other peripheral modernity): a sense of exclusion from global culture. Both modernism and noir are experienced as importations that symbolically transport the local. They bear the symbolic capital of being “modern” registers, that would allow for (a coveted) identification of the Spanish writer with modern culture despite the historical, cultural and economic anxieties of Spain as an imbalanced yet large economy with a recent colonial and

dictatorial past and a Catholic-influenced Southern European culture.

This is most obvious in *Black, black, black*, where Zarco obtains the aforementioned fictional chronicle of the murders written by Luz, for Paula's literalizing reading to extricate the factual from the counterfactual within it. Luz and Paula's double mediation doubly complicates genre through gender. When asked by another neighbor, a writer trained as a philologist (like Marta Sanz), about its genre, Luz writes "[N]o sé exactamente lo que escribo, tal vez lo que me pide el cuerpo, no me importa la clasificación en el anaquel de la biblioteca, sino la música de una palabra tras otra [...]; le respondo que a lo que más se parecen mis escritos es a un diario" (215). As Luz's interlocutor very well knows as a philologist and a writer, diaries are coded as a feminine genre, regardless of whether or not their substance backs up that coding (Steinitz). Even if she didn't, the reader of the book (or of the book within the book), knows that Luz is writing in response to her gynecologist's advice: she is to write her moods during the day, her weight, her sleep, her diet and her menstrual flow.

This is a complication not only at the thematic level, for the obvious reason that the private detective of noir tends to be a heterosexual man (which allows for other tropes like the *femme fatale*). The two women's mediation subverts noir at the level of the reader. If part of the pleasure of crime fiction is outwitting the detective, arriving at a resolution before he does (and the novel with him), investigation in *Black, black, black* involves a readerly experience embodied by women. Rather than Borgesian investigation, in which in which "stuff" is just there for the detective to weave as another sign into a meaningful text, here the detective is merely a messenger; Luz gives him a text for Paula to uncover the things that the manuscript's words are signs of. The decision regarding the book's literary genre becomes an important one because Luz describes the deaths of several neighbors. If it is an actual diary, Luz is a psychopathic "desperate housewife"; if the manuscript is a novel, she may be innocent, although she still may know more about the crimes than she lets on. Is death in Luz's book literary, or literal and, if the former, does a "muerte de libro" ("a bookish death") a "libro de muerte" ("an awesome book," literally "a deadly book") make (219)? Luz exposes the diary to Zarco's literary gaze, while Paula's literal gaze decipher, elucidates what's truthful in it<sup>19</sup>.

The formal self-referentiality of the novel becomes indistinguishable from detection. Sanz's formalism is a possibility already contained in Chandler's model, in which the intellectual challenge to the reader, who tries to outwit the detective, is only part of the text's *jouissance*. The formal articulation in the plot (*syuzhet*), as opposed to its objective, chronological story (*fabula*), brings about the possibility of that interplay, which is also the danger that the reader is being misled by the characters, but also by the author, who may leave a false trail—or just a digressive, yet equally meaningful one:

[E]ven after the temporal reading of the book is finished we have a feeling of its continuity spread out before us in a pattern and the earlier, misleading twists of the plot (which the pure mind rejects as illusory filling just as soon as it guesses the secret to the puzzle) remain for the imagination of form as an integral part of the road traveled, the experiences gone through. (Jameson 62-63, see also Valles 36-38)

Sanz deploys metafiction, allusion, symbolism and stylized diction (what Jameson calls “subjective form” in Chandler) to bring forth the main problem: not the individual crime, but the socioeconomic system that renders it not only possible, but plausible. Luz's perspective provides the reader with an uneasy mediation. She replaces the paratactic, assertive voice of noir (“The first time I laid eyes on Terry Lennox he was drunk in a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith outside the terrace of The Dancers,” Chandler 1954, 4) with a playful, slippery, allusive meditation about her own body. Even when the narrative voice is Zarco's, Paula's gendered, vulnerable embodiment interrupts “normal” (i.e. normative) readerly identificatory pleasure with a power fantasy. If in noir, the detective's mind unravels an “objective” story that he doesn't play a role in (unless there's some kind of “twist” and he happens to be the killer, or something) and his body is exposed to and survives external harm, here a mature woman's desire and her aging and disabled body complicate the referentiality of the narrative, but also provide knowledge that the good-looking male detective is unable to access. Over and over again, the novels dismantle crime fiction's conventions (Sánchez Villadagos 45, Martínez Quiroga 18) and, with them, normative identificatory fantasies, scopophilic and otherwise, through a readerly supplement that engages the reader in the world (and suspicions) of the narrative.

