

# THE BORDERSCAPE IN A STREET FILM: MADRID IN PRINCESSES\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Still swept up in the enthusiasm of the turn of the millennium, in an article published in 2008, Ángel Quintana described *Princesses* (Princesas, Fernando León de Aranoa, 2005) as an emblematic example of stylistic changes in Spanish cinema. The author approaches the film, along with other examples, as an example of Spanish cinema's return to realism, and its abandonment of the "limbo of postmodernity" (2008: 251). Quintana observes this return to realism as a move away from the pastiche tone, so fashionable in the 1990s, which, in his opinion, "removed cinema from its context". However, he warns that this return to realism should not be seen as a return to modern cinema, or in *stricto sensu* as a return to neorealism, but rather as "something epidermal [...] a timid realism" marked by a disdain for the political causes that may lie behind social phenomena (2008: 254). The new realism, in Quintana's view, adhered to a hy-

brid model of organising the narrative of reality within the structure of film genres.

The passage of time has proven that *Princesses* was not a sign of the abandonment of postmodernity. The "timid realism" put into practice in the film was in fact a distancing from the modern realist model—marked by what Deleuze once called the predominance of the time-image over the action-image—and an approach to the new spatial portraits of postmodernity (Jameson, 1991). In this sense, as Kyle Black's reading shows, Fernando León de Aranoa's film was one of the multiple responses of Spanish cinema to the accelerating changes that Spanish society was experiencing in "its passage from modernity to postmodernity" (2011: 82). The portrayal of Madrid amid its shift to the status of global city was a cinematic reaction to the social consequences of Spain's integration into the European Community to become "an attractive destination for many people from other countries who have been left without as many re-

sources and opportunities as Spain offers” (Black, 2011: 82). Two decades after the death of the dictator and the establishment of democracy based on the principles of the modern Nation-State, the country found itself immersed in the processes of globalisation and their indispensable effects, such as immigration and multiculturalism. It now had to deal with what Jürgen Habermas (2000) called a “post-national constellation”: a scenario shaped by the constant flow of capital and human mobility. It is a space marked by a sense of both excitement and fear, triggered by individual freedoms and by contact with the Other. The old borders were fading away and, in turn, new borders were multiplying.

Spanish cities have become the most visible face of the impact of this scenario of globalisation and the constant crossing of invisible borders. *Princesses*, in this sense, offers a filmic reading of the border spaces of Madrid in the wake of the impact of globalisation and its social effects in the form of multiculturalism and migration. The city has become a place of social antagonisms, divided between urban islands and by the invisible borders between multiple centres and peripheries. It has metamorphosed into a realm of permissiveness as well as a place of conflict. *Princesses* is a portrait of this double-faceted urban landscape: the global city of spectacle and consumption, but also of pathological references and stigmatised localities. The film’s reading of Madrid is strengthened by its accompaniment of wandering bodies constantly crossing borders. In short, the filmic space takes shape as the characters move over a new phenomenological map of the city’s borders.

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TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE SPATIAL  
REFLECTIONS AND PORTRAYALS  
OF MADRID IN THE FILM**

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Most of the excellent studies on *Princesses* address issues related to the representation of gender and migration (Black, 2011; Van Liew, 2012; Lobo, 2013; Sanjuán-Pastor, 2013; Murray, 2014). In this article, I intend to examine possible spatial reflections and portrayals of Madrid in the film. The basic research question is how the global city, with its multiple borders, appears in the film. Or, to put it another way: how the mobility of the characters in the creative geography of the film creates a filmic space and responds to the dominant imaginary of the city. By *filmic space*, I mean the result of aesthetic strategies used to portray the characters’ experiences on the urban terrain. In the case of *Princesses*, this space is created by the inter-urban journeys of the subaltern, border-dwelling characters and their daily negotiation with the codes of the global city. Like a kind of street film with a disruptive urban art style, *Princesses* challenges the dominant discourses on the city. In this way, like many other Spanish films that addressed the psychosocial changes in Madrid during this period, it highlights the inconsistencies and contradictions of official discourses on the city during the structural shift towards globalisation. This portrait—and hence the hypothesis of this article—can be understood precisely in the gap that the film creates between reality and fiction, and in the mere fact of adding a new phenomenological layer to the official cognitive maps through narratives of the border dweller.

