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LAVAPIÉS, MADRID AS TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY URBAN SPECTACLE

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Abstract of Dissertation

Matthew Isaiah Feinberg

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2011
LAVAPIÉS, MADRID AS TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY URBAN SPECTACLE

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By
Matthew Isaiah Feinberg
Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Susan Larson, Professor of Hispanic Studies and Dr. Ana Rueda, Professor of Hispanic Studies
Lexington, Kentucky
2011

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

LAVAPIÉS, MADRID AS TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY URBAN SPECTACLE

Informed by the theories of Henri Lefebvre regarding the production of space and the theories of scale found in current scholarship in Cultural Geography, my methodology analyzes both dramatic texts and theater spaces to investigate how cultural production and capital converge in the “spectacle” of urban space. While employing this term “spectacle” to describe how dramatic texts, theater productions, and modern architecture transform the urban landscape into a metaphoric theater space for the production of local, national, and global identities, this project examines the relationship between theater and urban change in Lavapiés, an iconic, multicultural, and often-underserved neighborhood located in the Embajadores district of Madrid, Spain. Against the historical backdrop of the neighborhood’s long and important relationship with theater and theater spaces from the seventeenth century onwards, I analyze a range of urban spectacles taking place in Madrid between 1997 and 2006. This analysis includes close readings of contemporary plays that represent the urban space of Lavapiés and Madrid, an analysis of the architecture of power articulated in the municipal government’s Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997 [Plan for Urban Development for Madrid 1997] and the recently constructed Teatro Valle-Inclán Centro Dramático Nacional [National Drama Center]. Finally, I look at the cultural activities of the squatters (okupas) of the Laboratorio 03 who between 2002 and 2003 transformed an abandoned warehouse into a space for art, theater, and cyber resistance that sought to shatter the illusion of capitalist spectacle projected by the gleaming steel and glass of the new condominiums and cultural institutions represented by the aforementioned Teatro Valle-Inclán. Overall, this project looks to this range of traditional and nontraditional texts to illustrate how Madrid’s historical dynamic between urban space, power, and theater continues to be manifested in the contemporary spectacle of Lavapiés.
KEYWORDS: LAVAPIÉS, THEATER, OKUPAS, SCALE, MADRID
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DISSERTATION

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For Kelly.

You are still my favorite.

And for Ari, my best boy.
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Chapter I
Introduction—
Urban Spectacle and the Articulation of Scale

In 1997, the municipal government of Madrid designated the neighborhood of Lavapiés an *Área de rehabilitación preferente* [Preferred Area of Rehabilitation] in the *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997* [Plan for Urban Development for Madrid 1997; hereafter referred to as the Plan General 1997].¹ The proposed changes for Lavapiés fit into a broader plan for rehabilitation that some scholars, such as Fernando Díaz Orueta, consider “the most important project carried out in the historic centre of Madrid” (184). One of the reasons the project was so significant is that it “aim[ed] to put Madrid and its surroundings in the best possible conditions to compete in the European arena” (Díaz Orueta 184). The physical rehabilitation of Lavapiés would help “to turn Madrid into an important element in the European system of cities [. . . and . . . ] a sphere favorable to international investment” (Díaz Orueta 187). Given that many of the individual rehabilitation projects and the overall project were focused on consumption and tourism (Díaz Orueta 188), the Plan General 1997 intended to produce a cultural playground that would transform Lavapiés into an urban stage through which domestic and international tourists would pass on their way between several different cultural sites. The work on this project begun in 1997 continues today, and the circulation of tourists has undermined the isolation of this economically marginalized neighborhood and reincorporated it into the broader cultural experience of the municipality.

A cultural tourist’s route through Lavapiés goes past the Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, the Teatro Valle-Inclán (one of two sites in Madrid of the Centro Dramático

¹ All translations are by the author of this thesis unless otherwise indicated.
Nacional), and the soon to be built Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales which will rehabilitate the old *tabacalera* [tobacco factory]. These sites have a local presence and importance, but Lavapiés has also become an urban container for the national patrimony.² To consume the cultural offerings of Lavapiés is to consume the projection of a national cultural heritage. On a global scale, it is important to point out that in the same Plan General 1997 that designates Lavapiés as an *Area de rehabilitación preferente*, one finds extensive discussion of plans to present Madrid as a candidate for future Olympic games. The municipal planners in 1997 hoped to redevelop Madrid into a stage for the global extravaganza of the Olympics and re-create the successful municipal branding that accompanied the 1992 games in Barcelona. As a result, contemporary Lavapiés is a site where various geographical scales—the local, the municipal, the national, and the international—articulate with one another. With this cultural geography in mind, this project explores how cultural production assists, resists, and manifests these scalar relationships.

The following chapter will demonstrate how the urban spectacle of Lavapiés can be understood against the backdrop of Henri Lefebvre’s theories on the production of space. In addition it will argue that the commodification of place is an accumulation strategy for capital; a concept informed by the research on gentrification, cultural, and

---

² The *tabacalera* is more formally referred to as “la antigua Fábrica de Tabacos de la calle Embajadores de Madrid [the old Tobacco Factory of Embajadores street, Madrid]”. This industrial space located on the Glorieta de Embajadores [the roundabout of Embajadores] was originally constructed in 1790 as a warehouse for liquor and wares associated with the crown. In 1809 it was converted into the tobacco factory as a part of the efforts to stimulate the economy of Madrid. Significantly, because the factory employed high numbers of women from the neighborhood the *tabacalera* and its requisite *cigarreras* [cigar rollers] became closely associated with Lavapiés. This *tipo* [type] of the *cigarrera* eventually became one of the recurring figures of the zarzuela and género chico [small format musical] and eventually mythologized as the representation of the stereotypical working-class, *castiza* [pure blood] woman of Lavapiés and arguably of working-class Madrid. The production of Lavapiés in the cultural imaginary, the *castizo*, and the theater will be the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation. For a more complete discussion of the *cigarrera*, the *tabacalera*, and Madrid see García Sánchez (1993). Readers might also recall central role of the *cigarrera* in the French opéra comique *Carmen* (1875) by Georges Bizet.
symbolic capital of cultural geographers and urban planners in the last three decades. Finally, it will argue that the notion of urban space as spectacle and its subsequent commodification highlights key debates about geographic scale. It is precisely in these discussions of scale that the relationship between Lavapiés’ culture and urban space find a great deal of resonance.

The barrio bajo of Lavapiés

To find the area in question, we must head South on the Calle Lavapiés and upon leaving the plaza Tirso de Molina, follow the steep narrow street as it descends into the appropriately named barrio bajo [low neighborhood] of Lavapiés. This neighborhood has a rich history of representation in Spanish theater and has historically served as a reference point for the imagining of authentic madrileño and, to a lesser degree, Spanish identity. As a result, it is one of the most historically significant and symbolic neighborhoods in Madrid. Lavapiés occupies the south facing slopes of the broad meseta upon which the city sits that are formed by the drainage of the Manzanares river as it slowly winds towards the East and the South from its southern flowing direction below the Royal Palace. Though this hillside is barely a ten minute walk from the heart of the historic city center of the Puerta del Sol, its location within the topography of the city is literally below the rest of the Centro [central] district and as a result this neighborhood has also always been a marginalized part of the city.

Yet this term barrio bajo not only refers to the area’s physical location, but also speaks to the neighborhood’s historical situation on the social margin of the city. This

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3 The use of the term authenticity is this project does not refer to actual essential identities, but rather to constructed notions of cultural identity that are often used to distinguish oneself from a foreign other.
marginalization stems, in part, from its origins as the original judería [Jewish enclave] of Madrid. As Pedro de Réuide, indicates “el origen del barrio Lavapiés es hebraico. La judería madrileña tenía su núcleo de población en las cercanías de la Sinagoga” [the origin of the neighborhood Lavapiés is Hebraic. The judería of Madrid had the nucleus of its population near the synagogue] (Répide 343). These statements are found in his well-read series of articles entitled Guía de Madrid published in 1921 in the daily newspaper La Libertad that provide the historical context for and celebratory commentary on many of the most significant streets and plazas in Madrid. He also suggests that the etymology of Lavapiés derives from “alguna fuente o pila de abluciones, en la que tal vez fuera costumbre mundificar los pies de quienes, no perteneciendo a esta secta, iban al barrio de la judería, y al salir practicaban esta forma de purificación” [some fountain or basin for ablutions in which, perhaps, it was customary to wash the feet of those that went to the Jewish neighborhood but did not pertain to the sect, and upon leaving practiced this form of purification] (344). This obligatory washing upon leaving the neighborhood probably had associations with the fact that, according to Répide, this area was the “residencia de judíos conversos” [residence of Jewish conversos] and “fue refugio de moriscos que se vieron expulsados por Felipe III” [was the place of refuge for Muslims that were expelled by Philip III] (Répide 343). In the Catholic Spain of the reconquista [the reconquest] the

4 Répide, like other popular chroniclers of the neighborhood’s history, suggests that the variation of the name Avapiés, which appears with great frequency from the eighteenth century on derives from a mere “error de fonética, influyendo en la ortografía, que desfiguró el nombre tradicional” [a phonetic error, influencing the spelling, which altered the traditional name] (342).

5 The term converso [convert] refers most often to Jews that converted to Christianity from approximately the thirteenth century onwards, though Muslims were also converts. Because these cristianos nuevos [new christians] lacked the required estatutos de limpieza de sangre [certificate of clean lineage] they were barred from certain titles, professions, guilds, and religious orders. For a more in depth discussion of the history of conversos in Spain see Norman Roth’s Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain (2002). In particular, see Chapters One and Two. In contrast, the term morisco refers to Muslims that lived under Christian rule after the conquering of Moorish lands on the Iberian peninsula from approximately 1212 (the battle of the Navas de Tolosa) through the expulsion of the Muslim
religious other was socially marginalized and these Muslim and Jewish populations in Madrid, whether by choice or by mandate, made their homes on the physical margins of the city on the steep and unappealing slopes away from the city center.

The presence of this *converso* population led to Lavapiés also being called *La manolería* [the place of the Manueles], a name that derived from “una preocupación judaica, [que] hacía que las familias de los conversos llamasen siempre Manuel al primero de sus hijos, con lo que, por abundancia de este nombre, quedó aquel barrio como el de los Manueles y, por eso . . , de los Manolos” [a Jewish preoccupation that caused the families of the *conversos* to always call the first son Manuel, by which, because of the abundance of this name, the neighborhood remained the place of Manueles and, therefore, of the Manolos] (Répide 343). Over time these origins become tinged with irony as writers like Ramón de la Cruz begin to use characters with the name *Manolo* as a sort of dramatic shorthand for the working-class inhabitants of Lavapiés and Madrid. In particular, de la Cruz’ famous *sainete* “Manolo, tragedia para reir o sainete para llorar” [Manolo, Tragedy for Laughing or Short-Work for Crying] (1757), relies on the clearly non-Christian and ‘inauthentic’ character of *Manolo* to construct the *castizo* [the pureblooded] of Madrid in the imaginary of the city.6

The physical marginalization of Lavapiés caused by its topographical situation gets compounded by the development of urban space in the city during the medieval and early modern periods. Given its position below the strategic high ground of the *meseta* where the original Moorish fortress and city core were located, Lavapiés was continually

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6 The term *castizo* refers to notions of Spanish cultural purity and is most often associated with the cultural identity and practices of the inhabitants of the working-class neighborhoods of Madrid and specifically Lavapiés and La Latina. In its more rural connotations it designates Castile (the region where Madrid is located) as the pure “heartland” of Spain. This term and its relationship to Lavapiés and theater in Madrid is a central theme of Chapter Two.
either just outside or just inside the walls of the city. When in 1566 Philip II expands the
wall of the city to accommodate and control the surging populace and corresponding
urban growth, the Jewish neighborhoods of Lavapiés find themselves physically
separated from the urban core by a gate at what is now the Plaza Antón Martín and a
cerca [defensive wall] that ran along the ridge to what is now the Plaza Jacinto
Benavente. Soon thereafter in 1571, a subsequent expansion includes this urban enclave,
but just barely as the wall intersects the neighborhood with a city gate found at
Embajadores. Later in 1625, when another cerca is built by Felipe IV to accommodate
the exploding city, the new boundary traces what are now the Rondas of Toledo and
Valencia. Though the cerca of Felipe IV was demolished in the nineteenth century to
make way for the boulevards and rondas that would characterize the increasingly modern
Madrid, the marginalized space of Lavapiés persisted.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Lavapiés maintained its function
as a home for immigrants and other marginal populations during waves of immigration
that arrived in Madrid during the periods of 1561-1654, 1720-1800, 1836-1877, and in
the late twentieth century (Ringrose 298). Today, this diversity has taken on a more
international flavor as much of the Spanish working-class population has been replaced
by foreign immigrants. According to Isabel Gea, author of detailed historical guides to
the city, “Lavapiés concentra el número más elevado de culturas diferentes por metro
cuadrado de todo Madrid” [Lavapiés concentrates the highest level of different cultures
by square meter in all of Madrid] (59). This diversity includes the high numbers of North

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7 David Ringrose suggests that between 1550 and 1600 Madrid saw its population explode from about
20,000 inhabitants to nearly 100,000, and that by 1630 the population had reached almost 130,000 (234).
8 Immigration to Madrid has been such a persistent quality of its character that Ringrose makes the
definitive statement that “Desde el momento de su elevación a la categoría de ciudad-capital hasta el
presente, Madrid ha sido una ciudad de inmigrantes” [Since the moment of its rise to the category of capital
city until the present day, Madrid has been a city of immigrants] (233).
Africans that arrived in the early 1990s and were followed by immigrants from South America, the Caribbean, other parts of the Middle East (Iraq, Iran), Southern Asia (India, Pakistan), and, most recently, from China (Gea 58-9). In the 2002 article “Imágenes mentales del centro de Madrid. El barrio de Lavapiés,” geographer Antonio Zárate Martín uses census data to provide a twenty-first century snapshot of the neighborhood. Therein he suggests that this level of immigration has made Lavapiés “el barrio más poblado del distrito Centro, el que cuenta con una población más envejecida y, junto con Sol, el que tiene una proporción más elevada de población extranjera; de sus 42.273 habitantes, 5.216 proceden de otros países (el 12,3% frente al 5% en el conjunto capital)” [the most populated neighborhood of the central district, that which includes the most elderly, and together with Sol, that which has the highest proportion of foreign population. Of its 42,273 inhabitants, 5,216 come from other countries (12.3% compared to 5% in the whole of the capital city)] (Zárate Martín “Imágenes mentales” 405).

Of this large number of immigrants, there are many that are undocumented. This growing marginalized population adds to the underserved groups that have been there for years, like the elderly for example. The presence of these marginalized groups has led to general neglect by the Ayuntamiento [Municipal Government or City Hall] and by the owners of the residential buildings. The city’s investment in the city has created a somewhat schizophrenic situation where high-priced condominium projects stand a few doors down from buildings that have deteriorated greatly over the last twenty-five years.

While considering the cause of this level of neglect, it is easy to see the large immigrant population as a major factor. Nonetheless, it is important to note the difficulties in discerning the relationship between these two features of the neighborhood.
The process has been a combination of the low-quality housing stock keeping rents low and attracting immigrants and an intentional negligence on the part of landlords hoping to have the buildings condemned so the tenants might be evicted, and the property sold to speculative interests. The conjunction of these two factors (immigration and poor condition of the housing stock) contributes to the way that Lavapiés is conceived today. Zárate Martín indicates that "la mayoría de los encuestados destacan en segundo lugar la antigüedad como el rasgo que mejor define la personalidad de esta zona del interior de Madrid, después de la multiculturalidad" [the majority of those interviewed emphasize in second place old as the quality that best defines the personality of this area in the interior of Madrid, after its multicultural character.] (“Imágenes mentales” 413; emphasis in the original).

Significantly, in this contemporary context Lavapiés’ marginality has been compounded by the presence of a “nutrida comunidad de activistas, cuyas ideologías y prácticas socio-políticas transcurren al margen del sistema” [healthy community of activists whose ideologies and socio-political practices occur on the margin of the system] (Gómez 3). This political activity loosely associated in the Red de Lavapiés [Lavapiés Network] has included “discursos y prácticas okupas, feministas, de liberación lesbiana y gay, anti-bélicas, pro-vivienda, pro-República, etc.” (Gómez 3) as well as groups like la Asociación de Vecinos La Corrala [La Corrala Neighborhood Association], la Asociación de Inmigrantes Senegaleses de España (AIESE) [the Association of Sengalese Immigrants of Spain], and la Asociación de Emigrantes Marroquíes en España (AEME) [the Association of Moroccan Immigrants in Spain]. The Red de Lavapiés
provided a forum where the interests of the various groups in Lavapiés can interact and respond to the urban processes occurring in the neighborhood.⁹

To clearly delineate the limits of this neighborhood for this study I look again to Zárate Martín who relies on interviews and surveys with secondary school students from the neighborhood to loosely designate the parameters of Lavapiés.¹⁰ According to these youths’ perceptions, the neighborhood forms a triangular-shaped area within the city center of Madrid that extends southward from the Plaza Mayor. It is contained to the East and West by Atocha and Toledo streets respectively, while the Southern boundary is formed by the Ronda de Toledo and Ronda de Valencia as they connect the Puerta de Toledo, la Glorieta de Embajadores and la Glorieta de Atocha. Though the Plaza Mayor may loosely form the Northern tip of the neighborhood when Lavapiés is assimilated into a map of medieval Madrid, it is more appropriate to see the metro stations found in La Latina, the Plaza Tirso de Molina, and the Plaza Antón Martín as an informal boundary (Zárate Martín 209). For the purposes of this study, Lavapiés will be defined as the triangular area demarcated by the plaza Tirso de Molina to the North, the Calle Atocha to the East, the Calle Embajadores to the West, and the Rondas of Toledo and Valencia to the South. These limits distinguish Lavapiés from the adjacent neighborhood of La Latina and the market area of El Rastro to the West and el Barrio de las Letras to the East.

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⁹ In recent years this loose association of groups has lost its collaborative spirit. Some might attribute this to the eviction and eventual disappearance of the squatted social center el Laboratorio 03 that provided a physical space for meetings and a certain activist energy to catalyze the cooperation of these disparate groups.

¹⁰ I rely on this article for two reasons. First, it provides one of the few clear articulations of the boundaries of Lavapiés by residents. Secondly, the fact that the data comes from sixteen and seventeen year olds seems particular poignant since this population is particularly invested in a sense of neighborhood and defining their “turf.”
Figure 1.1 Map of Lavapiés with key cultural sites in bold. Made for the author by Jeff Levy, Gyula Pauer Center for Cartography and GIS, University of Kentucky Department of Geography.

Though these boundaries form the physical parameters of the neighborhood, it is important to understand that the boundaries are fluid. This is particularly true since Lavapiés is not an officially designated district of the city. In technical terms, it is nothing more than the name of a metro stop and a plaza. As will be shown in the next chapter during the discussion of the zarzuela and the género chico, the significance of Lavapiés in the urban imaginary often expands its limits to include the adjacent areas of La Latina,
El Rastro, and other areas of the Embajadores district. Within these boundaries is found a neighborhood characterized by a rich historical legacy, cultural diversity, inspired political activity, and in the last twelve to fifteen years, the spectacle of intense urban change.

**The Urban Spectacle**

This notion of urban change as spectacle is well illustrated in the 2001 documentary *En construcción*, where the director José Luis Guerín films the destruction and redevelopment of a number of apartment buildings in the *barrio chino* of Barcelona during an eighteen-month period. As the demolition crews destroy the recently-occupied buildings, people from the neighborhood look on from street level and windows in nearby buildings as they discuss the construction that has intruded into their lives. The process of the changing urban landscape is seen through a camera that is described by Guerín as “[. . .] a window into a reality, rather than a mirror” (Klinger). Motionless except in the long tracking shot of the final scene, the camera’s presence seemingly sinks into the background and allows the construction and destruction of the urban space to become the central spectacle of the film.

This emphasis on the spectacle of urban change brings the process of urbanization into the foreground, exploring the reasons behind the unending disruptions of city life. What citygoers tend to experience as an inconvenience, as an obstruction, as temporary, is revealed as the central process in the production of urban space: the spectacle of destruction and construction. The effects of this spectacle emerge when later in the film middle-class professionals begin to visit the upscale apartments in search of new housing. During the visits, they are impressed by the bright light coming in from the windows, the
clean lines of the architecture, and the gleam of the new materials. They stare in blissful
ingnorance out of the windows at the working-class housing next door (next in line to be
demolished and “renewed”), ignoring the fact that these spaces are occupied by human
beings who soon will be displaced just as the previous inhabitants of their building have
been displaced. The process of the construction of the new buildings functions as a
spectacle that entrances the new residents, blinding them to history and the human cost of
the modes of production occurring around and for them.

This relationship between apathy and spectacle is central to Situationist Guy
Debord’s influential text The Society of Spectacle (1967). Alluding to the commodity
fetishism proposed by Marx, Debord insists that “the spectacle is both the result and the
project of the dominant mode of production. It is not mere decoration added to the real
world. It is the very heart of this real society’s unreality” (I:6). The capitalist mode of
production not only creates spectacle, but relies on spectacle being mistaken for reality.
In this way, the spectacle seduces the viewer/consumer into participating in a false
reality. This false reality, the spectacle, is “the visual reflection of the ruling economic
order— [wherein] goals are nothing, development is everything” (I:14). In more basic
terms, Debord summarizes, “the spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it
becomes images” (I:34).

The society of the spectacle is a post-industrialist society dominated by the mass
media where

the spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive,
indisputable and inaccessible. It says nothing more than ‘that which
appears is good, that which is good appears.’ The attitude which it
demands in principle is passive acceptance which in fact it already

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11 Because of the prevalence of online editions of this text as well as the absence of page numbers in some
print editions, I have cited the chapter number and the section number from Debord’s text instead of page
numbers.
obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, without its monopoly of appearance. (Debord I:12)

This is precisely the passive acceptance that we see in Guerín’s film. Debord’s society of the spectacle is not merely (re)produced by the visual culture of mass media, but also through more directly experienced images and monuments of capital: the spectacle of urban space. The spectacle of speculation and construction lulls the urban citizen into complacency which allows the process of construction/destruction of the city to take place. With Debord in mind, this thesis considers how the spectacle of urban space relies on cultural production for the benefit of capital locally, nationally, and globally.

Although Debord’s interest in the spectacle is principally concerned with the relationship between mass media and society, his theories are important to my work because what he attempts to do is to connect the symbolic world of images (a certain kind of discursive construction) to the material. In my work this symbolic will not be produced by the media (or not solely by the media), but rather by a range of discourses including those of progress, wealth, and nation perpetuated by the gleaming steel and glass of urban change. I am interested quite literally in the ways that the material functions as metaphor. In this project, the material product of the Teatro Valle-Inclán and the ancillary development in the Lavapiés neighborhood provides one of the texts for exploring this idea.

Later chapters will further demonstrate this interplay by considering symbolic representations of the built environment in the various modes of cultural production taking place within and around the urban landscape. In particular, these will include how the Plan General 1997 relies on discourses of spectacle to conceptualize the rehabilitation
of the neighborhood. It will also analyze the visual and architectural rhetoric of the Teatro Valle-Inclán and the various modes of discursive production found in its selection of “spectacles” and promotional materials. Later, the notion of the urban spectacle will move away from institutionalized cultural production to consider how the resistant spectacle of okupas [squatters] in Lavapiés attempts to rearticulate spatial practices locally and nationally through direct-action political protest and the use of the internet. Finally, this thesis will consider how these notions of spectacle, contested cultural production, and urban space are examined in the representations of politics and place found in contemporary plays about Madrid.

**Selling of Place, Creative Cities, and Gentrification**

With the urban spectacle in mind, the rehabilitation of Lavapiés can be understood in terms of a larger process of transformation of the city center and a more general commodification of the city as a cultural product for consumption. Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo describe the process of commodifying urban space in their book *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (1993) where they describe the “[. . .] pivotal role that culture has come to perform for capital in the selling of places” (Kearns and Philo 4). For Kearns and Philo, any study of this process should “[. . .] examine ‘discourses’ that sustain the practice of manipulating culture in the selling of places and tease out the material contexts that generate this practice” (x). This notion is extremely relevant in the case of Madrid and Lavapiés since so much urban change has been anchored by two important cultural institutions: the Teatro Valle-Inclán and the Museo Nacional Reina Sofia.
The investment by the city government in the cultural infrastructure of the area catalyzed a real-estate speculation boom in Lavapiés and subjected it to the gentrifying process that typically follows capital as it invests and disinvests itself in urban space (Smith 1991). Of particular interest in this project is the Teatro Valle-Inclán. In the first place, the building is located directly on the namesake plaza of the neighborhood and its façade looms over the activities of the neighborhood. Secondly, the fact that this national theater center has been built in Lavapiés resonates in important ways with the neighborhood’s historical significance for the Spanish theatrical tradition. Urban change, especially as tied to the culture industry, functions as a spectacle (a type of theatrical performance) that often employs a national cultural heritage to reinforce the ideological container of the nation-state (a connection explored in detail in Chapter Two).

Anchoring the urban rehabilitation of Lavapiés and Madrid to cultural institutions and sites of cultural production suggests that the city is engaged in two popular strategies for urban change. The first strategy relies on “flagship property-led redevelopment” (Moulaert et al. 2001) in which urban reinvestment is anchored to large-scale cultural projects like museums and stadiums. The most significant example of this in the Spanish context is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao; a project that has been so successful in rebranding the city that the “Guggenheim effect” or “Bilbao effect” has become the catchphrase for redevelopment anchored by municipal investment in high-profile cultural institutions.12 Geographers Vicario Lorenzo and P. Manuel Martínez Monje (2003) describe this process in Bilbao and how city planners hoped that the “negative image associated with deindustrialization and decline would vanish, and a new image

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12 Vicario and Martínez Monje point to the use of this term in a September 2001 Financial Times article and articles in The Guardian from June and November in 2002 (2398-9).
associated with art, culture and advanced services created in its stead—an image of Bilbao as a better-looking, innovative, attractive city [would remain] (2385). As the cultural institutions begin to accumulate around Lavapiés—the Museo Reina Sofía, el Teatro Valle-Inclán, the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales—the associations with Bilbao are hard to ignore. It is as if the city planners in Madrid hope that by encircling the economically-depressed neighborhood with “culture,” that a transformation of urban space will follow. And though this cultural transformation of urban space has been complemented by an improvement of the housing stock in the neighborhood, inhabitants like Manuel Osana, the president of the Asociación de Vecinos La Corrala [Neighborhood Association La Corrala], continue to complain that the obras [work] in Lavapiés have been “en el barrio, pero no para el barrio” [in the neighborhood, but not for the neighborhood] (Osana).

Related to this “Bilbao effect” is the strategy for urban growth and development based in the cultivation of what Richard Florida (2002) has termed “the creative class,” a pool of labor characterized by “people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education and art, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and/or new creative content” (Rise 8). According to Florida, to attract this new class of workers so essential to competitiveness in the new global economy cities must make themselves appealing by creating livable cities that are “diverse, tolerant, and open to new ideas” (Rise 223). Essential to this livability is a vibrant cultural life manifested in diverse cuisine, artistic production, and other features of cosmopolitanism that theoretically exemplify and foster a creative environment.
Though much of his work focuses on the competition for the creative class in a North American context, his 2004 book *Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent* brings his argument into a global context and suggests that “creative” workers “search for work locations across borders” and “will go to places that offer abundant economic opportunity, [and an] exciting cultural and social environment” (Flight 145). One of the key factors in attracting this coveted talent pool, according to Florida, is the bohemian environment associated with tolerance, diversity, and cultural production. In *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005) Florida goes to great lengths to quantify the relationship high-tech job creation and high rankings on his “Bohemian Index.” From this relationship Florida concludes that the bohemian environment with the perquisite amenities like art galleries, restaurants, and museums, “means more for the larger economy—particularly the most advanced economic sectors than is generally perceived” (Cities 128). The presence of a wide range of ethnic restaurants, hip quirky bars, art galleries, and a diverse multitude in Lavapiés makes it, perhaps, the most ideal location in all of Madrid to present an international and cosmopolitan image.

At the base of both of these approaches to urban redevelopment is the notion that cultural production provides the backdrop for the rehabilitation of urban space. The “Bilbao effect” is often undertaken in conjunction with plans for private redevelopment with the expressed intent of rehabilitating the real estate market. This transformation of urban space can often “[enable] the city’s central district—any already privileged area—to become ever more exclusive and ‘privatised’” (Vicario and Martínez Monje 2388) and create what Neil Smith has called a “bourgeois playground” (“Gentrification, the Frontier” 32). In contrast, the pursuit of the “creative class” does not explicitly aim to
reform urban space. Nonetheless, the image that Florida projects of the “creative city”
contains “a teeming blend of cafes, sidewalk musicians, and small galleries and bistros”
and suggests an almost clichéd image of gentrification (Florida, Rise 166). In this
renovated urban stage “it is hard to draw the line between the participant and observer, or
between creativity and its creators” (Florida, Rise 166); the “creative” city becomes an
interactive urban spectacle.

There are critics of both of these approaches. In their work, Vicario Lorenzo and
P. Manuel Martínez Monje have emphasized how the notion of creating a flagship
museum would seem to give an urban area some sort of originality, while it in fact it
merely replicates the same strategy “that can be found in cities such as Baltimore,
Glasgow, and Barcelona” (2386). In addition, though these sorts of cultural institutions
may assert a city’s bona fides on the international art scene in order to attract tourists, it
actually does little to “. . . attract advanced service jobs or international capital” (Vicario
and Martínez Monje 2396). Finally, while transforming the real estate market around the
project these sorts of “cultural showcase” projects don’t do much for “cultural
production per se” (Vicario and Martínez Monje 2396). As a result, investment in
cultural infrastructure is often a rhetorical ploy (manifested both in language and in the
architecture that accompany such projects) to “reclaim underused space occupied by
marginal or dangerous social groups” and harvest the “plum left to rot . . . created by
highly attractive space in a context where residential land is scarce and prices are
soaring” (Vicario and Martinez Monje 2396).

These critiques of the “Bilbao effect” emphasize the ways that private capital
relies on cultural production and the urban space it requires to rehabilitate (i.e. gentrify)
urban space. Critiques of Florida’s notion of the creative city likewise see capital at work behind his optimistic and well-marketed notions of urban sociology and planning. Geographer Jamie Peck suggests that urban redevelopment plans based in investment in cultural production and creativity strategies “do the opposite: they commodify the arts and cultural resources, even social tolerance itself, suturing them as putative economic assets to evolving regimes of urban competition” (763). The warm-fuzzy feeling that certain city residents and city planners might get from the rhetoric of urban planning focused on the arts belies the fundamental commodification of the arts taking place in this process. And, of course, along with this commodification of “arts and cultural resources” is capital’s transformation of urban space.

For this reason, these municipal policies of cultural development are an important component of long-running debates in Geography and urban planning circles regarding the process of gentrification. First used in 1964 by sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the transformation of working-class areas of London into posh trendy neighborhoods, the term has come to be associated most often with the transformation of urban neighborhoods from working class to upper middle class. As the demographics shift the built environment experiences a physical makeover that alters the real-estate market. Subsequently, the original inhabitants are displaced by more upwardly-mobile professionals.

While research on gentrification focused for many years on the mere collecting of data to produce descriptive research on the topic, this empirical approach was replaced by

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13 The success of Florida’s books and theories have helped him to achieve great financial success with his consulting firm Creative Class Group (CCG) and accolades in the popular media. In particular, Florida’s annual index of “Creative Cities,” his “gay index”, and “bohemian index” have become key points of consultation for cities hoping to benefit from Florida’s “vision” of the twenty-first century city. Many scholars (Rantisi, et. al. (2006), Gibson and Klockler (2004), and Gibson and Kong (2005)) have critiqued Florida’s one-size-fits-all notions of urbanism as well as the neo-liberal policies he promotes.

more theoretical analyses in the 1980s that were more interested in explaining the causes of gentrification rather than merely identifying its presence. This causal debate has been shaped mainly by two positions. The first emphasizes the production-side process of gentrification, which is often associated with Neil Smith (1979, 1986, 1987) and his notion of the rent gap. According to Smith, the rent gap is “the gap between the actual capitalized ground rent (land value) of a plot of land given its present use and the potential ground rent that might be gleaned under a ‘higher and better’ use” (Gentrification and the Rent Gap 462). This rent gap has historically been produced by disinvestment in city cores associated with deindustrialization and the increasing investment in suburbanization on the periphery of cities. When the rent gap in the inner city is sufficiently wide, capital moves back into the city core; this shift often results in the displacement of residents, a physical transformation of the housing stock, and an economic shift in the value of land and real estate (Smith Gentrification and the Rent Gap 463). This supply-side theory of gentrification sees the process driven strictly by the mobility of capital to invest and disinvest in urban space. This makes gentrification a “back to the city movement [. . .] by capital not people” (Smith “Toward a Theory” 547).

In contrast to this production or supply-side approach focused on capital, other geographers have looked for the more sociological and cultural roots of the gentrification process. A prime example of this demand-side approach is the work of David Ley (1986) who relied on Canadian Census Data to argue that urban amenities and demographic shifts in the nature of households combined with the transformation of urban economies
from industrial to post-industrial or post-fordist to drive the gentrification process.\textsuperscript{14} Accompanying these changes, the demand for new forms of housing to accommodate smaller families has also helped drive the transformation of city cores over the last couple of decades.

Geographers and sociologists like Loretta Lees (1994) and Paul Redfern (1997) have attempted to unlock this “theoretical logjam” (Lees 390) by moving beyond the competing approaches constructed by the analogous binaries of culture/capital, supply/demand, or production/consumption. Often the solution has been to find a middle ground in which the economic and cultural work with each other to (re)create urban space. Lees suggests that “to understand postmodern lifestyle we need to be able to trace its roots in socioeconomic restructuring” (144). Therefore, it is important to consider how “urban actors and/or the culture industry, for example, ameliorate the movement of capital” (146).\textsuperscript{15}

This research into the intersection between culture, capital, and urban space has been heavily influenced by the work of Sharon Zukin. In her widely read book \textit{Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change} (1982) Zukin proposed that the “loft” phenomenon which transformed the manufacturing and working-class neighborhoods of the lower East Side of New York into the posh art colony that is now known as SoHo was an example of a process she termed the “artistic mode of production” (176). The AMP

\textsuperscript{14} The term post-Fordist is often used to refer to the post-industrial economies that have moved away from blue-collar industrial manufacturing as the base of the economy towards white-collar service sector jobs in engineering, finance, consulting, and information technology.

\textsuperscript{15} In a more general context in Madrid this process can be identified with neighborhoods like Chueca and Fuencarral where traditionally grungy urban neighborhoods of the city center have been turned into some of the hippest and most expensive real estate in the city. In Chueca this transformation is easily illustrated by the proliferation of high-end restaurants and \textit{tapas} bars, and boutique stores.
(as she refers to it) relies on a close connection between accumulation and cultural consumption (177) whereby

both materially and symbolically, artists’ lofts serve as infrastructure of a very special sort in the transition from an industrial to a deindustrialized urban economy. On the one hand they are the place where ‘post-industrial’ production is really carried out. On the other hand, they embody the switch in orientation from an industrial economy to one that is dominated by the service sector. (112)

This transition from the economy of the twentieth century to the twenty-first is characterized not only by the transformation of the labor market, but also by the revalorization of urban terrain. The artistic mode of production helps to turn urban space into a “symbol, and a site under contention by major social forces” (Zukin 174). As a result, urban space that derives a certain use value as productive space (i.e. manufacturing) is transformed almost exclusively into exchange value by “converting it into financial capital” (Zukin 175).

In the context of SoHo, one key element of this move from productive use to exchange use has been the promotion of an “ethos of historic preservation . . . [that] extricates the built legacy of the industrial city from the social matrix of industrial production” (Zukin 180). The “picturesque” (Zukin 180) value of the urban landscape is detached from its actual social and economic use. It becomes mere fetishized commodity. And, though Zukin’s example relies heavily on the particular social and historical context of New York City and the growth of the financial sector and Wall Street, it still helps to sketch out how the symbolic value of urban space can be altered by investment in an arts infrastructure. The social reproduction of cultural symbols and values is directly connected to the accumulation strategies of capital in urban space.
The Production of Space

While urban planners and geographers have attempted to sketch the empirical and causal parameters for gentrification, their most useful work (from the perspective of literary studies) has moved the discussion towards the intersection of the cultural and the material. To lay out a more focused theoretical framework I turn to Henri Lefebvre’s influential text *The Production of Space* (1974) in which he proposes a new vision for conceptualizing the relationship between human culture and its spatial context.

Discarding any kind of *a priori* sense of Cartesian space, Lefebvre argues against the idea that “empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it” (*Production of Space* 15) and suggests instead that “every society [. . . ] produces its own space” (*Production of Space* 39). For Lefebvre, key to this process of spatial production is the understanding that any society is merely a manifestation of its modes of production, and that as a result “this act of creation, is in fact, a process” (*Production of Space* 34). This modification of Marx’s historical dialectic shifts the emphasis of his materialist critique from mere consideration of ideological analysis to one that considers how ideology works in conjunction with the ways that “the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction” (Lefebvre *Production of Space* 38).

Notably though, this dialectic is composed of the *perceived*, the *conceived*, and the *lived* and therefore is “a triad: that is, three elements and not two” (Lefebvre *Production of Space* 39). Lefebvre hopes that consideration of this tripartite process of spatial production will produce a unitary theory that consists of the physical, the mental, and the social. This process includes the spatial production of technocrats that he calls *conceived* space, the contribution of artists and intellectuals to produce the
representational spaces or *lived* spaces that give meaning to a site or locale, and finally
the work of everyday users whose “spatial practice” dances between the *savoir* of
culturally understood meanings and the *connaissance* of their performance. The triad of
spatial production proposed by Lefebvre, therefore, implies a tension between an official
technocratic space committed to the production of capital, the aesthetics or
meaningfulness of that space (its “placeness”), and the performance of individuals within
that space.

Because his concern is with the social character of space he centers his discussion
on spatial practice. Associating it with the physical component of the triad, he suggests it
“presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members, and sensory organs, and
the gestures of work as of activity unrelated to work” (Lefebvre *Production of Space* 40).
This use of sensory organs makes spatial practice the realm of the perceived and as such
is a “practical activity [that] writes upon nature” (Lefebvre *Production of Space* 118). As
we perceive this “writing” upon nature, we confront “traces [which] embody the ‘values’
assigned to particular routes: danger, safety, waiting, promise” (Lefebvre *Production of
Space* 118).

Significantly, despite this “graphic aspect” (Production of Space 118), Lefebvre
wonders: “Could it be called a text or a message?” (Production of Space 118). He goes on
to insist that “the analogy would serve no particularly useful purpose, and it would make
more sense to speak of texture rather than of texts” (Production of Space 118). This
distinction between text and texture highlights the idea that we ‘read’ space with more
than just our mind and eyes. In fact, we read through the tactile experience of our bodies
moving through space, encountering the physical and social spaces around us, and hence
the ‘reading’ of space becomes a more phenomenological encounter that incorporates the
range of perceptive organs: it is the body that reads, that perceives, because it is the body
in movement. In moving through space, the body reproduces the codes of that space, and
it puts them into practice and hence becomes a spatial practice.

While spatial practice may reproduce the codes of space, this process is also
determined by the space of the mind, or conceived space. This representation of space is
the space of “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social
engineers” (Lefebvre Production of Space 38). Also called abstract space, it “is the
dominant space in any society (or mode of production)” (Lefebvre Production of Space
39) and is the terrain in which capitalism articulates its codes, its requirements, its
separation of labor, and its separation of reproductive and productive space. The
representations of space are fraught with ideology and lay the groundwork for spatial
practice to reproduce the modes of production.

Finally, the triad is completed by the lived spaces of representational space which
is the space of “‘inhabitants’ and ‘users,’ but also of some artists and perhaps of those,
such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do more than
describe” (Production of Space 39). Representational space is the “dominated—and
hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and
appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (Production
of Space 39). Key to this part of the triad is the idea that this representational space is
“alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house;
or square, church, graveyard.” (Production of Space 42). If spatial practice refers to the
ways that our bodies move through space, and representations of space generate our
logical codification of space, then representational spaces account for the emotional and symbolic encounters that individuals have with space. Evocative of Foucault’s heterotopias (1984) wherein “real places . . . are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted upon utopia” (Foucault 239). Representational spaces are localities that are imbued with an affective meaning. They are concretely real, but may carry some sense of the sacred, the natural, and the wild. It is the place where writers and artists have constructed our emotional relationship with a site. These sites carry the cultural history of lived experience within them, and hence are the lived spaces of spatial production.

Interestingly, as he introduces this tripartite theory of space, Lefebvre takes great pains to assert its cohesiveness and to disrupt the parceling out of “an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global” (Production of Space 8). Notably, this fragmentation of space into the terrain of various specialists (“economics, geography, sociology” etc.) is closely associated with a scalar division of space (“national, continental, global”). For Lefebvre, “the very multiplicity of these descriptions and sectionings makes them suspect” (Production of Space 8). By engaging with Lefebvre’s triad of spatial production, we undermine a variety of categories by which we understand space, including the often concrete divisions that we make between various geographic scales.

This interest becomes most clear in his chapter entitled “Social Space” where he suggests that “no space disappears in the course of growth and development: the worldwide does not abolish the local . . . the intertwinment of spaces is also the law” (Production of Space 86, emphasis in the original). The same mode of production creates
the networks of exchange and communication within the local as the global, and therefore
“social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another” (Lefebvre 86, emphasis in the original). Because of this interpenetration, social spaces “are not things, which have mutually limiting boundaries” (Production of Space 86). Lefebvre emphasizes this point by arguing that “visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of a separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity” (Lefebvre Production of Space 87). This ambiguous continuity problematizes basic definitions of geographic scale by suggesting that the boundaries (local, regional, national, etc.) that we often employ to organize and analyze spatial practices are actually indicative of connections and relationships more than of distinctions. As a result, using Lefebvre’s tripartite theory as a means to consider spatial practice suggests that we also consider spatial practice at a range of scales. That is, any analysis of spatial practice will consider how social practice at any given scale unfolds into and helps to construct practices at other scales of practice. This approach sees spatial practice as occurring across space and time rather than being discretely nested within distinct epistemological containers.

Linking this idea of representational space to the material transformation of the urban environment, geographer Mark Goodwin, in his contribution to the Philo and Kearns volume mentioned above, emphasizes that “depressed land values of course prevent economic speculation and regeneration, and hence new urban images are crucial in promoting such regeneration” (150). These ‘new urban images’ depend on the metaphoric power of language and the imagistic possibilities of the built environment to provide the surplus value necessary for capitalist speculation. Therefore, one of the key
goals of this project is to consider the discourses that work to create the representational space of Lavapiés and that imbue it with a symbolic meaning that allows for its commodification, subsequent selling, and material transformation. In the end this project will explore how competing spectacles of spatial representation either assist or resist the production of space by capital.

Though the material products of this process of “selling place” manifest themselves at the site of Lavapiés, there is a conscious effort to attract international capital in the form of investment and tourist dollars. This fact implies the production of a whole other series of spaces including the nation-state of Spain and the city of Madrid. The productions of these various “spaces” (the locale of Lavapiés, the city, the nation) are interdependent and, looking to the work done on scale, I suggest that any selling of place implicitly relies on the tensions between various geographic scales to succeed.

**Articulations of Scale**

This debate regarding the potential fixity or fluidity of the boundaries between various geographical scales has found much traction with many researchers in the field of geography, but also provoked much debate. Relevant to this dissertation is that the proposed theories of scale are not only tied to the movement of capital, also that they also frequently incorporate the role of cultural production as an important feature. A key concept for considering the relationship between scale and capital is what Neil Smith (1991) has called “uneven development” wherein the “[. . . ] the division of the world economy at the scale of national capital is the necessary foundation upon which capital can launch its aspirations to universality” ([Uneven Development](#) 144). According to
Smith, it is through its global ubiquity and movement between nation-states that capital can toe the delicate line between movement and fixity. This movement allows capital to maintain the necessary balance between underdevelopment—sites where labor and land rents are cheap and production and accumulation can occur—and overdevelopment—sites where high productivity has eliminated the profit margin (Smith Uneven Development 150). The nation-state serves as a container for capital and provides a series of repositories as it moves around the globe.

Significantly, for Smith the crux point of this uneven development occurs “where capital is the most mobile—that is at the urban scale” (Uneven Development 150). As Smith explains, “the ground-rent system levels urban space to the dimension of exchange value” (Uneven Development 138). As a result, “the equalization of urban space in the ground-rent structure becomes the means to its differentiation” (Smith Uneven Development 138), that is, its differing exchange values. Therefore, similar to the movement of capital globally, there is a continual tension between equalization (the universality of capital and the extent of the ground-rent structure) and differentiation (national capital and shifting land values). In this context, capital moves back and forth amongst various parts of the city squeezing profits out of the shifting land values. In short, focusing attention on the material contexts of a site implies its participation in a scalar structure at the service of capital. The rent-gap, in essence, is at work globally just as it is at work within the terrain of urban space.

Smith’s concerns regarding the relationship between scale and capitalist production are echoed in geographer Sallie Marston’s (2000) early theorization on geographic scale where she argues that “scale is constituted and reconstituted around
relations of capitalist production, social reproduction, and consumption” ("Social
Construction" 221). Given Smith and Marston’s implication of the nation-state in
capitalist production, scale becomes a useful tool to understand the material context in
which the nation-state is produced. That is, geographic scale becomes another means of
understanding how the discursive “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) of the nation
is harnessed for the purposes of producing capital.16

To clarify further, my concern with scale does not refer simply to “geographical
resolution” (Agnew 1997), but to a more complicated matrix that according to Howitt
(1998) includes “size, level, and relation” (qtd. in Marston 2000 220). Echoing this last
point Leitner et al. (2008) also argue that “scale shouldn’t be invoked as the extent or
scope of political practice, but to see how scales articulate with one another” (159). To
fully understand these articulations requires attention to the ways that scales function
within the “[ . . . ] social relations of empowerment and disempowerment”
(Swyngedouw 169) and the movement of power through and amongst scales. This issue
of power therefore asks us to consider Delaney and Leitner’s (1997) point that
geographic scales exist as a “fusion of ideologies and practices” (97). In basic terms,
“scalar structuration” (Brenner 2001) is a series of produced spaces that articulate with
one another to construct and deconstruct power relations.

This understanding of scale approaches Marston, Jones, and Woodward’s (2005)
assertion that scale as an epistemological category should be replaced by a notion of “flat
ontology.” These writers mistrust the discursive power of scale because of its capacity to

16 I use this term somewhat liberally here. I am not emphasizing Anderson’s focus on the nation as product
of the emergence of some Habermassian public sphere of readers. Rather, I emphasize the mere idea that
the nation is a discursive construction. That is, the nation is not fundamentally “real,” but rather a symbolic
notion that gets fetishized into an ontological reality. See Chapter Two for more developed discussion of
the nation as social construction.
reify dominant modes of spatial production (namely, neoliberal notions of globalization). They therefore attempt to discard the idea of scale as “[. . .] a nested hierarchy of differentially sized and bounded spaces” (Marston et al. 416-7). In its place, they suggest scholars rely on ‘flat ontology’ to focus on a “‘neighborhood’ of practices, events, and orders that are folded variously into other unfolding sites” (“Human Geography” 426). According to Marston et al., these “unfolding sites” are “materially emergent” and because they are made up of “practices, events, and orders,” they are not limited to their categorical designation. Instead any geographical scale should be considered a site “[. . .] where social things happen, things that are contingent, fragmented, and changeable” (“Human Geography” 427).

Despite their efforts to assert their break with dominant definitions of scale, I would assert that their ‘flat ontology’ and its ‘unfolding sites,’ in fact, echo the notions of other scholars that scale is the product of articulation and relations. Therefore, an acknowledgement that “social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another” (Lefebvre The Production of Space 86, emphasis in the original) opens up space for the analysis of the ‘ambiguous continuity’ embedded in spatial practice—a continuity that looks to connections and articulations rather than distinctions.

As a result, notions of geographic scale do not exist discursively as separate ontological categories, but rather unfold into one another because each scale only exists in relation to other scales. The local has some kind of cultural caché because it can be parlayed against some other level of geographic resolution and power. Therefore, unraveling the production of space at one scale asks for discussion of the production of
space at other scales. The definition of scale that best incorporates this idea while also considering geographic scale’s discursive and material components comes from Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto (2007). Written in response to the assertion of Marston, Jones, and Woodward’s notion of ‘flat ontology,’ this definition suggests that scale works best when “conceptualized as a relational power-laden and contested construction that actors strategically engage with in order to legitimate or challenge existing power relations” (Leitner et al. 159).

It is through this definition that the concept of scale provides a point of articulation between Geography and Literary Studies, and a methodological framework for this project. The basis for this assertion stems from the fact that throughout the debate on scale, all of the principal commentators agree that scale is not a pre-ontological given, but rather a social production. Given Lefebvre’s assertion that any production of space is dependent on the discursive work and the metaphors of representational spaces, Literary Studies offers an additional set of analytic tools to explore the production of those scales. For example, the concept of synecdoche is an explicitly scalar concept. This is particularly true when a text represents geographic terrain and allows it to serve a symbolic or metaphoric function. A wide range of authors have employed very particularized (i.e. localized) landscapes as a means to explore the production of identity at other scales. Examples that immediately come to mind are the novels of Benito Pérez Galdós and Camilo José Cela, the dramatic works of Félix Lope de Vega and Ramón de María de Valle Inclán. In the next chapter, I will discuss this process as seen the theatrical tradition of the zarzuela and the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz. In these works of theater, the cityscape of Madrid—and often the specific locale of Lavapiés—is employed as a
means of representing and commenting on the nation. This same synecdoche will also be illustrated through discussion of the ways that the castizo myth functioned as signifier for the nation within the Castilianist ideology that underpinned Francoist ideology.

Considering this notion of synecdoche in terms of cultural geography, we find that it also contributes to the discursive work underpinning the selling of place. Echoing Zukin’s notion of the artistic mode of production, Philo and Kearns point out that the fetishization that occurs when place is commodified “[…] depends on promoting traditions, lifestyles and arts that are supposed to be locally rooted, and in this respect the selling of places has what the humanistic geographers might call an ‘authentic’ quality spawned by the cultural life of the places themselves” (3, emphasis in the original). The construction of this ‘authentic’ quality depends on the selling of an authentic cultural product or identity at one scale (the neighborhood, the city, the region) that perpetuates myths of identity at another scale. Tourists explore Lavapiés looking for the heart of Madrid while simultaneously seeking an authentic “Madrid experience.” Similarly, they might attend a performance at the Teatro Valle-Inclán, a part of the Madrid cultural landscape located in Lavapiés, to engage with some authentic element of a broader Spanish cultural identity.

It is worth noting in this context how research on gentrification has also taken a more global turn. In particular, the 2002 volume edited by Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore Smith in 2002 Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Northern Europe offers a revised perspective of Neil Smith. They assert that “the impulse behind gentrification is now generalized; its incidence is global, and it is densely
connected into the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation ("New Globalism" 80). In the context of this new urbanism

the containers themselves are being fundamentally recast. The ‘urban’ is being redefined just as dramatically as the global. . .The new concatenation of urban functions and activities vis a vis the national and the global changes not only the make-up of the city but the very definition of what constitutes—literally—the urban scale. ("New Globalism" 84)

The result of this reordering of scale thrusts cities into more direct competition with one another, and not merely in a national or regional context, but in a global arena. Echoing Kearns and Philo, Smith argues that “this competition takes place not simply in terms of attracting and keeping industrial production but also in the marketing of cities as residential and tourist destinations ("New Globalism” 100).

The notion of gentrification as global accumulation strategy for Capital has also provoked Matthew Rofe (2003) to research the notion of a broad gentrifying class as an “emergent elite global community.” He identifies how the “consumptionscapes” (2521) of cafés, boutiques, art galleries, and restaurants, have helped “members of the gentrifying class sampled to look to the scale of the global to maintain a distinctive identity” (Rofe 2524). Through gentrification urban space is “increasingly enmeshed in global networks of flows and meaning” (Rofe 2521), and therefore interrogating urban space is an investigation of identity and the production of meaning at various geographic scales.

This study proposes that geographic scale becomes a key point of contact between the disciplines of Literary Studies and Geography because of the role of culture in producing the representational spaces that construct various scales. While the spatial containers that make up the various geographic scales organize society politically,
sociologically, ideologically, and culturally, it is the narrative representations of those spatial containers that reifies them into a means of organizing social space and identity. In the following chapters, a thorough analysis of the “scales of material practice and scales of representation” (Miller 173) will highlight how the theater that has become a touchpoint for considering the articulations amongst the representational spaces of Lavapiés, Madrid, and the nation-state of Spain.

