

Me cuesta tanto olvidarte:

Mecano and the *Movida* Remixed, Revisited and Repackaged

Santiago Fouz-Hernández

In a recent piece about *movida*-related literature, Paul Julian Smith critiques the tendency that he perceives in “some Spanish cultural scholars based in the US” (51) of reading the cultural production of the Spanish transition as a sort of elegy for the dictator as a putative lost object. He goes on to argue that the *movida* resists a conventional Freudian reading in that it is far from constituted in mourning and melancholia (52-53). What is interesting now, in the light of recent events that will be discussed in this article, is that the *movida* itself has become a lost golden age and a strong site of nostalgia. One version of the origins of the term *nostalgia*, from a Greek and Latin root (Greek *nostos* ‘home’ and New Latin *algia* ‘pain’), was first coined as a medical term, by Johannes Hofer in 1688. Encountered in soldiers homesick for their homes, the condition manifested itself for Hofer in a dislocation from reality, a slowness, a listlessness and a tendency to “lose touch with the present” (Boym 3). In this initial diagnosis, then, nostalgia represents itself to the medic as a condition in which the patient becomes enamoured of a voice or a fragment of something that reminds him of home. The condition is precisely about an investment in *objects* and other fragments of the lost place, the lost loved one, the lost golden age. In short, then, nostalgia was always a kind of fetishism, to recast it in conventional Freudian terms: it was always about desire caused by an absence that could not be made whole. In this article, I set out to analyse the specifics of a nostalgia epidemic in Spain attaching itself to a series of products and, in particular, the musical Hoy no me puedo levantar (2005), in which an idealised and idealising narrative of the *movida*, and the group Mecano’s contested part in it, is reduced to

commodity, the new object cause of desire that fuels nostalgia in its late capitalist incarnation.

I. *Removiendo la Movida*: The Post-2000 Products.

More than two decades since the so-called “*movida madrileña*” came to an end, its twenty-fifth anniversary has been marked by the proliferation of nostalgic images and commodities of those bygone years. This 1980s revival has had a huge impact on the Madrid cultural scene, with a string of exhibitions, plays and concerts, culminating with the series of cultural events organized by the *Comunidad de Madrid* under the umbrella term of “La Movida” (in late 2006 and early 2007).¹ Similarly, a number of films, television programmes, books and various other publications are also part of what I would term “*re-movida*” (both in the sense of “digging up and stirring” – in this case the past and more specifically the *movida* – but also in the more literal sense of revisiting the *movida* period) and which I will discuss briefly in this first section.

A plethora of books, CDs and DVDs, exhibitions, and live performances have come to form a palpable revival of 1980s music in the Spanish market and suggest nostalgia for “the golden age of Spanish pop”. This phenomenon is perhaps best illustrated with the popular CD compilations and collections released in the last few years under precisely that name: La edad de oro del pop español (these include two box-sets released in 2001 (volume I) and 2002 (II); 15 single CDs (volumes 1-15) released in 2004; a two-disc DVD (2004) and even a karaoke PS2 video game (2006)).² The artwork used for the cover of all fifteen CDs and the DVD set shows

the iconic work by Andy Warhol (himself a key reference for *movida* artists – particularly after his visit to Madrid in January 1983), Campbell's Soup (1962), here shown opened and subtly appropriated for Spain with the predominant use of red and yellow of the flag for the background. Cleverly, the CD covers borrow Warhol's original concept by repeating the image, with slight changes in each iteration (the tin label changes colour for each CD). As with Warhol's 32-part artwork, the CD cover draws attention to two key aspects here: on the one hand, the infinite possibilities of reproduction and simulacra made possible by modern machinery and which insist on the repetition of history and the mourning for "the lost object" (Baudrillard); on the other, the commodification of the products wrapped up with those suggestive images. Quite literally, the past is preserved in a can, ready to be opened and consumed. Further to this, the top of the tin announces the sale-by date of the golden age of Spanish pop as "1978-1990", whilst the list of iconic and influential bands that dominated the Spanish airwaves and concert scene during those years (the "lost objects") reads like a taxonomy of loss: from Radio Futura, Alaska y los Pegamoides or Nacha Pop to Hombres G, La Unión or Mecano. This return of the past is intensified by the fact that most of these bands have either re-released their albums on digipac (Mecano, Alaska + Dinarama), re-formed after a long break (Hombres G, Los Secretos, Nacha Pop) or released greatest hits albums (La Unión, Radio Futura) in the last few years.

The 1980s revival has also had a palpable impact on Spanish fashion, literature (fiction and non-fiction), media, and cinema of the 2000s. In 2004, Pedro Almodóvar made the unprecedented move of setting his film La mala educación in the years that made him a major representative of Spanish popular culture (a period

humorously recreated by his contemporaries *Diabéticas Aceleradas* in the *movida*-inspired cabaret Esta noche viene Pedro one year later (2005) – another recent “*movida* byproduct”). Director and former singer Chus Gutiérrez also relived her own *movida* experience in the film El calentito (2005), about the birth of an all-girl band called “Las Siux” (Gutiérrez herself was a member of 1980s all-girl band Las Xoxonees). In addition to filmic nostalgia, literary nostalgia also abounds: in the early 1990s, the book Sólo se vive una vez: esplendor y ruina de la movida madrileña (Gallero 1991) seemed a one-off publication about the decade that at the time was barely over.³ Yet, the first five years of the new century have witnessed a mini boom of publications about the *movida*, including books by Lechado, Grijalba or Fouce, and also monographs about various 1980s singers and bands such as Alaska (Vaquerizo; Cervera); Gabinete Caligari (Rodríguez Lenin); Mecano (Adrados and del Amo); Nacha Pop (Fernández de Castro); Radio Futura (Tango) or Enrique Urquijo (Bargueño). Books about iconic 1980s television and radio programmes have also been published, notably, La bola de cristal (Rico) – with separate DVD releases in 2003-04 – or Radio 3 (Ordovás, Sánchez).⁴ Sánchez’s book is of special interest here, given the nostalgic undertones of its subtitle (Rescate de un recuerdo) and its accompanying CD con sonidos de los 80. As with La edad de oro del pop español CDs, this CD title insists on the fact that those 1980s “*sonidos*” now clearly belong to a seemingly distant past; and that such sounds are something to be cherished as fetishes of the past.

Beyond the recording, film, and publishing industries, other significant byproducts of this post-2000 *movida* revival include the short-lived television series Los 80 (Tele 5, 2004 – cancelled due to low ratings) or exhibitions such as the

itinerant “25 años de pop en Radio 3” (curated by Radio 3 iconic presenter Jesús Ordovás) or Pablo Pérez Minguez’s “Mi movida madrileña” (2006; Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporáneo de Madrid – complete with lavish catalogue – Mi movida).⁵ The 2006-07 La movida season itself could be considered a sort of orchestrated “finale” of this revival. It included over 400 events such as major exhibitions of paintings, photography, architecture and fashion; workshops with key figures of the *movida*; radio broadcasts and film screenings. This manufactured climax, however, did not do much to cease the avid interest in the *movida*, with new concerts, talks, and exhibitions programmed throughout 2007 and 2008.⁶

II Mecano: The Uninvited Guests.

