# NOTES ON Z (COSTA-GAVRAS, 1969): JORGE SEMPRÚN AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN FICTION FILM[1]

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Give me a city or a river, with a few libraries, with museums and cafés, of course, and with town squares where I can read in the sun, and I will be at home, *Heimlich*. In other words, in Europe. A Europe without borders, which extends across much of the world.

**(SEMPRÚN, 2006: 218)**

Five axioms to define Europe: the coffee house; the landscape on a traversable and human scale; these streets and plazas named after the statesmen, scientists, artists, writers of the past; our twofold descent from Athens and Jerusalem; and lastly, that apprehension of a closing chapter, of that famous Hegelian sunset, which shadowed the idea and substance of Europe even in their noon hours.

**(STEINER, 2007: 56)**

## INTRODUCTION: JORGE SEMPRÚN AND THE MEMORY OF EUROPE

The last section of *L'homme européen*, a book that documents a conversation or perhaps a written correspondence about Europe between Jorge Semprún and Dominique de Villepin, expresses the bitterness of both authors over the rejection of the European Constitution by the French and the Dutch in 2005. Almost two decades since the emergence of that obstacle to the construction of a European federal project, interpreted by both as an opportunity to further consolidate the future of the Union, the shadows looming over the continent have grown even longer. Events of the magnitude of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, along with the economic uncertainty they have provoked, have relegated the debate over European unity to the background in the midst of discussions revolving around defence and economic policies, in

terms that had until recently seemed buried in the distant past of the Cold War's more tumultuous moments. In this context, close examination of European identity has given way to a forced reorganisation in which concerns over cultural vicissitudes in international dialogues have been swept aside in order to attend to a series of crises that in the space of a few years have placed the EU model in jeopardy. It thus seems a fitting moment to return to Semprún and Steiner and the common elements underpinning their reflections on the idea of Europe, the underlying cultural cohesion that persists despite the scourges threatening the continent's essential, heterogeneous unity. For Steiner, coffee houses and town squares are meeting points, to which Semprún adds museums and libraries, places where Europe's heritage and knowledge converge to point out a direction for the future, a cohesive spirit that stretches across times and names:

> For me, since adolescence Europe has above all been the privileged homeland of literature, of reading, in its many languages, in its spiritual coherence. A cultural memory and also an outlook on life. It was at once Gide and Kafka, Thomas Mann and André Malraux, Cervantes and Dostoevsky. Not forgetting Marlowe or George Bernard Shaw, of course. (Semprún, 2006: 214-215)

For Semprún, as for Villepin, the original impulse towards a European community dates back to May 1935 and a lecture given by Husserl in Vienna on philosophy and the crisis of European humanity.[2] It was there that it was first verbalised, and in the Buchenwald concentration camp that it began to take shape: there in the camp, from another inmate he heard Husserl's words for the first time, around the same time that he was reading William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* There, in the very clutches of death, Semprún first began conceiving a notion of the proto-European (for it would not be until the 1980s that he would construct an openly pro-European political and cultural/spiritual discourse, drawing on the impact in

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France of certain dissenting voices from the East, such as Milan Kundera and György Konrád). The notion would survive the concentration camps, but it would remain submerged in silence for many years in a reflex response to the unspeakable. In his book *Literature or Life*, Semprún explains the dichotomy he was faced with, and his decision to choose "a long cure of aphasia, of voluntary amnesia in order to survive" (Semprún, 1998: 196), referring to the long hiatus between the end of the Second World War and the publication of his first book, *The Long Voyage*, in 1963. The healing process of this voluntary silence gave him the time he needed to regain his memory and make the journey back in that freight train to the German countryside, to the pain and agony of those days that blurred into night, to the fluid time of death's antechamber. Strictly speaking, writing was not the watershed that marked the end of this therapeutic silence, but an act that arose out of a need to reconstruct the emotional topography of Buchenwald, until then repressed, in order to complete the long period of healing. As Rodríguez Varela suggests, the trigger can be found in a text by Manuel Azaustre, a former communist militant who felt himself incapable of conveying the essence of his experience at Mauthausen (Rodríguez Varela, 2018: 89). Buchenwald would thus give rise to writing because memory cannot escape the storytelling impulse, like the memories inscribed in Abraham Bomba's repeated act of cutting hair in *SHOAH* (Claude Lanzmann, 1986), a mechanical gesture that underscores his inexpressible story

until the distress that the narration subjects him to is revealed on his face. As Lanzmann recognized in his documentary, images are not enough to capture the emotional weight of the testimony:

> Even though they showed the naked obscenity, the physical deterioration, the grim destruction of death, the images, in fact, were silent [...] above all because they said nothing precise about the reality they showed, because they delivered only confused scraps of meaning. One would have had to work on the body of the film, on its very cinematic material [...]. What was really needed was commentary on the images, to decipher them, to situate them not only in a historical context but within a continuity of emotions. And in order to remain as close as possible to the actual experience, this commentary would have had to be spoken by the survivors themselves. (Semprún, 1998: 200-201).