**An Organizational Triad**

Relying both on Lefebvre and the theories of scale found in Cultural Geography, this project will consider the multiple ways in which space is produced in Lavapiés. First, it will examine how discourses of scale form part of the accumulation strategy underpinning the production, reproduction, and consumption of the neighborhood of Lavapiés in particular and Madrid in general. Some key elements of this analysis will be a consideration of the ways that Lefebvre’s abstract space is articulated through the urban spectacle of a major cultural monument and how this combination of cultural heritage and architectural representation produces hegemonic spatial practice. Secondly, this project will consider how artistic and activist responses articulate alternative spatial practices that speak to a more ‘flat ontology.’ Theatrical performances, online textual production, and distinct moments of squatting (called *okupas*), discursively inscribe a “[. . .] neighborhood’ of practices, events, and orders that are folded variously into other unfolding sites” (Marston et al. 426). In short, the discursive production found in contemporary plays about Madrid, in resistant cultural production online, and in resistant
spatial practices disrupt hegemonic spatial production by highlighting the interpenetration of various scales of spatial practice.

The following chapter will explore the relationship between Lavapiés, the history of theater in Madrid, and notions of the castizo to argue for the importance of spectacle to the development of urban space and the national imaginary in Madrid. Relying on this context, this thesis will then use Lefebvre’s triad as an organizational model in the following chapters to examine the production of Lavapiés from 1996-2007 by considering three different ways that space is produced in the neighborhood. Chapter Two will consider the space of representation or “abstract space” articulated by the Teatro Valle-Inclán and the discourses of urban change found in the Plan General 1997. Chapter Three will examine the spectacle the Centro social okupado autogestionado El Laboratorio 03 [Self-Sufficient Occupied Social Center The Laboratory 3], a neighborhood social center established by squatters that provided a venue for art, theater, and political activism, and in 2003-2004 became a focal point for resistance against the real-estate speculation taking place in Lavapiés. These “tactics” (de Certeau 1984) of spatial production attempted to undermine the selling of the local in the global marketplace. Finally, the last chapter will use four contemporary theater texts to show how in dramatic representations of Lavapiés and Madrid the urban landscape functions as an urban spectacle, a metaphoric theater space for the production of local, regional, and national identities.

In contemporary Lavapiés, the lived, perceived, and conceived space of the urban environment converge in a contested site where both the resistance and the reproduction of global capital and the dominant discourses of the nation-state are highly dependent on
the articulations of scale provoked by the synecdoche of urban space in the twenty-first century.
Chapter II

Lavapiés as the Castizo Stage for the Nation

In the previous chapter, I discussed the way that Guy Debord’s notion of spectacle can be used to consider the construction and production of urban space. I proposed that fundamental to the spectacular production of urban space is an overlapping, co-inhabiting, and an articulation between various geographic scales. To illustrate this process, this chapter will describe how the spectacle of urban space in the neighborhood of Lavapiés in Madrid, Spain is manifested as a symbol of Madrid as a whole and also implicated into producing a national imaginary associated with the nation-state of Spain. This chapter proposes that a relationship between urban space and the production of theatrical performance is a key element of this synecdoche. To illustrate these theories, this chapter focuses on the relationship between Madrid’s theater history and the construction of the Spanish nation.

This purpose is predicated on the notion put forth by many theorists like Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983), and Liah Greenfield (1992) that the modern nation is respectively an “imagined community,” a “contingency,” and a “social compact.” In short, the nation is a cultural construction bound together by ideology, language, a shared historical narrative, and the consumption of cultural products. 17 This process, at the minimum according to Anderson, occurs through the shared experience of

17 The bibliography on nationalism and the nation is long and varied. For various reasons, space being one of them, this chapter does not engage thoroughly with that bibliography. It also does not discuss the important and valid critiques of the Eurocentric and, often, imperialist, bias of Anderson and other theorists. Critics Neil Lazarus (1999), Timothy Brennan (1990), and Partha Chatterjee (1993) have broadened this critique to consider the difference between imperialist and non-imperialist nationalisms. For a broad discussion these and other theories of nationalism see Anthony Smith Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism (1998). For more on consumption as a key feature of national identity formation see Néstor García Canclini Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts (2001).
textual and cultural production, namely print culture. I use this idea as a point of departure to argue that theater production in Spain during key moments of its history also played an important role in helping to construct this “imagined community” that is the Spanish nation-state.

It must be noted that given the time frame being discussed in this chapter—the sixteenth through the early twentieth century—the concept of the nation-state is not one fixed notion, but rather something that evolves and develops within constantly changing socio-political contexts. For example, the sense of community cultivated during the Siglo de Oro [Golden Age] had much more to do with cultivating ideological allegiance to the singular sovereignty of the monarchy. In the nineteenth century, the rise of liberalism that accompanied the French cultural influence of the preceding century onwards contributed to a notion of a collective experience that would begin to resemble contemporary notions of the modern nation-state.

To accomplish the task laid out above, this chapter will briefly consider three ways in which Madrid has functioned as a spectacle intimately tied to capital and power. First, I will demonstrate how the theater industry often developed simultaneously with the growth of urban space in Madrid. In this context, the neighborhoods around what is now modern-day Lavapiés figured prominently in the wide range of theatrical performances that occurred: from religious ceremonies and street theater to those taking place in more formal spaces whose construction was linked to an emerging capitalist system. In short, I will consider how many of the most important theater spaces of

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18 The Siglo de Oro or “Golden Age” of Spanish literature refers to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The term “Golden Age” refers to both the literal gold that was arriving from the Americas at this time as well as the glorification by academic critics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of the artistic flourishing during this imperial period that includes the Renaissance and Baroque periods and such esteemed names as Diego de Velázquez, Francisco Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Miguel de Cervantes, and El Greco.
Madrid have, over time, always accumulated in and around Lavapiés; an ironic occurrence given Lavapiés’ historically marginalized situation in Madrid. Secondly, I will move from examining the stage in Madrid (the actual theater spaces) to discuss Madrid in the stage by demonstrating how representations of Madrid, and in particular the neighborhood of Lavapiés, found in the theatrical forms of the sainete and the género chico have played a key role in constructing popular notions of an “authentic” madrileño [of Madrid] identity and a broader Spanish identity articulated by castizo types and settings.19 At different historical moments, the intersection of these discourses permitted a conflation of Madrid with Spain as a whole. 20

After considering the stage in Madrid (the theater spaces in Madrid) and Madrid on the stage (dramatic representations of Madrid), this chapter will explore the notion of Madrid as a stage. Using historical examples, it will illustrate how the urban space of Madrid has served literally as a space for performance by those in political power for ideological and political reasons. The three approaches mentioned above will demonstrate that theater space, urban space, and the construction of national identity have an important relationship with Madrid, Lavapiés, and Spain. In more particular terms, the synecdoche that characterizes the layers of meaning found in notions of lo castizo will offer a context for understanding contemporary Lavapiés and highlight the way that

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19 I reiterate how lo castizo refers to notions of Spanish cultural purity often associated with the cultural identity and practices of the inhabitants of the working-class neighborhoods of Madrid and specifically Lavapiés and La Latina. This term will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.

20 The género chico is a genre of theater from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that consists of short one-act performances that frequently include music. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the working class neighborhoods of Lavapiés and the adjacent neighborhood of El Rastro often formed the basis for its themes and settings. Similarly, the sainete is also a short theatrical form, but one that dates back to the sixteenth century. In traditional theater performances of the sixteenth and seventeenth century short works were performed between the acts of the longer and more elaborate comedias [plays]. The performance between the first and second act was called an entremés while a sainete was performed between the second and third act. This chapter explains how this format was renewed in both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries to represent idealized scenes of everyday city life in Madrid.
Lavapiés has served and continues to serve as a meeting point for a range of geographic scales.

The Stage in Madrid: The Urban Theater of the Siglo de Oro

When one explores the relationship between urban change, cultural production, and theater it is important to take into account the important role that Madrid has played in the development of Spanish theater. For a variety of reasons, Madrid provided an environment where the modern art form of theatrical drama could develop and flourish. Culminating in the high water mark of Spanish theater during the Siglo de Oro, the theater culture of Madrid not only produced a remarkable quantity of texts, but also provided the template for the development of permanent theater spaces. Madrid was the urban site for theatrical performances of many of the most famous dramatists of the Siglo de Oro which transformed it into one of the centers of the Spanish theater industry. But Madrid was not merely the broad geographical location where the theatrical tradition of the Siglo de Oro developed, but was also the place where the specific design of the corral de comedia theater space was created; a physical space that would be replicated across the burgeoning nation-state.21

Urban space has always played a role in the development of the theater, and Madrid is no exception. In her broad overview of the development of the theater tradition in Spain Theatre in Spain, 1490-1700 (1992), literary critic Melveen McKendrick explains that the general history of the theater in Spain echoes that of many other national theater traditions with its roots in the “sung tropes (interpolated phrases)” that

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21 Although technically the first permanent corral was built in Sevilla in 1574, the most influential and paradigmatic corrales (namely the corral de la Cruz and the corral del Príncipe) were built in Madrid. See Haza and Allen (19).
characterized church services from the ninth century onward (6). During the fifteenth century, these moments of intermittent singing evolved into representations of scenes from the Bible relying on live actors staged on rolling carts or sometimes fixed platforms (McKendrick 6). These autos became a fixture of the processions that took place at Christmas, Easter, and Corpus Christi. \(^{22}\) Abraham Madroñal Durán and Héctor Urzáiz Tortajada in their introduction to volume I of the 2003 *Historia del teatro español* reinforce the liturgical roots of the medieval theater by asserting that “la relación de este teatro medieval con la iglesia ha sido puesta de manifiesto ya desde hace algunos años” [the relationship of the medieval theater with the church has been made clear for many years now] (36). In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as guilds and cofradías (charitable brotherhoods) took over their production from the churches and the ensuing spectacles, often made up of floats and tableaux vivants “[. . .] gradually overflowed the confines of churches and cathedrals into the streets and marketplaces” (McKendrick 6).

Even to this day, the streets of many Spanish cities (mostly in Castile and Andalucia) are filled with spectators on Holy Thursday to witness the processions of penitentes [penitents] as they reenact the suffering of Jesus Christ. In the edited collection of articles *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (1994), Maureen Flynn’s contribution, “The Spectacle of Suffering in the Spanish Streets,” describes the blood-spattered manifestations of this tradition in medieval Spain and suggests that “for the Spanish people this open-air spectacle served the same function as tragic theater in ancient times” (163 emphasis mine). The processional tradition in Spain during both Semana Santa [Holy Week] and Corpus Christi established the street as a performance space for the elaborate rituals of medieval Christianity.

\(^{22}\) McKendrick suggests that records of the earliest processions date back to 1418 (8).
As the street was becoming a new space for artistic expression, Europe, and Madrid in particular, was experiencing its first decidedly urban demographic shift after the population reductions caused by the Black Death. According to economist Paul Bairoch, between 1500 and 1700 in Europe “the number of people living in cities grew by about 55% and the number of cities by some 37%” (176). Madrid experienced an explosive level of growth in which its population almost quadrupled over the course of the sixteenth century, particularly after Philip II moved the court there in 1561. Historian David Ringrose suggests that between about 1550 and 1600 Madrid saw its population explode from about 20,000 inhabitants to nearly 100,000, and that by 1630 the population had reached almost 130,000 (234). At the same time that theater as an urban institution is developing into a more modern form (both artistically and economically), the urban environment is also developing. The proto-dramas of the late medieval period were public events that relied upon an interaction with a public in a developing urban landscape to communicate an ideological message to a generally illiterate public.

For example, the shift from the sacred space of the church to the street for the public performance of liturgy caused the dramatic space of the temple to overlay the physical space utilized outside of it. Eva Castro Caridad in her contribution to *Historia del teatro español* describes how “la disposición de los lugares en el espacio urbano [. . .] va a respetar siempre los ejes ortogonales: este (paráso), oeste (infierno), norte (cristianismo) y sur (paganismo), ya conocidos dentro del templo” [the disposition of places in urban space [. . .] would always respect the ortogonal axis: East (Paradise), West (Hell), North (Christianity), South (Paganism), known already from inside the temple] (62). Castro Caridad later underscores how “toda la plaza se [convirtió] en
espacio escénico, creando lugares específicos (Trono, Celestial, Monte de los Olivos, Castillo de Herodes, Puertas del Infierno, etc.) en distintos puntos de la misma” [all of the plaza was converted into a stage space, creating specific places (the Throne, the Heavens, Mount of Olives, the Castle of Herod, the Doors of Hell)] (62). Eventually this use of the public plaza for liturgical performances gave way to the use of the urban space for “manifestaciones espectaculares de índole civil, como la entrada de reyes, o religiosa, como procesiones o representaciones de misterios” [spectacular demonstrations of a civic nature, like the entrance of kings, or religious ones like processions or representations of mysteries] (Castro Caridad 64). This use of urban space was so persistent that Castro Caridad suggests that “estos dos ámbitos de la vida social de la época se conjugaron en la génesis de la ciudad como espacio escénico en la historia del teatro español” [these two spheres of the social life of the time were combined in the genesis of the city as a stage space in the history of the Spanish theater] (64). Urban space became the site for the articulation of ideology, both political and religious.23

It must be noted that most secular dramas (performances approaching our modern notions of drama) during much of the proceeding fifteenth century were limited to private performances. The public space was reserved for autos and jongleurs, while in the private spaces of the elite there existed what McKendrick describes as “a drama, but not a theater” (41). Influenced by Italian dramas—both in content and business model—Lope de Rueda and Alonso de la Vega organized the first theater companies to “combine the sort of dramatic humour already popular in Spain with elements from the fashionable

23 The street also plays an important role in a variety of non-religious forms of public performances during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries like troubadours and jongleurs that performed in both private palaces and public streets and the presence of mummers maintained the tradition of the Roman mime (McKendrick 6).
Italian drama to produce a commercially successful theatre” (McKendrick 45). As the short one act *pasos* of Lope de Rueda were followed by the longer and more elaborate dramas of the seventeenth century, there began to be a subsequent rise in the popularity of public theater performances. This growth in the market transformed the financing of the theater from a patronage by churches, municipalities and private entities to an institution supported by individuals who paid for admission; “opening up the theatre to anyone who could afford it” (McKendrick 47). This democratization not only subjected the theater to the influence of market forces, but it also broadened its audience and transformed the works of the baroque period into products for mass consumption.

A key development accompanying the rise of this commercial theater in Spain was the subsequent emergence of increasingly more permanent performance spaces, namely the *corrales de comedia* that would be ground zero for the veritable theatrical boom that would take place during the seventeenth century: what is known today as el *Siglo de Oro del teatro español* [the Golden Age of Spanish Theater]. The term *corrales* refers to the central patio that was a mandated part of new construction in the Madrid of Philip II. According to Coso Marín and Sanz Ballesteros “estas casas, tanto en Madrid como en Alcalá, seguirán las leyes que promulgó Felipe II, en el año 1565, sobre la construcción de casas de nueva planta. [. . .] La ley obligaba a construir casas superiores a 630 pies castellanos cuadrados, con su fachada, de dos plantas, a la calle y un patio o corral en su trasera.” [these houses, as much as in Madrid as in Alcalá, will follow the laws promulgated by Philip II, in the year 1565, about the construction of houses of a new level [. . .] The law required the construction of houses greater than 630 Castilian square feet, with a façade, of two levels, facing the street, and a patio and corral in back]
(24). Because of their enclosed nature and the built-in hierarchy of seating created by the two levels with inward-facing balconies, these domestic spaces converted easily into ideal spaces for commercial performances of theater in Spain.

![Figure 2.2 Artists rendering of Corral del Príncipe. Used with permission from The Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse, El Corral del Príncipe 1583-1744.](image)

Originally, these spaces were owned by religious cofradías (charitable brotherhoods) and used to raise money for hospitals for the poor. The theater companies would lease the space from the cofradías who in turn received a cut of the admissions profits and would subsequently pass these profits on to their charitable projects. The

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24 In later chapters this study explores the relationship between institutionalized cultural production and urban development. It is interesting to note that the relationship between housing stock and theater production has a long history in Madrid.
architecture of the corrales was particularly useful for controlling a public that had to purchase tickets to enter the enclosed space. As Ignacio Arellano stresses in Historia del teatro español del siglo XVII (1995), one of the key novelties of the new corrales was that “el recinto se cierra, lo que permite controlar la asistencia y los ingresos, es decir, permite una organización regular del espectaculo teatral” [the site was closed, this allowed for control of attendance and collection of income, that is, it permitted a regular organization of theatrical spectacles] (69). As the system of corrales was formalized into permanent spaces specifically designed for theatrical productions, they also became more commercial.

The most famous of these corrales—the Corral de la Cruz built in 1579-80 and the Corral del Príncipe constructed in 1582-3—were built by a joint venture between the Cofradía de la Pasión y Sangre de Jesucristo and the Cofradía de la Soledad de Nuestra Señora (Allen 4-5).25 In contrast to the makeshift corrales that had been living spaces converted into commercial theater spaces, these two corrales would be constructed with a permanent stage and seating as well as an awning to protect the audience. The cities would take a percentage of the profits from the door and these monies would eventually make their way to the various hospitals around the city. These two theaters would become the site for one of the greatest flourishings of theater production in the history of Spain, and arguably Western Europe. They were, in short, an architectural testimony to the significant role that the comedia came to play in Madrid of the sixteenth and

25 Significantly, the location of the important Corral del Príncipe is today the site of the Teatro Español, a theater operated by the municipal government of Madrid, but in 1933 during the Second Republic (1931-1939) it was site of the Teatro Nacional [National Theater].
seventeenth centuries. Some estimates attribute 800 plays to Lope de Vega, 400 to Tirso de Molina, and 180 to Calderón de la Barca (McKendrick 72). By comparison, William Shakespeare, writing at about the same time, is given credit for thirty seven plays. Literary critic C.V. Aubrun suggests that in the seventeenth century alone the Spanish theater industry produced some 10,000 plays and 1,000 autos (qtd. in McKendrick 73). There was, to say the least, a remarkably strong market for production and consumption of theater from the late sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century.

Of relevance to this study is the fact that both of these key corrales were located just a few blocks from the area which in later days would come to be known as Lavapiés. Although not physically located within the boundaries of what might be known as contemporary Lavapiés, both the Corral de la Cruz and the other significant corral of this period, the Corral del Príncipe stood a mere four blocks from the city wall and the city gate which provided access to the marginal outlying judería (Jewish neighborhoods) that would become modern day Lavapiés. Its close proximity to this neighborhood loosely inscribes it into the theater history of the area and at the minimum demonstrates that Lavapiés has always been close to the center of the theater tradition in Madrid.

In addition, as the permanent corrales were constructed, the adjacent buildings were not owned by either the city or the cofradías. As a result, the owners of those buildings would sell tickets for access to the windows that looked down upon the performance space. Moreover, in several cases, these owners went so far as to construct

26 The word comedia refers to a popular dramatic art form that emerged in Spain principally during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Characterized as a “secular play in three acts, with certain patterns of versification, around 3,000 lines long” (Campbell 33), its roots extend back to the Greek comedies of antiquity and find their most contemporaneous influences in the commedia dell’arte of the Italian Renaissance. The prevalence and popularity of the comedias in the early modern period result in the terms comedia and dramatic text often being used interchangeably regardless the comedic or tragic content of the work.

box seats that would extend into the space of the *corral*. In each case, the owners of these buildings would give a cut of their profits to the theater companies producing the performance. As a result, the space of the *corral* contained a multi-layered relationship between public and private ownership. The public entity of the city owned the space while the interests of private capital leased it. Simultaneously, other physical elements of the space like the private boxes extending from the adjacent buildings were owned privately. A snapshot of one of these two principal permanent *corrales* reveals a space made up of a collage of private and publicly owned spaces all devoted to the production of a theatrical performance. As will be shown later in this thesis, this complex relationship will not change as we move our discussion from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first.

It is important to note that during this time of rich and varied cultural production, Spain saw its fortunes as the most powerful empire in Europe begin to decline as its imperial project weakened. In the midst of this national crisis, McKendrik argues that “the *corrales* responded with a national drama of epic achievement and individual self-assertion which allowed the Spaniard, when he gazed for a while into its mirror, to burnish his self-image and go away reassured” (74). The *comedias* not only played an important role in altering the uses of urban space in Madrid, but they also contributed to a burgeoning sense of national identity by producing a shared cultural vocabulary of dramatic figures and plots. In her study of the reciprocal influence of the Italian and Spanish theater traditions, Nancy D’Antuono argues that the Italianate quality of the Spanish theater was one of the key features that made it so palatable to seventeenth-century Italian audiences (“Lope’s *Bastardo*” 179). Figuring prominently in this
“Italianization” was the fact that dramatists like Lope de Vega had “codified for Spain’s national theater elements that were at the heart of the *commedia dell’arte*: a three act structure, balance, and duplication in plot and characters” (D’Antuono “Lope’s Bastardo” 179). But these codified roles had an even greater impact than merely increasing the commercial appeal of the works.

According to Francisco Ruiz Ramón, the author of two influential histories of Spanish theater, to understand the subtleties of these *tipos-personajes* it is necessary “[acudir] al ambiente que rodeó al teatro, a la manera de ser o la voluntad de ser de España y los españoles, a las coordenadas ideológicas de la sociedad en que y de la que brotaron, etc.” [to turn to the environment that surrounded the theater, to the manner of being or the will to be of Spain and the Spanish, to ideological coordinates of the society in which and from which they appear] (135). While consuming this codified product, the fact that audience members generally knew what to expect from each character’s *tipo* how they would behave offered clear clues about how and when the social order would or wouldn’t be restored. It was this reliance on *tipos* and expectations that made many baroque comedias so effective at playing with the ambiguities between reality and appearance.

The sheer volume of works produced and consumed in Madrid combined with the affordability of entrance for all social classes contributed to the influence of the *comedia*.

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28 Although this assertion is somewhat reductionist, McKendrick also argues that the arrival of Italian theater companies in the second half of the sixteenth century prompted intense competition in the theater industry and the adoption of many elements characteristic of Italian theater from business practices and theater conventions to the development of permanent *corrales* (48-9). McKendrick also emphasizes that the “schematized situations and characters” of the *commedia dell’arte* had a profound impact on the *nueva comedia* of Lope de Vega (49).

29 Ruiz Ramón identifies the principal *tipos-personajes* as the galán [young man], the dama [the maiden], the rey [the king], the gracioso [the fool], the caballero [the knight or gentleman], the villano [the villain], and the poderoso [the powerful] (137-41). These *tipos* were at times not mutually exclusive and could be overlapping.
John J. Allen in his book *Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse: El corral del Príncipe 1583-1744* (1983) cites the work of Díez Borque to determine that “entry into the yard cost the equivalent of the price of four eggs, or less than one-fifth of a laborer’s daily salary in the early seventeenth century” (6). As a result, “[. . .] the price of entry to the yard was cheap enough for almost anyone to see an occasional play” (Allen 6). If for Benedict Anderson (1983), the “imagined communities” of early modern and modern states were formed partially from the shared experience of an emerging print culture, then, based on the sheer numbers of people consuming the *comedias* and the socio-economic diversity of that public, one can conjecture that the dramatic representations of the *corrales* may have contributed to a burgeoning sense of national identity. It is perhaps here that the populace would begin to conceive of itself as the “imaginary community” that would come to constitute the modern Spanish state. At the minimum, the theater played a key role in developing the cultural influence of Madrid. According to Historian James Casey in his *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (1999) “the development of the theater in the early seventeenth century would confirm [the] cultural hegemony of the capital and of the Castillian language” (164) and that “artistic patronage of the monarchy began to give Spain for the first time a real cultural centre” (164). The prolific theater industry and its accessibility assisted Madrid in projecting an image as a center of culture and power. Within this context, particular notions of power and culture like monarchy, the role of the nobility, honor and revenge would find constant reinforcement in the *comedias* of the period. If the *corrales* played no role in forming the idea of the nation, it certainly helped to reinforce the values that would come to be associated with that nation.30

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30 Again, I emphasize that my use of Anderson is somewhat liberal here. There may not be a Habermassian
One of the reasons that the *comedia* played a role in planting the seeds of the modern state corresponds to its dramatic innovations. Jodi Campbell in her book *Monarchy, Political Culture, and Drama in Seventeenth-Century Madrid: Theater of Negotiation* (2006) describes how the Spanish *comedia* resisted the Aristotelian division between comedy and tragedy by including kings and commoners on the same stage as protagonists. As a consequence, this “brought the figure of the king down from his Greek association with divinity and heroism, set above other men, to the position of an ordinary mortal, having to deal with the conflicts, passions, and obstacles of life on earth” (Campbell 1). Now a man amongst other men, the power invested in the king found its derivative somewhere else; a fountain of power that would eventually become the state.

The *comedia* was one of many contributing factors to the political and social shift that would occur in Spain and across Europe over the following two hundred years. Campbell emphasizes that the rise in absolutism that occurred during this period “operated not through the unrelenting imposition of their authority, but through a process of negotiation and cooperation with existing powers” (7). Politically, absolutism was ascendant from the seventeenth century onwards, but ironically, this implied the need to consolidate power against increasingly more influential groups like the aristocracy, the guilds, and a developing middle class. The world of the *comedia* problematized the relationship between the king and the people by placing them as dramatic equals in many of the stories they created. Despite this unsettling of the hierarchy the king’s authority and role as *deus ex machina* remained unquestionable. Ronald Surtz (1979) concurs with this
reading of the *Siglo de Oro* and goes so far as to suggest that the very structure of the *comedia* itself was designed to “celebrate the social values of seventeenth-century Spain” (192).

Drama historian Juan Aguilera Sastre (2002) concurs with this view of the *Siglo de Oro*, but goes further to emphasize the pragmatic utility afforded by the management of the *corrales*. Sastre describes how “en España la mayoría de los corrales de comedias en el siglo XVII estaban regentados por instancias oficiales—fundamentalmente municipales—que garantizaban y a la vez controlaban tan importante instrumento cultural como verdadera arma de acción política, con sus derivaciones sociales, económicas e ideológicas” [in Spain the majority of the *corrales de comedias* in the seventeenth century were managed by official decrees—typically municipal—that guaranteed and controlled this important cultural instrument as a true weapon of political action in all of its social, economic, and ideological derivations] (22). The municipalities, by controlling access to the *corrales*, their hours of operation, the content of the programming, the size of the spaces, amongst other factors, had a tool to manage the developing urban space of the seventeenth century and the ideological content of this proto mass media.

One dramatic work which helps illustrate this emerging political sensibility is *Fuente Ovejuna* (1619) by Lope de Vega. In the play, the transgressions of *el comendador* [the commander] against the people of Fuenteovejuna and their subsequent violent retribution require an intervention by the Catholic monarchs (Fernando and Isabel). By making the Catholic monarchs the arbiters of justice, this popular *comedia* (often considered one of Lope de Vega’s best works), invests the crown with an
expansive, almost modern, notion of sovereignty. In Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World (2005), editors Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat suggest that the “hard kernel of modern states” (1) is found in “the internal constitution of sovereign power within states through the exercise of violence over bodies and populations” (2). The fact that the state (in this case the monarchy) has the authority to absolve and implicitly approve of the people’s revolt helps construct the “state-territory-sovereignty link” (2). The violence that is committed on the body of the comendador by the people of Fuente Ovejuna demonstrates to the viewing public that authority—the real authority of violence—is not a power derived from birthright, but found in the collective authority of the people. That this authority then seeks to avoid the potential violent punishment of the Catholic monarchs implies that there may be power in the people, but the power of the state rests in the hands of the sovereign. The play projects a world controlled by a strong authority while evoking the period of the Catholic monarchs, the reconquista [reconquest], and the unification of several disparate kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula. Considered in the context of 1619 when it was published and the decadent state of Spain’s imperial project, Fuente Ovejuna has a clear nationalist message.

This reading is of course complicated by the fact that one could read the play as investing the town and its people with an authority to confront the comendador and bring him to justice. This reading suggests even more strongly the emergence of a proto-national identity because it imbues the general populace with a collective authority. Responding to the question “¿Quién mató al comendador?,” [who killed the comendador?] (de Vega ln. 2227), their simple, singular, and collective response is that
“Fue Fuente Ovejuna, señor” [it was Fuenteovejuna] (de Vega ln. 2228). Their resistance to these interrogations indicates their respect for authority. Ultimately, they ask forgiveness of the king and proclaim their loyalty. Given the fact that the corrales were attended by individuals of all social classes, including at times the king and the nobility, it was perhaps a pragmatic move by Lope de Vega to leave the political content of his work open to interpretation. What is clear, it seems, is that the notion of a divinely invested monarch managing the meek flock of the populace is problematized. As Campbell suggests the world represented by this play is one of negotiation over the power of what we might reluctantly call the state.

In this context of an emerging state it is important to consider that Madrid was a key site for this cultural production. As a result, Spanish academics and critics have often linked Madrid, the theater, and the Siglo de Oro to the discourse of a national cultural legacy in Spain. In his extremely detailed history of the Teatro Español and the establishment of a national theater building in Spain, Juan Aguilera Sastre (2002) suggests that “la recuperación del teatro clásico había sido, desde sus inicios, el tema central en la pólemica sobre el Teatro Nacional” [the recuperation of classical theater had been, since its inception, the central theme in the polemic over the National Theater” (208). Sastre elaborates by summarizing that this emphasis on the role of the Siglo de Oro stemmed from the belief held by many commentators in the early twentieth century that “los clásicos [. . .] son patrimonio imperecedero de la cultura nacional” [the classics [. . .] are the enduring patrimony of the national culture] (208).

32 Note that this assertion does not disregard the problematic assumptions upon which canonicity is based. I speak here in general terms regarding tendencies, generalities, and common sense notions and not in essentialist ones. I refer to these particular authors because of their prevalence in anthologies and reading lists for graduate programs.
In more contemporary contexts, this intertwining of the national and the theater of this period can be found in both scholarly and institutional contexts. For example, in Ruiz Ramón’s previously mentioned history of the Spanish theater written in 1964 he entitles his chapter on this period “El teatro nacional del Siglo de Oro” (127). In line with this nationalist discourse, the Ministerio de Cultura [Ministry of Culture] has one of its national theater companies devoted almost exclusively to the production of classic Spanish theater. More often than not these productions are plays of the Siglo de Oro. The emphasis on this period as a high point of Spanish cultural production has resulted in the canonization of several important madrileño dramatists from the imperial period of the Siglo de Oro—like Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, and Tirso de Molina—who have become almost synonymous with the literature of the Siglo de Oro. Through this process of canonization, theater production in Madrid from the early modern period had consequences well beyond that period, and played a role in the construction of the national imaginary in the seventeenth century and beyond.

The emphasis on Madrid as both the capital of Castile and of the Spanish empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was compounded in later centuries when the nationalist historiography of the Franco regime made Madrid a key geographical marker. David Herzberger, writing on this topic, sketches out this context by asserting that historians of the Regime not only link Castile to the birth of Spain as a nation during the reign of Isabel and Ferdinand, but equally significant, relate the region to the Reconquest and myth of unification under Catholicism and to the spiritual foundations of Spanish imperialism and conquest. (24)

33 The website of the Compañía Nacional del Teatro Clásico lists as its first objective “consolidar el repertorio esencial e inusual de nuestro teatro barroco” [to consolidate the essential and unique repertoire of our Baroque theater] (Compañía Nacional del Teatro Clásico).
In his article “Historia y novela en la posguerra española” Randolph Pope suggests that these associations were achieved through a particular process of historiography that “seeks out one point rather than many, since the concept of unity is central, advanced by the philological and castilianist historical school which reduces the history of Spain to that of Castile” (qtd. in Herzberger 23). This one point of departure becomes the terrain of Castile, the city of Madrid. The local scale of the capital and the regional scale of Castile were constructed to be synonymous with the nation as a whole. It is partly through the study of the literature of the Siglo de Oro by nationalist intellectuals that the synecdoche of Madrid=Castile=Spain was constructed. Therefore, we might posit that Spanish national identity is closely associated with the cultural legacy derived from the prolific theatrical tradition of comedias and corrales in which Tirso, Lope, and Calderón de la Barca participated.

This argument can also be extended to explain the way the cityscape of central Madrid has been inscribed with the cultural legacy of the Siglo de Oro. For example, in 1845 when the emerging modern state sought to establish a National Theater, it looked to the theater spaces of the Siglo de Oro. The actor Juan Lombía, generally given credit for these efforts, used the corral del Príncipe for this purpose to establish what is still today the Teatro Español (Aguilera Sastre 29).\(^\text{34}\) Notably, it is the façade of this theater that hems in one side of the Plaza Santa Ana, a prime destination for Madrid’s tourists. Other important references to the Siglo de Oro include the statue of Calderón de la Barca that sits across the plaza from the Teatro Español, the nearby Plaza Tirso de Molina

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\(^{34}\) Fires in 1802, in 1887, and later in 1980 resulted in extensive rehabilitations to the original structure at various times during its history (Teatro Español/Historia).
named for the important dramatist of the period, the iconic statue of Don Quijote and Cervantes in the Plaza de España, and the statue of the Baroque poet Francisco Quevedo in the Glorieta de Quevedo. It is important to note the convergence in two of these examples of references to the Siglo de Oro and a national referent (Teatro Español; Plaza de España). In short, the Siglo de Oro in general and the theater in particular sketch themselves across the national imaginary at the level of academic discourse as well as the material expressions of the urban landscape.

The proximity of Lavapiés to these first corrales implicates the neighborhood into the theater landscape of the Siglo de Oro. As we will see in the next section, in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century Lavapiés continued to be closely linked to the urban landscape for the production and consumption of theater in Madrid. This association with Lavapiés and theater in Madrid stems from the intimate relation between the neighborhood and notions of castizo identity codified by the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz, the zarzuela of the nineteenth century, and the género chico of the early twentieth century. Arguably, despite the presence of several other important theater locations in Madrid, no one area is identified so intimately with the production of theater in the capital. Significantly, until the recent wave of construction and development in the neighborhood, no significant monuments could be found in the neighborhood. This lack perhaps speaks to the fact that for many years, the barrio served as a living monument to a notion of castizo identity.

35 The role of the theater in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century will be discussed in Chapter Three.
Madrid on the Stage: Ramón de la Cruz, the zarzuela, and the myth of “lo castizo”

Just as Madrid of the Siglo de Oro played a role in constructing the “imagined community” of an emerging modern nation-state, the tradition of the short-theatrical forms of the sainete and the género chico [“small genre”] of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have also contributed to this process of national myth-making. Throughout each of these dramatic forms the working-class neighborhoods of Madrid—Lavapiés and the adjacent areas of El Rastro and La Latina—have served as a backdrop for the construction of certain mythical stereotypes of madrileño identity. The productive work of the zarzuela tradition whose roots extend back to Calderón de la Barca and the seventeenth century helps Madrid became a key site in the articulation of Spanish identity. As will be discussed in more detail later in the following section, the zarzuela would help an urban notion of the castizo broaden its influence to become synonymous not only with Lavapiés or Madrid, but with Spain in general.

The aforementioned género chico consists of small one-act performances of about one hour that combine music, song, and dialogue. Given their tendency to rely on the working-class neighborhoods of La Latina, Embajadores, and Lavapiés in nineteenth-century Madrid as a source for the production of its characters, the género chico is often lumped together with the more elaborate three-act musical form of the zarzuela, sometimes called the género grande [“large genre”].36 One of the points of intersection between the two formats is their reliance on the stereotyped tipos [stock characters] that

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36 Given this derivative relationship, it is common for critics and scholars to refer to both the género chico and the zarzuela grande under the blanket term zarzuela. In general, this term refers to a Spanish work of musical theater that consists of both singing and dialogue and is often characterized by some folkloric element. For the purposes of this study, I will use the term zarzuela to refer to the broader theatrical folkloric tradition that includes both the large format of the early to mid nineteenth century and the teatro por horas that would garner such success in the later part of the century. It is important to note that the significant role of Madrid and the castizo remains mostly the domain of the género chico.
derived from the eighteenth-century sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz (1731-94). Despite a tendency to exclude both genres of the zarzuela from the canon of Spanish literature, their contribution to the production of Spanish identity, and in particular of madrileño identity, is generally not disputed. In fact, these chulapos and majos that populate the urban setting of the zarzuela have become mythologized to such a degree that they have become one of the most enduring images of lo castizo, a term often translated as “authentically Spanish” (Parsons 10).

Before examining its role in the theatrical production of Madrid, the term castizo requires further clarification. According to the online dictionary of the Real Academia Española, the term castizo means literally “de buen origen o casta” [of good origin or caste] (“castizo”). A more nuanced definition is found in the second entry which defines it as “Típico, puro, genuino de cualquier país, región o localidad” [Typical, pure, genuine of any country, region, or locality] (“castizo”). Despite these more general definitions, the term has often been used to describe the inhabitants of the lower-class neighborhoods in the Southern part of the capital, and often will be equated not with the purity of any province or region, but serve as a reference to the inhabitants of Madrid and Castile (the region in which Madrid is located). This evolution primarily occurs towards the end of the nineteenth century when lo castizo begins to take on a more nationalist meaning as Spanish intellectuals confront the crisis of Spanish identity in the wake of increasing modernization (and Europeanization) and eventually the loss of two key colonial possessions, Cuba and the Philippines in 1898. Simultaneously, at the end of the

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37 See Herrera de la Muela (2004), Parsons (2003), and Salaün (1983).
nineteenth century Spain finds itself confronting a burgeoning sense of regional nationalism in the regions of Catalonia and the Basque region.38

Faced with these challenges the Spanish intellectuals of the Generation of ´98 begin to articulate a new sense of Spanish national identity through associations with the central plateau of Castile. This new discursive thread finds one of its clearest articulations in En torno al casticismo (1895) by Miguel de Unamuno where he presents a notion of Castile as “lo castizo, lo verdaramente castizo” [Spanish essence, the most truly essential Spain] (200). It is in this pure heart of the Castilian meseta where one finds “la verdadera forjadora de la unidad española, [el] nucleo de la nacionalidad española”[the true forge of Spanish unity, the nucleus of Spanish nationality] (Fox 118). Significantly, despite clear sense of rural nostalgia here, it is the urban environment and the theater that forged the relationship between the castizo and national identity (a relationship that will be developed later in this section). Ironically, because of the role of rural emigration to the major urban areas during much of the nineteenth century many of these urban representations are also, paradoxically, embedded with a rural nostalgia. Consistently, however, theatrical representations of the daily urban life of Madrid fixed the terms castizo, the barrios bajos of the capital, and certain working class tipos [types]. This process helped set the stage for the conflation of Spanish national identity and the distinctness of Lavapiés, Madrid, and Castile.

To understand the evolution of the term castizo, one must look to its genesis in the eighteenth century. At this time, as French influence on the continent and Spain became increasingly more dominant, the dramatist Ramón de la Cruz and other intellectuals...

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38 For more detailed consideration of the beginnings of Basque and Catalan nationalism see Fox pp. 65-110 and Conversi pages 11-35 and 44-73.
battled to define Spain in the face of this Frenchification. With the death of the last Hapsburg monarch Charles II in 1700, the control of the Spanish throne was bequeathed to Charles´ great-nephew Philip, the Duc d’Anjou. The ascendancy of Philip V of Spain to the throne would mark the beginning of the Bourbon line and the intimate involvement of France in the politics of Spain. The moves that Philip V took to consolidate power in the model of his grandfather Louis XIV’s absolutism and the near hegemonic influence of French culture in music, fashion, art, and literature on the court cultivated resentment amongst intellectuals and certain sectors of the nobility (Torrecilla 6).

While investigating the construction of “exotic” Spain, Jesús Torrecilla suggests that the reaction against French influence played a large role in what he calls the aplebeyamiento [plebification] of the aristocracy. He suggests that in this context the aristocracy of the eighteenth century “[tiende] a definir lo español por oposición a esa presencia extraña y amenazante: si lo francés monopoliza la alta cultura, lo español se identificará con la cultura popular; si lo francés es sofisticado y moderno, lo español deberá ser rudo y primitivo; si lo francés es lógico, lo español espontáneo” [they tended to define ‘Spanishness’ by its opposition to that threatening foreign presence: if Frenchness monopolized high culture, ‘Spanishness’ would be identified with popular culture; if ‘Frenchness’ is sophisticated and modern, ‘Spanishness’ should be rude and primitive; if ‘Frenchness’ is logical, ‘Spanishness’ could be spontaneous] (6). This reactionary context provoked varied forms of cultural production that increasingly “focus[ed] on the representation of contemporary social life” (Iarocci 386) and marked an

39 Torrecilla’s basic argument suggests that the “primitive” essence of Spanish identity was not imposed externally by foreign writers (namely the Romantics), but rather was very much produced domestically as a reaction to French influence. He has recently expanded upon this topic in his new book Guerras literarias del XVIII Español (2008).
inward turn for artists and intellectuals towards cultivating an empirically knowable sense of Spain and Spanishness.⁴⁰

In this context, Ramón de la Cruz began to produce his short one-act tragicomic pieces that glorified the characters of Madrid’s lower-class neighborhoods and provided images of the popular and the “authentically Spanish.” These short one-act pieces of musical theater rearticulated the theater tradition of the Siglo de Oro by appropriating the short forms of the entremeses and sainete that would often be staged between first and second and second and third acts (respectively) of the longer and more elaborate comedias. Ramón de la Cruz avoided the focus on mythology that tended to characterize the contemporary theater of the eighteenth century and instead attempted to “[reflect] popular life and speech” (Webber 2) by filling these short works with scenes from the lower-class neighborhoods of the Spanish capital. In doing so, Ramón de la Cruz created some of the most enduring figures of Spanish popular theater that would later become the stock characters of the hugely popular zarzuela and género chico.

As briefly mentioned in Introduction I, one of his most enduring works, “Manolo: Tragedia para reír o sainete para llorar” (1769) [Manolo: Tragedy for laughing or sainete for crying] produced the character of the Manolo who later comes to stand in for the typical working class madrileño. Because of its converso connotations, the reference also refers to Lavapiés and the understanding that its inhabitants were cristianos nuevos. This association with Lavapiés is stated explicitly in the stage descriptions for the sainete when the author identifies the setting as “Madrid y en medio de la calle ancha de

⁴⁰ Jaroči suggests that this proto-costumbrista tendency can be found in the Clavijo y Fajardo’s journal El pensador, the plays of Moratín, Goya’s caprichos, the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz, and the emphasis on folkloric music by collectors like Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola (386). See also Rinaldo Froldi’s “Anticipaciones dieciochescas del costumbrismo romántico.”
Significantly, the stage directions also locate the action in “el teatro de calle público con portada de taberna” [the theater of a public street with a doorway of a Madrid tavern] (Cruz “Manolo” 105). The description of the public street as “el teatro,” suggests that for Cruz, the theater was not merely the enclosed space for performances, but also the urban space of the city. It was in the barrios bajos [low neighborhoods] of the bustling urban environment where the real drama of life was occurring, not in the distant mythology of the ancient Greeks or medieval Spain that characterized so much of Spanish neo-classical drama (Gies 339). Rather, Ramón de la Cruz employed the cityscape of Lavapiés as this imaginary stage where the “characters” of the urban drama enacted their lives and livelihoods. In addition, it is important to note that Ramón de la Cruz first tastes success after the debut of his comedia La perla de Inglaterra (1761) in what was then the formal proscenium theater on the site of the aforementioned Corral de comedia on the Calle Príncipe (Huerta Calvo 382). The urban geography of this influential playwright’s theater career marches directly through the very neighborhoods that are the focus of this study.

By the time that de la Cruz writes “Los bandos de Lavapiés” in 1776, the sense of Lavapiés as a concrete point of reference has crystallized. The central argument of this sainete revolves around the conflict between a suitor from the nearby working-class neighborhood of Barquillo and the inhabitants of Lavapiés. The suitor, Zurdillo, is assaulted while trying to defend the honor of a young girl from Lavapiés. Returning to his neighborhood beaten and bruised, he stirs his compatriots into a frenzy with his plans for violent revenge. Beginning in Barquillo and ending in Lavapiés, the sainete uses the
rivalry to emphasize the territorial boundaries between the two working-class neighborhoods.

The identities of the characters derive from their spatial associations. As Zurdillo works his compatriots into a frenzy they shout “¡Muera Lavapiés!” [Death to Lavapiés] (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 219) to which Zurdillo responds “No puede / Lavapiés morir, jumentos.” [It cannot /die, Lavapiés, asses] (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 19-20). Undeterred, the crowd corrects itself by shouting “¡Mueran los que están en él!” [Death to those in it] (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 22). In this humorous exchange it is clear that the place has become larger than the people that occupy it, and the inhabitants derive their identity from the immortal neighborhood of Lavapiés that “no puede... morir.” [cannot die]. (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 22).

This exchange parallels one that occurs later in the sainete when the mob surges into Lavapiés and threatens the residence of Tío Mandinga, the leader of the gang that beat Zurdillo. Canillejas, the friend of Zurdillo, cries “¡Matemos la casa!” [Let’s kill the house!] (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 336) and Zurdillo responds “No; / matemos los que están dentro” [No;/let’s kill those inside] (Cruz “Bandos” 36-7). The parallel structure of this exchange reemphasizes one of the themes of the sainete that posits that people are an ephemeral presence in the enduring urban space of the city.

These associations with the urban space of the city are highlighted when Mandinga tries to lure back his daughter by telling her that “Tu madre es el Lavapiés, /mira por su honor y el nuestro” [Your mother is Lavapiés,/look out for its honor and ours] (de la Cruz “Bandos” ln. 444-5). The sense of place is so strong in this short work that one’s neighborhood affiliation is their progenitor. Mandinga’s appeal asks Zaina to
consider not only their personal honor, but the honor of the neighborhood. Lavapiés is no informal area of the city, but an identifiable place to which one should pledge one’s allegiance. In the end Barquillo won’t turn Lavapiés “a sangre y fuego” [to blood and fire] (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 447) in vengeance because Zaina, Zurdillo’s lover, lives there and Zaina will not abandon her compatriots. Significantly, she requires that Zurdillo pardon Lavapiés and that “viva Lavapiés triunfante” (Cruz “Bandos” ln. 502-3). It is the whole of the neighborhood that must be pardoned and not merely the people that live there. This inversion of the dialogues mentioned earlier leaves the public with Lavapiés functioning as a character in the sainete. The identity of the place has superseded any one of its inhabitants. This play will remain relevant in the discussion in later chapters of this dissertation of the city’s plan to build the transform the neighborhood with the construction of the Teatro Valle-Inclán and other projects. The response of activists in the neighborhood suggests that they sensed a similar cry (“¡Muera Lavapiés!”) in the new millennium and their concept of collective identity rooted in their sense of place calls them to action.

It is also worth pointing out that Ramón de la Cruz partly relied on the prosody of his work to glorify these lower-class characters. In the case of Manolo, the main character’s dialogue is often written in the hendecasyllabic meter that traditionally had characterized the dialogue of nobles in the Siglo de Oro. Ramón de la Cruz relied on the dramatic structures and forms of the Siglo de Oro to project images of a noble lower class often seemingly untainted by the corrupting influences of foreign culture. It is ironic that even though many of Ramón de la Cruz’ sainetes were nearly direct translations of French works or recapitulations of their storylines, for the spectator, the “Spanishness” of

41 Hendecasyllable is a poetic meter in which each line contains eleven syllables.
the works was clearly projected by easily recognizable *majos y manolos* and the settings of Lavapiés and Madrid.

According to folklorist Dorothy Noyes, these characters of the *majo* and *maja* were “working-class dandies, male artisans and female fruit and flower vendors from certain ‘popular’ quarters of Madrid and the Andalusian cities” (199). The typical costume consisted of a “broad-brimmed soft hat, and long cloak” for men and “a black mantilla, a tight bodice, and a *basquiña* (top petticoat) over a skirt sometimes as high as mid-calf” for women (Noyes 199). In literature and painting these stereotypes were contrasted with *petimetres* and *petimetras* associated with a more bourgeois and foreign style of dress and comportment. The emergence of these *tipos* helped to create a differential system in which *majo* equaled plebian and therefore Spanish and *petimetre* equaled bourgeois and foreign. These images of Spanish identity would become further codified by the famous paintings of Francisco de Goya of these very same *majos* and *majas* and later by the *género chico*.

The *sainetes* and their dominant character types were also important because of the interchange they created between the theater, urban space, and the construction of the nation. The result of this process was that “street and theater mirrored each other: in public places people dressed and performed as recognizable theatrical types” (Noyes 198). The image of the *majo* in this xenophobic period carried such cultural significance, that the act of *aplebeyamiento* consisted of actually dressing like a *majo* or *maja* for the express purpose of making the street into a theater for expressions of identity. As Noyes points out, this costume allowed the aristocracy to move unnoticed amongst the plebian crowds at popular events like bullfights and *verbenas* [popular neighborhood festivals].
Later, this costume and type would take on nationalistic significance when the inhabitants of Madrid became associated with the popular resistance to French invasion in 1808. These events only “strengthened the myth of the *majo* as sole maintainer of the uncorrupted national spirit—warlike, Catholic, patriarchal, not a product of the 18th century but a survivor of the Reconquest” (Noyes 214). The notion of the working-class *majo* as a symbol of Madrid began in the *sainetes* of Ramón de la Cruz and over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became transformed into a symbol of Spanish identity. By the early nineteenth century, Spanish writers would continue to look to the crucible of the *barrios bajos* of Madrid as the forge where Spanish identity was formed.

This cultivation of the popular would become a dominant part of Spanish letters in the nineteenth century in the *cuadros de costumbres* [sketches of local life] that would emerge in the 1830s alongside the growth of the daily periodicals and a middle-class reading public (Iarocci 387). Writers like Ramón Mesonero Romanos (1803-1882), Serafin Estébanez Calderón (1799-1867), and Mariano José Larra (1809-1837) seized on the images of “authentic” Spanish identity that had been produced in painting, the theater, and urban space and reinforced them through journalistic vignettes that captured snapshots of everyday life; the genre of *costumbrismo* was born. In the short newspaper articles of these three writers the essence of the Spanish “nation” was constructed for their middle-class readership through the use of literary snapshots of the streets and neighborhoods of Madrid and the flamenco and *taurino* [bullfighting] culture of Andalusia. At times, these two modes coincided considering that the working-class in Madrid was often comprised of immigrants from Andalusia.

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In his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (2004) Michael Iarocci aligns this *costumbrista* awakening with the historical novels of the Spanish romantic writers and the “nationalism that accompanied the genre’s focus on geographical and cultural specificity” (383). Importantly, he highlights how this nationalism “found expression in novels whose basic tropes equated Castilian and Spanish history” (383). This Castile-centered nationalism from both the historical novel and *costumbrista* journalism inspired a Romantic search for national origins and identities in the regional nationalisms of Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque country. While this set of fragmented quests for “national identity” would seem to undermine the notion of a unified Spanish nation, the act of differentiation pursued by these regionalist movements more likely fixed in place the Spain-Castile elision. The Spain-Castile nationalism provided the center against which the peripheral nationalisms could form themselves into the non-Castilian other. The end result is a codification of the very thing against which they tried to resist.

The work of Mesonero Romanos is particularly interesting because his work expresses an explicit tension between the local and the national. An important historian from the nineteenth century, Mesonero Romanos’ sketches of Madrid’s people and urban spaces are some of the most enduring descriptions of the burgeoning capital. While remaining keenly focused on the local character of Madrid, he simultaneously folds a more national into his discourse. In *Escenas Matritenses* (1842), he purports to share a collection of “cuadros que ofrezcan escenas de costumbres propias de nuestra nación, y

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42 Some key historical novels from this period include: *El señor de Bembibre* (1844) by Enrique Gil y Carrasco (1815-1846), *Ramiro, conde de Lucena* (1823) by Rafael Húmura (dates unknown), and *Los bandos de Castilla* (1830) by Ramón López Soler (1806-1835). See Iarocci pp. 382-386 for a more in-depth discussion of the Spanish historical novel.
más particularmente de Madrid, que como corte y centro de ella, es el foco en que se reflejan las de las lejanas provincias” [sketches that offer scenes of our nation’s distinct customs, and in particular those of Madrid, which as the court and center of the nation, is the focus in which the distant provinces are reflected] (5, emphasis mine). Notably, Mesonero Romanos not only finds in Madrid a site of “our own customs” but identifies these as those of the nation. Additionally, he characterizes Madrid as the collection point for the distillation of all the regional differences of Spain. It is the site where the collective identity of the nation is forged.

In her study of ideology, costumbrismo, and the género chico, Lucy Harney suggests that many “costumbristas sought to reconcile the vast regional and socio-economic disparities among Spaniards with the social and economic imperative of aggrandizing the commercial middle class. The ideological umbrella under which this reconciliation was to be effected was the concept of ‘nation’” (35). The costumbrista sketch was a tool for crafting an image of popular Spain that was distinct from Europe, and it produced easily digestible notions of national identity. Later, in the early twentieth century these ideas would be relocated by Unamuno and others to the more general geographic area of Castile. In both cases, the center of Spain would be projected as a representation of the whole. As goes Castile, so goes Spain. As the following discussion of the género chico will suggest, this important synechdochal relationship was also perpetuated by the larger-format zarzuela tradition.

