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## **Hybrid Models: Auteurism and Genre in Contemporary Spanish Crime Thrillers**

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The concept of national concept relies on its projection as a cultural product of the distinctive language, culture and heritage of a nation. Nevertheless, it is increasingly difficult to discern from one another the plethora of transnational border crossing networks, with their growing number of co-productions and exchange of stars, film-makers, genres and aesthetic styles. Thomas Elsaesser has traced how European cinema is changing, suggesting ways in which our perceptions of it might change accordingly. The identity construction that he proposes is one which demotes the concept of national cinema to the level of a ‘floating designation’ (2005: 76). In its place, he opts for a concept of a European cinema based on ‘mutual interference’ (2005: 126) among nation states, a *modus operandi* institutionalized in the workings of the European Union. Along the same lines, Elsaesser analyses the complex relationship between European and Hollywood film, subverting conventional dichotomies: Europe/Hollywood, art/commerce, elitism/populism, auteur cinema/genre cinema, and so on.

Recent contributions to this debate move toward a broader understanding of cinema practices, incorporating the influences of diaspora, exile, the postnational, postcolonialism and consumers, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> While it is still common to discuss Spanish cinema within a

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of the aims and scope of these approaches are posited in the introductory chapter to the academic journal *Transnational Cinemas* covering the ‘industrial practices, working practices, historical factors, aesthetics, themes and approaches, audience reception, ethical questions, and critical reception’ through topics such as ‘migration, journey and other border crossing’, ‘exilic and diasporic film-making’, ‘indigenous cinema and video and the cinemas of the ethnic minorities’, as well as ‘transnational and postcolonial politics’ (Shaw and Garza 2010: 4). In the same issue, trying to overcome the limited approach of using transnational as a simplistic or empty signifier. Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim propose the term ‘critical transnationalism’ to emphasise the importance of considering ‘the aesthetic, political or economic implications’ of transnational collaborations as well as the imperative of examining the use of this concept ‘in the concrete-specific so that the power dynamic in each case can be fully explored and exposed’ (2010: 10).

national paradigm, it is increasingly common to hear appeals for an approach that is able to encompass cinematic practices from a European or global perspective (Evans et al., 2007; Monterde, 2006).<sup>2</sup> In an issue devoted to ‘Transnational Cinema’, *Cahiers du Cinema España* recognizes the idea of a continuum, acknowledging the increasing multiple cross-breeding of film legacies and influences (Herebero, 2008: 5). In the same dossier, Àngel Quintana remarks on the hybrid nature of Spanish cinema, ‘one of the most thrilling examples of a national cinema adapting to a model where the tensions between the hybridism of cultures and the emergence of the hyper-local coexist’ (2008: 7). Clearly, the increasingly globalized and constantly changing market economy is affecting the audio-visual industry; therefore, it seems appropriate to locate recent Spanish films within this global context. For example, as Núria Triana-Toribio notes, ‘Spanish production companies aspire to finance their projects with overseas money and to make their products internationally available’ (2007: 154).

In order to carry out this task, I will apply descriptive criteria developed by Mike Wayne (2002) in his study of British cinema to the Spanish context.<sup>3</sup> Basing his study primarily on films produced in the 1990s, Wayne devises a model of four non-exclusive categories to categorize national films with an international profile:

1. embedded films
2. disembedded films
3. cross-border films
4. anti-national national films.

While the criteria for including films in the first three categories ‘are a mixture of economic and cultural factors which determine what markets they are primarily pitched at’, the fourth is characterized by the ‘political combativity of the films’ and the questioning of the nation as ‘a site of shared interests and values’ (2002: 40). *Embedded films* are aimed primarily at the national market as a result of budgetary constraints and/or their cultural specificity. In sharp distinction, *disembedded films* ‘have the budgets and the cultural potential to succeed in the American market’ (2002: 42). *Cross-border films* comprise those that can move in the international market, outside America and particularly in Europe. Wayne (2002: 45) includes national art films as those co-productions whose narratives inscribe a certain permeability of

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<sup>2</sup> Núria Triana-Toribio proposes that ‘the first step is to find ways of thinking and writing about national cinema that go beyond the commonsensical one, that interrogate categories such as *Spanishness* while acknowledging their power and resilience’ (2003: 2).