The purpose of this article is to explore the markers of Semprunian discourse in the writer's work on the screenplay for the film *Z* (Costa-Gavras, 1969), with a focus on his political commitment and on how these markers connect with the rest of his work, as well as with the pro-European stance that he would begin to consolidate in the 1980s. To this end, it presents a comparative analysis that considers the relationship between this film and some of Semprún's literary work, particularly those texts that best represent his discursive evolution and personal history, from his experience at the Buchenwald concentration camp in *Literature or Life* to the construction of a European ideal in *The European Man*. In order to draw some useful conclusions from this dialogue, this study adopts an intertextual perspective that will facilitate the identification of the particular qualities of Jorge Semprún's militancy through the diversity of an oeuvre that encompasses multiple media forms over various decades.

## FROM *THE LONG VOYAGE* TO COSTA-GAVRAS'S MILITANT CINEMA

The publication of *The Long Voyage* in 1963 placed Semprún on the French literary map, sparking interest in him as an author that would bring him into intellectual circles that included Alain Resnais and Yves Montand. It was with these two that he would embark on his first cinematic adventure, writing the screenplay to the film *The War Is Over* (La guerre est finie, Resnais, 1966). According to Ricardo Jimeno, the script for this film contains a three-level structure whose origins can be identified in *The Long Voyage* and which would continue to appear in his subsequent work as a screenwriter: on the first level is Semprún the creator, the second is occupied by Semprún the militant, and on the third is a book or film character who often constitutes an alter-ego combining the first two (Jimeno, 2017: 64). This structure effectively reflects a faith in artifice and the mechanics of fiction as the ideal tools for expressing the experience of inexpressible, as the author himself would acknowledge: "The only ones who will manage to reach this substance, this transparent density, will be those able to shape their evidence into an artistic object, into a space of creation. Or of re-creation. Only the artifice of a masterly narrative will prove capable of conveying some of the truth of such testimony" (Semprún, 1998: 13). Through this apparatus described by Jimeno and channelled through the alter-ego character of Diego Mora (Yves Montand), *The War Is Over* is effectively a reworking of Semprún's experiences as a militant for the Spanish underground during

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the Franco regime. The film also reflects the disenchantment with communism that led Semprún to abandon the official Spanish communist party line dictated by Santiago Carrillo and Dolores Uribarri ("La Pasionaria")— and consequently end up expelled from the party.

A year later, in the autumn of 1967, Semprún began working with Costa-Gavras on the screenplay for *Z*, an adaptation of Vassilis Vassilikos's novel that itself was based on the assassination of the Greek politician Grigoris Lambrakis by vigilante groups in May 1963. The script was written out of militant necessity, as just a few months earlier Greece had been taken over by a military junta following a coup d'état on 21 April 1967. In response to these events, Costa-Gavras wanted to adapt the source material to make a targeted attack on the new dictatorship, while Semprún was keen to explore the fate of a country that had obvious parallels with his native Spain. Based on the assassination of Lambrakis, *Z* depicts an unnamed, supposedly democratic country that is nevertheless plagued with corruption and repressed by military and police efforts to eradicate any left-wing opposition. In this context, a member of parliament (Yves Montand) and his supporters organise a peace rally despite the obstacles placed in their way by the authorities. As he leaves the rally, the MP is assassinated in the street in the midst of confrontations between protesters and counter-protesters. After his death, a young examining magistrate (Jean-Louis Trintignant) takes on the case while a photojournalist tries to gather evidence to uncover the truth of this political crime, and together they discover that the culprits are right-wing extremists in collusion with military authorities.

