

# PORTRAYING HOMOSEXUALITY IN SPANISH FILM AND TELEVISION DURING THE FRANCO REGIME

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«je savais que le bien comme le mal est affaire de routine,  
que le temporaire se prolonge, que l'extérieur s'infiltré au-  
dedans, et que le masque, à la longue, devient visage.»

*Mémoires d'Hadrien*

M. Yourcenar

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the long Franco regime, both movie theaters and movies in Spain were areas of longing, places for furtive encounters, impossible desires and stern warnings to everyone whose sexuality, regardless of orientation, ran outside the narrow margins that religious morals assigned to human sexuality in an absolutely Catholic way, that is—pardon the diaphora and the paradox—universal. Sexuality had to be heterosexual, connubial, reproductive and monogamous or, otherwise, damned, although the prevailing machismo tolerated that monogamy could be questioned with relative indulgence in the case of the male.

During the moral crusade of the regime, certain cultural products aroused special concern, film and later television being worthy of particularly attentive zeal on the part of censorship mechanisms, both civilian and religious, as the two coexisted, each with its own legal identity and

institutions<sup>1</sup>, nourishing pages of anecdotes that nowadays could seem naive, but at the time constituted a true nightmare for those who wanted to discuss heterodox realities (ZUBIAUR, 2010). The problem was that control was exerted subjectively, in line with the individual criteria of the censor, in the context of concepts as vague as “respect for good habits.” There was no detailed and explicit code like the American Hays Code that would have allowed writers and producers to anticipate the censor’s judgment; the closest thing was a 1950s code published by the Episcopal Commission on Orthodoxy and Morality (Comisión Episcopal de Ortodoxia y Moralidad) aimed at providing moral guidance to Catholic devotees<sup>2</sup>, but it did not necessarily coincide with the guidelines of civil censorship, even though the Catholic Church was represented in its bodies.

This lack of definition triggered a specific demand by film professionals in what was called the *Salamanca Conversations* (Conversaciones de Sala-

manca), which asked for “clearly determined matters and unapproachable subjects, and to provide enough space to make it possible to create a kind of cinema that could address important subjects”<sup>3</sup> as well as the request that censorship only be practiced by the docent Church and that its judgment could not be modified *a posteriori* by another official institution (GALÁN, 1989: 226-227).

This combination of civil and religious control determined that the “visible” representation of the LGBTIQ issue in any of its facets, variations or details, could only flourish on the screens of both movies and television under very precise and controlled conditions.

The difference between film and television is essential to the content of this paper and explains why there is a substantial difference in the volume of anecdotes concerning each of them regarding the censorship system: while cinema was an industrial activity that, although deserving protection by the regime, was essentially a private initiative, television was exclusively a public media, so its control, at least in theory, was guaranteed.

Through these pages we will review the details of LGTBIQ representation, first in movies and then in television during the Franco dictatorship. Finally, in a metadiscursive analysis, we will address the different ways of looking at that period regarding the LGBTIQ issue from the perspective of the democratic period.

## 2. REPRESENTATIONAL MODES OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN SPANISH FILMS DURING THE DICTATORSHIP PERIOD: CONCEALING, EROTIC CINEMA, AND “SISSY COMEDY”

Homosexuality learned over decades to live along the edges of others’ stories, to cross-dress its gaze in the vestments of love, indifference, desires and passions which resembled it to the point of attaining an affinity that at times became identity itself, hence the quote that heads this article. The

gay and lesbian experience drew for years on representations that, even being cynically wrong and clearly unflattering, were the only “authorized” discursive source for identity construction.

Here we shall not dwell on explaining the different representational modes —concealing, vindicating, erotic, decentered and integrational— that have appeared so far regarding the LGBTIQ issue in both Spanish films and TV, as there is a lot of written content around the subject<sup>4</sup>, to which we will add a *traditional mode*.

Until the arrival of democracy there were only two ways of addressing the LGBTIQ issue in film: 1) to do it in a way in which the details about the nature of the representational object were not totally explicit or in which one had to appeal to extra-discursive references to relate to them, which falls into what we have been calling the concealing mode, as in movies such as *Diferente* (Luis María Delgado, 1961) or *La Maldición de los Kranstein* (Marcelo Matrocínque, 1964); or 2) in cases where it was recognizable, to make the representation faithful to the traditional stereotypes, that is, a laughable or perverse character, totally recognizable but whose visibility was, on one hand, relatively reassuring and, on the other, divested of any indication of moral and social equity. All of this would constitute a mode that could be called the *traditional mode*, in the sense that representations are in line with the clichés and stereotypes traditionally related to homosexual visibility in society.

In the case of women, the procedure took an unexpected route owing to the lack of a traditionally “laughable” figure as the driving force of comic situations, and since the stereotype of a masculinized woman was far from having the same hilarious impact, the perverse slope was chosen so that the “visible” lesbian became a woman driven by unrestrained appetites, the epitome of which would be a vampire. This narrative displacement banished her to a chimerical, unreal universe, to a non-existence outside of fictional plots, and there-



Visual expression of homosexual desire and guilt in the movie *Diferente* (Luis María Delgado, 1962)

fore was even reassuring in its own way, as long as its perversion was not a threat outside the universe of narrative development. The vampire stereotype remained for years in the filmography of several countries and became a category in itself, providing significant stories far beyond the time-frame addressed.