The aforementioned urban borders are part of this filmic landscape. In this sense, in the following sections, I intend to contextualise the film in relation to theories of urban fragmentation and border studies: cinematic and literary fiction’s response to the discourses and policies that create, legitimise, and displace borders. Seen through this lens, *Princesses* offers a useful case study as an example of artistic expressions of an important historical moment.

## 2. THE QUARTERED CITY AND URBAN BORDERS

The theory of urban fragmentation, as Ricardo Gómez Maturano (2014) points out, has a long history dating back to the 1980s. The phenomenon has been called by different names, but all of them refer to a process of “aggravation of social inequalities, of non-solidary forms and regroupings by affinity” (Mari-France Prévôt Schapira, quoted in Gómez Maturano, 2014: 12). In other words, social segregation translates into spatial fragmentation in a city of closed enclaves with their own cultural codes. A process of isolation that Richard Sennet (quoted by Goldsmith, 2000: 41) in the 1970s described as an urban phenomenon whose result is “not only a lack of sympathy for the inhabitants of the other enclave, but a lack of information and a misunderstanding [of the Other]”. Contact between urban enclaves is (ideologically) mediated and largely stereotyped:

When groups learn about one another only by means of distant, indirect, vicarious experience—through what they read or hear, or much worse, through what they see on television—they have shallow understanding, based only on superficialities. Living in separate neighborhoods, they are unable to learn to develop, to be tolerant, to work things through, to compromise. (Goldsmith, 2000: 41).

The question posed here is how *Princesses* responds to and represents the borders of a globalised Madrid. Filmed in a period that can be understood as the end of the economic boom of the 1990s and just prior to the advent of the financial crisis that would accelerate the process of the multiplication of urban borders, the filmic representation of the city in *Princesses* underlines the tensions of centre/periphery, inside/outside, which remained intact despite the policies of official representation that tried to show the opposite. In this sense, the film follows in the footsteps of León de Aranoa’s earlier feature, *Barrio* (1998), organising narrati-

ves within the filmic structure in the style of disruptive performance art on the urban landscape. The question of landscape is key to understanding this type of filmmaking, as it attends “to the landscape both *in* and *as* performance” (Moyo, 2017: 25, emphasis in the original). In other words, and following Moyo’s argument once again, the street film is a kind of cinema in which the urban landscape is part of the content and, at the same time, part of the context of the filmic narrative. But this symbiosis of content and context must necessarily be complemented by images whose connotation is analogous to any other urban performance art that aims “to encourage the public to experience the everyday landscape of the city differently [...] making the presence of marginalized groups in the city, such as migrants, more tangible and visible” (Les Roberts, 2018: 4). Undoubtedly, this street art ultimately suspends the urban political cartography for a moment by making visible and questioning the invisible boundaries between different spaces in the city. Performance art here is first and foremost a phenomenological charge of the urban space and its ideologically created borders presented as neutral and natural. This translates into making publicly available an emotional and empathetic portrait of the subjects of a radical otherness, migration, xenophobia, and prostitution (Moyo, 2017: 25). By visibilising and humanising the Other, the street film essentially constitutes a tacit challenge, and one not necessarily free of ideology, against the great discursive machinery of spatial creation—and differences—of the postmodern city.

*Princesses* begins with the urban journey of Caye, one of its main characters. Through some objective shots, the spectator is confronted with a series of images from the window of a moving vehicle on one of Madrid’s ring roads: blocks of buildings, industrial estates, and shantytowns. These shots are intercut with the image of Caye in a taxi, to imply that they are from her point of view. The film thus begins with Caye, a prostitute

in Madrid, looking at an urban landscape devoid of any architectural landmarks. It is a borderland, between the countryside and the city, built up or abandoned. This character's gaze is taken from a vehicle in motion on a Madrid ring road, an invisible and at the same time geographically marked border between the city centre and the periphery. Caye—whose name is a homophone of the Spanish word *calle*, referring to the urban public space known in English as “street”—is on a work-related journey. She has been invited to a hospital by a group of male friends as a birthday present for a patient.

