



Louie Dean  
Valencia-García

ANTIAUTHORITARIAN  
YOUTH CULTURE  
IN FRANCOIST  
SPAIN

*Clashing with Fascism*

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# Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain

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# Antiauthoritarian Youth Culture in Francoist Spain

Clashing with Fascism

Louie Dean Valencia-García

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*A mi mamá. Te debo todo. Sin tu apoyo y cariño este  
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## Preface: Indignant Youth

Landing at Madrid's Barajas International Airport in May of 2011, I arrived to what had become the largest youth movement in Spain since the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, who had ruled since the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). When I booked my ticket from New York City to Madrid, I had expected a quiet summer researching Spanish youth culture and dissent of the 1960s and 1970s, digging through boxes of forgotten paper in the Archivo General de la Administración, attending a seminar or two and giving a talk at the Association of Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies Annual Conference to be held that year in Lisbon. Climbing into the taxi, I was confronted with the energized sounds of young people singing songs of dissent on the radio; tens of thousands of people were marching through Madrid's city centre, la Puerta del Sol, calling themselves *Indignados*, or the indignant ones. The taxi driver, a man in his late 30s, commented to me, 'Man, it's about time someone did something about the state of things in this country'. In fact, the protests would reach every major city in the country within a week.

After years of recession, Western democracies started showing symptoms of an oncoming crisis – the likes of which had not been experienced since before the Second World War. Across Europe, young people felt corporate interests were placed above those of the people. Economic stagnation tarnished the dream of a prosperous Europe promised at the turn of the millennium, when Europeans adopted a common currency. Already in 2010, in Hungary, Viktor Orbán's far-right nationalist party, Fidesz, had gained control of the country. Putin's Russia had become a de facto oligarchy. Poland, Greece, Austria and even France were flirting with far-right authoritarianism and nationalism, once again.

At the heart of this recession and economic crisis was the simple fact that the European Union (EU) was formed primarily for purposes of economic integration as the European Economic Community; an assumption was made that cultural integration would follow economic integration. To some extent, cultural integration had begun, but as the economic crisis worsened, nations, ethnic groups and social classes began to turn on each other. The EU had failed its primary promise of economic stability, causing nationalist self-interests to swell. In a twist of fate, echoing the interwar years, xenophobia arose anew.

Across Europe, immigrants and minority groups received the brunt of the backlash – the scapegoating. However, some countries handled this crisis not with a fascistic backlash, but, instead, imagined new possibilities. Simultaneous to the coming upsurge in new nationalism and far-right fascistic behaviour, an anarchist-inspired youth movement emerged in Madrid, utilizing decentred power structures that relied on flat, non-hierarchical organizing – inspired by an Arab Spring of 2011, located most fervently in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain.

With 21 per cent of all Spaniards unemployed, and an astounding 43.5 per cent of people under the age of 30 in that precarious situation, the highest youth unemployment rate in the EU at that time,<sup>1</sup> in January of 2011 a group calling themselves ‘*Democracia Real Ya*’ (Real Democracy Now) first appeared on the social media website Facebook proclaiming, ‘We are going to wait. Organising a protest is difficult. Civil Society is sleeping. We are going to wait three months, and we are going to work.’<sup>2</sup> The nascent movement asked for ‘the unemployed, poorly paid, the subcontractors, those in precarious positions, and young people to take the streets on 15 May.’ Some 500 organizations pledged support of the action. This action resulted in an encampment of the heart of Madrid that came to interrupt the commercial capital of Spain. Not only was Real Democracy Now a condemnation of the type of democracy that arose out of the Spanish transition, one that turned its back on the socialism of Madrid’s mayor, Enrique Tierno Galván, giving way instead to a neoliberal capitalism, it marked a wave of discontent that crossed the Mediterranean during the Arab Spring, and threatened to spread throughout the continent – even crossing the Atlantic to become Occupy Wall Street.