Originally a twosome formed by singer Ana Torroja and composer José María Cano, the former couple (romantically attached in their teenage years but not since the formation of Mecano – Adrados and del Amo 25) were later joined by Cano’s younger brother, Nacho, whose catchy compositions about all-night partying, drugs and youth rebellion became the driving force of the band in its first three albums with CBS.⁷ In turn, José María’s most profound lyrics about love and death were the key to the band’s success in a second “maturity” stage, marked by a new contract with BMG for a further three studio albums in the late 1980s and very early 1990s. Unexpectedly, the band split in the midst of a successful “comeback” and after releasing a double greatest hits CD (with some new songs) in 1998, having performed live for the last time six years earlier, at the peak of their fame both in Spain and Latin America.

Their only English-language single “The Uninvited Guest” (1982) (the band’s first number-one Spanish hit in its original version) had been set to introduce Mecano into the British market. The song, about a party crasher who immediately gets the attention of the best-looking female guest, could be a semi-autobiographical reference to the crucial first encounter between Ana and José María at a “*guateque*” in the mid 1970s – although it was Ana and her friends who crashed the party (Adrados and del Amo 25). I would read the English version of the song as a humorously but defiant nod to their sought-after foreign audience. Here is a then barely conspicuous Spanish band (the “uninvited guests”), and yet confidently lined up by their multinational record company (then CBS) for a breakthrough into the coveted English charts (the “*fiesta*”) – at the time dominated by bands such as Duran Duran or Spandau Ballet, on which the early Mecano was arguably modelled.

In retrospect, the song becomes an ironic reflection on Mecano’s position in *la movida*. Indeed, photographer Pablo Pérez Mínguez remembered meeting Mecano as the “uninvited guests” at one of his parties: “en el 82 di una fiesta en casa. De repente noté que se habían colado dos jovencitos vestidos de nuevos románticos. Miguel Ángel Arenas me los presentó como Mecano. Seis meses después, oí por la radio “Me colé en una fiesta”” (cited in López 118) and, in another source, Nacho Cano remembers: “íbamos al Rockola y Pentagrama, acabábamos en la casa de los Costus o nos colábamos en alguna fiesta de Pablo Pérez Mínguez” (cited in Adrados and del Amo 48). Due to their affluent background, which was partly reflected in the lyrics of their songs, and their reputation as a prefabricated band that actually made money, Mecano fits uncomfortably into the *movida* milieu.⁸ “Resulta curioso que, junto con El Aviador Dro, Mecano haya sido el grupo más controvertido y

provocador del movimiento”, writes Arenas de Pablos (328). In an interview that I held with the producers of Hoy no me puedo levantar, Andrés Torres defined the Mecano story as that of “tres niños pijos madrileños”, lacking narrative interest for the musical (Fouz-Hernández 9).⁹ Indeed, as Lechado (66-67) and band members themselves have argued, their notorious troubles with rival bands (notably Alaska + Pegamoides/Dinarama) were due to their perception as posh kids with easy access to the latest (expensive) technology.¹⁰ The words of El Zurdo sum up the general impression left by Mecano with regards to *la movida*: “La Movida se va a la mierda cuando aparece Mecano” (cited by Arenas de Pablos 329).

This perception has been transferred to the *movida* literature, which struggles to justify Mecano’s exclusion from the *movida* milieu while acknowledging their prominence in the 1980s Madrid music scene. Mecano is conspicuously absent from Grijalba’s account of the “music” chapter of her *movida* book. Fouce describes them as “un grupo de Madrid que no pertenece, ni por sus referencias musicales, ni por su actitud, al entorno de *la movida*, pero que se convertirá en una referencia ineludible del pop español” (24-25). For Diego Manrique “Mecano fueron paralelos a la movida, supieron absorber ese espíritu de libertad que se respiraba en el Madrid de entonces hablando de fiestas, drogas, sexo y juventud [...] pero no pertenían a los grupos que la representaban” (cited in Adrados and del Amo 60). It is fair to point out that Ana Torroja and the brothers Cano were not the only 1980s pop performers that came from a well-to-do background. As Torroja herself has put it: “nos trataban de señoritos y ahí todos veníamos de familia bien” (citing Carlos Berlanga as an example) (see Adrados and del Amo 72), an aspect also noted by Triana-Toribio (276). On the other hand, as famous record producer Miguel Ángel Arenas “El Capi”

(credited for “discovering” successful 1980s bands such as Pecos, Tequila, and Mecano – see Arenas) recalls: “nadie sabe que ambos grupos [Pegamoides and Mecano] se formaron a la vez y que les costó el mismo esfuerzo sacar un disco adelante” (cited in Cervera 246), adding: “sigo creyendo que lo más original de aquella época es Mecano” (in Cervera 323). Some facts do indeed exclude Mecano from the *movida* milieu. They were never part of the “underground” *Rastro* activities, they never performed at the *Rockola* (although they were regular customers (Adrados and del Amo 48)) and the new establishment publicly approved of them.¹¹ Yet, the conception of Mecano as a manufactured band seems unfounded. The role of the earlier mentioned producer “El Capi” was undoubtedly crucial in the making of Mecano (as Nacho Cano acknowledges in Adrados and del Amo 46-50), but the band was already formed by the time he facilitated their first record contract and the deal was not easy to achieve. Capi remembers: “Al principio ninguna compañía quería a Mecano” (cited in Cervera 246).

Although the story of Hoy no me puedo levantar, the musical, is not the story of Mecano, and the story of Mecano is not the classic story of a *movida* band, their beginnings and their rapid success do recall the story of some of the 1980s bands less problematically associated with the *movida* such as the “average” band that the musical strives to portray. Ironically, this is also evidenced in some of the same literature that denies Mecano’s “belonging” to the *movida*. Fouce discusses “Hoy no me puedo levantar” (I and J M Cano 1982) as one of the “canciones de la movida” (136, 149) and later he analyses sections of I. Cano’s 1982 songs “Perdido en mi habitación” (130, 146-47) or “Maquillaje” (155). As we shall see in the analysis of the musical, there are other fundamental ways in which Mecano fits Fouce’s own

movida paradigm (127-135). The lyrics of their first two albums are markedly rebellious (I Cano's "No me enseñen la lección" or "Me voy de casa" – both 1982) and urban ("Quiero vivir en la ciudad" (I and J M Cano 1982), or "Madrid" (J M Cano 1983)). Other recurrent topics include nightlife ("Hoy no me puedo levantar" or "Me colé en una fiesta" (I Cano 1982)), hedonism ("Maquillaje"), and drug consumption ("Perdido en mi habitación", "Barco a Venus" (I Cano 1983) or "Aire" (I Cano 1984) – and later "El lago artificial" (I Cano 1991) and "Esto no es una canción" (J M Cano 1998)). Furthermore, Mecano's "new romantic" look in the early 1980s, their foreign musical influences and their embracement of new music technologies (as well as their international ambitions) were clear markers of the kind of *apertura* and "modernity" also described by Fouce (29) and which made of Mecano "el paradigma de grupo "moderno" de 1982" (Cervera 228).