In *Diferente*, the references to the nature of the main character were encoded as alleged homosexual standards of culture, with nods to the work of Oscar Wilde, Lorca and Freud, the cult of the body, the love of dance or resorting to symbolic-type Freudian references to drilling jackhammers, swelling or standing forearms, fingers pushing “the right” buzzers, etc. Picture 1 shows the moment in which Alfredo, after contemplating a jackhammer worker with fascination and desire, comes back to the house of an employee's spouse who was unsuccessfully suggestive to him several sequences earlier. After the last shot of the worker, the tip of the jackhammer fades with Alfredo's finger on the ring bell, indicating the sexual nature of what comes next: Alfredo goes in and the woman closes the door with a delighted smile. Note that, even when the woman has already opened the door, his finger is still on the buzzer.

*Diferente* manages to overcome censorship wisely by combining its flirting with the limits of what is accepted in terms of representation without exceeding them and a seamless moralizing message in which the main character will end up drowned, humiliated and visibly sorry. In the Board of Classification report, D. Alberto Reig [Gonzalbes], after commending the aesthetic and technical aspects of the film, observed that “[...] as far as the ‘difference’ is concerned, that’s another issue”<sup>5</sup> but “adaptations” were not recommended<sup>6</sup>. To complete the alibi, the closing of the synopsis attached to the file indicated that “Alfredo was evicted from his house by his older brother. In his loneliness, he begs God’s forgiveness”<sup>7</sup>. As Baltasar Gracián said: enter conceding and come out winning. In this way the movie anticipates the spirit of the new Ministerial Order of February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1963 in which considerably more explicit film censorship rules were handed down: “9. It is forbidden: 1) to represent sexual perversions as the axis of the plot and even as secondary, unless the latter is essential to the development of the action and has a clear and prevailing moral consequence.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1978, once democracy was established, the movie was re-released without changing the original duration but adding to the promotional material the very explicit slogan: “Why being homosexual is being Different!”.

In *La maldición de los Karnstein*, the movie that probably merited an honor similar to *Diferente* but related to lesbianism, homosexual references are literally wiped off the map and there is nothing left in the film narrative of the story that served as inspiration, *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu (1872). It wasn't until 1972 that *Carmilla* “returned” to Spanish cinema and this time much more explicitly, embodied under the anagram of Mircala in *La novia ensangrentada* by Vicente Aranda.

In *La novia ensangrentada*, lesbianism is presented as a perverse and malignant condition; in the words of Irene Pelayo (2011: 285) “the bite

has an explicitly sexual power over the sufferer. The immortal power inherent to the vampires is transmitted through the bite, an action similar to kiss, through which vampire attributes are transmitted. After this bite, the victim will fall into the biter's web and into vampirism in general. In the film, this bite takes on the meaning of the female vampire initiating her victim into the world of sex."<sup>9</sup> Traditionally "the essence of homosexuality as a predatory weakness imbues the representation of homosexuals in horror movies"<sup>10</sup>(Russo, 1987: 49, translated by MELERO, 2010: 53).

As in the case of *Diferente*, the strategies operating on vampire representations are more or less subtle, depending on who is looking at it: on one hand, the vampire synthesis reduces the lesbian issue to a matter of bites which are simply the narrative sublimation of the sexual encounters of the main characters (PELAYO, 2011: 286) and, on the other hand, the lesbian construction did not establish in that period any commitment towards the construction of the identity of the social group but rather locates women in the direction of satisfying a heterosexual male point of view where feminine encounters are part of the erotic social imaginary. However, lesbian vampirism challenges the limits of what is acceptable to the extent that it questions the male presence as a source of sexual satisfaction by narratively introducing strong women, empowered and sexually self-sufficient, which is why the only possible ending is the death of the main characters.

These movies use terror as pretext not devoid of a certain eroticism, and even if it was not considered totally correct, it could be accepted by the censors as long as it remained within the limits of decency. The footage of *Las Vampiras* (Jesús Franco, 1973), for example, was cut by 15 minutes because of the censorship requirements to cut out any excessively generous or violent shots (PELAYO, 2011: 54). These boundaries were to finally blow up after dictatorship was over, leading to the erotic mode that will be characteristic in the bulk of



*Diferente* (Luis María Delgado: 1962) movie posters: from premiere in 1962 and re-release after Francoism in 1978

lesbian cinema during the period of the Transition; vampires would persist, but directors such as Jesús Franco were to take their erotic aspect to the extreme.

The political implications of these strategies could not be more obvious, but Beatriz Gimeno clarifies them and, even though her text refers to the lesbian in advertising messages, it is perfectly suitable for our discussion: "In her [the lesbian in advertising messages], the lesbian identity has disappeared and has been transformed into a reflection, into a still picture that allows capitalist patriarchy to exploit male anxiety by transforming a threatening political identity into a sexual fantasy [...]"<sup>11</sup>(GIMENO, 2005: 297).

Another of the pretexts that allowed homosexual characters to appear in movies during Francoism was to provoke laughter. To trigger hilarity has traditionally been the function reserved for homosexual male characters in any kind of popular discourse: jokes, novels, plays, and so on. It is therefore not surprising that film and television took advantage—and continue to do so—of the narrative gold mine that male/female misunderstanding provides. *No desearás al vecino del 5º* (Ramón Fernández, 1970)

is an impossible hybrid between “sex-celtiberian comedy” and “sissy comedy,” and that was probably the secret of its success; in the words of Román Gubern (1981: 267): “a hypocritical agreement was established between salaciousness as a commercial attraction and its moral repression”<sup>12</sup>.