During the months leading up to the ‘Spanish Revolution’ of 2011, anarcho-syndicalist groups came to clashes in Catalunya, Basque Country and Galicia; retirement age was moved from 65 to 67 and new threats of governmental austerity loomed. Adding to the discontent, in February, the Spanish government passed the *Sinde* law, an anti-internet download law similar to the failed American SOPA law, which allows for a judicial order to close down any web page that links to illegal downloads of copyrighted content. Moreover, since at least 2001, Spaniards had spoken of ‘*mileuristas*’ (or college-educated young people that were making only 1,000 euros per month); already, in 2006, talk of *quinientos euristas*, or those topping off at 500 euros per month, started to appear. By 2011, it was not uncommon to hear of ‘300-euristas’ who worked multiple part-time jobs. It would be this vast unemployment rate that would be both the impetus for young people to act and what allowed them to dedicate so much of their time

to the movement. With unemployment so high, camping in a plaza seemed to be as good of a job as any.

Two days before the 15th of May, the conservative-leaning Spanish newspaper A.B.C. suggested this was the start of another May revolution, evoking comparison to the protests in France and Germany during the May of 1968.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, that 15th of May dispelled the popular belief that young Spaniards were ‘pasotas’, or young people that ‘pass’ on their responsibilities – family, school, activism, work, political discourse – everything. However, high unemployment, low pay for those who could find jobs, a sense that owning a home was out of reach and a general disenchantment with the capitalist system pushed young ‘apolitical’ Spaniards into action. The motto taken for the 15th of May protest was ‘we are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers’ – pointing directly to what the ‘participants’ saw as the problem they were facing. Indeed, it would be this same rhetoric that the American Occupy Wall Street protests would draw from in the autumn of that year.

What started off as a large organized march, following a sort of structured and orthodox form of dissent, transformed into a performance of everyday dissent. Young protestors simply set up a camp in the heart of Madrid and lived their lives in the public space. Rejecting ‘the system’, they sought to create a space that reflected the type of world they wanted to imagine for themselves. They created libraries, large kitchens, information centres, meditation tents, community work projects and publicly performed new models of democracy and society – a precursor to Occupy Wall Street. For many young Spaniards across Spain the summer of 2011 embodied a performative shift in *mentalité* that called for a forced confrontation with the disillusionment felt by young people globally. This dissent as performance *did* feel familiar.

Spain is one of the few places in the world that has bred consistent, and sometimes successful, albeit short-lived, anarchist movements with visible political power. At one point in the 1930s, before the Spanish Civil War, an estimated one to two million Catalonians identified as anarchist or were involved in some sort of collective.<sup>4</sup> Young Spaniards participating in the 15th of May movement (15-M), drawing from anarchist ideology advocating a stateless, consensus-based democracy, did not just want to express disillusionment with the neoliberal system; they wanted to work towards the creation of decentralized, direct democracy so as to dismantle systems of oppression, not unlike the 1933 Spanish anarchist uprisings that appeared just before the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish anarchists of the 1930s created ‘consensus based decision-making models’, ‘people’s libraries’, ‘general assemblies’, ‘affinity groups’ and ‘spokes

councils' – all tactics and organizing structures used in the Spanish 15-M. Moreover, 15-M was composed of 'commissions' that organized the functions of the movement (legal, action, activities, neighbourhood, national, international, infrastructure, etc.) and specialized 'work projects' ranging from culture, education, environment, social work, gender and sexuality issues, science and technology, religion and migration. Not only did 15-M use anarchist models in their organization, but they also incorporated aesthetic and performative tactics that borrowed from the underground youth culture that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, the focus of this study.

Inspired by the tactics used by young people in Tunisia's Green Revolution, Cairo's Tahrir Square, the uprisings in France in 1968 and Spanish anarchist movements of the 1930s, tens of thousands of Spaniards had gathered to show dissent calling for 'real democracy now'. Young Spaniards were inundating Facebook and Twitter with political commentaries, reading books such as historian Tony Judt's *Ill Fares the Land*, former French diplomat, resistance fighter and concentration camp survivor Stéphane Hessel's *Time for Outrage: Indignez-vous!* and *The Coming Insurrection* by the Invisible Committee. These books threatened what Hessel called 'peaceful insurrections', as well as a more extreme insurrection foretold by the Invisible Committee. Electricity filled the air.