After a swift and efficient scriptwriting process with Semprún, Costa-Gavras found that no European producers were willing to finance their project because it was deemed too political. Despite having the prior support of United Artists, which had distributed the director's previous film and had acquired the rights to Vassilikos's book, concerns about the film's economic viability expressed by studios such as Gaumont and Les Artistes Associés put the project in jeopardy. In the end, personal contributions by actor and producer Jacques Perrin—who plays a photojournalist in the film—along with other stars, including Montand himself, rescued the film from development hell. The decisive boost came from an unexpected source: amidst the turbulence of the Cannes Film Festival in May 1968, Costa-Gavras and Perrin secured funding from Algeria's National Film Marketing Office, a government agency whose support as a co-producer would result in the film being shot in Algeria—and would give the African nation its first and only Oscar when the picture won the award for Best Foreign Film in 1970. Jimeno describes the precarious conditions under which the film was shot, with a cast of European stars that included Irene Papas, Jean-Louis Trintignant and Montand, all of whom agreed to work for reduced salaries, and with the participation from prison of musician Mikis Theodorakis, who took inspiration from the Lambrakis's story to compose a soundtrack combining traditional songs and original compositions, without having been able to read the script (Jimeno, 2014: 638).

## *Z*, OR FICTION AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

The opening credits of *Z* feature a rapid succession of close-ups on military insignia with the names of the cast superimposed, all to the sound of Theodorakis's frenetic score. Immediately after the film title "Z" appears on the screen, we find ourselves in a room in which a group of senior military officials are listening without much interest to an explanation of mildew prevention methods. The speaker concludes by equating this fungus with an *ideological mildew* that is devastating the population. He then introduces the Chief of Military Police, who stands up to takes his place at the front of the room. At this mo-

ment, the frame freezes and the following caption appears on screen: "*Toute ressemblance avec des évènements réels, des personnes mortes ou vivantes n'est pas le fait du hasard. Elle est VOLONTAIRE*" ["Any similarity to real events or persons, dead or living, is not coincidental. It is INTENTIONAL"]. This declaration introducing the story is "signed" in all capital letters by Jorge Semprún and Costa-Gavras, who thus endorse the militant message that underpins the film. With the pacing of a news report and emphatic editing, from the outset *Z* depicts a very specific story—the political circumstances in Greece prior to the coup d'état that brought the Regime of the Colonels to power—as a universal tale. Despite being clearly based on the assassination of Lambrakis, the film evades any geographical references or names of those involved, suggesting that this story could easily be repeated and, in fact, is being repeated in other places with other protagonists. In this way, Semprún is able to refer to personal experiences that are filtered into twists and turns of the story, (re)writing his own identity into one of the film's characters. The first level of the three-level scheme established by Jimeno Aranda for Semprún's writing (Jimeno Aranda, 2017) fits thematically here with the aforementioned parallels between Spain and Greece, although on this point it is worth stressing the universality that defines the articulation of the film's anti-fascist discourse, a conciliatory and combative discourse that is also an embryonic version of the pro-European sentiment that would emerge in Semprún's work in the 1980s. The second level is reflected in the authorial imprint identifiable in the technical style, with constant spatio-temporal ruptures creating a fragmentation advocated in titles such as *Literature or Life* and which here finds a certain correlation with the lively editing of Françoise Bonnot, for which she won the Oscar in that category.

As a fragmenting device, the editing here serves to structure the film, without undermining the fervour of the events, into two basic acts: the first covers the lead-up to the rally organised by Z (Montand) and the official attempts to boycott it until attacks by paramilitary groups and their followers ultimately result in the politician's assassination; and the second act presents the investigation conducted by the relentless examining magistrate (Trintignant), which threatens to topple the military leadership complicit in the crime. The inexorable succession of events in *Z*, depicted with blunt immediacy, involves a rupture that is more spatial than temporal or memory-related, although Jimeno identifies the use of memory in the brief flashback in which Z remembers when his wife discovered him with his lover. Nevertheless, the constant fragmentation, which on other occasions is more closely associated with memory, is still clearly one of Semprún's most effective weapons for breaking the boundaries of representation and vindicating art as a means of combat and criticism, as Mirjam Leuzinger astutely observes:

> Artistic memory is not limited to an aesthetic discourse, as might be hastily assumed; on the contrary [...] it is a hybrid discursive moment that is at once aesthetic and ethical, at once fictitious and referential; it is, in short, a heterogeneous discourse that appeals to the transcendence of art not only for the conception of the literary text, but also for the formation of free and critical human beings in the face of the many trials to which the brutality of the past century has subjected them. (Leuzinger, 2016: 22)