Extending that affirmation slightly, the move of *No desearás al vecino del 5º* consists in denying anything shown: the issue of divorce is raised, but denied; adultery is praised at the same time that its ravages are exposed; the issue of premarital sex is raised—for a good cause, of course—but finally the bride’s honor is respected and, in the end, a homosexual character who is represented as the axis of the plot eventually ends up being an undercover Casanova who, in fact, does what is needed to survive.

Not without problems, it was squeezed through the filter of the dictatorship, among other things because the representation of *the poofster* is funny and reassuring to the extent that it is foreseeable, notorious and his expression is the antithesis of the heterosexual male, so there is no possible room for confusion, something Albert Mira (2008: 78-79) defines as an “investment paradigm”: “In the sissy, desire and love are ridiculous or pathetic, rarely are they taken seriously. By emphasizing the external aspect, any emotional depth disappears, the dangerous specter of homoeroticism vanishes”<sup>13</sup>.

During the dictatorship, despite the conflicts, the several schools of thought within the government itself or even the disagreements between civil and religious authorities about what censorship should or should not accept, the only access channels to a homosexual point of view in cinema were, thus, to accept a caricature—neither benevolent nor naïve—or to enter into the game of hiding and taking the blame and the punishment as uncomfortable and unavoidable baggage. However, there was a third possibility: to appropriate storylines and plots. Moralizing melodramas that fed Spanish billboards for years had sufficiently broad

plot scenarios to have a genuine process of projection and affinity between spectator and characters, nearly always female, a plot appropriation strategy that would explain the existence of genuine gay legends, such as Sara Montiel. She embodied social and morally questionable heroines, such as María Luján in *El último cuplé* (Juan de Orduña, 1957), and because of the way they lived their romantic relationships, they were just like their homosexual spectators, who, precisely from that parallelism, could engage with plots that initially did not target them. As García Rodríguez (2008: 96-97) asserts: “the figure of the folkloric dancer dressed in ‘faralaes’ is a distinctive Spanish gay icon and was part of the social imaginary of some homosexuals from that time”<sup>14</sup> María Donapetry (2006: 78-9) addresses the issue of appropriation—what she calls “against-the-grain readings”—<sup>15</sup> regarding the representation of the figure of Queen Joanna the Mad in *Locura de Amor* (Juan de Orduña, 1948): “The combination of the words ‘queen,’ ‘crazy’ and ‘love’ became fuel that was relatively easy to re-inscribe in the popular speech of that moment”<sup>16</sup>.

This dialectic between the discourse of the oppressor and that of the oppressed is clear in Barthes’ observation, captured equally by Donapetry, in regard to myth: “The oppressed person is nothing, there is only one discourse to be found in him, the one of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his word is rich, multifaceted, flowing, has every possible level of dignity: he alone controls the meta-language. The oppressed person builds the world, has only an active language, transitive (political); the oppressor conserves it, his speech is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is myth; the language of one tends to transform, the language of the other tends to perpetuate.”<sup>17</sup> (BARTHES, 1999: 133).

Taking a step further, *queer* readings were made of movies that had been aligned *a priori* with Franco’s ideology, such as *Harka* (Carlos Arévalo, 1941) or *¡A mí la legión!* (Juan de Orduña, 1942) (AMADOR CARRETERO, 2010).



### 3. REPRESENTATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN SPANISH TV FICTION DURING THE DICTATORSHIP: TABOOS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

If cinema found slots, though meager and narrow, through which to avoid some censorship, it was very complicated for television due to its own mainstream nature and the lack of offer during that period. It was during the transitional period to democracy when this medium began to timidly open up to these subjects and representations through programs such as the report broadcast by the weekly news programme, *Informe Semanal* (TVE 1: 1973-), on “Homosexuales, aquí y ahora” [Homosexuals, here and now] from 1981, or the airing of an episode of the film and discussion program called *La clave* (TVE 2: 1976-85) dedicated to homosexuality in 1983. Furthermore, homosexuality in television during the period of the dictatorship is a topic that has been only scantily researched (GONZÁLEZ DE GARAY, 2012; LLAMAS, 1997; MELERO SALVADOR, 2013), so we will outline the few references to examples of homosexuality found in TV fiction during the Franco dictatorship.

As in film, the first examples were strongly stereotyped and the characters were episodic. On one hand, the examples of episodic characters whose homosexuality was suggested through an exaggerated mannerism of gesture and ambiguous dialogs stand out. This representational mode is analogous to the concealing mode in movies (ALFEO, 1997: 34-35). That is, a way of suggesting the characters' homosexuality through elliptical extra-discursive references.

The first allusions recorded (MELERO SALVADOR, 2013: 505) appeared in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE 1: 1967), a program of paradoxical liberal vocation in a strongly controlled media that “reveals the difficult balancing act of the dictatorship” (GOMEZ ALONSO & PALACIO, 2006: 33), in a story about the history of censorship in which the

censors did not allow them to use this exact term. First of all, during a sketch about ancient Rome and its supposed debauchery, a group of people are seen drinking and caressing each other. Among them we can see two women who while hugging are sharing a bunch of grapes (13 min. 45 s.). Thus, this first reference to homosexuality is framed within a context of perversion and vice; however, it was narrated with the fine irony that ridiculed the ‘Female League against Frivolity,’ which was the thread running through the story



Up. Allusion to lesbianism in ancient Rome in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE 1: 1967)

Down. Homoeroticism in a sketch set in Middle Ages in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE 1: 1967)

and, which, by the way, merits a study from the gender perspective.

Another glimpse of homoerotism can be found in the Middle Ages sketch which shows a striptease seen by, among others, two men that are clearly hugging affectionately until they notice what they are doing and shy away from each other (19 min. 42 s.). These kinds of misunderstandings with comical intention were to be the pillars of so-called 'sissy comedy' (MELERO SALVADOR, 2010: 127-180).