<sup>3</sup> Alejandro Pardo (2007) uses the taxonomies developed by Wayne (2002), and Palacio (1999) to establish a new typology of Spanish international co-productions.

national identities within this category. *Anti-national national films* are films that assess critically the notion of community and national identity. Wayne points out how these films are marked by a contradiction:

[They] are national insofar as they display an acute attunement to the specific social, political and cultural dynamics within the territory of the nation, but they are anti-national insofar as that territory is seen as a conflicted zone of unequal relations of power. (2002: 45)

### **Transnational Auteurs and Genre**

This chapter proposes a re-examination of the relationship between the auteurist tradition and a transnational production model using popular genre. More specifically, it examines one specific generic trajectory: that of the crime thriller. The films discussed are by two directors who both debuted in the first decade of the twenty-first century: Jaime Rosales' *Las horas del día/The Hours of the Day* (2003) and *Tiro en la cabeza/Bullet in the Head* (2008); and Daniel Monzón's *La caja Kovak/The Kovak Box* (2006); and *Celda 211/Cell 211* (2009). These case studies are examined in relation to the following questions.

1. How have these film-makers reworked this genre?
2. Is genre used for purely stylistic reasons, as a commercial tool, or does it serve other purposes?
3. To what extent are the films responding to a change in national and international production networks?

Before moving to the analysis of the four case studies, first, it is worth outlining a definition of the crime thriller and, second, considering how the popular model of genre film-making has increased its weight as a marketing and stylistic tool in contemporary Spanish cinema. It is difficult to define, categorize and differentiate crime films and thrillers as they are inherently hybrid forms, capable of appropriating devices from several genres. Normally, the thriller is characterized as a genre that uses thrills 'which are on one level a simple depiction of danger and violence, and on a second level a vicarious psychological experience' that 'engages the spectator by causing anxiety' (Derry, 1988: 19). Although crime thrillers are all films offering a gripping description of the perpetration of a crime (or a failed crime), distinct

sub-categories can be loosely classified as crime-thrillers: the gangster film focusing on the criminal; the suspense thriller on the victim; or the cop film on the agents of the law.

Rosanna Maule has appraised the ‘repositioning of the film author as a professional and symbolic figure’, paying particular attention to film-makers who relocate themselves as authors ‘outside of the circuits of film production and reception established by arthouse and auteur-informed cinematic traditions’ (2008: 17). Among those directors who explore different forms and genres is Alejandro Amenábar, who is:

a postmodern author, commercially minded within a transnational framework of reception, yet, nonetheless, maintaining a very distinct and culturally over-determined position [whose] preference for the genre film is at the same time a symptom of cultural conditioning and a way to reposition Spanish films within the contemporary film market. (Maule, 2008: 157)

In a similar vein, Jay Beck and Vicente Rodríguez Ortega interrogate the arguments of some Spanish critics, and critique their simplification of the concept of genre and their claim for European art cinema as inherently superior. They also note ‘an inflexible understanding of the concept of national cinema and how genres operate within a process of continuous transnational cross-fertilisation and evolution’ (2008: 12), subsequently proposing a critical model for analysing Spanish cinema by looking into ‘the interrelationships between national cinemas, transnational media flow and genre as discursive frameworks for constructing meaning’ (2008: 18). There is a clear strategy in recent Spanish cinema to engage in a more commercial production model through a genre approach that links Spanish, European, transnational and Hollywood traditions (Herrero, 2007, 2010; Lázaro-Reboll, 2006; Willis, 2008). In what follows, I will examine how two very different, even antithetical, directors have negotiated this complicated terrain of market forces and generic conventions.