The prologue to *Princesses* expresses the film's vision of the city. Various perspectives may potentially be adopted to analyse this vision, ranging from a formalist perspective to studies of gender or class representation, but what is also worth exploring here is the portrayal of border space in this prologue and throughout the film. It is a space that gives rise to different representations of gender and sexuality, as well as class and race. This space in the film is corporeal and allegorical: Caye, as Sanjuán-Pastor argues, is an impossible *flâneuse*, who “is not in the public space, in the street, but is part of it” (2013: 62). Her female body is a possible signifier of the public sphere. As Susan Hayward argues with reference to imaginaries of *fin de siècle* Paris, the prostitute's body “becomes the symbol of both the danger and the promise of the modern age [...] As the *erotic* public woman, she is prosti-

tute [...] the site where capitalism and sex unite. Literally, the public and private spheres come together in that intercourse; she is a conduit of pleasure but also of filth” (2000: 24-25, emphasis in the original). Similarly, in León de Aranoa's film, the women protagonists represent this aforementioned promise and danger. They are part of the city's public sphere. They represent Madrid in all its historical complexity of the moment of change.

*Princesses* was filmed in the midst of major changes in Madrid as it entered the era of neoliberalism and globalisation. It was a period of profound changes to the economic structure that affected the anatomy of Madrid and other European cities. These were the years in which Madrid was moving towards the post-Fordist city: an industrial reorganisation with centrifugal tendencies of urban expansion. In the city centre, the last traces of the traditional neighbourhood were disappearing and, at the same time, new headquarters for corporate business and financial activities were appearing in the vicinity of the government institutions. A new social class was settling in gentrified areas near the financial centre. The historic centre was becoming a city of spectacle, an object of consumption for citizens and tourists. At the same time, outside the borders of the ring roads, residential developments were expanding everywhere in the proximity of the industrial estates, with suburbs of substandard housing and empty, abandoned spaces.

Film stills 1 and 2. *Princesses*. Caye's POV shots



The global city is not the city without borders. Peter Marcuse and Roland van Kempen's seven socio-spatial divisions of the postmodern city expose a new pattern in urban development (2000: 253). For these authors, the global city is divided by the new urban boundaries into zones of interest such as "citadels, gentrified neighborhoods, exclusionary enclaves, urban regions, edge cities, ethnic enclaves and excluded 'racial' ghettos" (2000: 253). Marcuse and van Kempen acknowledge that their model may be more applicable to some globalising European cities than others (2000: 253). In an earlier study, Marcuse explores the story of the quartered, divided and insular city (1989). Life in each division is totalised, independent, and emancipated, so that each division is isolated from the other: "on the one hand, walls, literal or symbolic, prevent people from seeing, meeting and hearing each other [...]. On the other hand, within the walls life can be lived in its totality: places of residence, of work, of recreation, of socialization, [...] whether it be the citadel, the edge city, or the excluded ghetto" (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000: 250). Urban geographers point to economic structural change as the main trigger of this spatial reorganisation: change that "produces both extreme wealth and extreme poverty, con-

centrated power and concentrated powerlessness, ghettoization and citadelization, and not by accident: the decrease at the one end is in large part the result of the increase at the other" (2000: 251).

In the film, soon after the prologue we are confronted with one of these enclaves less favoured by globalisation, a kind of pseudo-ghetto of exclusion, where Caye lives and works together with other prostitutes. The sequence depicts this urban corner using wide shots from the points of view of Caye and her fellow prostitutes from inside a hairdressing salon. Shots of foreign-born prostitutes looking for clients in a small tree-lined square are interspersed with the looks and comments of the Spanish prostitutes from inside the salon. The shop window is a border between inside and outside, which for Olga Lobo is "a real glass border that compartmentalises the space between a here of the 'autochthonous' prostitutes, and a there [outside] of the immigrants, the 'others'" (2013: 8). But this otherness is what the inhabitants of both sides of the glass border share: the social status of Spanish prostitutes is an otherness, which they share with the immigrants in the square. The difference is what Kyle Black calls "the double otherness" (2011: 87) suffered by the outsiders, the non-Spanish. The criticis-

Film still 3. Princesses. The hairdressing salon window



ms made by Caye's colleagues in the salon further highlight the vulnerability of the group, both inside and outside, and express the film's political stance on the dominant discourses of the moment, linking issues of immigration and racism to the laws of the market and competition. The salon window divides two seemingly separate but ultimately linked and communicating worlds.