Whilst there is no room here to develop issues of "authenticity" (Middleton provides a challenging re-reading of the term), nor even to analyse Mecano's music in depth, for the purposes of the discussion of the musical that follows, it is perhaps sufficient to point out Mecano's status as one of the most iconic bands in the history of Spanish pop music and also the most commercially successful in Spain and abroad (especially in Latin America, but also in Europe).¹² Some figures make the case quite transparent: their album Descanso dominical (1988) was the first Spanish pop record to sell over one million copies, then a "historic" number of record sales in the Spanish context, later repeated with their next two album releases, Aidalai (1991) and Ana/Jose/Nacho (1998) – more recently this feat was repeated with their greatest hits release in 2005. Original sales of their six studio albums were estimated at ten million (Pita 40) and have increased considerably as a result of the

revival and re-releases here described (Fouz-Hernández 46). In the years in between the split and the re-release of their albums (with no promotion of any kind) they sold an average fifty thousand copies of their back catalogue per year (Adrados and del Amo 226). Their 1988-89 tour was seen by over 1.5 million people (140-141).

Interestingly, with time, post-separation Mecano have become widely perceived as part of the 1980s Madrid *movida* (Lechado 67-68). Such perception is perhaps best illustrated by the ambience and the narrative of the musical Hoy no me puedo levantar, the fresh interpretations of their songs in the context of such narrative, and also the ubiquity of Mecano in the 2000s “*re-movida*”. Mecano’s own revival arguably started in 2001 with the launch of the website www.yoquieroquevuelvamecano.com. Rumours of a reunion inundated the Spanish press at the start of the new century and the site (still live and with over forty thousand signatures at the time of writing this article) was conceived by its creators as “un llamamiento on-line cuyo fin es recoger firmas a lo largo y ancho del planeta reivindicando la vuelta a los escenarios del grupo hispano más grande de nuestro tiempo”. The film El asombroso mundo de Borjamari y Pocholo (dirs. Juan Cavestany and Enrique López Lavigne, 2004) capitalised in the much-rumoured Mecano reunion by making a comic story around it. In that same year (2004) the first “official” biography of the group was published, aptly named after one of Nacho Cano’s hits La fuerza del destino (Adrados y Del Amo). The rapid sales of the book opened Pandora’s Box and a series of commercial releases in various formats continued throughout 2005. First there was the re-launch of all six studio albums in digipack, then a retro-style CD box-set including their six studio albums on CD

format (featuring original artwork and nostalgic vinyl-like CDs) as well as their live album (1985) and an extra CD with single B-sides and other “rarities”; then a new greatest-hits digipack (CD and DVD) and, in 2006, a four-disc DVD set, Mecanografía, including classic television and live performances, interviews and music videos, presented in an equally retro format, as discussed in the final section of this article.

Following the example of the book, a number of products named after Mecano hit songs ensued: a double tribute CD recorded by young Spanish indie bands entitled En tu fiesta me colé; then the musical discussed in the next section (and its own double CD) and then the children’s version of the musical (also entitled En tu fiesta me colé). All these timely releases and events triggered a renewed press and media interest in everything Mecano-related in the 2004-06 period, building up to what at the time seemed an inevitable “comeback”. It seemed that, whilst in the 1980s Mecano were perceived as the *movida* party-crashers, it is now everybody else’s turn to crash Mecano’s own, and to cash in on their legacy. In 2006, in view of undeniable public demand and the lack of prospect of a proper Mecano reunion, the band’s former singer (now a reasonably successful solo artist) launched a new tour of Spain and Latin America with a “100% Mecano repertoire” (as widely advertised) and, like the band’s biography, also appropriately named after the song “La fuerza del destino”. Inevitably, the show called for just another Mecano greatest hits album, this time with solo versions of the singer’s favourite Mecano songs re-arranged with a more contemporary sound and in various musical styles and genres, also appropriately and nostalgically named after another Mecano “favourite”: Me cuesta tanto olvidarte (2006).¹³

III Building with Virtual Mecano

Despite being at the height of their popularity in the early 1990s, one of the songs of Mecano's final studio album, Aidalai (1991), was a premonition of the band's disappearance. In reference to the three members of the band, the lyrics of "El uno, el dos, el tres" (J M Cano, 1991) anticipated:

Si de ese cuajo la tortilla da la vuelta/ veréis que pocos nos quedamos en
cubierta/ [...] [...]
El uno, el dos, el tres/ y para de cantar/ porque a ninguno le interesa
escuchar.

A video montage projected on large screens during the live performance of the song in their last tour (Tour 91-92), showed a puzzle made up of three main pieces which were slowly assembled and then dissembled at the end of the song, clearly playing with the meanings of the toy of the band's name. This, the only directly self-referential song in Mecano's discography, became a double premonition: not only would this be their last studio album and their last tour, but the song's reference to the fear that one day they might have to resort to some sort of nostalgic reinvention of their first ever hit song would also come true:

Y quizá volvamos al local/ a cantar para nosotros/ lo de "Hoy no me puedo
levantar"/ y dejar que esa chorrada/ nos empañe la mirada/ Lágrimas de
agua pasada/ despintando la fachada.

Little did they (or we) know at the time that this song's title would be up in lights on a Gran Via theatre's billboard some fourteen years later. Hoy no me puedo levantar, "the musical", premièred in the reconditioned cinema Rialto on the Gran

Vía in April 2005. With a set-up budget of eight million Euros, the original production of the show did not spare any expenses: a purpose-built theatre in the centre of Madrid, up to thirty actors and dancers on the stage, nine separate singers (performing live in a cabin, which is shown sometimes on the stage's backdrop screen), a live band of nine members, and a long list of choreographers technicians, make-up artists, wardrobe stylists, publicists, and administrators all devoted full-time to the show. The award-winning musical boasts a record one million spectators in its first four seasons, ticket sales to an average eighty five percent of capacity (selling out during bank holidays and weekend functions) and gross earnings of over seventy million Euros in its first four Spanish seasons (see Cadena SER). In Madrid, an equally popular "PG" Sunday matinee adaptation for children, En tu fiesta me colé was equally successful. Following Mecano's own steps, their musical also branched out to Latin America, reaching Mexico City in May 2006, running 400 shows at the Centro Cultural Telmex. The Mexican version went on an arena-scale tour throughout the country in the last quarter of 2007. Plans to tour other Latin American countries including Chile, Colombia and Venezuela, as well as some parts of Northern Europe and the USA were halted when Nacho Cano resigned as director in November 2007 (although a revised production of the musical went on a year-long tour of the main Spanish cities from August 2008, once the Madrid production closed in June of that year. There are talks of a possible film inspired by the musical (some of the leading actors of the first season starred in the recent "youth film" Café solo o con ellas (dir. Álvaro Díaz Lorenzo, 2007), another Drive production).¹⁴