The sixteenth century is then defined by the Lecturer (played by Irene Gutiérrez Caba) as "the golden age of theater and the golden age of modesty," to the extent that, as the narrator herself indicates, women were not even allowed to go on stage. We then witness the representation of Romeo and Juliet at the climax of which a kiss takes place between the two lovers. With a sought-after hilarious effect, the reverse angle shows that Juliet is being played by José Luis Coll (a very famous Spanish comedy actor), revealing the irony that is the result of the inconsistency between the praise of the censorial Lecturer and the homosexual kiss that can be seen on the screen. Even though it is the result of misogyny and is not being interpreted as a homosexual act *per se*, the moment became a representative milestone that would take many years to be repeated in national fictional television; in fact, there is no record of any homosexual kiss, with characters that clearly define their sexual orientation as such, until *La huella del crimen* (TVE 1: 1985) episode 5 (#1x05, El crimen del cadáver descuartizado, Ricardo Franco, TVE 1: 1985). In the next two theatrical extracts, from *Othello* and *Hamlet*, men perform the two female characters as well.

When the story gets to seventeenth century France we note, on one hand, the artificial mannerism of almost every man at the dance and, on the other hand, a homosexual misunderstanding is shown when one of the "precious" (as they are



Up. Romeo kisses Julieta, played by José Luis Coll, in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE I: 1967)

Middle. Effeminate french characters from 17th century in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE I: 1967)

Down. Comical attempted homosexual misunderstanding in *Historia de la frivolidad* (Jaime de Armiñán & Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, TVE I: 1967)

named in the film credits) winks and the other thinks that it refers to him, gets surprised and the first man denies it when suddenly the camera focuses on a woman who winks again (30 min. 08 s.)

—another misunderstanding that reinforces the traditional use of homosexuality (masculine) as a comic element.

Another example of elided references to homosexuality can be found in the fourth episode of the first season (#1x04, *Aquí durmió Carlos III*, Antonio Drove, TVE 1: 1977) of *Curro Jiménez* (Antonio Larreta, TVE 1: 1976-78) in which the affected gestures of one of the characters indicate a hidden homosexuality.

When this character, named Don Félix, sees a Muslim ambassador's wife who is also staying at the same inn and who is in fact El Estudiante (José Sancho) in costume, he says that she is very hairy, smokes cigars and is a bit weird, but has a "strange charm that I cannot explain". At the end

of the episode the characters end up under the effects of opium. It is at that moment when Don Félix, looking at a carnation, claims out loud that maybe his life has been a mistake to then point out smiling that he is happy to realize it and starts caressing and chasing El Estudiante in costume.

This again provides an example of the concealing mode in homosexual representation founded in misunderstanding and cross-dressing and very present in theatrical tradition, folklore and film.

A further example in which extra-discursive references are needed to understand the possible homosexuality of a character occurs in *Entre visillos* (TVE 1: 1974), in particular in the eleventh episode of the series (#1x11, Miguel Picazo, TVE 1: 1974). This is an adaptation of the 1957 novel by Carmen Martín Gaité and Nadal prize winner about the routine and tedious life of a group of women in a Spanish provincial capital in the 1950s. The book makes it clear that the character Teresa is divorced and a lesbian. The TV series



Up. El Estudiante (José Sancho) and the one-off character Don Félix (Emiliano Redondo) are involved in an homosexual misunderstanding in *Curro Jiménez* (Antonio Larreta, TVE 1: 1976-78) (#1x04, *Aquí durmió Carlos III*, Antonio Drove, TVE 1: 1977)

Down. Carmen Martín Gaité made a cameo in *Entre visillos* (TVE 1: 1974) (#1x11, Miguel Picazo, TVE 1: 1974) playing a character who has an affective attitude towards Teresa (Sonsolés Benedicto), a character portrayed as lesbian in the novel





removes any reference to the character's sexual orientation, performed by Sonsoles Benedicto, but she is shown becoming closer to another character, a cameo played by Carmen Martín Gaité herself, where they drink and talk affectionately.

Within this concealing representational mode, several examples were to show up later, during the democratic period. Such was the case of the series *Anillos de oro* (TVE 1: 1983) in 1983, written by Ana Diosdado and directed by Pedro Masó, which addressed the homosexual issue through the episodic plot in the seventh episode (#1x07, *A pescar y a ver al Duque*, Pedro Masó, TVE 1: 1983).

cultural level [...] and from a broken home —usually the paternal figure is missing— with which he maintains a favorable relationship”<sup>18</sup>.

The prevailing social taboo regarding homosexuality is reflected in the continual use of euphemisms (delicate, sensible) to refer to the sexual condition of the character. In fact, in the aforementioned episode not only do the words vanish, but the images as well. When Rita (Queta Claver), the servant, give us to understand that she surprises Arturo having sex with one of his employees, no image of the two men is shown; however, the spectator only sees the servant's face of astonishment as she runs out



The picture of a homosexual relationship is denied to the spectator showing only the horror face of the servant finding out in *Anillos de oro* (TVE 1: 1983) (#1x07, *A pescar y a ver al Duque*, Pedro Masó, TVE 1: 1983)

The episode relates the story of Arturo (Tony Isbert), a man from the upper class in his thirties whose mother, on her deathbed, makes him promise to get married. He is portrayed as an extremely shy, fragile, and sensitive person who has always been by his mother's side, and the father figure is missing. His profile coincides with the major structural characteristics that defined homosexual characters in films, as studied by Juan Carlos Alfeo Álvarez (1997: 295): “a single individual, between 19 and 30 years old, who pays attention to his personal appearance [...], situated in a high or middle-high social class and with a high

of the room followed seconds later by Arturo himself, who comes out of the bedroom getting dressed up and followed by his lover. Hence, no verbal or visual verification of the character's homosexuality is provided, even though in both plot and allusions it could not be more clear, which suits the characteristics of the concealing representational mode.