Of all the interior spaces in the film—hospitals, houses, bars, night-clubs, shops, and a phone booth—the hairdressing salon is the most political. It is the place of shelter for women, but it is also a perfect stage for the reproduction of media and social debates. This space—whose invisible border, the glass of the shop window, functions as a screen from which to watch, control, and at the same time project ideas—is also a space where power can be exercised and surveillance conducted. Although in itself a space of negotiation and conflict, the salon is a transitory place, as a boundary between the public and the private. It is a place where a *de facto* national border is constructed through discourse and debate (Schimanski, 2013; 2015). The square outside the shop window is an arena of constant negotiation and interaction between migrant prostitutes, neighbourhood passers-by, police, and NGO volunteers. This produces and provokes important debates inside the salon and generates a binary basis of us/them that gives an identity to the inhabitants of both sides of the glass border.

But the hairdressing salon is not the only intermediate, transitional space in the film. Almost all the other interiors—except for Caye's two houses, hers and her mother's—are public and private spaces of transition. In this sense, Zulema's flat, referred to as a hot-bed flat, is noteworthy; during the day, she occupies it as a place of work and rest, and at night it is the home of an immi-



Film still 4. *Princesses*. The shop windows

grant family. Zulema, the film's co-protagonist, works as a prostitute to support her son in the Dominican Republic. The friendship between Caye and Zulema provides more important clues to consider some of the film's allegorical layers. Their relationship is also ambivalent: while competing in the labour market, they are friends who help and admire each other. The fate of both is similar: they suffer from emotional instabilities and project their desires onto an uncertain and inaccessible future. Zulema has serious problems of abuse and mistreatment by a man who presents himself as a policeman and asks her for free services in exchange for promises to secure a residence permit for her. Zulema's negative response to this man's abuse leads to problems. She is physically and psychologically assaulted by this pathological character. At one point in the film, Zulema manages to cross the glass border and enter the hairdressing salon. Her entrance changes the texture of the dominant discourse, as it now becomes a space of contact and multicultural negotiation.

The glass windows mark an important boundary between the interiors and exteriors in the film. In addition to the aforementioned hairdressing salon window, the glass walls and windows of bars, restaurants, and cars generate border aesthetics for the film narrative. Filmed mostly



Film still 5. *Princesses*. The shop windows

from the inside, from the interiors of transitory spaces, the characters in the film project their hopes and dreams onto the exteriors through point-of-view shots. Predominant in this respect are subjective shots of Caye looking outside through the glass barriers, expressing her hopes and her profound, repressed desire to cross the social borders for good. It is as if, again considering the film from Hayward's perspective, Caye were this intimate and public body of transition, a representation of desires and fears of a changing city (2000).

The film, however, has a far from an optimistic view of the future of its characters and their deep longing for a certain quality of life: in a scene when Caye and Manuel meet for a date in a restaurant, Caye confesses her private desire to enjoy a normal life, and to be able at last to integrate into the established codes of urban behaviour. For Caye, the mere idea of a decent job and a boyfriend who comes to pick her up after work is a symbol of happiness—and her greatest wish. The illusion does not last long, as the viewer is then confronted with one of the most shocking scenes in the whole film: Caye is subjected to unconscionable violence by a stranger in the restaurant's toilets.

### **3. WANDERING BODIES, BORDERSCAPES**

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The new urban reorganisation is an ongoing process. The global city is an urban landscape in utter turmoil. Urban development breaks down physical borders but multiplies symbolic borders in a continuous, endless process. Inhabiting the post-Fordist city means a constant crossing of borders, whether physical or symbolic, real or imaginary.

The city of enclaves is a space that is constantly constructing invisible borders, which in turn gives rise to constant negotiations (Lazzarini, 2015). The border is of course a human construction, as a space of passage, but also as a marker of differences. It is no mere accident that border studies in the last decade have shifted the focus toward studies of border construction and bordering. Beyond examining physical borders, the issue under study now is the ongoing process of social negotiations that construct and maintain borders, while at the same time questioning and challenging them. Borders are symbolically markers of difference. They are structured by discourse and ideology, but they are also grounds for resistance and disagreement in a living and ongoing process.

In addition to the aforementioned glass borders, in *Princesses* the portrayal of these urban borders can also be found in the film's exterior locations. There are basically four urban enclaves depicted in the film: the underprivileged neighbourhood, the street market, the central streets of Madrid, and the abandoned industrial estate. Four separate urban islands, with their own codes and boundaries. They are examples of an urban fragmentation that addresses and supports the film's vision of the inherent dynamism of spatial segregation in the Spanish capital in its definitive transition towards the global city.