The images of national identity produced by Mesonero Romanos had a certain currency for his middle class readership, but the idea of a castizo Spain manifested in the authenticity of the barrios bajos of Madrid would not really find traction until it could
overcome the limitations that illiteracy presented for its consumption. Significantly, as the zarzuela shifted from its large three-act extravaganza of the first half of the nineteenth century to the short one-hour format of the género chico, the notion of a castizo Madrid and its recapitulation of the tipos of manolos, majos, and chulapos would find an efficient vehicle for the disbursement of these images (del Moral Costumbrismo. 44-46).

To clearly understand the relationship between these various stock characters, lo castizo, and Madrid, it is important to situate the género chico in its historical context and point out its connections to both the Siglo de Oro and the works of Ramón de la Cruz. First, we must clarify the term zarzuela and understand its relationship to the género chico. There is much debate about how to define the term zarzuela given its long history and two stages, roughly 1650-1790 and 1845-1965 (Alier 11). In the most general terms the zarzuela is a “variedad española de teatro musical hablado y cantado a la vez” [Spanish variety of musical theater spoken and sung at the same time] (Alier 11). What distinguishes the zarzuela from other forms of musical theater is that patrons in general have not looked to the zarzuela for rich artistic experience, but rather for capricious entertainment in which a catchy tune, a humorous confrontation, and a certain folkloric familiarity could be found. In general critics tend to divide the zarzuela into two distinct categories, the zarzuela grande of the mid-nineteenth century that tended to consist of two or more acts and the género chico or teatro por horas that would emerge from around 1870 to 1910 and consisted of very short one-hour performances that could be performed multiple times each day.

Alier and Webber both see the development of a proto-zarzuela from the seventeenth century through the end of the eighteenth and a resurfacing of the zarzuela in the mid-nineteenth century. This break in its development is generally attributed to the combined effects, culturally and politically, that the Napoleonic invasion had on Spanish life. Civil wars, revolutions, and the allure of French culture all undermined the continuity of the zarzuela’s role in Spanish cultural life.
The roots of the large-format zarzuela extend to the seventeenth century where Felipe IV (1621-1665) would use a building called La zarzuela in the Real sitio del Pardo for resting and entertainment. Situated amongst the thorny zarzas [brambles] of this garden palace, the performances took on an associated name: zarzuela. Here, under the heavy influence of la ópera italiana, musical pieces of theater were performed to entertain the king (Pinto Crespo 364). Because of economic pressures and the need to provide actors and singers to the other theaters in Madrid, they began to intersperse spoken parts into these musical performances to alleviate the need to constantly require singers at one location or the other. As a result, the musicians themselves began to refer to the necessity of travelling to the palace of La zarzuela as having a “zarzuela” (Alier 42). The name took hold and fixed the association between the La zarzuela and a musical theater with spoken parts performed for the royal family. Because of this relationship between the zarzuela and the Court, the musical form has always maintained a close association with Madrid. Although it eventually extended to other cities, according to Alier, during the seventeenth century, “la producción de zarzuelas siguió teniendo su centro en Madrid” [the production of zarzuelas continued to have their center in Madrid] (Alier 43). This association with Madrid would continue from the seventeenth century through the twentieth century.

As the Bourbon line took control of the Spanish throne in the early eighteenth century, the previously discussed influence of French culture accompanied this political shift. Simultaneously, the zarzuela found itself besieged by the popularity of the Italian opera. Fernando VI (1713-1759) and his musically talented wife Bárbara de Braganza (1711-1758) followed these cultural currents and heavily patronized the development of
foreign forms of cultural production. This period of dominance by the Italian opera would meet its end with the death of the royal couple and leave an opening for the resurgence of a more domestic form of musical theater. Notably, it was Ramón de la Cruz who sought to bridge the gap between these two competing forms of musical theater and took it upon himself to translate the most popular and famous Italian operas of the day into Spanish. Ironically, as these translations were performed in cities other than Madrid (namely Barcelona, Valencia, and Zaragoza) their rejection in Madrid was firm and absolute. These cities lacked the xenophobic anxieties of the Madrid theater-going public and found the castellanizado [castilianized] versions of the Italian operas to be unacceptable (Alier 48). Because of the presence of the Court and the nobility, Madrid manifested its proto-nationalist sentiments through its tastes in theater.

This process can be seen in the emergence of another form of popular theater that served as a direct reaction to the Italianized theater of the time. The tonadilla was a short musical piece of lyric theater which was written with very few lines and required just a few players, and as a result, was easily produced and easily consumed. Because of their popularity, they reduced the market for large-format zarzuelas and put more emphasis on the production of short pieces of theater that would reflected the growing market for performances that would articulate some notion of Spanishness, or at the minimum non-Italian or non-Frenchness. Significantly, the majos and majas from Cruz’ sainetes and popular castizo songs and dances were an important element of the tonadillas (Doménech Rico 575), and, like the sainete, were another means by which Spanish composers attempted to react against French and Italian influence and establish their own musical
and artistic tradition. In both forms, the notion of the castizo—at this point loosely defined as pertaining to Madrid—was the distinguishing characteristic.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the zarzuela underwent a renaissance that would transform its content and result in the forms of the zarzuela as they are popularly understood today. Despite the heavy influence of the musical structures and forms of the Italian opera, in particular the Italian opera buffa (Webber 3), the renewed zarzuela began to look to the works of Ramón de la Cruz for inspiration. There was also an active attempt to move beyond the world of mythology and look to popular customs within the Spanish landscape to represent an idealized notion of Spain (Alier 49). Simultaneously, the more urban, and specifically madrileño sainetes líricos of Ramón de la Cruz were flourishing. In both forms, there was a shared reliance on a structure that combined spoken and musical scenes with dependence on representations of popular life of the lower classes. As a result, Alier suggests that the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz “debe[n] considerarse como asimilados al género de la zarzuela” [should be considered assimilated into the genre of the zarzuela] (50). It is in this shared moment of popularity between the short form of the sainete and the larger operatic form of the traditional zarzuela that the term zarzuela begins to encompass a variety of different types of works. The key, though, is that in each the emphasis on the popular and the “authentic” is consistent. As a result a liberal usage of the term zarzuela can refer to not only the lyrical theater of the nineteenth century, but also the proto-género chico of Ramón de la Cruz.

While the theatrical emphasis on the proto-national was emerging there were also government intrusions into the theater industry that emphasized this relationship between Spanish identity and theatrical production. In 1799 Leandro Fernández Moratín, while
serving as Secretario de Interpretación de Lenguas [Secretary for Language Interpretation] for the government of Carlos IV, prohibited, first in Madrid, and later in all Spanish cities, the production of theater performances in languages other than Spanish (Alier 51). The theater in the eighteenth century was seen as the site for the articulation of Castilian identity and the Juez de teatros [Theater Magistrate] sought to use his position to defend it. Obviously, it was a protectionist move to support the employment of Spanish writers and theater companies. As a result of this proclamation, the zarzuela in its grander form and translations of Italian operas filled the gaps left by the suppression of foreign productions. The political situation during the first third of the nineteenth century (namely the invasion of Napoleon in 1808), disrupted this nationalistic meddling in theater production. In addition, the subsequent French occupation of Spanish cities saw an infiltration of French operas-comiques. Because of the strong contrast between these whimsical productions and the epics of the Italian opera, the end of the occupation saw a return to an interest in Italian opera that was bolstered by the marriage of Fernando VII to the Napolitan princess Maria Cristina. This conjunction of events left the zarzuela by the wayside and seemingly in the dustbin of history.

Ironically, this fascination with the Italian opera by the royal family was so extensive that it culminated in the creation of the Conservatorio de Madrid in 1830 to train young musicians in the art of operatic singing. It is worth noting that the creation of this national cultural institution was not only established in Madrid, but also contains the name of the city in its title. As one of the principal centers of Spanish theater (and the Court), Madrid was to be the home of a national institution for the production of culture.

44 Alier comments that Barcelona sought to be excluded from this prohibition because of the prolific nature of the Italian opera in the city and therefore the Italian opera continued to be performed (with Italian singers) in the port city (51).
In this context, the anxieties of Spanish musicians and composers to find their own musical voice that was not reliant on the Italian models found fertile ground. Notably, Alier emphasizes that “se despertó, sobre todo en Madrid, la inquietud de poder presentar algún día las óperas en la lengua castellana” [the restlessness was awakened, especially in Madrid, to be able to someday present operas in the Castilian tongue] (53, emphasis mine). This inquietud would provoke efforts to develop some form of “national opera.” To achieve this goal three professors from the recently established conservatory set out to write an opera in Castilian. These efforts would inspire subsequent attempts and result in the production of El novio y el concierto in 1839, written, ironically by an Italian musician living in Madrid. It is significant that this work was advertised as a comedia-zarzuela; a double allusion that evoked both the comedias of the Siglo de Oro as well as the (at that moment) defunct tradition of the zarzuela.

For Alier, it is this work that “desenterró a la zarzuela de su olvido y puso en marcha la recuperación del género” [exhumed the forgotten zarzuela and began the recuperation of the genre] (54). Given that one of the broader goals of this project is to consider the relationship between the theater and the construction of the national imaginary, it is important to emphasize that an institution dedicated to the cultivation of a national culture relied on the terms comedia and zarzuela as the point of departure. Though seemingly insignificant, it alludes to the cultural caché that these genres carried with them; at the minimum they held meaning for the Spanish musicians charged with constructing a national operatic tradition.

In the midst of this resurgence in the use of the term zarzuela and the search for a Spanish or national opera several Spanish composers established la Sociedad Española
Musical [the Spanish Musical Society] (1848). Among its members were Hilarión Eslava, Emilio Arrieta, Asenjo Barbieri, and others who would become key figures in the establishment of the modern zarzuela tradition (Alier 57). This same year the stunning success of Cristóbal Oudrid’s El ensayo de una opera: una zarzuelita en un acto “puso en marcha definitiva el renacimiento del género operístico, básicamente porque el nombre de la zarzuela sonaba ya como género peculiar, con personalidad propia” [put in progress definitively the renaissance of the operatic genre, basically because the name zarzuela sounded already like a unique genre with its own personality] (Alier 57). Over the next several months, the writers of El ensayo were contracted to produce two more zarzuelas and opened the way for the rebirth of the zarzuela as a part of Madrid’s theater culture. In 1851, several composers rented the Teatro del Circo and proposed that each composer promise to produce three zarzuelas per year for the space. The success of these various productions attracted other composers to “la sensación que había causado en Madrid el género que ya todo el mundo llamaba por su nombre: la zarzuela” [the sensation that the genre had caused in Madrid and that the entire world now called by the name: la zarzuela] (Alier 60). Madrid had become the center of this “new” sensation and it quickly spread to other cities in Spain.

As the zarzuela gained more momentum there was still a heavy reliance on “Spanish” themes in the form of characters from Spanish literature. More importantly, many writers, still in search of a national opera employed the folkloric traditions of Spain’s regional heritages to perpetuate some sense of the popular. The zarzuela often relied on Madrid as the setting for works that included a traditional folkloric dance from another region, like a Basque jota or a Catalán sardana, the inflected speech of
Andalucía, or other markers of local (i.e. regional) identity. As a large bustling city, Madrid had no folkloric tradition of its own to speak of, but by fusing the various regional idiosyncrasies of the historic communities into the urban setting of Madrid, the zarzuela “representó la eclosión de un mosaico de músicas regionales y de una peculiar ‘música madrileña’ en grado arquetípico” [represented the blending of a mosaic of regional music and of a particularized music of Madrid at a archetypical level] (Alier 63). This tension between the localized notion of Madrid, the local regional identities, and some sense of national identity would become one of the defining characteristics of the zarzuela.

The success of the modern zarzuela reached its climax with the opening of the Teatro de la Zarzuela on the Calle Jovellanos in 1856. In a description of this theater’s origins from the current home page of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, Victor Pagán describes how the founders hoped to “ofrecer al público un local moderno y confortable -a tono con los nuevos aires que corren en la ciudad- junto a la céntrica calle de Alcalá.” [offer the public a modern and comfortable locale—in line with the currents running through the city—alongside the centric street of Alcalá] (Pagán). To align this new theater with the new modern sensibility coursing through the city, it was constructed near the Calle Alcalá and the Plaza Cibeles, directly adjacent to the anticipated epicenter of the expanding modern Madrid of the Castro Plan of Expansion. Interestingly, this location also positioned the theater just a few blocks from the sites of the Corral del Príncipe and

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45 The jota is a folkloric dance from Aragon performed in various parts of Spain where more localized versions have developed (like the Basque jota). Similarly, the sardana is a traditional folkloric dance of Catalonia.

46 The ensanche de Madrid (or plan de Castro) refers to the plan developed for the government in 1857 by Carlos María de Castro to expand the city to the Southeast and the Northeast beyond the parameters of the old muralla [city wall] and the established footprint of the capital. For more on the ensanche see Teran (1999) pp. 62-33 and Santos Juliá (2000), 370-84.
the Corral de la Cruz near the Plaza Santa Ana. The Teatro de la Zarzuela quite literally straddled the margin between the old imperial city and the modern industrial one under construction. As if to emphasize the significance of the building to both the city and the increasingly modern nation-state, the inauguration of the Teatro de la Zarzuela took place on October 10, the birthday of Queen Isabel II; it was a national holiday indeed.

As a testament to the popularity of the zarzuela, the Teatro de la Zarzuela was, at the time, considered the second best theater in Madrid, next to the Teatro Real. The establishment of a permanent physical space for the zarzuela legitimized its existence as a formal genre. There was much debate amongst Spanish musicians and intellectuals about the actual validity of this genre given its reliance on both the Italian opera and opera-comique for structures and plots. Despite the window dressing of costumbrista elements, many zarzuelas were almost directly plagiarized from foreign sources. Nonetheless, the zarzuela in the mid nineteenth century was at its peak with multiple theaters in Madrid offering performances on a daily basis. The most significant of these included the Teatro Novedades located on the Plaza de la Cebada on the calle Toledo, the Teatro Variedades found on the calle Magdalena between Antón Martín and Tirso de Molina, and the Teatro del Apolo also known as “La catedral de la Zarzuela” [the cathedral of the Zarzuela] located on the Calle Alcalá.

Notably, in his memoiristic history of the theaters of the Zarzuela written in 1949, José Deleito y Piñuela emphasizes how “ambos [Variedades y Novedades] hallábanse emplazados en arterias principales y populosas del castizo Madrid, donde comienzan ‘los barrios bajos’” [both [Variedades and Novedades] were located on principal and populous arteries of castizo Madrid, where the ‘low neighborhoods’ begin] (6, emphasis
mine). Given the Teatro Apolo’s location close to the Teatro de la Zarzuela, one can envision the circulation of spectators between the theaters in the barrios bajos and those located on the margin between the old city and the edge of the neighborhoods of the ensanche, the nineteenth century expansion of the city towards the Northeast and South. Echoing the liminal location of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, the physical sites of these theaters moved spectators through the landscape of the city’s past and its future.

This period would mark the high point for the large-format three-act zarzuela. At this time, if it did not meet its desired goal of becoming a national opera, then at least it emerged as one of the most popular forms of entertainment for an increasingly urbanized Madrid. The extensive number of theaters and zarzuelas being performed led to a saturated market and made it difficult for both writers and producers to remain economically solvent. In addition, the political instability of the late 1860s compromised the Spanish economy and made the relatively high cost of a theater ticket a luxury few Spaniards could or were willing to afford. These factors suppressed attendance and further complicated the precarious economic situation of the theater industry.

Interestingly, one of the most important works to be produced at this time was El barberillo de Lavapiés [The Little Barber of Lavapiés] (1874) by Francisco Ansejo Barbieri featuring a libretto by Luis Mariano de Larra. Its enormous success singlehandedly saved the Teatro de la Zarzuela. It is significant that this work not only takes place in Lavapiés, but locates the action in the Madrid of Carlos III; the historical period during which Ramón de la Cruz was writing his influential sainetes and Madrid was undergoing major urban development. Through Barbieri, the manolos and majos of the eighteenth century found their rearticulation in the nineteenth century. This
rearticulation not only provides one of the key links between the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz and the modern zarzuela, but it also helped establish the close associations between Madrid and the zarzuela and firmly reimplanted the stock characters of Lavapiés into the theatrical imagination of the theatergoing public. Even today, El barberillo de Lavapiés remains one of the most widely performed zarzuelas and as a result has fused the name Lavapiés into the geographical lexicon of the zarzuela.

**Madrid on the Stage: The género chico**

In the midst of the economic crisis that accompanied the liberal revolution of 1868, the owners of the Teatro de Variedades in Madrid, inspired by the cabarets that they had seen in Paris, developed the ingenious plan to offer many shorter performances for a much lower ticket price. What couldn’t be accomplished with the extravagance of the zarzuela grande could perhaps be surmounted through sheer volume. This effort led to the creation of what would be called the teatro por horas. Because these performances were often adaptations of larger format zarzuelas, the teatro por horas slowly came to be known as the género chico—or small genre. This approach brought such success to its purveyors that, according to Serge Salaün, “el género chico (que incluye la zarzuela en uno o dos actos, y los géneros ‘menores’ en general) ejercen, a partir de 1870 y durante más de medio siglo, un auténtico monopolio teatral, no solamente en Madrid sino incluso en toda España” [the género chico (that includes the zarzuela in one or two acts, and the ‘minor’ genre in general) exercise, from 1870 onwards and during more than half a century, an authentic theatrical monopoly, not only in Madrid, but all of Spain] (251).
Like the comedias of the Siglo de Oro, and the later forms of the zarzuela, the género chico became not just a trend, but a cultural event.

Key to these productions was the continued employment of extremely particularized settings and characters. Like the sainetes of Ramón de la Cruz and the zarzuela tradition in general, the género chico looked to the working class neighborhoods of Madrid and their inhabitants for content. According to Serge Salaün:

[one of the most evident elements of this theatrical mechanism resides in the nature and tipology of the characters. More than characters, they are types, that is, figures defined beforehand in their social, professional, and psychological characteristics [. . .] From the furniture to the moral referents, all are moving, authors, composers and spectators, in a known scheme, effective and comfortable: the important thing is precisely that this 'recognition effect' isn't altered in order to establish the pact. On a formal level, the género chico has much more to do with the folkloric than with art]. (254)

Because of their short nature, these works were also often called sainetes; a reference that firmly intertwines this new genre with both the works of Ramón de la Cruz and the heritage of the Siglo de Oro. The popularity of these sainetes-cómicos reached their pinnacle between the years of 1890 and 1900, during which time critics account for some 1500 works and fifteen theaters are devoted to the género chico. According to scholar
Dru Dougherty, by 1909 “377 of the 411 plays that opened in Madrid were of the one act variety” (214).\(^{47}\)

Though scattered across the city, these theaters found their highest concentration directly in or just adjacent to the very neighborhoods that they were representing: near the Plaza Antón Martín, near the Plaza Cibeles, on the Calle Barquillo, and other central locations. This prolific production and reasonable price of access allowed for the images produced by the género chico to permeate the imagination of the theatergoing public. These images were dominated by scenes of the working class neighborhoods of Madrid to such a degree that literary critic Pilar Espín Templado argues that “el patio de vecindad es el cuadro escénico sainetero por excelencia” [the central patio is the essential sainetero setting] (28). These patios de vecindades are most typical of the housing stock of the corralas found in Lavapiés and the other barrios bajos of Madrid.\(^{48}\) In her study of the mythification of Madrid by the género chico Carmen del Moral Ruiz concurs with Espín Templado and suggests that the backdrop for the género chico consists of “los llamados barrios bajos, el Madrid del Sur [. . .]. Esto quiere decir que el espacio urbano que recurrentemente plasma la escena es el Madrid de la cerca, el Madrid anterior al Plan de Ensanche y sus zonas de influencia” [what are called the ‘low neighborhoods,’ the South

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\(^{47}\) Fernando Rico Doménech in his book La zarzuela chica madrileña (1998) identifies several of the most important of these theaters and their locations throughout the city. In particular he cites: el Teatro Variedades (calle Magdalena next to Antón Martín), the Teatro Circo de Paúl later known as the Teatro Lope de Rueda (calle Barquillo), the Alhambra, Lara, Eslava, Martin, Apolo, and the summer theaters of Felipe, Recoleto, Príncipe Alfonso, el Dorado, Maravillas, and Teatro de la Comedia (15).

\(^{48}\) Although the term corralas usually refers the housing stock of these neighborhoods and corrales to the theater spaces of the Siglo de Oro they are structurally very similar. They both consist of a central patio surround by balconies. The corralas are a residential space shared (often) by multiple families where the central patio forms a communal semi-public space. In contrast, the corrales used the central patio as a space for constructing seating. It is important to note this fluid relationship between the theater spaces and housing stock in the history of the neighborhood. As this study moves into discussion of these issues in a more contemporary context, this relationship will have ironic implications given that the establishment of a national theater has direct associations with both speculative development of new housing stock as well as the demolition of many of these historic corralas, and the rehabilitation of the some of the original corralas.
side of Madrid [. . .]. More specifically, the urban space that consistently creates the scene is the Madrid of the medieval inner wall, the Madrid before the Plan for Expansion and its areas of influence] (74). In this way, the term género chico has come to refer to the neighborhood of Lavapiés and other adjacent lower-class neighborhoods.

As a result, when discussing the género chico a conflation begins to occur between Madrid and Lavapiés. For example, when literary critic Fernando Vela cites the popularity of the género chico and its prolific production to argue for the canonization of a generación género chico [generation of the género chico] that would mirror the recognition afforded to the prolific production of the Generación de ’98 [Generation of ’98], Vela demarcates the specific character of these works and makes it clear that “para los autores del género chico el filón fue la vida madrileña de aquella época” [for the authors of the género chico the principal source was the madrileño life of that time] (364). Given the content of the works of the género chico, his reference to Madrid in this context suggests that the “authentic” barrios bajos serve as the metonymic equivalent of the entire capital.

Significantly, it wasn’t just within the works of the género chico that Madrid played a role, it was also the center of a whole industry of cultural production. This occurs to such a degree that the principal theaters that produced these short works were incorporated into the sense of nostalgia that permeated them. In her brief history of Madrid, Gea describes Lavapiés as being one of two areas “muy populares y castizas” [very popular and castizo] (54) inside of the Embajadores district of the city (the other is El Rastro, an adjacent neighborhood to Lavapiés). She describes how

Lavapiés es el barrio de los sainetes—Carlos Arniches, Ricardo de la Vega, Ramón de la Cruz—y de las zarzuelas—Chapí, Chueca, Bretón,
Barbieri—cuyo centro en la Corrala, con Mayúscala porque es la corrala por excelencia, donde cada verano se representan zarzuelas al aire libre, frente a su fachada.

[Lavapiés is the neighborhood of the sainetes—Carlos Arniches, Ricardo de la Vega, Ramón de la Cruz—and of the zarzuelas—Chapí, Chueca, Bretón, Barbieri—whose centre in the Corrala, with a capital M because it is the quintessential corrala, where each summer zarzuelas are represented in the open air in front of its façade.] (54)

The neighborhood is not just a site that serves as the setting for the sainetes of the género chico, but is also the actual site where they are performed. Moreover, Gea also points out that even today during the festivals of San Isidro and other verbena, Lavapiés becomes an open-air stage for the performance of zarzuelas. The urban landscape of Lavapiés is itself a stage that reproduces these mythologized notions of its own identity.

The género chico was therefore a widespread form of cultural production and consumption with Madrid as both its site of production and consumption. Moral Ruiz points out that this all occurs at a key moment for the city in which there is a transition from the ancien régime to a more modern city. In 1860 the cerca of Felipe IV is demolished to make way for the architect and engineer Carlos María de Castro’s plan for the expansion of Madrid. The railroad was also in the midst of a moment of concentrated growth at this time as well. There was increasing industrialization and urbanization and both the physical and cultural landscapes of the city were radically transformed. Relying on census figures from 1857 and 1877 Spanish urbanist Fernando Terán in his Historia del urbanismo en España vol. II (1999) demonstrates that the population of Madrid had seen a growth of 25% between 1836 and 1857 and subsequently one of 77% between 1857 and 1877 (25). Much of this growth was not internal, but rather was due to rural emigration to the major cities and their developing industrial capacities (Terán 23). As a
result of this domestic immigration, the people who populated the working-class neighborhoods of Madrid and formed the laboring backbone of Madrid’s increasing industrialization were often not *madrileño* at all, but rather from various regions of Spain and often from the rural areas of Andalusia and Castile, the countryside surrounding Madrid.

As a result, the notion of the *castizo* that emerges at the turn of the century relies on an urban landscape and protagonists, but is deeply embedded with a rural nostalgia.\(^{49}\) Initially, as Parsons writes in *A Cultural History of Madrid* (2003), the term “was used by mid-nineteenth century Madrid writers and commentators to describe the popular, local color of its lower classes, and in particular the social identity of the southern-lying barrios [neighborhoods] of La Latina, Lavapiés, and Embajadores” (10). Later, for the writers of the Generation of ’98 they began to broaden the definition of the term to suggest that it is in the crucible of Castile that the disparate identities of Spain, (*la patria chica* [minor homeland] according to Unamuno), are formed into the *patria grande* [major homeland] of the Spanish nation. Describing this transformation, Parsons asserts that “redefined by national ideologies, *lo castizo* was naturalized into the ‘authentic’ expression of Spanish cultural character and lost much of its specific urban context and cadence: multicultural, lower-class Madrid substituted by a fantasized rural Castile” (10). Echoing the xenophobic reactions of the writers of the eighteenth century, this inverting of an urban trope to a rural one reveals the anxieties of many Spanish intellectuals, including, of course, Unamuno, towards the increasing modernization the country was experiencing. Modernization represented Europeanization and a possible diluting of (at this moment)

\(^{49}\) It is interesting to note that in an almost ironic contrast to the peninsular usage the term *castizo* in colonial Latin America was used to describe *mestizos* of mixed ethnic background, usually a mix of European and indigenous bloodlines.
tenuous Spanish identity. In contrast, the mythological rural *tipo* that characterizes Unamuno’s text represents an essentialized sense of pre-industrial Spanish identity intimately connected to the physical land; a connection to territory that should persist beyond the surface level changes brought on by modernization.

Therefore, paradoxically, the *castizo* characters of the *género chico* not only project a sense of the essentialized authentic Madrid, but also evoke a rural and provincial nostalgia. This paradox allows for Madrid to serve as the fusing point of Spanish identity; an *aleph* where Madrid is both unique and distinct, but simultaneously contains all of provincial variations of the heterogeneous Spanish nation-state. Castile may be the pastoral source of Spanish identity, but Madrid, as the center of Castile, is the forge where Spanish identity is fused into its modern conception. The *tipos* of *manolos* and *chulapos* that populate the *zarzuela* at the turn of the century, then, are not merely representations of *lo madrileño*, but also of *lo español* since as Salaün suggests, “una definición del ‘castizo’ es una adhesión al pintoresquismo de las clases humildes y subalternas elevadas a la categoría de depositarias del patriotismo nacional” [a definition of the *castizo* is an adhesión to the pintoresque of the humble and subordinate clases elevated to the category of placeholder for a national patriotism] (18). Thus, the *tipos* of the *zarzuela*, and more specifically, the Madrid setting of the *género chico* stand as synecdoche for the Spanish nation and suggests that these theatrical forms become one of the basic mediums by which a modern mythology of the city is constructed.

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50 I am using the term aleph in reference to Jorge Luis Borges’ famous short story “The Aleph” (1945). During the climax of the story, the narrator discovers the object of the story’s title in his rival’s basement. There, on the nineteenth step of the basement stairs, the narrator gazes upon the Aleph: “one of the points in space that contain all points” (280). It was an object “probably two or three centimeters in diameter, but universal space was contained inside it, with no diminution in size” (283).
What is most interesting about this term is that it is fraught with paradox. While the term refers to the purity of Spanish blood, there is of course little purity to be found in a nation whose bloodlines extend back through seven hundred years of Moorish rule and whose contemporary history is characterized by struggles with a polyglot national identity. Additionally, while the genres of the sainete, the zarzuela, and the género chico construct the working class neighborhoods of Madrid as the heart of this pure casticismo, it must be noted that these neighborhoods were and still are the site of some of the highest concentrations of immigrant populations in Madrid. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this immigration was domestic whereas today it is more international. The castizo is therefore an ideological construct that arguably has more to do with the landscape than with the individuals that populate it.

That the “purest” neighborhoods of Madrid have always contained a more heterogeneous composition has even lead contemporary scholars to glorify Madrid’s ability to forge some greater Spanish identity. José María Gómez Labad falls into just this sort of rhetoric in his book El Madrid de la Zarzuela: visión regocijada de un pasado en cantables (1983). In the introduction to this study of representations of Madrid in the songs of the zarzuela and the género chico, Gómez Labad suggests that it is precisely “el casticismo [. . .] que ha sido el producto de esa mezcla de los puros madrileños y los provincianos [. . .]. [The casticismo [. . .] that has been the product of that mix of the pure madrileños and those of the provinces] (12). Even some eighty years after the turn of the century, scholars persist in reproducing Madrid’s ideological function as the site where the heterogeneity of the modern Spanish state is fused into some sort of pure Spanish identity.
Moral Ruiz suggests that this myth of Madrid was “forjado por el género chico”

[forged by the género chico], (“La mitificación” 70) and describes how

poco a poco, a fuerza de repetirse, la realidad madrileña se fue convirtiendo en un estereotipo. Los espectadores dejaron de buscar en esas piezas el reflejo de sus inquietudes o problemas y encontraron en ellas una imagen de la ciudad fija, inmóvil, en la que sin demasiado esfuerzo podían reconocerse tranquilamente mientras sonreían complacidos.

[Little by little, by the force of repetition, the madrileño reality was converted into stereotype. The spectators quit seeking in these pieces the reflection of their problems and dissatisfaction and found in them an image of a fixed city, immobile, in which, without much effort, they could tranquilly recognize while smiling complacently.] (El género chico 56)

This dependence on recognized locales and stock characters, created, according to Salüan “una especie de consenso o pacto que afecta a todas las partes interesadas [. . .]” [a type of consensus or pact that affects all the interested parts] (251) and generates “una pieza esencial de la vida colectiva” [an essencial piece of the collective life] (365). María Teresa Herrera de la Muela relies on this relationship between lo castizo, national identity, and the theatrical tradition to demonstrate how performances of a particular drama at several distinct historical moments (1894, 1935, 1963, and 1996) function within the national mythmaking process. Focusing on the zarzuela La verbena de la Paloma (1894) by Ricardo de la Vega, she demonstrates how the production of the text at these particular historical moments helps construct a “metalanguage [that] allows for construction of the folkloric concept of the working-class citizens of Madrid which fulfils a historical agenda that the ruling class considers acceptable at the moment the myth is enunciated” (Herrera de la Muela 1). This allusion to the ways that the local characters of the zarzuela have been employed at a variety of historical moments to articulate some spatial imaginary beyond the local highlights how these dramatic works put a range of
geographic scales into contact with one another. In a paradoxical way, the local is used to amplify the national. As a result the production of theater becomes the stage for a synecdoche in which the urban helps produce the representational space necessary to drape a national imaginary over a particular territory. The following section will continue to consider the role of the theater in the construction of the national imaginary, but examines how the urban space of Madrid has served as a stage for the articulation of a national identity.

**Madrid as a Stage: Urban Spectacles of Power**

While Madrid has a long history as a site for theatrical performances, it has also functioned as a more literal urban stage for the performance of political power. Of course, this function was not limited to Madrid. Casey suggests that “from the fifteenth century, in Spain as in other parts of Europe, the city became a stage on which was played out the ritual of power needed by Renaissance rulers” (113). In Madrid: historia de una ciudad (2000), David Ringrose demonstrates how Madrid’s role as a stage for political theater continued to be prominent well into the eighteenth century. His chapter “Madrid capital imperial (1561-1833)” [imperial capital] describes in great detail Fernando VI’s “espectacular entrada” [spectacular entrance] (155) into Madrid on October 10, 1746 and suggests that the theatrical display of the king entering the city echoed a visual trope that had been employed for centuries across Europe. Employing this spectacle allowed the king’s coronation to “[confirmar] el hecho de que el Madrid del Antiguo Régimen era una de las grandes ciudades la Europa preindustrial. Como lugar de residencia del rey y su Corte, Madrid era por definición una capital” [[to confirm] the fact that the Madrid of
the *ancién regime* was one of the great cities of pre-industrial Europe. As the residence of
the King and his Court, Madrid was by definition a capital] (Ringrose 155-6). Using the
specific site of Madrid for his entrance projected the power of the new king well beyond
the limits of the city by establishing his credibility and that of his capital city within the
domain of the European monarchy.

Ringrose suggests that this arrival was “algo más que un simple espectáculo
brillante. Era también un complejo alegato sobre la sociedad, que se expresaba a través de
una rica exhibición de símbolos y de un cuidadoso orden de proximidad al rey”
[something more than a simple brilliant spectacle. It was also a complex declaration about
the society that was expressed via a rich exhibition of symbols and a careful ordering of
those in proximity to the king] (163). While this description juxtaposes the idea of the
“espectáculo” and “una rica exhibición de símbolos” as not equal, their shared reliance on
a symbolic vocabulary suggests otherwise. Moreover, when considered in terms of Guy
Debord’s notion of spectacle, this symbolic quality becomes even more pronounced. As
was explained in the Introduction, the spectacle works to seduce the public into
accepting the symbolic system propping up the modes of production. For Debord this
fetishized system is the capitalist mode of production. In the case of Fernando VI it is a
feudal one. The visual rhetoric of spectacle “presents itself as something enormously
positive, indisputable and inaccessible” and seduces the viewer/consumer into
participating in a false reality (Debord I:12). It is exactly this monopoly of appearance
that is employed by Fernando VI to project his power since “en efecto, muchas otras
ciudades españolas organizaron similares entradas sustituyendo las personas del nuevo
rey y su reina con grandes retratos” [in effect, many other Spanish cities organized
similar entrances substituting the personage of the new king and queen with large portrait paintings] (Ringrose 155). The spectacle of the king entering the city, whether in person or merely his image, was a tool to project power and sovereignty over the urban space of the city and implicitly the broader terrain of the kingdom.

This claiming of the urban space of Madrid as a monarchical space, and therefore not merely a local space, was a traditional part of the royal processions as they entered the city. Virgilio Pinto Crespo and Santos Madrazo Madrazo point this out in “Madrid, escenario y representación,” the third part of their book Madrid: Atlas histórico de la ciudad: siglos IX-XIX (1995). The authors describe how the traditional route through the city utilized by the monarchy began in the convent of Nuestra Señora de Atocha in the southeast corner of the city on the edge of the grounds of the Palace of the Buen Retiro (now the Retiro park). The royal procession would follow the Calle Atocha, skirt the outlying neighborhoods of Lavapiés, and pass through the city gate at Antón Martín. Continuing on through the Plaza Mayor (then the Plaza de Arrabal), the procession would end at the Alcázar (now the Royal Palace). At a predetermined place (often the triumphal arch along the street of San Jerónimo) the leaders of the municipality would submit themselves to the authority of the king (Pinto Crespo 329). Simultaneously, “una imagen alegórica de la Villa podía ofrecer sus llaves al soberano” [an allegoric image of the town could offer its keys to the sovereign] (Pinto Crespo 329). The procession was literally a performance in which the local urban entity of Madrid subjugated itself to the consolidated centralized power of the nation represented in the personage of the monarchy.
In this way, the street functioned as an urban stage for projecting monarchical power to the people. Ringrose emphasizes how these various acts of urban stagecraft “revalidaban y reforzaban los vínculos que, según la ideología oficial del Antiguo Regimen, unían al soberano y los vasallos” [revalidated and reinforced the connections that, according to the official ideology of the ancien régime, united the sovereign with the vassals] (164). Importantly, these spectacles of power were complemented by a whole range of other performances by people of various classes. Characterized by satire, costumes, and other escapes from daily life, these “mojiganga[s] [. . . ] constituían una inversión temporal y simbólica de las normales jerarquías de autoridad, significaba también la aceptación del orden social y político, y por ende lo fortalecía” [street performers constituted a temporal and symbolic inversion of the normal hierarchies of authority, signified also the acceptance of the social and political order and therefore reinforced it] (Ringrose 164). The streets of the burgeoning Spanish cities at these moments of royal pageantry served as a site for the articulation and reinforcement of the dominant power structure and modes of production.

Central to this dramatization of authority was the very grandeur and splendor of the Renaissance and Baroque architecture that would come to characterize the imperial capital. These urban transformations were focused on one goal: “convertir la ciudad en un inmenso e integrado decorado físico que no sólo diera relieve al mensaje de las ceremonias cívicas, sino que fuera en sí mismo la materialización del poder del soberano” [converting the city in an immense and integrated physical decor that not only emphasized the message of the civic ceremonies, but rather that was in and of itself the materialization of the power of the sovereign] (Ringrose 193). For example, in 1581
Philip II took control of the chaotic medieval streets of the city center by commissioning architect Juan de Herrera to construct the Plaza Mayor. It was here that the monarchy could stage the formal rituals of empire that communicated the power of the monarchy. During the course of its history, the Plaza Mayor has served as a public site for everything from bullfights to the public spectacle of the Santo Oficio [Holy Office (i.e. the Spanish Inquisition)]. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century that Plaza Mayor functioned as a municipal stage for performances of national and proto-national power.

The relationship between theater and the monarchy was also embedded into the Spanish liturgical calendar when on Jueves Santo [Maundy Thursday] the spectacle of political theater moved into the Salon de las Columnas [Hall of Columns] in the Palacio Real [Royal Palace] for the annual Comida de Los Pobres [meal of the poor]. This event consisted not only of the King and Queen feeding the poor at a lavishly-set formal table, but also a public washing of their feet beforehand. During the time of Queen Isabel II (1830-1904) this performance was such an expected part of the monarchical spectacle that the canonical Realist author Benito Pérez Galdós produced a farcical representation of it in Chapter Eight of his novel La de Bringas [That Bringas Woman] (1884) that not only emphasizes the “curioso espectáculo” [curious spectacle] (Pérez Galdós 37) created by the poor occupying such an elegant space, but also its superficiality as the behavior and appearance of the poor become mere fodder for the public in the room to ridicule.

Other spectacles were more diffuse and less focused. When Madrid was designated the site of the Spanish court in 1561, it not only moved the administrative and bureaucratic functioning of the empire to the new capital, but also converted the city into a stage in which individual performances of power and acquiescence translated into
actual influence. It was the place to see and be seen for nobility and other hangers-on jockeying for power and influence. With the growth of the Spanish empire over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a commensurate growth in the size of the bureaucracy to manage it. To maintain control over a burgeoning city and kingdom, the king needed the assistance and cooperation of the local elites. By incorporating these nobles into the bureaucratic system “[. . .] las elites locales de todas partes estaban integradas en una red que hacía del rey el punto focal de la sociedad” [the local elites from all parts were integrated into a web that made the king the focal point of the city] (Ringrose 299).

The ability to gain proximity to the crown related directly to one’s ability to receive the titles and positions that characterized power in a shifting social structure driven by bureaucratic power and influence. The largesse of royalty was to be found as a functionary of the crown as much as owning large tracts of land. In short, “la meta era la Corte, lo cual implicaba residir in Madrid” [the goal was the Court, which implied residing in Madrid] (Ringrose 300). Madrid was the stage for expressions of power and the stage for its procurement in early modern Spain. At times, the life of the court spilled into the street for any minor excuse to celebrate with fiestas de máscaras [costume parties] and equestrian events in public plazas. These public displays of the Court functioned as “mecanismos para mantener o ganar el favor real” [mechanisms for maintaining or earning royal favor] (Pinto Crespo 330). Moreover, these chivalric displays also helped to reaffirm the control of urban space by the court and the monarchy (Pintor Crespo 330).
But the relationship between the Court and the theater went beyond mere extravagance on festival days. According to María Luisa Lobato “el teatro cumplía un papel pedagógico en la sociedad de la época” [the theater fulfilled a pedagogical role for society of the period] (96), not only because it showed members of the court how to behave, but in many cases because members of the court actually participated in the stage performances as actors (Lobato 96-7). The members of the Court participated both literally and figuratively in a spectacle of manners to impress each other and the king. In a similar vein, Patrick Williams cites the ways that both the Duke of Lerma and the Count-Duke of Olivares employed festivals characterized by theatrical performances as a means of attracting court attention and creating a courtesan orbit around themselves (Williams 200).

The theatricality of power, though, was not just restricted to the Early Modern period. In her study A Cultural History of Madrid (2003) which explores the intersection of modernity, cultural production, and urbanism, Deborah Parsons describes how Alfonso XII also employed this use of the urban environment for the projection of monarchical power during his wedding in 1878 when electric lights adorned city streets and buildings and transformed the Puerta del Sol into a spectacular stage for the royal nuptials (77). For Parsons, the urban spectacle of the monarchy bathed in electric light became a moment of “ambiguous and uneven assimilation of modernity” (6) in which the city itself was the contested site where “professional bourgeois elite, liberal government and restored monarchy all sought to mark their identity in the built form of the city” (10).  

51 For more on the problematic relationship between Spain and modernity see Jo Labanyi “Engaging with Ghosts; or, Theorizing Culture in Modern Spain” and Marshall Berman All That is Solid Melts into Air.
of electric lights illuminating the city-stage of the *Puerta del Sol* worked to conflate the monarchy, a decidedly antiquated institution, with the modern innovation of electricity.

The city would continue to function as a stage for power well into the twentieth century. One notes in particular the announcement of the establishment of the Second Republic from the balcony of the *Casa de Correos* (in the Puerta de Sol) as one modern example of urban stagecraft. More significantly, one recalls that Franco employed the Royal Palace as the backdrop for his most important pronouncements and state addresses. The physical architecture of the city and particularly its monarchical past underpinned the power of the *caudillo* and placed him firmly within the spectacular tradition of the capital city.

The importance of the theater in the history of Madrid and Lavapiés functions on a variety of levels: there is the proliferation of physical theater spaces that extends from the seventeenth century on through the twentieth, the employment of these urban landscapes as the backdrops for the theater traditions of the *zarzuela* and the *género chico*, and finally there is the role that urban space has played as a theater for spectacles of power. In the next chapter, this notion of spectacle will be considered in its contemporary context as this thesis turns its attention to the relationship between institutionalized cultural production and the urban morphology of the Lavapiés by examining the Teatro Valle-Inclán. This national theater builds on the tradition of urban spectacle that has been a part of Madrid since the *Siglo de Oro*, but while in the past these spectacles were at the service of the monarchy, now they serve the interests of capital.

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Chapter III
The Conceived Space of Lavapiés: The Teatro Valle-Inclán and the Plan General 1997

The previous chapter illustrated the important relationship between urban space, spectacle, and ideology in Lavapiés, and the way that urban space and its representations have historically played a role in the construction of the national imaginary. This argument relied on the theoretical model developed in the Introduction that suggested that the production of space proposed by Henri Lefebvre is assisted by the spectacle of urban space in the process of change. Urban spectacle is often at the interstices of various geographic scales. Given that these scales are produced and mediated by the movement of capital, the production of geographic scales by the spectacle of urban change is implicitly ideological: that is, the driving force behind the constant construction and deconstruction of urban space is the commodification of space and its production on the imaginative level. This occurs in two ways. First through the world of language and metaphor produced by the cultural production of literature and the visual arts, and secondly in the images (re)produced by the mass media. Accompanying these two media are the messages about space, power, and culture that are communicated by the visual rhetoric of urban space’s physical architecture and organization. When this spatial component is contextualized by cultural policies enforced on a municipal or national level, the relationship between urban space, national “space,” and the dynamic of geographical scales can be manifested in the site-specific locale of a “national” theater building. In other words, a particular building can encompass an intersection of
geographic scales when it serves as a vehicle for the cultural policies of the state, on many levels.

Figure 3.1 Teatro Valle-Inclán. Photo by author.

In this chapter, I argue that the Teatro Valle-Inclán connects the local (i.e. the neighborhood), the municipal, the national, and the international because is serves as a vehicle for the urban and the cultural policies of the Ayuntamiento of Madrid and the Spanish State. Given its connection with state power and real-estate speculation, the Teatro Valle-Inclán is closely aligned with the dominant modes of production and therefore manifests the “abstract space” of “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (Lefebvre The Production of Space 38) that Lefebvre calls spaces of representation or conceived space. The architectural spectacle of the
Teatro Valle-Inclán illustrates the ways that culture and capital function to produce twenty-first century Lavapiés. The physical architecture, promotional materials, programming and integration into the neighborhood are all key elements of the discursive

Figure 3.2 Plaza Lavapiés seen from Teatro Valle-Inclán. Photo by author.

production of this new urban space. When these new discourses are considered in the context of Madrid’s overall plans for rehabilitation of the city—i.e. the Plan General 1997—it clearly reveals how this post-Fordist production of space overlaps various geographic scales serving the interests of global capital. The Teatro Valle-Inclán is one of the tools by which Lavapiés is fetishized as a ‘place,’ and therefore helps produce the rehabilitated image of the municipality of Madrid and the nation-state of Spain. At the
same time, it facilitates the commodification and subsequent “selling of place” in a global network of cities. The Teatro Valle-Inclán helps leverage the local for the benefit of global capital and in so doing reconfigures the urban space of Lavapiés both physically and discursively.

Of all the literary arts, theater has its own unique spatial component. Novels and shorts stories represent urban space and affect how readers conceive of the spaces they inhabit, but theater is a different modality. It requires physical space for its representation and therefore the audience participates actively in the creative space of the work through their attendance. In addition, the theater space itself must inhabit a physical location in a neighborhood, so the comings and goings of the spectators generate a movement of people through space. A theater building is itself an act of cultural production, and in the case of the Teatro Valle-Inclán its very presence implies a broad transformation of urban space both in the physical domain and the “representational space” of the imaginary.

The Theater of a Nation: El Centro Dramático Nacional

Bounded by the streets Valencia, Argumosa, and Salitre, the Teatro Valle-Inclán occupies a triangular lot adjacent to the Plaza Lavapiés. Its dark glass and concrete façade faces the bustling plaza and serves as a bold architectural statement when juxtaposed with the much older buildings nearby, some of them from the nineteenth century. Though the current building was inaugurated in 2006, the lot has been dedicated to public spectacle since 1926 when the building originally opened as a movie theater.

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52 It is important to note that the cultural institution of the Centro Dramático Nacional, an organization directed by the Ministerio de Cultura [Spain’s Ministry of Culture] and its subsidiary, the Instituto Nacional de Artes Escénicas y Música [National Institute of Performing Arts and Music] has two sites. The first is the Teatro María Guerrero, a building that served first as a National Theater from 1940 onwards and then was later designated a Centro Dramático Nacional in 1978. The second, of course, is the focus of this study, the Teatro Valle-Inclán.
The original Sala Olimpia, therefore, reflected in urban space Spain’s modernization in the first part of the twentieth century. But the site’s relationship to more institutionalized cultural production is also a longstanding one, although it was not until the late 1970s that the building was used for actual theater performances.

Following the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, the theater industry found itself in a substantially less restrictive environment, especially once official theater censorship ended in 1977. Despite being liberated from official state censorship and free to explore themes of sexuality and morality, the theater industry still found itself, after many years of repression, reluctant to present works with explicit political content (Oliva 45). The timidity of the commercial theater industry left a void that encouraged the growth of non-commercial independent theater. This theatrical flourishing saw the establishment of many new theater spaces during the Transition, and in this context, the Sala Olimpia re-opened in December 1979 with a specified commitment to independent theater. 53

During the Franco regime, independent theater served an important political purpose. According to critic and theater historian César Oliva, “teatro independiente equivalía a lucha, a situación alternativa” [independent theater was the equivalent of struggle, of an alternative situation] (71). As a result of their contrarian and politically charged position, the independent theater companies were well poised to take advantage of the ground-breaking cultural policies of the ascendant Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) [Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party] that won the post-Franco elections of

53 The Transition is traditionally considered the period of time between the death of the dictator Francisco Franco and the democratic elections held in 1982 during which the monarchy had a loose hold on power and the Spanish nation attempted to sort out the power politics of the post-Franco state.
1982. With the newly written Constitution of 1978 in hand, the PSOE poured money into the subsidizing of the arts and in particular of the theater.

As scholar Phyllis Zatlin points out in her essay about Spanish theater in the second part of the twentieth century, “theater is [. . .] potentially more subversive than literary works intended to be read in private; thus it has frequently been subject to greater suspicion, censorship, and repression” (221). It is not surprising then that the theater simultaneously functioned as a symbol of artistic freedom and as an important space for the development of a post-Francoist cultural politics. Highlighting this point is the enthusiasm with which many of the autonomous communities that formed the new Spanish state (particularly those for whom Castilian was not the historical language) embraced the theater as a vehicle for reclaiming their culture and their language. Valencia, Catalonia, Galicia, and Andalusia, for example, were quick to establish National Centers of Drama and made efforts to provide permanent spaces for the production of theater (Oliva 66). This was due, in part, to the fact that the spoken and public nature of theater made it an ideal format for the literal vocalization of languages and notions of regional-nationalist identity that had been prohibited and/or, at the minimum, barely tolerated for almost forty years. This high level of activity, according to Oliva, was a direct result of the Socialists’ ascent to power in 1979 “en cuyos programas aparecía el más absoluto apoyo a la cultura” [in whose programs appeared the most absolute support for culture] (66). The Constitution of 1978 proposed a decentralized state formed by multiple autonomous communities—previously anathema to the centralized Castilian state of the Franco regime. The decentralized cultural policy
established in 1983 reflects this emphasis on culture in the nation-building process during
the Transition and the early 1980s.

One of the vehicles for cultivating this more pluralistic cultural sensibility was the
establishment of the Centro Dramático Nacional (CDN) in 1978. As recently as 2009 the
CDN describes how its purpose “ha sido difundir y consolidar las distintas corrientes y
tendencias de la dramaturgia contemporánea, con atención especial a la autoría española
actual” [has been to disseminate and consolidate the distinct currents and tendencies of
contemporary dramatic production, with special attention to current Spanish authors]
(Centro Dramático Nacional). This nationalist tinge derives from the history of official
cultural institutions in Spain, and alludes to the fact that the notion of a National Theater
institution is not a new development in the Spanish context.

As discussed in Chapter Two, some of the first efforts to establish national
cultural institutions extend back to the late eighteenth century when many artists and
intellectuals pushed to establish a National Conservatory or National Lyric theater to help
incubate Spanish musicians and writers and protect emerging “Spanish” genres of
musical theater (that would later become the large-genre zarzuela of the mid-nineteenth
century) against the dominance of the Italian Opera. In 1845 these efforts resulted in the
establishment of the Teatro Español on the site of the old Corral del Príncipe (Aguilera
Sastre 18).54 While the modern liberal nation-state of Spain was emerging, the
development of national cultural institutions continued throughout the nineteenth century
and into the early part of the twentieth century. As a result, many dramatists, actors, and
directors sought to establish some kind of National Theater building that would provoke a

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54 Readers will recall from Chapter Two that the site of the Corral del Príncipe (now the Teatro Español) is
located in the Plaza Santa Ana in the Barrio de las Letras [Neighborhood of Letters] directly adjacent to
Lavapiés.
more substantial and committed subsidy for the production of Spanish theater. These institutions as well as the very efforts to establish them would contribute to what Inman Fox (1997) has called “la invención de España” [the invention of Spain], a process of ideological construction of national identity that mythologized the historical longevity of a Spanish national consciousness through work in historiography, literature, law, and, of course, the theater. The theater industry’s role in the ‘invention’ of Spain would become even more overt as the emerging nation-state of the nineteenth century solidified into its more modern form in the twentieth century. In particular, the strong ideological and administrative State apparatus developed during the dictatorships of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and Francisco Franco (1939-1975) played key roles in consolidating more rigid notions of the Nation and its bureaucratic apparatus, the Spanish State. Under both regimes the theater was used as an important tool for this consolidation process.

During the rule of Primo de Rivera, there had been many intellectuals in the theater community that hoped that the authoritarian regime would intervene and reappropriate the Teatro Español from the bumbling Ayuntamiento whose mismanagement of the building compromised its capacity to truly support the theater professionals in the capital (Aguilera Sastre 188). In this context, the death of the famous actress and theater personality María Guerrero in 1928 presented a unique opportunity for the regime and those interested in a National Theater project. In the wake of her death momentum built to rename in her honor the Teatro de la Princesa, since Guerrero had been the owner and proprietor. Writing in the newspaper ABC in 1928, Rafael Sánchez Mazas lobbied for the national government to intervene with the hope that it would turn the Teatro María Guerrero into the site “de un Madrid nuevo, de una nueva España, y el
indispensable instrumento de una expansión en el mundo” [of a new Madrid, of a new Spain and the indispensable instrument of an expansion into the world] (cited in Aguilera Sastre 190).55 Not only did Sánchez Mazas understand the importance of culture to the project of building the nation-state, but, he sensed the potential for a designated national theater building to reconstitute space at a range of geographic scales (although, obviously, he would not have articulated it with this language). Although the building was renamed the Teatro María Guerrero in 1931, it remained in the hands of the Ayuntamiento until 1940 when the Franco regime appropriated the building for its own political purposes and declared it a National Theater. In 1978 it would be converted into the site of the Centro Dramático Nacional, a title which it continues to hold today.