In conclusion, homosexuality in Spanish TV fiction during Franco's dictatorship was forbidden by censorship, and only through ambiguous situations and extra-discursive references can some examples lead to a queer reading.

#### 4. THE DIACHRONIC LOOK: HOMOSEXUALITY IN FRANCOISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEMOCRACY

How homosexuality during the dictatorship was represented in the period following it, in other words, during the democratic period that started in 1975 and still prevails, is in fact a very unique and interesting case of analysis. Both in cinema and in television there have been several titles set in the dictatorial period that include the homosexual issue in different ways.

On one hand, some biopics and other productions that introduced prominent historical figures among their characters can be highlighted. Here we would include productions such as *Lorca, muerte de un poeta* (TVE 1: 1987-88), *A un dios desconocido* (Jaime Chávarri, 1977), *Las cosas del querer* (Jaime Chávarri, 1989), *Las cosas del querer 2* (Jaime Chávarri, 1995), *El cónsul de Sodoma* (Sigfrid Monleón, 2009) or *Sin límites* (Little ashes, Paul Morrison, 2008). This focus on great men of letters, singers or painters connects with what Llamas (1997: 72) denominates “the Elton John factor”: “[t]he new authorized gays [...] are often examples of recognized excellence”<sup>19</sup>.

On one hand, television, which at the end of 70s and 80s showed a tendency to produce literary adaptations (*Cañas y barro* [TVE 1: 1978], *Fortunata y Jacinta* [TVE 1: 1980], *Los gozos y las sombras* [TVE 1: 1982], etc.), as well as biopics of distinguished figures [*Cervantes* (Eugenio Martín, TVE 1: 1981), *Ramón y Cajal: Historia de una voluntad* (TVE 2: 1982), *Goya* (TVE 1: 1985), etc.], addressed the figure of Federico García Lorca at the hand of Juan Antonio Bardem in *Lorca, muerte de un poeta*. According to Manuel Palacio (2005: 154), “it was about creating symbolic mythologies based on connecting the past with the social time and space of the present”<sup>20</sup>. These were series characterized by an unvaried tone “somewhere between giving voice to the defeated and settling a score with the victors” (PALACIO, 2005: 161). In this con-

text, addressing Lorca’s homosexuality worked as another symbol of freedom of speech. However, the series, which won the Montecarlo Festival critics’ choice award in 1988, showed sentimental homosexual relationships that were to a large extent suggested rather than explicit. Lorca’s attraction to Dalí is insinuated, although it is clearly shown in the film *Sin límites*, and his relationship with Emilio Aladrén and Rafael Rodríguez Rapún is narrated. In this respect, it is not a particularly radical narration and the dialogue that comes closest to that takes place in fourth episode (#1x04, *El Llanto* 1929-35, Juan Antonio Bardem, TVE 1: 1987) when Lorca, faced with Cipriano Rivas Cherif’s amazement that Lorca “had never been with a woman,” claims: “I have only known men, and you know that sissies make me laugh, I enjoy their womanly obsession with washing,

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ironing and sewing, putting on makeup, dressing in skirts, speaking with feminine gestures and expressions. But I don’t like them. Your idea of just knowing women isn’t normal, nor is mine. Normality is love without limits, but for that we would need a revolution, a new moral, a moral of absolute freedom. And that was what beautiful old Walt Whitman was seeking”. This disdain of what is effeminate will be taken up again by the series *El ministerio del tiempo* (Pablo Olivares & Javier Olivares, TVE 1: 2015) in its eighth episode (#1x08, *La leyenda del tiempo*, Marc Vigil, TVE 1: 2015) when the main characters move to the Residencia de Estudiantes in 1924. There they

establish a relationship, among others, with Lorca himself (performed by Ángel Ruiz) who claims “I won’t deny that I like men, but I hate swishes, pansies and effeminacy” (28 min. 30 s.). Even Julián’s character (Rodolfo Sancho) is considered homosexual because he hugs Lorca. The same episode tells of a love affair between one of the main characters, Irene (Cayetana Guillén Cuervo), and actress Rosita Díaz Gimeno (Mar del Hoyo), Juan Negrín’s daughter-in-law.

Lorca is probably the most important historical homosexual figure in Spain, and was included as well in the plot of *A un dios desconocido* (Jaime Chávarri, 1977). In this film, the main character, José García (performed by Héctor Alterio who won that year the best actor award at San Sebastián International Film Festival) has a frequent relationship with Pedro (Jose Joaquin Boza), the friend in turn of an adolescent poet that will be soon identified as Federico García Lorca. In fact, in that movie “Oda a Walt Whitman” from *Poeta en Nueva York* (Poet in New York) is recited, as it will also be later in *Lorca, muerte de un poeta*, thus shaping an element of national cultural gay tradition. Outstanding aspects of this representation of homosexuality are, on one hand, that José’s sexual orientation “seems to be a state which blocks any door to hope” and, on the other, that it “shows the first representation of an act of a sexual nature between two men: a kiss between José and Miguel”<sup>21</sup> (ALFEO, 1997: 57).