Unlike the later Occupy Movement, those who supported the Spanish movement did not call themselves 'protestors', but rather *Indignados*, or 'indignant ones' and 'participants' in democracy. This usage of 'indignado' was borrowed from one of the inspirations of this movement, Stéphane Hessel, a then-93-year-old French public intellectual who had served in the foreign service and participated in the Second World War, who wrote a pamphlet titled *Indignez-vous!*, or *¡Indignaos!* in Castilian, or, loosely translated, 'All of you be indignant!' While 'Occupy' implies an action that is 'active', and maybe even aggressive, to be 'indignant', or to be 'robbed of dignity', implicitly justified the movement in a way that the verb 'occupy' does not.

I eagerly anticipated my arrival to the Puerta del Sol in the heart of Madrid. Imagining the scene was easy for me, as I had only a few years earlier lived some thirty seconds from the plaza itself on the Calle Montera, popularly known as 'the street of perdition' because of heavy prostitution and crime that had marred the reputation of the short, busy street that pumps directly into the heart of Madrid. Organized chaos, anarchy, antiauthoritarianism: all words thrown around in the media that described the scene. Politicians decried the movement for its lack of specific goals – not unlike Occupy Wall Street. Despite this lack of a 'coherent' message, everyone at the encampment *knew* the goal: real democracy now. Tens



of thousands of young, 'indignant' Spaniards took up the call to not only create 'real democracy', but doing so through the (re)appropriation of public space in the very heart of the Spanish capital, Madrid, setting the stage for a 'European summer' that situated itself between an Arab Spring and an American fall.

Young people created spaces for themselves in their society. Young people *imagined* spaces and communities where they had power to act and even 'create' spaces where they dictated both rules and norms. It is through this concept of the 'creation' of democratic space that we should consider the Spanish '15-M' movement. While events such as these are not commonplace, they are neither exceptional. Young people in modernity particularly excel at 'making a scene', in the multiple senses of the phrase.

The *Indignados* not only managed to hold the Puerta del Sol for nearly two months, the Madrid equivalent of Piccadilly Circle or Times Square, but they managed to operate without money, relying solely on non-monetary-based donations (unlike Occupy Wall Street, which did accept monies), the kindness of strangers and a sense of solidarity. While the encampment phase essentially ended by July, even still, hundreds of thousands of Spaniards are connected via email lists and social media, creating a network of people that can quickly be activated. In this sense, the movement was successful. They created a movement that tied dissent in the Middle East to that of Europe and the United States, demonstrating that despite imagined borders there was indeed a 'glocal' (globally minded and local) youth culture infecting young minds with ideas of pluralism and democracy.

Despite the small amount of success that the *Indignados* demonstrated, they provided a model to organize against neoliberalism. More importantly, they relied upon a culture that promoted pluralism. While in other parts of Europe far-right ideologies made an upswing, no such reaction happened in Spain. In fact, Vox, one of the few far-right Spanish fascist parties, has not seen the success of the Popular Front in France, Golden Dawn in Greece and other such parties – despite having had a long tradition of fascism and dictatorship for much of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

I offer this preface, following the belief of one of my advisors, the late Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, that no historian writes in a vacuum. We must strive to think objectively in our historical investigations, but also acknowledge that the questions we ask are inevitably tied to our contemporary moment. In a moment when authoritarianism once again threatens democracy, we must revisit the histories of how democracy has taken hold in the past. This book sets the stage by looking at the creation of youth subcultures culture and the Spanish

constitutional monarchy from the view of plazas, bedrooms, cafés, bars and bookstores. It glances back at another crisis, different young people in Madrid, who challenged different norms. Instead of demanding ‘real democracy now’, they lived their lives as though they already had it by finding spaces where they could act it out. They did this living under the long shadow of an authoritarian dictator, Francisco Franco, who managed a fascistic bureaucratic apparatus – an open enemy of liberal democracy. They contributed to the founding of the Spanish democracy by imagining and creating a more pluralistic world. This culture of pluralism, although certainly challenged at times, endures – continuing to clash with fascism.