But there is a critical potential to this kind of hybrid modernism, one that exploits the ironic distance of estrangement but also the inquisitive gaze of detection, one that denies neither the *jouissance*

of formally demanding writing nor the *plaisir* of the conventional tropes of popular genres. Paula's snarky comebacks to Zarco are funny partly because Zarco is funny; not because he is gay and middle aged, but because he is a detective in a Spanish reality that, as peripherally modern, thinks of itself, not as fascinatingly gritty, but just as uninterestingly crappy. Sanz is hardly the first to suggest that Anglo-American "mysteries and solutions cannot apply" to peripheral realities "or can apply only in parodic ways" (Wood 30)<sup>20</sup>. Paula's cutting comments are Sanz's Brechtian rejoinder to modernity's seduction: they interrupt the detective's fantasy and remove the reader from it. "Yo no sé vivir sin que Paula me mire" (2012a, 296). But Zarco's voice also lurks behind Paula's socially committed literal gaze. Zarco's self-mystifying gaze needs Paula's demystifying voice to point to the real of Spain's modernity, but so too does Paula need his gaze to be able to imagine it: "Grietas y humedad recorren las paredes. Zarco escribiría en su cuaderno que parecen hiedra. Heridas vegetales." Zarco is the one who locates the (criminal, economic) fantasy that can later be analyzed, questioned by Paula's undeterred realism by phone, in person, in Zarco's head:

Ahora que se anuncia el día de la lapidación de los cultos [...] Paula insiste 'Muévete' y yo le tapo la boca-, ahora que se anuncia el advenimiento de ese día, proclamo a voz en grito: Dostoievski, Nabokov, Lascano Tegui, Mary Cholmondeley, la institutriz sin nombre de James, Severine y el conejo blanco, los prerrafaelistas [sic], Huysmans y Mirbeau, Mrs. Danvers que era Judith Anderson, Goliarda Sapienza, la madre de Ripley, el doctor Sheppard, el martillo azul, Théophile Gautier, la muerta enamorada, el avatar. Me defiendo del mundo. Recupero fuerzas. Estoy pendiente de una narración. Quiero seguir escuchando una historia. (2012a, 274)

Even when his life is in danger, Zarco amasses filmic, artistic and literary referents that underscore the literariness (Huysmans, Gautier), the mysterious (James) and the criminal (Ripley, MacDonald), but also the crossings between the three (Dostoievski, Nabokov, Hitchcock). They aren't local signifiers; rather, they betray an imaginary identification with an apparently global framework that is instead heavily localized in Anglophone and French modern and modernist culture. "A quién le importa la verdad si se puede vivir dentro del término imaginario de todas las metáforas. [...] Yo viviría para siempre en el decorado nocturno de un film de Fritz Lang" (2012a, 47). Zarco's archive (which is to say,

Sanz's archive) allows for insertion in a larger world and provides the tools to retell the narrative of that world and his (and her and Spanish culture's) position within it. Paula's questions and zingers prod the narrative, teasing out its conditions of possibility but also its small subserviences to a larger identificatory fantasy. Of course, this is also true of Marta Sanz's writing as she, by the very virtue of writing noir in a literary idiom that signals noir as a model but also a citable discourse, produces an "autonomous" artwork "whose content is not direct experience, but already formed cultural and ideological artifacts" (Jameson 41).