Along this road towards a more explicit representation of Lorca’s homosexuality, the movie *Sin límites* can be highlighted, a Spanish-British production which addresses the tumultuous relationship between Lorca (Javier Beltrán) and Dalí (Robert Pattinson). The film shows how despite the painter’s reservations and in an anguished way, their relationship is manifested in kisses and even an attempt at sexual contact.

National film production became interested as well in the figure of the important Spanish man of letters, Jaime Gil de Biedma (performed by Jor-



The rekindling of young love in *80 Egunean* (José María Goenaga y Jon Garaño, 2010)

di Mollá), through the movie *El consul de Sodoma*. Not without controversy (INTXAUSTI, 2010; RUIZ MANTILLA, 2010) the film relates in a very explicit way the poet’s intricate sexual evolution as well as homosexual exclusion by both sanctimonious Francoist society and the resistance (illustrated by his exclusion from the Communist Party).

To finalize this review of audiovisual productions that approached important homosexual historical figures during Franco’s regime we focus on the case of Miguel Molina, as portrayed by director Jaime Chávarri in both parts of *Las cosas del querer*. Both can be included in the de-centered representational mode as “homosexuality does not constitute the main focus in the development of the plot”<sup>22</sup> (ALFEO, 1997: 42). However, in the second part (six years later than the first one, 1989 to 1995) “the homosexuality issue is much more defined”<sup>23</sup> (ALFEO, 1997: 101) and three types of homosexual characters are represented: the uninhibited funny man, the naïve man in love and the passionate one who does not accept his condition.

In short, it can be observed how a large part of the diachronic look at homosexuality during Francoism was sustained by recovering some of the important figures in the Arts. In this regard we should note the absence of women and of representatives of other fields such as science, economics or politics.

In another vein, Agustí de Villaronga is a director whose filmography has repeatedly tackled the homosexuality issue: from *Tras el cristal* (Agustí de Villaronga, 1987) to *99.9* (Agustí de Villaronga, 1997) or *Aro Tolbukhin* (Agustí de Villaronga, 2002) and the ones set in Franco's dictatorship, such as *El mar* (Agustí de Villaronga, 2000) or *Pa Negre* (Agustí de Villaronga, 2010). Auteur filmmaker of "cruel movies" through which "evil circulates" (PEDRAZA, 2007: 6) and in which "we usually find characters generally complex in the role of child corrupter" (GORDI, 2011: 54). This topic, child abuse during Franco's regime, was also addressed in *La mala educación* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2004) through its recreation of a case of pederasty at a Catholic school in the 1960s.

The dramatic treatment is also chosen for *Electroshock* (Juan Carlos Claver, 2006), a tv-movie based on real events which narrates a love story between two teachers in the last years of Franco's dictatorship, one of which is sent to a psychiatric facility and forced to get electro-shock treatment. The tendency in movies with homosexual characters to show parents who hold empathetic or rejectionist attitudes according to their child's gender continues in this film. Thus, gays usually have unrelenting fathers and more understanding mothers while it is the other way round with lesbian characters, as the movie depicts.

The prize-winning film *80 Egunean* (José María Goenaga & Jon Garaño, 2010) also narrates a love story between two women with the repressive context of the dictatorship as background. Two old friends meet again in their maturity and

their youthful feelings start to rekindle. The film shows, subtly and undramatically, a repressive environment (both former and current), although in the second case it is endogenous rather than exogenous, as it arises from one of the main characters "exploring the persistence of homophobically produced historical inhibitions and prohibitions" (PERRIAM, 2013: 39).

The memory of a youthful love in the late stage of life is also the starting point in *En la ciudad sin límites* (Antonio Hernández, 2002). It contains a mixture of Franco's political repression (clandestine communism) and social repression of sexuality as exemplified by Marie's character (Geraldine Chaplin), who reported her husband's male lover, and Max himself (Fernando Fernán Gómez), who regrets not having lived the love of his youth.

Tragicomic is the tone chosen by *Madre amadísima* (Pilar Tavora, 2009) to tell the story of Alfredo (Ramón Rivero), a man who recalls his life marked by an abusive father, a very close relationship with his mother and his manifest effeminacy, which causes him several problems in the repressive environment of a small village in the last years of Francoism.

More recently, the issue of homosexuality during Franco's dictatorship has been addressed on television through *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, Antonio Onetti & Rodolf Sirera, TVE 1: 2005-12), *Cuéntame* (Miguel Ángel Bernardeau, TVE 1: 2001-) and *El ministerio del tiempo*. Throughout the long time setting of the first two, several homosexual characters have appeared: Sito Robles (Jaime Menéndez), Felipe (Xosé Manuel Esperante), Ubaldo Ramos (Roberto San Martín), Richi (Víctor Massán), César (Miguel Cubero), Beatriz de la Palma (Sandra Collantes), Matilde (Bárbara de Lema), Teresa (Carlota Olcina) and Ana (Marina San José) in *Amar en tiempos revueltos*, as well as Julián (Roger Coma) in its sequel, *Amar es para siempre* (Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, Antonio Onetti & Rodolf Sirera, Antena 3: 2013-) and in *Cuéntame*, Mateo (Asier Etxeandía),



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**CINEMA AND TELEVISION (TO A LESSER EXTENT) FOUND SOME FISSURES THROUGH WHICH TO STRAIN A NON-HETEROSEXUAL IMAGINARY MOSTLY BASED ON THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES: CONCEALMENT, APPEALING TO IMPLICIT OR ELIDED REFERENCES, CARICATURIZATION, RESPECTING THE POPULAR CULTURE STEREOTYPES REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY, AND THE APPROPRIATION OF HETEROSEXUAL PLOTS AND CHARACTERS**