### **Jaime Rosales**

The seemingly increasing gap between commercial film-makers and ‘auteur-directors’ is particularly pertinent in relation to Jaime Rosales, who has been categorized by Carlos Losilla as belonging to a group of cineastes who are ‘dissidents’ (2007: 20–21), preoccupied with making low-budget but personal films. Searching for new styles and forms of expression, they are minority film-makers whose works reference a wide range of film

legacies, linking them to an international auteur tradition that is particularly well received on the global festival circuit. Leading the list of this *cine silencioso* (silent cinema) are José Luis Guerín, Javier Rebollo, Marc Recha, Albert Serra and Rosales who, with just four feature films, has achieved the international status of auteur (Hereadero, 2009).

The award-winning psychological thriller *Las horas del día* was Rosales' debut film. After graduating in economics from the ESADE Business School, he won a scholarship to the prestigious international film and television school San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV) in Havana. His international training continued when, in 1999, he received another scholarship to study at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in Sydney. Rosales is an example of an auteur-producer, as *Las horas del día* was produced by In Vitro Films and Fresdeval Films, a company he founded alongside José Maria de Orbe.<sup>4</sup> His directorial debut had a limited impact in terms of cinema-goers, but was very well received by national and international critics (according to the official Spanish Ministerio de Cultura database, <http://www.mcu.es>, the film was seen by 38,858 spectators and grossed €192,078.11 at the domestic box office). It won the Fipresci Award at the 2003 Cannes Festival for the best film presented during the Directors' Fortnight, obtaining international distribution through Bavaria Films. In the same year, the film was also nominated for two Goya Awards (Best New Director and Best Original Script).

Co-written by Rosales and Catalan dramatist Enric Rufas, *Las horas del día* focuses on the activities of a serial killer, Abel, who runs a small clothing shop on the outskirts of Barcelona. His existence is depicted through routine activities. Àlex Brendemühl plays the character with a cool distance that does not allow for any psychological understanding of his actions. Two acts of violence disrupt his monotonous lifestyle: these murderous aggressions are not explained or justified, and there is no moral lesson, no 'social justification'. Rosales has declared that the main theme of *Las horas del día* is '[t]he inability to understand the human being' (cited in Burgos and Torres, 2011: 16). Following the international critical success of *La soledad/Solitary Fragments* (2007), Rosales's third film, *Tiro en la cabeza*, opened simultaneously in Spanish cinemas and at film portal Filmin ([www.filmin.es](http://www.filmin.es)), a new and challenging strategy within the context of the Spanish film industry.<sup>5</sup> The script for the

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<sup>4</sup> The film obtained the backing of the Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals (Catalan Institute of Cultural Industries) and Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts). Catalan Television (TVCa), as well as TVE and Canal + also provided funding.

<sup>5</sup> The actor, director and producer Paco León has successfully applied this model to his *opera prima*, the fake documentary *Carmina o revienta* (2012), by releasing it simultaneously in cinemas, on the Internet and on DVD.

film was written in a week, and it was shot in less than two weeks in San Sebastián and the French region of Les Landes. It is a European co-production between Spanish Freseval Films and Wanda Vision, with the participation of the French company Les Productions Balthazar. This transnational production strategy is also reflected in the film's narrative, based on the attack carried out by ETA in December 2007, when three members of the terrorist group killed two Spanish policemen in the French town of Capbreton.