From the moment in which the musical was announced in late 2004, it became a media event in Spain. In the fashion of the ubiquitous "Operación Triunfo" television

contest, the casting process was widely covered in newspapers, magazines, internet, radio and television, creating a buzz just as the Mecano albums were being re-released and reaching unexpected levels of sales and radio spins. The musical is a markedly Spanish response to the demand created by the overwhelming success of a number of Broadway musicals adapted for the Gran Vía since the late 1990s and it was, according to its producers, partly inspired by the success of the “Abba musical” Mamma mia (Fouz-Hernández 2).¹⁵ Yet, the domestic element was seen as a major selling-point, with first season advertised in flyers, television and radio ads as “por fin un musical en el que podrás cantar todas las canciones”. What the *movida* did for pop music sung in Spanish, Hoy no me puedo levantar would do for homegrown musicals.¹⁶

As mentioned in the previous section, and unlike what most press reports had anticipated, the “Mecano musical” (as it has become popularly known), is not exactly *about* Mecano. Instead, in a story line not dissimilar from the already mentioned coterminous film *El calentito*, the musical narrates the adventures in the capital of two friends (Mario and Colate) who, excited by the prospect of becoming a successful pop-rock band, decide to ditch the safe but monotonous life at their hometowns in search of a record deal and “crash” the vibrant 1980s Madrid music scene. Using Mecano’s greatest hits as less of a soundtrack and more of a forced narrative thread, David Serrano’s script sees the initially naïve and loyal friends (in my view, a proxy for the brothers Cano) quickly become street wise and urban as a result of their exposure to the “usual suspects” of the *movida*: the city, sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll, to finally fall victims of their own success. Crucially, the band’s dissolution is blamed on the solo ambitions of one of its members (Mario – arguably

a stand-in for the elder Cano, who single-handedly decided to end Mecano in 1998 to pursue his solo projects), and the erratic behaviour of another (Colate – arguably Nacho Cano, who was “moderately” hooked on cocaine throughout his twenties, as he openly admits in *Adrados and del Amo* (87-89), and was also fictionally identified as HIV positive in the promo video and live performances of “El fallo positivo” in the 1991-92 Tour).

As in some Spanish films of the 1960s (see Faulkner 2006), the binary opposition *pueblo/ciudad* is introduced very early on. In what could appear a moralizing exaltation of the countryside which is closer to a Francoist standpoint than to the quintessential celebration of the city that characterized the *movida*, here the *pueblo* seems to win out. A first reading of the story may suggest so: life in the provinces equals stability, friendship, love, and comfort whereas the city signifies corruption, promiscuity, casual sex, coldness, drug-addiction, and ultimately death. Not coincidentally, perhaps, the producers knew from very early on, that the commercial success and longevity of the musical strongly relied on a forty percent audience “*de provincias*” (Fouz-Hernández 37). Yet, it seems that the city spirit was already part of the protagonists’ life in their hometown. The opening number, “Hoy no me puedo levantar” sees Mario and Colate still at home but unable to get up in the morning after a sleepless night “*bebiendo, fumando y sin parar de reir*”. Crucially, their arrival in Madrid is marked by one of Mecano’s early signature songs “*Quiero vivir en la ciudad*”. Unusually for a Mecano song, all three band members sing and the music is also surprisingly fast and high energy, as if echoing the force of the city described in the lyrics. The song, worth quoting at length, captures the “urban” spirit of 1980s Madrid, and, in the musical, it sets the mood for the rest of the show:

Los bloques de cemento gris aquí y allá/ dan la forma al decorado de mi ciudad / Quiero vivir en la ciudad/ Me gusta estar rodeado de gente/ gente que no conozco formando un ambiente/ en el que todos me miran y nadie me siente/ Quiero vivir en la ciudad/ Aunque a la una no hay quien camine/ aunque a las seis de la tarde no haya quien respire, aunque a las diez por la calle me juegue el pellejo/ Quiero vivir en la ciudad/ Y no me marcharé jamás, no soy feliz/ pero aquí están mis razones para vivir.

The unambiguously urban spirit of the song contrasts with the apparently moralistic narrative described earlier. The city might be ugly, cold, stressful, intoxicating and dangerous, but most definitely worth it.¹⁷ Indeed, the possibilities of the big city allow Colate and Mario to quickly integrate into the night scene; soon they are joined by a third member (a drummer) and together they form a successful band called Rulé.

One of the intriguing aspects of this musical is the extent to which Mecano's songs can seamlessly amalgamate into a fictional story set at the time in which the songs had been first released – and thus the songs' potential as *movida* artifacts that can further relocate Mecano in the *movida* context. The re-contextualization of the songs sheds new light on some of the most ambiguous lyrics of the band. The then taboo issue of hard drugs is revealed as an open secret behind the *movida* creativity but also the killer of some of its key players. Therefore, on the basis of the line “busco en el cajón alguna pastilla/ que me pueda relajar/ me pueda quitar un poco de angustia” the single “Perdido en mi habitación” is used to illustrate Colate's cold

turkey and to signal his increasing heroine addiction and inevitable downfall.¹⁸ In what could be read as a biographical reference to José María's role in the Mecano split, Mario, after Rulé wins a rock contest and becomes a popular band, abandons the other two members to pursue a solo career. He also ignores Colate's cry for help, despite his visibly deteriorated health. Colate was desperate to tell him that he had contracted the then fatal HIV virus and, losing all hope, hangs himself. This is an unnecessarily and shockingly graphic scene, a literal interpretation of Mecano's AIDS song "El fallo positivo" (I Cano 1991) which, predictably, illustrates this episode of the musical: "la ignorancia de los demás [...] y la vergüenza al que dirán/ te empujó hasta que colgabas al final/ tu cuerpo de una cuerda en el desván". His funeral provides an opportunity for comic relief, which sees Colate's ghost rejoice in an idealistically lively after-life predictably illustrated with J M Cano's "No es serio este cementerio" (1986) with a choreography inspired by another 1980s classic, Jackson's "Thriller" video (1982). His apparition has two important roles in the musical's "almost" happy ending. Not only does he forgive his disloyal friend, but he encourages him not to make the same mistake that he made, and return to his girlfriend María and the stability that she represents, thus marking a regressive and moralizing foreclosure that heralds the end of the *movida*.