The debate over establishing a National Theater building continued during the period of the Second Republic (1931-1939) and focused on the position of the old guard, committed to the notion of National Theater as “museum” to preserve the classics, and the new, hoping to use the State to create a subsidized “laboratory” to develop the theatrical vanguard (Aguilera Sastre 322-23). Given that the Teatro María Guerrero was being rehabilitated during this time, much of the debate focused on the use of the Teatro Español for this purpose. As a result, another impediment to the establishment of a National Theater building derived from the Ayuntamiento’s reluctance to relinquish control of the building. This bureaucratic impasse was complemented by the orientation of the Second Republic’s national cultural policy towards “the spread of culture to remote areas devoid of modern notions and conveniences” (Dougherty 220). Therefore, the

55 Sánchez Mazas would later become one of the intellectual architects of the fascist Falange movement that would underpin the military coup led by General Francisco Franco in July of 1936 that would mark the start of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and eventually lead to the establishment of Franco’s military dictatorship until 1975.
Second Republic devoted more energy and resources to the creation in 1931 of the Misiones Pedagógicas [Pedagogical Missions] by the Ministerio de Educación [Ministry of Education]. This program included projects like dramatist Alejandro Casona’s Teatro del Pueblo [Theater of the People] and Federico García Lorca’s La Barraca which were funded by the State and worked to bring classic Spanish drama to the rural countryside (Dougherty 220). When in 1936 the Republican government was ousted by the military coup of Francisco Franco and his Fascist cohorts, the establishment of an enduring Republican National Theater building and its commensurate Socialist inspired programming disappeared.

Instead, when the Fascists wrested control of the entire territory of Spain from the Republican forces in 1939 the ideologically committed dictatorship took advantage of a powerful State apparatus to build its own National Theater infrastructure. As mentioned previously, these efforts resulted in the designation in 1940 of the Teatro María Guerrero as a national theater building. According to Aguilar Sastre the regime hoped to “recuperar la tradición nacional y Cristiana del teatro áureo” [recover the national and Christian tradition of Golden Age Theater] (333). This idea of a National Theater had been developed in the ideologically charged context of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) by intellectuals like Felipe Lluch Garín who saw the need for the “control absoluto de todas las manifestaciones teatrales por parte de las instituciones gubernamentales y el sometimiento jerárquico de la industria y el arte teatral a los fines de propaganda política del Estado totalitario” [absolute control of all theatrical manifestations by government institutions and the hierarchical subjugation of the theatrical industry and arts to the political propaganda of the totalitarian State] (Aguilera Sastre 337). It was this theoretical
perspective that guided the management of the two national theater buildings in Madrid: the Teatro Español and the Teatro María Guerrero. After Franco’s death in 1975, the Teatro Español was returned to the Ayuntamiento while the Teatro María Guerrero was still under the control of the national government.

For many involved in the theater industry, the period of the Transition was a time of disillusionment and pessimism about the health of the Spanish theater (Ruiz Ramón 91-3). In this context, when the Socialists finally came to power in the post-Francoist era in 1982 they enacted an aggressive policy of subsidies to develop and recover the remains of the repressed Spanish theater industry.56 According to Ruiz Ramón, compared to the increase of 75% in the theater budget that occurred from 1978-1982, the year of 1983 saw a tripling of that budget (99). These subsidies were part of a broader effort by the Socialist government to consolidate a ‘national’ culture during the politically fragmented period after the Transition when a reconfiguration of the political spectrum was in progress. Historian Santos Juliá suggests that these efforts were considered necessary in the midst of Spain’s cultivation of a broader European identity and its simultaneous “recovery of identity” that “consolidated and extended” the regional nationalisms in Spain (Juliá116). This tension between an outward-looking Europeanization and regionalist isolationism strained the delicate sense of nationhood holding the nascent Spanish state together. In this context, according to Juliá, the “government’s cultural policy was geared toward favoring the national—the Spanish—by establishing or increasing awards and national prizes in the fields of literature, history, painting, music,

56 Francisco Ruiz Ramón describes the environment of the Francoist period as a “stifling, completely neurotic atmosphere of prohibition and inquisition that had blocked all outlets for critical theater” (91). During much of the Transition, Spanish theater was characterized by what Ruiz Ramón has called Operation Rescue and Operation Recovery. These two “cultural operations” sought to represent many authors and plays from the post-war period that had been victims of censorship.
etc” (117). Cultural policy was conceived as a kind of glue to hold together a politically and linguistically fragmented nation.

Later, in 1984, the Socialist government added to the network of official cultural bodies by establishing the Centro Nacional de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas (CNNTE) [National Center for New Tendencies of the Stage]. During its transformation from a cinema to a theater in 1979, the Sala Olimpia had been managed by la Asociación Cultural La Corrala [the Cultural Association La Corrala] that had turned it into “una de las opciones fundamentales para el desarrollo del teatro profesional independiente” [one of the fundamental options for the development of professional independent theater] (Oliva 66). As a result, the site was a logical choice for the newly established CNNTE and therefore in 1984 was designated as the performance space for this new bureaucratic arm of the CDN committed to non-traditional theater.

The Teatro Valle-Inclán

This history of alternative theater was certainly at the forefront when the new Teatro Valle-Inclán was constructed and inaugurated. In a 2006 interview in El País just days after the opening of the Teatro Valle Inclán, Gerardo Vera, the director of the Centro Dramático Nacional, claimed that the new site for the Centro Dramático Nacional would be a “punto de referencia del rigor profesional y de apertura a todo tipo de trabajo creativo relacionado con el mundo de la escena” [a reference point of professional rigor and an opening for all types of creative work related to the world of the stage] (Intxausti 50). Vera went on to suggest that not only would the new site be a center for theatrical enterprise, but that it would be “un centro de experimentación que no esté sometido a las
leyes impacables del mercado” [a center of experimentation that isn’t subject to the implacable laws of the market] (Intxausti 50). Because of this hope that the Teatro Valle-Inclán would not just be a theater, but a place where subsidies from the state would allow for a creative freedom not found in commercial theater, Vera also sees the Teatro as a gestation site for theater productions that could travel throughout Spain (Intxausti 50). In Vera’s hopeful vision of what would emerge from this new site of the Centro Dramático Nacional is a sense that the Teatro Valle-Inclán would serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of culture “por el territorio nacional” [throughout the national territory] (Intxausti 50).

Importantly, at the time of its inauguration, the Teatro Valle-Inclán was not just seen as a site for theater on the national or municipal level. It was also intimately tied to the urban space around it, and in this context, the notion of the avant-garde served a purpose as well. This attention to the type of theater intended for the site can be seen in the 2002 publication of the Ayuntamiento [municipal government] of Madrid, Madrid: cuatro años de gestión del plan general de ordenación urbana de Madrid 1997 [Madrid: Four Years of Management of the General Plan for Urban Ordinance for Madrid 1997]. Therein the authors describe the proposed plans for the Sala Olimpia (later renamed the Centro Dramático Nacional Teatro Valle-Inclán) and suggest that this building “fue durante largo tiempo un punto de referencia para los amantes del teatro en Madrid” [was during a long time a reference point for the theater lovers of Madrid] and that it has always functioned as an “escenario natural [. . .] de los grupos de vanguardia de toda España” [natural stage [. . .] for avant garde groups of all of Spain] (Echenagusia 140). For the city planners, not only was the building’s theatrical history important, but
specifically its associations with the avant garde. Notably, while using this text to assess the results of four years of implementation of the Plan General 1997, the writers of this document also attempt to inscribe the imminent rehabilitation of the building into not only the theater history of the city, but the theater tradition of the entire nation.

The urban planners underscore their investment in the cultural production of the city and state that they hope to “reforzar este papel en el futuro inmediato” [reinforce this role in the immediate future] and “consolidar la trayectoria de la sala como escenario de la vanguardia teatral madrileña” [to consolidate the trajectory of the sala as a stage for madrileño avant garde theater] (Echenagusia 140). That is, the building would not serve merely as a localized site for experimental theater in the neighborhood, but would serve as a cultural consolidation point for the entire city. Given that this process of consolidation would occur under the control of the Centro Dramático Nacional, this implies that Madrid would serve as the national distillation site for innovation in the dramatic arts. As a national center of Spanish theater, Madrid would serve as synecdoche for the Spanish nation and provide a cultural access point between Spain and the rest of the world.

It is not only the city planners that have these global aspirations, but the State cultural apparatus as well. Gerardo Vera explicitly referenced this more global interest in a 2004 interview with El Cultural, the arts supplement to the newspaper daily El Mundo, in which he asserted that “el CDN va a ser un centro de promoción de espectáculos que, en colaboración con el Instituto Cervantes, contribuya a difundir el teatro español contemporáneo fuera de nuestras fronteras” [the CDN is going to be a center for the promotion of spectacles that, in collaboration with the Instituto Cervantes, will contribute
to the diffusion of contemporary Spanish theater beyond our borders] (Villan). With this more global perspective in mind, the CDN established a Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales [Department of International Relations] at the same time that the new site of the CDN in Lavapiés was being constructed (Perales). The Teatro Valle-Inclán may be located in the neighborhood of Lavapiés, but complicity between the cultural institutions of the State and the urban planners of the Ayuntamiento transform the local spectacle of theater into a global stage for the performance of a national identity.

The ideological work of the nation-state is also accomplished in the very names assigned to the two theater auditoriums in the Lavapiés site of the Centro Dramático Nacional. These names maintain the discursive associations with the vanguard of Spanish theater articulated by the CDN and the Ayuntamiento of Madrid while relying on an allusion to the ‘anti-institutional’ to elide the building’s true power position. The principal auditorium, which holds 510 spectators, is named for the iconoclast Galician dramatist of the Generation of 1898 Ramón María de Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) whose expressionist esperpentos toed the line between prose and drama and often incorporated the visual possibilities of film. Vera explicitly states that this name was selected in order to communicate that “Valle-Inclán será la referencia artística del CDN” [Valle Inclán will be the artistic reference for the CDN] (Perales). The smaller auditorium, which holds 150 spectators, is named for the stage-craft experimentalist Francisco Nieva (1924- ). These references simultaneously align the building with tradition while also making rhetorical

57 According to their homepage, the Instituto Cervantes “es la institución pública creada por España en 1991 para la promoción y la enseñanza de la lengua española y para la difusión de la cultura española e hispanoamericana” [is the public institution created by Spain in 1991 for the promotion and instruction of the Spanish language and for the diffusion of Spanish and Hispano-American culture] (Instituto Cervantes).
choices that evoke the anti-institutional associations of the avant-garde.\textsuperscript{58} By choosing Valle-Inclán as the most visible name of the building, the Ministry of Culture evokes the Generation of 1898 as a means of fixing the building into the canon of Spanish letters and its so-called \textit{Edad de Plata} [Silver Age], an important historical moment in Spanish letters and the visual arts that occurred during the first third of the twentieth century. Often classified into three principal groups that include the generations of 1898, of 1914, and of 1927, this Silver Age includes such important artistic figures as Miguel de Unamuno, Antonio Machado, Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Federico García Lorca, and of course Ramón de María de Valle-Inclán. In terms of scholarly response it might rival the \textit{Siglo de Oro} as one of the most celebrated periods of cultural production in Spain’s history. At the same time, both Valle-Inclán and Nieva are closely associated with experimental theater and therefore the names are suggestive of the non-traditional theater of the avant garde. These associations contribute to the discursive efforts to distance the State cultural apparatus from the building and, in theory, assist in the cultivation of Lavapiés’ image as a bastion of neo-bohemianism in Madrid.

The promotional materials distributed at the inauguration of the building in 2006 and the architectural innovativeness of the performance space clearly demonstrate the original avant-garde vision for the building. In promoting the significance of the building, the press releases emphasize, for example, that “sus modernas instalaciones, la flexibilidad de uso de las salas interiores y un equipamiento escénico de vanguardia lo convierten en estandarte de la creación teatral contemporánea” [its modern installations,  

\textsuperscript{58} I rely here on Peter Bürger's (1974) notion of the avant-garde that sees the vanguard as a self-criticizing arm of bourgeois art. Although, it must be pointed out that Francisco Nieva does not pertain to the historical avant-garde of the teens and twenties in Spain. Nonetheless, his efforts to disrupt traditional modes of communication between reader-text/drama-spectator places him within a broader tradition of artistic experimentation associated with a more general definition of avant-garde art.
the flexibility of the interior auditoriums, and its cutting-edge stage equipment make it into a standard for the creation of contemporary theater] (INAEM 1). The reference to the flexibility, modern character, and its cutting-edge equipment all attempt to discursively inscribe this institutional space into a tradition of avant-garde theater that has been anti-institutional.

Nonetheless, the programming that the Teatro Valle-Inclán has produced has not really lived up to this rhetoric that presents the Teatro Valle-Inclán as an incubator of national avant-garde theater. For example, in the short inaugural season (2005-2006) the theater produced one canonical Spanish work (Divinas Palabras by Valle-Inclán), two foreign works (one British and one American), and one work in Catalan (performed in the much smaller Nieva performance space). The following season (2006-2007) this trend continued with another production of Divinas Palabras, five foreign works (including two international theater festivals), and merely two contemporary Spanish works. The 2007-2008 season saw ten total performances of which four were foreign and six were national works. This seemingly more balanced programming is offset by the fact that three of the six Spanish works were still relegated to the smaller space of the Sala Francisco Nieva. Similarly, in 2008-2009 of the six national works that were performed, four utilized the Sala Francisco Nieva. Despite the avant-garde and nationalist rhetoric utilized by the architects, the promotional materials, and the Director of the CDN the building’s use has been more inscribed into the international theater circuit than a “National” theater space.

Attempting to bridge this gap between words and actions is the spectacle created by the design of the performance space itself. The cutting-edge engineering of the building offers a wide range of staging possibilities and permit the audience’s location to
be physically manipulated. These possibilities are due to the series of hydraulic lifts located beneath the principal auditorium that can alter the space and allow for a proscenium configuration with the stage in front or more non-conventional uses of the space. According to Angela García de Paredes, one of the two principal architects that designed the building, the space was from the outset not intended to be “una sala convencional” [a conventional hall] especially given that from the beginning they knew that they would need to create a space “que se pudiera transformar y que fuera todo ella [la sala] como un escenario” [that could be transformed and that would be itself like a stage] (García de Paredes). Ignacio G. Pedrosa, García de Paredes’ partner, describes how the principal theater space has the possibility to change into “un amplio contenedor con el único límite de la imaginación, desde una sala convencional hasta el más sugerente montaje escénico” [a grand container with the imagination as the only limit, from a conventional hall to the most provocative staging] (Pedrosa 161). For the architects, this flexibility results in a relationship between the performance and the public that is “necesariamente abierta y flexible” [necessarily open and flexible] (Pedrosa 161). The very engineering of the space is intended to support the relaxing of the fourth wall that has become a hallmark of modern (i.e. avant-garde) theater and transforms the public’s entering of the performance hall into a participatory spectacle that communicates the dynamism of the CDN’s productions.

According to the architects’ interpretation of their building, the exterior space also relaxes a sort of fourth wall in order to create a sense of openness and dialogue with the public in the Plaza Lavapiés directly in front of the façade. The footprint of the building is one of the ways that the architects create this effect. In the architects’ descriptions of
the building and in an interview with this author, the architects continually cite the superimposition of the three rectangular volumes of the building onto a triangular plot as one of the building’s architectural achievements. A key feature that allowed them to resolve this challenge is the staggered façade that characterizes the theater. This technique not only allowed for a more effective use of the interior spaces of the building within the limiting confines of the triangular plot, but also left a portion of the plot open to the adjacent Plaza Lavapiés. For the architects “este espacio continuo que se extiende frente a la entrada del teatro, permeable ante la plaza [. . .] se convierte en antesala, verdadero vestíbulo urbano de ingreso al edificio y prolongación natural de la Plaza de Lavapiés” [this continuous space that extends out in front of the theater entrance, permeable before the plaza [. . .] converts into an anteroom, a true urban vestibule for entrance to the building and a natural prolongation of the Plaza Lavapiés] (Pedrosa 156).

Their interpretation highlights the permeable quality of the open space and envisions a flow of people from the space of the plaza to the space in front of the theater while in transit to attend a performance. They employ the notion of the *vestíbulo* and *antesala* as a means of characterizing this area as a liminal space that lies on the margin between two spaces, pertaining to both but not exclusively to either; a type of “between” (Mugerauer 1993) that is both simultaneously public and private, interior and exterior.

This liminality, in theory, is compounded by the façade of the building whose three square volumes contain “frentes acristalados [que] se tranforman de noche en prismas de luz que permiten ver desde el exterior las paredes interiores de la sala revestidas de madera de sicomoro y el movimiento del público en el vestíbulo” [glass fronts [. . .that. . .] transform at night into prisms of light that allow the sycamore of the
wood-paneled interior walls and the movement of the public in the vestibule to be seen from the exterior] (Pedrosa 158). For the architects there is a visual exchange that occurs between the exterior and interior of the building. At night, the people on the street can see through the glass façade into the well-lit theater. During the day this liminal quality is seen in the reflection of the older buildings of the plaza in the dark glass (see fig. 1 and fig. 3). Viewing the dark glass from the “anteroom” of the mini-plaza in front of the theater, the old neighborhood seems to continue in the reflection presented to the spectator. The neighborhood appears to be “in” the theater, and in theory, the theater is firmly entrenched in the neighborhood, replete with its own anteroom.

Figure 3.3 Reflection of Plaza Lavapiés in the glass of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Photo by author.
Though Pedrosa and García de Paredes interpret these features of the building as increasing the exchange between the completely public space of the plaza and the fee-for-entrance publicly-owned theater, there is another possible interpretation in its context within the broader urban plan for Madrid and Lavapiés. If one accepts cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s (2001) notion that “the built environment clarifies social roles and relations [. . .]” and as a result “[. . .] architecture teaches” (102), one can see that these architectural features communicate outwardly to the viewing public of the plaza (who are very rarely the spectators of the theater). The dark glass of the Teatro Valle-Inclán doesn’t necessarily serve to incorporate the neighborhood into the architecture of the building, but rather distances the neighborhood from the interior space of the building and in turn differentiates the two spaces. As Tuan suggests, “constructed form has the power to heighten the awareness and accentuate, as it were, the difference in emotional temperature between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’” (107). During the day, the reflective quality of the dark glass functions like panoptic one-way glass in the interrogation room at a police station (see Figure 3).

This panoptic quality of the building is today complemented by the program of “vigilancia especial” put in place by the Ayuntamiento in January of 2008 that called for heavier police presence on the Plaza Lavapiés. This presence includes officers milling about the plaza in their high-visibility yellow jackets, officers of horseback, and the use of drug-sniffing dogs (Treceño). In December of 2009, this disciplining gaze of the city was reinforced by the installation and activation of some forty-eight surveillance cameras in the area (Fraile). The Teatro’s dark façade repels the viewer’s gaze from the street with its reflective qualities and permits only the ephemeral image of the Plaza Lavapiés; the
simulacrum of the neighborhood’s architectural past is fixed as image in the opaque glass of the institutional building. They cannot see inside, but of course can be seen.

At night the lesson shifts. In *Space and Place* Tuan spends time describing the use of light in the history of European architectural history and describes how Gothic cathedrals used interior light to “produce effects of mystical beauty” (110). The Teatro Valle-Inclán relies on this tradition as well. The contrast between the dark night and the “mystical beauty” of the well-lit lobby maintains the distance between the plaza and the interior from the daytime by transforming the interior space of the theater into an illuminated fishbowl. The spectators milling around inside the building become ‘extras’

![Figure 3.4 Map of area designated for rehabilitation in Operación Lavapiés.](image-url)
in the middle-class urban spectacle of the Teatro Valle-Inclán; their ethnicity and class a visual contrast to the multicultural plaza; the quiet space of the interior contrasts with the bustle and noise on the plaza at night. The spectacle of the Teatro Valle-Inclán is not found merely within the confines of the performance hall, but it also occurs in the plaza outside of the building where the architectural rhetoric of the building’s façade communicates its message. In this interpretation the Teatro Valle-Inclán “presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible” (Debord I:12). Just as the spectacle in the performance hall of the Teatro Valle-Inclán is echoed by the spectacle of the building itself, the spectacular quality of the building contributes to the urban spectacle occurring around it.

According to a 2004 article in the Propiedades [Properties] section of El País, when one leaves behind “la plaza de Lavapiés y [sigue] en dirección este hacia la glorieta del Emperador Carlos V, la fisonomía del barrio Embajadores cambia radicalmente. Del abigarrado ambiente multirracial que se vive al oeste […] se pasa a un ámbito mucho menos bullicioso […]. Se alza un ámbito donde predomina el uso residencial con fincas de mayor calidad y mejor conservadas” [the plaza of Lavapiés and continues East towards the Glorieta del Emperador Carlos V, the appearance of the Embajadores neighborhood changes radically. From the variegated multiracial environment that is found to the West […] one passes into a much less noisy space […]. A space emerges where residential use predominates with higher quality and much better preserved dwellings] (Martínez 10). The Teatro straddles an invisible line in the neighborhood between the streetscape to the West characterized by “locales comerciales, bares y
restaurantes [. . .] en manos de inmigrantes” [commercial businesses, bars, and restaurants [. . .] in immigrants hands] (Martínez 10) and the street life found on the calle Argumosa. Here, the terraces are full of a much more homogenous population—what Mayte Gómez in her extensive analysis of multiculturalism in Lavapiés has termed los “novísimos vecinos” [the newbie neighbors]; “una nueva población de ciudadanos de clase media relativamente joven—rodeando los treinta o cuarenta años—más o menos progresista en lo social y lo político, bohemia en grados diversos, posiblemente artística también” [a new population of relatively young middle-class citizens—around thirty or forty years old—more or less socially and politically progressive, bohemian to various degrees, possibly artistic as well] (4). They are the pioneering gentrifiers of Florida’s “creative class” and have even been referred to by one city council member as “los nuevos colonos” [the new colonists] (Gómez 4). The square black volumes of the Teatro building, then, also serve as a gateway of sorts to the tree-lined and terrace-dotted Calle Argumosa that runs in almost a direct line between the expanded Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía and, according to a 2004 article in El País, one of the new architectural icons of Madrid, the Centro Dramático Teatro Valle-Inclán (Fernández Rubio and Fernández Bermejo 3).

This spot between the gentrified Calle Argumosa and the bustling and diverse streets to the West is almost directly in the center of what the Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997 designated as Sector I de Lavapiés as a part of the Plan de Rehabilitación Integral de Lavapiés. This area of about 50 square blocks (32.5 hectares) has been since 1997 the focus of a major rehabilitation effort for the Centro district of the city in which the city planned to combat the problem of infravivienda [sub-standard living].
housing] by rehabilitating 2,500 housing units in the neighborhood at the cost of nearly 24.6 million Euros (35.3 million dollars) (Gutiérrez 3). Ironically, this same set of city blocks has also been characterized by having some of the highest real-estate prices per square meter in the city. According to the article “Las dos caras de Embajadores” published in El País in 2002, it wasn’t uncommon to find a difference of 2,404 Euros (3,450 dollars) per square meter in Lavapiés between buildings right next to one another (Martínez 11). In 2003, the price per square meter had risen to 3,500 Euros for rehabilitated housing units. In this context, the prevalence of so many dilapidated properties in Lavapiés can be attributed to real-estate speculators buying up land to take advantage of these fast-paced changes.

For those critical of this process, the investment in Lavapiés and the transformation of the housing stock has never been about the improvement of the lives of its inhabitants. Rather, it has always been about real-estate speculation. The rising cost of housing and its suspected connection to the city’s investment in the neighborhood led one local activist, Jordi Claramonte, to complain in June of 2003 that the urban change occurring was “la conversión de un barrio degradado en un barrio guay, y después en un barrio caro” [the process is the conversion of a degraded neighborhood into a hip neighborhood, and later into an expensive neighborhood] (quoted in Guimón 18). At the same time these complaints were being voiced by residents against the gentrification occurring in Lavapiés, the Dean of the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid [Official College of Architects of Madrid] Ricardo Aroca lamented to El País that “durante la última década, la Administración municipal y los especuladores han sido indistinguibles [during the last decade the municipal Administration and the speculators have been
indistinguishable] (quoted in de la Vega 3). Because of the suspected relationship between speculative interests and the Ayuntamiento the spectacle of the Teatro Valle-Inclán can be understood to function as a part of the broader plan for the redevelopment of Lavapiés. Understood in this context, the Teatro Valle-Inclán and the other ‘cultural’ buildings in the neighborhood, according to local resident and activist Carlos Vidiana, function as a “bunker cultural” [cultural bunker] or “bulldozer cultural” [cultural bulldozer].

From the perspective of activists like Vidiana, the investment in the cultural resources of the neighborhood in conjunction with the improvement of the housing stock will change the economics of the neighborhood to a point where the ‘undesirables’ (people who are not middle-class white professionals) will be forced out. The morphology of the Teatro Valle-Inclán with its impenetrable dark glass standing tall above the plaza evokes this idea of the “cultural bunker.” In that vein, the flat façade of the building functions as a metaphoric bulldozer blade, poised to roll through the plaza leaving a gleaming gentrified neighborhood in its wake. But as a symbol of the gentrification to come, the building is merely one showpiece in the urban spectacle of Lavapiés that assists in the production of a cityscape devoted to the interests of capital. The cultural capital that was developed in Lavapiés has a strong connection to the flows of capital in the city as a whole and Spain’s interest in increasing Madrid’s role globally. This relationship between the Teatro Valle-Inclán, Madrid’s global aspirations, and the interests of capital is evident in the abstract space conceived by the city planners in the Plan General 1997.
The Abstract Space of Lavapiés and the Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997

Placing the Teatro Valle-Inclán in its broader urban context is to see it as a key component in the cultural network of attractions for the city of Madrid. Significantly, this perspective also makes visible the ways that the neighborhood of Lavapiés serves as a place of convergence for discourses of scale, cultural production, and urban change. To illustrate this assertion the following section will provide a close reading of the document Cuatro años de gestión del P.G.O.U.M.1997 [Four years of Management of the P.G.O.U.M. 1997], a book published in 2002 by the Gerencia Municipal de Urbanismo del Ayuntamiento de Madrid [Office of Municipal Management of the City Government of Madrid]. This document summarizes in less technical language the goals for the Plan General 1997 and the steps being taken to implement those goals.

Before moving on to the urban planning texts, it is useful to see how the documents produced by the CDN itself situate the Teatro Valle-Inclán in the discourse of urban redevelopment of Lavapiés and the center of Madrid. In particular, the press materials distributed upon the inauguration of the theater explicitly state that the theater responde a varios objetivos de carácter urbanístico, arquitectónico y cultural compartidos por las administraciones implicadas: por un lado, la actuación se inscribe en el proceso de revitalización del centro de la ciudad (concretamente en el del barrio de Lavapiés) y, por otro, supone la creación de un nuevo teatro público en Madrid de nueva planta, especialmente construido e ideado para producir y exhibir teatro.
[responds to various objectives of a urbanistic, architectural, and cultural character shared by the involved agencies; on one hand, the effort is inscribed in the process of revitalization of the center of the city (concretely in that of the neighborhood of Lavapiés, and, on the other, it proposes the creation of a completely new public theater in Madrid, specifically constructed and conceived for producing and exhibiting dramatic performances.] (INAEM 1).

The building serves a dual function as a cultural container for the residents of Madrid and at the same time it works to transform the urban space of the Lavapiés and Centro district of Madrid. The Valle Inclán participates in this transformation because “se configura como una nueva referencia urbana para los itinerarios por las zonas históricas de Madrid, aprovechando su proximidad con el Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, el eje museístico del Paseo del Prado y otros importantes centros de actividad cultural del centro de Madrid” [it figures to be a new urban reference point in the itineraries of the historic zones of Madrid, taking advantage of its proximity to the National Museum of Art Reina Sofía, the axis of museums of the Paseo del Prado and other important centers of cultural activity in the center of Madrid.] (INAEM 1). In order to understand the role of the Teatro Valle-Inclán in the neighborhood it is essential to understand its role in the overall redevelopment plans for Madrid. It is here in what Lefebvre would call the “abstract space” of the urban planners where the Teatro Valle-Inclán can be seen as part of the broader spectacle of urban change taking place in Lavapiés. In addition, as will be shown, this urban spectacle exists within the production of overlapping and intermeshed geographic scales.

One indication of this “scalar” quality is that management of the building has required the convergence of local and national entities. Madrid’s Ayuntamiento [municipal government] paid for the construction of the building, the preliminary studies,
the purchase of the property, and the execution of the project. The National Ministry of Culture and its Instituto Nacional de Artes Escénicas y de Música “[pagaron] la implantación de infraestructuras, equipamientos y acondicionamientos escénicos, así como el acondicionamiento mobiliario de salas y oficinas” [INAEM [paid] for the implantation of the infrastructure, the equipment and stage components, as well as the furnishing and conditioning of the offices and halls] (INAEM 1). This administrative layering of the local and national persists, with the city of Madrid owning the property while the facilities are run by the national cultural infrastructure.

That both the urban planners of the Ayuntamiento and the cultural institutions of the national government participate in the construction and management of this building indicates how official government bodies play a key role in the production of space. Of course, for Lefebvre this relationship is a given because the dominant modes of production so clearly align with the production of “abstract space.” As was shown in the Introduction, in an urban context the container of the nation-state facilitates the movement of capital generated by real-estate speculation. Key to this process is the work of urban planning and technocrats to create the conceived space of the city. The modes of production do not merely require the factories of industrialization or the gleaming office towers of the post-industrial landscape to accumulate capital. There is a need for the social reproduction of values, desires, interests. The very notion of the “urban” must be produced.

The production of the urban as social system is a concept that merits further commentary since Lefebvre has contributed so effectively to its development in his monograph The Right to the City [Le droit à la ville]. First published in 1968 and later
translated into English and published in the 1996 collection *Writings on Cities*, this influential text explores Lefebvre’s concern with the “urban problematic” and insists on its intricate relationship with “the process of industrialization” (*Writings* 65). This relationship creates “a *double process* [. . .]: industrialization and urbanization, growth and development, production and social life” (*Writings* 70). This social life or *urban society* is made up of an *urban fabric*, a “phenomena of another order, that of social and ‘cultural’ life” (*Writings* 72, emphasis in the original). Lefebvre understands this ‘cultural life’ in the context of an urban-rural dualism and emphasizes that the socialization produced by urban space “carried by the urban fabric [. . .] penetrate[s] the countryside” (*Writings* 72). The urban society created by industrialization results in architectural and demographic transformations, and therefore there exists a series of cultural transformations (basically consumer culture) that projects across the entire territory whether that be the urban space of Madrid, or the national territory of Spain.

Although Lefebvre wrote in the context of late twentieth-century industrial capitalism, his concept of the *urban fabric* works in a post-Fordist context as well. The service economy and its correlative consumer culture is one that must produce its own space. Essential to the production of this space is the establishment of a new bureaucratic system of power. Interestingly, Lefebvre suggests that this system of power articulates the urban core as a “high quality consumption product for foreigners, tourists, people from the outskirts and suburbanites” (*Writings* 73). This consumer product, the new urban entity, is one that is produced by careful planning and the variety of academic disciplines: “historians, economists, demographers, and sociologists” (Lefebvre *Writings* 95). This body of academic work creates a social practice called urban planning that,
according to Lefebvre, sees the urban environment in terms of a series of particularities and generalities. In a theoretical move that has been important for culture critics, Lefebvre aligns these concepts to the concepts of performance/competence used by structural linguistics. Lefebvre tries to articulate the *langue* and *parole* which characterize the activities of particular cities as well as particular individuals. That is, individual cities have a particular way of expressing themselves (*parole*) within the general *langue* that defines all cities. Similarly, within a particular city’s system of discourse (*langue*) individuals perform it in particular ways (*parole*). The *langue* of the city is the urban fabric or abstract space produced by planners and projected over the city.

In the case of Lavapiés and the Teatro Valle-Inclán, the *langue* can be seen explicitly in the aforementioned *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997* and the previously cited self-assessment of said plan published by the Ayuntamiento four years later. Most notable in the document *Cuatro años de gestión del P.G.O.U.M.1997* [Four years of Management of the P.G.O.U.M. 1997] is how discourses of scale, cultural production, and urban change converge in the neighborhood of Lavapiés and explicitly situate the neighborhood as a key component in the cultural network of attractions for the city of Madrid.

The document’s preface by Mayor José María Álvarez del Manzano (1991-2003) warns that in “una era de globalización política, económica y cultural, una ciudad como Madrid no debe abordarse desde una óptica localista” [an era of political, economic, and cultural globalization, a city like Madrid should not examine itself from a local perspective] (5). With this global perspective in mind he emphasizes that the main goals for the Plan General 1997 were the development of “instrumentos que le permitan
afrontar los retos de una moderna capital integrada en la Unión Europea, que aproveche además las oportunidades derivadas de su privilegiada situación geográfica que le confiere una gran potencialidad como cabeza del arco mediterráneo y puente hacia África y América” [instruments that allow for the confronting of the challenges of a modern capital integrated in the European Union, that take advantage of the opportunities derived from its privileged geographic situation which confer upon it a great potential as the head of the Mediterranean arc and a bridge to Africa and the Americas]” (5). Both in 1997 when the Plan was developed and in 2002 when this retrospective document was published, the planning establishment in Madrid saw the rehabilitation of urban space in Madrid as a means of integrating the city into the supra-national body of the European Union while positioning it as a leading city in a variety of transnational global networks.

This discourse of globalization is also clearly articulated by the Vice-Mayor of Madrid and the head of the Division of Urbanism, Infrastructure, and Housing Ignacio del Río García de Sola, in the introduction to Cuatro años de gestión. Looking back on the work accomplished since the Plan General 1997 was implemented he concludes that

la ciudad de Madrid se ha dotado de los instrumentos necesarios para afrontar los grandes retos del nuevo siglo, con la vocación de convertirse en el gran centro financiero del sur de Europa, y ciudad olímpica, lo que supondría el catalizador necesario para impulsar su proyecto internacional entre las grandes capitales del mundo.

[the city of Madrid has been endowed with the necessary instruments for confronting the great challenges of the new century, with the vocation of converting itself into the great financial center of Southern Europe, and an Olympic city, which would provide the necessary catalyst for propelling its international projection amongst the great capitals of the world] (7).

For Álvarez del Manzano it is quite emphatically the Olympic candidacy that is “el objetivo de referencia [. . .] para centralizar [el] esfuerzo hacia un futuro mejor” [the
reference point for centralizing [the] efforts towards a better future] (5). Although we could naively believe that interest in attracting the 2012 Olympic Games derives from interest in helping generate the feelings of goodwill associated with this global event, the purpose is obviously more pragmatic. The investment at the local level to rehabilitate Madrid explicitly hopes to expand the global reach of the municipality. For the city leaders, the Olympic Games would put Madrid onto a global stage by jumpstarting its marketability for investment and tourism.59

This goal had and continues to have strong precedent. Ferran Brunet, a researcher for the Centro de Estudios Olímpicos and a professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, supports this assertion in his comments to El País in November of 2009 regarding the awarding of the 2016 Summer Games to Rio de Janeiro. He suggests that, in general, “No sólo es el derivado del evento atlético y las inversiones que se ponen sobre la mesa para acogerlo, sino de las inversiones extranjeras que puedes atraer antes de la propia celebración y hasta años después” [It isn’t only the derivatives of the athletic event and the investments that are put on the table to attract it, but rather the foreign investment that one can attract before the event itself and for years afterwards] (cited in Sánchez-Silva). For example, Brunet has calculated that the 2000 Sydney games generated over three billion dollars and the 2008 games in Beijing nearly twenty-three billion dollars in economic impact (cited in Sánchez-Silva). So the increased visibility and infrastructure investment that accompanies the games can be a financial shot in the arm for any municipality. Of course, Spain has already seen these benefits first hand in the results of hosting the 1992 games in Barcelona. According to Christopher Hill’s

59 The 2012 Summer Olympic Games were awarded to London, much to the chagrin of city leaders in Madrid.
(1996) political history of the Olympic Games “even if accurate figures are difficult, perhaps impossible to produce, Barcelona has been put on the map as a city of world importance; more hotels have been built, and the city attracts more visitors and conferences than ever” (195-6). The Olympic Games for Madrid and other cities have become a fast track to global visibility and catching the eye of foreign investors.

While articulating the means to accomplish these goals Álvarez del Manzano, intentionally or not, echoes the vision of Richard Florida’s “Creative City” (2002) discussed in the Introduction. Álvarez de Manzano suggests that Madrid must be “como un escenario activo en el que los ciudadanos puedan desarrollar libremente sus actividades profesionales, sociales y culturales en un ambiente de respeto y tolerancia” [like an active stage in which citizens can freely develop their professional, social, and cultural activities in an environment of respect and tolerance] (5). By emphasizing the tenets of tolerance and cosmopolitanism, Álvarez del Manzano elides the neoliberal quality of the “Preface.” The notion of “freely developing” one’s interests hints at the free-market agenda that accompanied the Partido Popular into power in 1995 and implicitly informs the assumptions of the Plan General 1997. This neoliberal agenda can be intuited if we accept Neil Smith’s (2002) assertion that “urban real-estate development—gentrification writ large—has now become a central motive force of urban economic expansion, a pivotal sector in the new urban economies” (100). Behind the utopic platitudes lay an interest in developing a global financial capital and the subsequent economic expansion this would create.

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60 For more in-depth discussion of the 1992 games in Barcelona and of tourism in Catalonia in general see also O. Pi-Sunyer “Tourism in Catalonia” (1996). Pi-Sunyer provides an interesting analysis of the ways that the interests of the city government, the autonomous government, and the national government clashed over the symbolic use of the games for cultural and nationalistic ends.
This situation prompted the then president of el Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya [the Catalan Socialist Party] and former mayor of Barcelona (1992-1997) Pasqual Maragall to suggest in a 2003 article in El País that despite the Spanish constitution’s picture of a pluralistic democracy, there seemed to be the belief in Madrid that the unsettled political situation required “una mano firme en el centro para dominar sus demonios; si bien ahora una mano tan económica como política, tan ‘liberal’ como antes dictatorial” [a firm hand in the center for dominating its demons; although now a hand as economic as political, as ‘liberal’ as dictatorial before]. The power of the new centrist state run by the free-market boosters of the Partido Popular would leverage its power through the manipulation of capital with Madrid serving as the principal “escenario” [stage] for attracting foreign investment.61

This neoliberal discourse also characterizes the way that Cuatro años de gestión articulates the objectives for the Plan General of 19997 in terms of a “Recuperación del centro histórico” [Recuperation of the historic city center] (Echenagusia 16). In theory, this recuperation would result “en el mantenimiento de la población tradicional en sus barrios mejorando sus condiciones de habitabilidad y permitiendo la renovación del parque inmobiliario sin interés histórico-artístico” [in the maintenance of the traditional population and the renovation of the real-estate offerings without historic-artistic interest (Echenagusia16). The interest in the real-estate market is a key piece of the Plan General 1997 because at the time it was developed "La vivienda era, según todos los diagnósticos previos a la redacción del Plan General del 97, uno de los más graves problemas que de

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61 The political context of this article alludes to the fact that the Basque separatist group ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) [Basque Homeland and Freedom] had broken their treaty with the Spanish government in 2000. In addition, the nationalist policies of the ruling Partido Popular [People’s Party] had increasingly isolated politically the northern regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country. The historic rivalries and the tensions between the central Spanish state and the linguistically defined ‘nations’ of the North had begun to return to the forefront of Spanish politics, a development that always destabilizes the Spanish state.
inmediato debía afrontar Madrid” [housing was, according to all the reports that preceded the Plan General 1997, one of the most serious immediate problems that Madrid should confront] (Echengusia 56). This housing crisis was caused by “escasez de suelo, carestía de la vivienda” [lack of land and the cost of housing] and led to the “expulsión de nuevas familias a la periferia metropolitana” [expulsion of new families to the metropolitan periphery] (Echenagusia 56). With the middle class on the periphery of the city, the city center had lost one of the key features of a consumer society: consumers.

In this context, it was hoped that the infrastructure improvements that had been implemented (increased access to housing, sidewalks, limits on the use of buildings) through the Plan General 1997 would result in not only “el mantenimiento de la población, sino la atracción al centro de capas de población más amplias y con una estructura de edades más equilibradas, invirtiendo el fenómeno de los últimos años” [maintenance of the population, but rather the attraction to the center of a wider strata of the population and with a more balanced structure of ages, inverting the phenomenon of the last several years] (Echenagusia 17). The physical transformation of the city was to serve as an antidote to socially transform the city. Central to these plans was the neighborhood of Lavapiés because as Mayte Gómez points out, the logic of monopolistic capitalism that was driving these redevelopment plans “no [podía] tolerar que las zonas centrales de la ciudad—atraíbles por su diseño urbano histórico y por sus atracciones culturales tanto históricas como modernas—[estaban] ocupadas por las clases más humildes viviendo en edificios antiguos, lo que [impediría] que [se especulara] con el terreno”[couldn’t tolerate that the central zones of the city—attractive for their historic urban design and for their cultural attractions, both historic and modern—were occupied
by the most humble classes living in old buildings, which would impede the speculation of the land] (5). The physical modification of the neighborhood, though discursively articulated in terms of improving the lives of its inhabitants, was merely prepping the neighborhood for real-estate speculation. The very fact that so much money was directed at a national theater building meant to attract spectators from across the city instead of new health centers, social centers, or sports installations that would directly impact the lives of the residents is one illustration of this fact.

These intentions are reflected quite explicitly in the Ayuntamiento’s assessment of the Plan General 1997. The authors of Cuatro años de gestión emphasize that “revitalizar y recuperar el centro histórico de Madrid, muy especialmente su Casco Antiguo, es uno de los mayores retos asumidos por el Plan General de 1997 que se enuncia, además, con el rango de gran operación de carácter emblemático con un fuerte componente social” [revitalizing and recuperating the historic center of Madrid, especially the Casco Antiguo [old quarter], is one of the greatest challenges assumed by the Plan General 1997, problematized, moreover, by the major scale of this operation with its emblematic character and strong social component] (110). The Plan’s interest here in the neighborhood’s “emblematic character” and the project’s “social component” seems to be an unsubtle xenophobic allusion to the problematic social situation that has been present in the center of the city.

According to Antonio Zárate Martin’s 2006 article on the changes in Spanish urban centers in the last fifty years, the number of foreign residents in Madrid went from 32,120 in 1986 to over 500,000 in 2005, over sixteen percent of the population. Significantly, most of this presence was found in the central part of the city in the
districts of Sol (35%), Embajadores (34.5%), and Universidad (30%) (Zárate Martín 297). This multicultural presence is complemented by a large elderly population that in 2005 represented nearly 21% of the population of el Centro (Zárate Martín 295). In total, the elderly and immigrants make up nearly 40% of the overall population. These numbers do not correspond to Florida’s image of a city full of young youthful tech-savy workers prepared to meet the challenges of a global financial capital in the new century. With this context in mind it is important to note how the discourse of Cuatro años de gestión emphasizes not only the “componente social” [social component] of the plan, but also its “carácter emblemático” [emblematic character]. The Plan General 1997 was a project designed to serve a symbolic significance that would represent a city in process of becoming a global capital; a spectacle that would appeal to the International Olympic Committee as well as international corporations.

Key to this spectacle was the neighborhood of Lavapiés which is discussed at length in the overview of the Plan General 1997 (Echenagusia 130-146). Therein, Lavapiés is seen as the “escenario de actuación” [stage of action] for the “broche final” [final touch] of the Plan (Echenagusia 111, emphasis mine). Though it is not necessarily intentional, it is worth mentioning how the discourse of stagecraft informs this description. The “emblematic character” of the project has its principal stage in the neighborhood that Zárate Martín—echoing commentators from the last century—describes as “uno de los más representativas del casticismo madrileño, recogida tantas veces por la literatura, la música y el cine [que] se ha transformado en un ámbito multicultural, bien distinto de lo que era” [one of the most representative neighborhoods of castizo Madrid, collected so many times by literature, music, and the cinema that has
been transformed into a multicultural sphere, so distinct from what it was] (297). Given
the mythical significance of Lavapiés and its associations with Madrid as a whole and
subsequently with a national theater tradition, it is important to note that it is precisely the
most multicultural neighborhood located near the tourist zone of Sol, el barrio de las
Letras, and el Prado that was targeted as the key “stage” for the transformation of the
whole city.

An important element of this urban “spectacle” was the image that would be
consumed by the pedestrian spectators passing through the “escenario de actuación.” To
accomplish this end the Plan General 1997 established several administrative tools
including “la Comisión de Estética Urbana, cuya función [consistía] en definir las
grandes directrices en cuanto a la protección, mantenimiento y mejora de los valores
fundamentales del paisaje urbano” [the Urban Aesthetic Commision, whose function
[consisted] of defining the prinicple directives related to the protection, maintenance, and
improvement of the fundamental values of the urban landscape] (Echenagusia 23). This
new bureaucratic arm of the Ayuntamiento would be charged with closely guarding “la
imagen de la Villa de Madrid” (Echenagusia 23). One of the key provisions of this new
bureaucratic layer was the power of “ejecución sustitutoria” [executive substitution] or
eminent domain. This power was intended for “el mantenimiento del patrimonio
edificado, no sólo los monumentos singulares, sino el conjunto de la ciudad construida, es
consustancial a la ciudad misma” [the maintenance of constructed patrimony, not only
the distinct monuments, but rather the city as a whole is innate to the city itself]
(Echenguasias 50).
Echoing the desire of the monarchy in the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods to convert the city into an “inmenso e integrado decorado físico” [an immense and integrated physical décor] (Ringrose 193), la Comisión de Estética Urbana was charged with requiring property owners to maintain buildings “en condiciones de seguridad y ornato público” [in conditions of safety and public décor] (Echenguasia 50). This ornate city landscape would revive the visual landscape of the city as a whole. As an example of the success of this program, the Ayuntamiento looks to the rehabilitation work done in the Plaza de la Paja as a result of the Plan General 1997. There, in the Madrid de los Austrias, [of the Hapsburgs]

se ha intervenido sobre 17 edificios [. . .]. Se trata de edificios residenciales de los siglos XVIII y XIX, en los que se recuperó el tratamiento de fachadas, utilizando técnicas tradicionales y devolviéndolos los colores y texturas perdidas. De este modo los tonos rojos, amarillos, blancos o azul añil que visten el revoco de las fachadas aportan una gran riqueza de policromía al paisaje.

[There have been interventions in seventeen buildings [. . .]. They were mainly residential buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the façades were recuperated, utilizing traditional techniques and returning them to their lost colors and textures. In this way the red, yellow, white, or indigo tones that dress the plaster of the façades lend a polychromatic richness to the landscape.] (124)

Not only does this “polychromatic richness” evoke the literal image of the past, but it also reasserts the streetscape as a place where power and capital express their influence. If Baroque architecture functioned as urban spectacle to instruct the spectator on the splendor and power of the sovereign, then the bright colors of the refurbished historic city center communicate the control of urban space by the modern-day municipal sovereign, the Ayuntamiento. Though pleasant to consume visually, this rehabilitated urban space is
often designed to attract certain inhabitants and visitors (i.e. young professionals and tourists) while displacing others (the working and lower-working class) to the periphery.

This interest in using image as a means of controlling urban space can also be seen in the criteria for construction laid out in the Cuatro años de gestión. The document sees the city “como un conjunto de elementos inserto en el tejido urbano que configure el espacio de la ciudad desde un punto de vista medioambiental y paisajístico” [as a conjunction of elements inserted into the urban fabric that configures the space of the city from the perspective of the environment and landscape] (Echenagusia 112). This criterion is possible because the city’s visual landscape is conceived as “un elemento singular gracias a su calidad arquitectónica, morfológica o tipológica” [a singular element thanks to its architectural, morphological, and typological quality] (Echenagusia 112).

Gentrification and urban change function as the result of economic processes, but they also rely on visual cues in the form of décor and ambience (coffee shops and hip bars, for example) to transform the symbolic and exchange value of a particular neighborhood. In the case of Madrid this symbolic value is constructed by means of an aesthetic code that attempts to integrate the entire city into one cohesive visual experience.

Another way of altering this system of exchange value is through the use of cultural capital. In a post-Fordist context, cities need to compete to attract the new workers of the contemporary service economy. The dominant paradigm, to which Florida has contributed so heavily, suggests that these workers of the new economy require “places that offer abundant economic opportunity, [and an] exciting cultural and social environment” (Flight 145). This discourse of culture heavily influences the Plan General 1997 in its interest in the “mantenimiento y fomento de equipamientos y sedes.”
institucionales que permitan cualificar el carácter simbólico y emblemático del centro sin interferir con su vocación residencial, fomentando y protegiendo además los usos culturales” [maintenance and fomenting of institutional sites and facilities that allow for the development of the symbolic and emblematic character of the center without interfering in its residential purpose, fomenting and protecting, as well, its cultural uses] (Echenagusia 111). In line with the overall argument of this chapter, institutional sites would play a key role in establishing the city center as a symbolic representation of the whole of the city while also protecting and nurturing its cultural resources. Via these cultural resources and this symbolic work of the city center, Madrid would increase its image as a global capital and leverage the position of the nation-state of Spain amongst various global financial networks (namely the Mediterranean arc and the European-Latin American exchange).

But this scalar component of the Plan General 1997 and its dependence on cultural resources has another important element. Specifically, the neighborhood of Lavapiés was seen as a key site for the overall redevelopment of the city. It was also seen as a model for urban change throughout all of Madrid and the entire territory of Spain. *Cuatro años de gestión* emphasizes that “El ‘Área’ se ha convertido en el punto de referencia, el objetivo de la nueva política de rehabilitación en *España y en Madrid.*” [The ‘Area’ has been converted into the point of reference, the objective of the new rehabilitation policy of *Spain and Madrid*] (Echenagusia 130, emphasis mine).

Significantly, this project is not just intended to be a model for communities at other geographic scales, but required the administrative cooperation of bureaucratic entities at various scales. In particular it provoked the cooperative efforts of the “administraciones
centrales, autonómicas y locales” [central, autonomous, and local administrations] and even included subsidies from the European Union Fondos de Cohesión [Cohesion Funds] (Echenagusia 130). Because of the poor condition of the housing stock and the overall infrastructure the neighborhood was designated an “Área de Rehabilitación Integrada” [Area of Integrated Rehabilitation].\textsuperscript{62}

In Cuatro años de gestión these sites are defined as “[aquellos en] los que se ha detectado una mayor necesidad de inversión pública, por el mal estado del caserío, el escaso poder adquisitivo de sus habitantes junto con la acusada degradación ambiental y social [those in which there has been detected a great necessity for public investment, because of the poor state of the neighborhood, the limited buying power of its inhabitants together with the notable social and environmental degradation] (Echenagusia 112). Of these projects, the “operaciones desplegadas en Malasaña y Lavapiés son, acaso, los ejemplos más relevantes” [ongoing operations in Malasaña and Lavapiés are, perhaps, the most relevant examples] (Echenagusia 112). In addition to the discourses of rehabilitation that characterize this description, it is important to note how these Áreas de Rehabilitación Integradas also had “una dimensión social de gran envergadura” [a social dimension of great importance] that as a result they were “donde se incorpora un proyecto cultural innovador como es el Plan de Itinerarios de Cines y Teatros, que actúa como elemento de conexión entre las Áreas de Rehabilitación Preferente” [where an innovative cultural Project like the Plan for the Route of Theaters and Cinemas was incorporated, that acts as an element of connection between the Áreas of Rehabilitación Preferente] (Echenagusia 112). The rehabilitation of urban space relies on the connective

\textsuperscript{62} These subsidized areas are known as Áreas de Rehabilitación Preferentes as well.
tissue of the cultural resources of the city and the Plan General 1997 actively sought to subsidize and foster the growth of these cultural resources.