The film's vision of the quartered city is completed by Caye's and Zulema's constant movement across invisible borders. Apart from the incessant sound of mobile phones that prompt the protagonists to experience urban mobility for work reasons, urban journeys outside of work also involve crossing the borders between Madrid's different islands. It is here that we, together with the characters, cross different borders, some invisible and others hypervisible. Caye and Zulema's first journey takes place when the friends go shopping at a street market with products that are exotic to Caye because they come from overseas, but to Zulema they are familiar, everyday objects that bring back memories. The flea market as a space created by and for the working class, immigrants, and the underprivileged has its own laws and codes of behaviour. It belongs to the same enclave where the friends live. It also forms part of the film's creative geography, with editing techniques that place it close to the Latin bar of Zulema's acquaintances, and to the neighbourhood of the phone booth where she calls her family and can communicate with her son. The street market, the Latin bar, and the phone booth collectively constitute a subaltern space, but at the same time a familiar and comfortable place,

marked by human emotions and feelings of solidarity. In the film, this space is created in symmetry with the hairdressing salon and the square in front of it, which is also a place of vulnerability and marginalisation.

The film's biggest border crossings occur when Zulema and Caye, alone or together, have to leave their marginalised enclave to travel to the consumerist city. This is where they may come into conflict with the urban codes of the city's central island. On their journeys to the centre of Madrid, both women try to camouflage their radical subalternity in order to enjoy the pleasures of consumerism. Even so, they are sometimes confronted with signs that remind them that they do not belong to this enclave. The constant crossing of urban borders highlights the process of border-making in the quartered city. The film also underscores the fact that the global city is also the city of hypermobility, turning urban space into a constant border crossing: "borders, originally meant to separate and create distinctions, end up being constantly crossed and become a means for uniting through passage and movement" (Lazzarini, 2015: 182). The postmodern city creates new, sometimes non-conformist and rebellious border crossers. Urban space thus itself becomes a borderscape.

Film still 6. *Princesses*. The street market





Despite the multiplicity of isolated enclaves, the boundaries between centre and periphery in *Princesses* are visible and tangible in the everyday lives of the subaltern characters. In their daily confrontation with the dominant power of the city, Zulema and Caye learn new negotiation tactics, or what Michel de Certeau calls “the art of the weak” (quoted by Schimanski, 2015: 99). Tactics here are nothing more than small, everyday gestures. Caye teaches Zulema how to defend her rights, and Zulema shows Caye her tricks to attract and provoke customers, lends her a T-shirt, and takes her to the flea market to buy cheap clothes. Another example is the scene in the perfume shop where Caye takes advantage of the opportunity to perfume herself with a free sample. On another occasion, Caye intervenes in Zulema’s conversation with the abusive man to save her. But these negotiation tactics are not always enough to get ahead. In a hotel in the city centre, Zulema is mistreated by the man who had promised to obtain her residency papers. And upon receiving the news that she is HIV-positive, she visits him once more to transmit the disease to him. This is the end of Zulema’s career in the global city. She leaves Spain to rejoin her family in her home country. Caye

accompanies her on this last border crossing at the airport.

The characters in *Princesses* are inhabitants of the periphery, beyond the confines of the ring roads, the physical borders of central Madrid. They are economically vulnerable, and their cinematic portrayal exposes a *modus vivendi* on the threshold of exclusion. The characters’ physical contact with the urban fabric in turn results in the spectator’s sensory contact with a Madrid in a process of transformation. In this sense, the prostitution area in an abandoned industrial estate has a core presence in the film and deserves a separate mention. It is an urban island with an intermediate position inside and outside the confines of the global metropolis with its corresponding laws and codes. Frequented by Zulema, it is a refuge and workplace for prostitutes. The scene in the abandoned industrial estate has no dialogue. It is accompanied by a Manu Chao song calling for a human vision of this space of radical otherness, a space emptied of all dignity.