The over-dramatized death of Colate is certainly hyperbolic, but also possibly inspired by the very real death by overdose in 1999 of Enrique Urquijo, a former member of the iconic *movida* bands *Tos* and *Los Secretos* and undoubtedly meant as a recognition of the downsides of the otherwise idealized 1980s Madrid. Elsewhere, there is an apparent lack of engagement with the country's political transition or other dramatic events outside the *movida* bubble. As in Gutiérrez's film (released

only months after the musical's première), the failed military coup led by Colonel Tejero on 23 February 1981 and some minor dialogue about it (Fouz-Hernández 23-26) is the only direct historical reference. In the musical, news of the coup interrupts a rock competition (perhaps representing the *Trofeo Rock Villa de Madrid*), that Rulé eventually wins. For a brief moment, Tejero's shots are overhead in the news coverage, suddenly quashing the loud and festive atmosphere of the bar 33 (a fictionalized *Rockola* or any of the legendary *movida* hangouts that are referred to by the characters, such as *El Sol* or *La Vía Láctea*).¹⁹ The music stops for a few brief moments, only to re-start louder as soon as news of the failed coup come through. Clearly the emphasis of the musical is not history but, as producer Torres puts it, on the "explosión de color y de libertad" of 1980s Spain (Fouz-Hernández 24).²⁰ Certainly, the narrative focuses on the *intrahistoria* and is rich in references to key figures of the *movida*: from Almodóvar – film spoof included ("he won't last" is their retrospectively hilarious verdict) to McNamara or television programmes such as La edad de oro. The television broadcast of the traditional "campanadas de fin de año" from Madrid's Puerta del Sol and the arrival of 1987 (which is often regarded as the end of the *movida* following the death of Tierno Galván and Spain's incorporation to the EU amongst other symbolic events) is used towards the end of the musical as if to mark the "end of an era", just before the death of Colate, itself symbolic of the end of the *movida* and, arguably, the end of Mecano.

IV Me cuesta tanto olvidarte: The Nostalgia Industry and the Cost of Remembering

The death of Colate is further dramatized with the hit song "Me cuesta tanto olvidarte" (J M Cano 1986), here interpreted by his disloyal "best friend" Mario in a

further re-contextualization (homoerotisation) of the lyrics.²¹ The dramatic performance of this nostalgic song is a climatic moment, and one that invites a mass mourning for the lost object. Not Colate, but Mecano, *la movida*, the “golden age of Spanish pop” and, indirectly, the end of a long-gone youth of those members of the audience who can remember the 1980s.

In his reading of rock ‘n’ roll sound tracks and nostalgia Shumway notes that “youth is the privileged site of nostalgia” (49). This is also corroborated by market research on nostalgia consumption: the maximal memorability is for episodes that occur during the consumer’s teens or early twenties (Holbrook 246). The important connection established between the story on stage and the spectator’s own personal story has also been studied by Rugg with regards the Broadway musical:

The attraction to revivals is grounded in individual memory and familiarity. Whenever the music from these shows was first heard [...] when they are seen on stage, the spectator experiences a personal connection. The events seem to be part of one’s own history. Where cultural nostalgia asserts sameness and difference, personal nostalgia urges individualism and proximity (47).

The commercial paraphernalia surrounding this musical and the post-2000 *movida* byproducts more generally insist on this idea. The air-brushed, re-vamped versions of those memories that the consumerist, global Spain of the twenty-first century repackages for easy consumption are poignant reminders of an embellished

past that we are encourage to re-live, at a cost. Indeed, this hugely expensive production has also a high price tag for audiences (70 Euros for a stalls ticket), giving the “*cuesta tanto*” en “Me cuesta tanto olvidarte” a whole new meaning, and highlighting the potential of the so-called “nostalgia business”.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Like in most of the material discussed in this article, the nostalgic potential of the story and the songs of this musical are commercially exploited as a marketing strategy, especially in the website. Oddly, the DVD menus of the four-disc set Mecanografía, released in 2006, is reminiscent of much earlier times: the looped soundtrack in the menu is the sound of an antique cinema projector, whilst in disc 4 a vintage typewriter stands out in the foreground, next to sepia Mecano snapshots that seem unnecessarily aged and strangely atemporal. Tellingly, the original version of the musical’s website combined the use of the latest technology with a markedly retro imagery. This is the 1980s as seen from the twenty first century: compressed high resolution digital images and videos were available for download, and yet, these were surrounded by a retro aesthetic featuring some of the most recognizable artifacts of the Spain of the transition, from the now virtually extinct vinyl singles to “pop” badges, all-star trainers or vintage cameras. Videos were viewed on an old-fashioned wooden television set, music downloads were represented by music cassettes. Furthermore, other downloadable items included an online version of popular 1980s computer games such as Pacman or Tetris, as well as Rubik’s Cube, which also made an appearance in the musical (see figure 1). The nostalgic appeal of the musical and its core (Mecano’s music) is a key element in this virtual environment: visitors to the site were encouraged to share Mecano

memories and discuss how the musical had helped them relive those magic moments (figure 2):

Mecano es algo más que récords en las listas de ventas, discos de platino y decenas galardones. Para muchos de nosotros, Mecano es emoción, acordes que nos remiten a otra época, lágrimas del pasado, risas compartidas, fiestas imborrables, noches sin dormir y palabras cargadas de sentimientos.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

The original site also included a virtual scrap-book with scans of old Mecano photographs, used concert tickets, and autographs submitted by members of the public. The musical's website thus became a virtual shrine to Mecano, comparable to what Lechado's book, with its display of photographs of vinyl records, concert tickets, magazine covers or used Metro and bus tickets is to *la movida*. The once "paradigmatic symbol of "modernity"" (Cervera 228) has been reduced to a jumble of newspaper cuttings, autographed photos, old concert tickets, accounts of personal memories and a bundle of rehashed music hits. Yet, the producers of the show insisted on describing it as a contemporary production created with the main challenge of attracting audiences of all ages: the original target audience of "forty plus" (involved by the nostalgic element provided by the songs) gradually gave way to the ideal target of "twenty plus". This was achieved with the help of the media (that have contributed to making this into a massive and fashionable social phenomenon) and state-of-the-art advertising campaigns and sponsorships featuring the songs and performers of the show for major mobile phone providers,

phone makers, brand trainers, and soft drink multinationals (especially during the first two seasons), or the use of “You Tube” for casting purposes in 2008 (Fouz-Hernández 40-44). For the younger generations, then, the appeal that memories have for their elders were here replaced with the commercial appeal of contemporary brands and gadgets and their conveyance of those attractively repackaged “non-memories”.

The poised nostalgia effect was accentuated in the musical with the use of particularly sentimental songs at crucial moments of the narrative. The New Year’s Eve hymn “Un año más” (I Cano 1988) illustrates Colate’s demise and loss of love and friendship and “Me cuesta tanto olvidarte” Mario’s mourning of his friend’s death. Other examples include “El siete de septiembre” (I Cano 1991) about the continued ritualistic celebration of their anniversary by two long-separated lovers (a good metaphor for Mecano’s virtual reunion with their audience in the musical), and “La fuerza del destino” (I Cano 1988), about two young lovers that separate but (unlike Mecano) eventually get back together. These songs are used to mark the low and high points of Mario and María’s troubled relationship and become metaphors for Mecano’s own separation, own anniversary, own memories. Or, as the website reminded us, of the audience’s own relationship with Mecano. By contrast, the oft repeated chorus of Mecano’s anti-nostalgic “Ay, qué pesado” (I Cano 1986) is used in isolation and interpreted in high, exaggerated tones, as an ironic counterpoint, providing comic relief and bringing the audience back to the present and to reality, uncovering the nostalgic simulacra by accentuating the constructedness of the image of the bygone object (“Mira que hemos hablado/ Que los recuerdos son mentiras/ Y que inundan la razón”). In the context of the song’s original release, the

lyrics “Ay qué pesado, qué pesado/ siempre pensando en el pasado/ no te lo pienses demasiado/ que la vida está esperando” came to signify a symbolic new start for Mecano (it was their first single with BMG, a year after many had predicted their inevitable extinction after CBS refused to negotiate a renewal of their contract under the band’s conditions). In the context of this *movida* musical, “Ay, qué pesado” can also be seen to represent the view of many *movida* artists who refuse to discuss those years, such as Alaska, who has recently written:

cada vez que me quieren entrevistar para los libros, documentales y reportajes sobre eso que llamáis *movida*, remito al interesado a un par de libros y un documental donde ya lo dije todo y para siempre. Como si estuviera muerta, para opinar sobre el pasado, que busquen en la bibliografía como tengo que hacer yo cuando estudio la pintura del Paleolítico Superior.
(326)