In particular, the work being done in Lavapiés was understood to be a preliminary step to the expansion of the tourist corridor of Recoletos-Prado; home to two of the most important museums in Madrid, the Museo del Prado and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, and the central node for the tourist itineraries of Madrid. The writers of Cuatro años de gestión state this interest explicitly and describe the work of Operación Lavapiés as essential to “la ampliación de su área de influencia hacia el oeste a través de las Rondas hasta su encuentro con la calle Bailén y el entorno del Palacio Real” [the expansion of influence to the West along the Rondas until their intersection with the calle Bailén and the environs of the Royal Palace]” (Echenagusia 132). They go on to emphasize that “en este contexto, los nuevos enclaves culturales relacionados con la rehabilitación del Sector 1 de Lavapiés (Sala Olimpia, Circo Estable), unidos a la próxima ampliación del Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, suponen el primer paso en esta dirección” [in this context, the new cultural enclaves related to the rehabilitation of Sector 1 of Lavapiés (Sala Olimpia, Circo Estable), together with the imminent expansion of the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, constitute the first movement in this direction] (Echenagusia 132). Finally, the city planners see the use of the Tabacalera [old Tobacco Factory] as the “impulso definitivo para la consolidación del nuevo eje cultural” [definitive impulse for the consolidation of the new cultural axis] (Echenagusia 132).

Looking at a map of the area one sees that this “eje cultural” extends in a curving line from the Museo del Prado to the South and West through the Museo Reina Sofia and Teatro Valle-Inclán, include the planned Museo de Artes Visuales in the site of the old
Tabacalera. It would then turn towards the Northwest to extend up through the important tourist site of the Rastro neighborhood where the famous Sunday flea market is held, move through the steadily gentrifying neighborhoods of La Latina and the historic neighborhood of Los Austrias [the Hapsburgs] arriving at the Palacio Real. Along the Northern perimeter, this axis would include the Plaza Mayor, the Puerta de Sol, and the Plaza Santa Ana. This series of tourist destinations and cultural sites would form a touristic and cultural belt around the neighborhood of Lavapiés (see Figure 3.5).
Figure 3.5 Representation of cultural rehabilitation of Madrid taken from Madrid: ¿la suma de todos? (96) by Observatorio Metropolitano.

From the outset, activists in the neighborhood (like the okupas to be discussed in the following chapter) reacted to plans to rehabilitate the neighborhood with suspicion. In July 1997 they envisioned that

el plan, en vez de ofrecer soluciones a quienes viven en Lavapiés, más bien abre la puerta a la especulación y expulsará del centro a los sectores populares, atrayendo inversiones y nuev@s vecin@s con poder económico y coches y motos último modelo, cambiando el tipo de vecindario que
caracteriza este barrio, rompiendo la estructura popular y multicultural que hace de Lavapiés un espacio distinto en el centro de Madrid. Sin hacer un gran esfuerzo de imaginación ni ser demasiado agorera@s, se puede ver un imaginario bulldozer que, desde el Pasillo Verde hasta la zona del Reina Sofía, va devorando todo lo que encuentra a su paso.

[the plan, instead of offering solutions to those who live in Lavapiés, opens the door to speculation and will expel the people from the center, attracting investment and ‘new neighbors’ with economic power and the latest cars and scooters, changing the nature of the residents that characterize this neighborhood, breaking the popular and multicultural structure that makes Lavapiés a distinct space in Madrid. Without too much imagination nor without being overly gloomy, one can see an imaginary bulldozer that, from the Pasillo Verde to the area of the Reina Sofía, proceeds to devour all that it finds in its way. (En defensa).]

The ‘cultural bunker’ would consist not only of the Teatro Valle-Inclán, but the “red de hitos urbanos” [network of urban landmarks] that form a virtual ring around the highly desirable real-estate of Lavapiés; a cultural besiegement dazzling visitors with its architectural innovation while speculative capital works to alter the “social tejido” [social fabric] of the neighborhood.

But it isn’t just the activists who cynically believed in this outcome. The city planners, too, clearly saw the establishment of new cultural facilities as central to the renovation of the neighborhood. According to the planners of the Ayuntamiento, this cultural loop with several new installations in the neighborhood of Lavapiés was intended to “mejorar las dotaciones en el barrio generando focos de atracción de actividad urbana que rompan el tradicional aislamiento de Lavapiés con respecto del resto de la ciudad” [improve the resources in the neighborhood by generating attractive focal points of urban activity that break the traditional isolation of Lavapiés with respect to the rest of the city] (Echangusia 132). This would also help to improve “su imagen urbana” [its urban image] (Echangusia 130) and result in “recuperar la vitalidad del barrio pieza clave del centro...
histórico” [recuperating the vitality of a key neighborhood of the historic center]
(Echegausia 130). Finally, the improvement of the cultural resources in Lavapiés would increase “en valor de este modo el carácter cultural del centro de la ciudad en su conjunto” [in value, in this way, the cultural character of the city center in its entirety] (Echegausia 130). The rehabilitation of the urban environment and the cultural resources of the most emblematic neighborhood of the city would impact the cultural quality of life for the entire city. The neighborhood was a means of leveraging a transformation of the city.

Central to developing these cultural resources was “hacer de la Sala Olimpia un hito cultural a la altura de su prestigio”[to make the Sala Olimpia a cultural landmark worthy of its prestige] (Echegausia 140). Fundamental to creating this cultural landmark was to “eliminar el impacto negativo generado por la existencia de los frentes medianeros de los edificios residenciales que conforman la manzana en la que se ubica la sala” [to eliminate the negative impact generated by the existence of the divided fronts of the residential buildings that form the block in which the hall is located] (Echegausia 140). By eliminating the inconsistent façade facing the plaza and replacing it with an iconic building the city would install “una nueva pieza arquitectónica que configure una imagen reconocible en la escena urbana [a new architectural piece that would form a recognizable image in the urban scene] (Echegausia 140). It is a given that the spectacle of this new icon was based on “la capacidad de la arquitectura como elemento impulsor de la rehabilitación de los cascos históricos de las ciudades” [the capacity of architecture to serve as a motor for the rehabilitation of the old quarter of a city] (Echegausia 140).
In conjunction with the other projects proposed in the Plan General of 1997, Lavapiés would benefit from “una red de hitos urbanos que permiten introducir en Lavapiés muestras de arquitectura contemporánea capaces de funcionar como nuevas referencias urbanas integradas en un caserío cuya homogenidad asentada por el tiempo, es uno de los valores del paisaje urbano del barrio.” [a network of urban landmarks that allow for the introduction into Lavapiés examples of contemporary architecture capable of functioning as new urban reference points integrated into a locale whose established homogeneity over time is one of the values of the urban landscape of the neighborhood] (Ech THROUGH THE SPECTER OF THE TERRIBLE (Echenagusia 138, emphasis mine). The spectacle of the Teatro Valle-Inclán was specifically intended to operate in union with other cultural sites. Just as important, the classic castizo landscape of the neighborhood was meant to create a refurbished iconic neighborhood for Madrid.

Interestingly, this emphasis on Lavapiés as one of Madrid’s cultural offerings is complemented heavily by discussion of the extensive problems facing the neighborhood. The writers of Cuatro años de gestión point to the following range of issues facing Lavapiés: a deficient state of the basic infrastructure; the lack of green public space; the lack of cultural and athletic facilities; the poorly maintained buildings; lack of economic activity with 24% of commercial space closed or in disuse; an aging population, and high levels of undocumented immigrants (Echenagusia 130). In basic terms, Lavapiés’ capacity to function as a productive space is limited by its social and physical situation.

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63 The list of cultural facilities mentioned in this two-page text box insert in Cuatro años de gestión . . . include the Jardines del Casino de la Reina, el Centro de Día en el Casino de la Reina, Circo estable en la fábrica de Galletas Pacisa, Centro Cultural de Caja Madrid (now the Casa Encendida), Sala Olimpia, Biblioteca de la UNED en las ruinas de las escuelas Pías y solar del Teatro Lavapiés, and the Museo de Artes Populares en la Corrala de Carlos Arniches (Echenagusia 139).
This list, provided as a text box in the book, also includes the curious comment that one of the problems of Lavapiés is the “inadequada utilización del patrimonio público” [the inadequate use of the public patrimony] (Echenagusia 130).

This ambiguous comment seems to allude to Lavapiés’ character as a “lugar mítico” [mythic place] (Gómez 1). Gómez teases out this notion further in her aforementioned 2006 study of “interculturalidad” [interculturalism] in Lavapiés and suggests that it is “una manera de vivir, un estilo, una historia—una leyenda” [a manner of living, a style, a history—a legend] (1). This emblematic function derives from the fact that Lavapiés “tiene una personalidad inconfundible construida y aceptada por el imaginario colectivo de toda una ciudad y, posiblemente, de todo un país” [has an unmistakable personality constructed and accepted by the collective imaginary of a whole city and, possibly, of an entire country] (Gómez 1). She is quick to point out the ephemeral quality of these categories and later spends much of her article deconstructing these received notions of identity about Lavapiés. Her characterization is useful though, because it alludes to the dominant perception of Lavapiés and speaks to its presence in the imaginary of the city and the nation. This mythic character dances between Lavapiés’ castizo legacy and its contemporary identity as a bastion of neo-bohemianism flavored with the multicultural influence of its more recently arrived immigrant inhabitants.
This image isn’t just a subtext, but one that the Ayuntamiento has actively sought to cultivate in recent years and in doing so has used the perception of Lavapiés as the bastion of Madrid’s diversity as another component of its urban spectacle. As an example of this spectacle, during weekends in May and June of 2009, the Plaza of Lavapiés was devoted to cultural events. The first entitled Tangopiés: Un festival de tango urbano de Madrid [Tangopiés: A Festival of Urban Tango of Madrid] took place over two days and saw booths selling Argentinean empanadas and other delicacies accompanied by the offering of free tango lessons on the Plaza. In the evening the events moved to the nearby Plaza Agustín Lara a block away for a series of tango music and dance performances.\textsuperscript{64} In a more direct appropriation of Lavapiés’ multicultural character the neighborhood has

\textsuperscript{64} See the full listing of events at http://www.mrmonkey.es/tangopies/.
served as the site for the past two years of the BollyMadrid Festival, an event devoted to
the profusion of Bollywood and Indian culture that has included films, food, and a market
of clothes and goods. According to the homepage of the event, “las calles del castizo
barrio de Lavapiés volverán a llenarse con los sonidos, los colores, los sabores, y la
belleza de la cultura india en un jovial ambiente de convivencia” [the streets of the
castizo neighborhood of Lavapiés will be filled again with the sounds, the colors, the
flavors, and the beauty of Indian culture in a jovial ambience of coexistence]
(BollyMadrid). The description captures aptly the way the city has sought to
commodify both the neighborhood’s castizo past and its diverse present into the unique
urban spectacle of Lavapiés. This connection with the past and its flavor of a globalized
future has also enamored the Ayuntamiento, whose writers devote sixteen of the 256
pages contained in Cuatro años de gestión to a section of the city that only officially
exists as a metro stop, a street name, and the name of a plaza. Despite the fact that the
neighborhood of Lavapiés does not even exist in any official way, the Ayuntamiento
entitles the section about Lavapiés “La nueva imagen del centro” [the new image of the
center] (Echenagusia 130).

While Madrid seeks to consolidate its economic and political power over
autonomous communities like Catalonia that seek increasingly more independence, this
“nueva imagen del centro” functions effectively as a bridge between a nationalist, centrist
past (lo castizo) and the image of a refurbished global city. To some degree, in terms of
its financial success and its image Madrid seems to be succeeding. Geographer Eduardo
Santiago Rodríguez suggests that since the 60s and 70s Spain on the whole has joined
“[el] selecto club de los países ricos que controlan los circuitos globales de acumulación

65 For more information on the BollyMadrid festival see http://www.bollymadrid.com/.
y depredación mundial” [the select club of rich countries that control the global circuits of accumulation and plunder] (3). This has been accomplished principally by “reorientándose hacia las actividades propias de la economía financiera, decisional, informacional y de control y gestión de flujos de materiales que alimentan el sistema” [reorienting itself to the activities of the financial, decisional, informational economy and of control and management of flows of materials that feed the system] (Santiago Rodríguez 3). For Santiago Rodríguez these changes have allowed Madrid to reposition itself as the relational node between Spain and the global economy and serving as the entry and exit point for global flows of capital. Madrid’s significance as an access point for capital also has a spatial component given the fact that the capital’s Barajas airport is the principal port of entry to Spain. Notably, it is specifically “el hub más importante en las comunicaciones entre Europa y Latinoamérica de modo que funciona como un modo hiperconnector global” [the most important hub in the communications between Europe and Latin America resulting in its function as a global hyperconnector node] (Santiago Rodríguez 10). This role as hyperconnector node has made it the eighth most trafficked airport in the world (Santiago Rodríguez 10).

The growth in Madrid’s economic clout during the late nineties and early 2000s (until hitting the financial wall in the global financial crisis of 2007), occurred despite the size of the population and territory of Madrid and the Comunidad de Madrid. Santiago Rodriguez cites the fact that the Comunidad de Madrid in 2007 represents merely 2% of the national territory and contains a mere 13.5% of the population, and in 2001 was responsible for 17.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (6). Much of this economic influence is due to the heavy presence of the most strategic service sectors in Madrid.
From 1993 to 2004 (the period during which the Plan General 1997 was developed, published, and implemented) Madrid saw employment in business services, financial brokerage firms, and real estate grow by 116% (Santiago Rodríguez 8). The local-global intersection has been key to this expansion given that it is the consequence of “la apertura comercial al exterior y de la expansión internacional de las empresas—y de la internacionalización de flujos de capital” [the commercial opening to the exterior and of the international expansion of business—and of the internationalization of the flows of capital] (Santiago Rodríguez 8). The internationalization of Madrid’s economy has played a key role in transforming the nature of businesses functioning in and around the capital city.

In terms of flows of capital, Madrid’s transformation has been even more profound. From the 1970s to the early 2000s Madrid has seen a shift from a scant presence of national financial institutions and banks to the majority of these institutions maintaining a site in the capital. In the broader European context, the trend is the same with every foreign bank in Spain having a site in Madrid (Santiago Rodriguez 7), a situation that has facilitated Madrid’s ability to secure extensive foreign investment.

Notably, these numbers were at a peak precisely in the period in which the Plan General 1997 was being executed and at the time when Cuatro años de gestión was being written. During that period, over 70% of foreign capital flowed through Madrid and nearly 80%

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66 Santiago Rodriguez presents data showing that in the 1970s only 28% of banking entities were to be found in Madrid. This number grew over the following decades to 49.6% in 1985 and in 2004 to 63.4% of the national banks having a presence in Madrid.

67 In each of the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 the average level of foreign investment has been 58%. It has also served as the exit point for Spanish capital during these years with over 55% of the Spanish investment emanating from the city.
of Spanish investment flowed out of the city.\textsuperscript{68} This relationship with global capital and finance has had a commensurate impact on the growth of \textit{La Bolsa de Madrid} [the Madrid Stock Exchange]. Between 1975 and 1985 the stock exchange shifted from managing 53\% of national stock transactions to 79\% (Santiago Rodríguez 7).\textsuperscript{69}

These changes had an inevitable impact on the other economic regions of the country. In particular, it has reoriented the traditional rivalry between Madrid and Barcelona “claramente a favor de la capital”[clearly in favor of the capital] (Santiago Rodríguez 8). In a 2001 article, “Madrid se va” [Madrid is leaving], Maragall describes this shift pointing out that “antes, Madrid era la capital política y Barcelona y Bilbao, y luego Valencia, las capitales industriales y económicas. Ahora figura que es al revés. Ahora Madrid es la capital económica, la capital de innovación y de la nueva economía, mientras que el poder político se ha decentralizado” [before, Madrid was the political capital and Barcelona and Bilbao, and later Valencia, the industrial and economic capitals. Now it appears to be the reverse. Now Madrid is the economic capital, the capital of innovation and of the new economy, while the political power has been decentralized] (Maragall). By 2006 this image of Madrid’s economic power had been actualized with the capital city accounting for twenty-one of the twenty-nine business located in Spain that were included in the Forbes 2000 (detailing the 2000 most important corporations in the world). Similarly, of the nine businesses located in Spain recognized in the Fortune Global 500 seven made their home in Madrid and its autonomous community (Santiago Rodríguez 52). As of July of 2009, these developments have

\textsuperscript{68} It is important to note that Madrid’s economic dominance is not, by any means, complete. In 2000 Catalonia accounted for 28\% of the commercial transactions with the exterior compared to Madrid’s 19\% (Santiago Rodríguez 10).
\textsuperscript{69} Similarly, between 1990 and 2000 the exchange saw its capitalization multiply by eight from 70.5 billion Euros to 537 billion Euros (Santiago Rodríguez 7).
vaulted Madrid to seventh place among cities with Global 500 companies and have placed Spain in tenth place among countries with the presence of these large corporations.

Of course since reaching all of these benchmarks as a global financial capital Spain has been one of the countries of the European Union hardest hit by the global financial meltdown of 2007-2008. In 2008 an editorial in The Economist described how “the housing bust at home, as much as the financial turmoil abroad, has sent Spain skidding towards recession [. . . .] Already this year unemployment has shot up by 750,000 to 2.8m, or 12.3% of the workforce” (“After the fiesta”). In April 2010 Spain’s unemployment rate reached 20%—double the 10% rate of the Euro Zone in general—with some 4.5 million Spaniards out of work (House)—the product of six straight quarters of economic contraction that Spain has seen “since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2007 precipitated the collapse of its credit-driven economic-growth model” (House). The dual façades of the financial service sector and a highly-inflated housing bubble eventually undermined Madrid’s ascension to global prominence. Now Spain, with Madrid as its financial figurehead, finds itself classified with the other PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain) of the European Union whose financial problems threatened to spread the contagion of economic collapse across Europe. 70

In the midst of Madrid’s ascension, the presence of global capital has had implications for the cultural life of the city as well. One of the key points in the previously mentioned “bunker cultural” is the Casa Encendida, a cultural center that opened in December of 2002. Since its opening the Casa Encendida has been a place for

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cultural offerings from “las expresiones artísticas más vanguardistas, a cursos y talleres sobre áreas como medio ambiente o solidaridad” [the most avant-garde artistic expressions, to courses and workshops about areas like the environment or solidarity] (“Qué es <E”). It has become a new locale in the neighborhood of Lavapiés for the “artes escénicas, cine, exposiciones y otras manifestaciones de la creación contemporánea” [scenic arts, cinema, exhibitions, and other manifestations of contemporary creativity] (“Qué es <E”). Importantly though, this project is an initiative of the Caja Madrid, one of the largest financial institutions in Spain, and its program of Obra Social [Social Work]. Therefore, it is a direct expression of global capital into the cultural scene of Madrid and of Lavapiés. As a result, this cultural center, despite the quality of its artistic offerings, is arguably more interested in riding the coattails of the presence of the nearby Reina Sofía museum just a few blocks away. That is, its public is not the neighborhood of Lavapiés but rather the international tourists that make the Reina Sofía an essential part of their visit to Madrid. It is the clearest example of the links between global capital, the production of culture, and the transformation of Lavapiés into a twenty-first century urban spectacle.

That ironically, in February of 2002, it was the adjacent building around the corner at Amparo 103 that local activists chose to okupar [squat] in order to establish the third manifestation of the Centrol Social Okupado Autogestionado Laboratorio [Self-managed Social Center The Laboratory]. This self-managed social center sought to create its own spectacle of Lavapiés that would call into question the program of real-estate speculation and gentrification being carried out by Ayuntamiento in collusion with the
interests of capital across the city. It is this subversive urban spectacle that will be the focus of the following chapter.
Chapter IV
The Spectacle of Okupando Lavapiés

The previous chapters of this thesis have articulated the relationship between power, the production of space at varying geographic scales, and the spectacle of the urban environment. I showed how the construction of a specific cultural institution, the Teatro Valle-Inclán, was integrated into broader plans for redevelopment of the neighborhood of Lavapiés and the urban core of the city of Madrid. Moreover, these rehabilitation efforts were central to plans to remake the image of the capital city and the nation-state of Spain in order to reposition them more favorably in the global circuits of capital. The Teatro Valle-Inclán was a localized spectacle embedded in the more global spectacle associated with the commodification of urban space and the selling of place. Yet the city planners, the Ayuntamiento, and the cultural institutions of the State were not the only actors in the creation of Lavapiés during the years in question.

In this chapter I extend the argument of this project to illustrate how a more resistant urban spectacle was also taking place in the lead up to the construction of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. An analysis of the spectacular cultural production generated by the CSOA Laboratorio 03, (Feb. 9, 2002-June 9, 2003) an important manifestation of the okupa movement in Lavapiés, will demonstrate two things. First, that even for resistant discourses of urbanism spectacle is an essential component to the production of space. Secondly, analysis of this resistant urban spectacle reveals articulations amongst various geographic scales—even for the local activists of the Labo 3, the local, the municipal, and the global are overlapping and intertwined.
Methodologically, this chapter continues to look to Henri Lefebvre’s triad regarding the production of space. If Chapter Three illustrated how the Teatro Valle-Inclán manifested the abstract space of urban planners and the dominant modes of production, then this chapter will rely on Lefebvre’s notion of *perceived* space. As was outlined in the Introduction, Lefebvre’s triad of spatial production derives from a tension between an official technocratic space committed to the production of capital, the aesthetics or meaningfulness of that space (its “placeness”), and of interest in this chapter, the performance of individuals within that space. Also referred to as spatial practice, Lefebvre associates *perceived space* with the “the use of the body” and, significantly, “activity unrelated to work” (Lefebvre 40). In contrast to the abstract space central to *conceived* space, *perceived space* is not complicit in the productive use of space associated with the dominant modes of production. Rather, it is essential to the social reproduction of space because movement of the body through space confronts “traces [which] embody the ‘values’ assigned to particular routes: danger, safety, waiting, promise” (Lefebvre 118). This phenomenological encounter of the body in space often reproduces the codes of that space, and therefore puts them into practice and hence becomes a spatial practice. Simultaneously, this encounter between the body and social codes offers opportunities for spatial practice to resist the *conceived space* aligned with capitalist production. It is precisely this resistant spatial practice that will be the focus of this chapter.

Central to the resistant culture produced by the *okupas* of the CSOA Laboratorio 03 was a theatrical use of space that moved bodies through the streets of the neighborhood in an attempt to reinscribe the neighborhood’s social codes. These spatial
practices sought to incorporate a range of publics into their performances in order to break the fourth wall separating the public from the performers and make the public complicit in their resistant production of space. Given that the public for any given spectacle associated with the Laboratorio 03 was not merely the neighborhood of Lavapiés, but also the municipality of Madrid as a whole, and even, arguably, the nation of Spain this analysis of spatial practice will also demonstrate how these social practices at the scale of Lavapiés unfolded into and helped to construct practices at various geographic scales.

In short, the artistic and activist spectacles produced by the Laboratorio 03 illustrate the notion of ‘flat ontology’ developed in the Introduction because the theatrical performances, online textual production, and the act of okupar [squatting] itself, discursively inscribe a “[...] neighborhood’ of practices, events, and orders that are folded variously into other unfolding sites” (Marston et al. 426). The Laboratorio 03 disrupted hegemonic spatial production by creating an urban spectacle fraught with the interpenetration of various scales of spatial practice.

**Resisting the Spectacle**

On February 21, 2006 the Teatro Valle-Inclán was inaugurated with much fanfare and celebration by the city leaders of Madrid. As has been illustrated in the previous chapter, this new building was more than just another theater venue for the capital city of Madrid, but figured prominently in the Ayuntamiento’s plans to rehabilitate the Lavapiés neighborhood and continue to develop a circuit of cultural attractions throughout the Centro district. In contrast to the self-congratulatory rhetoric found in the publication
Madrid: cuatro años de gestión del plan general de ordenación urbana de Madrid 1997

many local activists saw the building as a symbol of the “museificación, y reificación” [museumification and reification] of the neighborhood into a “mercancía de consumo para la supuesta élite seudomestiza” [commodity of consumption for the supposedly pseudo-mestizo elite] (Grupo Surrealista 90). This particular critique was written by a group called the Grupo Surrealista de Madrid [Surrealist Group of Madrid], a Situationist actors' group working in Lavapiés and Madrid. In their text, they reinterpret the architects Paredes and Pedrosa’s description of their building and reconceive its façade of glass and concrete as a “remedio de un bunker, de una trincher, del muro de Cisjordania, materialización monolítica en el espacio físico del poder despótico y de las relaciones
sociales que crea” [an imitation of a bunker, of a trench, of the West Bank wall, the monolithic materialization in physical space of despotic power and of the social relations that it creates] (91).

![Protesters at the inauguration of the Teatro Valle-Inclán](image-url)

**Figure 4.2 Protesters at the inauguration of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Used with permission from the archives of Antonio Girón.**

This resistance to the abstract space projected by the Teatro Valle-Inclán manifested itself in a series of protests surrounding the building’s inauguration. On the day of the inauguration, while several important city leaders, including the Mayor of Madrid, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, arrived for the event a local activist situated himself in a window high above the plaza with a bullhorn.71 From there his catcalls and mocking slogans rained down on the plaza. As if channeling the medieval street performers discussed in the Introduction, this protester thought it important to wear a shiny red

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71 This description relies on the video archives of the protest made by filmmaker Antonio Girón of Kinowo Media and was acquired with the gracious help of local activist Jacobo Rivero.
clown’s nose to punctuate his seemingly individual act of resistance. This seeming act of buffoonery lent the protesters’ actions an air of theatricality which was then reinforced by his compatriots on the ground who carried banners and signs and wore, of course, their own shiny red clown noses (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 4.3 Sign from protest of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Used with permission from archives of Antonio Girón.

The protesters’ signs emphasized the absurdity of investment in such a luxurious cultural facility while basic neighborhood services remained absent. This position was exemplified in one protester’s sign which read “muertas de tanta cultura sin centro de salud” [dead from so much culture without a health center] (Girón). For the protesters, the brand new Teatro Valle-Inclán did not represent a contribution to the neighborhood,
but rather an architectural symbol of the Ayuntamiento’s lack of interest in transforming the neighborhood for the current residents, but rather a policy dedicated to: “To’ para la gente guapa, [y] que se muevan los feos” [Everything for the beautiful people, [and] ugly folks get out] (Girón). This discourse of resistance to the imminent gentrification was reflected in other signs that read “Queda inaugurado este búnker” [This bunker stands inaugurated] (Girón) that intertwine the discourse of gentrification with an allusion to the Teatro as a military fortification. As was explained in Chapter Three, the activists rely on this term cultural bunker to describe the use of cultural institutions to besiege the neighborhood and lay the groundwork for capital to do its work gentrifying the neighborhood.

Figure 4.4 Okupa symbol on the front of the CSOA Patio Maravillas in the neighborhood of Malasaña in Madrid. Photo by author.
In addition, protesters wondered why after so much money (nearly twenty million Euros invested by the Ayuntamiento and the Ministerio de Cultura), the neighborhood remained devoid of space to call its own. They asked “¿Es este el nuevo centro social?” (Girón) (see Figure 3). Yet these protesters were not interested in just any social center, but rather one that would fill the void left by the eviction of the Laboratorio 03 some two and a half years earlier in July of 2003. This connection is made explicit in the distinctive circled lighting bolt symbol found on the sign (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). It is a symbol that local activist and former *okupa* Jacobo Rivero described in an e-mail dialogue with this author as a symbol that “significa un rayo que abre puertas y ventanas” [signifies a lightning bolt that opens doors and windows]. He went on to point out that “el movimiento de okupaciones lo utiliza para avisar que una casa está okupada. Se usa en todas las casas okupadas de Europa” [the *okupa* movement utilizes it to indicate that a house is *okupada*. It is used in all *okupa* houses in Europe]. With this explanation in mind, it is clear that the protests during the inauguration of the Teatro Valle-Inclán were not merely about the theater building itself. Rather, one of the subtexts to the protests of the Teatro Valle-Inclán was the continuing story of the *okupa* movement in Lavapiés and more specifically the efforts to establish a Centro Social Okupado Autogestionado [Self-Managed Okupado Social Center] in the neighborhood. This subtext was illustrated in a sign that read “3 años sin el Laboratorio, Centro Social ¡Ya! En la tabacalera” [Three years without the Laboratorio, A social center in the tabacalera already! ”] (Girón). The sign pleads to the city to turn over the large vacant industrial space of the tabacalera to

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72 The term *okupa* spelled with the non-standard *k* (as opposed to the standard spelling *ocupa* or *ocupar*) generally alludes to politically motivated acts of squatting often with the intention of establishing a social center. This contrasts individuals that squat merely in search of housing because of direct economic need and survival. Because of these very specific connotations, the term *okupa* will not be translated to English since the English term squatting lacks the layer of meaning communicated by the subversive *k*. 
local activists in order to replace the social center of the Laboratorio. More importantly, it highlights how the confrontation over the Ayuntamiento’s investment in the Teatro Valle-Inclán was merely another chapter in a broader narrative of contested urban space in Lavapiés.

![Figure 4.5 Construction next to the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Used with permission from archives of Antonio Girón.](image)

This fact is captured most aptly in the two images. The first one is the juxtaposition of the red clown noses of the protesters and spectacle of the steel and glass façade of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Their clown noses undermine the straight narrative put forth by the Ministerio de Cultura and the Ayuntamiento regarding the contribution of the Teatro Valle-Inclán to the neighborhood. The second image is in a pan shot found in
Antonio Girón footage from the inauguration. As the camera moves across the reflective black glass of the Teatro, the barriers and crushed concrete of a construction site fill the frame. The city is in process as its newly constructed product, the Teatro Valle-Inclán, is juxtaposed with the deconstruction of the streetscape next to it. The construction of the Teatro Valle-Inclán is a part of the larger process by which the urban space is being produced. That is, the story of the Teatro Valle-Inclán is not contained within itself, but is very much incorporated into the story of urban space in Lavapiés. In order to tell the story of urban space in Lavapiés it is essential to come back to those red clown noses and the allusion to a more subversive spectacle that had taken place in those three years earlier in the Laboratorio 03. It is this spectacle of resistance that this chapter will explore in more detail. But in order to contemplate the eighteen months during which the Laboratorio 03 existed, it is necessary to move further back in time and situate this spectacle of urban resistance in its historical context. Therefore, the next section of this chapter will discuss the history of the okupa movement and describe in more detail the Laboratorio 03. Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate how even the resistant urban spectacle of a centro social autogestionado okupado undermines rigid notions of scale.

What is an Okupa?

The following section will summarize the history of the Laboratorio 03 in Lavapiés. This discussion will help clarify the ideological orientation as well as the practice of that ideology for the social center that is the focus of this chapter. Given that the okupa movement in Madrid is made up of “diversos colectivos, desde el antifascismo y el feminismo hasta la antiglobalización y la contrainformación” (Martínez López
Okupaciones 10), this task is not a simple one. Moreover, sociologist Lorenzo Navarrette (1999) argues that for the okupa movement this diversity “es precisamente su fuerza: su ambigüedad, su indefinición que impide ser atrapado, diseccionado por un discurso (sociológico, político) que les es ajeno” [is precisely its strength: its ambiguity, its indefinition that impedes it being trapped, dissected by a discourse (sociological, political) that is alien to it” (13). The ephemeral nature of the ideology makes defining the okupa movement extremely difficult.

Similarly, the more general term ‘squatting’ has a broad range of definitions as well as a long history. The range of examples might include workers occupying a workplace, a student “sit-in,” rural tenants reappropriating arable land, as well as the mere habitation of a domicile out of necessity. These might all be examples of ‘squatting,’ but it must be made clear that this study considers the very particular phenomenon of squatting in which a building is inhabited by individuals, but more often a group of individuals, for the specific purpose of establishing a social center. For this reason, the term okupar has a much more narrow definition and a much more concrete history than that of squatting in general, especially in Spain.

In his more general study of okupas in Europe Hans Pruijt attempts to flesh out some of these differences when he states that “okupar es vivir (o usar de otro modo) inmuebles sin el consentimiento de su propietario […] con la intención de usarlos durante un tiempo relativamente largo (más de un año)” [okupar is living (or using in another way) buildings without the consent of the owner […] with the intention of using them during a relatively long time (more than one year)] (35). This delineation between squatting motivated by poverty, the occupation of businesses, and the more politically-
motivated act of \textit{okupar} is important because in many cases the motivation affects the types of buildings targeted, the theoretical orientation, the goals, and results.\footnote{For a more detailed explanation of these differences see the helpful chart in Pruijt pages 59-60.} Pruijt also makes clear that the act of squatting out of economic necessity (i.e. in search of basic housing) is quite different from the more self-aware action taken to “satisfacer una necesidad de expresión contra-cultural y/o política” [satisfy a need for counter-cultural and/or political expression] (36) because it emphasizes that the act of \textit{okupar} is a “forma de participación social y política” [form of social and political participation] (Martínez López \textit{Okupaciones} 26).\footnote{Pruijt cites the work of Lowe (1986) to develop this definition.} The presence of a political agenda is an essential element in this study because it plays a major role in the way that the act of \textit{okupar} has been utilized in Spain and created the circumstances under which the various Laboratorios were established in Lavapiés between 1997 and 2003.

Sociologists like Martínez López (2002, 2004), Argilés (2004), and Navarette (1999) amongst others have also done extensive work to sketch out the parameters of just what it means to \textit{okupar} and often struggle with the need to characterize it as a Social Movement. This term, of course, has a range of definitions and an extensive bibliography within the field of Sociology, but Martínez López’ 2002 book on \textit{okupas} provides a functional definition in which a Social Movement is “una acción colectiva específica que activa relaciones de poder hacia sus contextos (no solo políticos, sino también espaciales, sociales, o económicos)” [a specific collective action that activates power relations within their contexts (not only political, but also spatial, social, or economic)] (Martínez López \textit{Okupaciones} 26).\footnote{It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail the extensive bibliography in the field of sociology devoted to this term. Martínez López cites several sources to develop this definition. Some of the most} Applying this definition to the direct action of \textit{okupar} emphasizes its
position at a nexus of power relations in the modern capitalist democracy since it fundamentally questions the right to private property. This is particularly true when the squatters actively make their presence known (as will be shown later in the case of the Laboratorios). The spectacle of their presence undermines the vested authority of capital to manage and control urban space, an act that reverberates locally and globally.

For this reason the use of squatting in its various manifestations has been utilized as a form of direct-action political resistance throughout Western Europe for some time. As a result, establishing a finite starting point chronologically or geographically for this Social Movement is difficult. Therefore, of course, the type of politically-motivated squatterism associated with the okupas is not something found only in the Spanish context. Rather, the Spanish manifestation of this direct-action technique has its roots in movements that occurred in various locations across Western Europe. Martínez López's 2002 book Okupaciones de viviendas y de centros sociales: Autogestión, contracultura y conflictos urbanos [Okupaciones of Housing and Social centers: Self-Management, Counter-Culture and Urban Conflicts] provides an informative overview of these influences and pays particular attention to important squatting movements that developed out of the economic turmoil of the post-war period in England, Holland, Germany, and Italy. In each of these cases the sixties and seventies were seminal periods in the development of squatterism as the economic needs of large swaths of the urban population (i.e. a lack of housing) converged with a more general radicalization of the Left to allow for squatterism to grow into a social movement.

In England this relationship between economic necessity and the more general political context was particularly notable. Here, self-managed social centers emerged from the government-sponsored community hostels that had been established to accommodate the extensive homeless population of the post-war period. Over time the mismanagement of these spaces and the intervention of anarchist activists transformed many of them into highly visible examples of direct-action politics (Martínez López Okupaciones 98). This process assisted in the consolidation of a somewhat more well-defined ideology with concrete practices that included “la cultura asamblearia, [y] la creación de servicios comunes en muchas de las viviendas okupadas en cooperativas” [assembly culture, [and] the creation of common services] (Martínez López Okupaciones 99). The notion of individuals occupying buildings to live in them was transformed into a more dynamic process in which occupied buildings were used to provide “alternativas autogestionadas [. . .] a los problemas de la vivienda” [self-managed alternatives [. . .] to the problems of housing] (Martínez López Okupaciones 99). That is, they became sites to establish new spaces of community outside of the dominant discourses on social services offered by the State or the market.

Another important influence on the Spanish okupas was the kraaker movement that took place in Holland during the eighties and nineties. This example is important because of the sheer numbers of squatters believed to have been involved with an estimated 20,000 individual squatters in Amsterdam alone in the mid-1980s (Martínez López Okupaciones 106). The case of Holland was an inspiring model for many activists in Spain not only because of these sheer numbers, but also because the social center model that had become paradigmatic also had many examples of social centers
successfully negotiating a legal existence with the municipal government. These social centers were so embedded into the urban fabric of some Dutch cities that in many cases the municipal governments would send homeless people to the collectives so the squatters, relying on their extensive knowledge of the abandoned (i.e. available) buildings in the city, would find them housing (Martínez López Okupaciones 106-7).

The other notable case cited by Martínez López is that of Italy where highly active anarchist and communist political activists established social centers that would come to characterize the okupaciones of Spain. Unlike the squatter movements in England and Germany (another notable example mentioned by Martínez López), the squatter movement in Italy gained momentum as the nineties began and the punk, DIY (Do It Yourself) aesthetic of the eighties began to subside (cultural strains that were important in Holland and England). The Italian squatters tapped the new sources of political energy that accompanied the growth of the anti-globalization movement and the new ecological activism of the early nineties. Additionally, these squatters were some of the first to develop “iniciativas tecnológicas paralelas como las radios libres y la creación de un servidor de Internet” [parallel technological innovations like free-radio and the creation of an Internet server] (Martínez López Okupaciones 109). These techniques for broadening their influence and expanding their visibility through technology would be models that would be replicated in the Spanish context.

In Spain, like in the other countries of Western Europe, the first strains of the okupa movement occur in the late 1970s with scattered instances of communal living and

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76 In Germany squatters are called besetzer. For additional commentary on okupas see also Chapter Five of Feixa, Costa, and Pallares Movimientos juveniles en la península Ibérica: Graffitis, Grifotas, Okupas (2002).
social centers occurring in both rural and urban contexts. Urban historian Fernando de Terán (1999) describes this period in the 1970s as one in which

las ciudades españolas en general mostraban bien claramente en su fisonomía, las visibles huellas y cicatrices que les había producido el acelerado crecimiento de su población y de las actividades productivas y de servicios que se habían acumulado en ellas, sin que hubiese habido tiempo ni recursos para hacer frente debidamente a esa enorme y rápida avalancha.

[Spanish cities in general clearly revealed in their physiognomy the visible footprints and scars that had been produced by the accelerated growth of the population and of the productive activities and services that had accumulated in them without having had the time or resources to appropriately confront that enormous and rapid avalanche]. (262)

Frustrated by this deterioration and the lack of services provided by the State, an organized neighborhood movement developed. These groups were committed to protesting the problems of housing (*chabolismo* or shanty towns), the lack of health centers and green spaces, and the general deterioration of public installations in neighborhoods throughout Spain. Together, the *okupas* and the neighborhood association movement were some of the clearest examples of “movimientos urbanos de carácter progresista” (Adell Argilés and Martínez López 22).

During this time period of the late 1970s and early 80s there appeared with more and more frequency *okupaciones* in urban centers throughout Spain. These incidences were efforts to rearticulate the “tradicionales ocupaciones colectivizadoras de fábricas y fincas del repertorio de acción de los movimientos obrero y campesino” [the traditional collectivized occupations of factories and farms from the repertoire of action of the worker and peasant movements] (Adell Argilés and Martínez López 22). In most cases these early strands of the *okupa* movement transpired in the urban triad of Bilbao, Barcelona, and of course, Madrid. One might attribute some of this tendency to the heavy
industrialization in these areas and the commensurate activism of the large anarcho-
syndicalist trade union, the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo [CNT] [National Workers
Federation] and other anarchist and Leftist political groups. This “izquierda radical
heredera de la de los 70” [radical left descended from that of the 70s] (“Aquellos
maravillosos años” 2) began to construct “espacios comunitarios alejados de la izquierda
parlamentaria y de las viejas organizaciones Leninistas” [community spaces distanced
from the parliamentary left and the old leninist organizations] (“Aquellos maravillosos
años” 2). Though established by groups espousing modified versions of traditional
political discourses in Spain, these spaces would offer a place for non-institutionalized
political discourse to incubate and develop.

Not surprisingly, given its often marginal and radical position in Spanish politics,
it was the Basque Country that saw “las más numerosas tentativas por parte de colectivos
de gente joven para okupar locales donde poder realizar sus actividades” [the most
numerous attempts on the part of youth collectives to okupar sites where they could
realize their activities] (Martínez López Okupaciones 142-3). These gaztetxes or youth
houses were some of the first CSOAs to come onto the Spanish scene that endured more
than a few weeks or a few months.77 This activity culminated in the years of 1984 and
1985 in which the okupa movement really gained traction and began its first real wave of
expansion across the urban centers of Spain.

It was in this period that the first okupación occurred in Madrid. After two years
of planning, activists established a social center on the Calle Amparo 83 in the offices of
an old hydroelectric company. In a location just a block and a half from where the

77 Martínez López includes the example of the gaztetxe Skuat in the city of Ludio that was active for
almost eleven years from and Gazteizkio Gaztetxea in Vitoria that lasted thirteen years (Okupaciones 143-
4).
Laboratorio 03 would be located some eighteen years later, it was one of the first sites to function as both social center and housing. As a result, this experiment received the support of neighborhood associations, the Department of Youth of the Community of Madrid, and lots of attention from the media, but nonetheless was shut down after only ten days (Martínez López Okupaciones 144). This early okupación and subsequent ones on the Calle Argumosa and the Calle La Madera all took place in Lavapiés and forshadowed the important role that Lavapiés would play in the okupa movement in Madrid. Established by counter-culture punks and groups associated with the CNT, the casas okupadas in these locations did not last long (the site at the Calle Argumosa, like the Amparo site, only lasted 13 days) (Rivero). Nonetheless, according to the anarchist website nodo50.org which contains many archival documents regarding okupas in Madrid, it was during these fleeting moments of okupación that “se empiezan a conformar en torno a ellas una serie de colectivos que comienzan a trabajar en los temas clásicos del movimiento: cárceles, antimilitarismo, represión” [a series of collectives began to form within them that began work in the classic themes of the movement: prisons, antimilitarism, and repression (“Aquellos Maravillosos años” 2). This ideological development was due in part to the fact that the experiences at Amparo 83 led to the convening of the first Asamblea de Okupas de Madrid [Okupa Assembly of Madrid], a space for discussion and debate that allowed the movement to share techniques, refine its ideology and garner a sense of identity (Martínez López Okupaciones 146).

Much of this ideological framework was a result of visits to Hamburg, Germany and the important CSOA Haffenstrasse that became a reference point for the consolidation of “la nueva autonomía urbana: enfrentamiento total al estado, solidaridad
internacionalista, lucha anticárceles, vida comunitaria” [the new urban autonomy: confrontation total with the State, international solidarity, anti-prison resistance, community life] (“Aquellos Maravillosos años” 3). During this seminal period in the development of the Spanish *okupa* movement, what would become locally focused acts of subversion were very much immersed in international ideological currents of resistance. This would continue into the 1990s when the *okupa* movement in Spain and in Europe in general would begin to lose its scattershot quality and begin to develop a more global sensibility. The catalyst for this process was a 1991 meeting of CSOAs held in Venice that would be highly influential for the Spanish participants.

According to a document entitled “‘Aquellos maravillosos años’: una historia de la okupación en Madrid” published on the anarchist website Nodo50.org, it was in Venice where the Spanish *okupas* were really exposed to the Italian model of CSOA. Seeing how they

[estaban] totalmente raizados en lo territorial, en su entorno urbano, participando en la conflictividad política y en la cotidianidad, incluyendo la sanidad, las fábricas y otras experiencias productivas. Lucha autónoma [asumiría] en Madrid la tarea de llevar el proyecto político de los centros sociales a los barrios, al territorio, como ya ocurriría en el País Vasco con los gaztetxes.

[were totally rooted in the territorial, in their urban context, participating in political conflict and in daily life, including health services, the factories and other productive experiences. Autonomous battle would assume in Madrid the task of bringing the political project of the social centers to the neighborhoods, to the territory, just as was already occurring in the Basque Country with the gaztetxes.] (“Aquellos maravillosos años” 3).

In contrast to the more underground tendencies of the squatter movements in England and Germany, the visible activity of the Italian model and its direct engagement with their territory (i.e. neighborhood) inspired the activists who begin to *okupar* in Madrid
(Rivero, Personal Interview). It is this period of consolidation that Martínez López considers the early stages of the *okupa* movement and suggests that it was characterized by a lack of focus and a lack of refinement in their techniques.

This period of growth and development can be partially attributed to the social and economic circumstances in which it took place. It was during this time (late 1980s early 1990s) that one of the more recent economic boom/bust cycles occurs. Characterized by high rates of speculative growth (in particular in the real estate market) and subsequent financial crisis, this process was accompanied by the broader transformation of the Spanish economy from an industrial one to a more service-oriented one. This results in many youths being left out of work (for lack of skills) and without access to housing (because of the speculative boom in the real estate market). Simultaneously, the process of real estate speculation begins to transform the urban space of Spain’s historic centers and, in particular, the character of many working class neighborhoods as the local factories begin to be abandoned (Martínez López “Del urbanismo” 86).

In 1996 a key shift in the legal context coincided with significant growth in the sheer number and quality of the *casas okupadas* across Spain. The penal code was amended in 1996 to make the act of *okupar* a crime. In the same year, there were forty-two *okupaciones* and subsequent evictions across Spain. By the year 2000 this number would grow to nearly 200 across the whole of Spain (again with most of this activity occurring in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid) (Martínez López *Okupaciones* 154, Flecha 34). Because the act of *okupar* became a punishable crime several of the evictions were highly-visible actions taken by authorities to remove well-established
casas okupadas. For example, the eviction in 1996 of the Cine Princesa, in Barcelona, was executed by some 200 anti-riot police, twenty-five police vans, fire engines, helicopters, and tear gas and resulted in the arrest of some sixty people and subsequent protests by some 1,500 to 3,000 in the streets (Martínez López Okupaciones 155-7).

Similarly, the next year in Madrid the eviction of La Guindalera saw 160 people (some reports say 200) arrested. The large number of arrests and the sheer size and cultural importance of this social center transformed this eviction into one of the seminal moments in the history of the okupas in Madrid. The building held nearly 3000 people and as a result had become a key focal point for the underground music scene with concerts and performances filling the building to capacity (Rivero “Personal Interview”). Because of this important role in the cultural life of Madrid and the intensity of the confrontation with the authorities during the eviction some 5000 people took to the streets to protest the arrests of the 160 okupas from La Guindalera. It was the largest protest associated with a casa okupada in the history of Madrid. As a result, La Guindalera was “al nivel micro y el nivel de lo que fuera los espacios okupados [de Madrid], como el Seattle del movimiento antiglobalización. [on the micro level and the level of whatever were the occupied spaces [of Madrid], like the Seattle of the anti-globalization movement] (Rivero “Personal Interview”).

In short, La Guindalera was a watershed moment for the okupa movement in Madrid the due to the convergence of media attention and authoritarian response that had transformed the very act of okupación and desalojo [eviction] into a theatrical display of resistance with urban space as its stage. As a result, the lack of impunity shown by the authorities, instead of deterring the okupas, emboldened and inspired them. An assembly
of okupas that took place in Madrid in the wake of the events of La Guindalera resulted in a commitment to “volver a okupar en el centro de Madrid” [to okupar again in the center of Madrid] (Rivero “Personal Interview”). The location in the city chosen for this strategic move was Lavapiés and the resulting action was the okupación in April of 1997 of an old building of the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agrarias [National Institute of Agricultural Research] located at number 68 on the Calle Embajadores. The proceeding social center was appropriately named El Laboratorio, and was the first iteration of what would later become the Laboratorio 03 that is the primary focus of this chapter.78

Los Laboratorios: Ideology and Performance

The time period in the late nineties and early 2000s was an important one for the okupa movement in Madrid and, in particular, in Lavapiés. The change in the penal code

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**Figure 4.6 Brief Chronology of Centros Sociales Okupados in Lavapiés**

- C/ Amparo 83 - November 1985 (10 days)
- Ronda de Atocha - April 1987 (13 days)
- CS La Eskalera Karakola (November 1996-Present)
- Laboratorio II Pza de Cabestreros (Jan. 6 1999-Aug. 28 2001)
- Laboratorio III C/ Amparo 103. (Feb. 9, 2002-June 9, 2003)

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78 Two other significant centros sociales that form part of the okupa canon of Madrid include the CS David Castilla located at Villamil 46 in the neighborhood of Tetuán that lasted from 1995 to 1997. This important social center “fue el primer Centro Social importante en que nadie vivia allí, y era sólo para uso colectivo y social” [was the first important Social Center in which no one lived there, and was only for collective and social use. (Rivero “Re: okupas (claro)”). Also worth mentioning is the CS Minuesa, a printing factory on the Ronda de Toledo near Lavapiés that was okupada from 1989 till May 18, 1994. The well-coordinated intervention by the State in the eviction of the CS Minuesa resulted in the arrest of some twenty-four individuals (“Aquellos maravillosos años” 3).
prompted spectacular police responses to *okupación*, but ironically it would allow the very act of *okupación* to become a resistant urban spectacle. The spectacle of eviction increased the visibility of the social centers, attracted media attention, and allowed the act of *okupar* to offer an alternative spectacle to the gleaming façades of the new buildings and bring to light the consequences of urban change. This is precisely the process that took place in the Laboratorio 03 during its eighteen-month tenure at the Calle Amparo 103. The following section will not only discuss the unique urban spectacle of the Laboratorio 03, but also discuss the ideology that underpinned the establishment of all three Laboratorios that were located in Lavapiés between 1997 and 2003. In the *okupación* of the Laboratorios, the urban spectacle Lavapiés produced articulations between various geographic scales and blurred their distinctions.

As mentioned previously, one of the key contexts for the establishment of the Laboratorio was the criminalization of *okupación* in 1996. As a consequence, at the time that the “refugees” of La Guindalera looked for another location, the very existence of a *casa okupada* would defy the law and hopefully attract a similar level of attention and reaction as La Guindalera. The next act in the drama occurring between the city and the inhabitants of La Guindalera would need an appropriate setting because it would be an act of civil disobedience. If any act of civil disobedience is an active defiance of the law in order to draw attention to injustice, it is implicitly a performance, a spectacle of resistance. As will be shown, in this case the *okupas* hoped to draw attention to the injustice of the new penal code since it violated an individuals’ right (under Spanish law) to housing. The choice of where to locate the next social center, therefore, was the selection of a stage for their spectacle of civil disobedience.
The stage that was selected for this spectacle of resistance was Lavapiés. There were several reasons for this, according to Jacobo Rivero. One reason was the historical significance of Lavapiés, “un barrio en el que había surgido el movimiento de okupación en los mediados de los ochenta y era donde se había empezado a okupar [en Madrid]” [a neighborhood in which the okupa movement had emerged in the middle of the eighties and where the act of okupar [en Madrid] had begun] (Rivero, Personal Interview). In addition to its importance to the history of the okupa movement in Madrid, Lavapiés was also appealing because it was “un espacio muy metropolitano . . . [y] todo lo que pasa en Madrid tiene que ver, o ocurre de alguna manera en Lavapiés” [a very metropolitan space . . . [and] everything that happens in Madrid has something to do with, or occurs in some way or another, in Lavapiés] (Rivero, Personal Interview). Just as a dramatist considers the symbolic value of the setting for their work, the establishment of a social center relies on a symbolic value. Lavapiés was both a distinct locale and a Borgesian aleph that contained the entire municipality.79 As will be shown later in this chapter the aleph of the Laboratorio does not just overlay the neighborhood and the municipality, but other geographic scales as well: the nation and even strands of the global.

Lavapiés marginality and diversity were also key features that made it appealing. As was explained in the Introduction, despite its iconic nature Lavapiés was one of the most underserved areas of the Centro district where there were “muchos inmigrantes, donde muchas rentas bajas, donde mucho déficit de la administración [. . .], bolsillos de pobreza, lo que se llama chabolismo vertical, viviendas en muy malas condiciones, etc. etc.” [many immigrants, lots of cheap rent, an administrative void, pockets of poverty,

79 Please recall my note from page 46 of Chapter Two that explained that the aleph is what Borges described as “one of the points in space that contains all points” (280).
what’s called *chabolismo vertical*, housing in terrible conditions, etc. etc.] (Rivero, Personal Interview]. These conditions made it the ideal place to stage the spectacle of *okupar* because the administrative deficiencies and neglect of the modern gleaming Madrid would be laid bare.