The abandoned industrial estate, as an enclave on the border between the countryside and the city, is close to what the geographer Joan Nogué calls “the residual space” (2009; 2011). For Nogué, the residual space is an urban space in disuse with

Film still 7. *Princesses*. The abandoned industrial estate





Film still 8. *Princesses*. The consumerist city

clear marks of the past. This category includes vacant lots, abandoned industrial estates, disused railway stations, empty spaces between motorways, closed roads, railway tracks leading nowhere, and shut-down factories. In general, these are public, open spaces, empty and deteriorating. They are places that have lost their urban significance and are waiting to be given a new meaning. They are pathological spaces that stand as a sign of the obsolescence of modern discourses of the Fordist city. Usually located on the margins of the global city, their time of glory has passed, and they have fallen into decay and neglect. Because of the uncertainty they project, they are intermediate spaces in no man's land that for different reasons (but mainly because of radical changes to the economic model) have been left out of the dominant geographical and urban discourse. As Nogué points out, they have acquired a particular photogenic quality for urban cinema and novels, above all because they elicit from the observer a "sensation of bewil-

derment, sometimes of chaos and in any case of astonishment" (2009: 106). For this reason, inside and outside the filmic narrative, this space becomes a place of social exchange, or of negotiation in the proximity of marginalised housing developments that run the risk of becoming pseudo-ghettos of exclusion. For Nogué, by materialising the negation of the metropolitan space of the globalised city, this space is a polemical space where the urban dream places its deepest fears:

[They] are *terrains vagues*, enigmatic places that seem condemned to an exile where they impassively contemplate the dynamic circuits of production and consumption from which they have been removed and to which some—not all—will one day return. Many of these spaces—and their corresponding landscapes—were generated in the form of negative externalities by the modern industrial city, a city closed in on itself and indifferent to its own external image. These barren spaces between motorways have often served as rather gloomy

and funereal settings for action films and crime novels. (2009: 111, emphasis in original)

It is not by chance that this repressed aspect of the postmodern city returns again and again to urban narratives and film screens. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000: 259) point to the brownfield as an industrial space abandoned by basic changes to the production model, when business parks find new locations that are economically or ecologically more favourable. The phenomenon is not new, but the processes of globalisation have accelerated the formation of this space emptied of its content (2000: 259). Part of this space that finds no other residential or cultural use becomes an abandoned space, a desolate landscape, which for Nogué is a landscape without glory, a ruin without splendour, a residual, ruined space, “a diaphanous expression of the spatial disorder inherent in the territorial marginality of the system and its supreme representatives” (2011: 7). They are spaces that in Nogué’s view awaken in the spectator “nostalgia and melancholy, albeit in small doses. The melancholy of decline, the sadness of abandonment” (2011: 7).

The image of prostitutes in the background of an abandoned industrial estate conveys to the spectator a sense of fear, rejection, melancholy and existential emptiness identified by Nogué. This desolate space is also a place of contact and negotiation between subaltern subjects: while one juggles on abandoned train tracks, others negotiate at car windows with the clientele, against a background of fights and jeers from the crowd. This abandoned space, in the film, is a showcase of the past glory of modernity. It is a postmodern portrait of an intermediate place par excellence, where the public, the private, and the intimate intermingle. A place inside and outside the law of the city and its dominant discourse.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Filmic cartography, like any other map, is a source of knowledge and conquest of space. The filmic

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### THE BORDERSCAPE IS THE CHAOTIC SPACE OF INTERSECTING LIMINAL IDENTITIES. POSTMODERN CINEMA OFTEN ADDRESSES THIS CHAOTIC SPACE

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map functions through the corporeal and emotional exploration of the image surface. The tacit knowledge provided by film invites the viewer to rediscover—and sometimes reconquer—the mapped space. Considered a postmodern street film, it has the capacity to generate a filmic map that reconfigures urban maps through the telling of hidden stories, highlighting the pathologies of urban topography. In this way, the filmic cartography of the city can generate new emotional maps that produce empathy for, closeness to, and knowledge about the marginalised space and the subjects that inhabit it.