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## An Introduction



In 1975, the catchphrase ‘Generalissimo Franco is still dead’ entered American lexicon after being featured in a satirical newscast on a popular, new television show, now known as *Saturday Night Live*. The recurring skit mocked the American news media for its obsession with the Spanish dictator – ironically reminding viewers for more than a year that the deceased dictator was, in fact, ‘still dead’. In the original skit, pseudo newscaster Chevy Chase read a quote from the soon-to-be-disgraced US President Richard Nixon proclaiming, ‘General Franco was a loyal friend and ally of the United States. He earned worldwide respect for Spain through firmness and fairness.’<sup>1</sup> Contradicting those words, to uncomfortable laughter, images flashed behind Chase of Spain’s dictator, Francisco Franco, marching alongside Adolf Hitler during an infamous meeting of the men in the French border town of Hendaye in October of 1940. In fact, within months of that meeting, Franco’s régime had prepared a list of 6,000 Jews in Spain to turn over to the high-ranking Nazi leader, Heinrich Himmler.<sup>2</sup> Francisco Franco’s death might have become a satire, but the man himself was no joke – firmly ruling Spain from 1939 until his death in 1975.

In the mid-1970s, all eyes were on Spain. After forty years of rule, both Spaniards and the outside world watched as Madrid, a drab city under the Franco régime, became the centre of both a young democracy and a vibrant artistic scene by the early 1980s. Rejecting the old guard, young Spaniards occupied public plazas, subverted Spanish cultural norms and undermined the authoritarian state by participating in a counterculture that eventually grew into the *Movida Madrileña*, or the ‘Madrid Scene’. Analysing everyday acts of dissent by young people, this book studies Spanish youth culture and queer culture during and after the dictatorship, with an emphasis on that of Madrid and its role in the transition to the modern Spanish democracy. This antiauthoritarian youth culture, which finds its roots in the long 1950s, reflected a mixture of sexual liberalization, a rejection of the perceived ‘backwardness’ of the Francoist dictatorship, a reinvention of native Iberian pluralistic traditions and a burgeoning global youth culture that connected the American Civil Rights Movement, the New York Underground, British punks, French Situationists and Spanish *frikis*, or freaks.

Translating *Movida* as a ‘scene’ rather than ‘movement’ is also important in that the Francoist régime called itself the *Movimiento Nacional* – a fervently nationalist movement. As a decentralized youth culture, the *Movida* was, in fact, an anti-movement – one that rejected the sort of strict organizational structures associated with many global social movements of the 1960s. After forty years of dictatorship, Franco left behind what he believed to be a patriarchal, conservative

and authoritarian country. However, not only had the young generation already been imagining a democratic, pluralistic and 'modern' Spain before the dictator died, but they had long been creating spaces from which to subvert the régime through an attempt to (re)construct Spanish social norms – seen in clandestine reading of forbidden literature and foreign comic books that subverted Francoist ideologies, the revival of the Spanish tradition of holding political-literary café gatherings called *tertulias* (with a contemporary twist) and the creation of music, novellas and art that sought to spread a libertine, Dionysian message.

The study of everyday life and print culture of young people who grew up in Madrid under the Franco régime helps us to better understand the role of young people in the political transformation of Spain from dictatorship to the current Spanish democratic system of 'autonomous communities'.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it helps us to understand how even seemingly apolitical young people challenge old norms, and can potentially allow us to imagine new possibilities – to challenge authorities. Moreover, the Spanish case also demonstrates ways to strengthen communities and promote pluralism of thought and peoples, the antidote to fascism. The Madrid case is particularly salient as that city was not only the stronghold of Franco's power, but it had been particularly suppressed by the régime because of its stand against the rising dictatorship during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Despite this oppression, by the end of the 1970s, a youth nightlife and party scene had emerged.