In relation to the third of Jimeno's three levels, the author cites Bucarelli to point out how Semprún finds a kind of fictional alter-ego in the character of Manuel (played by Charles Denner), who accompanies the Greek politician and is responsible for the university political organisations. Manuel has Jewish roots and is the only one of the politician's followers who maintains a stance distinct from the political strategy of the Pacifist Committee (Bucarelli, 2011: 56). Here, the flashes of literal representation of Semprún's experi-

ences are relegated to the background, appearing weaker than those identifiable in other fiction films such as *The Confession* (L'aveu, Costa-Gavras, 1970) or *Roads to the South* (Les routes du sud, Joseph Losey, 1978), in which Montand's protagonist bears some unmistakeable traits of the author. However, *Z* could be understood as a kind of polyhedron or prism whose multiple sides reflect the different aspects of Semprún's character: the idealised but imperfect hero (the golden aura surrounding Z is somewhat tainted by his marital indiscretions); the loyal, passionate militant (embodied in Manuel); the persecuted witness of history (the character played by Perrin); and the tireless pursuer of justice (unequivocally represented by Trintignant's examining magistrate). These different faces all draw somewhat laterally from his reinvention of himself and of his memories, which constitute such a key feature of his work (consider, for example, his story about killing a German soldier, the circumstances of which he consciously revised and updated in *Literature or Life*). All seem to be marked by the same motif: the individual who struggles in different ways against the abuses of an oppressive state determined to crush him for his rebellion. Yet it is also an individual who is never alone in his mission—even when he is isolated and repressed—and who recognises that he forms part of a struggle that transcends him. It is significant that the narrative of *Z* is founded on two very deliberately anonymous points of reference: Z himself, and the Examining Magistrate—a fictional alter-ego of Christos Sartzetakis, the jurist who between 1985 and 1990 would serve as president of Greece—are the two pillars around which this statement of protest is constructed, turning it into a kind of diptych. When the first is murdered, the second steps into the ring to take his place and push the military authorities against the ropes, although his attack is based not on ideology but on the strict impartiality attributed to the judiciary. Adolfo Millán Aguilar locates these two resistance figures on the third level of a structure that also includes the Greek government in the context of the fledgling, conservative-controlled democracy that emerged out of the civil war, and the battle waged against it by a leftist, reformist opposition (Millán Aguilar, 2022: 273). Although Millán Aguilar's study is limited to describing these figures as actants of the narrative, his three-level structure is worth drawing on to highlight the importance of these heroes as catalysts for change in the course of history. Leaders come and go, but the causes they lead survive.

## Z, OR FICTION AS A DOCUMENT

The conclusion to *Z* serves as a troubling counterpoint. The apparent victory over systemic injustice represented by the magistrate's various accusations and arrests is quickly turned on its head by a news report announcing the coup d'état by the Colonels, which is in turn followed by a description of the fate of the story's protagonists, all of whom are victims of the coup. According to Txetxu Aguado, the film thus points out that the safeguards of liberal democratic society are not a guarantee against fraudulent political tactics aimed at suppressing opposition.[3] There is no room for optimism: the voice-over that concludes the film lists everything the new dictatorship has banned, a long list that includes freedom of the press, learning Russian or Bulgarian, Tolstoy, Sophocles, the Beatles, long hair, miniskirts and, finally, the letter "Z", which fills the frame, which, as the voice-over explains, means "he is alive" in ancient Greek. In this way, the character played by Montand—whose image appears behind the "Z", beside a cartoon portrait of his face—is identified as the representation of an eternal ideal. The film ends here and the final credits roll. Despite the news of the coup, Costa-Gavras's reporter-style tone remains impervious to despair, eschewing any dramatic emphasis or suggestion of failure, and ensuring that the final words appearing over Theodorakis's music attest to the contin-