This idea that the new social center in Lavapiés would be a spectacle emerges in Rivero’s description of this foundational period for the original Laboratorio. He describes how the *okupas* of Madrid, as diffuse as they were, sought to “*okupar otra vez en el centro de Madrid y generar un sitio muy grande, muy amplio, que [generaría] muchas actividades de todo tipo. . . políticas, sociales, de culturales.* [okupar again in the center of Madrid y create a very large site, very extensive that [would generate] all kinds of activities . . . .political, social, cultural] (Personal Interview). In addition to the symbolic location, the *okupas* hoped that the size of the new site would attract attention. They wanted to “*crear un espacio que fuera una referencia*” [to create a space that would be a point of reference] and that would be an “*espacio radicalmente público porque toda la gente que entrara autoinculpara del delito de okupar*” [radically public space because all the people that entered would implicate themselves in the crime of *okupar*] (Rivero, Personal Interview). Only by making this space as large and as inclusive as possible could the next step in the *okupa* movement in Madrid “*ampliar al máximo lo que era la okupación*” [amplify to the maximum just what *okupación* was] and in doing so create an act of civil disobedience “*Muy muy visible . . . [y] muy enfocado a cambiar los modos de vida de la ciudad*” [very very visible . . . [and] very focused on changing the modes of life of the city] (Rivero, Personal Interview). The physical presence of the Laboratorio and the bodies traversing the city to participate in that spectacle would defy the social and

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80 Readers will recall that change in the Penal Code made *okupación* a crime.
legal codes associated with private property and the interests of capital. The visibility of
the Laboratorio would contribute to its participatory potential and transform the
perceived space of the city.

Somewhat ironically, these discourses of visibility and inclusivity that seem to indicate an audience well beyond the ephemeral boundaries of the neighborhood contrast with the hope that this new site would be “un centro social desde, para y por el barrio y no algo ajeno al barrio” [social center from, for, and by the neighborhood and not foreign to the neighborhood] (Rivero, Personal Interview). In other documents produced during each of the Laboratorios this tension between various geographic scales is detected. An analysis of these documents reveals discourses of scale and spectacle committed to the production of an alternative urban space that resists capital.

These discourses will be discussed in a moment, but it is important to step away from the documents for a moment to emphasize that fundamental to the okupa movement and any struggle over urban space in Spain is a paradox written into the Spanish Constitution of 1978 which puts the right to private property in conflict with a more Socialist agenda protecting the right of individuals to have access to decent housing. Article 33 establishes “el derecho a la propiedad privada y la herencia” [the right to private property and inheritance] (cited in Navarette 67), but at the same time suggests that one may be deprived of their “bienes y derechos [. . .] por causa justificada de utilidad pública o interés social” [goods and rights [. . .] for justified cause of public utility or social interest] (cited in Navarette 67). This contradiction is compounded by Article 47 that proclaims that “Todos los españoles tienen derecho a disfrutar de una vivienda digna y adecuada” [all Spaniards have the right to enjoy dignified and adequate
housing] (cited in Navarette 68). This same Article of the constitution goes on to entrust “los poderes públicos” [the public power] with the responsibility of promoting “las condiciones necesarias [. . .] para hacer efectivo este derecho, regulando la utilización del suelo de acuerdo con el interés general para impedir la especulación” [the necessary conditions [. . .] for making effective this right, regulating the utilization of the land according to the general interest in order to impede speculation] (cited in Navarette 68). In short, the right to real estate speculation is undermined by the responsibility of the State to protect the public interest and individuals’ right for access to decent housing.

The right-to-housing and anti-speculation components of the constitution are one of the key places where the scalar tensions in the discourse of the okupas emerges. The okupas are focused on the local instances of speculation in Lavapiés but are using their act of okupación as a means to resist the broader real estate speculation in the city and the influence of capital in the production of space throughout Spain. On a local level, the high numbers of abandoned buildings and the problems of chabolismo vertical (vertical shantytowns) made Lavapiés a prime target for the okupas to assert their vision of a new city and highlight the consequences of speculation and the lack of housing. The okupas are concerned about these problems in Lavapiés, one assumes, but in the “Informe de las actividades del centrol social okupado El Laboratorio” written during the okupación of the Laboratorio I, they describe how okupación undertaken by activists that “no sólo denuncian la dificultad para acceder a una vivienda, sino que mediante la apropiación directa cuestionan directamente el sistema económico, político y social imperante” [not only denounce the difficulty of affordable housing, but also through direct appropriation
question directly the ruling economic, political, and social system] (“Informe” 1). There is no mention of Lavapiés or of any concrete location at all for that matter. Rather, the writers focus on changing the system and in doing so seem to abide by Lefebvre’s assertion that a shift in the production of space requires a shift in the modes of production, a process implicitly embedded in the local, the national, and certainly the global scale.

This systemic interest is found in the self-definition of *okupa* provided by this document as well. Therein the writers define *okupa* as “a una pluralidad social que, contra la carestía de la vivienda y contra la gestión autoritaria o burocratizada de los recursos sociales, entiende como legítima la okupación de espacios abandonados, que en su mayoría responden a casos flagrantes de especulación” [a social plurality, opposed to the high cost of housing and the authoritarian and bureaucratic management of social resources, that understands as legitimate the *okupación* of abandoned spaces, generally responding to flagrant cases of speculation]. This resistance to speculation is a resistance to the dominant mode of production that allows capital to extract profits through the differentiation found in “uneven development” (Smith, *Uneven Development*).

During the Laboratorio II this resistance finds a more focused and hence local articulation as the writers of the document “Manifiesto en defensa de la okupación y de los espacios autogestionados” describe the reappropriation of a particular building. They refer to “el caso del edificio recientemente okupado en la plaza de Cabestreros, en Lavapiés, que llevaba más de veinte años construido sin que nadie llegara a habitarlo

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81 This document and others in this chapter come from the archives of the Laboratorios, a collection of papers, photographs, and newspapers clippings held in the offices of the alternative newspaper El Diagonal that is published in Lavapiés. Thanks are owed to Jacobo Rivero for providing me with access to these materials and the opportunity to photocopy relevant documents. The MLA handbook does not provide standards for informal documents of this sort so I formatted the citations with any relevant information.
nunca” [the case of the recently okupado building on the Plaza Cabesteros, in Lavapiés, that they spent more than twenty years constructing without anyone ever coming to inhabit it] (“Manifiesto”). For the okupas this vacant building’s mere exchange value as a commodity in a speculative real estate market could be converted back to “su valor de uso” [its use value] (“Manifiesto”). This use value derived from continuing the project of the first Laboratorio creating “espacios públicos no institucionales, autónomos y autogestionados—los llamados centros sociales okupado” [public, non-institucional, autonomous and self-managed spaces—the so-called okupado social centers] (“Manifiesto”). Despite the more concrete reference in this text to the particular locale of Lavapiés, the discourse of the okupas remains in the abstract and frames their activity as a form of resistance to “la tendencia de hacer inhabitables las ciudades” [the tendency of making cities inhabitable] (“Manifiesto, emphasis mine). The use of the indefinite article broadens their complaint to critique modern Spanish urban planning in general and not the concrete problems of Lavapiés. Despite being “radicalmente separadas de las normas del consumo y del mercado” [radically separated from the norms of consumption and the market] (“Manifiesto”) and providing “riqueza para el territorio y para el tejido social” [wealth for the territory and for the social network] (“Manifiesto”), the okupas remain entrenched in a broad based struggle against the State and the free-market system that regulate urban space across Spain.

This tension between the local reclaiming of urban space and the more diffuse struggle against processes seemingly at work at broader geographic scales is not just a subtle component of the okupa discourse. In another document produced during the time of the first two Laboratorios, “Cuentos espaciales (apotegmas sobre la okupación),” the
writer, Juan Gelman, says that he hopes to “hablar de okupar aquí—en Lavapiex (sic)—y que eso sea hablar de okupar aquí—en Madrid—y que eso sea hablar de okupar allí—en cualquier urbe del orbe o de la galaxia” [talk about okupar here—in Lavapiex (sic)—and that that be to talk about okupar here—in Madrid—and that that be to talk of okupar there—in whatever city on the globe or in the galaxy] (38). But this scalar discourse also resists a totalizing view of the project in Lavapiés when Gelman writes that “necesariamente, sin embargo, no será lo mismo okupar en Lavapiex que La Guinda o en Barna o en Euskadi o en Cádiz, a no ser [. . .] que quienes okupen sean iguales o sean l@s mism@s” [necessarily, nonetheless, it will not be the same thing to okupar in Lavapiex than La Guinda or in Barna or the Basque Country or in Cádiz, without those who okupar being equals or being the same thing] (38). The act of okupar is both distinctly local and differentiated by geography, but at the same time loosely conglomerated into a broad-based movement of social resistance.

One of the key ways that okupas maintain a connection to their locality is through the important principle of autogestión [self-management]. This key element of the social centers is defined as a “práctica organizativa” [organizational practice] in which “el colectivo sobre el que repercute la decision puede y debe ser el artifice de la misma” [the collective that is affected by the decision can and should be the author of said decision] (“Informe” 1). Each social center is committed to having its own particular collective that makes decisions based on their particular local requirements. The means by which this process or autogestión is put into practice is the use of la asamblea [the general assembly], in which “la base de la toma de decisions es el consenso producido por la

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82 The use of the ampersand in many okupa texts to make gendered nouns simultaneously masculine and feminine will be discussed later in this chapter.
asamblea, consenso que no se impone por mayorías o menores, sino que tiene al colectivo como punto de referencia, y la autonomía individual y colectiva como eje constructivo de las diferencias” [the basis for making decisions is the consensus produced by the general assembly, a consensus not imposed by a majority or a minority, but rather one that has the collective as a reference point, and individual and collective autonomy as a constructive axis of differences] (“Informe” 1). Just as the establishment of a social center okupado engages both with the locality and the broader social system, the assembly process of autogestión is imbued with a tension between the individual and the collective. The consensus requirement paradoxically asks that the entire collective of individuals act as one body in order to prevent any one individual’s autonomy from being compromised by the majority or the minority. The individual’s interests are subsumed by the interests of the collective and the tension between the local and global, the micro and macro, functions as a fractal pattern that gets replicated throughout the urban spectacle of okupar.

This scalar tension is also present in the discourses used to articulate the role of cultural production in the Laboratorios. In particular, a universalist discourse underpins the argument for cultural production. It is seen as “un instrumento socializador de valores, actitudes y motivaciones que refuerza, por ausencia de crítica, el orden establecido” [a socializing instrument of values, attitudes, and motivations that reinforces, by absence of criticism, the established order] (“Informe” 2). This role in socializing individuals derives from the fact that “las formas de la relación social y las construcciones culturales (roles, costumbres) sirven como fundamento ideológico de los modelos económico, político y social” [the forms of social relations and cultural
constructions (roles, customs) serve as an ideological foundation for economic, political, and social models] (“Informe” 2). This pedagogical quality of culture to construct social codes and relations makes okupas in the Laboratorio skeptical of institutionalized cultural production. This skepticism is compounded by the increasing tendency towards “privatización de los recursos sociales y a las dificultades burocráticas, limitaciones horarias y la carestía por la utilización de los espacios públicos” [privatization of social resources, and to bureaucratic difficulties, scheduling limitations, and the cost of using public spaces] (“Informe” 2).

In this context, the Laboratorio is seen as a place where “la expresión artística y la apertura de espacios y tiempos festivos no es una concesión al mercado alternativo, sino un eje constructivo de relaciones de confianza que son puestas en juego continuamente en los momentos de lucha” [artistic expression and the opening of festival spaces and times is not a concession to the alternative market, but rather a constructive axis of trust relationships that are put in play continually during times of battle] (“Informe” 2). The use of culture is seen as an extremely productive tool for rearticulating social relationships in order to “romper los roles asignados y desaprender actitudes y limitaciones para dar cabida a otras experiencias de la sexualidad, el amor, el trabajo . . .” [break the assigned roles and unlearn attitudes and limitations that would allow for other experiences of sexuality, love, and work” (“Informe” 2). Culture alters the modes of production and social reproduction by revising the web of relationships among individuals. In the aforementioned “Informe” the activities listed at the end of the document include:

- Talleres de aprendizaje e intercambio: yoga; informática; danza; tai-chi; cocina.
• Producción artesanal y artística: teatro, cine, poesía, música.
• Servicios de auto consumo: cooperativa de consumo, comedor popular, tasca.
• Espacios contrainformación: área telemática, distribuidora de material alternativo.
• [Workshops of exchange and learning: yoga; computing, dance, tai-chi, cooking.
• Artistic and craft production: theater, cinema, poetry, music
Services of sustainable consumption: cooperative of consumption, dining hall, tavern
• Counter-information space: telecommunications area, distributor of alternative material. ] (3)

These various activities range from leisure activities (yoga, tai chi, cooking), to alternative modes of consumption based in cooperative living, to politically activated uses of technology and the written word.

This range of activities allows a social center okupado like El Laboratorio to be converted into “un instrumento de libre expresión y de construcción de redes de cooperación” [an instrument of free expression and for the construction of webs of cooperation] (“Informe” 2). As a vehicle for free expression and the production of a new social order, the social center might transcend the need for a permanent site to occupy. For this reason, one of the okupa slogans is that “se pueden desalojar las casas, pero no se pueden desalojar las ideas” [one houses can be evicted, but you ideas cannot] (“Informe” 2). The aleph of okupación is both contained in one location, but also ephemeral and therefore in multiple places and at various geographic scales. This scalar paradox becomes most poignant in the case of the Laboratorio 03 because their use of spectacle engages with political struggles at a range of geographic scales while simultaneously incorporating audiences at these respective scales.
Resistance and Spectacle in Lavapiés: El Laboratorio 03

The previous section discussed the philosophical and ideological orientation that underpinned the establishment of the various iterations of the Laboratorios in Lavapiés. Much of the previous analysis relied on documents, interviews, and other kinds of textual production related to the Laboratorios in general. In the following section the analysis will return to the time period most relevant to this project—2002-2003. This period is not only the tenure of the Laboratorio 03, but is also the moment during which the document discussed in Chapter Three (Cuatro años de gestión del PGOUM 1997) was published. That is, it is a key moment in the transformation of Lavapiés. As a result, the tensions surrounding the establishment of the Laboratorio 03 in the midst of this substantial process of urban change and the subsequent eviction of the *okupas* would become an urban spectacle of resistance whose impact would be felt even three years later during the inauguration of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. The effectiveness of the Laboratorio to undermine the urban spectacle of abstract space is due to the *okupas'* own use of spectacle to call attention to ways that the urban space of Lavapiés was at the mercy of capital. One of the principal means for analyzing this spectacle is through the images and interviews that appear in the 2007 documentary Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío produced by Kinowo Media as well as the documents from “Un paseo (guiado) por Lavapiés: textos recopilados” that appears in the book of photographs edited by Julien Charlon.

The Laboratorio 03 derived from its two previous manifestations. As discussed earlier, the first location on the Calle Embajadores benefited from the size and openness
of an old industrial space that consisted of nearly 20,000 square feet contained in three buildings and came to include exterior gardens. Here the Laboratorio made a name for itself with concerts and other public events (Rivero, Personal Interview). The idealism and functionality of the Labo 01 (April 1997-December 1998) gave way to a more complicated situation in the Labo 02 (January 6, 1999-August 28, 2001) located in Plaza Cabestreros where the layout of a vacant apartment building compromised some of the more social functions of the Laboratorio. Nonetheless, this second step in the development of the Laboratorio was important because it coincided with the movement to support and protect the rights of immigrants. This included the emergence of various collectives “sin papeles” [Without Documentation] working on behalf of Madrid’s now large foreign immigrant population. These groups were able to meet in space provided by the Laboratorio 02, mingle at the communal meals they shared with the community, and generally find connections and organize via the okupado space.

Ironically, though this period was much more one “de reflexión y de construcción teórica que de intervención” [of reflection and of theoretical construction than of intervention] (Rivero, Personal Interview), the limitations of the space “condiciona a la gente a hacer mucha intervención en la calle . . . se hacen cosas de teatro, conciertos, performance y tal en el espacio público” [condition people to make interventions in the street . . . theater, concerts, performance art and such are all done in public space] (Rivero, Personal Interview). This situation allows the Laboratorio to “[imbricarse] mucho más en lo que es el territorio de Lavapiés porque se hacen mucho más cosas de puertas afuera [overlay itself much more so in what is the territory of Lavapiés because many things are done outside the doorways] (Rivero, Personal Interview). This experience on the street from
the Laboratorio 02 increased the visibility and familiarity of the Laboratorio and allows the Laboratorio 03 to have a powerful impact. When the old printing press building on the Calle Amparo was okupado in February of 2002, the experiences of the two previous Laboratorios led to the involvement of many more people and allowed for the initiation of a much wider range of projects. This energy is complemented by the fact that the building itself contained many large spaces for meetings, for concerts, for communal meals, for theater performances, exercise workshops, etc. The combination of the space, the visibility (from the previous experiences), and the participation of many people helped the Laboratorio to construct “alianzas muy fuertes con diferentes grupos que

![Figure 4.7 Façade of Laboratorio 03. Taken from Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío.](image)

intervienen de la ciudad: arquitectos, urbanistas, grupos de teatro más conocidos, pintores, gente de la cultura mucha más implicada” [very strong alliances with different groups that intervene from across the city: architects, urbanists, well known theater
groups, painters, very well connected “culture” people] (Rivero, Personal Interview). In this way, the Laboratorio functioned

not only as a neighborhood center for the arts and culture, but one that was connected to cultural production across the city.\(^3\) In a paradoxical twist, then, it is by means of cultural production that the Laboratorio 03 is both integrated into the neighborhood and with the territory beyond.

Figure 4.8 Façade of the Patio Maravillas. Photo by author.

In the longest text that appears in the Charlon book the writers highlight both the power of cultural production and the expansiveness of that production. In particular, the text asserts that in the Laboratorio “no somos ni queremos ser meros espectadores. Somos actores, artistas, magos y brujas que, afectados por las transformaciones urbanas y

\(^3\) The connections between the Laboratorio 03 and the well-known theater group El Animalario will be discussed in Chapter Five when the play Alejandro y Ana is discussed in detail.
globales, transformamos nuestras vidas” [we are not, nor do we want to be mere spectators. We are actors, artists, magicians, witches, affected by urban and global transformations, we transform our lives] (Charlon 3). Through artistic production the confrontation of individual lives and global and local transformations might be mitigated.

Fundamental to this transformation is the mere physical presence of resistant bodies in urban space utilizing cooperative living as a means to establish new social codes. It is through the process of “construir [. . .] tejidos sociales participativos, creativos y vivos, espacios de libertad y de experimentación, de cooperación y apoyo mutuo” [constructing [. . .] participative, creative, and living social webs, spaces of liberty and of experimentation, of cooperation and mutual support] (Charlon 8) that a new perceived space can be produced. This power derives from the basic way that “cuerpos, fuente y producto donde se insertan y acoplan los mecanismos de control hasta convertirlos en las herramientas mismas del poder, son al mismo tiempo, en sí mismos, desde el afecto, la deconstrucción, la cooperación, la diferencia y la fuga, los instrumentos de transformación más potentes [bodies, source, and product where the mechanisms of control are inserted and connected until converting them into tools of power, are at the same time, in of themselves, from affection, deconstruction, cooperation, difference, escape, the most powerful instruments of transformation] (2).84

The perceived space of Lefebvre’s produced urban environment is seen as both the place where bodies reproduce social codes and function as the tools of power (and capital), but are also therefore instruments of transformation. This tension between the “body” as a

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84 This text is a pamphlet inserted into the jacket cover of Julien Charlon’s book of photographs. It is composed of several short texts, many of which are written anonymously or credited to an individual only by first name. Given that collectivity is such a key value for the okupas of the Laboratorio, I have used only one bibliographic citation and will cite Charlon, who edited the text, as the reference.
tool of resistance and cultural production as another allows the Laboratorio to become an “artefacto para la producción de inteligencia colectiva” [artefact for the production of a collective intelligence] (Charlon 2).

As an artifact in and of itself, therefore, one of the key spectacles produced by the Laboratorio 03 is the building itself. This spectacle is emphasized by two key features. The first is illustrated early in the documentary Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío when the actual okupación is filmed. Notably, this event takes place under the cover of night. Though part of this timing is due to the illegality of the activity, it emphasizes the fact that the actual taking of the building is not the important act of okupar. Rather, it is the being in the place, and then later, the eviction that generate the most spectacular responses. This sense of being as spectacle can be seen in the way that the façade of the building transforms a nondescript vacant building into a spectacle of resistance (See figure 6). One of the very first acts that the okupas do as they enter the building is spray paint the okupa symbol of the encircled lightning bolt onto the front of the building. In later images, after the social center is up and running, the social center has “Labo” painted in large letters over the doorway announcing their presence. There is no hiding the Laboratorio 03 because this act of civil disobedience, as Jacobo Rivero pointed out, is intended to be extremely visible. A similar technique was used by the Patio Maravillas in the Malasaña neighborhood of Madrid (see Figure 3.6 and 3.7). 85 There, meticulously applied graffiti art calls attention to the okupado space and proclaims its resistant spectacle to all who pass by. The very presence of an okupado building is a contrasting spectacle to the gentrified café and art spaces that would begin appearing around the

85 Many of the activists that were involved in the Laboratorios in Lavapiés found new energy in the CSOA Patio Maravillas which lasted from the summer of 2007 till the spring of 2010.
Reina Sofia museum at this time.

This spectacle of “being” was complemented by the actual spectacles that took place in the Laboratorio. According to the activists in the documentary “lo primero en sí importante fue el cine que animó mucho para hacer otras cosas [. . .] Eso fue la primera cosa gorda que hicimos” [the first thing that was important in of itself was the cinema that spurred on doing other things [. . .]. That was the first big thing that we did] (Laboratorio 03). These “other things” are seen on the large schedule of activities that appears in the documentary where classes for capoeira, “teatro de la lengua [Language Theater], Circus entertainment are scheduled alongside listings for “Akafree Jazz,” theater performances, and flamenco. In this way the space of the Laboratorio converted into a “espacio para todos los que quieran hacer cosas, si quieren montar un taller, si quieren un sitio para reunirse. . . y lo hay” [a space for everyone wanting to do something, if they want to set up a workshop, if they want a meeting space, . . . it’s there] (Laboratorio 03).

One important form of cultural production that occurred in the Laboratorio 03 pertained to theatrical performance. The theater’s role in the Laboratorio was important both as an incubation space for theater professionals throughout Madrid as well as a key tool for direct political action when the eviction of the site became imminent. In terms of its contribution to the artistic community, the Laboratorio 03 offered a meeting and rehearsal space for members of the theater community of Lavapiés and Madrid. According to local theater activists Laura Corcuera and Belén Rubira, the Laboratorio 03 was “como un hervidero, en el caso concreto del teatro, para que, durante este tiempo, a través de los talleres de Desobedencia Creativa, nos conociéramos” [was like a hotbed of
activity such that during this time, in the concrete case of the theater, we met each other] (Personal Interview). The meeting space provided by the Laboratorio allowed these two to join with others to form the theater collective Cedepalo, a small theater collective committed to “investigar y llevar a la acción un espíritu común de inconformismo político y artístico” [investigating and bringing into action a common spirit of political and artistic inconformity] (Corcuera et. al. Cedepalo). As will be discussed later, the convergence of theater and politics as a means of direct action resistance in the street forms a key part of the Labo’s spectacle and Cedepalo was one of the additional products of this convergence.

But the Laboratorio served a more basic purpose for theatrical production as well. Corcuera and Rubira explain that in the Laboratorio “había muchos tipos diferentes de teatro y muchos grupos diferentes de teatro, algunos que nada más iban al Laboratorio para ensayar” [there were many different types of theater and many different theater groups, some of which did nothing else but go to the Laboratorio to rehearse] (Personal Interview). Significantly, these groups came from “muchas partes de Madrid . . . con necesidades para mostrar sus trabajos o sólo ensayar, para dar cursos también” [many parts of Madrid . . . with the need to present their work, to merely rehearse, or to offer courses, also] (Corcuera and Rubira, Personal Interview). Therefore, the theater became one of the ways that the Laboratorio 03 connects with the cultural currents across the city as a whole and provided an outlet for artists throughout the municipality.

That the Laboratorio 03 filled this role for the broader theater community across the city suggests that it filled a void for these groups. One of the reasons that the Laboratorio 03 was so appealing was that large cultural institutions like the Teatro Valle-
Inclán often focus their attention on participating in a more global network of theater productions and festivals (see Chapter Three). Simultaneously, the alternative theaters, most of which are located in Lavapiés, offer their own obstacles to theater production. Corcuera and Rubira describe how even in the independent theater spaces “tienes que pasar por una serie de burocracias... se envía un dossier, un video, y uno no sé qué etc.” [you have to go through a series of bureaucratic steps... sending a dossier, a video, and who knows what, etc.] (Personal Interview). They go on to suggest that “la libertad y la potencia que tenía el laboratorio era que no era necesaria nada de eso, pues, había un montón de lugares donde hacer cosas” [the freedom and power that the Laboratorio had was that none of that [the bureaucracy] was necessary, well, there was a ton of place for doing things] (Personal Interview). In the Laboratorio artists could find the freedom and space to develop their craft without having to rent a space or negotiate the bureaucracy associated with the formal theater spaces in the community, a situation that stands in stark contrast to the austere monolithic cultural production of the “national” theater building just down the street.

Significantly, in the midst of these more city-wide connections there were also important local connections as well. Given that the theater performances were staged for free, “había muchas personas senegaleses y muchas personas arroquis por allí viendo el teatro” [there were many Sengalese and Morrocan folks around there watching the theater] (Corcuera and Ribera, Personal Interview). The theater became a link to the diversity of Lavapiés because without it “a lo mejor había mucha gente de muchas culturas del barrio que no pasaban por el Laboratorio 03” [there were probably lots of people of many different cultures from the neighborhood that wouldn’t come by the
Laboratorio] (Corcuera and Ribera, Personal Interview). These cultural connections were complemented by the Laboratorio’s function as a meeting space for a multitude neighborhood groups. These groups converged in the Laboratorio and were able to develop a collective voice as a group called the Red de Lavapiés [Lavapiés Network]. Participants included some twenty-nine collectives associated with different interest groups in the neighborhood from la Asociación de Emigrantes Marroquíes en España [the Association of Morrocan Emigrants in Spain], la Asociación de Inmigrantes de Bangladesh [the Bagladeshi Immigrant Association], the Asociación de Inmigrantes Senegaleses [the Sengalese Immigration Association], to the neighborhood association La

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 4.9 Nighttime protest symbolically closing the Office of Municipal Rehabilitation. Screen shot from Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío.**

Corrala, the feminist group Eskalera Karakola, and Servicio Civil Internacional [Civil Service International]. It was a diverse and tumultuous group, but the Laboratorio offered a physical space for meeting and organizing and as a result the disparate voices of
Lavapiés had an opportunity to generate one voice to protest the lack of services and disproportionate investment in the cultural facilities of the neighborhood at the expense of more basic needs like a health center.

The influence of the politically activated theater techniques of groups like Cedepalo influenced the Red de Lavapiés and resulted in theatrical street protests throughout the urban space of Lavapiés. That is, the spectacle of the Laboratorio, through its neighborhood links, converted the streets of the neighborhood into the stage for its resistant spectacle. In one notable protest organized by the Red de Lavapiés that is seen in the documentary Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío, the “performers” dressed as bricklayers replete with full coveralls and protective facemasks and literally bricked closed the entrance to the Oficina Municipal de Rehabilitación [Municipal Office of Rehabilitation], the bureaucratic entity overseeing the infrastructure improvements laid out in the Plan General de Ordenación Urbanismo de Madrid 1996. The selection of nighttime adds as somber air to the proceedings as does the torch light used to illuminate the performance. The *albañiles* [bricklayers] move silently and methodically as they subvert the constructive work of laying bricks, a process occurring everyday in the rehabilitation efforts throughout the neighborhood, into a direct challenge of the bureaucratic authority managing this transformation of urban space.

This performance echoes other uses of street theater as a means of protest. One important example of this technique is found in the *Revistas Kaminadas* [Walking Reviews] that were utilized at various points during the spring of 2003. These short performances of music, theater, video, and readings relied on the movement of spectators from location to location throughout the space of the neighborhood and the city to weave
the “audience” into a spatial narrative of resistance as each performance offered another “página” [page] of the Revista. The range of performances and the their themes can be seen in an announcement that appeared on the web page of the Agencia de Noticias de Información Alternativa [News Agency of Alternative Information] that advertised a Revista Kaminada organized to celebrate the one year anniversary of the Laboratorio 03.

In the announcement, the organizers described themselves as “movimientos sociales, colectivos, ciudadan@” [social movements, collectives, citizens] and indicate the inclusive nature of the proceedings by describing the protagonists of the upcoming drama as “Ustedes vosotr@s” [you all] (Revista Kaminada). Amongst the “distintas Páginas” [distinct pages] included in the itinerary are a performance of rap and hip-hop in the Plaza Callao near one of the most important Corte Inglés department stores in the city. There is also a “Página contra la Guerra” [Page against the War (in Iraq)] in the Times Square of Madrid, the Puerta del Sol. In another significant location, the Plaza Mayor, there are “Páginas de Vivienda, Consumo Responsable, Educación” [Pages of Housing, Responsible Consumptions, and Education]. Interestingly, as the path of the Revista winds its way towards Lavapiés the themes become more pertinent to the locality of Lavapiés. In the adjacent Plaza Tirso de Molina the Revista exhibited a “Página de las Mujeres, Visión de Género, Inmigración” [Page of Women: A Vision of Gender and Immigration], an extremely significant topic in the multicultural context of Lavapiés. Finally, this deriva through the urban space of Madrid culminated in the heart of Lavapiés in the Plaza Cabestreros with a page dedicated appropriately to “Barrio, Vivienda, Especulación” [Neighborhood, Housing, and Speculation] ("Revista Kaminada").
The Laboratorio 03 used the *Revista Kaminadas* as an opportunity to subvert the urban space of the city and just as the location of the Labo 03 in Lavapiés functioned as part of its spectacle, the setting for each “page” of the *Revista* seeks to attract the broadest audience possible by appropriating spaces dedicated to tourism (Plaza Mayor, Puerta de Sol) and consumption (Plaza Callao) to confront issues embedded simultaneously in the scales of the local, the municipal and the global. Importantly, in the midst of this broad perspective the *Revista* and the urban spectacle of the Laboratorio return to the local space of Lavapiés to address the pertinent issue of gentrification and real estate speculation. Just as capital leverages the local to move at the global scale, the *okupas* and the activists of Lavapiés intertwine the local confrontation with capital with the seemingly more global processes of consumption, speculation, immigration, and war.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 4.10 The "Façade performance" during the *encierro* of the Laboratorio 03. Still from *Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío.*
This overlay of the global and the local is also during one of the iconic protest performances associated with the Laboratorio 03. In the June of 2002 while facing a serious threat of eviction, the okupas of the Laboratorio 03 locked themselves into the building. With the encierro [lock in] at the center of the protest, the okupas transformed the protests into a spectacle through an orchestrated series of events in the neighborhood to resist the eviction. These events included a cultural forum with film actors and directors and musicians to debate the eviction, panels on urbanism, music concerts, guided tours of Lavapiés highlighting alternative uses for the abandoned buildings, and various other workshops (Valera 12). One of the key moments during the encierro was a “performance” on the façade of the building at Amparo 103. It features so prominently in the documentary Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío that a still from these scenes in the documentary serves as the cover image for the DVD case. In this performance, as before, the building itself serves as the stage for their resistant spectacle as the actor-vists appear in various windows of the façade dressed as seemingly everyday people: the housewife, the child, the working man shaving in his bathrobe (see figure 3.10). Their nondescript clothing suggests their lack of status and alludes to their identity as the “neighbors” of Lavapiés. In their banter back and forth from window to window they allude to the imminent eviction. “Nos quieren desalojar” [They want to evict us] shouts one of the housewives between the windows (Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío). Their appearance makes ambiguous the topic of their conversation and conflates the eviction of the Laboratorio with the more general displacement of the inhabitants of Lavapiés. This conflation emphasizes the continuing relevance of a 2001 description of the Laboratorio
02 in *ABC* in 2001 as a “símbolo en el barrio de Lavapiés” [symbol in the neighborhood of Lavapiés] (Olmo 91).

This association between Lavapiés and the Laboratorio had become so strong by this time in its existence that an article in the newspaper *El Mundo* from June 26, 2002 suggests that the *okupas* of the Laboratorio “han logrado convertirse en un elemento de identidad del barrio de Lavapiés apoyados por la gran mayoría de sus vecinos” [have accomplished the conversion of themselves into an element of the identity of the neighborhood of Lavapiés supported by the great majority of its neighbors] (12). This wide-spread support is illustrated in an amusing moment in the documentary when Sara, an elderly resident of the neighborhood and one of the members of the collective “Madres Contra La Droga,” declares that “si coger lo que está allí, que es tuyo, y algo que te está negando, para cuestiones de la vivienda o para hacer lugar para organizar actividades . . .

*Figure 4.11 "Shaving man" during the encierro performance June 25, 2002. Still from Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío.*
si eso es ser okupa, pues yo soy okupa” [if taking what is there, what’s yours, and something that’s being denied to you, for questions of housing or for making a place to organize activities . . . if that’s being an okupa, well, I’m an okupa] (Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío).

Yet during the performance other elements indicate the overlay of other scales beyond merely the neighborhood or the city. During the climax of the performance the “shaving working-man,” replete with red clown nose, turns to the crowd below and shouts “no me voy” [I am not going], and shouts the protest slogan associated with the encierro “el Laboratorio se keda en Lavapiés” [The Laboratorio Stays in Lavapiés] (see figure 10). At this moment, he opens his robe to reveal the okupa lightning bolt symbol painted onto his chest. The use of the recognizable okupa symbol highlights the Laboratorio’s connections with the broader Spanish okupa movement. The interweaving of other geographic scales is also revealed by the large banner hanging on the façade during the performance that reads “NO A LA GUERRA: Otro mundo es posible, Otro Madrid.” The resistance to the work of capital in Lavapiés is a manifestation of anarchist resistance to the State in general, and simultaneously becomes a site for expression of global discourses opposing the seemingly imminent invasion of Iraq by the United States, the United Kingdom, other members of the international community, and of course Spain.

The convergence of the build-up to the War in Iraq and the last year of the Laboratorio helped to leverage the efforts of the okupado space into scales beyond merely the local. On the national level this is seen in the use of the space for the staging in April of 2003 of the play Alejandro y Ana. Lo que España no pudo ver del banquete de
la boda de la hija del presidente by the playwrights Juan Mayorga y Juan Cavestany. This play offers a biting critique of the cronyism and lavishness of the presidency of then Spanish President José María Aznar (1996-2004). A more careful analysis of this work appears in Chapter Five of this thesis, but it is important to mention in the context of this chapter how a pointed critique of national political figures relied on the highly “localized” space of the Laboratorio 03. Given the anti-war currents found throughout the existence of the Laboratorio, this focus on the national is not surprising given Aznar’s close allegiance to United States’ President George W. Bush and the strong support (both material and ideological) Aznar provided for American policy in Iraq.

The overlay of various geographic scales emerges in other ways during the Laboratorio’s strong and focused response to the War in Iraq. In particular, in February 2003 the Laboratorio 03 establishes a center for independent media against the war and as a result “se convierte en un punto de encuentro para diferentes iniciativas de rechazo a la invasión de Irak” [is converted into a meeting point for different initiatives to reject the invasion of Iraq] (Laboratorio 03: Ocupando el vacío). This involvement in the nation’s foreign policy decisions and the overall visibility of the Laboratorio 03 as a center for leftist politics leads to the local and regional candidates from the Izquierda Unida (United Left) party Fausto Fernandez and Inés Sabanés (candidates for the presidency of the Comunidad Autonoma and Mayor respectively) to declare their support for the Laboratorio 03 and to participate in the protests (in the Spring of 2003) against its eviction. This action was supplemented by the support of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español [Spanish Socialist Workers Party]. Together the two parties made public declarations against the eviction and attempted to work towards an “uso dotacional y
autogestionado del inmueble” [public and self-managed use for the site] (“PSOE” 37).
The spectacle of the Laboratorio transformed it into a symbol of leftist politics and place for local and regional politicians to enact their own spectacles in support of their candidacy.

The role of technology and the use of the Internet is also one of the keys ways that the local, national, and global scales find themselves intertwined. This tension is echoed in an interview with Emisora Libre Orcasitas by Santi Jartos e Iñaki Correcaminos in which he asserts the fixity and local emphasis of the Laboratorio because he cannot imagine “el Laboratorio fuera de Lavapies ni Lavapies fuera del Laboratorio.” [the Laboratorio outside of Lavapiés nor Lavapiés outside of the Laboratorio] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 10). Simultaneously, he suggests that “en Madrid destacaría que no existe un movimiento de okupación como tal, sino que existe un movimiento anticapitalista que une a un montón de cosas” [in Madrid it is notable that there doesn’t exist a movement of okupación as such, but rather there exists a anticapitalist movement that unites a number of things] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 13). It is in this union of a “montón de cosas” [number of things] that the Laboratorio’s scalar fixity is most compromised. In particular, the associations with the “movimiento anticapitalista” translated into the Labo 03 being a site for previously mentioned antiglobalization activism as well as a site for activism against the then imminent invasion of Iraq.

These more “global” efforts perpetrated by this local neighborhood movement were underpinned by the extensive use of the Internet and with web “hacktivismo.” Importantly, the Labo 03 was the site of the third “Hackmeeting” that occurred in Spain. In his study of the internet and the okupa movement, sociologist Igor Sábada Rodríguez
describes how the interpersonal contacts made at these meetings a whole series of hacklabs were established across Spain and facilitated the “poner en pie un medio independiente, horizontal, democrático, masivo y de capacidad movilizadora global, sin referente inmediato en la historia de la comunicación y el desarrollo técnico contemporáneo” [putting in place an independent, horizontal, and democratic media, massive and with a global mobilizing capacity, without an immediate referent in the history of communication and contemporary technical development] (281). The localized resistance of the okupas in the Laboratorio 03 used and continue to use the internet to inscribe new discourses that rely on the articulation between the global and the local. This investment in the free software movement and anti-copyright activity helped the Laboratorio 03 participate in global anti-capitalist currents. These resistant forms of cultural production will not remain neatly contained in their “nested” locality, but rather use the local as a way to reinscribe the scale of the municipal, the national, and the global. The space of the Laboratorio becomes a launching pad for an online spectacle whose public is most decidedly local, but found also around the world.86

On June 9, 2003 police in full riot gear smashed through the door to evict the eight or ten okupas that had decided to remain in the building in defiance of the court order of eviction. The eviction appears in the documentary about the Labo 03 and during these last moments the spectacle continues. One lone okupa sits in a plastic lawn chair attached to the façade of the building via rope and carabiners the police are forced to bring a firetruck and disengage him from the wall. The police are turned into participants in this final spectacle as they have to physically carry his passive body away from the

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building. The Laboratorio 04 was occupied that same day, but only lasted fourteen days. Nonetheless, the Laboratorio continues to live online at websites like sindominio.net and other anarchist and *okupa* websites.

In a manifesto written in response to the eviction and posted online at sindominio.net the *okupas* recognized the expansiveness and ephemeral quality that the Laboratorio achieved.

El Laboratorio dejó de existir: por ahora no ha habido un Laboratorio 05, pero su experiencia resuena en multitud de otras iniciativas sociales, dentro y fuera de Lavapiés, en nuevas prácticas de acción y pensamiento críticos, en el empecinamiento del arte y de la cultura por ser independientes, en los modos de vida y actitudes sociales insumisas y rebeldes, en todo aquello que nutrió y de lo que se nutrió El Laboratorio.

[The Laboratorio ceased to exist: for now there hasn’t been a Laboratorio 05, but its experience resonates in a multitude of other social initiatives, inside and outside of Lavapiés, in new practices of action and critical thought, in the obstinancy of independent art and culture, in the modes of life and disobedient and rebellious social attitudes.] (“La audiencia”)

Like a traditional drama that can be read and performed in a multitude of physical settings the resistant spectacle of the Laboratorio was converted into a “práctica política entre la realidad y la ficción que inventa otro mundo” [political practice between reality and fiction that invents other worlds] (Charlon 1). Its urban spectacle is both intimately tied to the space of its production, but simultaneously embedded in a range of geographic scales.

Whether found in the Plan General 1997 or in the manifestos and cultural production of the Laboratorios, the urban spectacle of Lavapiés during the period of 1997 to 2006 consistently produces discourses that articulate the global and the local. The following chapter considers this trend by considering how contemporary Spanish dramatists represent urban space during the time period. As will be shown, these artistic
treatments of Lavapiés that make up the *lived space* of Lefebvre’s triad also help to produce the spectacle of Madrid and its spatial metonym, Lavapiés. In contemporary Spanish theater urban space becomes a vehicle for negotiating issues of national identity and culture at the dawn of the twenty-first century.
Chapter V

Representing the City

The previous chapters of this thesis have grappled with two key components of Henri Lefebvre’s triad of spatial production. Chapter Three illustrated how the *conceived* space of Lavapiés relied on articulations between global and local discourses to produce the “abstract space” of the Plan General 1997 and looked closely at one of its manifestations, the Teatro Valle-Inclán. The neighborhood of Lavapiés formed an essential part of Madrid’s aspirations to establish itself as a global city and a destination for international investment and tourism. The tension between the geographic scales of the local, the national, and the global worked to advance the interests of global capital and the Nation State.

Chapter Four broadened this discussion of urban space in Lavapiés by considering how the *perceived space* of Lavapiés also situated itself at the intersection of multiple geographical scales. Lefebvre associates this *perceived space* with the terrain of the body in space. He argues that *perceived space* is not necessarily complicit in the productive use of space associated with the dominant modes of production, but is nevertheless essential to the social reproduction of space; as the body moves through space it reproduces the social codes of that space. The *okupas’* use of urban space as a site of spectacle is a prime example of how to resist the imposition of an “abstract” technocratic space that serves capital.

This chapter builds on this argument by exploring the third element of Lefebvre’s triad of spatial production, *lived space*. For Lefebvre, this *lived space* is a *representational space* produced by “‘inhabitants’ and ‘users,’ but also of some artists
and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do more than describe” (The Production of Space 39). Significantly, this lived space “. . . overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (39). Key to this part of the triad is the idea that a representational space is “alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or square, church, graveyard.” (42). If spatial practice (perceived space) refers to the ways that our bodies move through space, and representations of space generate our logical codification of space (conceived or abstract space), then lived space accounts for the emotional and symbolic encounters that individuals have with space. They are evocative of what Foucault called heterotopias (1984) wherein “real places . . . are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted upon utopia” (Foucault 239). These heterotopias, in contrast to the imaginary and idealized places called utopias which “. . . are sites with no real place” (Foucault 239), are in fact physically located in space. Nonetheless, they still serve a symbolic and signifying function.

Foucault likens the difference to one’s image captured in a mirror. The virtual image, the place in the mirror, is a utopia. The mirror itself is a heterotopia because it actually exists in reality and has the capacity to reflect our image back onto us and allows us to situate ourselves in the physical space where we stand in front of the mirror (Foucault 240). In these symbolic spaces that all cultures maintain, individuals go through rites of passage. They are the sites of the sacred and the profane and “juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after another, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (Foucault 240). A sacred place like a
church may carry local meaning to the town in which it is situated because of the way that it generates community, but it also might simultaneously channel Cavalry and that sacred place and time where Christ hung on the cross. For each individual in the church the symbolic meaning is both personal and communal, at times abstract and at others concrete, but still physically located in one site. Likewise, Lefebvre’s representational spaces are also sites imbued with an affective meaning. They are concretely real, but may carry some sense of the sacred, the natural, and the wild. It is the place where writers and artists have constructed our emotional relationship with a site. These sites carry the cultural history of lived experience within them, and hence are the lived spaces of spatial production.

As in the other portions of this study, this chapter will demonstrate how a contemporary urban spectacle—in this case a cluster of contemporary Spanish plays—manifest a component of Lefebvre’s triad. The discourses of scale and urbanism found in these texts contribute to the lived space of Lavapiés and Madrid. These plays include the political satire of Juan Mayorga and Juan Cavestany, Alejandro y Ana: lo que España no pudo ver de la boda de la hija del presidente [Alejandro y Ana: What Spain Couldn’t See of the President’s Daughter’s Wedding] (2003); Jerónimo López Mozo’s exploration of historical memory and urban space in El arquitecto y el relojero [The Architect and the Watchmaker] (2001); David Planell’s attempts to engage with issues of immigration in Bazar [Bazaar] (1997); and César López Llera’s modern urban auto sacramental El Chivo en la Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés [The Beard in the Court of the Street-Party or Valle-Inclán in Lavapiés] (2003). The lived space produced by these theatrical spectacles not only helps to produce localized urban space, but also articulates
this urban locale across a range of other geographic scales. This transpires for reasons that are often unique to the individual work, but more broadly because of each play’s subject matter as well as their reliance on and awareness of the mass media and popular culture as a fundamental component of their aesthetic construction. In contemporary consumer societies lived space is not only produced by artists, but also through a range of media including television and cinema. Incorporating media and popular culture into their works allows these dramatists to more actively situate them within the signifying systems that construct meaning for contemporary viewers. In this way, the study of these contemporary plays not only reveals much about current struggles over the meaning and use of urban space in contemporary Madrid, but also reveals important trends in dramaturgy in general in Spain at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

**Theater in Contemporary Spain**

In the years surrounding the development of the Plan General 1997 and the establishment of the first manifestation of the Labo in Lavapiés, theater in Spain was in a transitional and difficult situation. According to theater critic and historian César Oliva, the theater industry was confronting a multi-headed hydra of challenges. In his 2004 history of the Spanish theater he suggests that an over-reliance on state subsidies for survival and increasing doubts about the sustainability of this situation were compounded by the excessive expense of the public theater network and the decline of private theater businesses (185). These more economic circumstances, he suggests, were complemented by the disappearance of the dramatic arts from the mass media and a virtual vanishing of the remains of the independent theater movement of the 1970s (Oliva 185).
Of particular interest in this diagnosis is the relationship between the media and the theater industry because it reflects a broader issue in Spanish letters during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the introduction to the recent book *New Spain, New Literatures* (2010) the editors Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini highlight two important elements of Spain’s new cultural and artistic landscape. First, they emphasize Spain’s transformation into a “[. . .] democratic, plurinational, and multicultural society [. . .] marked by a thriving cultural production, which highlights “difference” as a major asset” (ix). According to the authors, this focus on “difference” has not only led to a “redefinition of nationhood” (ix-x), but also, significantly, to an incorporation of “global commercial and cultural trends on local symbolic systems” (ix-x). In essence, the process of cultural production in Spain has had to assimilate a more fluid notion of the Spanish nation than the seemingly fixed monumental image that dominated official Spanish discourse during the long period of rule by General Francisco Franco. Simultaneously, as Spain has become a more consumer-driven society, logically, the access to mass media has become more widespread. As a result, Spain’s writers and artists have also found their cultural production more integrated into and ever more influenced by new technologies such as film, television and the internet.

As a visual medium, the theater, perhaps more than any other literary art, is susceptible to these influences. The relationship between the new media and the theater has been a preoccupation of critics and intellectuals during much of the twentieth century. Amongst others, Oliva cites dramatist Ramón María del Valle-Inclán’s assertion in the first quarter of the twentieth century that “algún día se unirán y completarán el Cinematógrafo y el Teatro por antonomasia, los dos Teatros en un solo Teatro” [some
day the Cinema and Theater par excellence will be united and completed, the two theaters in one single theater] (18). Oliva also shares Antonin Artaud’s prediction from later in the twentieth century that “el espectáculo extenderá [. . .], por supresión de la escena, a toda la sala del teatro y, partiendo del suelo alcanzará las paredes sobre ligera pasarel, rodeará materialmente al espectador, lo mantendrá en un baño constante de luz, de imágenes, de movimientos y de ruidos [the spectacle will extend [. . .] due to the elimination of the stage, to the whole theater and extending up from the floor it will reach the walls over light catwalks, materially surround the spectators, [and] keep them immersed in light, images, movements, and noise ] (Oliva 18). Despite the enthusiasm with which these dramatists envision the fusion of visual media and the theater, Oliva sees these predictions as mere fantasies that don’t conform with the present state of Spanish theater (18).

Oliva bases this assertion on his belief that “el teatro siempre será la confrontación del pensamiento aceptado con otro sin aceptar, hecho por artistas que lo representan frente al público en directo, [. . .]. El teatro nunca será virtual. Será vivo o no será” [the theater will always be the confrontation between an accepted belief with an unaccepted belief, made by artists representing it live before a public. The theater will never be virtual. It will be live or it will not be] (Oliva 18). It is not a far-reaching generalization to suggest that on the whole theater productions in Spain today confirms this stance. On any given night in the major independent or commercial theaters in Madrid the representation of dramatic works remains generally unchanged: proscenium theater, public in seats, actors on stage. There are occasional efforts to modify this

87 Oliva cites Dru Dougherty’s Un Valle-Inclán olvidado (1983) page 168 as the source for this citation of Valle-Inclán.
88 Oliva cites Antonin Artaud’s Le theatre et son double (1964) page 90.
arrangement (such as the avant-garde possibilities built into the Teatro Valle-Inclán), but for the most part the actors remain on the stage and the public firmly in their seats. Artaud’s catwalks and public awash in light, sound, and movement remain advances in theatrical performance that are yet to be established as the norm.

Nonetheless, the plays that are the focus of this chapter do, in fact, have an interesting and important relationship with new media. Though not all of the plays that will be discussed demonstrate this hybridity that adds the use of media to an already-established vocabulary of traditional theater, it is important to emphasize how new media formats and technology have expanded and broadened the possibilities for theater in the twenty-first century. As will be shown later in this chapter, these influences range from the use of movie screens and No-Do clips in *El arquitecto y el relojero* (2001);\(^89\) to the use of online media delivery vehicles like YouTube and television in *Alejandro y Ana: Lo que España no pudo ver de la boda de la hija del presidente* (2003); to the inclusion of television programming into the themes of the works. I argue that because these theatrical works engage with urban space they are implicitly participating in the production of overlapping geographic scales. While they simultaneously engage with these local, national, and global spaces, their use of and connection to mass media contributes to their ability to engage with the multi-scalar quality of contemporary space.

There is also a market explanation for this increasing incorporation of mass media into the scenographic vocabulary of Spanish theater. Candyce Leonard and John Gabriel position contemporary theater between two challenges: “la necesidad [. . .] de explorar y experimentar con nuevas formas dramáticas [. . . y . . . ] el impulso de atraer al público

\(^{89}\) The term NO-DO refers to “Noticiarios y Documentales” [News and Documentary] filmreels that were used between 1943 and 1981 by the Spanish State. They are closely associated with the propaganda efforts of the Franco regime.
Considered in the context of Germán Labrador Méndez’s recent efforts to periodize the last quarter of the twentieth century in Spanish letters, this media issue gains further resonance. Writing in 2010, Labrador Méndez’s formulation of the post-Francoist period can be loosely divided into three “cultural moments” (263): 1) the 1980s associated with emerging democratic structures and the “cultural hegemony of the Socialist Party (PSOE)” (263); 2) the early 1990s during which the corruption scandals that destroyed the credibility of the PSOE would lead to a crisis of language and identity for intellectuals and writers on the left; and 3) the rise to power of José María Aznar and the conservative Partido Popular in 1996 until their defeat in the elections of 2003 just after the bombing of the Atocha train station. This period of aznarismo ushered in an ideology characterized by a “neoliberal version of Spanish Catholicism and [. . .] bellicose atlanticism” (Labrador Méndez 269).90 Most significant in Labrador Méndez’s description of this period of Spanish politics is his emphasis on the way that the Aznar period relied on “telepolitics, attempting to produce consensus through the media” (270).

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90 Labrador Méndez credits Catalanian writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán with creating this term. The “bellicose atlanticism” that characterizes aznarismo alludes to Aznar’s allegiance to the aggressive, militaristic, and unapologetic foreign policy of the United States during the presidency of George W. Bush. (2000-2008), and the subsequent decision by Aznar’s government to include Spain’s military in the controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003.
Though Labrador Méndez focuses mainly on how the neo-nationalist politics of the Partido Popular “animates the construction of alterities” (270) like a reinvigorated regional nationalism in Catalunya and the País Vasco, it is important to consider the spectacular nature of their method. From a Debordian perspective “the spectacle is both the result and the project of the dominant mode of production.” It is not mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society’s unreality” (Debord I:6). In other words, the use of the image is an effort to supplant reality and create what French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1981) would call the “simulacrum.” As has been shown in Chapter Three of this thesis, an important part of this strategy of “telepolitics” includes the transformation of urban space. The city itself is a part of the media massage used by the national government to create the simulacrum of success and progress; the burgeoning financial capital of Europe, Latin America, and the Mediterranean should have an appropriately appointed capital city. The fact that the Ministry of Culture is so actively involved in investing in the urban center of Madrid is one of the ways that the urban transformation can and should be understood as not merely a municipal plan of action.