Rosales's 'golden rule' is to present everything 'with the maximum lack of expression' (2004: 80). *Las horas del día* follows the non-commercial tradition of European art cinema (lack of closure and disruption of classical Hollywood's reliance on cause and effect), as the narrative is constructed around fragments of reality, linked without a particular logic, in order to emphasize Abel's monotone existence. Nevertheless, as Manuel Yáñez Murillo (2006: 378–9) has pointed out, there is a clear, repetitive, internal rhythm in the linking of these scenes using establishing shots and the shot-reverse shot pattern during the conversations. The principles of Rosales' filmic style are already manifested in *Las horas del día*: the display of a sober *mise-en-scène*; austerity in the cinematography; third person point of view; a soundtrack full of silences and a lack of extra-diegetic music, as the film shooting was done only with direct sound; and a clear preference for naturalism in the photography and realism through the use of non-professional actors and real locations. However, the cinematographic treatment is highly stylized, with images often framed by doorways, windows and walls, which locate the viewer as a voyeur. Overall, *Las horas del día* is a carefully constructed film with lofty aims: it embraces a subtle approach to human reality, captured from afar so as to encourage the spectator 'to adopt a critical attitude toward the reality that is presented, as well as the way in which that reality is represented' (Rosales, 2004: 78).

His interest in technical experimentation – demonstrated particularly in *La soledad* through its use of 'polyvision' – is more radical in *Tiro en la cabeza*: filming with a zoom lens to emphasize a distant point of view; the absence of audible dialogue justified as a way of reflecting the lack of dialogue and communication on both political sides (Vanaclocha, 2008); the preference for direct sound; and the alternation of long shots and close-ups.<sup>6</sup> The fictional component of the story is based on a documentary-style recording of the real life of Ion Arretxe, the non-professional actor who plays the lead role; while the non-fiction part –

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<sup>6</sup> In his review of the film for *Cahiers du Cinema España*, José Enrique Monterde (2008) emphasizes Rosales' capacity to combine his ethical approach to the representation of terrorism with formal experimentation. However, this innovative mode was not successful at the domestic box office: the film with an estimated budget of €501,700 was seen by 6189 spectators and grossed just €34,494.32, according to the Ministerio de Cultura database (see <http://www.mcu.es/cine/CE/BBDDPelículas/BBDDPelículasIndex.html>).

the murder scene – is shot with a fictional approach.<sup>7</sup> This hybrid method imbues the feature film with an atmosphere similar to a fake documentary. On the one hand, this way of filming allows the director to move towards his goal of approximating a documentary style, which provides more freedom and a less expensive way of making a film; on the other, this film requires a higher level of implication in order to complete the snapshots that are part of a particular moment in the life of the characters.

*Las horas del día* and *Tiro en la cabeza* are both overt arthouse filmic exercises. While employing the archetypical model of a crime thriller, they subvert generic conventions and expectations through the deliberate use of a slow pace, and the presence of ostensibly empty moments without any obvious emotional or symbolic value. For example, Jordi Costa praises Rosales' capacity for combining 'disturbing scenes with a precise oceanography of tedium' (2006: 149). *Las horas del día* showcases Rosales' personal trademarks: 'emotional distance' through off-camera scenes, particularly the murder of the female taxi-driver; the use of silences; and the lack of time ellipses and use of very long takes, which are generally fixed and provide opportunities to use the frame as an immobile boundary between what the viewer sees and what they do not. In *Tiro en la cabeza*, a plethora of transnational cinephilic resonances can be detected. On the one hand, Rosales' cinematographic approach is reminiscent of Carlos Saura's entomological lens in *La caza/The Hunt* (1966), observing human figures from a distance as well as in close-up;<sup>8</sup> while the treatment of daily routine and the distancing effects applied to the narrative and characters links Rosales' style to Bresson (Torrado Morales and Ródenas, 2009: 181). Rosales uses the thriller genre to establish a transparent framework in which a calculated disaffection allows the stimulation of 'the conscience of the spectator' (Rosales, 2004: 78). As in his *opera prima*, *Tiro en la cabeza* forces a deliberate Brechtian distance from the psychological empathy associated with popular thrillers by eliminating explanations about the characters' personalities, and not including dialogue or voice-over. Again, according to Rosales, the narrative form and style serve to promote a different audience reaction, as the film works toward the 'deactivation of ideologies' (Herederó et al., 2008: 18–19).