Madrid became a place of sustained subversive counterculture, serving as a model to other Spanish cities yearning to reject conservative Francoist ideals. By the time Franco died, not only were young subversives already creating their own newspapers, music, pamphlets, films and comic books that implicitly, if not outright, criticized Francoism itself, but their underground culture had a following that would continue to grow exponentially by the time the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was ratified. By partying in the streets, young people created a carnivalesque and pluralistic culture that subverted the ideals of the conservative régime through a culture of drugs, sex, drinking and art performed in the streets of Madrid. The extension of the transgressive and 'postmodern' youth culture of the *Movida* throughout Spain not only subverted the traditionalist norms, but it also exemplified the ways young people adopted new technologies to spread their pluralistic message through new and adapted media.

Madrid's carnivalesque and antiauthoritarian youth culture was influenced by: (1) the (re)appropriation of public and private space by young people; (2) new consumer technology that provided an availability of affordable printing and recording technology which allowed young people to avoid censorship and more

easily connect to other likeminded individuals; (3) the penetration of popular American and Western European culture into Franco's Spain; (4) a rejection of the perceived 'backwardness' of the régime; (5) a revival and reimagination of Iberian pluralistic traditions found in pre-Spanish Civil War culture; and (6) a burgeoning vision of youth culture that coincided and connected with other global youth movements, like the uprisings in France and Germany in May 1968, Black Liberation in the United States and the predominantly working class and immigrant punk movements in the United Kingdom and New York. The lasting impact of the *Movida* not only reflected the cultural production of the period, but also, more importantly, promoted the creation of pluralistic, autonomous and democratic spaces despite the Falangist desire for a homogenous, conservative and Catholic Spain (albeit a very particular Francoist form of Catholicism). As a result of the fragmented nature of the penetration of popular culture entering Spain under the régime, and because of the anti-modernist culture of the dictatorship, young Spaniards stitched together a youth culture that more similarly resembled postmodern sensibilities – being influenced by everything from nineteenth-century bohemian café culture and carnivalesque traditions, the more modernist culture of the 1960s, hippie culture, Spanish kitsch culture, British punk culture and American popular and underground culture.

The everyday life of young Spaniards under Franco was composed of a negotiation of inculcated social norms, the demands of authority figures and the ways in which many young people negotiated their own agency, or ability to affect change, through the subversion of authority and acceptance of normativity. However, Spanish youth under Franco cannot be considered monolithic,<sup>4</sup> as issues of geography, class, ethnicity, nationality, gender and sexuality played important roles in the ways that young people lived their everyday lives. Young people of the late Francoist dictatorship grew up with different perceptions and understandings of the régime, authority and their own subjectivity in relation to Francoism as compared to their parents who had participated in the Spanish Civil War.

Some young Spaniards of the late 1950s, such as film director Julio Diamante Stihl, who features prominently in Chapter 3, were already imagining a world without Franco, whereas other young Spaniards of the 1960s might not have been able to imagine a world without 'el Caudillo' (the Leader) – being all that they had ever known. Even still, some young Spaniards of the 1970s might have considered Franco a non-issue already at the start of the decade – a dying old man. As Thomas Kuhn reminds us, describing a paradigm shift from inside of the paradigm is quite difficult, if not impossible. As in all modern societies,



young Spaniards both conformed to and transgressed against hegemonic social norms – both capable of succumbing to, while, paradoxically, still subverting those systems of power and social norms in the practice of their everyday lives.<sup>5</sup> The chapters of this volume are designed to follow a chronological framework that traces young people during various stages of their lives, and to show specific vignettes that elucidate how both the older and younger strata of people who grew up under the Franco régime encountered authoritarianism and antiauthoritarianism in their everyday lives. While certainly there were young people who were in favour of the authoritarian régime, they are not the focus of this study, though they do appear.