Marca España is a national-cultural reaction to an economic, political, social crisis. It attempts to intervene in the image of the country, but takes as its point of departure a preexisting image. Sanz's novel makes use of that same point of departure: Spain as a singular, exceptional, or out-of-joint nation, at the fringes of global modern culture, economy, politics, i.e. capitalism. Whereas Marca España attempts to suture or sublate the gap, Marta Sanz holds onto it productively. Her desire for modernity isn't cruel because it doesn't reproduce the fantastic image of a modern Spain that is the symptom of Spanish culture's very non-modernity, but instead represents the fantasy as fantasy, with ironic distance. Sanz's irony is not the rejection of a nation-brand; on the contrary, she deploys that brand strategically, which determines formally and resignifies thematically the noir genre. Were they to lack a particular internal image of Spain as located within a peripheral modernity, Paula's gaze, which dismantles, derails and mocks detective fiction's charismatic seduction and Zarco's literary gaze, which gives narrative coherence to contemporary Spanish history's fragmented nature, would not make sense. Paula's gaze would not be disenchanted realism, but resentful cynicism; Zarco's gaze would not be witty and sophisticated, but *kitsch*. At worst, both would reinforce modernity's cruel optimism as a norm from which Zarco and Paula's queer, disabled bodies and desires, would be excluded. In these novels, it isn't only literary Zarco and materialist Paula's gazes that traverse each other; they share a marginal gaze over a genre deeply identified with big Anglo-American cities, a point from which the difference marking Spanish modernity can be clearly viewed. Is that difference the exotic surplus in a seamless global economy (*serrano* ham-flavored chips and noir) or a site of nonconformity to it? What Sanz rejects is not an image of Spain but

the totalizing reduction of Spanish society to an image and, especially, the image-brand's smooth insertion in global economic flows as an end in itself.

The dialogue between the two registers, between noir and modernism, embodied by Zarco and Paula, but also by the implicit author and the characters, solves the crime, but also negotiates the local detecting gaze's insertion in a global framework. Sanz's noir (and Spanish noir) is torn between the melancholy and the irony of a peripheral modernity that knows that its desire for the modern is the main sign of its distance from it, that knows that "[t]here ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks" and our long, clingy goodbye to *Marca España* is the lament of a culture's libidinal attachment to its own cruel optimism.

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### **Biographical note**

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in Transatlantic Literary Culture.

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<sup>1</sup> There is an already sizeable amount of bibliography on Marca España. For a wide summary of approaches and case-studies, see Dinnie.

<sup>2</sup> For a panoramic description of the crisis for a general audience from the vantage point of 2012, see BBC. For a more specialized approach, see Castells, Caraça and Cardoso.

<sup>3</sup> Marta Sanz addresses the crisis and the resulting precarity elsewhere: in the autobiographical short non-fiction fragments in *Clavícula* (2017).

<sup>4</sup> He names himself “Zarco” (literally, zarco is a light blue), because that’s the color of his eyes (2010, 46). The name Zarco, though, is probably a tribute to the character sharing the same family name in Pedro Antonio de Alarcón’s “El clavo” (1853), who investigates a murder connected to his romantic interest in possibly the first example of Spanish crime fiction (Vosburg 1). (Colmeiro questions that we can describe “El clavo” as “novela policíaca” based on its ideological presuppositions, 93). However, I should also mention a sci-fi noir novel by Rafael Reig, *Sangre a borbotones* (2002), in which Zarco Wallace is the friendly and (a little too) well-adjusted policeman in dystopian Madrid.

<sup>5</sup> The exception would be Lino, who merely mentions in passing that Zarco’s love interest is a young man (42).

<sup>6</sup> In what I take to be the result of a different focus rather than disagreement, Martínez Quiroga locates Paula’s detecting skills in her empathy (29).

<sup>7</sup> For a crime novel taking on shady real-estate businesses in Spain early within this process, see Juan Madrid’s *Un beso de amigo* (1980).