Rosales has stressed the paramount importance of the locatedness of spectators within the specific culture in which films are produced. Therefore, his cinema can be clearly

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<sup>7</sup> Ion Arretxe was the art director in Rosales's *La soledad*.

<sup>8</sup> In an interview with *Cahiers du Cinema*, Rosales has declared his desire to combine the distant perspective with close-ups, achieving an image in which the soft focus background 'reinforces the frontality effect' (cited in Herederó et al., 2008: 20).

classified as *embedded films*, as they are conceived, first and foremost, as artistic products linked to the Spanish cultural and social setting. Nevertheless, for Rosales, the best way to achieve success on the national and international levels is to create films that are able to show ‘simultaneously the particular and the universal of our culture in the extreme’ which, in Spanish art, is ‘the essential, the real thing [...] the sincere, devoid of all ornamentation’ (Rosales, 2004: 86).<sup>9</sup> At the same time, *Tiro en la cabeza* is an excellent example of *anti-national national film*, as it criticizes the myth of community (Basque, Catalan, Spanish), questioning the concept of nation and engaging with a critical political and aesthetic position.

### **Daniel Monzón**

Daniel Monzón’s approach, which utilizes a range of genre styles, is quite distinct. After working as a film critic, Monzón debuted as a scriptwriter with *Desvío al paraíso/Shortcut to Paradise* (Herrero, 1994), a thriller shot in English. His *opera prima*, *El corazón del guerrero/Heart of the Warrior* (2000), was an action-fantasy film which proved popular at international festivals, and also achieved a nomination for the Goya Award for Best Film in 2001. The following year, Monzón opted for a hybrid of comedy–action in *El robo más grande jamás contado/The Biggest Robbery Never Told* (2002). The thriller *The Kovak Box* (2004) follows a famous science-fiction writer, David Norton (Timothy Hutton), as he and his fiancée attend a conference on the island of Mallorca. Norton’s fiancée leaps out of her hotel window and subsequently dies in the hospital, at the same time that Silvia (Lucía Jiménez) also jumps from a high window after picking up her phone and hearing the song ‘Gloomy Sunday’, performed by Billie Holiday. A casual encounter between Norton and Silvia leads them to investigate the suicides that are taking place all over the island, alongside the possible connection with Franz Kovak (David Kelly). The film, co-written with Jorge Guerricaechevarría, was a European co-production involving Spanish Castelao Productions (a subsidiary of Grupo Filmax), Estudios Picasso and British Future Film. This English-language thriller with an international cast – American, Irish and Spanish – was clearly aimed at the international marketplace, which was increasingly enthusiastic about Spanish genre film, particularly horror and thriller, as exemplified by the horror-fantasy film launched by

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<sup>9</sup> Rosales proposes the art of Goya, Miró, Chillida, Lorca, Buñuel, Erice, Zulueta and Guerin as examples of the sublime in Spanish cinema.



The Fantastic Factory (part of Grupo Filmax).<sup>10</sup> One of the film's highlights and key selling points was the use of special effects created by Raúl Romanillos and the Catalan company DDT, which was responsible for the visual effects in Guillermo del Toro's *El laberinto del fauno/Pan's Labyrinth* (2006).

Based on the homonymous novel by Francisco Pérez Gandul, and with a script co-written by Daniel Monzón and Jorge Guerricaechevarría, *Celda 211* was co-produced by Spanish Telecinco Cinema, Testimonio Gráfico, Vaca Films Studio and Morena Films, with French production company La Fabrique 2.<sup>11</sup> It received funding from several television channels: Telecinco, AXN, Televisión de Galicia and Canal+.<sup>12</sup> The film follows an eager new prison guard, Juan (Alberto Ammann), who visits the penitentiary the day before he is due to start. As he is being shown about the place, a violent riot breaks out at the same time that he is left knocked unconscious. When he is taken to the prison leader – a notorious inmate, Malamadre (Luis Tosar) – Juan, who is still in his civilian clothes, must pretend to be a prisoner to survive. Competing against Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora* (2009) at the Goya Awards ceremony, *Celda 211* won an impressive total of eight awards, including the categories for Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor; it also achieved international success on the festival circuit. It is significant that the film was presented at the Venice Festival in the section dedicated to auteur cinema, and after public screenings at the Toronto Film Festival, IFC Films purchased the distribution rights for the US market, the film having achieved a certain hybrid status between auteur and genre film-making (Redacción General, 2010).