ued existence of a combative spirit that survives totalitarianism and its various reincarnations. *Z* thus effectively functions as a Semprunian political manifesto and as a quasi-journalistic document of a key period in Greek history. Its evasion of any melodramatic twists is indicative of the creators' intentions, far removed from the epic and/or frustrated tones of historical fiction while still maintaining an energy generated by Bonnot's editing and Semprún and Costa-Gavras's screenplay. These characteristics, which give the film its powerful quality, contribute to the placement of an almost exclusive focus on the characters' political frictions with the system, thereby infusing it with a spirit that could legitimately be classified as the epitome of the style of *political cinema* that for years was associated with the name of Costa-Gavras. It is of course a classification which, as Pinel astutely points out, raises serious questions about its nature, as "it is also worth asking whether it [political cinema] is a genre in the strict sense of the word or a recurring theme that particularly inspired the productions of the 1960s and 1970s" (Pinel, 2009: 241). The journalist and screenwriter Manuel Hidalgo argues that "political cinema in the Semprún/Gavras mould has become a part of history. There was nothing like it before and it has had a huge influence on filmmaking since. French, Italian, Latin American political cinema…" (Alemany, 2011). Indeed, the Greek filmmaker's style could be postulated as filmmaking essentially associated with its main theme, an approach just as evident, it must be remembered, in the decisions and turns of any artistic text. Godard's films of the late 1960s were certainly political, as were the films of Italian neo-realism and of the Russian Revolution, and also in their own way—perhaps less explicitly but undoubtedly just as marked by ideology—the big Hollywood productions. It is undeniable that the thematic focus of Costa-Gavras's films had a decisive impact on the emergence of a label that is worth questioning given its suggestion that ideology can be confined to one supposed genre, overlooking the possibility that any work of fiction of any kind may have political implications.

The effect of thematic amplification resulting from the stylistic choices made by Semprún and Costa-Gavras in the writing and production process plays a role in this, as the fact that *Z* smooths out any emotional roughness of its characters and lays the facts bare without resorting to superficial spectacle imbues the film with a candid honesty that the spectator may construe as the kind of objectivity associated with journalistic discourse. This connects to a debate over forms of representation and their relationship to the historical world that far exceeds the limits of this article, and which was already a concern in photography before the birth of cinema, and in primitive cinema before the birth of the documentary. In this respect, it is useless to speculate on the real value of *Z* as a document testifying to a specific episode in history, as the film makes no attempt to create a *documentary effect*—to use the terminology of Zumalde and Zunzunegui (Zumalde and Zunzunegui, 2014)—that would place it in close relation with the reality to which it refers (the episode of the assassination of Lambrakis, the subsequent investigation, and finally, the coup d'état). Instead, it adopts an approach that uses the anonymity of names and places to avoid specification and endow the discourse with a universal quality. The text can thus communicate to and mobilise its audience much more effectively than could a politicised documentary through its enunciation. It is thus worth reiterating Català and Cerdán's max-

*Z* EFFECTIVELY FUNCTIONS AS A SEMPRUNIAN POLITICAL MANIFESTO AND AS A QUASI-JOURNALISTIC DOCUMENT OF A KEY PERIOD IN GREEK HISTORY

im that "it is not in the medium that the guarantee of truth must reside, but in the filmmaker" (Català and Cerdán, 2008: 17). Semprún, who years later would experiment with documentary forms in *Les deux mémoires* (Jorge Semprún, 1974), stressed the value of artifice in *Literature or Life*, expressing his belief in a dialogue—an unreliable dialogue, as he himself warns, without this mattering in the least—among concentration camp returnees as to how their story should be told, in which one of them asserts: "Telling a story well, that means: so as to be understood. You can't manage it without a bit of artifice. Enough artifice to make it art!" (Semprún, 1998: 123).

## CONCLUSION: Z AND SEMPRUNIAN MEMORY

In his article "Travelling arrière et circulaire": Jorge Semprun's Script Writing", Marcus Coelen analyses Semprún's assertion of the need to turn testimony into an artistic object in the following terms:

> This sentence expresses an idea underlying all of Semprún's writing: the opposition of an artifice (of literary nature) to a truth (of historical essence)—in which the former serves as privileged vehicle or even sole form of manifestation of the latter—organizes his entire endeavor of inscribing his productions into the texture of historicity. (Coelen, 2016: 115)

Coelen's observation perfectly sums up the Semprunian mechanism as reflected in the stylistic approach taken in *Z*: the apparent contradiction of conveying truth through artifice, inherited from the false dichotomies that have marked the parallel development of documentary and fiction, is no obstacle to conveying the truth of a testimony or an accurate portrait of an era. On the contrary, this process of creative (re)construction involves an honesty that allows the author to evade the snares of memory, while renaming places and people to render them anonymous to the reader/spectator, who is given access to an even greater level of intimacy in these reappraised locations and rediscovered characters. This is the intimacy facilitated by fiction, which here vests the narrative with a universal quality without abandoning specific ideas. *Z* does not limit its denunciation to the coup d'état in Greece; instead, it uses the mechanisms of the thriller to raise the protest to a higher level. The Lambrakis case thus serves as a starting point, while the ultimate object of the protest is the deprivation of freedoms under totalitarianism, and the purpose of its discourse is to call upon spectators of any nationality or situation to keep up the fight against systemic injustice. The Semprunian approach thus involves the delocalisation of the conflict at the heart of the discourse, in a manner similar to the fluid overlapping of memories collected in *Literature or Life*. The intention behind this is not to camouflage the writer's identity, but rather to construct it on the foundation of freedom offered by fiction, the same freedom that was merely a fantasy in the barracks of the concentration camp. Costa-Gavras's complicity in his partnership with Semprún takes this approach to its ultimate consequences, whereby films such as *The Confession*, *Special Section* and *Z* itself construct a style of cinema that transcends its "political" label to offer a timeless representation for European spectators of issues as palpable today as they were all those years ago. ■