Equally, Arenas de Pablos argues that the earlier mentioned symphonic *movida* concert at the Teatro Monumental de Madrid was a “requiem” for the *movida*:

un movimiento deja de ser movimiento y vanguardia en el momento que se empieza a mirar el ombligo y a repetirse [...] La interpretación de algunos de sus clásicos con orquesta sinfónica ha sido el curioso epitafio final de un fenómeno primo del punk e hijo de la nueva ola. El halago debilita, pero la nostalgia – y más con violines – mata (329).

V Ay, qué pesado: Memories and Lies.

In this final section I will discuss three striking elements of the musical. Firstly, the use of the Ana Torroja's silhouette (figure 3) as the logo of the musical. This highly iconic image was prominently displayed at the theatre's Gran Vía billboard and endlessly reproduced on the website, printed publicity, posters, CD, tickets, official merchandise, and even the stage screen. Ironically, the silhouette was taken from one of Mecano's final photo shoots as a band, after their short-lived comeback in 1998 (for the cover of the double CD Ana/Jose/Nacho, released that year). The use of the image, initially unauthorized by Torroja (thus provoking much chatter about a possible lawsuit in early 2005) seems at odds with the idea that this is a musical about the *movida* (why not use a Mecano photo from the 1980s?), but also about the much advertised and important detail that the musical is *not* about Mecano. This discordant "return to the future" further confuses the temporal placement of this story, which seems to be firmly set in the 1980s but which, in contrast, insists on some of its props and publicity machine on imagery that precedes that decade, thus re-emphasizing the "emptied out" quality of the simulacrum. Like Warhol's Campbell's Soup series, the musical's logo is endlessly reproduced, destabilizing its "original" meaning and, in turn, like the plethora of *movida* by-products, becoming itself a commodity.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

My second point regards one of the changes introduced in the revised version of the musical: at the very end of the show, the cameras used to film the parts of the

performance that are projected on the screen (mostly live footage of the musical numbers) are turned towards the audience during the last karaoke-style encore that follows the end of the musical's story *per se* (complete with screen subtitles).²² The song chosen for this climatic moment is "Un año más". The song's lyrics are supercharged with nostalgic imagery and are meant to invite a reflection on past events ("hacemos un balance de lo bueno y malo") and to mourn those who "ya no están" (Mecano?). Annually, the absence of those who "ya no están" will hit us when we are faced by an annual ritual at New Year's Eve: the traditional consumption of the grapes in front of the television or in the Puerta del Sol itself. The lyrics and the refrain thus also insist on the idea of repetition: the simulated sound of the famous "*campanadas*" and the rhythm of the song itself emulate the peal of a bell. Importantly, the event evoked by the song is one of those rare moments in which all Spanish people "hacemos por una vez algo a la vez".²³ The theatre's audience is thus encouraged to join together and sing along to Mecano's hit song. With the cameras now turned to the audience and their images projected on the stage's large screen, then mixed with live images of the stage where all the performers are now also singing along, the audience becomes present-day protagonists of the story previously told on that screen. Even perhaps present-day contestants of a "Pop Idol" contest, not dissimilar from the one portrayed in the show, or the highly publicized real casting process for the musical. Reality and fiction become blurred in an attempt to further involve the spectators in the story. In another turn of the screw, those images of the audience of the Mecano musical in Madrid are then mixed with recorded footage of audience in the Mexican version of the musical. Then the screw turns further: real footage of a 1988 Mecano concert, showing a highly climatic finale with "Barco a Venus" is now mixed in with the images of the musical performers and audiences in Mexico and Spain. The 1988 audience is fused with the

2007-08 audiences in two different continents. The fictional time and space of the musical is thus folded together in what, with regards to similar temporal distortions in Villena's novel Madrid ha muerto (1999), Smith suggests "could also be read sympathetically as testimony to that fluidly festive intermingling, or collective temporality without tradition, that characterized the *movida*" (70). Memories of the real Mecano experience (or awareness of its lack/absence) and the musical's commodified version come together only to reveal the lost object mourned here. Then, as if to reinforce the point, the image of the three Mecano members triumphant at the end of their concert freezes up to the last notes of the song. This image will remain in the audience's immediate memory of the show when they leave the theatre.²⁴

The logo, the music, the encore draw attention to the travesty of the musical. They become the "*chorradas*", the "lágrimas de agua pasada, despintando la fachada" feared in the song discussed earlier, "El uno, el dos y el tres". This very postmodern experience is complicated further by the last of the three points that I wanted to raise here. The musical closes, as it opened, with the narrative voice of Mario, which frames the story by directly addressing the audience. His narrative voice returns only to momentarily bring us back to his fictional world before we face the reality of the outside world again. In his last intervention, he makes a predicament for the 1980s and, in a clear reference to the infamous statement by the 1990s mayor of Madrid, José María Álvarez del Manzano, he refutes the former mayor's ill-fated and very public denial of the cultural heritage left by the 1980s ("de la movida no ha quedado nada") and says: "a pesar de que algunos digan que de los 80 no ha quedado nada, yo creo que de los 80 ha quedado todo."²⁵ In the midst of the

temporal and spatial dislocation, partly encouraged by the staging and paraphernalia that surrounds this musical and heightened by the onstage presence of the controversial Torroja silhouette and the Mecano concert footage, the young actor's final characterization of the musical as "mi historia" and the 1980s as "mi década" forecloses the musical's possible readings.

This sentimental 'pesado' close points to something knowing in the musical's appropriation of the past. What the *re-movida* (and the musical in particular) does is to focus on the minutiae of the *movida* – objects, fragments, fetishes – in the true nostalgic logic of synecdoche and metonym. Nostalgia, it seems, was ever thus, scrabbling (*remover*) for mementos, remnants with which to piece together the past without ever making that past whole again. In short, it is a kind of fetishism through and through. And, as fetishism, nostalgia is precisely about the confusing and idealizing of specific events, times, and narratives. The moment where the 2000s audience is merged with the 1980s concert (*re-movida*) underlines the nostalgic logic of the musical: the audience of the musical is subsumed into that iconic concert and, like the action in the musical, and arguably like Mecano in the *movida* itself, we cannot help but feel like uninvited guests: estranged, somehow incomplete.