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Arturo (Alberto Vázquez) and Marcelo (Nao Albet), although this last one joins the series after dictator's demise. In general, characters in both series are framed in the integrational representational mode of homosexuality, despite the historical period in which they are set. Thus, for example, Felipe, César, Ubaldo, Richi, Beatriz, Matilde and Ana (AETR) and Arturo (C) do not have guilty feelings, their desire is fulfilled and shared with other characters (for example, Ubaldo with his wife), there are even some assertive aspects in an absolutely repressive context: "People are not better or worse just because of their sexual preferences" (#1x173, Asier Aizpuru, TVE 1: 2006). This is not the case with Sito and Teresa (AENTR) or Mateo (C), who have more problems in integrating their sexual orientation and assume conceptions of that period such as "I know this is a sickness" (Mateo en #5x84, La habitación de arriba, Agustín Crespi, TVE 1: 2004). For his part, Julián (AEPS) takes on a villainous but complex role due to his past of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

In *El ministerio del tiempo*, the homosexual issue is addressed mostly through a main character, Irene (Cayetana Guillén Cuervo), a lesbian, born in 1930 and, as she states herself, "adventurous", a euphemism used to refer to her numerous love affairs.

The seventh episode of the first season (#1x07, Jorge Dorado, *Tiempo de venganza*, TVE 1: 2015) explains the moment at which Irene's character is recruited to be part of the *Ministerio del tiempo* (Ministry of Time) and, thus, to travel through Spanish history to guarantee that it stays the same. This was in 1960, therefore in the middle of Franco's regime, when the main character was close to committing suicide because of her unhappiness in both work and family life under that kind of regime: "I spent half of my life obeying the rules imposed by others. I spent my youth married to a man that I hated. My parents forced me to get married at 17 [...] It could have been worse. They almost forced me to be a nun because they found me in the bathroom with a friend"<sup>24</sup>.

The main characters also travel to the Franco period in the third episode of the first season (#1x03, Marc Vigil, *Cómo se reescribe el tiempo*, TVE 1: 2015).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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The representation of homosexuality during Francoism was forbidden, notwithstanding the discrepancies between civil and religious censorship or, even, the fluctuations of the regime itself. However, film and television (to a lesser extent) found some fissures through which to strain a non-heterosexual imaginary mostly based on the following strategies: concealment, appealing to implicit or elided references, caricaturization, respecting the popular culture stereotypes regarding homosexuality, and the appropriation of heterosexual plots and characters. All of them were tragic strategies that implicitly assumed ignominy, derision, invisibility, death or punishment. Meanwhile, there are three main trends in the way that the homosexual issue has been addressed during the Franco regime in recent and democratic periods: the recovery of great historical figures, such as Federico García Lorca, the focus on the repressive and / or marginal as-

pects, appealing to the complicity of an audience equally oppressed in various aspects during the dictatorship, and the integrated representation in which characters are relieved of blame and their situation de-dramatised, despite the possible anachronism, in order to connect with the sensitivity of the broadcast period instead of the sensibility of the setting period. ■

## NOTES

- 1 Meriting special mention is the work by Juan Antonio Martínez Bretón (1988). *Influencia de la iglesia Católica en la cinematografía española (1951-1962)*. Madrid: Harofarma, in which the institutions in charge of moral control are provided in detail, as well as the codes that were established and a review of the not always easy relationship between civil and religious power in relation to moral criteria that should inspire the control of content.
- 2 The code classified movies according to their moral content: 1. Everybody 2. Young (14 to 21), 3. Adults (over 21), 3R. Adults, with objections (for adults with a solid moral education) and 4. Seriously dangerous. (Colmenero Martínez, 2014, p. 145).
- 3 “determinen claramente los asuntos y temas inabordables, y que tenga la suficiente amplitud para dar posibilidades a un cine que afronte temas importantes”.
- 4 In regard to the different representational modes, see Alfeo (1997) (2000), Pelayo (2011), on cinema, and Gonzalez de Garay (2012) on TV fiction.
- 5 “[...] en cuanto a lo de “diferente”, eso es otro asunto”.
- 6 “Adaptations” was the report section where the commission indicated the cuts and changes which conditioned the authorization for shooting.
- 7 “Alfredo es echado de su casa por su hermano mayor. En su soledad, invoca el perdón de Dios”. File nº 23,805 from the Junta de Clasificación y Censura. The censorship branch met on December 23, 1961, while the classification was done on February 23, 1962.
- 8 “Novena.- Se prohibirá: 1º La presentación de las perversiones sexuales como eje de la trama y aun con

carácter secundario, a menos que en este último caso sea exigida por el desarrollo de la acción y ésta tenga una clara y predominante consecuencia moral”.

Order of 9 February 1963 approving the “Rules of cinematographic censorship” published in the B.O.E. nº 58 of 8 March 1963 (p. 3930).