In this context, this chapter will analyze several plays from this period of *aznarismo* and will demonstrate how “telepolitics” as a media and urban phenomenon become an increasingly important concern of contemporary Spanish theater. The coexistence of these discourses of urbanism and the media reflect the broader transformations occurring in the city during this time period that have been discussed in previous chapters. The concern with urbanism is also important because urban space is an

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91 Labrador Méndez emphasizes how the “phallocentric rewriting of the nation” (270) catalyzes a rise of regional nationalism, a reenergized feminist movement, amongst other consequences. A more detailed explication can be found on page 270 of his text.
implicitly central concern for dramatists. This preoccupation is due to the fact that
dramatists craft dramatic texts with the intention—one would presume—of having them
represented publicly. Therefore, the theater as an artistic medium is always pursuing
public space in which to be actualized into living performance. One of the consistent
threads of the history of drama is the recurring challenge for dramatists to find these
performance spaces. How a given city develops is often intimately tied to the
development of its cultural infrastructure. On this level too, then, urban space is a
concern of fundamental importance to dramatists.

In Oliva’s characterization the challenges to Spanish theater have been varied
over the last thirty years, but its precarious situation hasn’t changed. For a wide range of
theatrical movements both during and after Francoism, from the proponents of
Underground Theater, to Social Realism, to the more philosophically driven drama: all
share the same struggle to access the stage. They confront the need to have their works
performed and attract a public willing to pay admission for these works (10). This need to
find performance space (often implicitly found in urban space) and the competition from
new media forced Oliva to ask in 2004 if Spanish theater was writing its “última escena”
[last scene]. For Oliva this problematic situation stems principally from the fact that “la
vida teatral se mueve entre unos centros públicos de producción en los que predomina el
gran espectáculo que tiende a la clasicidad y unas empresas privadas que apuestan por lo
seguro” [the life of the theater moves between public centers of production in which
predominates the grand spectacle and its tendency towards the classical and private
businesses that gamble only on safe works] (263).
This chapter will analyze four plays that illustrate the efforts of contemporary Spanish dramatists to stay relevant to their viewing public. Just as aznarismo catalyzes the construction of alterities, I assert that this period in Spain’s history has pushed its dramatists to look for new themes and new avenues of expression. In the lived space that emerges, the relationship between culture, scale, and urban space that was explored in previous chapters persists as an important discourse in representations of the contemporary urban spectacles of Lavapiés and Madrid.

“Como si fuesen distintos . . .” [as if they were different]: Alejandro y Ana: Lo que España no pudo ver del banquete de la boda de la hija del Presidente

The dynamic between media, space, theater, and the city brings us back to the argument made in the previous chapter. The street as a site of performance found a powerful example in the squatted social center el Laboratorio 03 through their direct-action political theatrics like the Revista Caminada and the protest of the Teatro Valle-Inclán’s inauguration. Their efforts to produce social space and redefine the social codes of the city included the reclaiming of urban space politically and artistically. But the cultural activities of the okupas of Lavapiés are important not just for their own spectacle, but also for some of the “traditional” theatrical spectacles that were produced in the squatted social center. One of the most important artistic events to take place at the Laboratorio 03 involved the highly political and spatially dynamic work of Juan Mayorga and Juan Cavestany entitled Alejandro y Ana: lo que España no pudo ver de la boda de la hija del presidente [Alejandro y Ana: What Spain Couldn’t See of the President’s
Daughter’s Wedding]. In this work, the use of space and media function together in a highly localized but intensely global discourse that seeks to deconstruct the very notion of the State as a functioning entity.

The dramatists Juan Mayorga (1965-) and Juan Cavestany (1967-) are credited with authorship of the play and in Mayorga’s own description “El texto lo escribimos Juan Cavestany y yo, pero siempre en diálogo con Andrés y con los cuatro actores que representarian los cientos de personajes de la obra. [Juan Cavestany wrote it, the text, but always in dialogue with Andrés and with the four actors that would represent the hundreds of characters in the work] (Mayorga “Entrevista”). The principal dramatists behind the play are two well-established writers in Madrid’s theater scene. In 2005 when Alejandro y Ana appeared in an anthology of plays performed by the Madrid-based independent theater group Animalario Juan Cavestany and Juan Mayorga are credited for writing three of the six works. In two of those works, the writer/actor/director Alberto San Juan and the writer/director Andrés Lima (mentioned above) are also credited as writing the plays. The other works are credited individually to either San Juan or Lima.

Since that time, Cavestany’s work has focused on writing for the cinema and for television. In contrast, Juan Mayorga has become one of the most celebrated dramatists in contemporary Spain, having won the National Theater Prize in 2007 and the Premio Max for best author in 2006, 2008 and 2009. In a volume edited by Candyce Leonard and John Gabriele, his work is described as “profundamente intelectual donde los mundos de la realidad y la fantasía chocan como consecuencia de las divergentes filosofías que los separan” [profoundly intellectual where two worlds of reality and fantasy collide as a

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92 After its debut, the work’s title was shortened to Alejandro y Ana for simplicity’s sake for its tour around Spain. I will rely on this shortened title to refer to the work during the course of this chapter.
consequence of the divergent philosophies that separate them] (20). Mayorga’s success within the Spanish theater establishment has provided him a range of opportunities to have his original plays and his adaptations of more international works performed at the Teatro Valle-Inclán in recent years. That he has become one of the Centro Dramático Nacional’s favorites is ironic considering the biting political satire that is found in Alejandro y Ana. The work relies on a combination of Cavestany’s more media-oriented sensibilities and Mayorga’s philosophical preoccupations make a pointed critique of aznarismo near the end of its ascendancy. On a technical level, the work is also notable for its use of different kinds of media and its experimental use of everyday locales as theatrical spaces.

![Figure 5.1 Still from online version of Alejandro y Ana.](image)

The premise of the play is a very simple one: the work offers the public a behind-
the-scenes view of the events that took place on the occasion of Spanish President José María Aznar’s daughter’s wedding. The original event took place in the mountains outside of Madrid in the monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial, a location closely associated with King Philip II, the height of the Spanish empire, and the glory of Spain’s imperial past. The work offers a sarcastic and biting critique of Spain’s elite by meandering through fifteen snapshot scenes of various wedding guests in dialogue with one another. The actors represent some forty characters including the bride’s mother, the candidates poised to succeed Aznar, a small-time arms dealer, the “most important chaffeur in the world,” household servants, and even Aznar himself—all without changing clothes. The guests are revealed to be egotistical, out of touch, and carry a hyper-inflated sense of the national. It is a piece of political satire intended to deflate the ostentation of a president and the media spectacle of his daughter’s wedding. The event was covered with great aplomb by the Spanish media and the Spanish celebrity gossip magazine Hola dedicated a special issue to the event. After looking over this special issue, Mayorga and the Spanish film director Andrés Lima, “decidimos hacer algo” [decided to do something] (Mayorga “Entrevista”).

This attitude is very much in line with Mayorga’s “Prólogo” to the book in which the text version of the play appears. Therein Mayorga emphasizes his belief in theater’s implicitly critical component. He suggests that “los hombres que nos gobiernan se creen dioses y como dioses no exigen silencio. Olvidan que el teatro nació precisamente para interrogar a los dioses” [the men that govern us believe themselves to be gods y as gods they demand our silence. They forget that the theater was born precisely to interrogate the gods] (7). In his view, these modern-day gods act “como si para nosotros fuesen distintos
el teatro y la calle” [as if for us the theater and the street were different] (7). It is here where his emphasis on politics begins to become tinged by language that intertwines the theater and the urban. In a more explicit statement he says that “sólo en el encuentro de los actores con la ciudad, sólo entonces tiene lugar el teatro” [only in the meeting of actors with the city, only then does theater take place] (7). And it is the unique use of performance space that makes *Alejandro y Ana* so effective in its satire of *aznarismo*. It relies on urban space as part of its aesthetic and by embedding the work into the urban fabric of the city it is able to make its critique more powerful.

According to Mayorga, from the outset space formed one of the key rhetorical techniques to convey the play’s humor. In an email exchange with the author of this dissertation, Mayorga writes that the play first debuted in the Festival Escena Contemporánea [Contemporary Scene Festival] in February 2003 in the slot dedicated to works performed in “otros espacios—es decir, a hacer teatro en espacios en principio no concebidos para ello” [other spaces—that is to say, to produce theater in spaces in principle not conceived for such] (Mayorga “Entrevista”). The specific space selected was a “modesto salón de bodas” [modest wedding hall] (Mayorga “Entrevista”) in order to undermine the declaration of the mother of the bride that they were just a normal family (see figure 1). The work premiered in February of 2003 with the members of stage and cinema actor Willie Toledo’s independent theater group Animalario playing the various roles that comprise the play. First performed in the Lady Ana wedding hall in the neighborhood of la Prosperidad, it would continue to appear in these non-traditional theater spaces as it toured wedding halls around Spain and would even appear in the Laboratorio 03 in April of 2003.
By employing these modest spaces the play creates a physical space in which its use of irony can have more impact. This irony is used heavily in the opening scene of the play and establishes the tongue-in-cheek tone of the rest of the work. When the play opens with the music and voice-over that the playwrights identify in the stage directions as “música NO-DO,” the real functionality of the space is augmented by the documentary illusion created by this NO-DO technique. The voice-over proceeds to describe the silhouetted figure sitting with his back to the audience as not only “el más prestigioso estadista de España” [the most prestigious statesman of Spain] but “tal vez de Europa,” [perhaps of Europe] (Mayorga and Cavestany 279). The audience, we can presume, well aware of Spain’s true position in the pecking order of Europe can be expected to take this hyperbolic description as a jab at Aznar’s inflated sense of importance. This hyperbole strikes a different note in the second part of the opening voice-over description when it suggests that at this profound moment “además del hombre de Estado, nos encontramos al ser humano, al marido, al padre” [besides the man of State, we find ourselves with the human being, with the husband, with the father] (Mayorga and Cavestany 279). The juxtaposition of these descriptions—the greatest of statesman and the most humble of human beings—establishes the overall tone and presents a caricature of the President that undermines both his credibility as a statesman and as a human being.

This introduction of Aznar leads into a description by the voice-over about the procession of wedding guests out of the monastery after the ceremony. It is in this moment that the modest banquet halls used for the performances augment the work’s use of irony. This first scene that includes all the actors of the play consists of a voice-over enumerating the wedding guests as the actors sashay back and forth through the “theater”
(i.e. banquet hall). The list includes everyone from Silvio Berlusconi and Tony Blair to Rupert Murdoch and Spanish politician Adolfo Suárez. It is a list that includes athletes, singers, actors and actresses, politicians; it is a list of the elite—some Spanish, some global. In short, the wedding is a congregation of the rich and famous and hardly an event of “normal” people, nor an event for a modest banquet hall located in a nondescript neighborhood in Madrid, Barcelona, or one of the other locations where it was performed.

Alejandro y Ana doesn’t just focus its critique on the elite, but also takes shots at the “new” Spanish citizen: the global consumer that emerged in the boom years of aznarismo. The most pointed critique appears in the vignette entitled “Servicio de inteligencia” [Secret Service]. During the course of a conversation between two secret servicemen about the invasion of Iraq, “Uno” says to “Dos” that “uno me viene y me dice ‘Guerra no’” [one of them comes to me and says ‘No war’] (Mayorga and Cavestany 285). He continues: “Dicen: paz, diálogo, negociación, solidaridad, dicen eso, en el bar de la esquina, ¿sabes como te digo? Dicen eso y están de cañas con el dinero de sus padres” [they say: peace, dialogue, negotiation, solidarity, they say that, in the bar on the corner, you know what I am saying? They say that and they are out drinking beers with their parent’s money] (Mayorga and Cavestany 284).

This critique of armchair activists gets more pointed later when the Secret Service agent suggests that this imaginary pacifist should “deja de comprarte la ropa en las rebajas de El Corte Inglés, porque eso sí, cuando hay rebajas todos a comprarse cuatro pares de zapatos Rayban, pero luego: solidaridad, pobreza en el mundo, ay qué pena ay qué pena” [quit buying clothes on sale at the Corte Inglés, because that’s how it is, yes,
when there are sales everyone’s off to buy themselves four pairs of Rayban shoes, but then: solidarity, poverty in the world, oh what pity, what a pity] (Mayorga and Cavestany 285). The telepolitics of aznarismo with its emphasis on spectacle and façade extends across the political spectrum as the easy money of these boom years has even made resistance to the bellicose policies of the Bush-Blair-Aznar-Berlusconi alliance into hollow words.

![Google videos](http://videos.google.com/video?list=71271675952323157765)

**Figure 5.2 Screen shot illustrating Alejandro y Ana's multi-media delivery.**

In this way Alejandro y Ana offers one of the more poignant critiques of the socio-political context during which it was produced. The world of Alejandro y Ana is a world in which everything is for sale behind the façade. In three vignettes entitled respectively “Inocencia” 1, 2, and 3 [Innocence] the character Volpone sells everything from “Scuds de la guerra del Golfo” [Scuds from the Gulf war] (Mayorga and Cavestany
and Leopard A4 fighter planes, to pharmaceuticals, Asian women, and Rolex watches. In “Inocencia 2,” Volpone approaches one of the other guests about his pharmaceutical offerings. When the guest responds that “farmacia es la quince. Esta mesa es combustibles” [pharmacy is table 15. This table is combustibles] (Mayorga and Cavestany 288), Volpone shrugs it off by pointing out that “hoy en día, ya se sabe, la globalización, todo está mezclado con todo. Sales por trigo y vuelves con un portaaviones” [These days, as we know, globalization, everything is mixed with everything. Go out for wheat and you return with aircraft carriers] (Mayorga and Cavestany 288). The recurrent presence of Volpone throughout the play suggests how the spectacle of the wedding was not only a celebration of Aznar’s daughter’s matrimony, but a celebration of the politics of the Right in general. The original wedding was, in the opinion of play’s first director, Andrés Lima, “más la boda de José María” [more like José María’s wedding] (Ginart 40). According to the dramatists, this “wedding” like any other wedding was “un hecho teatral por excelencia” [a theatrical event por excellence], but in this case the spectacle contained “todos los estamentos de la derecha” [all of the stratum of the Right] (Ginart 40).

By converting traditionally non-theater spaces into spaces for performance the dramatists, the director, and the theater group Animalario highlight how the original wedding event served as another media spectacle intended to benefit the image and influence of José María Aznar and his Partido Popular. By purposefully performing this work outside of the theater and thereby embedding it more fully into the urban space of the city the playwrights are able to open up the space of the play for the participation of the audience. This sense of the play’s situation in urban space is clearly illustrated by the
video of the play put online at the user-generated video content websites like YouTube and Google Videos (see Figure 2). At the opening of this video, the first image that the viewer is confronted with is a mid-shot with the focus on the Prosperidad metro station. The camera tilts downward to capture a woman ascending the stairs. As she fills the frame and moves past the camera, the camera begins a tracking shot as she moves through the city. The camera follows her, as a voiceover interview reveals that she works “en la obra de teatro” [for the play] (Lima). The handheld camera follows her into a local market where she buys shrimp and then enters the banquet hall. A sharp cut to the next shot shows the woman in her work uniform dusting the floor.

That the video of the performance relies on this metatheatrical opening highlights that the work is a cultural artifact being produced in urban space. The self-consciousness of the video version expands the dramatic action of the play to include the empleada who cleans the space and in doing so brings attention to the space itself as well as her modest social position. The opening simulates, to some degree, the route that many of the patrons of the performance will take. They pass through the working-class streets of the Prosperidad neighborhood—like the working-class empleada—only to be transported to the elite world of aznarismo and its aspirations for global recognition. The local space of the city serves as a counterpoint to the critique of national politics in the play and the world of the global elite represented there. That the play appears online also allows it to operate at a range of geographic scales simultaneously. Again, the highly localized spaces of the urban environment are overlayed with the global reach of the Internet. In a theater market ever more controlled by government subsidies and the private market, these
dramatists and actors have found a variety of different spaces for their political spectacle exactly at the convergence of the local, the national, and the global.

The Symbolic Stage of the City: *El arquitecto y el relojero*

Jerónimo López Mozo’s play *El arquitecto y el relojero* [The Architect and the Watchmaker] (1999), the winner of the Premio Carlos Arniches [Carlos Arniches Award] in 2000, offers a more subdued use of media as a means of negotiating the urban space of Madrid. Though not as dynamically engaged with new media (partly because of when it was published), the stagecraft of the work is highly dependent on photographs and films to communicate its vision of the representational space of Madrid. Though this work does not have a direct connection with the Laboratorio 03, it demonstrates a more profound anxiety about the transformation of urban space occurring at the turn of the century.

López Mozo was born in 1942 and debuted his first play *Los novios o la teoría de los números combinatorios* in 1965. He came of age as a dramatist during the last throes of *franquismo* and formed a part of the Nuevo Teatro Español [New Spanish Theater]. This group of dramatists devoted to political critique and an avant-garde aesthetic helped to bring Spain through the transition from the dictatorship and into democracy. A winner of the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática [National Dramatic Literature Prize] in 1998 for his work *Ahlán* among other prestigious awards, López Mozo is a prolific dramatist who, despite his recognition in Spain, has not received the treatment in the United States afforded other dramatists of his generation like Sanchís Sinisterra for

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93 This designation owes it recognition to the work of George Wellwarth 1972 book “Spanish Underground Drama.” Some of the other members of this group included José Ruibal, Antonio Martínez Ballesteros, José María Bellido, Juan Antonio Castro, José Guevara amongst others (López Mozo “El Nuevo Teatro” 17).
example. Perhaps for generational reasons, López Mozo’s concern in this work of “political surrealism” (Ruggeri Marchetti 192) is the historical memory contained in urban space and the need to protect the triumphs and the traumas of the past from being erased by the transformation of urban space.

The plot of the work revolves around the conflict between the Architect who has been charged with remaking the iconic Casa de Correos building in the Puerta del Sol and the Relojero who maintains and cares for the famous clock on the facade of the building. The work unfolds in eight scenes plus an “escena cero” [scene zero] that consist mainly of dialogue between the Architect and the Relojero as the rehabilitation of the building proceeds and the Relojero’s attempts to thwart the Architect’s efforts “[limpiar] y [sanear] la volumetría exterior” [to clean and sanitize the exterior space] (López Mozo 12).

The “telepolitics” of urban space are placed into a broader context in this work as the scenography relies on a movie screen in the center of the stage to highlight the process of urban change and to remind the public of the building’s important role in the social and political life of the nation. The play opens in Scene Zero with the stage in semi-darkness. There is just enough light to see that “a lo largo del proscenio y en los laterales se vislumbra parte de una cubierta acabada en teja de dos aguas” [across the proscenium and on the sides a part of a gabled roof can be made out] (López Mozo 1). This gabled roof highlights the spatial component of the work since it brings attention to a built environment that encloses all the action of the play. The action of the play and, in more metaphoric terms, the life of the city always transpires “somewhere.” The concreteness of that somewhere is physical, but there is always a more complex story
contained within the urban landscape. The movie screen located in the center of the stage emphasizes this quality of urban space.

According to the stage directions, while the public takes their seats the screen will be filled with images of drawings and sketches of the Puerta del Sol prior to 1768, before the construction of the building that today is known as the *Casa de Correos* and that currently houses the offices of the Comunidad de Madrid. As the theater space is transformed into the dramatic space of the work, the images continue to appear and carry the public through a visual history of the Puerta del Sol and the construction of the building in question. At the moment that the lights in the theater are turned off, the Architect enters the stage and contemplates the images along with the audience. At this point the screen displays images after 1866 when the current building was constructed and then images of the building adorned with its famous clocktower. The Architect’s appearance on the stage is complemented by the appearance of the *tramoyistas* [Stagehands] who come out to install the “maquinaria de reloj” [watch works] that will feature prominently in the center of the stage for the duration of the work (López Mozo 4). The scenography in this short opening is subtle but significant as the city and the stage are both revealed to be spaces in process, spaces constructed and manipulated by human hands. The active appearance of the *tramoyistas* also disrupts the stable and static nature of the work’s stagecraft. The built-space of the drama is manipulated, constructed, produced, just as the city, too, must be built by someone. The old images of the Puerta del Sol and the original building show the city as a Lefebvrean space that is constantly in process.
As the scene on screen shifts to a New Year’s celebration in the Puerta del Sol the audience sees and hears the iconic tolling of the belltower—the Spanish version of the Times Square “ball drop” against which Spaniards mark the arrival of the New Year. During these scenes that emphasize the building’s emotional meaning, the Relojero [Watchmaker] appears on stage. His appearance at this moment is appropriate since his role in the work is to protect the “affective kernel or centre” (Lefebvre 42) that is produced by the lived space of the city. Ironically, the Relojero works on the most mechanized portion of the clocktower, but the symbolic associations between the clocktower, time, and memory, allow him to serve as the guardian of that which “overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (Lefebvre 39). In contrast to his role as the purveyor of lived space is the Architect’s role as technocrat, charged with producing the abstract space of the urban landscape in which the dominant modes of production (in this case, the urban spectacle of aznarismo) and the cultural memory of place will be rehabilitated.

This conflict over the symbolic and emotional meaning of space is informed by the work’s insistence on the urban landscape as a theater space and its emphasis in particular on the Casa de Correos as the central stage for performances of both liberation and oppression. The Relojero explicitly expresses this sentiment in the fourth scene of the play when he realizes that the careful and conscientious rehabilitation underway is really a demolition and reconstruction. He confronts the Architect and argues that “en este edificio han ocurrido cosas que no debemos olvidar” [things have happened in this building].

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94 Readers will recall other important representations of this building in Spanish literature as well. In particular, one recalls that the protagonist Max Estrella is taken here during his detention in the important esperpento by Ramón María del Valle-Inclán Luces de bohemia (1924). Antonio Buero Vallejo also implicitly references the building’s use in the State security apparatus in La doble historia del Doctor Valmy (1968). Mesonero Romanos also refers to the Casa de Correos as the “teatro” (275) where a confrontation with French troops takes place in the Puerta del Sol and its “teatro” (Antiguo Madrid 275).
building that we should not forget] (López Mozo 26). For the Relojero, these things include the proclamation of the Second Republic on April 14, 1931 from the principal balcony of the façade. More importantly, these events also include the use of the building for the Dirección General de Seguridad del Estado [General Office for State Security] after the Spanish Civil War. It was here that political prisoners were taken, imprisoned, and interrogated during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco.

This combination of uses underlies the Relojero’s assertion that “No hay en Madrid, mayor ni más original teatro. Escenario y platea son una misma cosa. Público y actores andan revueltos. Desde este palco asisto a diario a lo que en él se representa: farsas, comedias, dramas” [Stage and theater seat are one and the same. Public and actors intermingle. From this seat in the audience, I attend the daily performance that takes place here: farses, comedies, dramas] (27). That the association of the building with the interrogation and torture of the Franco era are of principal concern become clear when the Relojero builds on the metonymic relationship between urban space and theater space by alluding to that which is not seen. The Relojero describes darkly that “en tiempos de silencio hay otro teatro. Es un teatro clandestino. Se representa en sótanos, en lugares sórdidos, sin público [in times of silence there is another theater. It is a clandestine theater. It is represented in basements, in sordid places, without a public] (27). As result of this “clandestine theater,” there is the odd circumstance that “al mismo tiempo y escasos metros de distancia, fuera se representa a bombo y platillo una comedia y dentro, una tragedia” [at the same time and at just a few meters apart, a comedy is represented with great fanfare, and inside, a tragedy] (27). The Casa de Correos and its shifting uses provoke a range of interactions with the building. In those interactions we see that urban
space, like the very drama that describes it, becomes a site for the social and political life of the city and the nation to be played out.

The players in these dramas of the street are “casi siempre poco conocidos, pero interpretan papeles importantes” [almost always, little known, but interpret important roles] (López Mozo 27). Because of their important role in keeping alive the historical memory of the building, of the city, and the nation, the Relojero accuses the Architect of trying to “[borrar] las huellas” [to erase the footprints] (27) of those little-known actors from the drama of the street. In this context, importantly, the discourse of urban space as dramatic space also includes references to the city en construcción—in process. The Architect assures the Relojero that “cuando se retire la tela, la Real Casa de Correos seguirá en su sitio” [when the tarp is drawn back, the Real Casa de Correos will still be in its place] (29). The taping that drapes the façade of the building while the construction proceeds serves as a metaphoric curtain behind which the spectacle of the new building takes place. Evoking Debord, the Relojero points out that this process of construction has transformed the building into “una escenografía que no deja ver lo que hay detrás” [a scene on stage that does not allow one to see what’s behind it] (29). The construction and rehabilitation of this building will alter the façade and undermine the public’s ability to “reproducir o interpretar la historia de Madrid a través de una serie de edificios emblemáticos” [reproduce or interpret the history of Madrid via a series of emblematic buildings] (“Personal interview” López Mozo).

Yet the façade of the building doesn’t only function as spectacle with the “tela” draped across it. The spectacle of the façade as a means to suppress discourse and break the architectural connections with the past figures prominently in the Relojero’s
monologue in the eighth scene after the “estructura de acero y vidrio ya ha sido instalada” [steel and glass structure has already been installed] (López Mozo 54). As the scene opens, the tramoyistas appear to dismantle the set and leave the characters in the barren stage space. The appearance of the tramoyistas and the empty stage not only suggest that when the Architect and Relojero appear that they seem poised for a closing scene, but it also brings attention to the setting as a built space, as something manipulated behind the scenes. It is a metatheatrical move that highlights the produced spectacle of the work itself.

The “closing” conversation between the Architect and the Relojero reinforces this metatheatrical quality of the work. The Architect expresses his surprise that the Relojero has more lines because “en [su] libreto, no hay más escenas. Nadie [le] ha dicho que quedara nada por representar” [in his script, there aren’t any more scenes. No one told him that there was anything left to perform] (López Mozo 57). Yet there is more of the play left since “el autor pone en [la boca del Relojero] algunas reflexiones sobre “la arquitectura de cristal” [the architecture of glass] (57). In particular, the Relojero describes “cuando en una fachada aparece el reflejo de algún antiguo edificio próximo, tiene la sensación de que las arquitecturas de todos los tiempos se integran en una sola” [when in a façade there appears the reflection of some old building nearby, it has the sensation that the architecture of all periods is integrated into a single one] (López Mozo 58). But the seeming “armonía” [harmony] of “tanta luz y transperencia le provocan algunas dudas” [so much light and transparency provokes many doubts for the author] (López Mozo 58). Echoing the critique made of the glass façade of the Teatro Valle-Inclán in Chapter Three of this thesis, these doubts are due to the author’s fear (voiced
by the Relojero) that “en ocasiones, el vidrio sea más opaco que el hormigón. Es tan atractiva esa arquitectura [. . .] que atrapa las miradas hasta embriagar los sentidos” [on occasions, glass is more opaque than steel. It is so attractive that it traps the gaze until it intoxicates the senses] (López Mozo 58).95 The intoxicating power of the glass architecture “deslumbra hasta convertir en invisibles los objetos que ilumina” [dazzles until it makes invisible the very objects that it illuminates] (López Mozo 58). Thus the translucence becomes opaque because of its dazzling spectacle.

This monologue of the Relojero then puts the spectacle of glass into a global frame by drawing connections to other iconic buildings that have relied on glass as a principal architectural feature of their rehabilitation. The Relojero mentions the remodeled Louvre and its controversial crystal pyramid and how it “impidió descubrir actuaciones discutibles en otras dependencias” [impeded the discovery of other debatable acts in other buildings] (López Mozo 58). Similarly, the “corona de cristal” [crown of glass] (López Mozo 58) that was placed in the Reichstag in Berlin that “no permite ver, a los ciudadanos que suben hasta ella, [. . .] mientras que los políticos que les representan pueden verles a ellos desde los escaños” [doesn’t allow the citizens that go up to it to see, while the politicians that represent them can see them from the benches] (López Mozo 58). The irony of the glass spectacle is that its illuminative properties do not clarify, but rather distracts the public and obscures either the political process in action or the modes of production while other parts of the city—and therefore other historical and political traces—are deconstructed and reconstructed.

95 Readers will note that the El arquitecto y el relojero was published in 2001 before the construction and inauguration of the Teatro Valle-Inclán in 2006. Therefore, it is mere coincidence that the rehabilitated Casa de Correos in the play so clearly evokes the architecture of the Teatro Valle-Inclán, but the parallels only augment the argument that was made in Chapter Two about the National Theater Building’s opaque architecture.
This passage is also important because it puts this urban spectacle into a global frame. The postmodern “arquitectura de cristal” relies on an aesthetic of clean lines and reflective surfaces often associated with the contemporary architecture of skyscrapers and buildings found in cities around the globe—Los Angeles, New York, Berlin, Dubai. In the context of Madrid and Lavapiés the list of “reflective” iconic buildings includes both the modernization of the Reina Sofía museum with its distinct glass façade and exposed elevators as well as the building’s recent expansion that also relies heavily on reflective material for its aesthetic. There is also, of course, the previously discussed glass façade of the Teatro Valle-Inclán. Whether in Lavapiés, in Madrid in general, or in any range of global cities, it is an aesthetic associated with the world of finance and the global movement of capital that sanitizes the memory and history projected by a more traditional architecture.

This global discourse is also found in two other important details in the text. The first comes early in the play when the architect describes his conversation with the president of the nation and how he explained that his aesthetic sensibilities were learned at the “Escuelas y Universidades que [han] frecuentado en [sus] años de aprendizaje. Barcelona, París, Chicago, Nueva York, Harvard, Londres, São Paulo, Milan, Tokio” [Schools and Universities that he frequented during his years of schooling. Barcelona, Paris, Chicago, Nueva York, Harvard, London, Sao Paulo, Milan, Tokyo] (López Mozo 7). The breadth of the list highlights the global quality of his education and suggests that the Architect does not approach the project as a Spaniard or madrileño, but rather a global technocrat draping a curtain of emotionless glass across the historical memory of urban space. Ironically, in this same monologue, the architect reassures the Relojero that
he made it clear to the president that “ofreceré una solución armoniosa que respete las cualidades arquitectónicas originales” [I will offer a harmonious solution that respects the original architectural qualities] (López Mozo 7). The resulting steel and glass structure proves this promise to be mere lip service as the building is transformed into a “muestra de luz y de transparencia [y . . .] un espacio inocente y virgen” [show of light and transparency and an innocent and virgin space] (López Mozo 23). Like the Teatro Valle-Inclán, the rehabilitated building in the play partly derives meaning from its significance as a local site of memory and history, but its use of a globalized architectural vocabulary sanitizes the narrative of the building, the city, and the nation and assists in the reappropriation of the urban landscape for the purposes of global capital.

It is not merely the façade of the building where this new global order will be on display, but also in the heart of the building in the inner workings of the clock. In response to the Relojero’s threats to destroy the clock works that drive the iconic clocktower, the Architect reveals that he will replace this antique machinery. His decision will be carried out on orders of the nameless Presidente that is referenced throughout the work, because this Presidente “no quisiera que un edificio que aporta a la ciudad tanta carga simbólica tenga en el reloj [. . .] su talón de Aquiles” [doesn’t want a building that carries so much symbolic weight to have its clocktower be its Achilles heel] (López Mozo 55). The original machinery, the Achilles heel of the antique clock, will be replaced by “otro más moderno” [a more modern one] that “expertos suizos se ocuparán de instalar” [Swiss experts will be charged with installing] (López Mozo 56). The internal mechanism that drives the clocktower will be modernized through this new Swiss clock while the original machinery will be kept in the Museo de la Ciudad. The removal of the
clockworks and its replacement with a foreign import will convert the structure into a mere façade while its inner workings will be replaced by austere modern machinery from abroad.

That this clocktower functions as a metaphor for the historical memory of the building, the city, and the nation seems fairly implicit given the obvious associations of time and the past with memory. But the concrete relationship between the two is also made explicit when the architect tells the Relojero that his petition to create a memorial to the victims of the Francoist regime and its acts of repression and torture will be fulfilled by “aprovechando el espacio que deje libre el desalojo de la maquinaria” [taking advantage of the space to be left free by the removal of the clockworks] (López Mozo 57). The workings of the clock will be replaced by the physical artifacts of the building’s bloody past.96

This offer makes reference to the central conflict around which much of the plot of the play revolves: the Relojero’s demand in scenes six and seven that the new building contain a memorial space to display the concrete artifacts of the building’s historical memory. This list, itemized in the sixth scene, includes everything from the bureaucratic tools that allow for state repression to be systematized like “una máquina de escribir Olivetti, una lampara potente, una camara fotográfica marca Kodak, cinco sellos de caucho, un tampón, veinte legajos atados con baldes que contienen cientos de expedientes” [an Olivetti typewriter, a powerful light, a Kodak camera, five rubber

96 It is important to note that in 2007 the government of José Luis Zapatero and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español passed a Ley de Memoria Histórica de España [Law of Historical Memory of Spain] to recognize the victims of the fascists atrocities committed during the Spanish Civil War. A key element of the law includes the removal of signs, symbols, and monuments to the Franco regime. In March of 2005 the last statue to Francisco Franco in Madrid was removed. Debate over the demolition of the Valle de los Caídos [Valley of the Fallen] monument in the mountains outside of Madrid where Franco’s tomb is located continues to rage in Spain.
stamps, one inkpad, twenty office files tied with string that contain hundreds of dossiers] (López Mozo 31) to the tools of interrogation, imprisonment, torture, and terror: “una grabadora magnetofónica, tres cerrojos, un manjo de llaves, una palangana, una barra de hierro, quince juegos de esposas, ocho pares de guantes, tres pasamontañas” [a tape recorder, three deadbolts, a bundle of keys, a wash basin, an iron bar, fifteen sets of handcuffs, eight pairs of gloves, three facemasks] (López Mozo 31).97 The “ocho gafas rotas, seis casquillos de bala oxidados, una baldosa con manchas que pudieran ser de sangre” [six rusty bullets, eight sets of broken eyeglasses, a tile with stains that seem to be blood] (López Mozo 31) reveals the traces of those interrogations of the past and the detritus produced by violence imposed on bodies by the State security apparatus.

This apparatus of State violence organized and recorded these broken bodies and broken lives in the “miles de fichas con las fotos de los que pasaron por las dependencias de la Dirección General de Seguridad” [thousands of notecards with photos of those that passed through the offices of the Division of General Security] (López Mozo 31). The walls of the building contain the victims’ own inscriptions of this violence and complement the bureaucracy’s record of violence in “dos trozos de pared con restos de grafitos, otro con nombre arañado en el yeso” [two sections of wall with traces of graffiti, another with a name scratched in the plaster] (López Mozo 31). The reading of this list in the sixth scene offers a narrative of the building’s history as told by its artifacts and its very walls and ends in the name of a single victim inscribed on a piece of plaster: a symbolic gravestone of one victim, but one that simultaneously represents those faces found on the thousands of fichas.

97 For the purposes of this analysis, I have grouped the items listed in the inventory according to my own categories. They do not appear in the original text in exactly the order presented here, though they all do appear in the same list.
In this same sixth scene where this debate over the building’s function as memorial occurs, the play’s scenography again employs a filmic technique to offer the public a more visceral experience of these objects. The Relojero offers the resistant Architect a narrative of how the objects from the list were used and how the typical prisoner’s visit would unfold. While he offers this verbal description, the screen on stage provides a montage of images: a prisoner alone in his cell, the cell seen from inside and out, fingerprints, blood, broken faces, broken bodies, stamps, and more stamps, and then “de nuevo las imágenes anteriores, en desorden” [the images again, in disorder] (López Mozo 36-7). The frenetic images multiply the effect and imply the multitudes that passed through the building. The jarring jump cuts between the images seem intended to unsettle the viewers, to make them uncomfortable, and in a Spanish context, remind the public of the shared pain of the past.

The eighth and final scene brings this struggle over memory to its climax. The public, like the Relojero, is perhaps set at ease by the Architect’s assurances that the objects that will be used in a memorial to replace the machinery. At this moment, the architect reveals his offer to be a mere sham when he tells the Relojero that he destroyed this inventory of objects from the past and wonders coyly if the Relojero had made a copy of the inventory of items for inclusion in the memorial. The Relojero, of course, had not and thus leaving the memorial devoid of the items necessary to preserve the building and the nation’s memory. The narrative of the past, literally inscribed on the building’s walls, will be whitewashed by the new and modern clockworks.

Here, after the Relojero’s discourse on the “arquitectura de cristal,” the Architect leaves the stage and leaves the Relojero alone below the new glass cupola of the building.
that now encapsulates the clock tower. At this moment, the climax of the play occurs as the Relojero unleashes a key spring in the clock and the “la esfera dorada se desprende y cae. La imagen de la esfera en la pantalla, el impacto contra la vidriera” [the golden sphere is dislodged and falls. The image of the sphere on the screw, the impact against the glass] (López Mozo 59-60). Through the shattered glass the Relojero “arroja fotos, fichas, expedientes” [throws photos, notecards, files] (López Mozo 60). After this moment, the stage becomes dreamlike as the broken glass and papers “regresan en forma de lluvia desde el telar” [returns like rain thrown from the scaffolding above] (López Mozo 60). In the midst of this chaos the Architect “aparece con el rostro descompuesto, el traje detrozado, heridas cortantes en el rostro y en las manos” [appears with his face contorted, his suit destroyed, sharp cuts on his face and hands] (López Mozo 60). His physical body impacted by the destruction of his new building, he wonders what has happened.

The play’s metafictional layers reappear as the Relojero calmly explains that he merely followed “el libretto al pie de letra” [followed the script to a T] (López Mozo 61). The Relojero proceeds to read aloud the “stage directions” in the form of a monologue and describes the arrival of guests for the inauguration of the building; members of the old regime and the current democratic one—victims and torturers mingling as if “no se conformen con pasar algunas páginas de la historia reciente, sino hayan pactado cerrar el libro” [they don’t have an interest in reviewing certain pages of the recent past, but rather have agreed to close the book] (López Mozo 61). The Relojero, therefore, had flung the documents through the shattered glass that he “recuperó a tiempo” [(López Mozo 61) [recovered in time] before the Architect has destroyed them.
The only item left in the Relojero’s libreto describes how he will “[precipitarse] al vacío” [tumble into the void] (López Mozo 61). When the Architect tries to prevent this last moment in the play, the Relojero wonders if there is any other way “que el libro siga abierto” [that the book will remain open] (López Mozo 62). The language of the play allows the term “libro” to acquire various layers of meaning. It is the history that the party guests will not read, it is the libreto of the play itself, and finally, in the destruction of the new cupola, it is the narrative embedded quite literally in the walls of the Casa de Correos. By destroying the glass of the rehabilitated building, the Relojero has required that the negotiation of historical memory occur again through the rebuilding and “rewriting” of the text of the Casa de Correos, but hopefully with different results.

This possible rewriting of these layers of texts—the play, the building, the historical narrative of the nation that will unfold into the future—is clearly suggested by the ending of the play. After the Relojero carries out the stage direction and “se arroja al patio” [flings himself down onto the patio] (López Mozo 62), the Architect closes his eyes in horror. Upon opening them he appears to “despertar de un largo y profundo sueño” [awaken from a long and deep sleep] (López Mozo 62). All around him the stage is draped in darkness except for the Clock and its works. The tramoyistas appear one last time to bring back the set from the opening of the play. The narrative has been renewed through the sacrifice of the Relojero, and the play begins again with the Architect having the same conversation with the Presidente from Scene One. The Architect soon realizes that the play has not returned to the beginning because he notices that his clothes are still in shreds and his hands marked with cuts from the shattered glass. At this moment the Relojero enters the stage, puts on his apron, and takes his place at his work table. As the
Architect watches in disbelief, the lights slowly dim and the audience is left with the image of the single small light of his work lamp illuminating the stage.

The Relojero as artesan is charged with maintaining collective memory. He continues to exist in this recapitulation of the play because even in the destruction and construction of urban space the historical memory of place persists. The craftsman—here standing in for the dramatist and the artist—by maintaining the collective memory through his work keeps the libro open that abstract space tries to suppress and control. As the play ends, the technocrat fades into the darkness while the light of hope and endurance continues to shine from the Relojero’s workbench. The spectacle of urban space is constantly being physically constructed and deconstructed by abstract space, while the representational space of art creates, maintains, and recovers the narrative of iconic buildings and therefore of the city, and the nation. López Mozo, like the Relojero, uses his play to guard the meaning, the history, and the narratives upon which the Casa de Correos and the capital have been built.

**The Spectacle of New Spain: Bazar**

The previous two works discussed in this chapter engage with national discourses through focused treatments of urban space. In Juan Mayorga’s Alejandro y Ana this occurs mainly through the use of highly localized urban spaces as performance spaces, from banquet halls in Madrid and other locations around Spain to the 2003 performance in the Laboratorio 03. In El arquitecto y el relojero the performance space is of less concern as the urban landscape is seen as an important site for the negotiation of the nation’s historical memory of the traumas of the Francoist era. In both works, the use of
urban space is complemented by a more media-infused approach to theater. Through his play Bazar (1997) David Plannell (1967- ) also participates in these trends in contemporary Spanish theater by using the neighborhood of Lavapiés as the setting to explore the challenges confronting the burgeoning immigrant populations of “new” Spain—namely the North African immigrants that have come to populate the urban landscape of Madrid’s working class neighborhoods.

Mainly a scriptwriter for television and the movies, his credits include, in his own words, “algunas de las series más exitosas de la parrilla televisiva española (Hospital Central, Lobos, El comisario, MIR, etc.)” [some of the most successful series of the Spanish Television Schedule] (Planell, “El Blog . . .”). Nonetheless, Planell still conceives of himself as a dramatist because

un dramaturgo es una persona que cuenta historias: las concibe, les da orden, dosifica su interés y las manda al mundo como un posible espejo de la vida. Eso puede aplicarse a todos los formatos [ . . .], internet y la televisión son lugares perfectos para el dramaturgo. Hay mucho futuro en los nuevos medios.

[a dramatist is a person that tells stories: he makes them up, gives them order, puts some interest into them, and sends them into the world as a possible mirror of life. That idea can be applied to all formats [ . . .], internet and television are perfect places for the dramatist. There is a lot of future in new media.] (Planell “Re: Bazar”)

Bazar was his first foray into theater. It was met with success and won the Comedias de Hogar de Teatro prize after its debut in Cádiz, Spain, in August of 1997. The play went on to tour around Spain before being performed in English at the Royal Court Theater Upstairs in November of 1997 (Dodgson and Peate 105). Because of this background and interest in television, it is not surprising that television is central to both the plot and the themes of the play.
The central plot of this two-act play revolves around the relationship between Hassan, a Moroccan immigrant, and his nephew Rashid and their efforts to win a funniest-home-video television show called “You’ve been framed.” Some weeks earlier while trying out a new video camera for the shop, Hassan unintentionally filmed Rashid’s friend Anton crashing on his bike. After discovering in the first act that the submission has been accepted, but deemed “too real” by the studio, the characters are thrust into an elaborate plan to reconstruct and film the accident in order to win the contest. This effort to simulate reality for the actual event is echoed by Rashid’s friend Anton’s plan to have Hassan produce a fake receipt so that he can make an insurance claim. This theme of reality and simulation has deeper resonance in the work as Hassan and Rashid must confront and resolve their differing perceptions of authenticity and identity as immigrants. In this thematic context the urban space of Lavapiés serves as the setting for two concurrent spectacles: the media spectacle of the home video performance and its potential to offer access to financial security as well as the spectacle of being “other” on Madrid’s city streets.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the very fact that this work chooses Lavapiés as its setting is fraught with meaning. The author has chosen Lavapiés instead of other heavily immigrant neighborhoods in Madrid like Carabanchel or Tetuán. That is, the play reproduces the popular myth of Lavapiés as an iconic symbol of immigration in Madrid. In the context of Spain’s continuing efforts to confront the multicultural challenges of increasing levels of immigration from Africa and around the world, Lavapiés functions more broadly as a symbol of Spain. This reading is suggested implicitly because of Lavapiés’s contemporary cultural caché as an immigrant neighborhood, but also because
of Lavapiés’s historical association with the quasi-nationalist notion of *lo castizo*. As a result, the work converts the urban space of Lavapiés into a synecdoche of the nation as a whole. That this synecdoche occurs in a world in which reality is often constructed via the media suggests that urban space in contemporary Spain might serve as a site where the spectacle of both individual and national identity can occur.

The malleability of reality as a thematic thread begins to develop in the very first scene of the play as Rashid works in the back of the store pricing inventory and his friend Anton proposes his insurance scam plan. Rashid is cautious to accept this plan and states plainly “OK, but it isn’t true.” When Anton responds that “Of course it isn’t. I mean that’s the whole point” (Planell 10-12), he seems to shrug off the need for an accurate representation of reality.98 For Anton, who appears to be Spanish, this seems to be a minor detail. As a Moroccan immigrant in Spain, Rashid’s relationship with reality is already tenuous since “Police don’t believe [him]. If [he] went into a police station and told them [he’d been] robbed, [he knows] what’d happen. They’d put [him] in jail” (Planell 11). The sheer presence of being Other keeps Rashid trapped in perceived stereotypes and undermines his ability to be accepted as an individual by the culture around him.

As the play unfolds and the characters are forced to manufacture a more real-looking bicycle accident to enter the competition, this theme takes on a farcical quality. The actual footage of Anton looking “at the blonde, the car brakes, . . .[turning] the handlebars to avoid it but hit the bench instead, go through the air and hit the flower stall” (Planell 23) is deemed by the studio to be “set up” (Planell 23) in part because “it’s all

98 This play was only recently acquired in Spanish from the author. For the purposes of this dissertation I have relied on the translation by John Clifford cited in the list of works cited.
too clear. ‘The camera’s got to move. It needs to be dirty. To look worse. More .. fuzzy’
That’s what they say” (Planell 23). To be taken seriously, the event needs to be recreated
so that it appears “like it was more of an accident” (Planell 23). The actual authenticity of
the event has no bearing on its believability. Rather, the grittiness and presentation of the
event becomes the testament to its authenticity. In other words, the spectacle itself
supersedes the event being represented. “They have to LOOK real. They don’t have to
BE real” according to Hassan (Planell 23).

As the need to reproduce/fabricate reality becomes one of the central elements of
the plot the characters are aware of the fact that now Hassan is going “to direct a film”
(Planell 30). In this way, Bazar participates in the broader trend already discussed in
Spanish theater to engage with the dominance of visual media culture. Yet critique of
Spain’s participation in global media culture is not the only significance of the work’s
focus on spectacle. There is a deeper resonance here because of the characters’ status as
immigrants. Their commitment to this get rich quick scheme suggests that participating in
the spectacle of media culture is their only real means of gaining financial and social
mobility.

In addition, with the prize money Hassan plans to expand his shop and, in
particular, “put in a shop window. [Because] we need a proper shop window” in order to
be “overrun with customers” (Planell 35). Hassan’s ability to conform to the
requirements of the media spectacle will provide him with the capital to alter his shop
and use the spectacle of a shop window to allow the space of consumption within his
shop to penetrate the urban space of the street.99 Their incorporation into the mediatized

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99 This image of the shop window as means of transforming the street into a space of consumption evokes
Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project from 1927 which carefully and poetically considers how the emergence
spectacle on television will enable them to more fully reproduce the spectacle of consumer culture in the urban space of Lavapiés. The bazaar of the title becomes, here, more resonate, as it refers to the literal shop Bazaar Hassan, to the modern bazaar of commercial products that drives the production of television shows, and finally the way that the bazaar of the television interacts with and projects into and onto urban space.

But the role of spectacle in the play is also central in other ways to its attempts to contemplate the immigrant experience in Spain. For example, in one of several confrontations between Hassan and Rashid about how to succeed and what it means to be an immigrant, Hassan criticizes Rashid for finding a simulated Moroccan experience in Madrid: “It’s the same every day: you get together, you roll a joint, you spend all day sitting on your magic carpet drinking mint tea . . . Morocco in Madrid. Welcome to the ghetto. All you need is a photo of King Hassan on the dining room wall” (Planell 36). For Hassan, the tea-house of Madrid is the charade of life in Morocco and therefore a false space for really entering Spanish society. For Rashid, the social experience of the tea-house is a part of his identity as a Moroccan and therefore he declares that “[he doesn’t] know any other way of living. [He] just [knows his] own” (Planell 36). For Hassan it is just this sense of identity that must be suppressed, as exemplified by his unwillingness to listen to Rashid “talking berber language back at [him]” and his insistence on the need to “forget that way of life” (Planell 36). The authentic reality of one’s culture must be superseded by the demands of assimilation and the need to appear less Moroccan, less immigrant, less Other.

of the glass arcade promenades in Paris in the nineteenth century created a dreamlike spectacle devoted to fostering consumer society and allowing the bourgeois an opportunity to enter the public arena.
This rejection of his past has kept Hassan from visiting Morocco for many years and he scoffs at those that return. In his mind, typical Moroccan immigrants are “living here like animals, sleeping five in a bed, and going about there like big pricks in their Mercedes, which they drive around the village so everyone can see them” (Planell 37). Hassan seemingly rejects the notion that he must create a mythical image of himself back home and chooses to reject his Moroccan identity and remain in Spain.

This issue of appearance and authenticity is also represented aptly in two other instances in the play. The first occurs when Anton and Rashid describe the re-enactment of the accident. Because his attempts to recruit a new “blonde” are thwarted when she insists that “I’m not going nowhere to do nothing with no Moor” (Planell 45). The result of her racist refusal is that the filmmakers use a blond wig to allow the “greengrocer” from around the corner to fill the role. They dress a man as a woman as a means of re-creating and making more “real” the original event. In actuality, the result is a representation of reality in which “the greengrocer had it on crooked [. . .and . . .] you could see his bald patch from a mile off” (Planell 49). The fabricated reality is quite literally askew and the disagreeable reality begins to show through. This ugly reality is symbolic of the racism that is an undercurrent throughout the play and is often manifested in Hassan’s own self-hatred.

These issues come to a head in the climax of the play when Hassan, Rashid, and Anton realize that the one good take from the afternoon has been ruined because of a technical malfunction of the camera. Hassan begins to work desperately to save the project and makes broad declarations that he will pay all of the extras to continue to participate. During the frenzy of these last scenes, Hassan becomes so obsessed with the
notion that this video will provide him with economic and social access to Spanish society, he even takes the extra step of dressing himself in a traditional djellaba and decides that he will ride the bike himself (after five takes, Anton now has two broken arms). From this point in the second act until the end of the play Hassan is dressed in a djellaba and seems to have accepted his inability to be anything but a caricature of his own ethnic identity. He is willing to demean himself and his culture because “they’re going to love this disguise” (Planell 63). Even when Hassan finds out that the studio is out of money to pay him, he remains committed to his plan to turn the video into one in which the “Arab’s going to give himself a smash on his bicycle” (Planell 63). His only justification is that the studio is “going to transmit it, and that’s all [he wants]” (Planell 73). Like a modern-day penitente seeking salvation in urban space through self-mortification, Hassan wants to defile both his body and his identity for the triumphant media-age objective of merely appearing on the television.

This cynicism in the work takes a more redemptive turn in the last scene of the play when Anton confronts Rashid and Hassan about the receipt central to the insurance scam. Hassan had provided it to Anton not knowing for what it was to be used, and Rashid had subsequently stolen it from Anton to protect Hassan from any legal troubles. When Anton returns in search of the receipt he launches racial epithets at Hassan calling him “Mahomet” and beating him with his crutch. Notably, in the face of this racial attack Hassan shouts to Rashid and responds to Anton in Arabic and proclaims “Ismi Hasan, machi Muhammad” [my name’s Hassan, not Muhammad] and insists that “Ive spent my whole life saying I’m sorry. Magadish nat’leb esmah” [I’m not going to say I’m sorry]
This self-actualization climaxes in Hassan’s quick move to grab the receipt from Anton’s hand, stuffing it in his mouth, and eating it. This moment recapitulates a story told earlier in the play by Hassan of his apparent boldness on a train when, in the face of racial slurs directed at him by a group of older women, he snatches one woman’s ticket away and eats it just before the conductor arrives. Rashid had exposed this story to be urban legend and a lie, but dressed in his djellaba Hassan inverts the truth-fabrication theme of the play by making actual what was exposed to be a white lie on his part.

The inversion of the spectacle is the last image that the dramatist leaves with the audience. Enfuriated, Anton uses the price gun to “price” Hassan and storms out, Hassan realizes with pride that he has stood up to him and stood up for who he is repeating twice “He wanted the receipt. I ate it” (Planell 83). This symbolic standing up is echoed by the injured Hassan literally getting to his feet to look for the slippers to complete his djellaba outfit. Understanding that Hassan has re-engaged with his identity Rashid helps him to the mirror and after helping him put on the “African slippers. You should try them. They’re much more comfortable” (Planell 84). The audience is left with the image of Hassan in his djellaba standing in shoes that symbolize his ethnic identity in front of the mirror. He has re-actualized his identity as a Moroccan, but it is unclear whether this will lead to a greater or lesser ability to assimilate.

This ambiguous ending is indicative of some of the broader cultural issues at work surrounding this play. To my knowledge, it is one of the few published plays to be published...