Works cited

23-F: El día más difícil del rey (television series), TVE-1 (2009).

Adrados, Javier, and Carlos del Amo. Mecano. La fuerza del destino, 2nd ed. Madrid: La esfera de los libros, 2004.

Alaska "Críticar por criticar." La Movida. Ed. Blanca Sánchez Berciano. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 2007. 326.

Arenas de Pablos, Miguel Ángel. "La cruzada de los niños." La Movida. Ed. Blanca Sánchez Berciano. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 2007. 327-329.

Arenas, Miguel Ángel. Anécdotas de él conmigo mismo. Madrid: Plaza & Janés, 2003.

Asombroso mundo de Borjamari y Pocholo, El. Dirs. Juan Cavestany and Enrique López Lavigne. Amiguetes Entertainment, 2004.

Bargueño, Miguel A. Enrique Urquijo. Adiós tristeza. Madrid: Rama Lama, 2005.

Baudrillard, Jean "The Hyper-realism of Simulation." In Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings. Ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988. 143-47.

Boym, Svetlana. The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Cadena SER "Entrevista a Nacho Cano." La ventana (16 Nov 2007), <http://www.cadenaser.com/la-ventana/audios/entrevista-nacho-cano/csrrsrrpor/20071116csrrsr_12/Aes/> .

Café solo o con ellas. Dir. Álvaro Díaz Lorenzo. Drive, 2007.

Calentito, El. Dir. Chus Gutiérrez. Buena Vista H E, 2005.

Cervera, Rafa. Alaska y otras historias de la movida. Barcelona: De Bolsillo, 2003.

Dos lados de la cama, Los. Dir. Emilio Martínez Lázaro. Buena Vista H E, 2005.

Edad de oro, La (television programme), TVE2 – now La2 (1983-85).

EFE “Nacho Cano vetado en su espectáculo Hoy no me puedo levantar.” El Mundo

15

Nov

2007

<<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2007/11/15/madrid/1195149480.html>>.

Faulkner, Sally. A Cinema of Contradiction: Spanish Film in the 1960s. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006.

Fernández de Castro, Alex. Nacha Pop. Magia y precisión. Lleida: Milenio, 2002.

Fouce, Héctor. El futuro ya está aquí. Madrid: Veleció, 2006.

Fouz-Hernández. Unpublished Interview with Andrés Torres and Carlos Ituiño, producers of the original Hoy no me puedo levantar. Madrid. 9 June 2005.

Gallero, J. L. Sólo se vive una vez. Esplendor y ruina de la movida madrileña. Madrid: Árdora, 1991.

Grijalba, Silvia. Dios salve a la movida. Madrid: Espejo de Tinta, 2006.

Holbrook, Morris B.. “Nostalgia and Consumption Preferences: Some Emerging Patterns of Consumer Tastes.” The Journal of Consumer Research 20.2 (1993): 245-256.

Ipop (television programme), La2 (2006-07).

Lechado, José Manuel. La movida. Una crónica de los 80. Madrid, Mexico, Buenos Aires, San Juan, Santiago: Algaba, 2005.

López, Carlos. Mecano (el libro). Madrid: Lucas, 1992.

Los 80 (television series), Tele 5 (2004)

Mala educación, La. Dir. Pedro Almodóvar. El Deseo, 2004.

Middleton, Richard. "The Real Thing? The Specter of Authenticity". Voicing the Popular. On the Subjects of Popular Music. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. 199-246.

Operación Triunfo (television series), TVE1 (2001-2004) and Tele 5 (2005-2006).

Ordovás, Jesús. 25 años de pop con Radio 3. Madrid: Everest, 2006.

Otro lado de la cama, El. Dir. Emilio Martínez Lázaro. Buena Vista H E, 2002.

Pérez Mínguez, Pablo. Mi movida madrileña. Fotografías 1979-1985. Madrid: Lunwerk, 2006.

Pita, Elena. "La desigual fortuna de los tres Mecano." La Revista de El Mundo 23 Nov. 1997: 38-42.

Pop idol (television series), ITV UK (2001-2003).

Rico, Lolo. El libro de La bola de cristal. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 2003.

- Rodríguez Lenin, Jesús. Gabinete Caligari. El lado más chulo de la movida. Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2004.
- Rugg, Rebecca Ann. "What It Used to Be: Nostalgia and the State of the Broadway Musical." Theater 32.2 (2002): 44-55.
- Sánchez Berciano, Blanca. La movida. Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 2007.
- Sánchez, Mariano. Radio 3. Rescate de un recuerdo. Madrid: Espejo de tinta, 2004.
- Shumway, David R. "Rock 'n' Roll Tracks and the Production of Nostalgia." Cinema Journal 38.2 (1999): 36-51.
- Smith, Paul Julian. "The Movida Relocated: Press, Chronicle, Novel." Spanish Visual Culture. Cinema, Television, Internet. Manchester: MUP, 2006. 51-74.
- Tango, Cristina. La transición y su doble. El rock y Radio Futura. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2006.
- Triana-Toribio, Núria. "A Punk Called Pedro: La *Movida* in the Films of Pedro Almodóvar." Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies. Eds. Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas. London and New York: Arnold, 2000. 273-83.
- Vaquerizo, Mario. Alaska. Valencia: La Máscara, 2001.
- Villena, Luis Antonio de. Madrid ha muerto. Esplendor y caos en una ciudad feliz de los ochenta. Barcelona: Planeta, 1999.

¹ The season was curated by one of the *movida*'s key protagonists, the recently deceased Blanca Sánchez Berciano, who also compiled the catalogue.

² The same title was used later for the "symphonic concert" that took place at Madrid's *Teatro Monumental* in September 2006 with orchestrated versions of 1980s classics by key bands, marking the beginning of an unexpected and prolonged "come-back" period for some of them.

³ Smith analyses Gallero's pioneering essayistic work on *la movida* (published in 1991) and Villena's 1999 novel *Madrid ha muerto*.

⁴ Radio 3 was established in 1979 as a four-hour programme devoted to pop music and young people within the then only station of Radio Nacional to then become a station in its own right.

⁵ Significantly, given the iconic value of Manchester in the influential British music scene of the 1980s and 1990s, Ordovás's exhibition tour included the city's Instituto Cervantes in March 2006. The now retired Ordovás also gave a talk at the 11th Spanish film Festival *¡VIVA!* which also focused on *la movida* that year. The event was filmed for Ordovás's now defunct television programme *Ipop* (*La2*, 2006-07).

⁶ The BNE programmed an exhibition of the magazine *La luna de Madrid* and "otras revistas de vanguardia de los años 80" from September to November 2007 and the Universidad de Alicante held a summer course on "Movida(s)/mujeres: música y transgresión en la transición española" in July 2008. I am grateful to Héctor Fouce for keeping me up-to-date with the *La Movida* season in late 2006.

⁷ For the purposes of acknowledging authorship of Mecano songs, those written by José María Cano will be cited as J M Cano and those authored by Nacho (Ignacio) Cano as I Cano.

⁸ As Smith notes, "there is also consensus on the fact that during the *movida* no-one made any money" (66).