- 9 “El mordisco tiene poder explícitamente sexual sobre quien lo padece. El poder inmortal propio de los vampiros se transmite a través de un mordisco, una acción similar a un beso, a través del cual se contagian las cualidades vampíricas. Tras este mordisco, la víctima caerá en las redes de quien la mordió y del vampirismo en general. En el cine, por su parte, esta mordedura adquiere el significado de una introducción al mundo del sexo por parte de la vampira hacia su víctima”.
- 10 “la esencia de la homosexualidad como una debilidad depredadora impregna la representación de los homosexuales en las películas de terror”.
- 11 “En ella [la lesbiana de los anuncios publicitarios], la identidad lésbica ha desaparecido y se ha transformado en un reflejo, en una foto fija que permite que el patriarcado capitalista explote la ansiedad masculina transformando una identidad política amenazante en una fantasía sexual”.
- 12 “se llegaba a un pacto hipócrita entre la escabrosidad como atractivo comercial y su represión moral”.
- 13 “En el mariquita, el deseo y el amor son ridículos o patéticos, rara vez se toman en serio. Al acentuar lo externo, cualquier hondura emocional desaparece, el peligroso fantasma del homoerotismo se esfuma”.
- 14 “la figura de la folclórica vestida con “faralaes” es de todas un icono gay particular de España y pasa a formar parte de ese imaginario colectivo de algunos homosexuales de la época”.
- 15 “lecturas a contrapelo”.
- 16 “La combinación de palabras ‘reina’, ‘loca’ y ‘amor’ se convirtieron en pasto relativamente fácil de reinscribir en el discurso popular del momento”.
- 17 “El oprimido no es nada, en él sólo se encuentra un habla, la de su emancipación; el opresor es todo, su palabra es rica, multiforme, suelta, dispone de todos los grados posibles de dignidad: tiene la exclusividad del metalenguaje. El oprimido hace el mundo, sólo

tiene un lenguaje activo, transitivo (político); el opresor lo conserva, su habla es plenaria, intransitiva, gestual, teatral: es el mito; el lenguaje de uno tiende a transformar, el lenguaje del otro tiende a eternizar”.

- 18 “un sujeto soltero, de entre 19 y 30 años, atento al cuidado de su aspecto [...], perteneciente a un nivel socialmente situado entre el alto o el medio/alto y también con un elevado nivel cultural» [...] y «perteneciente a núcleos familiares desintegrados —de los que suele faltar casi siempre la figura paterna— con los que mantiene un estatus de relación favorable”.
- 19 “[l]os nuevos gays autorizados [...] son con frecuencia ejemplos de reconocidas excelencias”.
- 20 “se trataba de crear mitologías simbólicas a base de conectar el pasado con el tiempo y el espacio social del presente”.
- 21 “parece constituir un estado que bloquea toda puerta a la esperanza» / «aparece la primera representación en campo de una acción de carácter sexual entre dos hombres: un beso entre José y Miguel”.
- 22 “la homosexualidad ya no constituye el objeto central en el desarrollo de la trama”.
- 23 “la cuestión de la homosexualidad queda mucho más definida”.
- 24 “me he pasado media vida viviendo con las reglas que me imponían los demás. Pasé mi juventud casada con un hombre que detestaba. Mis padres me obligaron a casarme con él con 17 años. [...] Podía haber sido peor. Casi me meten a monja porque me encontraron con una amiga en el cuarto de baño”.

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## PORTRAYING HOMOSEXUALITY IN SPANISH CINEMA AND TELEVISION DURING THE FRANCO REGIME

### Abstract

This paper analyzes how homosexuality was portrayed in Spanish cinema and television during the Franco dictatorship. Our findings show that three main strategies were used in order to elude the censor: concealing (using implicit references), caricature (exaggerating stereotypes) and appropriation (*a priori* re-reading of non-homosexual discourses). We also study how contemporary cinema and television portrays homosexuality as it was during Francoism, with trends such as the recovery of historical homosexual characters, a harsh reflection of the prevailing repression, and a defusing of the issue with the generation of discourses closer to contemporary rather than historical sensibility.

### Key words

Homosexuality; Film; Television; Francoism; Spain; Dictatorship; LGBTIQ.

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### Article reference

GONZÁLEZ DE GARAY DOMÍNGUEZ, Beatriz, ALFEO ÁLVAREZ, Juan Carlos, (2017). Portraying Homosexuality in Spanish Cinema and Television during the Franco Regime. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 23, 63-80.

## FORMAS DE REPRESENTACIÓN DE LA HOMOSEXUALIDAD EN EL CINE Y LA TELEVISIÓN ESPAÑOLES DURANTE EL FRANQUISMO

### Resumen

El presente artículo analiza la representación que de la homosexualidad se hizo en el cine y la televisión españolas durante la dictadura franquista. Se concluye que se utilizaron principalmente tres formas de representación para sortear la censura imperante: la ocultación (mediante referencias implícitas), la caricaturización (exagerando los estereotipos) y la apropiación (de discursos sin *a priori* una intencionada lectura homosexual). Asimismo se estudia cómo el tiempo presente ha observado diacrónicamente el periodo franquista en relación a la homosexualidad desde la ficción cinematográfica y televisiva. Se observan en este sentido algunas tendencias como la recuperación de grandes personajes históricos homosexuales, el reflejo crudo de la represión imperante en el período o la desdramatización de la cuestión acercándose los discursos más a la sensibilidad contemporánea que a la histórica.

### Palabras clave

Homosexualidad; Cine; Televisión; Franquismo; España; Dictadura; LGBTIQ.

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### Referencia de este artículo

GONZÁLEZ DE GARAY DOMÍNGUEZ, Beatriz, ALFEO ÁLVAREZ, Juan Carlos, (2017). Formas de representación de la homosexualidad en el cine y la televisión españoles durante el Franquismo. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 23, 63-80.

Edita / Published by



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ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB [www.revistaatalante.com](http://www.revistaatalante.com) MAIL [info@revistaatalante.com](mailto:info@revistaatalante.com)