In this sense, the filmic map offered by *Princeses* underlines the urban islands of Madrid, marked by the symbolic borders of spatial segregation. The global city is an antagonistic microcosm. The constant and perpetual mixing of identities confers on this city the quality of a borderscape: a place where, as Chiara Brambilla’s puts it, it is not only “a matter of dis-locating and re-locating borders” but of “the multiplication of border forms, functions and practices through their distribution and proliferation in a variety of social and political arenas” (2015: 15). The borderscape is the chaotic space of intersecting liminal identities. Postmodern cinema often addresses this chaotic space. Schimanski and Wolfe define the borderscape and the liminal identities that inhabit it in the following terms:

A relational identity is linked not simply to place, or to ideological or legal designations. Nor is it relegated to a temporal limited transition outside daily life, as in narratives of liminality. Rather, it is an aspect of the conscious and contradictory never-ending experience of contacts among cul-

tures, at both the external and internal borders of a state. Identity is produced in the chaotic network of relation and not simply by filiation. It does not receive any legitimacy as its guarantee of entitlement, but circulates in a number of different directions simultaneously creating a “fluid identity”, a “scape”. (2013: 246)

*Princesses* reflects these aforementioned “fluid identities”. Its filmic space, created by the techniques of editing images of Madrid at a certain historical moment, is the place of negotiation of dramatic characters with a spatial interpellation. While the film responds to a historical need for alternative representations of the city, the physical contact of these characters with the fragmented metropolis turns them into perfect fluid identities, inhabitants of a borderscape. In the style of street art, the film thus conquers public space to generate disruptive performance art, thereby challenging the hegemonic pedagogy of the consumer city. The mobility of the characters between urban islands results from a denial of the subaltern space to which they belong and the identity that this confers on them. In some cases, such as Caye and Zulema’s urban journey to the flea market, mobility inevitably ends with the exploration of third spaces, thresholds of contact with the Other. The third space for Homi Bhabha was where the liminality of the characters resists their spatially remarked otherness. This intermediate space is “a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha, 1990: 211).

In other cases, Zulema and Caye’s movements to other urban island spaces end in confrontation and conflict with the other. One example is when the friends travel to the city centre of consumerism and encounter the unspoken laws of spatial segregation. As Schimanski and Wolfe propose, like any other art, cinema of this kind can itself become an integral and aesthetic part of the memories and imaginaries of the borderscape and thus develop the capacity to facilitate a liminal space of negotiation of identities (2013: 243). Film has the capacity

to visibilise differences, such as the structure of urban borders. The hairdressing salon in *Princesses* is a clear example of this: the political discourse of the inside creates a reactive identity, structured on the otherness of the inhabitants outside. Finally, there is the sensory effect of the film in blurring the official urban map, to approach the other in terms that Stavros Stavrides calls “a threshold space” (2016): a spatial and cartographic claim showing the shadow zones, devoid of ideological glory, but the habitat of invisibilised communities.

## NOTES

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## THE BORDERSCAPE IN A STREET FILM: MADRID IN PRINCESSES

### Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the portrait of Madrid in *Princesses* (Princesas, Fernando Leon de Aranoa, 2005). At an intersection between studies of film space, urban geography, and the recent border studies, the theoretical framework of this paper is applied to a film that was considered a symptom of aesthetic changes in Spanish cinema at the beginning of the new millennium. The film offers a critical reading of Madrid in the midst of substantial changes toward globalisation by focusing on its invisibilised and marginalised urban spaces and their inhabitants. An important feature of the film is its exploration of subaltern characters who cross the city's invisible borders in their day-to-day negotiation with the spatial interpellation. The main focus of this paper is therefore on examining the relationship of this film portrait with different urban islands and their corresponding borders.

### Key words

Street Film; Film Space; Film Cartography; Borderscape; Urban Islands.

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## EL PAISAJE FRONTERIZO DE UN CINE CALLEJERO: MADRID EN PRINCESAS

### Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es explorar el retrato del espacio urbano en la película *Princesas* (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2005). En una intersección entre los estudios del espacio fílmico y la geografía y las fronteras urbanas, el marco teórico de este artículo aborda una nueva visión a una de las películas que fue considerada un síntoma de cambios estéticos del cine español al inicio del nuevo milenio. La película procede a una lectura crítica de Madrid en pleno cambio sustancial hacia la globalización, poniendo de relieve los espacios urbanos invisibilizados y marginados. El rasgo importante de la película es su aproximación a los personajes fronterizos que atraviesan las fronteras invisibles de la ciudad en su negociación cotidiana con la interpelación espacial. De ahí que el enfoque principal de este estudio sea examinar la relación entre este retrato fílmico con las diferentes islas urbanas y sus correspondientes fronteras.

### Palabras clave

Cine callejero; espacio fílmico; cartografía fílmica; paisaje fronterizo; islas urbanas.

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