<sup>8</sup> Possibly “Cult” translates the implicit critique better than the more literal “Culture”. The term, coined by journalist Guillem Martínez, refers to the hegemonic, reverential narrative that the political Transition was a success story of consensus pushed by heavily subsidized public intellectuals.

<sup>9</sup> Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) was sworn as prime minister in the Summer of 2018, when he spearheaded a no-confidence

vote against Mariano Rajoy. After considering closing down the High Government Commission for Marca España, he “rebranded” it instead: he placed Irene Lozano at the helm, endowed it with its own budget, and renamed it “España Global” (Marcos and Abellán).

<sup>10</sup> Sanz’s *Susana y los viejos*, more traditional in genre and language, deals with this very topic. See Becerra Mayor (134-139). For the ways in which traditional understandings of the economic have feminized and invisibilized affective labor and care, or mobilized rhetorically to support the authority of the State, see Pérez Orozco (180-198).

<sup>11</sup> It is in this context that we must understand Sanz’s narrative’s specificity. The inheritance of the house as motive of the crime is hardly new—it was crucial to the “the mid-century [mid-XIXth century, that is] obsession with property as the core of respectable life” (Knight 67), but Sanz’s narrative can’t be understood in the context of anxiety over a waning, disdained aristocratic class (as in A. Conan Doyle’s “The Speckled Band” or in Andrew Forrester Jr.’s “Tenant For Life”), anxiety over women’s access to and redistribution of wealth (as in Doyle’s “A Case of Identity,” or, again, “The Speckled Band”), or even the Freudian take on family traumas, as in Ross MacDonald.

<sup>12</sup> Marina and Ilse’s father was a German tourist. Their mother abandoned them and opened a modest haberdashery in Frankfurt. Their aunt and de facto matriarch, Amparo Orts, maintains a somewhat tense relation with her. It is not accidental that the personal and the economic are traversed by a sort of “Northern exposure,” or better, desire.

<sup>13</sup> Pérez Orozco insists that the crisis rhetoric distracts from the crisis of futurity and economic, social, and ecological terms, inbuilt in capitalist accumulation way before 2008.

<sup>14</sup> His excellent *Cuestión de imagen: Cine y Marca España* also inspires much of the conclusions of this essay. However, as his title indicates, he focuses on the images produced and distributed by, for, through and against Marca España. I focus on the implicit but real network of desires and anxieties that sustain Marca España. In Lacanian terms, he works with images, whereas I write here about the fantasy, the signifying structure that puts the nation-image to work (although Lacan may turn Berlant upside down: optimism is not cruel insofar as it allows the subject to hold on to its desire) (Lacan 532).

<sup>15</sup> While use of the word *hipster* is wide-spread in Spain, it comes closest to the local idiom *gafapasta* (“thick-framed glasses person”).

<sup>16</sup> Sanz doesn’t mind breaking away from the model as needed, though. She clearly questions the idea that “a good detective never marries”: “Chandler era un tipo inteligente y un magnífico escritor. Pero quizá no debería haber dado instrucciones” (2012b, 45). I should point out that maybe Paula shouldn’t have been so harsh when Zarco uses the word *tipo*.

<sup>17</sup> Colmeiro summarizes Montesinos’ and Laín Entralgo’s positions (1994, 133-135), but also disproves them (262-263).

<sup>18</sup> Mota Chacón (99-101) denies the possibility of characterizing Spanish Crime Fiction by means of style. I do not mean to do so. Rather, I claim that Sanz is making a point by means of style, one that is tied to Spain’s self-perceived (hardly objective) position vis-à-vis modernity and noir.

<sup>19</sup> *Black, Black, Black* is named after its three parts: “Black I: El detective enamorado,” in which Zarco narrates to Paula his first encounter with the victim’s parents and neighbors; “Black II: La paciente del doctor Bartoldi,” Luz’s semifictional diary; and “Black III: Encender la luz,” in which Paula narrates to Zarco her own investigation into Luz’s papers, which uncovers the truth in Zarco’s case.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Wood’s original reads “Latin American realities” (30), as he is thinking of a tradition that goes from Borges to Piglia.