Both of Monzón's thrillers can be seen as imitations of a Hollywood genre model. *La caja Kovak*, classified by the director as a 'black fable', is a conspiracy thriller with a simple narrative based on the misfortunes of the lead characters as they try to solve the mystery and break free from their labyrinthine and claustrophobic entrapment. Linking the origin of the film to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Monzón declared his intention to create a story in which a horrific real event can seem like part of a Hollywood script. In the press notes, the film-maker clearly points out his desire to build an international project based on genre with an entertaining goal; a type of suspense thriller exemplified by Alfred

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<sup>10</sup> The film was quite successful at the national box office (295,603 spectators, with a gross of €1,599,398 according to the Ministerio de Cultura database), but it only received a direct TV release in the United States.

<sup>11</sup> Telecinco Cinema, Vaca Films and Morena Films, as well as Mod Producciones and Apaches Entertainment, are among the productions companies that systematically establish an international approach in their projects, particularly through the use of genre (horror and thriller).

<sup>12</sup> With an estimated budget of €3.5 million, the film was extremely successful at the national box office: 2,123,338 spectators and a gross of €13,108,595, according to the Ministerio de Cultura database.

Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958), Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (1995) and David Fincher's *Seven* (1995) (Monzón, 2006).

The starting point for Monzón's second thriller is the exact opposite. Pursuing realistic portrayal, Monzón creates a sense of authenticity with a gritty atmosphere. He echoes documentary film-making by casting a mix of professional actors and real inmates, which helps to bring the colloquial dialogue alive. The use of a real, abandoned prison and the projection of scenes through surveillance or CCTV footage (fixed cameras, no editing) alongside TV newsreels, all add credibility to the naturalistic look. Most of the action occurs in the well-lit atrium of the penitentiary, which places the audience in the middle of a riot through fast pacing. Realistic social commentary is prevalent throughout the film, right from the metaphorical opening sequence in which a man (Morao) is seen cutting open his wrists and bleeding into a sink full of water; the death of Morao – left to suffer in cell 211 from an undiagnosed brain tumour – establishes how injustice, corruption and lack of care for inmates are pervasive within the prison system. According to the director, from the outset the film's narrative is reminiscent of 'a Greek tragedy, where a character is in the middle of a very happy moment in his life, and suddenly he makes the wrong choice to go into work one day earlier, where his whole life is ruined' (cited in Kadra, 2011). Monzón skillfully connects the audience with Juan's point of view, so the spectator can understand his actions, his journey into desperation. The film has been generally received in Spain as an American-style action thriller. For example, there can be no doubt that the dialogue and extreme violence (including the ear cutting scene), alongside the use of flashback, are reminiscent of Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). It appeals to a demographic within the domestic market that enjoys Hollywood cinema and can respond to the specific national elements, most notably the micro-social groups represented in the film or the three ETA terrorists held hostage by Malamadre to negotiate better conditions for the inmates. However, overall the film relies on more universal values, such as the affective dimension developed by the complex friendship that grows between Malamadre and Juan, and in particular the notions of masculinity and violence on which it is predicated.