⁹ My interview with *Grupo Drive*'s Andrés Torres and Carlos Ituiño (two of the original producers of the musical) took place at the Grupo Drive headquarters in Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid on 9 June 2005. I am grateful to Mr Torres and Mr Ituiño for their attention and to Cristina Marinero (former PR at Drive) for organising the interview and granting permission to reproduce the images that illustrate this article. The unedited digital recording of the interview (approximately 85 minutes long) is available for consultation. All citations to Fouz-Hernández refer to minutes in the interview (rounded up for clarity).

¹⁰ Alaska's perspective on this is discussed in Cervera (245-246, 321-322). Mecano's own in Adrados and del Amo (39-40, 60-61, 71-73). Mecano had the last laugh with the 1991 song "Bailando salsa", a tongue-in-cheek parody of the exclusivist atmosphere that characterised certain sectors of the *movida* and had made them feel excluded.

¹¹ The *Príncipe de Asturias* was a self-confessed fan and they were acquainted with *Infanta Cristina* (Adrados and del Amo 164).

¹² Their last studio album was released in Belgium, France, Germany, Holland and Italy, with some songs released in Spanish and others in French or Italian. The French version of "Mujer contra mujer" (J M Cano 1988), re-titled "Une femme avec une femme" (1990), remained at the top of the French charts for thirteen weeks (the record number for an international artist in France – Adrados and del Amo (143)).

¹³ Torroja's album of Mecano hits was announced in the spring of 2006 with the same title as the tour, the also appropriate *La fuerza del destino*. However, the title was changed just before its release in the summer to *Me cuesta tanto olvidarte*, a 1986 Mecano song that is not even included in the album. The title of this article was conceived prior to the album's name change.

¹⁴ The analysis presented in this article is based on the Spanish version and three shows seen in Madrid in seasons one (10 June 2005 and 1 July 2005 at 6PM) and four (30 October 2007 at 8.30 PM). Those shows lasted approximately four hours and included twenty six songs and two long medleys. In November 2007 José Manuel Lorenzo and Nacho Cano, the original creators of the project, abandoned the direction of the musical due to differences with producer Ángel Suárez (see EFE).

¹⁵ In our interview Torres explained that the idea of a Mecano musical originated in 2002 when former Mecano member José María Cano had a meeting with Jose María Cámara (now president of Sony BMG Spain) about the possibility of releasing a new solo album. Mr Cámara took Mr Cano to see the *Mamma mia* musical in Broadway and suggested that, rather than recording a solo album, he should create a similar musical with Mecano hits for the Spanish and Latin American market. J M Cano turned down the idea, but Mr Cámara discussed the project with producers Ángel Suárez and José Manuel Lorenzo and they offered it to his younger brother, Nacho, who agreed to direct it. The first script was prepared by David Serrano (writer of the successful musical films *El otro lado de la cama* (2002) and *Los dos lados de la cama* (2005), both directed by Martínez Lázaro) in late 2003. This was followed by a shorter and final version also scripted by Serrano in collaboration with Nacho Cano (Fouz-Hernández 1-9).

¹⁶ Arguably, this has been the case. Following the success of the Mecano musical, similar (albeit less ambitious) productions have followed, including the equally nostalgic *Quisiera Ser* that premièred in the *Nuevo Apolo* theatre in Madrid October 2007. Set in present-day Spain (a journey in the controversial Ave train between Madrid and Barcelona), the musical uses the 1960s hits of the Duo Dinámico as a soundtrack. Nacho Cano also capitalised on the success of the Mecano musical with a second, less successful musical called *A* that premièred at Madrid's *Teatro Calderón* in December 2008. Domestic productions of Broadway classics including *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cabaret*, *Cats*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Mamma Mia* and *We will rock you* have also been very successful.

¹⁷ The negative aspects of the city are highlighted and exaggerated in the song "Madrid" (J M Cano, 1983), which is not performed in the musical: "una ciudad de alquitrán: hierro, cemento y cristal" [...] "y no sobrevivirás si no funcionas a gas" [...] "alguna gente no lo puede soportar/yo ya sin humo no sé respirar en Madrid". In this case, living in the city is perceived not as a choice, but as fate: "A unos les toca en Gambia y a otros en Pekín/ y a mi me tocó nacer en Madrid".

¹⁸ In a previous "warning", Colate's steps to drug-addiction are illustrated with "Barco a Venus" (I Cano, 1983), a song about the self-deceptive effect of substances-induced "trips". During the performance of this song in the musical, a video shows the notorious excesses of famous rock stars who died of overdose in the early 1970s, including Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison.

¹⁹ On the significance of the Rockola for the *movida* see Fouce (71-72).

²⁰ Whilst some might remember the Tejero incident as a particularly traumatic event of the 1980s, the *movida* literature tends to de-dramatise it (Lechado 13). The event is remembered rather differently by members of Mecano. For Nacho it was "un momento muy gris. Miedo, confusión... Estábamos en Madrid [...] ensayando y [recuerdo] salir a la calle y ver todo como si fuera un estado de Guerra, con los tanques, la gente corriendo hacia sus casas" (like Mecano, the fictional Rulé are also seen rehearsing when they hear about the coup). Ana adds: "hasta comentábamos la posibilidad de otra guerra civil, del recorte de libertades" (both cited in Adrados and del Amo 64). Producer Torres sees it quite pragmatically: "el 23 F en la historia de este país es un acontecimiento dramático y nosotros no queríamos dramatizar" (Fouz-Hernández 22). That also explains why the dreaded "call to duty" letter from the army is addressed with a generous dose of humour and tightly linked to the Tejero incident, becoming a symbolic reminder of the seemingly distant past of compulsory military service. The success of the two-part television series *23-F: El día más difícil del rey* (watched by over 7 million people when first broadcast on TVE-1 in February 2009) could suggest that the relevance of the incident for present-day Spanish audiences is much stronger than producers of the musical seemed to think.

²¹ This song about a man missing his ex lover after a break up was written by Jose María Cano and performed by Ana Torroja from a male perspective. Fouce uses the Mecano example as example of the possible "conflict" between lyrics on the one hand and voice and musical performance on the other (115).

²² The screen is also used to project images of the musicians playing live or singers performing "in the cabin". Such instances are meant to highlight the genuineness of a live show, but they also draw attention away from the story and thus become a further reminder of its constructedness.

²³ Strangely, the same song was also added to the 'encore' section of I Cano's second musical, *A*, suggesting the sustained appeal of Mecano and this song, even completely out of context.

²⁴ The effect must have been heightened for audiences who witnessed the temporary reunion of the three Mecano members on the stage of the musical at the end of the musical's premièred on 7 April 2005. On 26 September 2007 Torroja and Nacho Cano played some of the musical songs live on stage as part of a charity event to help drug addicts through the Fundación de Ayuda contra la Drogadicción (FAD). Before leaving the direction of the show, Nacho Cano also signed autographs during the intervals of some shows (this was the case on 30 October 2007).

²⁵ Álvarez del Manzano's words are quoted in Fouce (63).