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100 The translations of the Arabic are provided in the Clifford translation of the text.
found that engage directly with the immigrant experience in Lavapiés.\textsuperscript{101} That a representation of this experience exists on the Spanish stage is an important re-working of the representational space of Lavapiés. Principally, the false reality of Lavapiés’ castizo character is thrown into relief by this work while it also simultaneously constructs Lavapiés as a symbolic space in which to explore the issue of immigration in Spain in general. In this way, Lavapiés continues—as it has since the time of the zarzuela and the género chico—to serve as a synecdochal space for producing, revising, and contemplating the national imaginary.

Nonetheless, the play also has very complicated problems of representation given that this immigrant experience is written by a Spaniard from Madrid.\textsuperscript{102} These issues are somewhat on display by the almost stereotypical move by the dramatist to choose Moroccan immigrants as his subjects. There is no mention in the play of the broad diversity of immigration in the neighborhood represented by residents from China, Senegal, Ecuador, Bangladesh, among others. The cultural situation of the play is compounded by the fact that after its initial debut in the Festival de Teatro de Comedias in Puerto de Santa María in 1997 it was subsequently produced in translation by the Royal Theater Company in the United Kingdom and then later published (again in translation) in 1999 by the British publisher Nick Hern Books in the collection New

\textsuperscript{101} In addition to Jerónimo López Mozo’s play Ahlan that discusses the theme of immigration, there are also a number of recent narrative representations including Cosmofobia (2007) by Lucía Etxeberría and Esperando en un banco de Lavapiés (2001) by Pako de Manuel. It is also worth mentioning Basel Ramsis’s 2002 documentary El otro lado: Un acercamiento a Lavapiés. For a more complete list of films, literature and criticism focused on the Moroccan immigrant experience in Spain see the thorough appendix of the recently published collection of stories edited by Ana Rueda with the collaboration of Sandra Martin, El retorno/el reencuentro: La inmigración en la literatura hispano-marroquí (2010).

\textsuperscript{102} These issues are beyond the focus or scope of this thesis, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) critique "Can the Subaltern Speak?" provides a good starting point for exploring the treatment by postcolonial scholars of issues of representation and power.
Spanish Plays. As a result, the immigrant experience in Lavapiés has been exported for consumption abroad, but remains somewhat outside of the view of contemporary Spanish readers.

![Figure 5.3 Performance of "La vida no es una cárcel" produced by the La asociación de sin papeles de Madrid and La red de apoyo del ferrocarril clandestino. Photo taken by the author.](image)

One can contrast this treatment of the immigrant “subject” with a performance produced by the “La asociación de sin papeles de Madrid” [the Association of Those Without Papers] and “La red de apoyo del ferrocarril clandestine” [The Support Network for the Underground Railroad] that occurred in front of the Centro Dramático Valle-Inclán in May of 2009 to support the rights of undocumented immigrants in Spain. In this performance, volunteers read testimonials of anonymous immigrants that described their mistreatment and abuse at the hands of the Spanish police. These include the experience
of María Luisa, from Ecuador, Lydia from Africa, and Salma, from Morocco interspersed with testimonials from Jewish refugees of Nazi Germany and victims of the apartheid in South Africa (“Porque la vida . . .” 6-9). It is a somewhat unrefined performance that also uses the stage of Lavapiés (and, notably, the plaza in front of the Teatro Valle-Inclán) to engage with Spain’s immigration policy. With this performance in mind, Planell’s use of Lavapiés as a key site to explore Spain’s immigration “problem” in 1997 merely participates in a broader discourse that continues to the present day in which Lavapiés is both generically an “immigrant” neighborhood, but also a contested space for resistance to the violence necessary to maintain the national imaginary in place. This all the more since Lavapiés is so consciously selected for the setting of the play, but the actual urban space of the neighborhood is treated so minimally. Lavapiés is converted into mere symbolic place holder for the idea of an immigrant neighborhood, and, as has been argued, immigration in Spain.

Finally, as a last side note it is important to mention that this work not only helps reinforce the notion of Lavapiés producing space at a range of scales, but it also supports the assertion earlier in this chapter that film and television media are increasingly (and, it seems, naturally) becoming an important part of Spanish theater. In many ways, this work is Planell’s only foray into the world of theater. He has a well-developed Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB) page that contains a long list of credits writing for television series. Planell is basically a television script writer who decided to write a play. The play’s loose commitment to Aristotle’s dramatic unities derive more from a television sit-com aesthetic in which one set is preferable to several than from some dedication to the
theatrical traditions of Greek tragedy. One can conjecture that this “play” might have been dually conceived as a script to be peddled to the local television network just as much as it had aspirations for the stage. As subject matter, the neighborhood of Lavapiés and its cultural caché might be highly localized, but aesthetic, economic, and political trends of both Spanish theater and urban space have converted the representational space into a globalized media product.

Lavapiés: the esperpento of Madrid: El Chivo en la Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés

One of the persistent themes in all three of the works discussed so far has been an intersection of tradition and innovation. In Alejandro y Ana a range of spatial and media resources help Juan Mayorga and Juan Cavestany to redefine the way that theater might be delivered to its public. López Mozo confronts the issue more thematically in El arquitecto y el relojero by contemplating how to negotiate the relationship between memory and urban space. The characters in Bazar grapple with the nature of personal ethnic identity and the nature of representation in a mediatized and consumerist world. César López Llera also explores this tension between an emergent “New” Spain and the

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103 Readers will recall that Aristotle proposed that tragedy should have a unity of action (one central plot), of place (one location), and of time (take place over twenty-four hours).
104 This is not the only representation of Lavapiés that converts the neighborhood into a global media product. A more significant example would be the short-lived television series from 2002, Living Lavapiés, a sanitized vision of the neighborhood that focused on the lives of several twenty-somethings living and working in the neighborhood.
vestiges of tradition in his 2004 play Un Chivo en la Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés [A Bearded One in the Court of the Street-Party or Valle-Inclán in Lavapiés].

The author César López Llera (1963-) received the Premio de Teatro Serantes in 2004 for the play that will be discussed. He has had success in recent years, including great acclaim for his 2006 play Últimos días de una puta libertaria o La Vieja y la Marel for which he won the Premio Tirso de Molina. More recently in 2010 he was awarded the prestigious Premio Lope de Vega for Bagdad, ciudad del miedo, a dramatic treatment of the War in Iraq. In Un Chivo en la Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés López Llera looks to the urban terrain of Madrid and of Lavapiés as means of recontextualizing and recapitulating Ramón María del Valle-Inclán’s 1924 esperpento Luces de Bohemia [Bohemian Lights]. In doing so, he uses his dramatic work as a means to rearticulate the representational space of an urban space in the midst of profound transformation.

Valle-Inclán’s original drama Luces de Bohemia tells the story of the last night of the blind, alcoholic, writer Max Estrella’s life as he traverses the streets of Madrid in search of financial remuneration for a book that his compatriot Don Latino has sold. Over the course of the night this Dantesque journey carries Max Estrella and Don Latino through the urban landscape of early twentieth-century Madrid—to taverns full of modernist writers, into street confrontations between anarchists and the police, and into the jail cells of the aforementioned Casa de Correos. The work relies on both colloquial language and more elevated literary prose. Lengthy stage directions make the

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105 The term “botellón,” although not recognized by the Royal Academia Española, is a common slang term used in Spain to refer to the practice of gathering on street corners, plazas, or parks to consume alcohol before going on to the bars or discos. Usually practiced by teenagers or university students, it is a cost-saving measure on the part of the participants given that purchasing wine or liquor in a store is significantly cheaper than buying it in a bar.

106 It is worth pointing out that this format of the nocturnal jaunt also evokes a similar set of scenes found in the costumbrista sketch "Madrid a la luna" (1842) by Ramón de Mesonero Romanos.
drama seem like a work of prose and offer descriptions of characters and settings that create a distorted and impressionistic reality. This range of techniques and characteristics would become codified by Valle-Inclán into something altogether new: the genre of the *esperpento* [the grotesque].

In the twelfth scene of the drama—one of the most cited scenes in the work, and perhaps one of the most cited in all of Spanish letters—the work self-consciously both defines this notion of the *esperpento* and argues for its necessity to reflect Spain's reality. It occurs late in the drama when Max and Don Latino encounter the carnival mirrors on the side street of the Callejón del Gato. It is here that Valle-Inclán uses Estrella’s dialogue to propose that “los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el Esperpento. El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistematicamente deformada” [Classical heroes reflected in concave mirrors create the Esperpento. The tragic sense of Spanish life can only be captured with a systematically deformed aesthetic] (Valle-Inclán 162). This need for the *esperpento* to express the Spanish experience is a consequence of the fact that “España es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea” [Spain is a grotesque deformation of European civilization] (Valle-Inclán 162). It is an approach to artistic representation imbued with both darkness and playfulness; it is the world that "ha inventado Goya" [was invented by Goya] (Valle-Inclán 162) according to Max (i.e. Valle-Inclán).\(^{107}\) This epiphany and the commensurate form of representation that it promulgates provide the theater of Spain with a new aesthetic to explore a Spanish experience always seemingly on the margins of

\(^{107}\) The reference here is to Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828), the Spanish painter that is often considered the last of the old masters and one of the first modern painters because of his impressionistic style and his dark cynical view of Spanish society.
European modernity. This deformation is on display at the end of the work when Max Estrella is not only left to die on the street, but also relieved of his wallet by his “loyal” squire Don Latino. Amongst other instances in the play, the esperpento transforms the loyalty and affection of Cervantes’ classic duo into a more pessimistic image in which the artist’s attempts to negotiate the cityscape of modern Madrid leaves him penniless and dead on the street.

In a compelling analysis of Valle-Inclán’s work, Dru Dougherty (1997) suggests within the esperpento the urban landscape of Madrid offers the work a level of verisimilitude that creates an “espejo plano” [flat mirror] (Dougherty 134) that accurately reflects the burgeoning metropolis of Madrid in the early twentieth century. Simultaneously, the cityscape functions as an “espejo cóncavo” [concave mirror] (Dougherty 133) in which Madrid is converted into a symbol of Spain’s success and failures with modernization and Valle-Inclán’s ambivalence towards this modernization (Dougherty 134). The Madrid of the early twentieth century, too, is a spectacle in which the allure of the modern elides a complementary but potentially contrary discourse. It is “un espectáculo incesante de novedades cuya condición azarosa da la impresión de un caos; y la sensación contraria de que detrás de tanta variedad existe un orden inflexible y determinante que convierte a la vida, como observó Clarín, en ‘cosa de maquinaria’” [an incessant spectacle of novelties whose arbitrary quality gives the impression of chaos; and the contrary sensation that behind so much variety exists an inflexible order and

108 For more on Spain and modernity see the edited volume by Graham and Labanyi (1995) and Fusi and Palafox’s España, 1808-1996: el desafío de la modernidad (1997).
determinism that transforms life into, as Clarín observed, a ‘piece of machinery’”
(Dougherty 135-6). 109

That López Llera looks to Valle-Inclán for the secondary title of his El chivo en la
Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés implicitly puts this “burla trágica,” [tragic
mockery] as the author subtitles it, into the frame of the esperpento. 110 Given that the
setting for the action is the urban space of Madrid, it is hard not to see the work as a
recasting of Luces de Bohemia. Just as in the original, the work follows a pair of
characters as they traverse urban space over the course of a night. Also, like the 1924
text, the use of urban space not only grounds the work in a concrete reality, but also
allows its deforming aesthetic to function more emphatically. In El chivo, this
deformation is partly achieved through the juxtaposition of the central characters in
which the role of the errant knight falls to Pablo, a junky who is resuscitated from a
heroin overdose in the first scene, and his loyal squire, a “clónico de Valle Inclán” [clone
of Valle Inclán] (López Llera 9). The mere act of pairing a street junky and a titan of
Spanish literature for a nocturnal foray is one that puts tradition and a decadent crumbling
contemporary reality into direct dialogue.

This tension is compounded by other structural elements of the work. In this more
contemporary version the work is divided into three “trancas” instead of the fifteen
scenes of the original. By utilizing this odd term, which colloquially means “borrachera”
or “drunken binge” López Llera disrupts traditional dramatic terminology. At the same
time, the work is divided into three sections and consequently echoes the highly
traditional division of drama into three acts. Over the course of these three trancas the

109 Dougherty refers here to Leopold Alas also known as Clarín, a Spanish writer from the nineteenth
century who often employed his realist narrative to critique the decadence of Spain’s emerging modernity.
110 This chapter will refer to the work in question as El chivo to condense the somewhat unwieldy title.
pair move through the urban space of Madrid. Interestingly though, in López Llera’s twenty-first century version of this nocturnal jaunt, the action is focused exclusively in Lavapiés and moves from the Plaza Lavapiés in the first tranca to a “casa en ruinas en el barrio de Lavapiés” [house in ruins in the neighborhood of Lavapiés] (López Llera 35) for the entirety of the second tranca. The third tranca begins in this same crumbling residential space, but returns to the Plaza Lavapiés. Though the play relies on a more limited number of urban settings, the circular structure allows the work to project a sense of movement and flow that echoes the nocturnal journey found in Luces de Bohemia.

In line with the broader argument of this project, it is significant that the locale chosen for the nocturnal journey is Lavapiés. Here in the castizo heart of Madrid the opening scene is one full of a “sabores y olores mezclados: alcohol, tabaco, miasmas residuals de orgía: sudor, semen, flujos vaginales, orines, vomitadas y hasta chispazos de sangre mondonguera” [mixture of tastes and smells: alcohol, tobacco, the residual miasma of orgies: sweat, semen, vaginal fluid, urine, vomit and even flecks of intestinal blood] (López Llera 9). The plaza has been transformed into a “improvisado vertedero de papeles y bolsas multicolores, cascos, latas, vasos.” [improvised trashcan of paper and multicolor bags, empty bottles, cans, glasses] (López Llera 9). Alongside the trash are “veinteañeros semidesnudos” [semi-naked twenty-somethings] (López Llera 9), a young eighteen-year old drinking the water from a can of olives, and Pablo preparing his dose with a spoon. Like his predecessor Valle-Inclán and other dramatists (Buero Vallejo comes to mind), López Llera relies on long stage directions (almost a full page). This is a technique that suggests the dramatist is searching on some level for some hybrid form of representation that is both simultaneously drama and narrative. In this context, the
repetitive rhythm of the description and the consonance of the “S” sounds describing the trash and the assonance of the “O” sounds lend an almost poetic quality to this base subject matter.

The scene functions as a “flat mirror” by depicting realistically the harshness of the streets life and the mundane “fachadas de casas de vecindad” [façades of neighborhood houses] (López Llera 9) that frame the scene. It is an image imbued with an element of social realism, but “las ascuas de una noche botellera” [the embers of night of drunkenness] (López Llera 9) also convert the image into a modern recapitulation of a Hieronymous Bosch triptych. This reading becomes more prescient when one considers that in the midst of this visual cacophony of detritus both human and otherwise strolls not only the aforementioned “clónico Valle-Inclán,” but also “un Gran Cabrón [. . .] acompañado por una Pecadora Compañía de dragones, tortugas, monos, mandarines, princesas medievales y jóvenes desnudos de ambos sexos, con la mitad del cuerpo pintada de blanco y negro” [a Great Beast accompanied by a Sinners Procession of dragons, turtles, monkeys, Mandarins, medieval princesses and naked young men and women with halves of their body painted white and black] (López Llera 9). Notably, this grand procession “se dirige desde el fondo de la sala hasta el escenario” [heads from the back of the theater to the stage] (López Llera 9). The scene on display is not merely an expression of youthful decadence, but, it seems, a ‘night’ of earthly delight in which a pagan rite has occurred with Satan as overseer. As if to hammer home the point, the stage directions instruct that the song “Demonios” [Demons] by the Spanish pop group Estopa provide the soundtrack to this “amanecida primaveral” [Spring-time dawn] functioning on both a mythic level as well as one concretely grounded in a particular cultural context:
turn of the millennia, Lavapiés, Madrid.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, from the outset López Llera offers a work in which the layering of myth, pop culture, urban space, and canonical literary figures combine with a ruptured fourth wall to create the concave mirror necessary for crafting an esperpento.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 5.4** "El aquelarre o Gran Cabrón" [The Witches Sabbath or Great Goat (1798) by Francisco de Goya. Image from Wikipedia Commons.]

It is also worth lingering on this scene for a moment to recall that two of the most important paintings produced by Francisco de Goya—the source of the esperpento according to Valle-Inclán—is of “El aquelarre” or the Witches Sabbath.\textsuperscript{112} In both images (see Figure 4.2 and 4.3) the Gran Cabrón or large male goat is being venerated as the focus of a Black Mass. The Gran Cabrón therefore serves a dual purpose. On the one

\textsuperscript{111} Estopa’s self-titled first album “Estopa” came out in 1999.

\textsuperscript{112} The term *aquelarre* or *akelarre* is a Basque word that refers to the field where a male goat lives and eats. It is traditionally thought to be the place where witches would converge to commune with Satan, who would take on the form of the large male goat.
hand the *esperpento* is a clear allusion to Goya and augments the work’s connection to
the tradition of the genre and therefore to the canonical artistic tradition in Spain. On the
other hand it emphasizes that the space of the play, the *barrio bajo* [low neighborhood] of
Lavapiés carries associations with deviant behavior. In line with the interplay of dark and
light humor, flatness and concavity found in the play, the Gran Cabrón’s intermittent
appearances suggests that the characters’ confrontations with the social realities of living
in an underserved neighborhood has some deviant element to it. Given that these
behaviors are often just strategies of survival makes the Gran Cabrón into an ironic
symbol that recurs throughout the play.

Another key component of this *esperpento* derives from the implicit juxtaposition
created by Valle-Inclán’s presence itself in the urban environment of the Plaza Lavapiés.

![Image](image-url)

*Figure 5.5 "El aquelarre" [The Witches Sabbath] (1821-1823) by Francisco de Goya. Image from Wikipedia Commons.*

The visual grittiness of the scene is compounded by the fact that the very first
thing to transpire in the play is Pablo’s injecting himself with heroin and subsequently
falling into the spasms of overdose. In this context, Valle-Inclán saunters onto the stage

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drinking the remains of the bottles scattered about and then launches into a reciting of the
tenth verse of his poem “La tienda del herbolario.” This handful of stanzas describes an
opiate-induced vision of “Verdes dragones, sombras chinescas, [. . . ] sabias Princesas de
palanquines” [Green dragons, Chinese shadows, wise Princesses on litters] (López Llera
11) seems hollow and distant from the dark world of drug abuse and social neglect
surrounding him.113 The poem and the character of Valle-Inclán, called the Chivo [the
bearded one or the Goatee] throughout the play, are used to comic effect as this titan of
Spanish letters is asked for his papers by the police, continually seems to be smoking
hashish, and sprinkles his verses filled with fairies and princesses and far off lands during
various scenes. The contrast between the escapist poem that Valle-Inclán—the Chivo—
recites and the panic of Pablo’s overdose form the grotesque first scene in the Plaza
Lavapiés.

The humorous presence of el Chivo (Valle-Inclán) confronting urban life is only
amplified when the SAMUR paramedics and the police arrive and ask for the poet’s
identification. The long monologue offered by el Chivo instead points out that his photo
graces “todas las Historias de la Literatura” [all of the Histories of Literature] (López
Llera 15) and that statues of his likeness are found in both the Paseo Recoletos and the
Paseo de la Herradura de Santiago. The police respond unconvinced and ask only for his
home address. In the marginal space of Lavapiés even one of the most important writers
of the twentieth century is reduced to mere citizen, subject to citation for “consumir
bebidas alcohólicas en la calle” [consuming alcoholic beverages in the street] (López

113 Although this particular selection from Valle-Inclán seems highly modernist, the book of poems from
which it derives La pipa de Kif (1919) has been seen by some like Borelli (1961) and others like Morales
Lomas (2007) as a part of Valle-Inclán’s aesthetic shift towards the esperpento in this period in which he
published the play Luces de Bohemia and the novel Tirano Banderas, some of his texts most closely
associated with the esperpento.
It is a bizarre scene made all the more so by the pulsing and flashing lights of the emergency vehicles emanating from off stage. This strange quality is heightened when the Pecadora Campaña returns to the stage for a dance number to the 1982 hit “Bailando” by the Spanish pop group Alaska y los Pegamoides, a musical aside that coincides with Pablo’s resuscitation.

These comic moments of the esperpento continue to be balanced by the cruel social reality in which the play takes place. The resolution of the first tranca revolves around a confrontation between the players on the stage and a domestic abuser who charges onto the stage in mid-dispute and shoots his pregnant lover (a scene that is a direct allusion to a similar scene in Luces de Bohemia). In the context of drug addition, overdose, and murder, the term tranca loses its amusing connotations with a night of bacchanalia. The SAMUR return to save the baby and in the background of the scene the Gran Cabrón appears seated in a “una silla de largas patas” [large-footed chair] (López Llera 34). With Satan overseeing the violent birth of the baby, the scene is transformed into a cynical modern-day auto sacramental in which Pablo’s resurrection simultaneously evokes the story of Cavalry as well as the reawakening of Saul of Tarsus. The biblical overtones extend to the crying orphan who can easily be assumed to allude to the baby Jesus. El Chivo confirms this reading when he describes Pablo as “Saulo, que ha recuperado la vista para convertirse en testigo de cargo de la mentira” [Saul, who has recuperated his vision in order to convert himself into a witness for the prosecution of lies] (López Llera 20). The urban setting grounds the mythic qualities of the scene. That this critique of contemporary urban life uses Lavapiés as the “iconic” marginalized

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114 Readers will recall the discussion of the auto sacramental from the Chapter One. Autos were allegorical religious plays.
neighborhood both illustrates and perpetuates the notion of Lavapiés as both a neo-bohemian and immigrant domain on the margin of Madrid as well as a metonym for the city as a whole. The social exclusion in Lavapiés and its cynical representation here belies a broader critique of a city only marginally in control of urban space at the onset of the twenty-first century—very much unlike the boosterism taking place in which the Ayuntamiento was engaged during this same time period that was mocked by the street spectacles of the okupas of the Laboratorio 03.

At the opening of the second tranca the city seems literally to be crumbling around the characters. The stage directions describe how “Mientras se abre el telón se oye ruido de cristales rotos, gritos y un golpe seco. Silencio sepucral. En el centro de una cutre estancia abuhardillada de una casa en ruinas en el barrio de Lavapiés yace un cuerpo con un charco de sangre bajo su cabeza” [While the curtain opens the sound of broken glass, shouts and a dry thud are heard. Deathly silence. In the center of a humble dormered room of a house in ruins in the neighborhood of Lavapiés lies a body with a pool of blood below his head] (López Llera 35). As the characters move from the public space of the street to a private domestic space, this opening image links the two spaces with spilled blood. In the last scenes of the first tranca it is the matamujer [woman-killer] and his victim that provide the blood and in this scene it is that of the crumpled body that has fallen through the skylight. As the scene unfolds, this “body’s” companion, el Colgado [the Stoner], comes to retrieve him and the somber air is undercut by their drug-induced banter. Together the Descalabrado and the Colgado have no serious contribution to the proceedings other than to perpetuate this tension between violence and humor and link the aesthetic of the first tranca with the second.
Also important in the opening description of the space in this second Act is the fact that the walls are marked by “Grafitis, símbolos ocupas, carteles contra la Guerra y del Mago de Oz” [Graffiti, okupa symbols, posters against war and the Wizard of Oz] (López Llera 34). The house to which el Chivo, Pablo and Pablo’s friend Micaela returns has been transformed into a casa okupada. As the play reveals later, the house is Micaela’s, but given that the posters on the wall include anti-war slogans and its clearly stated location in Lavapiés one can conjecture that this casa okupada is also simultaneously supposed to represent the Laboratorio in one of its manifestations during the period during which this play was published. This reading is compounded by the appearance later in the play of the classic refrains of the okupa movement and Lavapiés’ most famous casa okupada at the time of the play’s publication in 2003. Threatened with eviction in the third tranca Pablo shouts “Cuando vivir es un lujo, ocupar es un derecho” [when living is a luxury, squatting is a right] (López Llera 79) and “un desalojo, otra ocupación” [one eviction, another squatted house] (López Llera 79). Additionally, the presence of the young Somalian and Ecuadorian girls in this casa okupada converts the space from merely a representation of the Laboratorio, but into a microcosm of the neighborhood itself. Through its spatial choices and representations of characters in those spaces, López Llera allows the discrete domestic space of the casa okupada to serve as a synecdoche of Lavapiés, Madrid and even Spain. The urban space in the play becomes a place where all of these geographic scales might articulate with one another.

Throughout the second and third trancas this synecdochal matrix becomes an effective context in which to explore the role of cultural production in the management and production of space. The work’s contemplation of this theme begins broadly as
Pablo, el Chivo, and Pablo’s friend Chusito discuss the merits of Art. Pablo, the contrarian, complains that “Vaya aburrimiento de Arte” [Oh Art, what a drag!] (López Llera 50). This prompts an exchange between el Chivo and Chusito about the hope that “otro Arte es posible” [another Art is possible] (López Llera 50) in the pursuit of avant-garde expression and el Chivo’s disgusted response that “Para ese Arte haría falta otro mundo . . . De momento, aunque experimentemos, los artistas estamos obligados a reflejar la perversa realidad y a profesar de malditos” [For that Art another world would be needed . . . Now, even though we experiment, artists are obliged to reflect the perversity of reality and to profess its wretchedness] (López Llera 50). The conversation reveals one of the reasons that the play has followed Valle-Inclán’s lead and relied on the esperpento as an aesthetic frame. The artist’s need to engage with social reality potentially limits the space for experimentation. López Llera, like many artists before him, seems to use his work as a way to navigate this tension between social reality and artistic experimentation and exploration.

In the middle of the second tranca, the scenography of the work spatially expresses this discomfort with aesthetically driven art. Pablo has offered el Chivo the opportunity to stay in the casa okupada in the room of Pablo’s recently deceased artist girlfriend, another victim of heroin, who worked making copies of paintings as well as her own art. To accommodate him, el Chivo, Pablo, Chusito, and the Pecadora Compañía swirl in and out of Elia’s room to the sounds of Rossini’s “Tarantella.” The previous use of pop music allows this classical soundtrack to work to comic effect as the whole troupe of characters rearrange the apartment and in doing so the stage itself.
The stage “queda dividida en dos partes por unos biombos chinos” [is left divided in two parts by folding screens] (López Llera 54). On the right side of the stage there is “el cortinaje que cubre las paredes es de color verde. Sobre él, en el fondo de la derecha destaca una enorme reproducción del cuadro “Cante hondo” de Romero de Torres” [the curtain that covers the walls is green in color. Over it, in the background on the right an enormous reproduction of the work “Cante Hondo” by Romero de Torres stands out] (López Llera 54). This large painting is complemented by other reproductions by Julio Antontio, Rusiñol, Victorio Macho, Gutiérrez Solana and caricatures of Valle-Inclán (López LLera 54). The left side of the stage has been converted into a “pequeño salón de café” [coffe house] with its own array of art reproductions and Charlie Chaplin posters (López Llera 54). When the rearranging ends, el Chivo stands on the right side of the stage and Pablo and Chusito on the left. El Chivo is on the side devoted exclusively to art and the two twenty-somethings occupying the less clearly delineated artistic space in which living and art converge. The stage has been converted into a space devoted to art.

The *casa okupada* as a place for the (re)production of art develops another significance when later in the scene a galerista de arte [art gallery owner] arrives. He has come to see the paintings of Elisa Valle, Pablo’s deceased ex. After examining the art on display, he notes the mix of “Pintura abstracta y realista juntas, arquitectura, escultura ¡La lámpara, para fliparlo! Faltan la danza y la poesía . . .” [Abstract and realist painting together, arquitecture, sculpture, the lamp, I love it! It only lacks poetry and dance] (López Llera 58). With this broad mix of mediums and genres the *galerista* suggest that “en vez de salas de exposiciones o galerías de arte, la creación en su medio, en el estudio del artista . . . podríamos cobrar la entrada” [instead of exposition halls or galleries of art,
the creation in process, in the studio of the artist . . . we could charge admission for it] (López Llera 59). In a recontextualizing of what Zukin (1982) called “Loft Living,” the intervention of capital not only commodifies the objects, but urban space itself. Once it becomes commodity, “we see space being consumed in both the economic and the literal senses of the word [ . . . ] not as consumption of the cultural past, but indeed as immediate practical ‘reality’” (Lefebvre _Production of Space_ 122-123). As Zukin’s Artistic Mode of Production would have it, the production of culture is intimately linked to the material production of space. The play highlights this circumstance to reappropriate artistic production from “abstract space” and create a representational space in which art might signify space free from capital.

In the midst of capital’s commodification of the artistic process there are several indications that capital’s interest in Lavapiés is also more traditional. Micaela, an older friend of Pablo’s who has brought him and el Chivo to the apartment, is constantly a source of pathos in the play. Not only is her imminent demise from diabetic complications a source of dramatic tension in the second _tranca_, but her complaints about her economic situation belie the broader problems of the neighborhood. She complains about the lack of medical facilities in the neighborhood and that she has had to go to a private doctor instead of “esa mierda de ambulatorio de Tribulete” [that crap of a clinic in Tribulete] (López Mozo 60). Similarly, the plumber that appears intermittently throughout the work to repair the bathroom in the apartment observes “que en este barrio quedan muchas viviendas sin baño o con un comunitario” [that in this neighborhood there are many homes without a bathroom or with only a communal one] (López Llera 62). Just as these references reflect the debilitated state of much of the neighborhood in 2003,

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115 See pages 19 and 20 of the Introduction for more discussion of Zukin.
Micaela’s imminent eviction also reflects the tensions over real-estate speculation and
gentrification occurring at this time. She describes “que me dan un pisito en Rivas, me
dice el concejal de Urbanismo . . . Nuevo, amplio, luminoso, con vistas a un parque.”
[that they’ll give me a little apartment in Rivas, the Councilor of Urban Affairs told me [. . .] New, spacious, well-lit, with views of a park] (López Lloro 62). She is obstinate about
not accepting the city’s offer because “me instalé en el 63 y no me he movido desde
entonces” [I moved in here in ’63 and I haven’t moved since then] (López Llera 62).
Micaela is, to use Gómez’ (2006) term, *un vecino de toda la vida* [a lifelong neighbor],
one of the elderly residents of Lavapiés who remain in the decrepit housing that they
have lived in for many years in a neighborhood devoid of services because it is their
home.

At this point in the work, Micaela’s imminent eviction and her failing health
begin to converge into one religiously-tinged sacrificial discourse. Having seen the Gran
Cabrón in the first *tranca* she is convinced that death is coming for her and she prepares
her “última cena” [last supper] (López Llera 62) in the second *tranca*. The allusion to
Christ here resonates with Chusito’s joke earlier in the *tranca* about Micaela’s taking in
of the Ecuadorian and Somali prostitutes. He proclaims that “hace Ud. honor a su
nombre, porque santa Micaela consagró su vida a las putas.” [you honor your namesake
because Saint Micaela consecrated her life to prostitutes] (López Llera 61). Chusito refers
literally to Santa Micaela, a Spanish nun that lived in the nineteenth century and
established the organization Adoratrices Esclavas del Santísimo Sacramento y Caridad
[Adoring Slaves of the Charity and the Holy Sacrament]. Like the character’s efforts in
the play to save the two young immigrant girls from the streets, this organization was
committed to rescuing women from the perils of prostitution and a life on the streets ("Biografía"). According to Chusito, however, Micaela has “fundado la hermandad del Refugio Okupa” [founded the sisterhood for the Shelter of the Okupa] (López Llera 61). In addition, el Chivo observes that “sucorrió a los drogadictos, a los mendigos, a los inmigrantes y a las putas” [she rescued drug addicts, beggars, immigrants, and prostitutes] and therefore should be considered “Santa Micaela de Lavapiés” (López Llera 82).

Given that these proclamations come in the wake of her death at the end of the second tranca, her beatification derives partly from her works, but also from her martyrdom. In particular, “hizo los milagros de no suicidarse, de envejecer, de conservar la dignidad y de resistirse a abandonar su casa” [she accomplished the miracles of not committing suicide, of growing old, of conserving her dignity, and of resisting the abandonment of her house] (López Llera 82). In the context of a decaying city “la virtud cotidiana y doméstica” [the virtue of domesticity and of daily life] (López Llera 82) are the inspiration for myth, tragedy, and art. The religious discourse that underpins much of the dramatic action in the work transforms it into a manifestation of the ideal of theatrical expression described in the play itself. The idea was Elisa’s and therefore it is left to Pablo and el Chivo to summarize how she “concebía el teatro como arte total [. . .] como combinación de explosión plástica y conceptual, a la manera del auto sacramental barroco” [conceived of the theater as total art [. . .] as a combination of concepts and explosive plasticity, in the manner of the Baroque auto sacramental] (López Llera 66).

The pursuit of new avenues of theatrical innovation desired by Elisa and echoed by el Chivo and Pablo, of course, butts up against the ubiquitous limitations of the market.
in which “manda la taquilla, no la calidad artística” [the ticket box drives all, not artistic quality] (López Llora 66). Through the voice of Elisa, López Llora uses the play to propose that to surmount these challenges the theater must “adaptarse al moderno lenguaje visual y [. . .] explotar las posibilidades de las nuevas tecnologías [. . . y . . .] crear en espacios virtuales, cambiar la manera de actuar los cómicos, apostar por diálogos más literarios y reivindicar un teatro sensual para disfrute de los cinco sentidos y de la inteligencia” [adapt itself to modern visual language [. . .] to exploit the possibilities of new technologies [and] create in virtual spaces, change the way the actors act, gamble on more literary dialogues, revindicate a sensual theater for the enjoyment of the five senses] (López Llera 66). Thus the play is self-consciously aware of itself as artifact and through these reflections of its own aesthetic agenda it becomes an effort to not just contemplate the dilemma of urban living, but also that of the dramatist in the urban marketplace.

It is the market that limits and instructs both urban space and contemporary dramaturgy, and in this context Micaela’s reappearance and resistance to the Gran Cabrón early in the third and final tranca serves an allegorical purpose. The Chivo rests in bed smoking his pipe when “aparece triunfante Micaela arrastrando por los pelos al Gran Cabrón pataleante” [Micaela appears triumphantly dragging the Gran Cabrón kicking and screaming by his hair] (López Llera 71). Having seen this display of resistance in which “debilidad” and “sufrimiento” [weakness and suffering] (López Llera 71) have “doblegado al Gran Cabrón” [humbled the Gran Cabrón] (López Llera 71), the Chivo feels that he now has “la fuerza y el valor necesarios para derribar a los enemigos de la Justicia” [the necessary strength and valor to defeat the enemies of Justice] (López Llera 71).
As the third *tranca* unfolds and the police enter to evict the inhabitants of the apartment, it becomes clear just who those enemies of Justice are: the State’s security apparatus advancing the interests of capital. The conflation here of the Gran Cabrón and capital makes readers attuned to the pop cultural vocabulary of the text (Estopa and Alaska y los Pegamoides, for example) resonant of Alex de la Iglesia’s parallel use of el Gran Cabrón in his 1995 film *El día de la bestia* [The Day of the Beast]. That film used the symbol of Satan as a comic means to critique the corruption, and cronyism that accompanied capital’s speculative activity in Madrid during the Torres Kio scandal in the late 1980s.¹¹⁶

Like in the film, the play uses the Gran Cabrón as a device to invert the dominant social order. Here, the deviance associated with the witches’ Sabbath and Lavapiés is inverted and shown as heroic while the State does the work of the devil, capital. During the confrontation with the police, el Chivo makes this connection between the Gran Cabrón, the police with their eviction order, and the work of capital more explicit. He decries the fact that “la propiedad es un robo, el auténtico mal. La tierra carece de dueño y ningún hombre posee más derecho que otro al disfrute [property is a robbery, the true evil. The land lacks an owner and no man possesses more right to enjoy it than another] (López Llera 79-80).

Fundamental to this “robo” el Chivo points out that “a pesar del principio de la igualdad, la fuerza perpetúa las diferencias como aliada de los estados de los ejércitos, de la policía, de las falsas religiones” [in spite of the principle of equality, force perpetuates difference as an ally of states, of armies, of the police, of false religions] (López Llera

¹¹⁶ For more on this reading of de la Iglesia’s film see Compitello (2003): “Del plan al diseño : *El día de la bestia* de Alex de la Iglesia y la cultura de la acumulación flexible en el Madrid del postcambio.”
With the body of Santa Micaela de Lavapiés lying in wake in the midst of this confrontation, the false religion would seem to be understood as the worship of the Gran Cabrón and the forces of the State and capital. As Lefebvre points out, “nationhood implies violence [. . .] a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market [. . .] in order to maintain and further its rule” (112). In contrast to the assault by the State stand Santa Micaela and the sacraments of charity, of dignity, and of resistance to which urban space and artistic production should be devoted.

As if to illustrate this idea, the troupe of inhabitants holds a devotional to Santa Micaela after the police have decided to give them an hour to pay their respects. After barricading the door, the inhabitants of the apartment pray that Jesus Christ offer Micaela’s soul eternal life. The ritual is followed by an act of civil disobedience in which the characters chain themselves to Micaela’s coffin. The plumber, who has facilitated their plan, knows that “seguro que los sacan en los periódicos y en televisión” [surely they will appear in the newspaper and the television] (López Llera 86). Their devotional to Santa Micaela has been transformed into the potential for multi-media spectacle.

It is a spectacle that will present viewers with the image of the okupas being dragged out chained to the coffin. The image re-appropriates the spectacle of urban space to bring attention to the violence necessary to maintain the inequalities of private property. Despite their resistance, the police enter violently with tear gas and force the inhabitants to leave. Because they are chained to the coffin, their exit turns into a “cortejo fúnebre presidido por la Policía” [a funeral procession headed by the female police officer] (López Llera 88). The scene does not appear in the play, but one can imagine that outside the building the journalists are waiting to capture this spectacle of ruthless state
power. In addition to this possible success, the group’s other triumph is that they have
distracted the police for long enough to allow the young Somali and Ecuadorian girls to
escape. Their spectacle has kept the spirit of Santa Micaela alive by protecting her wards.

The final scene of the play returns the action to the Plaza Lavapiés and the play
closes its circular structure. The scene of bacchnalia from the opening has returned with
the partially-nude twenty-somethings making love on the bench, the Joven Mamado
watching them and pleasuring himself, Pablo, el Colgado, El Descalabrado, and el Chivo
smoking hashish. The scene ends with Pablo, who reveals himself to be “seropositivo”
[HIV positive] (López Llera 94), sharing a needle with the other addicts. He dies of the
overdose that he attempted at the opening of the play. As the curtain drops, the song
“Negra sombra” by Luz Casal and Carlos Nuñez is heard, and the audience is left with
the image of both el Chivo and Pablo sprawled in the plaza, their bodies being poked
with a nightstick by the police.

The story of a tragic night in Lavapiés alludes to the many stories to be found in
the city of Madrid. The dual use of the auto sacramental and Luces de Bohemia to frame
the work position it firmly in the theatrical tradition of both Madrid and Spain and
highlight the play’s function as allegory for the victims of an emerging global city. As in
other instances in this chapter and this project in general, Lavapiés represents the tensions
of the capital city as a whole and arguably the nation as it enters the twenty-first century.
For Lefebvre, “there is doubtless no such thing as a myth or symbol unassociated with a
mythical or symbolic space which is also determined by practice” (The Production of
Space 118). Just as the Plan General 1997 attempted to tie the myth of Madrid to
Lavapiés, César López Llera’s play uses the same marginalized space as a way to deform
the steel and glass of the city. In doing so, he reveals how the *burla trágica* of Madrid and of Spain is reflected in the *esperpento* of Lavapiés.
**El teatro de kif**

Tu contorno es tan monstruoso que el horizonte se aparta.

A tus pies
Adoquines artificiales para torcer tobillos.

Yo quería a aquel otro de la pared rosada, y no a las tuyas.

Eres el reconocimiento
Más postrero al esperpento.

De ahí tu nombre: Valle-Inclán.

Pero al caballero tan perfecto puede que le disgustases.

---

**[HashishTheater]**

[Your outline is so monstrous that the horizon disappears.]

At your feet
artificial paving stones for twisting ankles.

I loved that other one with the pink wall and not yours.

You are the recognition the very last one of the grotesque.

Thus your name: Valle-Inclán.

But to the gentleman oh so perfect it might be that you are not so pleasing.]

Juanjo Martín Escriche
(MundoLavapiés 99)
Towards the middle part of the nineteenth century as Madrid began to move
towards being an increasingly more industrialized and bustling urban capital,
costumbrista writers like the writer and intellectual Román Mesonero Romanos were
busy crafting sketches of the people and places of daily life in Madrid. It is through the
words of Mesonero Romanos and his contemporaries that the exceptionalism of Madrid
would be fomented and the roots of the castizo myth of Madrid would be planted. As
discussed in Chapter Two, the second part of that century and the early twentieth century
would see this mythologized city of words reinforced and amplified in the scenes of the
popular theater genres of the zarzuela and the género chico. Considering this dynamic
between the capital and its mythical artistic production, it is noteworthy that in Mesonero
Romanos’ essay “Madrid a la luna” from the collection Escenas matritenses (1842), he
describes Madrid as “un libro inmenso, un teatro animado en que cada día encuentro
nuevas páginas que leer, nuevas y curiosas escenas que observar.” [Madrid is for me an
immense book, an animated theater in which each day I encounter new pages to read, and
new and curious scenes to observe] (93).

Mesonero Romanos’ description generates a certain metafictional irony by relying
on the metaphor of a book to animate his own book describing the city. In the context of
this dissertation, that the book is not merely an inert text, but also a “teatro animado”
[animated theater] speaks to the broader argument that has been developed over the
course of this project. The material city made up of concrete, bricks, and mortar
constantly in the process of being constructed and deconstructed is engaged in a dynamic with the linguistic constructions that overlays it. Perhaps unwittingly, Mesonero Romanos’ metaphor evokes a fundamental feature of literature; texts are not merely read passively and observed, but rather constantly recapitulated and re-signified. It is this process of signification that has underpinned the investigation of the ways that conceived, perceived, and lived space of Madrid was produced during the period that begins with the publication of the Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Madrid 1997, includes the existence of the Laboratorio 03, and is bookended by the inauguration of the Centro Dramático Nacional Teatro Valle-Inclán in 2006.

As has been made clear throughout this dissertation, both historically as well as here in the twenty-first century, the iconic neighborhood of Lavapiés has been central to this process of signifying Madrid because it has functioned as a synecdoche for the city—a metaphor wherein a metonymic association is created between a part of something and a corresponding whole. This dynamic is perhaps seen most clearly in the underlying discourse of the Plan General 1997 that seemed to suggest that as Lavapiés goes, so goes Madrid. As a result, Madrid has relied on its often-metonymic relationship with the barrio bajo to project new meanings across the stage of the capital. Like any literary text a theatrical work offers a series of interconnected metaphors and symbols that attempt to re-capitulate and re-signify the reality of the viewing public. For this reason, Lavapiés might be considered an urban spectacle in which the urban landscape functions as a metaphoric theater space where technocrats, playwrights, and okupas have attempted to re-articulate the meaning of the neighborhood and its function as a synecdoche of Madrid and the nation.
In this intersection between the material and the metaphoric contemporary cronistas are at work to re-signify and recapitulate the urban space of Lavapiés. Like a modern-day Mesonero Romanos, Julien Charlon has used both his multimedia “libro DVD participativo” [Interactive book DVD] Mundo Lavapiés and his book-length photographic essay on the Laboratorio 03 to try to give meaning to the “nuevas y curiosas escenas” that the “teatro animado” of Lavapiés’s urban landscape offers (Mesonero Romanos 93). One of the poems from this collection, Juanjo Martín Escriche’s “Teatro de kif,” serves as an epigraph to the conclusion of this dissertation because it captures succinctly the intersection between the material and the metaphoric being discussed.

Central to the poem is the transformation of the Teatro Valle-Inclán building into a metaphor for the physical and social changes occurring in the neighborhood. The nostalgia that tinges the poem when the speaker pines for “aquel otro/ de la pared rosada” [that other one/ with the pink wall] that the speaker “quería” [loved] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 99), alludes to the tone of lament within the poem. The title’s use of the term “kif” is an allusion to the Valle-Inclán poem “La pipa de kif” recited multiple times by the Chivo in López Llera’s play El Chivo en la Corte del botellón o Valle-Inclán en Lavapiés discussed in the previous chapter. This subtle reference and the more explicit statement later in the poem, “de ahí tu nombre: Valle-Inclán” [thus your name: Valle-Inclán], makes it clear that the “Teatro” of the title is the new Centro Dramático Nacional: the Teatro Valle-Inclán. For the speaker, the building is quite literally an abomination whose “contorno es tan monstruoso” [outline is so monstrous] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 99) that the “horizonte se aparta” [horizon departs] and at whose “pies
adoquines artificiales” [feet concrete paving stones] serve only to “torcer tobillos” [twist ankles] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 99).

The speaker’s use of the possesive pronoun “tu” [your] and the reference to the building’s “pies” [feet] personify the building and conflate the writer Valle-Inclán, the referenced in the title, and the national theater building itself. This architectural monstrosity called Valle-Inclán is like a deformed reflection of the bearded Galician poet and his work and therefore is “el reconocimiento/ más postrero/ al esperpento” [the very latest recognition of the grotesque] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 99). Here again, the urban space of Lavapiés is transformed into an example of a literary genre when the poem describes the building as an example of the esperpento. As the speaker wonders in the following lines whether this deformation of urban space will be appealing “al caballero/ tan perfecto” [to the oh so perfect gentleman] (Charlon Mundo Lavapiés 99), the frame of the poem broadens from being mere critique of the building to a contemplation of the broader social changes occurring in Lavapiés. In this reading, the “perfect gentleman” is an allusion to Gómez’ nuevos vecinos, the attractive, tidy professionals moving into trendy Lavapiés that fulfill the Ayuntamiento’s hopes to change the “componente social” [social component] (Echenagusia 110) of Lavapiés. The poem uses the specific site of the Teatro Valle-Inclán as a means to critique the neighborhood as a whole. To accomplish this critique the poem emphasizes the figurative power of poetry to convert the building into a metaphor while continuing to emphasize its physicality, its immensity, its presence as monstrosity. Through the poetic form, the material merges with metaphor and reflects the fractal nature of urban space—the building as metaphor is a reflection of the neighborhood as metaphor, which is a reflection of the city as a whole, and subsequently
the aspirations of the nation as a whole. These synecdoches of urban space are the point at which the written word and our understanding of place intersect.

In this dissertation, the study of Lavapiés has relied on the intersection of Literary Studies and Cultural Geography to explore how a geographical synecdoche underpins the convergence of cultural production and capital in Lavapiés. The previous discussion of Mesonero Romanos emphasized the textual character of urban space. What is unique about the textual construction of urban space in the twenty-first century is that the preponderance of visual culture in contemporary society has made the physical and visual experience of urban space an important part of this spatial production. Therefore, Madrid isn’t just an immense book as Mesonero Romanos would have it, but an urban stage in which dramatic texts, street theater, and modern architecture transform the urban landscape into a spectacle, a metaphoric theater space for the production of local, national, and global identities. The strong relationship between theatrical production and urban change at work in Lavapiés raises broad questions about the way that municipalities and the State commodify “place” by co-opting the available cultural resources of a particular area. In the case of Lavapiés, the cultural caché of the local is being used to project the municipal into a global arena and given Madrid’s role as the national capital, increase Spain’s global influence.

This dissertation has explored this spectacle in more detail by considering historical importance of spectacle to the development of urban space and the national imaginary in Madrid. I argued that the history of theater in Madrid offers an important means to understand this historical process since the theater played such an important role in fomenting notions of lo castizo and mythologizing Lavapiés as a site of municipal
and national patrimony. Relying on this context, I look at the contemporary spectacle of
Lavapiés from three different perspectives. I considered what Lefebvre would call the
“abstract space” of city planners and technocrats articulated by the Teatro Valle-Inclán
and the Plan General 1997. I contrast this analysis of institutionalized spectacle with
discussion of the spatial practice of the okupas of the Centro social okupado
autogestionado El Laboratorio 03 [Self-Sufficient Occupied Social Center The
Laboratory 3] that used its production of art and theater as a focal point for political
activism for resistance that simultaneously had a local, national, and global character.
Finally, the discussion of contemporary theater texts by Juan Mayorga and Juan
Cavestany, Jerónimo López Mozo, David Planell, and César López Llera demonstrated
how discourses that articulated the relationships between multiple geographic scales
circulated throughout these representations of Madrid and Lavapiés. The convergence of
the conceived, perceived, and lived space of Lavapiés results in an urban landscape that
serves as a metaphoric and literal theater space for competing spectacles engaged in the
production of local, regional, and national identity.

The approach used in this thesis highlights the ways that cultural products
(various kinds of theatrical texts in this case) have very concrete material impacts on
urban space. The misconception that the study of Literature deals with dusty books in a
cloistered library is one that is ripe for disruption (a deconstruction of the Real-World vs.
Academia binary, if you will). Representations of space in literature contribute to our
understanding of our physical environment and often generate the very “placeness” to
which we devote so much emotional energy. In Lavapiés, the interaction between culture
and the built-environment reflects a broader interaction between the interests of the
Nation-State and notions of the “local.” That is, the process of urban change occurring at
the local level in Lavapiés and the presence of national cultural institutions and global
capital in that process result in a synecdoche that undermines the very notion of the local
as it is subsumed by broader municipal, national, and even global interests.

For literary scholars, this effort to chart the spatial and material contexts of
Spain’s rich theater tradition continues the important work that scholars like Enrique
García Santo-Tomás (2004) have dedicated to the early modern period. As has been
stated at various points in this thesis, the spatial component of theater begs for it to be
considered in the broadest spatial context possible. By considering the dialogic
relationship between urban space and theater, scholars will have opportunities to re-
examine works from earlier periods that were often approached as merely dramatic (i.e.
written) texts. Though this approach may present challenges in earlier periods, the
important role of theater in urban development in Madrid suggests that as scholars
engage with contemporary theater texts they consider the way that those texts have been
represented in urban space, how they represent urban space, and how the performance of
these texts participate or resist broader discourses of urbanism at work in contemporary
Madrid. I hope that the approach that I have laid out in this dissertation will also provoke
more investigation into the actual theater spaces where performances “took place” and
allow researchers to quite literally map the consumption of literature on the terrain of the
city. This dissertation is also a call to cultural critics to be supportive, but wary of urban
art initiatives. A healthy art scene is indeed a worthy thing to support. Too often, though,
that pleasant gallery hop, public art initiative, or proposed performing arts center is
intimately tied to the “abstract space” found in the plans for condominium complexes just
around the corner. Just as literary critics have much to share by elucidating the role that
cultural production has on creating the signifiers that underpin urban space, it is
important to also see how the consumption of those cultural products is tied to the
commodification and consumption of urban space itself. In the context of Hispanism, this
dissertation has been focused on this process in Madrid. There is of course much work to
be done to tease out these issues in a variety of other cultural contexts within Spain (like
in Barcelona or Valencia) as well as in the many countries and regions that make up Latin
America.

For cultural geographers and others in urban studies, an attention to the way that
the cultural production associated with ethno-cultural festivals, theater districts, art walks,
and iconic museums converts the terrain of the city into a theater for competing interests
and ideologies offers new avenues to contemplate culture’s constitutive role in the actual
transformation of urban space. By relying on the research methods and training
associated with urban studies and geography, scholars might more carefully demonstrate
the relationships between real-estate development devoted to cultural infrastructure and
the process of gentrification and social transformation that often accompanies it. By
contextualizing cultural production in this way and emphasizing its material qualities, this
approach might also provide another means of exploring the thorny theoretical issue of
scale. In particular, understanding how cultural products articulate geographic scales
with one another would benefit from more research from geographers.

Because the notion of the urban spectacle is a process that converts the material
quite explicitly into metaphor, it allows scholars to embrace the mutable, variable, and
powerful ways that language function as a kind of connective tissue between people and
places. Here in the intersection of Literary Studies and Cultural Geography we might examine the narratives that produce the spatial containers that organize our society politically, sociologically, ideologically, and culturally. In the *conceived, perceived,* and *lived* spaces of the urban landscape the spectacle of the city articulates the narratives of the local into a synecdoche for municipal, national, and global identities.
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Peer-Reviewed


Book Reviews


Creative Non-Fiction


Conference Presentations


Teaching Experience

Fall 2006-Present: Graduate Teaching Assistant. Department of Hispanic Studies, University of Kentucky

Fall 2002-Spring 2006: Instructor. Department of English Colorado State University

Fall 2001-Spring 2002: Writing Center Consultant

Fall 2000–Spring 2002: Graduate Teaching Assistant. Department of English Colorado State University

Administrative Experience and Service

Fall 2008-Spring 2009: Co-Chair. Third Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. University of Kentucky

Summer 2008-Spring 2009: President. Graduate Student Congress University of Kentucky

Fall 2006-Spring 2008: Department Representative. Graduate Student Congress University of Kentucky

Fall 2006-Spring 2007: Admissions Liaison. Middlebury College Spanish School