Both *The Kovak Box* and *Celda 211* draw their cultural reference points from every point on the geographical scale, from the very local to the regional, up through the national and then to the global. In terms of production models, both films have elements that allow them to be included in the *disembedded* and *cross-borders* categories proposed by Wayne: they were conceived as 'quality products' aimed at a European audience but with potential for further international exploitation, including the US market, as they draw on North American

filmic references. Overall, *The Kovak Box* is a good example of the twenty-first century international co-production model which is ‘financed by global capital, featuring international casts, shot in several countries and often several languages, and foregrounding the hybrid status of their production contexts in both their formal construction and narrative content’ (Baer and Long, 2004: 150). If *The Kovak Box* fits more into the ‘post-national’ trend that Martine Danan defines as ‘the downplaying or erasure of cultural references unknown or damaging to foreign spectators’ (2000: 356), then the spectacle, themes and geographical settings of *Celda 211* more successfully combine national, international and post-national elements at the textual and production levels. It self-consciously connects nations and cultures, rather than simply erasing local specificity.<sup>13</sup>

In *Celda 211* the director juxtaposes aesthetic codes from two traditions: European social realism (images and stories of social deprivation) and the Hollywood hybrid genre (crime film, thriller, gangster, western and prison film).<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting how changes in the European distribution market are affecting the programming of arthouse cinemas which are opting for a less adventurous approach, with an markedly increased predilection for genre films. This fact was reflected in 2010 at the European Film Awards, where many of the nominees were thrillers, including Monzón’s *Celda 211*, Roman Polanski’s *The Ghost Writer* (2010) and Oliver Assayas’ *Carlos* (2010) (Barracough, 2010). *The Kovak Box* and *Celda 211* both showcase another prominent feature of international co-production: ‘their aesthetic and thematic concern with contingency, chance, and coincidence, and with the lines between reality and fiction’ (Baer and Long, 2004: 150). In addition, *Celda 211* can be seen as an example of an *anti-national national film* through the amorality of state institutions and particularly the ETA subplot. It has strong local, regional and national cultural references, placing the prison as a miniature reproduction of a fractured society through the display of social and political and cultural forces in conflict (the Basque and Castilian languages, corruption at different levels, immigration, gang territory, and so forth).

## Conclusion

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<sup>13</sup> The successful international appeal of *Cell 211* is reflected in the fact that, at the time of writing, it has attracted the interest of Hollywood. Paul Haggis has been slated to rewrite the script for a Hollywood adaptation, with Russell Crowe in the leading role.

<sup>14</sup> *Celda 211* has been linked to John Woo’s *Face off* (1997), Oliver Hirschbiegel’s *Das experiment/The Experiment* (2001) and TV series such as *Prison Break* (2005–09) (Petrus 2009).

This chapter has argued that the strategies developed within Spanish cinema to meet the challenges of globalization result in texts that open up hybrid transnational avenues. The four case studies raise deep and relevant questions about how Spanish cinema is responding to the contemporary cultural and political dynamics of European and Hollywood cinema. Rosales' and Monzón's films both explore national and transnational strategies: co-productions financed by national and international support; distribution of films through exhibition in festivals and on the Internet; quality films that achieve national and international recognition through positive audience response; and hybrid products that fit in both the genre and auteur film categories.

Nevertheless, through analysing the generic conventions of Rosales' *Las horas del día* and *Tiro en la cabeza* in comparison to Monzón's *The Kovak Box* and *Celda 211*, it is clear that both film-makers adopt the genre approach with antithetical intentions. Monzón relies on emotions to interpolate the audience in narratives brimming with suspense and tension, and his evolution as a film-maker goes in tandem with some of the most significant trends in recent Spanish cinema, moving from English to Spanish language film, and from fantasy towards a realistic model while maintaining a clear generic identity – in this case, that of the crime thriller. On the contrary, Rosales' films are 'anti-thrillers', not because they present an opposition to the thriller, but because they start with the basic conceit of the film thriller yet are not constructed using the usual generic components. His idea of focusing on thriller is to drive the narrative, and then opt for a cinematography that breaks with the psychological empathy associated with popular thrillers, looking for an active response on the part of the spectator. Rosales' directorial efforts are predominantly 'national' films that achieve international projection through their capacity for presenting essentially local stories without *costumbrismo* (local colour).

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