The first chapter situates the book both historiographically and theoretically, placing itself firmly in current issues concerning modern Spanish history, while using a theoretical framework that draws from youth studies, urban studies, critical theory, space theory, queer theory and the study of everyday life. Chapter 2 will discuss everyday interactions with authority in the classroom through a study of textbooks intended to inculcate young people with Francoist ideology and students' everyday interactions with authority, i.e. teachers, parents and so on. It also reflects on bureaucratic systems under Franco, and how those systems inculcated young people with fascist, nationalist and pre-Vatican II Catholic ideology.

Chapter 3 studies the events surrounding the death of the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, and how young people turned his funeral procession into a protest. In the wake of the philosopher's death young Spaniards clandestinely organized 'poetic gatherings' in an attempt to recall the Spanish 'liberal' tradition. Chapter 4 analyses seemingly everyday acts of dissent, and considers the spaces in which young Spaniards were able to dissent through the reading of authors banned by the régime, looking specifically at banned Superman comic books of the 1960s and the ways young Spaniards acquired said materials. This chapter shows creation of both an underground comic book black market and the régime's attempt to prevent young people from reading those comics.

Chapter 5 discusses the emergence of antiauthoritarian spaces under the régime, focusing on implicit dissent, political-literary magazines of the 1960s. I will argue that the publication of these magazines allowed for not only a counter-narrative to develop to that of the régime, but also, within the pages of these magazines, young Spaniards were reimagining the lost tradition of the Spanish *tertulia*, promoting dialogue and pluralism through the discussion of politics and literature. Chapter 6 will discuss the production of underground comic book culture and independent youth publications of the 1970s. Further,

I will use this entrée into underground culture to understand the creation of counterpublics in Madrid, and how they influenced and were affected by the Spanish democratic transition of the late 1970s through the early 1980s. Chapter 7 will focus on the creation of the mythos of the *Movida* during the early 1980s, looking at popular symbols of the *Movida* – the punk band Kaka de Luxe and the films of Pedro Almodóvar and Iván Zulueta. This concluding chapter will explain how the *Movida* dissipated, and was incorporated into normative ideas of Spanishness through an appropriation of it by the Spanish Socialist party and capitalist commoditization of the *Movida*.

# Making a Scene

## Remembering the past

Not even a decade after the ratification of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, radio disk jockey and music critic Jesús Ordovás (1947–) was already writing with a sense of nostalgic melancholia about the changes that had occurred to the Madrid Scene since its rise. In 1987, he wrote:

It all began when Madrid assumed its role as a grand modern city, without complexes ... The news of punk and its echoes were received in Madrid almost instantaneously, thanks to the radio and music magazines. Madrid now connects to London, New York and Paris, and knows it belongs to the modern world. Punk is the revulsion that opens new doors to dozens of groups and characters who have things to say.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 1980s, Madrid had indeed sloughed off much of the shell of Francoism. As Ordovás indicates, the city had rejected many of its own complexes – especially its so-called backwardness. Madrid had embraced a new image for itself as part of a network of cities located in the ‘modern world’. For Ordovás, these metropolitan centres were connected by a common, vulgar, aesthetic language – punk. In that same paragraph, Ordovás also writes about the young people who produced music because it was ‘pure and simple fun.’<sup>2</sup> While there is certainly an argument to be made that punk culture was based on a devil-may-care attitude and a sort of nihilistic diversion, it can also be said that punk participants directly combatted authority and societal norms – self-consciously or not – even claiming the explicitly antiauthoritarian anarchist ‘@’ as one of its symbols. If it was *just* pure and simple fun, it certainly made transgression broadly appealing. Ordovás tells of participants of the *Movida*, before it was called that, making homemade demos and recordings, while noting a shift away from the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) aspect of the Madrid Scene with the arrival of ‘contracts, managers and promotion companies, tours and success’. By 1987, the scene had