## NOTES

1 This study has been conducted in the context of the research project "Media Literacy in Public Mass Media: Analysis of Collaboration Strategies and Processes between Media and Educational Institutions in Europe and Spain (AMI-EDUCOM)", code PID2022-13884-I00, under the direction of Javier Marzal Felici (IP1) and Roberto Arnau Roselló (IP2).

2 In his article "Las raíces de una Europa en crisis", Sergio Sevilla examines the origins of the idea of Europe in philosophy based on Husserl's notion of a Europe

founded on the culture of rationalism, with the classical philosophers as its model (Sevilla, 2013).

3 "Despite the successful efforts to bring the guilty to justice, the assassins will be released from prison when a coup d'état gives way to the so-called Regime of the Colonels, therefore pointing to how the safeguards of a liberal democratic society are no guarantee against fraudulent political means directed toward the suppression of the opponent" (Aguado, 2014: 188).

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## NOTES ON Z (COSTA-GAVRAS, 1969): JORGE SEMPRÚN AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN FICTION FILM


### Abstract

*"Tout ressemblance avec des évènements réels, des personnes mortes ou vivantes n'est pas le fait du hasard. Elle est VOLONTAIRE."* This caption, superimposed over a freeze-frame shot of a room full of military officers deciding Greece's fate, is followed by the names of Jorge Semprún and Costa-Gavras, appearing immediately below it like signatures. Thus begins *Z*, the Greek filmmaker's most accomplished political thriller, and the finest product of the partnership between the two. Semprún's screenplay, adapted from Vassilis Vassilikos's novel based on the judicial investigation into the assassination of the professor and activist Grigoris Lambrakis in 1963, stands as a vibrant distillation of the Spanish screenwriter's political commitment. The textual force of the fictional tale told in *Z* conveys a truth as unrelenting as the examining magistrate portrayed by Jean-Louis Trintignant. Its denunciation of democratic backsliding in its depiction of events that led to the annihilation of ideological opposition and the establishment of the Regime of the Colonels in Greece is constructed around an assassination that Semprún and Costa-Gavras analyse through the use of multiple points of view, a news reporting style and a reflection on the nature of testimony and its relationship to reality.



### Key words

Jorge Semprún; Cinema; Memory; Costa-Gavras; *Z*.



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## APUNTES SOBRE Z (COSTA-GAVRAS, 1969): JORGE SEMPRÚN Y EL COMPROMISO POLÍTICO EN EL CINE DE FICCIÓN


### Resumen

«Tout ressemblance avec des évènements réels, des personnes mortes ou vivantes n'est pas le fait du hasard. Elle est VOLONTAIRE". Al rótulo, sobreimpresionado sobre la imagen congelada de una sala repleta de militares que acotan el destino de Grecia, le siguen las firmas a pie de Jorge Semprún y Costa-Gavras. Así empieza *Z*, cima del *thriller* político marca del director y también de la colaboración entre los signatarios. El guion de Semprún, adaptación de la novela de Vassilis Vassiliskos que recoge los hechos y la investigación fiscal del asesinato en 1963 del profesor y activista Grigoris Lambrakis, se erige como vibrante destilación del compromiso político del español. El relato de *Z*, desde la ficción, sostiene en su fuerza textual una verdad tan implacable como el juez instructor encarnado por Jean-Louis Trintignant. Su denuncia de una democracia secuestrada y de los hechos que acabaron por reducir a cenizas la oposición ideológica para dar paso a la Dictadura de los Coroneles, se arma en torno a un asesinato-epicentro que Semprún y Costa-Gavras desmenuzan desde la multiplicidad del punto de vista, la voluntad cronista y la reflexión sobre la naturaleza del testimonio y su relación con lo real.



### Palabras clave

Jorge Semprún; cine; memoria; Costa-Gavras; *Z*.



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